

The Letter to the Hebrews

Adult Bible Study
Fall 2010

I. Introductory remarks

- A. Although it is commonly called a letter, Hebrews is really more of a Sermon in written form. There are no greetings at the beginning. The end however takes more of an epistolary form. The author acknowledges he has written but also calls his work a “word of exhortation” (*logos paraklesis*) which was a standard synagogue term for a sermon delivered therein.
- B. The Main purpose of the Letter is to show the reasonableness and superiority of the New Covenant of Christianity over the Old Covenant. The New Law is not at odds with the old law but is a perfection and fulfillment of it. Christ’s divinity and and priesthood are described and exalted here. All of this is meant to encourage the early Christians to persevere in faith despite persecution and being considered a “lunatic fringe” by their fellow Jews.
- C. Authorship - The tradition of the Eastern Fathers of the Church was usually to attribute authorship to Paul. However the Tradition of the Western Church Fathers is not unanimous on this point. Most modern scholars doubt Paul was the author. Why?
 - 1. The Absence of his name anywhere in the Letter.
 - 2. The large difference in Greek syntax and literary style.
 - 3. There is also a different way of quoting the Old Testament.
 - 4. Whoever the author was, his personality stays very much in the background (unlike Paul). It is almost as though he were hiding behind the sublimity of his subject matter. It is quite clear he was a highly Christian educated man, almost certainly of Jewish birth and very familiar with Christian theology in general and Pauline theology in particular. Even those who doubt Paul’s authorship frequently conclude he was a disciple of Paul
- D. Place of composition was Rome or at least Italy. Hebrew 13:24 says *Those who come from Italy send you greetings.*
- E. Date of composition - Everyone agrees that the Letter was written before 95 AD. Internal evidence however suggests a date prior to 70 AD. It was in 70 AD that the Temple and Jerusalem were destroyed by the Romans. This letter presumes the existence of the Temple and Jerusalem though it prophesies their soon removal from the scene: Heb 8:13 *In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.* Further, the

texts speaks of difficult times for Jews (10:25; 10:37; 12:26ff; 13:13). Hence we are probably on the eve or at the very beginning of the Jewish War with the Romans which was declared in 67 AD. This date may also supply something of the purpose of the letter to encourage the Christian Faithful to stay loyal to the faith. Nationalist loyalties could make them leave behind their Christian faith and rejoin the Jews in their national struggle. But Christ had warned them to get out:

1. Luke 21:20 *"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it; for these are days of vengeance, to fulfil all that is written.*
2. Mark 13:14 *But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let him who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything away; and let him who is in the field not turn back to take his mantle.*

F. Audience - The context is that Hebrews was clearly addressed to converts to Christianity from Judaism. The author seems to be familiar with them and presumes they have extensive knowledge of Old Testament Scripture and Temple ritual. Furthermore they are not recent converts for he refers to their already having been catechized (Heb 5:12) He expresses some disappointment they are not further advanced by now.

G. Basic Themes

1. Christ's pre-existence and divinity (1:1-4)
2. Christ's Superiority over the angels (1:5-2:18)
3. Christ's Superiority over Moses (3:1-4:13)
4. Christ's priesthood is superior to Levitical Priesthood (4:14-7:28)
5. Christ's sacrifice is greater than all sacrifices of the Old Law (8:1-10:18)
6. The final three Chapters deal with exhortation and moral topics.

H. Hebrews is difficult. There is no way around it. It presumes extensive knowledge of temple rituals and Old Testament texts which many modern Christians lack. Further it is a highly theological letter. It is hard enough to grasp the "what" but it is also hard to grasp the "so what" and the "now what" of the Text. But we'll try!

I. Prologue: - Christ's pre-existence, Divinity, and our new life.

A. ***1 In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; 2 in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, 3 who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word. When he had accomplished purification from sins, he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 as far superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.***

B. What time is it?

1. ***In times past...in these last days***

2. Note the line of demarcation. There is a declaration that we are in a new time denoted as the *last days*.

3. Be careful. Last days does not mean the author thought that time was short and that the end of the world was near at hand. What he is doing is tapping into a theological tradition begun in the Old Testament. There were many passages that spoke of a coming age wherein God would renew the face of the earth. What our author declares is that these are those days prophesied. Here are some examples from the old Testament:

a. Is 27:6 ***In days to come*** *Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots, and fill the whole world with fruit.*

b. Jer 23:5 "Behold, ***the days are coming***, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. *In his days Judah will be saved,*

c. Jer 31:31 "Behold, ***the days are coming***, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. *But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

d. Is 2:2 ***It shall come to pass*** *in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

e. Jer 30:8 "And it shall ***come to pass*** in that day, says the LORD of

hosts, that I will break the yoke from off their neck, and I will burst their bonds, and strangers shall no more make servants of them. But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.

- f. Joel 2:28 "**And it shall come to pass** afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions....³² And it shall come to pass that all who call upon the name of the LORD shall be delivered;
- g. Deut 4:30 *When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in **the latter days**, you will return to the LORD your God and obey his voice, for the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not fail you or destroy you or forget the covenant with your fathers which he swore to them.*
- h. Hosea 3:5 *Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the **latter days**.*

- 4. In effect God had promised that he would act in days to come, pour forth his Spirit, save his people, raise up a righteous king in the line of David to shepherd and save his people. He promised that new grace would be available that would enable the people of God to live in a whole new way, cause them to walk in God's paths and transform the world by their own transformation.
- 5. Our author is declaring here, by the Holy Spirit that these promised latter days, have now come up us through the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus who is now exalted at the Father's right hand.

- 6. Now the question:
 - a. Have these Last Days come for you?
 - b. Or are you living "in times past?"
 - c. Do you live in and exhibit the power of Christ in your life?
 - d. Or, Do you live as though Christ had not died, risen and ascended?
 - e. Do you live in these last days, or in times past?

C. How does God speak?

- 1. ***God spoke in partial and various ways to our fathers through the prophets;***
- 2. God's revelation is first of all through creation
 - a. Romans 1:19 *For what can be known about God is plain to the Gentiles] because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.*
 - b. Ps 19:1 *The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament*

proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

3. God revealed himself more personally to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob our fathers in the faith. Further he spoke to Moses, and all the prophets. The Greek text says here: *polumeros* which our translation renders as “partial” This captures the nuance of the Greek better than the more traditional translation “many or diverse.” The point is that the revelations they received was partial or incomplete. The full meaning of what was said was shadowy. Only in Christ would the fuller meaning of these events and revelations become evident. The Old Testament is best perceived in the light of the New Testament. Christ is the key to the whole Bible.
 - a. 1 Cor 10:11 *Now these things [events in the desert] happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come.*
 - b. John 5:39 *You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.*
4. Now he speaks to us through his Son - Jesus is the perfect revelation of the Father, the Word made flesh. But let’s discuss this in class. The Word is more than ink spots on the page of a book. Jesus is the living Word of God whom we are called to personally encounter. We must square our experience with the written word but it must be our experience.

D. Who is Jesus Christ?

1. This question is central to our confidence that we can live in a whole new way. Is Jesus just a human figure who taught and showed a way or is he the eternal Son of God, Lord and King of all creation? Notice how this text lays the foundation of confident expectation.
2. Please note that what is said of Jesus here is not said so much as a catechesis but as a confirmation. He is appealing to their experience of the majesty of Jesus Christ as a motive for them to stay faithful. In order for this appeal to be effective, the audience has to know personally the power God at work in their lives. When you know the power of Jesus Christ to put to death the habit patterns of sin in your life then you know he is the Lord and heir of all things. Who else could do that. Who else could step into your life and take away habit patterns of fear, anxiety, addiction, greed, except the Lord of the universe? Therefore we Know that he has entered into his inheritance
3. We see here Jesus’
 - a. IDENTITY - ***Son***

- (1) Not merely an angel
- (2) Not merely a prophet
- (3) But a Son, His Son.
- b. **INHERITANCE- *whom he made heir of all things***
 - (1) He inherits not just the Land as did Abraham but the whole universe
- c. **INSTRUMENTALITY - *and through whom he created the universe***
 - (1) we say in the creed, “Through him all things were made.
 - (2) Note the divine attribution. The scriptures attribute things to the Son heretofore attributed to God the Father.
- d. **IMAGE - *who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being***
 - (1) Here too, Jesus is the perfect image of the Father.
 - (2) How can there be one divine nature fully possessed by the Son and by the Holy Spirit as well. Here we have distinction but not separateness. Consider a candle: it’s flame, it’s heat and its light. We can distinguish them but not separate them. So it is with Jesus who fully reflects the Father’s glory yet not in a way separate from him. So for all time we have had God’s glory and the refulgence of his glory
- e. **IMMANENCE (intimacy) - *and who sustains all things by his mighty word.***
 - (1) Here too we are called to experience that Jesus is all in all.
 - (2) We are called to living conscious contact with God at every moment of our day
 - (3) We are called to acknowledge and experience how we are sustained and transformed by the powerful work of God in Jesus who holds all creation together in himself:
 - (a) Col 1:17 *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*
- f. **INTRINSIC Mission - *he accomplished purification from sins***
 - (1) Col 1:21 *And you, who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him, provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel which you heard*
 - (2) Some what to reduce Jesus to a prophet, teacher or miracle worker. But his fundamental mission was to save us from our

sins.

- (3) Here is Jesus central work: he brought about the purifications of sin. Why? Because it is sin that kills us. Why are we estranged from God why do we not know God, why are we fearful? Why do we walk about like orphans as though we never knew we had a savior? SIN. Make no mistake about it. SIN is the obstacle between God and ourselves. An old musical (West Side Story) said "I'm not depraved, I'm deprived." well guess what, You're depraved. We need not fret or cower before this because there is a solution, the death of the Son of God. 1 John 3:8 *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.* Not only for our sins but also to save us from this present evil age, this whole climate of sin in which we so willingly cooperate. How much TV do we or our children watch? Never mind the violence and sex which is unfit for Christians, But do you ever see there, "Get ready for death: My friends listen, your life will end briefly, get ready to meet God." Consider the rebellion and twisted values! Yet we watch hours a day. Do we ever stand up before our children and say that is a lie. The meaning of our life is not to drive a BMW. That is not the meaning of life to drink the right beer and spend the day at the beach with a beautiful girl. Violent retribution and unrestrained sexual passion with anyone we please....That is not the mind of God, that is contrary to the will of God. And we do all this cooperating with the world and its values and want to know why we are confused and weak and seemingly incapable of restraining our desires. Where is our mind? Why do we cling to this perverse worldly thinking? To live in this age and though we did not live in the "age to come" is to renounce our heritage. Yet we live riddled through with confusion, anger, hatred, sexual irresponsibility, greed. And we want to know what is the problem. And the Lord is very clear: "You don't know what I've done for you, I died to free you from sin. But you refuse to look at what is wrong with your life. You think If I were just better adjusted emotionally, if I just had a little more money everything would be alright. You refuse to look at what I say is wrong with your life. It cost me my life to save you from all this and yet you go on as though nothing is different." Our text is clear, Jesus Christ has come to purify us from our sins and set us free. Either we accept this work and live in the age to come or we renounce

our heritage and God's power to change us and live as though nothing has happened. Where and how do you live?

- g. **INAUGURATION - *he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high,***
- (1) Here too is the source of our confidence and transformation.
 - (2) Rom 8:31 *If God is for us, who is against us?...who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us?*
 - (3) Eph 1:18 *having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.*
 - (4) 1 Peter 3:22 *Jesus has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.*
- h. **INSURPASSIBILITY - *as far superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.***
- (1) This insight will be developed in the verses to come.

E. **5 For to which of the angels did God ever say: "You are my son; this day I have begotten you"? Or again: "I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me"? 6 And again, when he leads the first-born into the world, he says: "Let all the angels of God worship him." 7 Of the angels he says: "He makes his angels winds and his ministers a fiery flame"; 8 but of the Son: "Your throne, O God, stands forever and ever; and a righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom. 9 You loved justice and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions"; 10 and: "At the beginning, O Lord, you established the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands. 11 They will perish, but you remain; and they will all grow old like a garment. 12 You will roll them up like a cloak, and like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end." 13 But to which of the angels has he ever said: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool"? 14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent to serve, for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?**

1. Verses 5-14 amount to a scriptural “proof” of the superior status of Jesus to the angels, indeed to his divinity. Why does our author spend time demonstrating Jesus superiority to the angels?
 - a. We live in an age that pays little attention to the ministry of angels. But this was not so in the First Century. There was great interest in this topic for our authors first century audience.
 - b. Secondly and perhaps more importantly, the author seems to be refuting one of the ways some one might try to diminish the divinity of Jesus. Some apparently stopped short of claiming Divine Status for Jesus by claiming he was an angel, but not God. This allowed them to affirm his awesome power and elevated status but in a way that stopped short of accepting his divinity. Almost as though they were to say, “Well if you want to claim he is an angel, well ok. But God? No way!” Our author refutes this claim in verse 5-14. Jesus is no angel, he is the eternal Son of God, who, even in his humanity has been exulted at the Father’s right hand.
2. This passage is a rich source for us in understanding how the early Christians used and understood scripture. The passages our author selects from are messianic psalms and other texts. Our author has already noted that in times past God spoke in *partial and various ways*. A Christian perspective of the Old Testament is that it is only fully (as opposed to partially) understood in the Light of Jesus Christ. Thus we shall see here how our author takes the Messianic texts and show how Christ fulfills them in a way more glorious than perhaps the ancients ever knew. They were “expecting water and got wine.”

3. A brief excursus of Messianic texts:
 - a. 1 Chron 17:7 *Now therefore thus shall you say to my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts...Moreover I declare to you that the LORD will build you a house. When your days are fulfilled to go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son; I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom for ever and his throne shall be established for ever.'*" In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.
 - b. Ez 34:22 *I will save my flock, they shall no longer be a prey; and I will judge between sheep and sheep. And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.*
 - c. Isaiah 7:10 *Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*
 - d. Royal/Messianic Psalms
 - (1) 110:1 *The Lord's revelation to my Lord: "Sit on my right: your foes I will put beneath your feet." 2 The Lord will wield from Zion your scepter of power: rule in the midst of all your foes. 3 A prince from the day of your birth on the holy mountains; from the womb before the dawn I begot you. 4 The Lord has sworn an oath he will not change. "You are a priest for ever, a priest like Melchizedek of old."*¹
 - (2) Psalm 89:4 *"With my chosen one I have made a covenant; I have sworn to David my servant: I will establish your dynasty*

¹Jesus own exegesis on this is as follows: Matt 22:42 saying, "What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying, 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I put thy enemies under thy feet'? If David thus calls him Lord, how is he his son?"

for ever and set up your throne through all ages." ...16 Happy the people who acclaim such a king, who walk, O Lord, in the light of your face, who find their joy every day in your name, who make your justice the source of their bliss. For you, O Lord, are the glory of their strength; by your favor it is that our might is exalted; for our ruler is in the keeping of the Lord; our king in the keeping of the Holy One of Israel

(3) *Psalm 45:2 My heart overflows with noble words. To the king I must speak the song I have made, my tongue as nimble as the pen of a scribe. 3 You are the fairest of the children of men and graciousness is poured upon your lips: because God has blessed you for evermore....The foes of the king fall down and lose heart. 7 Your throne, O God, shall endure for ever. A scepter of justice is the scepter of your kingdom. 8 Your love is for justice; your hatred for evil. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above other kings.*

(4) *Psalm 2:1 Why this tumult among nations, among peoples this useless murmuring? 2 They arise, the kings of the earth, princes plot against the Lord and his Anointed. 3 "Come, let us break their fetters, come, let us cast off their yoke." 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord is laughing them to scorn. 5 Then he will speak in his anger, his rage will strike them with terror. 6 "It is I who have set up my king on Zion, my holy mountain." 7 The Lord said to me: "You are my Son. It is I who have begotten you this day. 8 Ask and I shall bequeath you the nations, put the ends of the earth in your possession. 9 With a rod of iron you will break them, shatter them like a potter's jar."*

e. *Psalm 16 9 And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad; even my body shall rest in safety. For you will not leave my soul among the dead, nor let your beloved know decay.²*

f. *Is 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform*

²Cf acts 2:7ff

- this.*
- g. Jer 23:5 *"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'*
 - h. Jer 30:8 *"And it shall come to pass in that day, says the LORD of hosts, that I will break the yoke from off their neck, and I will burst their bonds, and strangers shall no more make servants of them. But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.*
 - i. Ez 37:24 *"My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes. They shall dwell in the land where your fathers dwelt that I gave to my servant Jacob; they and their children and their children's children shall dwell there for ever; and David my servant shall be their prince for ever.*
4. Note then the significance of the title uttered by the crowds to Jesus: "Son of David!"
 5. Now then we can perhaps understand these extensive quoting from Scripture of our author. He is tapping into a deep tradition in Israel. But his selection of messianic and Davidic texts are those that emphasize the eternity, divinity and high status of the Messiah. Thus our author reminds them that it is NOT a departure from revelation to claim divine status for Jesus. We need not conclude, perhaps he is an angel but not divine. No indeed, the Son of David is called "My son" by God, his throne is eternal, he sits at the right hand of the father, the angels worship him. Other messianic texts as we have seen call him God, God with us, the Mighty God, Father forever and the like. We need make no apologies for claiming divine status for our Messiah and Lord Jesus!
 6. Indeed our author is in no way shy in attributing high titles to Jesus in these and the verses ahead. Yet at the same time he underscores his human nature as well. In both was, as God and as Man he is no angel. He is called
 - a. Son - (of David, of God) verse 5
 - b. Firstborn - verse 6
 - c. God - verse 8
 - d. Lord - (Yahweh) verse 10
 - e. Son of Man - Chapter 2:6
 - f. Pioneer of Salvation - 2:10
 - g. The one who sanctifies - 2:11

- h. Our brother 2:12
- i. Sharer in our Human nature 2:14
- j. The compassionate and merciful high priest. 2:18

- 7. So then for us, these questions?
 - a. Who is Jesus Christ?
 - b. How did our author know this about Jesus?
 - c. What difference does his power and divinity make for us?
 - d. What of his humanity?
 - e. What was the author asking of the first Christians?
 - f. What is the Holy Spirit asking of us?
 - g. Let's read on.

II. Hebrews - Chapter 2

A. EXHORTATION - *1 Therefore, we must attend all the more to what we have heard, so that we may not be carried away. 2 For if the word announced through angels proved firm, and every transgression and disobedience received its just recompense, 3 how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? Announced originally through the Lord, it was confirmed for us by those who had heard. 4 God added his testimony by signs, wonders, various acts of power, and distribution of the gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his will.*

B. This reflection on all these texts and the demonstration of Jesus' power and divinity is no mere intellectual exercise. It requires a response. We have got to pay attention to what we have received. Otherwise we just drift away. And to drift away from the author of salvation is very serious. If we are so arrogant or dull minded as to make light of salvation or the decision that is before us, we risk disaster. If it is true that Jesus is the eternal Son of God, God himself, Lord of all creation, what then is the response expected of us? Faith. We have a decision to make that has eternal consequences. There are many places in Scripture where this is told. Here are but a few.

1. Mark 16:15 *And Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*

2. Matt 22:2 *Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son, and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast; but they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.' But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find....*

3. 1 Cor 10:1 *I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things are warnings for us,*

C. We don't like to think like this. We don't like to think that our decisions are of eternal significance. We like to think in terms of a rather vague, deistic sort of notion that God is good and loving but really rather remote from our daily decisions. We

prefer to think that if we just do good things in our life and the number of good things we do outnumber the bad things we do, then we've made it.

1. In the first place it is worth looking at the self-centeredness of that view. Where is there any love for God in that. Where is there any gratitude for God. Where is there any desire to please God. "I'm on this globe to make myself as safe as possible. And therefore, while I want to live my life in a way that pleases me, I'll do it only to the degree that I don't actually anger or displease God. And that way I can have the best of both. But where is the desire to please God. My whole focus is that I be safe and saved. God is secondary. I care about me and want heaven not because I love God but because I want to be safe. Where is my gratitude for salvation?
2. Secondly there is a naivete. That is we still think things are basically OK. And because of that we're not really living a realistic life. We're fail to understand that our decisions, both individually and collectively have great significance and consequence. We see this best in the big picture. The more we push God to the margins, the more we forsake our Christian roots, our dependance on God, the more we do this, the deeper our descent into violence, confusion, disease, anxiety, and corruption. Everything is not basically OK. Further, it is not just societies that are messed up. Individuals are deeply confused, alienated and in very deep bondage due to their choices. Yet still we insist everything is basically OK and that everyone is on the way to heaven. This is naive, it is not rooted in reality. We are not called to despair but we are called to sobriety, to seriousness.
3. Our author is placing before us a choice. Either we ***attend to what we have heard***, namely pay attention to what is being said to us and Who it is who is saying it; either we accept this revelation and base our lives upon it, or we reap the consequences, temporal and eternal. The texts single out two consequences if we fail to attend to what we have heard
 - a. We are ***carried away***. Dead bodies float downstream. It takes a live body to resist the current. Some one alive in Christ Jesus, who accepts the ministry of Jesus Christ to transform his/her life.
 - b. Further we will stand condemned if we fail to accept the Lord's ministry in our lives: ***For if the word announced through angels proved firm, and every transgression and disobedience received its just recompense, 3 how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?***
 - (1) Mat 7:24 *Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like*

a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it."

- (2) Heb 12:25 *See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth (Moses), much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.*

4. EVIDENCE - This message, this Truth of Jesus Christ has its own proof:
- a. ***Announced originally through the Lord, it was confirmed for us by those who had heard. 4 God added his testimony by signs, wonders, various acts of power, and distribution of the gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his will.***
 - b. Note the description of the Word of God. It is a dynamic, a powerful word that shows it's power in signs wonders, and gifts.
 - c. Here is a description of the normal Christian life. A life marked out by miracles of transformation, signs of God's power at work, gifts of the Holy Spirit in evidence: peace, joy, serenity, confidence, wisdom, understanding, forgiveness, chastity, self-control, unity, patience, prudence, a clear mind, love for the truth, physical healings, proper priorities...etc. In a phrase, new life. A life in the Spirit rather than the flesh. A life in union with God rather than alienated from him.
 - d. We are being given the Word of God and a living relationship with Jesus Christ who is alive and rules the universe. Our response is to attend to it, to accept it in faith and not turn away. We will see the power of Jesus Christ bring about changes in our lives.
- D. We cannot remain neutral to this proclamation of Jesus Christ. We must respond in faith. By our decision we are determining our eternal destiny. Only we can do this, no one can do it for us. We are offered salvation: accept it or reject it.

E. THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST - *5 For it was not to angels that he subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. 6 Instead, someone has testified somewhere: "What is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you care for him? 7 You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor, 8 subjecting all things under his feet." In "subjecting" all things (to him), he left nothing not "subject to him." Yet at present we do not see "all things subject to him," 9 but we do see Jesus "crowned with glory and honor" because he suffered death, he who "for a little while" was made "lower than the angels," that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. 10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the leader to their salvation perfect through suffering. 11 He who consecrates and those who are being consecrated all have one origin. Therefore, he is not ashamed to call them "brothers," 12 saying: "I will proclaim your name to my brothers, in the midst of the assembly I will praise you"; 13 and again: "I will put my trust in him"; and again: "Behold, I and the children God has given me." 14 Now since the children share in blood and flesh, he likewise shared in them, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and free those who through fear of death had been subject to slavery all their life. 16 Surely he did not help angels but rather the descendants of Abraham; 17 therefore, he had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God to expiate the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.*

1. Up to now our author, in the doctrinal section has emphasized that Jesus is no angel because he is higher than the angels, he is Lord, he is God. Now he further develops that Jesus is no angel. But this time because he is man, having a human rather than an angelic nature. He is one with us, a brother to us. Here again he uses the messianic texts as well as others to show the human origins of the Messiah.
2. **The Messiah, even in his human origins, will receive a heritage greater than the Angels.** Our author uses Psalm 8:4-6, a Messianic psalm for his proof:
 - a. *6... What is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you care for him? 7 You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor, 8 subjecting all things under his feet*
 - b. No earthly king, however powerful has all things subject to him. Neither are all things subject to an angel. Only one of David's earthly successors, Jesus the God-man can qualify for such a title. Our author is clear to interpret the phrase "subjecting all things" from Ps. 8 in literal fashion for he immediately adds: *In "subjecting" all things (to*

him), he left nothing not "subject to him."

- c. How did the early Christians *know* that all things were subject to Jesus? How do you know?
- d. The text immediately raises a question, or rather an experience that must be admitted: *Yet at present we do not see "all things subject to him*. In other words, there is the on-going mystery of iniquity and rebellion that surrounds us. All things do not seem subject. Evil seems still quite powerful, quite “un-subjected” suffering and death are on-going. How do we reconcile the total victory of Christ with this “present evil age” Paul (elsewhere) reflects on the mystery of iniquity:
- (1) 2 Thess 2:1 *Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you this? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming...So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter.*
- (2) Rom 11:25 *Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved;*
- e. Despite the “mystery of lawlessness,” we *do* experience the power of Christ to subject all things through the power of the cross at work in our lives. The power of the Cross puts sin to death and brings alive the new life of grace. Thus our author says: **9 but we do see Jesus crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, he who**

"for a little while" was made "lower than the angels," that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. 10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the leader to their salvation perfect through suffering. The argument is this: to bring us to perfection and glory and to bring into subjection all sin and injustice Jesus descended to a place lower than the angels and suffered the full force of the rebellion of this world. These forces put him to death but he broke their back, rose and ascended to glory. All these powers are subjected to him. As our leader and model Jesus blazed the same trail we must walk. For him, and in God's eternal perspective, all things are now subject. For us that process is still under way.

- (1) Do you see this process at work in you?
- (2) How?
- (3) What sins and drives, once powerful in you have now been made subject?

3. **The Messiah is our brother, shares our human nature** - Our author now develops the fact that Jesus is our brother, he shares our human nature. This point is made for several reasons

- a. To show, as we have said that Jesus is not an angel.
- b. To show that he is one with us, a brother. One of us is the Son of God.
- c. To show us what a perfected human nature is. Since He and we have one origin, what is true for Jesus' human nature can become so with us.
- d. To show that, taking up a human nature capable of suffering he is by that suffering able to expiate our sins and receive glory.
- e. Let's examine the teachings of the text more closely -
 - (1) Through his Human nature Jesus was able to suffer - *because he suffered death, he who "for a little while" was made "lower than the angels," that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*
 - (2) His suffering was fitting - *10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the leader to their salvation perfect through suffering.*
 - (a) Why do you think it is fitting?
 - (b) Did God make suffering and death?
 - (c) Does he rejoice in suffering?
 - (3) The heart of our dignity - *11 He who consecrates and those*

who are being consecrated all have one origin. Therefore, he is not ashamed to call them "brothers," 12 saying:

(a) *I will proclaim your name to my brothers, in the midst of the assembly I will praise you";*

i) Psalm 22:22

ii) The great prophecy of the crucified Lord. Jesus clearly fulfills this psalm and that psalm clearly states he has brethren

(b) *13 and again: "I will put my trust in him"; and again: "Behold, I and the children God has given me."*

i) Is 8:17-18 - a passage wherein Isaiah put his trust in God in the face of an Assyrian invasion. Others turned to superstition and foreign alliance, but Isaiah trusts in the Lord.

ii) This messianic text shows how, in his humanity Christ trusted his Father but also that he has "children" who also trust the Father through faith. Our affinity to Jesus comes not merely through familial relationship but through faith.

(c) The heart of our problem and the manner of our healing: *14 Now since the children share in blood and flesh, he likewise shared in them, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and free those who through fear of death had been subject to slavery all their life.*

i) Problem = fear of death and the bondage thereof.

a) What do you think this means?

b) Fear of death as fear of diminishment of any sort.

ii) How does Christ free us from this slavery?

iii) How has he freed you?

(d) The fittingness of his incarnation - *16 Surely he did not help angels but rather the descendants of Abraham; 17 therefore, he had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God to expiate the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself was tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those*

who are being tested.

- i) Why did he have to become like us?
 - a) non assumitur, non rennovetur

- ii) Merciful AND Faithful
 - a) Love loves us and is merciful but this does not mean he ignores our sin. God has promised to deliver us from our sins. When a parent loves a child he and sees them in distress the parent cannot say, "I love you" then just walk away.

- iii) Expiate = poured out sacrifice - Jesus shed his blood. We have been purchased and at a price

- iv) How is he able to help those who are tested?

III. Hebrews Chapter Three - Exhortations

A. Since Jesus is greater than Moses, Fix your thoughts on him - *1 Therefore, holy brothers, sharing in a heavenly calling, reflect on Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, 2 who was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was "faithful in (all) his house." 3 But he is worthy of more "glory" than Moses, as the founder of a house has more "honor" than the house itself. 4 Every house is founded by someone, but the founder of all is God. 5 Moses was "faithful in all his house" as a "servant" to testify to what would be spoken, 6 but Christ was faithful as a son placed over his house.*

1. **Heavenly Calling** - do we live this way? When did you last meditate on heaven? Are we rooted here or is it obvious that we have a heavenly calling?
 - a. Col 3:3:1 *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*
 - b. Phil 3:17 *Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*
 - c. James 4:4 *Unfaithful creatures! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*
2. **Reflect on** - our translation is a bit weak here. The Greek word is *katanoeo* meaning to observe fully, behold, perceive, or fix your thoughts. In other words, let the reality of Jesus Christ take hold in your minds. Let it be at the center of your thoughts
3. **Apostle and High Priest** - Apostle in Greek means one who is sent. The Father has sent the Son. High Priest will be developed by our author in verses ahead.
4. **Moses** was a faithful servant but Jesus is a faithful Son. Here is the crux of the argument: Look at how the people of old were punished for disobeying Moses. But since there is a greater than Moses here, disobeying the Son of God has even more drastic consequences! This is developed in the verses to come.

B. The Consequences of Disobedience - *We are his house, if (only) we hold fast to our confidence and pride in our hope. 7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Oh, that today you would hear his voice, 8 'Harden not your hearts as at the rebellion in the day of testing in the desert, 9 where your ancestors tested and tried me and saw my works 10 for forty years. Because of this I was provoked with that generation and I said, "They have always been of erring heart, and they do not know my ways." 11 As I swore in my wrath, "They shall not enter into my rest."'" 12 Take care, brothers, that none of you may have an evil and unfaithful heart, so as to forsake the living God.*

1. We must remain faithful even in persecution and hardship, for these are passing things. But the things of the life to come are eternal. Consider the chosen people of old. God delivered them through the waters and showed them signs and wonders through Moses. Yet still they forsook him the desert and failed to trust and have confidence. Not only did they commit idolatry they also doubted that they could take the Promised Land. Their confidence and trust folded and let them have it their way. They preferred the desert to the promised land so God had that generation die in the desert, all but Joshua and Caleb.
2. If this be the case with them, how much more so with us who have received even greater promises.
3. Here too, our author will develop this in verses to come.

C. Particular Advice - *13 Encourage yourselves daily while it is still "today," so that none of you may grow hardened by the deceit of sin. 14 We have become partners of Christ if only we hold the beginning of the reality firm until the end, 15 for it is said: "Oh, that today you would hear his voice: 'Harden not your hearts as at the rebellion.'" 16 Who were those who rebelled when they heard? Was it not all those who came out of Egypt under Moses? 17 With whom was he "provoked for forty years"? Was it not those who had sinned, whose corpses fell in the desert? 18 And to whom did he "swear that they should not enter into his rest," if not to those who were disobedient? 19 And we see that they could not enter for lack of faith.*

1. Encourage - the Greek word is parakaleo which means to exhort or encourage but also contains a tinge of "console". To encourage means to "call to courage." This is most necessary in the Christian life wherein courage is so essential to live counter-culturally.
2. Hardened by the deceit of sin - through a life of compromise our moral life

falls increasingly short. Further our decisions become increasingly fixed and our hearts hardened. We don't like to think like this, but we are warned here and confronted with the reality of things. Here is a call to sobriety.

3. ***Who were those who rebelled?***
 - a. Those who ***heard*** - it is not enough to hear the word of God we must heed it.
 - b. ***those who came out of Egypt under Moses*** - it is not enough to get blessings, get saved, or be baptized. We must live the obedience of faith.

4. What did they do?
 - a. ***Provoked Him for forty years***
 - (1) God can't really feed us in this desert
 - (2) He brought us out here to die
 - (3) We'd better worship our old gods in case God doesn't come through.
 - (4) We are tired of this manna
 - (5) etc.
 - b. ***Sinned...and were disobedient***
 - (1) idolatry
 - (2) refusal to take the Promised Land
 - c. ***19 And we see that they could not enter for lack of faith.***
 - (1) Afraid to take the Promised Land
 - (2) Lacked courage to live the life and take up the fight.

5. What of us?
 - a. The courage to live a moral life with different priorities?
 - b. The neglect of heaven and Heaven's God?
 - c. Idolatry of money, power, popularity, etc?

 - d. We are called to heroic faith.

IV. Chapter Four - A warning regarding judgement.

A. *1 Therefore, let us be on our guard while the promise of entering into his rest³ remains, that none of you be judged to have failed. 2 For in fact we have received the good news just as they did. But the word that they heard did not profit them, for they were not united in faith with those who listened. 3 For we who believed enter into (that) rest, just as he has said: "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter into my rest,'"⁴ and yet his works were accomplished at the foundation of the world. 4 For he has spoken somewhere about the seventh day in this manner, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works"; 5 and again, in the previously mentioned place, "They shall not enter into my rest." 6 Therefore, since it remains that some will enter into it, and those who formerly received the good news did not enter because of disobedience, 7 he once more set a day, "today," when long afterwards he spoke through David, as already quoted: "Oh, that today you would hear his voice: 'Harden not your hearts.'"⁵ 8 Now if Joshua had given them rest, the Lord would not have spoken afterwards of another day. 9 Therefore, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God. 10 And whoever enters into God's rest, rests from his own works as God did from his. 11 Therefore, let us strive to enter into that rest, so that no one may fall after the same example of disobedience. 12 Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart. 13 No creature is concealed from him, but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account. 14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. 16 So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help.*

³Our Author plays on the word "rest" in this passage. Rest means, the perfect rest and serenity of the Kingdom of God (v. 1), It also means the promised land, it also means sabbath rest. Only the first use of the word is rest in the full sense. The others are images.

⁴Ps 95

⁵Ps 95

- B. Prescriptions - vv. 1-3,11
1. Fear - ***let us be on our guard (phobeisthai)***
 2. Faith -
 - a. ***for they were not united in faith with those who listened.***
 - b. ***11 that no one may fall after the same example of disobedience.***
- C. prefigurements vv. 4-10
1. The “rest” of the promised land
 - a. ***As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter into my rest,***
 (1) God here speaks of the penalty imposed on them for their lack of trust. He refused to let them enter the promised land.
 2. The “rest” of the Sabbath
 - a. Sabbath rest is meant as a symbol and foretaste of the rest of heaven, the perfect rest to which we are summoned.
 - b. ***4 For he has spoken somewhere about the seventh day in this manner, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works"***
 - c. ***9 Therefore, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God. 10 And whoever enters into God's rest, rests from his own works as God did from his.***
- D. Perfect rest
1. We look beyond the mere symbols of rest (Sabbath and Promised Land) to the perfect rest of the Kingdom of heaven.
 2. ***and his works were accomplished at the foundation of the world.***
 3. ***he [the LORD] once more set a day, "today," when long afterwards he spoke through David, as already quoted: "Oh, that today you would hear his voice: 'Harden not your hearts.'" 8 Now if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterwards of another day.***
- E. Probe - vv. 12-13
1. No playing games with God
 2. All lies exposed before God
- F. Power - vv. 14-16
1. Not fear, faith.

V. Chapter 5

A. *1 Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He is able to deal patiently⁶ with the ignorant and erring, for he himself is beset by weakness 3 and so, for this reason, must make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people. 4 No one takes this honor upon himself but only when called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 In the same way, it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high priest, but rather the one who said to him: "You are my son; this day I have begotten you"; 6 just as he says in another place: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." 7 In the days when he was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. 8 Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; 9 and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, 10 declared by God high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.*

1. Priesthood - vv. 1-4

- a. Priests are ordained to offer sacrifice in atonement for sin.
- b. They are to be of encouragement to the sinner, including themselves
- c. Priesthood is conferred, not obtained

2. Perfect Priesthood - vv. 5-6

- a. Christ received his priesthood directly from God the Father
- b. Psalm 2:1 *Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and his anointed, saying, 3 "Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us." 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs; the LORD has them in derision. 5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, 6 "I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill." 7 I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, "**You are my son, today I have begotten you.** 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." 10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. 11 Serve the LORD with fear, with trembling 12 kiss his feet, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way; for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.*
- c. Psalm 110:1 *The LORD says to my lord: "Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool." 2 The LORD sends forth from*

⁶The Greek word *metriopathein* was used by the Greeks to designate the golden mean between excess and defect of passion

Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your foes! 3 Your people will offer themselves freely on the day you lead your host upon the holy mountains. From the womb of the morning like dew your youth will come to you. 4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." 5 The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. 6 He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. 7 He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.

- d. Hence we are taught that Jesus is both priest and king in the way Melchizedek was and David sought to be.
 - (1) Melchizedek - Gen 14:18 *And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High.*
 - (2) Our Author will develop this more in future verses. Suffice it here to say, the Levitical priesthood came in response to sin. Jesus, who does away with sin, reestablishes priesthood in the order of Melchizedek. We can discuss this more in class.

- 3. Portrait - vv. 7-9
 - a. Personal prayer
 - b. Obedient through suffering
 - c. Saving

- 4. Point - v. 10
 - a. Jesus is high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

- B. Rebuke and exhortation - ***11 About this we have much to say, and it is difficult to explain, for you have become sluggish in hearing. 12 Although you should be teachers by this time, you need to have someone teach you again the basic elements of the utterances of God. You need milk, (and) not solid food. 13 Everyone who lives on milk lacks experience of the word of righteousness, for he is a child. 14 But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties are trained by practice to discern good and evil.***
 - 1. The author warns them that the argument to follow is difficult.
 - 2. But it is difficult not in itself but because our minds are sinfully weak. We are wise in so many worldly matter but babes in the things of the Spirit. Many of us have doctoral degrees in a worldly pursuit but a third grade grasp of our faith.
 - 3. In a way he shames them into “girding the loins” of their mind. He summons them to prepare to apply their minds to the argument that follows.
 - 4. If this is so for them, how much more so for us who have even less grasp of the Old Testament texts than did they!
 - 5. Why might they be sluggish? We will discuss a possible historical reason in class.

VI. Chapter 6 Continued exhortations and warnings

- A. **PROGRESS OR PERISH** - If we are not progressing we are backsliding⁷ - *1 Therefore, let us leave behind the basic teaching about Christ and advance to maturity, without laying the foundation all over again: repentance from dead works and faith in God, 2 instruction about baptisms and laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.*
- B. **RESISTANCE IS REJECTION** - Failing to grow is a sign that we have rejected grace - *3 And we shall do this, if only God permits. 4 For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened and tasted the heavenly gift and shared in the holy Spirit 5 and tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, to bring them to repentance again, since they are recrucifying the Son of God for themselves and holding him up to contempt. 7 Ground that has absorbed the rain falling upon it repeatedly and brings forth crops useful to those for whom it is cultivated receives a blessing from God. 8 But if it produces thorns and thistles, it is rejected; it will soon be cursed and finally burned.*
1. Growth and progress are the necessary result of God's grace.
 2. Failure in this regard (refusal to grow to maturity) leads to a hard heart that is ultimately not able to repent.
 3. The image used is this: ground may be cleared, cultivated, seeded and watered. But if it fails to bring forth the desired fruit it is rejected and burned.
- C. Even **SLOW GROWTH** is a **SIGN OF GRACE** - Yet this condemnation need not be for us if we hear the call to make progress and grow in our faith - *9 But we are sure in your regard, beloved, of better things related to salvation, even though we speak in this way. 10 For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love you have demonstrated for his name by having served and continuing to serve the holy ones. 11 We earnestly desire each of you to demonstrate the same eagerness for the fulfillment of hope until the end, 12 so that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises*
1. When we take one step, God takes two!
 2. God will joyfully accept even our baby steps.
- D. **AS I WAS SAYING** - *13 When God made the promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, "he swore by himself," 14 and said, "I will indeed bless you and multiply" you. 15 And so, after patient waiting, he obtained the promise. 16 Human beings swear by someone greater than themselves; for them an oath serves as a guarantee and puts an end to all argument. 17 So when God wanted to give the heirs of his promise an even clearer demonstration of the immutability of his purpose, he intervened with an oath, 18 so that by two*

⁷In a moving current, any fish not swimming against the current and making progress against it, is floating downstream.

immutable things⁸, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to hold fast to the hope that lies before us. 19 This we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm, which reaches into the interior behind the veil, 20 where Jesus has entered on our behalf as forerunner, becoming high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

1. The author now moves forward with the argument.
2. When God Swore an oath to Abraham he came through. God indeed blessed and multiplied Abraham's descendants.
3. So to, was the oath sworn to David's descendant, in psalm 110, Jesus is now eternal high priest in the order of Melchizedek.
4. Just as the high priest of old entered behind the veil, once a year, so now Jesus our high priest eternally does so, before the Father's throne.
5. He is our forerunner - where he has gone, we hope to follow.

⁸i.e. the promise and the oath.

VII. Hebrews 7

A. Who is Melchizedek? *1 This "Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of God Most High," "met Abraham as he returned from his defeat of the kings" and "blessed him." 2 And Abraham apportioned to him "a tenth of everything." His name first means righteous king, and he was also "king of Salem," that is, king of peace. 3 Without father, mother, or ancestry, without beginning of days or end of life, thus made to resemble the Son of God, he remains a priest forever. 4 See how great he is to whom the patriarch "Abraham (indeed) gave a tenth" of his spoils.*

1. Among those who bless Abram is the mysterious Melchizedek. From a worldly point of view he is the King of Salem, (the city would later be called Jerusalem). Not only is he a King but he is a priest who worships "The Most High God" (*EL-ELYON*). Although this is likely a Canaanite God, at this time early in revelation, later distinctions about God are not yet in force. From a secular point of view then we see Melchizedek, a Canaanite Priest King thus honors Abram for His conquest. From a spiritual point of view however, the Bible later comments on this mysterious priest king. Psalms 110 indicates that when the Messiah comes he would have a priesthood derived from Melchizedek (Not the Levitical priesthood). Hebrews 7 indicates that Melchizedek was a foreshadowing of Jesus. Note the description that he is without ancestry, without beginning of days or end of life. Was Melchizedek in fact Christ pre-incarnate?! This might help explain Abram's unusual behavior of paying a tithe to a pagan king after his victory against other Kings. Yet it is probably not the proper conclusion since the text says he is made to resemble the Christ. Our author is clearly stating here however the basis for the priesthood of Melchizedek declared here and in Psalm 110. Our author is about to declare this priesthood to be far superior to the Levitical priesthood. Why is this so?

a. Melchizedek as we shall see is superior to any Levite because He received tithes from Abraham and because he lives for ever

b. Further, the Levitical priesthood was inaugurated due to sin. It was a poor replacement for priesthood in the Order of Melchizedek.

(1) Ex 32:25 *And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose (for Aaron had let them break loose, to their shame among their enemies), then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, "Who is on the Lord's side? Come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'Put every man his sword on his side, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.'" And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. And Moses said, "Today you have ordained yourselves for the service of the LORD, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, that he may bestow a blessing upon you this day."*

B. Melchizedek is superior to the Levites - *5 The descendants of Levi who receive the office of priesthood have a commandment according to the law to exact tithes from the people, that is, from their brothers, although they also have come from the loins of Abraham. 6 But he who was not of their ancestry received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had received the promises. 7 Unquestionably, a lesser person is blessed by a greater. 8 In the one case, mortal men receive tithes; in the other, a man of whom it is testified that he lives on. 9 One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, was tithed through Abraham, 10 for he was still in his father's loins when Melchizedek met him. 11 If, then, perfection came through the levitical priesthood, on the basis of which the people received the law, what need would there still have been for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not reckoned according to the order of Aaron?*

1. **The Levites are obliged by law to take tithes.** Numb 18:21 *To the Levites I have given every tithes in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they serve, their service in the tent of meeting.*
2. But Melchizedek and his priesthood are superior to their priesthood for the following reasons:
 - a. He received a tithes from Abraham even though he was not of his ancestry. V. 6
 - b. The Levites are descendants of Abraham. But Melchizedek is greater than Abraham! He blessed Abraham, not the other way around, hence he is greater than Abraham since a greater person blesses a lesser one.
 - c. Even Levi owes tithes to Melchizedek! V. 9-11
 - d. The Levitical priesthood could not bring perfection. Otherwise, why would the order of priesthood in Melchizedek need to be re-established when Messiah came? (Ps 110).

C. New regime - *12 When there is a change of priesthood, there is necessarily a change of law as well. 13 Now he of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, of which no member ever officiated at the altar. 14 It is clear that our Lord arose from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. 15 It is even more obvious if another priest is raised up after the likeness of Melchizedek, 16 who has become so, not by a law expressed in a commandment concerning physical descent but by the power of a life that cannot be destroyed. 17 For it is testified: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."*

1. There's a new Law in effect - Jesus though not of the tribe of Levi, rather of Judah is still high priest. Rather he is of the superior Order of Melchizedek.
2. His priesthood is not due to physical descent but through the power of God as expressed in the 110th psalm
 - a. *The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool."...The LORD has sworn and will not change*

his mind, "You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

D. Further reasons for the Superiority of Jesus' Priesthood - **18 On the one hand, a former commandment is annulled because of its weakness and uselessness, 19 for the law brought nothing to perfection; on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. 20 And to the degree that this happened not without the taking of an oath --for others became priests without an oath, 21 but he with an oath, through the one who said to him: "The Lord has sworn, and he will not repent: 'You are a priest forever'"-- 22 to that same degree has Jesus (also) become the guarantee of an (even) better covenant.**

1. The Levitical priesthood is annulled because of its weakness for it did not bring about perfection.
2. The new Priesthood of Jesus Christ offers the "hope" of perfection through which we draw near to God.
 - a. How do you experience this hope?
3. Jesus priesthood is enacted by oath, it is God who swears!

E. Yet more reasons for the superiority of Jesus' Priesthood. **23 Those priests were many because they were prevented by death from remaining in office, 24 but he, because he remains forever, has a priesthood that does not pass away. 25 Therefore, he is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them. 26 It was fitting that we should have such a high priest: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, higher than the heavens. 27 He has no need, as did the high priests, to offer sacrifice day after day, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did that once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints men subject to weakness to be high priests, but the word of the oath, which was taken after the law, appoints a son, who has been made perfect forever.**

1. Jesus has an eternal priesthood - vv. 23-25
2. He is a perfect priest - v. 26, 28
3. His sacrifice is completed - v. 27

VIII. Hebrews 8.

A. The main Point , a summary- **8:1 Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord.**

1. Perfect High Priest
2. Placed in heaven
3. Ordained by God.

B. The gift he offers - **3 For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer.**

1. Himself

C. Christ is the true minister in the true Temple - **4 Now if he were on earth, he would**

not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. 5 They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary; for when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain."

1. The Levites on earth minister in a replica, a pattern, a small, scale model of the actual Temple in heaven.
2. But Christ is ministers in the true Temple in Heaven

D. God himself promised a new and better covenant - **6 *But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second. 8 For he finds fault with them when he says: "The days will come, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; 9 not like the covenant that 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 so I paid no heed to them, says the Lord. 10 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 write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 11 And they shall not teach every one his fellow or every one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."***

1. The old Covenant was written on tablets of stone.
2. The New Covenant is written in our hearts.
3. The Old Testament passage Ez 31:31 is quoted at length.
4. Ez develops the matter latter in the 36th chapter: Ez 36:25 *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.*

E. Old Covenant has been set aside - **13 *In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.***

1. The Old Covenant is obsolete
2. It's symbol, the temple is getting ready vanish, this it did in 70 AD as Christ had prophesied: Mat 24:1 *Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down."*

3.

IX. Hebrews 9

A. **A Tour of the Temple - 1 Now (even) the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. 2 For a tabernacle was constructed, the outer one, in which were the lampstand, the table, and the bread of offering; this is called the Holy Place. 3 Behind the second veil was the tabernacle called the Holy of Holies, 4 in which were the gold altar of incense and the ark of the covenant entirely covered with gold. In it were the gold jar containing the manna, the staff of Aaron that had sprouted, and the tablets of the covenant. 5 Above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the place of expiation. Now is not the time to speak of these in detail.**

1. See diagrams

B. **The imperfection of the Old - 6 With these arrangements for worship, the priests, in performing their service, go into the outer tabernacle repeatedly, 7 but the high priest alone goes into the inner one once a year, not without blood that he offers for himself and for the sins of the people. 8 In this way the Holy Spirit shows that the way into the sanctuary had not yet been opened while the outer tabernacle still had its place. 9 This is symbolic of the present time, in which gifts and sacrifices are [still] offered⁹ that cannot perfect the worshiper in conscience 10 but only in matters of food and drink and various ritual washings: regulations concerning the flesh, imposed until the time of the new order.**

1. The inner sanctum or the holy of holies was hidden by a veil and could only be entered by the high priest once a year. Hence the Old Covenant emphasized that the way to God was blocked by sin. There was no real access to the Father. Even once a year the High Priest had to use tons of incense to avoid seeing the presence of God. He also sprinkled blood to atone for sin. Further he had a rope around his ankle lest he be struck dead and his body need to be dragged out. In all these ways the imperfection of the Old Covenant is revealed. It could only show the barriers but do nothing to remove it. For all the rituals prescribed never perfected the believer or rendered him able to have access to the Father. Only Jesus could do this.

C. **The perfection of the New - 11 But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that have come to be, passing through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not belonging to this creation, 12 he entered once for all into the sanctuary, not with the blood of goats and calves but with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer's ashes can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who**

⁹Note how the text presupposes that the Temple is still standing and that sacrifices are being offered there. They cannot perfect, they have been surpassed by Christ's perfect sacrifice. Recall how, at the end of the Chapter 8 our author asserted that the Temple and the Old Covenant was "About to pass away" (8:13) This is in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies that the Temple would be cast down (Mt. Olivet Discourse).

through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.

1. But Jesus has access to the Father. He not only can pass into the holy of holies, he does this not in a little mock up or movie set but in the true tabernacle of the true temple in heaven. Further he did not merely enter, sprinkle some blood and get out of there as fast as possible (lest he be struck dead) but he enters it permanently! Yet again, the blood he sprinkles is not that of some bull, but his own blood. In this way the atonement, the redemption is eternal For Jesus, as we have seen is eternal, divine and as this text says, he works this work through the Eternal Spirit.
 - a. It is symbolic that when Jesus died, the curtain sealing off the holy of Holies was torn in two from top to bottom (Mat 27:51). Now there is access to the Father through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.
2. We are thus freed from dead works, that is dead rituals and we worship the living God in spirit and in truth.
 - a. John 4:21 *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father....But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."*

D. Sealed in His Blood and by his death - ***15 For this reason he is mediator of a new covenant: since a death has taken place for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant, those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance. 16 Now where there is a will, the death of the testator must be established. 17 For a will takes effect only at death; it has no force while the testator is alive. 18 Thus not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. 19 When every commandment had been proclaimed by Moses to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves (and goats), together with water and crimson wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20 saying, "This is 'the blood of the covenant which God has enjoined upon you.'" 21 In the same way, he sprinkled also the tabernacle and all the vessels of worship with blood. 22 According to the law almost everything is purified by blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.***

1. Now the New Covenant has been ratified since by his death, Christ is now able to bequeath an inheritance. It is by his death that he is able to do this. This is symbolized even in the Old Covenant by the shedding of blood, without which there is no forgiveness
2. Hence we must not forget the price of our redemption: without the shedding of Christ's blood there is no forgiveness!

E. Once for all and perfect sacrifice - ***23 Therefore, it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified by these rites, but the heavenly things themselves by better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made***

by hands, a copy of the true one, but heaven itself, that he might now appear before God on our behalf. 25 Not that he might offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters each year into the sanctuary with blood that is not his own; 26 if that were so, he would have had to suffer repeatedly from the foundation of the world. But now once for all he has appeared at the end of the ages to take away sin by his sacrifice. 27 Just as it is appointed that human beings die once, and after this the judgment, 28 so also Christ, offered once to take away the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to take away sin but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.

1. Christ does not operate on some movie set, or some fake mock-up but enters the real temple, the real and true sanctuary, not made with human hands but eternal, in the heavens.
2. He enters the presence of the Father as he has a perfect right to do and he does so on our behalf
3. But note, unlike the High priest who has to repeat the offering over and over, Jesus does this once and for all. It is appointed only to die once and in doing this he bequeaths the inheritance of salvation, access to the Father, life with Him forever.

X. Hebrews 10 - Recapitulations

- A. Restatement of the Main point - **1 Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of them, it can never make perfect those who come to worship by the same sacrifices that they offer continually each year. 2 Otherwise, would not the sacrifices have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, once cleansed, would no longer have had any consciousness of sins? 3 But in those sacrifices there is only a yearly remembrance of sins, 4 for it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats take away sins.**
1. But here is a question, how do you experience the “good things to come” Can we argue that this time has come upon us or are we just asserting it without evidence?
 2. What does it mean to “no longer have any consciousness of sins?”
- B. The Proof of a New Covenant - **5 For this reason, when he came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; 6 holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in. 7 Then I said, 'As is written of me in the scroll, Behold, I come to do your will, O God!'" 8 First he says, "Sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings, you neither desired nor delighted in." These are offered according to the law. 9 Then he says, "Behold, I come to do your will." He takes away the first to establish the second. 10 By this "will," we have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**
1. In quoting Psalm 40 and other Old Testament texts in future verses our author demonstrates that even the Old Testament spoke of a new and more perfect covenant wherein ritual sacrifice would be replaced by a transformed life effected by the once for all perfect sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross.
 2. Psalm 40 makes two points -
 - a. Ritual sacrifices etc., though commanded do not ultimately delight the Lord.
 - b. What actually delights the Lord is one who is transformed to do His will.
 3. Since the Old Testament itself speaks of a New Covenant, our author, indeed the Holy Spirit, here teaches that the Second has now replaced the first (v. 9b).
 4. In fulfillment of Psalm 40 Jesus offers his body and thus consecrates us who believe in Him.
 5. Two questions to consider in class:
 - a. What does it mean to be consecrated?
 - b. How do you experience this consecration?
- C. Christ's perfect and central ministry - **11 Every priest stands daily at his ministry, offering frequently those same sacrifices that can never take away sins. 12 But this one offered one sacrifice for sins, and took his seat forever at the right hand of God; 13 now he waits until his enemies are made his footstool. 14 For by one**

¹⁰Psalm 40:6-8

offering he has made perfect forever those who are being consecrated.

1. Our author has already made this point -
 - a. The Old Testament priests are like little mannequins going through prescribed rituals that cannot take away sins, only point to the day when sins will actually be taken away.
 - b. But Jesus is the true and perfect priest whose sacrifice actually atones for sins and gives power over sin.
 - c. One by one every one of our enemies and his, are being conquered until we are all made perfect by the power of his cross and blood.

- D. More scriptural evidence - **15 *The holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying: 16 "This is the covenant I will establish with them after those days, says the Lord: 'I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them upon their minds,'"*** **17 *he also says: "Their sins and their evildoing I will remember no more"***.¹¹ **18 *Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer offering for sin.***
 1. Notice again the internal transformation that is implied. To have the law of God in our minds and in our hearts means that they have been transformed so that we think and love as God does. We do not keep the law because we have to but because we want to. We do not demand explanations as to why we have to do this or that, we grasp it intuitively and concur with it in our minds. Here then is the internal transformation of the human person. Merely to speak of our transformation as a conformity to norms of external behavior is to trivialize the human person. We are summoned to and offered a complete and inner transformation of the deepest parts of who we are.

 2. A second point made in verse 18 is this: Jesus' perfect sacrifice has rendered pointless other on-going sacrifices. His sacrifice is once and for all (Heb 7:27; 9:26; 10:10-14; 1 Peter 3:18; *inter al.*). Thus recall our point regarding the Mass, it is not a sacrificial action separate from Christ's once for all perfect sacrifice. It is a manifestation, a making present to us at this point in time, of the once for all perfect sacrifice of Jesus. He is not sacrificed anew He did that once, for all.

- E. So what and Now what - (moral implications) **19 *Therefore, brothers, since through the blood of Jesus we have confidence of entrance into the sanctuary 20 by the new and living way he opened 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 approach with a sincere heart and in absolute trust, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water. 23 Let us hold unwaveringly to our confession that gives us hope, for he who made the promise is trustworthy. 24 We must consider how to rouse one another to love and good works. 25 We should***

¹¹Jer 31:33-34

¹²Ibid

not stay away from our assembly, as is the custom of some, but encourage one another, and this all the more as you see the day drawing near.

1. So, on account of the power of his blood and the resulting confidence that we have access to the Father and will one day live with him forever, what shall we do?
 - a. Accept and receive a “new and living way.” v. 20
 - b. Approach God with a sincere heart - v. 22
 - c. Approach with absolute trust (radical faith) - v. 22
 - d. Accept and receive a clean conscience through the new life conferred in baptism - v. 22
 - e. Be unwavering in our commitment and declaration to our faith. V. 23
 - f. Encourage one another to love (transformation) and good works. V. 24
 - g. Assemble - v. 25
 2. This is not an exhaustive list but only an example.
- F. Warnings for failing to do so: ***26 If we sin deliberately after receiving knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains sacrifice for sins 27 but a fearful prospect of judgment and a flaming fire that is going to consume the adversaries. 28 Anyone who rejects the law of Moses is put to death without pity on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Do you not think that a much worse punishment is due the one who has contempt for the Son of God, considers unclean the covenant-blood by which he was consecrated, and insults the Spirit of grace? 30 We know the one who said: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay"¹³, " and again: "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.***
1. Our Author does not probably mean here the ordinary sins of weakness but rather a wilful rejection of Christ’s saving work through rejection of the faith.
 2. Since wrath is coming, the only way to be ready is to be in the Lord.
 3. If the Old Covenant, imperfect though it was had severe punishments, how much more so the newer and perfect covenant.
 4. To reject the faith is to:
 - a. Have contempt for Christ, the Son of God
 - b. To consider unholy, and trivial the blood of Christ
 - c. To reject the grace of the Holy Spirit who enables our faith.
 5. Don’t trivialize God! Don’t trivialize the day of judgement or become presumptuous! Be serious about salvation and realize that choices have consequences.
- G. The Experience of Faith - ***32 Remember the days past when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a great contest of suffering. 33 At times you were publicly exposed to abuse and affliction; at other times you associated yourselves***

¹³Dt 32:35-36.

with those so treated. 34 You even joined in the sufferings of those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, knowing that you had a better and lasting possession. 35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence; it will have great recompense. 36 You need endurance to do the will of God and receive what he has promised. 37 "For, after just a brief moment, he who is to come shall come; he shall not delay. 38 But my just one shall live by faith, and if he draws back I take no pleasure in him." 39 We are not among those who draw back and perish, but among those who have faith and will possess life.

1. Here our author appeals to the experience of their living the faith. Although their exact experience and ours may be different note the basic ingredients
 - a. Enlightenment
 - b. Alienation from the world and the sufferings that follow
 - c. Perseverence
2. Faith has its reward - stay the course
3. In our next chapter he will develop biblical examples to show that faith is more than an intellectual matter or a matter of feelings but it is a way of knowing and a way of receiving God's blessings.

XI. Hebrews 11

A. Foundational Description - ***1 Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.***

1. This is a significant description of faith. Two key words are used
 - a. ***Realization*** - the Greek word is hypostasis meaning any number of things, substance, essence, even a person. Note again how far this is from an abstraction that many regard faith to be. Mere a set of hopeful hunches. No indeed, faith is real, substantial in itself and about real and substantial matters in life. To “realize” something is to make or experience it as real.
 - b. ***Evidence*** - faith is its own evidence because it involves experience not just abstractions and intellectual hunches. Not just something we know about but something we know by experience.

B. ***2 Because of it the ancients were well approved (By God). 3 By faith we understand that the universe was ordered by the word of God, so that what is visible came into being through the invisible.***

1. Now our author will set forth by example how the saints of the Old Testament lived faith by experience. Note it was faith that, by God’s gift, brought them God’s approval and ministry.
2. Without faith we cannot approach God and he “cannot” help us. But with faith, worlds open to us.
3. Now follows a litany.

C. ***4 By faith Abel offered to God a sacrifice greater than Cain's. Through this he was attested to be righteous, God bearing witness to his gifts, and through this, though dead, he still speaks.***

1. If we read Genesis it is a bit puzzling as to why God liked Abel’s gift but not Cain’s. Here God tells us why, Abel’s was offered in faith and trust. This is illustrated in the fact that Abel offered first fruits. Cain brought an offering but it was not described as first-fruits.
2. See how Abel’s faith is “realized” by his behavior. God enabled him through faith to offer a greater sacrifice.

D. ***5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death, and "he was found no more because God had taken him." Before he was taken up, he was attested to have pleased God. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please him, for anyone who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.***

1. Enoch’s faith led to his being assumed, taken up, by God. This is because, through faith he pleased God. Thus the O.T. scriptures establish the link

between faith and pleasing God, between faith and salvation.

E. ***7 By faith Noah, warned about what was not yet seen, with reverence built an ark for the salvation of his household. Through this he condemned the world and inherited the righteousness that comes through faith.***

1. Note again the link between faith and behavior. Noah, warned about something trusted God and, through enormous effort on account of that faith reached salvation. His faith forsook the world and embraced God's word.

F. ***8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; he went out, not knowing where he was to go. 9 By faith he sojourned in the promised land as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs of the same promise; 10 for he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and maker is God. 11 By faith he received power to generate, even though he was past the normal age--and Sarah herself was sterile--for he thought that the one who had made the promise was trustworthy. 12 So it was that there came forth from one man, himself as good as dead, descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sands on the seashore....17 By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer his only son, 18 of whom it was said, "Through Isaac descendants shall bear your name." 19 He reasoned that God was able to raise even from the dead, and he received Isaac back as a symbol. 20 By faith regarding things still to come Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau. 21 By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and "bowed in worship, leaning on the top of his staff." 22 By faith Joseph, near the end of his life, spoke of the Exodus of the Israelites and gave instructions about his bones.***

1. Abraham stepped out in faith. No road map was given, only the promise of land. But the real land he sought was not earthly, rather heavenly.
2. Abraham shows this in even being willing to offer his son, Isaac to God
3. Abraham also received the promised now fulfilled of many descendants.
4. Note the word obeyed. Here too the emphasis was on real behavior and real blessings, both now and in days to come.

G. ***13 All these died in faith. They did not receive what had been promised but saw it and greeted it from afar and acknowledged themselves to be strangers and aliens on earth, 14 for those who speak thus show that they are seeking a homeland. 15 If they had been thinking of the land from which they had come, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better homeland, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.***

1. They did not receive the fulness of the promises as we have but rather symbols of the far better promises.
2. The promise of earthly land and earthly riches and descendants were but signs and symbols of a heavenly home, heavenly riches with all the saints caught

up with God.

- H. ***23 By faith Moses was hidden by his parents for three months after his birth, because they saw that 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 known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 he chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin. 26 He considered the reproach of the Anointed greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the recompense. 27 By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's fury, for he persevered as if seeing the one who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, that the Destroyer of the firstborn might not touch them.***
1. Here too see how faith had real effects in Moses' life. It brought courage to Moses' parents. It effected what Moses valued. It brought Moses courage and victory over Pharaoh. It rescued him and his followers from death.
- I. ***29 By faith they crossed the Red Sea as if it were dry land, but when the Egyptians attempted it they were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell after being encircled for seven days. 31 By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with the disobedient, for she had received the spies in peace.***
1. Here again see the reality of faith: victory, courage, proper perspectives and choices.
- J. The Little litany - ***32 What more shall I say? I have not time to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, 33 who by faith conquered kingdoms, did what was righteous, obtained the promises; they closed the mouths of lions, 34 put out raging fires, escaped the devouring sword; out of weakness they were made powerful, became strong in battle, and turned back foreign invaders. 35 Women received back their dead through resurrection. Some were tortured and would not accept deliverance, in order to obtain a better resurrection. 36 Others endured mockery, scourging, even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, sawed in two, put to death at sword's point; they went about in skins of sheep or goats, needy, afflicted, tormented. 38 The world was not worthy of them. They wandered about in deserts and on mountains, in caves and in crevices in the earth.***
1. Here too see the litany of reality - faith produces real effects has real consequences.
- K. ***39 Yet all these, though approved because of their faith, did not receive what had been promised. 40 God had foreseen something better for us, so that without us they should not be made perfect.***
1. We are those upon whom the end of the ages has come. Until Jesus, the full promise could not be offered. Now, in these Last Days, the promised reward is attainable.

XII. So what - Now What?

A. Call to respond ***1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us 2 while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith.***

1. Since they shed the world overcame sin and ran the race of faith we too can and must do the same.
2. Note the goal is not so much a destination as a person - Jesus
3. Jesus is
 - a. Leader - he has gone before us as an example and a trailblazer.
 - b. Perfecter - he, by his grace perfects us through faith. He shows for perfect faith and empowers us to receive it.

B. Call to accept suffering - ***For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God. 3 Consider how he endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart. 4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood.***

1. Here is the pattern of your life:
 - a. First the Cross
 - b. Then the Crown
2. Despite enduring opposition from sinners he made it. Do not be afraid or discouraged when you encounter opposition.
3. We who live have still not endured to the degree Jesus has. We have not fought to the degree he did. Thus not only should we refuse to complain but also wonder as to our true commitment to shed this world and embrace heaven and heaven's God.

C. Call to accept punishment and testing - ***5 You have also forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as sons: "My son, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord or lose heart when reprovved by him; 6 for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines; he scourges every son he acknowledges." 7 Endure your trials as "discipline"; God treats you as sons. For what "son" is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are without discipline, in which all have shared, you are not sons but bastards. 9 Besides this, we have had our earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not (then) submit all the more to the Father of spirits and live? 10 They disciplined us for a short time as seemed right to them, but he does so for our benefit, in order that we may share his holiness. 11 At the time, all discipline seems a cause not for joy but for pain, yet later it brings the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are trained by it. 12 So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees. 13 Make straight paths for your feet, that what is lame may not be dislocated but healed.***

1. We often want a God who is just kind and sweet. We dislike any notions that God may have an anger, a passion against the sin in our life. We fear the true

God so we either reinvent him (idolatry) or we run from him.

2. Yet God has a passion to deal with our sins since we cannot enter into glory with him while clinging to our sins.

D. Some Moral Principles by way of illustration - *14 Strive for peace with everyone, and for that holiness without which no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one be deprived of the grace of God, that no bitter root spring up and cause trouble, through which many may become defiled, 16 that no one be an immoral or profane person like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. 17 For you know that later, when he wanted to inherit his father's blessing, he was rejected because he found no opportunity to change his mind, even though he sought the blessing with tears.*

1. Strive for
 - a. Note first the word STRIVE - neither peace nor holiness come without effort and a lot of grace.
 - b. **Peace** - Shalom is richer than the absence of Conflict. It is the presence in the relationship of all that should be there.
 - (1) Peace is not always possible if the other is unwilling:
 - (a) Rom 12:18 *If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peaceably with all.*
 - c. **Holiness** - To be whole, complete and lacking in nothing. To be wholly set apart from this world and its priorities.
2. The Communal dimension -
 - a. **No one deprived of the grace of God.** -
 - (1) Mortal sin
 - (2) We cannot fail to call each other to holiness
 - b. **No bitter root** - those who bring down communities with sin, gossip, harshness and the like.
3. The immorality of Esau - the text seems to emphasize the problem of over emphasizing personal comfort by mentioning Esau who was willing to give up his inheritance for a bowl of soup. How many are willing to forsake a heavenly inheritance for the passing pleasures of this world and sin.

E. Eyes on the Prize! - *18 You have not approached that which could be touched and a blazing fire and gloomy darkness and storm 19 and a trumpet blast and a voice speaking words such that those who heard begged that no message be further addressed to them, 20 for they could not bear to hear the command: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." 21 Indeed, so fearful was the spectacle that Moses said, "I am terrified and trembling." 22 No, you have approached Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and countless angels in festal gathering, 23 and the assembly of the firstborn*

enrolled in heaven, and God the judge of all, and the spirits of the just made perfect, 24 and Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and the sprinkled blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel.

1. Do not loose sight of what you journey toward, your inheritance! Like the saints of old you look to a reward. Not some earthly rewards merely but one which is in heaven. The ancients could not approach this, but you through the Grace of God have access to the glory of heaven.
2. Who is in heaven
 - a. God (Jesus and the Father are specifically mentioned)
 - b. Countless angels
 - c. Just people made perfect.
 - (1) Note the perfection that is required
3. The Blood of Jesus speaks more eloquently than that of Abel?

F. Be serious - ***25 See that you do not reject the one who speaks. For if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much more in our case if we turn away from the one who warns from heaven. 26 His voice shook the earth at that time, but now he has promised, "I will once more shake not only earth but heaven." 27 That phrase, "once more," points to (the) removal of shaken, created things, so that what is unshaken may remain. 28 Therefore, we who are receiving the unshakable kingdom should have gratitude, with which we should offer worship pleasing to God in reverence and awe. 29 For our God is a consuming fire.***

1. It is Jesus who speaks. If we ignore or reject his voice our punishment is worse than those who rejected Moses and the Prophets.
2. ***I will once more shake*** - Here is a quote from the prophet Haggai 2:6 *For thus says the LORD of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD of hosts.* Again our author reminds us to not cling to that which will pass and be shaken away. Everything belongs to God and to him it will return. God is our true treasure.
3. ***For our God is a consuming fire*** - Everything will pass and go back to God. The treasure remains what is evil is burnt up. The wicked are separated in hell.

XIII. Chapter 13 - Community life

A. Fundamental exhortation - 1 *Let mutual love continue*

1. He uses the next verses to flesh out what this means

B. The Particulars

1. ***2 Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.***
2. ***3 Be mindful of prisoners as if sharing their imprisonment, and of the ill-treated as of yourselves, for you also are in the body.***
3. ***4 Let marriage be honored among all and the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers.***
4. ***5 Let your life be free from love of money but be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never forsake you or abandon you." 6 Thus we may say with confidence: "The Lord is my helper, (and) I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"***
5. ***7 Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.***
6. ***8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. 9 Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teaching.***

C. Be Faithful to a more perfect covenant - ***It is good to have our hearts strengthened by grace and not by foods, which do not benefit those who live by them. 10 We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. 11 The bodies of the animals whose blood the high priest brings into the sanctuary as a sin offering are burned outside the camp. 12 Therefore, Jesus also suffered outside the gate, to consecrate the people by his own blood. 13 Let us then go to him outside the camp, bearing the reproach that he bore. 14 For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the one that is to come. 15 Through him (then) let us continually offer God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name.***

1. The priests who offered sacrifices had a right to eat some of the flesh of the animals sacrificed. But they have no right to our food, the eucharist unless they come to faith. Our food is the Lord himself not some roasted animals. Let them have their meat, stay faithful to the Lord, the Lamb of God, the Eucharist.
2. The rest of the animals' carcasses were burned up outside the camp. The author uses this as an image for us. For Christ too was rejected and crucified outside the camp, outside the city walls. It is long past time for us to leave behind the sacrifices of the temple, to go outside the walls of the temple and

city. Here is where we find Christ.

3. This city (Jerusalem prior to 70 AD and our own reality) cannot last. Cling not to them. *Time is filled with swift transition, nought of earth unmoved can stand. Build your hopes on things eternal, hold to God's unchanging hand.*

D. Final Exhortations

1. ***16 Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have; God is pleased by sacrifices of that kind.***
2. ***17 Obey your leaders and defer to them, for they keep watch over you and will have to give an account, that they may fulfill their task with joy and not with sorrow, for that would be of no advantage to you.***
3. ***18 Pray for us, for we are confident that we have a clear conscience, wishing to act rightly in every respect. 19 I especially ask for your prayers that I may be restored to you very soon.***

E. Final greeting and Prayer - ***20 May the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep by the blood of the eternal covenant, Jesus our Lord, 21 furnish you with all that is good, that you may do his will. May he carry out in you what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever (and ever). Amen. 22 Brothers, I ask you to bear with this message of encouragement, for I have written to you rather briefly. 23 I must let you know that our brother Timothy has been set free. If he comes soon, I shall see you together with him. 24 Greetings to all your leaders and to all the holy ones. Those from Italy send you greetings. 25 Grace be with all of you.***

1. Note in particular the portrait of grace developed here: ***[May God the Father] furnish you with all that is good, that you may do his will. May he carry out in you what is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ***
2. Sure sounds like Paul is our author when we examine these final verses.