

Studies in The Book of Hebrews



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Studies

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Romans & Hebrews

Romans asks: How do
the Gentiles get into the
Kingdom?

Hebrews asks: Why
should the Jews stay in
the Kingdom?

Midrash



MIDRASH is a Hebrew word which can be roughly translated as "commentary." It can also be used as a verb and then refers to a specific method of biblical exegesis called "Pardes." "Pardes" is an anagram for:

Peshat (simple meaning)

Remez (hints or clues)

Derash (interpretation)

Sod (mystical or "secret")

Midrash may be focused on either 'Halakic' (legal) or 'Aggadic' (non-legal and chiefly homiletical) subjectmatter. That is, it can interpret the **TORAH** or the **PROPHETS** and **WRITINGS**. In the first century both kinds of Midrahim were common, but they were preserved only orally. They began to be written down in the second century. They then took the form of exegetical or homiletical commentaries on the **TANAKH** (The Hebrew Bible).

TORAH - Law

NABIIM - Prophets

KETUBIM - Writings

MIDRASH would be the natural method of biblical interpretation for the Apostle Paul, since he was trained in the school of Gamaliel in Jerusalem. According to tradition Gamaliel was the son of Simon and the grandson of the Hillel. He represented the Pharisees and the school of Hillel in opposition to the school of Shammai.

Since most of Paul's writing was done in the epistolary style of the Greco/Roman world, the writing of **HEBREWS** would have been a sheer delight to him.



Reasons Why Paul Might Be Regarded As the Author of **HEBREWS**

1. The two requirements the Church applied to the acceptance of any work as Scripture were:
 - a. Consistency with the known teaching of the Apostles
 - b. The work must be written by and Apostle, a close associate of an Apostle, as in the instance of **Luke** and **Mark**.

The one who fits these qualifications best in the case of **HEBREWS** is Paul.

2. Since the style of **HEBREWS** is Midrashic, Paul would be the only one for whom this style of writing would be natural.
3. The theological content of the book, although presented differently, is pure Paul.
4. Even the overall structure of the book (Theological/Practical) is Pauline.
5. In Romans Paul shows his awareness of the twofold makeup of the Church into Jewish believers and Gentile believers, as in Ephesians and Corinthians.



HEBREWS - SIMPLE OUTLINE

TIME LINE - A letter to Hebrew believers written between 57 and 69 A.D. ,
Probably 57-58 while in prison at Caesarea.

Overall theme: To demonstrate the superiority of Messiah over the revelation of the Mosaic Covenant.

Outline

- 1. Superiority of Messiah - chapters 1 - 4**
- 2. The New Covenant - chapters 4 - 10**
- 3. The Life of Faith - chapters 11 - 13**

Key Verse - 12:2

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

HEBREWS - Expanded Outline - page 1

1. The Theological Basis for Messiah's Superiority (1:1 - 10:18)

A. Messiah is superior to the Prophets (1:1-4)

- 1. God's revelation to the Prophets (1:1)**
- 2. God's revelation in the "Son" (1:2-4)**

B. Messiah is superior to the Angels (1:5 - 2:18)

1. Demonstrated from the OT (1:5-14)

First warning - Don't drift (2:1-4)

2. Demonstrated by his humanity (2:5-18)

a. Positive: Exultation above the Angels (2:5-9)

b. Negative: Suffering necessary for superiority (2:10-18)

1. To identify with humanity (2:10-13)

2. To destroy the Devil and deliver saints (2:14-16)

3. To become a merciful and faithful High Priest (2:17-18)

C. Messiah is superior to Moses (3:1-4:13)

1. Both were faithful (3:1-2)

2. Builder vs. Building (3:3-4)

3. Servant vs. "Son" (3:5-6a)

Second warning: Don't defect (3:6b-4:13)

a. Israel in the wilderness (3:6b-11)

b. Warning against unbelief (3:12-4:2)

c. Warning against not entering God's rest (4:3-13)

(1) The necessity of faith (4:13-11)

(2) The penetration of God's Word (4:12-13)

D. Messiah is superior to Aaron (4:14-7:28)

1. Our compassionate High Priest (4:14-16)

2. The priesthood of Aaron (5:1-5)

3. The priesthood of Messiah (5:6-10)

Third Warning: Don't degenerate (5:11-6:8)

a. The rebuke for immaturity (5:11-14)

b. The encouragement toward maturity (6:1-3)

c. The warning against apostasy (6:4-8)

4. Reminder of the promises of God (6:9-20)

5. The Priesthood of Melchizedek (7:1 - 28)

- a. The greatness of Melchizedek in relation to Abraham (7:1-10)
- b. The greatness of Melchizedek in relation to the Levitical Priesthood (7:11-28)

E. Messiah's ministry is superior to the Old Covenant Ministry (8:1 - 10:18)

1. Introduction (8:1-6)

2. A better covenant (8:7-13)

- a. The inadequacy of the Old Covenant (8:7-11)
- b. The adequacy of the New Covenant (8:10-13)

3. A better sanctuary (9:1-12)

- a. The imperfection of the earthly sanctuary (9:1-10)
- b. The perfection of the heavenly sanctuary (9:11-12)

4. A better sacrifice (9:13-10:18)

- a. The necessity of shed blood (9:13-22)
- b. The purification of the heavenly sanctuary (9:23-28)
- c. The permanence of the sacrifice (10:1-18)
 - (1) The inadequacy of Levitical sacrifices (10:1-9)
 - (2) The adequacy of Messiah's sacrifice (10:10-18)

II. The Practical Outworking of Messiah's Superiority (10:19-13:17)

A. Exhortation to enter the new sanctuary (10:19-31)

1. Draw near in faith (10:19-22)
2. Hold fast in hope (10:23)
3. Stir up one another in love (10:24-25)
Forth warning: Don't Despise (10:26-31)

B. Exhortation to endure persecution (10:32-39)

C. Examples of faith (11:1-40)

1. Introduction (11:1-3)
2. Faith from Abel to Noah (11:4-7)
3. The faith of the Patriarchs (11:8-22)

4. The faith of Moses (11:23-29)
 5. Faith in Israel after Moses (11:30 -40)
 - D. Exhortation to endure chastening (12:1-29)
 1. The supreme example of Messiah (12:1-4)
 2. Chastening as evidence of sonship ((12:5-11)
 3. Chastening necessary for sanctification (12:12-17)
 - Fifth warning: Don't Deny (12:18-29)
 - a. Mount Sinai vs. Mount Zion (12:18-24)
 - b. The awesome holiness of the God of heaven (12:25-29)
 - E. Exhortation for Christian living (13:1-17)
 1. Love for believers (13:1-6)
 2. Respect for leaders (13:7-17)
 - a. Imitate their faith (13:7-8)
 - b. Resist the heretics' doctrine (13:9-15)
 - c. Provide for leaders (13:16)
 - d. Submit to leaders (13:17)
- III. Concluding instructions (13:18-25)**
- A. Request for prayer (13:18-19)
 - B. Prayer for readers (13:20-21)
 - C. Final exhortation (13:22)
 - D. Timothy's release (13:23)
 - E. Final greeting and benediction (13:24-25)

COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Chapter 1 - Outline: I-A-1&2

The Ascended Son - verses 1 - 4

General Comment

First notice that the “Son” has been appointed “heir of all things.” Appointment means that we are speaking about an event that happened in time. In Philippians 2:5-11 Paul gives the reasons, the time, and the privileges of the appointment. He is appointed “heir” because of his obedience to the Messianic mission. He became “obedient to death.” In our passage this is captured in the phrase “After he had provided purification for sins (3).” We are offered a picture here of the ascended son.

Jesus’ obedience reaches back before his final obedience. He is declared the “beloved son” at his baptism (Matt. 3:17). Paul says his obedience, in contrast to Adam’s disobedience has made us “righteous.”

Since this passage mixes two concepts, his “sonship,” which is a title earned in history as the obedient Messiah, and eternal qualities which belong to the Word, which was “with God” and “was God” from the beginning we must be careful to see that Paul is talking about two natures, belonging to one person - the Messianic Son, now exalted.

Verse 1 - The assumption is that God has spoken (λαλήσας) to us throughout history by the prophets.

Verse 2 - The last word comes to us in these “last days” (ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν) through the Messianic Son. The last days are framed by the two comings of Messiah. It is legitimate to speak of living in the “last days” so long as we understand that the “last days” have been with us for 2000 years.

Here we see vividly what we spoke of in the general comment at the beginning of the notes. “Appointed heir” and “through whom he made the universe” are used in the same breath, so to speak. The first phrase speaks of Messiah’s glorification at his ascension. It refers to a historic point in time. The second phrase speaks of an eternal reality described by John in the beginning of his Gospel.

It is true that as Paul writes this both realities are embodied in the person of the ascended Messiah. However, keeping them distinct in our thinking allows us to appreciate the wonder of the incarnation. “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.”

Verse 3 - “Radiance of his glory” (ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης), or the “shining out of his glory” is what we can see of God. This is what the Apostles saw in Jesus. They saw the character of God in his Son. This is what Jesus meant when he says in John 14 “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” He is certainly not talking here of a physical appearance, since God is a spirit. He is talking about character.

Only once did the Apostles see a physical manifestation of the “glory” (doxa) of God. They observed this on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Jesus revealed in his person the character of God. As such he was an “exact representation” (χαρακτήρ) of his being. The Greek word is

On The Messianic Son and The Incarnation

Regarding the *Incarnation*, there are several key passages in the New Testament. One of them is the first four verses of Hebrews. Another, and close parallel, is Colossians 1:15 - 22. A third passage approaches the subject from the practical plea for humility. It is Philippians 2:6 - 11. The fourth, and by far the clearest passage is from the prologue of the Gospel of John - chapter 1:1 - 5 and verse 14.

Only in John is the terminology “*Son*” not used. John uses only the phrase “*The Word*.”

All of the passages from Paul conflate the idea of the “Messianic Son” and the Eternal Word. On the one hand, it is clear that the Jesus earns the position of Son of God by his obedience, and is therefore not “The Eternal Son.” Jesus is placed on the right hand of God at his ascension. It is the Messianic privilege. There is no “Eternal Son” since Jesus was “born of the virgin Mary.” He did not exist prior to his birth. The man in heaven, on the right hand of God the Father, is still human. This becomes clear in Hebrews, chapter 2.

On the other hand, it is likewise clear that Jesus was somehow identified as having attributes of the eternal God. It is said of him in chapter 1:2 that it was “through (him that God) made the universe.” John make this clear. Paul, does not. We need to understand that Jesus is not God because he is the “Son of God.” He is the “Son of God” because he earns that title through his obedience to his Messianic office.

However, it is likewise clear that joined to his human nature is the divine nature. "The Word became flesh." The classic theological description is "two natures in one person." John simplifies the concept for us by seeing the human nature of Messiah, including his physical body, as the tent, or tabernacle, in which the divine nature dwells. He sees the Hebrew Tabernacle, and later the Temple, as the paradigm, or model, for our understanding what will always be beyond us.

What we ought not to do is to think that when we call Jesus "The Son of God" we are calling him God. Nor should we think that when Jesus affirms his *sonship* to God, he is claiming to be God. He is not. He is using one of two phrases that were common Messianic titles in first century Judaism - "Son of God" and "Son of Man." Jesus uses them interchangeably.

In Matthew 16 when Peter affirms "You are the Messiah, the son of the living God" he is using a Hebrew parallelism. "Son of God" is a Messianic title.

Precision is part of sound thinking. My concern is actually that if we are confused at this point, we will lose an awareness of Messiah's humanity. It is obvious from Hebrews 2 that Paul thinks this is very important.

“character.” It is the instrument used to strike an image on some object, such as a coin. It makes clear the intent of the phrase.

Although the same word is not used here as in John, it is clear that the eternal word (logos) not only creates but sustains the universe. The word used here is ῥήματα, or “rema,” that which is said.

The coronation of the King of Kings takes place upon his final act of obedience to the Father. This is how Stephen sees him in Acts 7:54-56, and how John sees him in the Revelation.

Verse 5 - This verse introduces us to the next section, since Messiah’s coronation places him above the angels as the ruler of all things in heaven and earth.

The Son and the Angels

Verses 5 & 6 - The quotations are from Psalm 2:7 and II Sam. 7:14. They clearly refer to David and the special relationship David has with God as a man after God’s own heart (I Sam 13:14). II Sam. 7:13 establishes the Davidic Monarchy as an everlasting kingdom. These are Messianic references. However, they are temporal, not eternal. The covenant with David was established in time.

The phrase, “And let all the angels worship him,” comes from the Masoretic text, the Septuagint and certain of the Dead Sea texts. If we consider it part of the Song of Moses, it clearly refers to God’s final judgment on the nations for their treatment of his people. Paul sees it as Messianic, and as such referring to the Ascended Jesus, the instrument of God’s judgment. This would be a “Sod Midrash.” or a secret meaning, which is certainly acceptable in the kind of interpretation Paul is doing here.

Verse 7 - 9 In this verse Paul quotes Psalm 104:4. The word translated “messengers” in the NIV is the Hebrew “malochi,” or his angels. Paul’s translation is more accurate. “winds” and “flames” likely modifies “angels,” and its parallel “servants.” That is to say angels are powerful spiritual beings. They are not, however, superior to the Anointed Son.

The passage of Scripture Paul brings to bear on this assertion is again a “Sod Midrash.” The Psalm is 45, verses 6 & 7. The entire Psalm is a wedding song addressed to the Davidic king at his wedding. Since the Messiah will inherit the Davidic throne, and since the Church is his bride, a mystical connection is made between the two circumstances.

Two words especially suggest the connection to Paul. The most obvious is the word “anointing” (Heb. Meshiach), which is the root of the word Messiah. The second is the word “scepter,” (Heb. Shebet). Paul would remember the promise of Jacob to Judah - “The scepter (Shebet) will not depart from Judah (Gen. 49:10).”

This anointed King God has “set above (his) companions.”

Verses 10 - 12 These verses are from Psalm 102, verses 25 - 27. They clearly refer to God himself as the Creator of heaven and earth? How is it, then, that Paul feels free to apply them to Messiah. He has already laid the foundation for this identification in verse 2 of the chapter - “His son...through whom he made the universe.” We noted at that point that Paul is using the “logos” doctrine of John.

Verse 13 - Verse 13 is quoted from Psalm 110:1. It is used frequently in the NT as a reference to Jesus as Messiah (Mt. 22:43 - 45, Mk. 12:36 - 37, Lk. 20:42 - 44, Acts 2:34 - 36, as well as in Hebrews 1, 5, 7). The exegesis depends on how we identify the three persons referred to in the first phrase. There is first the speaker, second the LORD, and third the “lord” of the speaker.

This is a coronation psalm. It was written to accompany an enthronement. If the speaker is King David then God speaks of another Lord of the King, besides himself, who is offered the seat at the right hand of God. It has been suggested that the speaker may have been David referring to Solomon who is invited to sit next to him in his old age as the rightful heir.

I think the solution is simpler than that. The psalm is a coronation psalm, but David did not write it, as is clearly indicated by the pronouns “your” and “you.” Verse one could then be paraphrased as, “God says to David (or one of his heirs) sit at my right hand.” That is, the throne of David is to be blessed of God as representing his rule over his people.

David is the prefigurement of Messianic rule, not the angels. Thus the passage can be used to speak of Messiah’s reign.

Verse 14 - Verse fourteen is a simple theological conclusion to the argument above. Angels (the word is not actually in the Greek text, but understood) are ministering spirits (λειτουργικά πνεύματα), or “liturgics pneuma” sent to (διακονίαν) serve or be deacons to the saved (σωτηρίαν - soterian).

The discussion continues in chapter 2.

On Angels

Vocabulary

Greek - Angelos Hebrew - Mal'ak

Both words mean "messenger"

Nature

Angels are created beings - Ps. 148:2

Angels are spirit beings - Heb. 1:7

Angels are without sin, although they are capable of rebellion

Angels who do rebel have no possibility of salvation - Jude 6

Responsibilities

Angels are given responsibility to protect children - Mt.

18:10

To Protect God's people - Ps. 34:7

To be involved in International Affairs - Dan. 10:13, 20 and

11:10

Participate in the Judgment of God - Rev. 15 and 16

Organization

There seems to be a hierarchy

Michael described as "Prince" and "Archangel" - Dan.

10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7

Satan is a fallen angel of a high order - Zc. 3:1, Jude 9,

Rev. 12:10

COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Chapter 2 - Outline: B, 1(parenthetical warning) &2

Having illustrated Messiah's superiority over the angels by right of his ascension and coronation, Paul turns to the other side of the incarnation, his suffering. He has mentioned this in his description of the Ascended Son - "provided purification for sins" - but this is the stumbling block for believing Jews. How can Messiah suffer, and why? It is for this reason he offers the first of five warnings.

The argument seems to be that Messiah did not come to help angels, but men. He therefore had to come as a man. Verse 16 & 17 declare, "surely it is not angels he helps. But Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers."

Nevertheless, it is as a man that he has been exalted and glorified in heaven. As such he has also exalted all who follow him.

The Exalted Son as Suffering Savior

Verses 1 - 4

Believing Israel (and for that matter, all believers) is being warned here to not neglect the Word of God. Two sources of revelation are brought forward. The Old Covenant revelation and the revelation through Messiah.

The revelation from Sinai seems to have been accompanied by the presence of angelic hosts (see Dt. 33:2, Ps. 68:17). Stephen refers to this in his sermon in Jerusalem (Acts 7:38 & 53). Paul also refers to it in Galatians 3:19. In Galatians Paul moves forward in the same direction as he moves here, namely to the greater revelation through the Messiah.

The greater revelation (“great salvation”) is announced by Jesus, Lord and Messiah. It is confirmed by those who heard it, by Messiah’s miracles, and by the coming of the Holy Spirit to establish the Church.

The argument is a straight forward “a fortiori” argument. If you are in danger from neglecting the former revelation, you are in much more danger from neglecting the greater.

The Exalted Son As Human

Verses 5 - 18

Paul begins this section with a Midrash on Psalm 8:4 - 6. He tells up upfront that he is speaking about a “remez” (hints or clues) meaning of the passage and not the “peshat,” or simple meaning. The subject of the Psalm is the high position of man in the creation. God did not put angels (ἄγγελοις - angelois) in charge of his creation, but man. Paul raises the interpretation to the next level. He tells us he is not talking about this world, but “the world to come.” That is to say, as in this world man is in charge, and not the angels, so in the next world man will be exalted above the angels.

We do not see this in the present (vs. 8). What we do see, however, is Jesus, who was made “a little lower than the angels,” “crowned with glory and honor.” As the obedient “Man” who suffered death for us all Jesus has been lifted above the angels.

Just a comment about the Hebrew word used for “angels” in Psalm 8. Paul is probably working from the Septuagint translation

(270 BC), where the Jewish scholars clearly understand the meaning of the word to be “angels.” However, the common word for “angels” is not used in the Psalm. That word would be “mal’ach, or “mal’achim” in the plural. The Psalm uses “elohim.” This is most often used as a name for God. However, it is a plural, and literally translated means “high ones.” When used for God the plural is a plural of majesty “the great high one.” Here in Psalm 8 it simply means “angels.” However, some translations read “a little lower than God.” This would not account for the plural, and “gods” would be unthinkable. We are probably familiar with the word “El” being used in this more general sense in the name of Israel’s airline - El Al, or to the high, or to the up.

Since Jesus has been exalted he has brought “many sons to glory.” That is, as members of his family, through faith, we too have been lifted up above the angels. He supports this conclusion by quoting from Psalm 22, a Messianic Psalm quoted by Jesus from the cross. Following his victory Messiah says, “I will declare your name to my brothers,” that is the believers are brought into the family.

Verse 13 is a single quotation from Isaiah 8:17 - 18. Messiah trusts in God for the children God has given him in his suffering through to victory.

Verses 14 through 18 present the doctrinal conclusions of the Scriptural exposition. Since it is not angels Messiah came to deliver from Satan and the power of death, but “flesh and blood” humanity, Messiah had to take on their humanity. Only thus could

he serve them as High Priest and make Atonement for their sins. In the process Messiah was tested and conquered. He is thus able to help us when we are tested.

In the phrase in verse 16 - "For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants." - we see the focus of the book, although not, of course, in a restrictive sense. Paul is concerned for believing Israel.

COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Chapter 3 - Outline: C-1,2,3

The Son and Moses - Verses 1 - 6

The first six verses of this chapter are a Midrash Remez (hints or clues) on the Exodus story. It suggests that Moses looks forward to one greater than himself.

The readers are addressed as “holy brothers,” that is brothers after the flesh, fellow Israelites. They are asked to fix their thoughts on Jesus as “Apostle” and “High Priest.” In this usage “Apostle” (one sent) is a synonym for Messiah (anointed one) as it stands along side “High Priest,” which is an anointed office. It is this Messiah they have confessed.

Jesus is declared as faithful to God just as Moses was. Moses, of course, is the founder of the Judaism to which these believers are being called back. They are being told that Moses is the giver of the covenant, not Jesus. As Jews, they are being told, they should be following Moses, not Jesus.

Paul has nothing to say that would denigrate Moses. Both Moses and Jesus were faithful. There is however, a difference. Moses built the house which is Israel as a true servant of God. The Messiah, however, is the son and heir of the household. The word “house” as used here (Gr. Oika; Heb. Bayit or Bet) refers not to a building but to the family.

Thus we are of the household of Messiah, of which Moses is a part. This is true so long as we remain faithful, holding on with courage and hope.

The Second Warning - chapter 3:7 - 4:14

The warning is connected to the Midrash (Remez) on Moses. It takes the wilderness wanderings of Israel as a case in point for a faith that does not hold fast. It moves to the Midrash Derash, or the practical application of the superiority of the Son over the servant..

A Word About “Saving Faith”

This section raises the question about when faith can be considered “saving faith.” Can a person once brought into the household of faith, for whatever reason, be excommunicated? Can we loose our salvation?

The most enlightening teaching on this subject comes from Messiah himself as he teaches us through the parable of the sewer in Matthew 13. Jesus tells us of four kinds of soil, or hearts, on which the seed of the word of God falls.

The path
Rocky soil
Thorny soil
Fertile soil

Each heart receives the word of God in some degree. The seed that falls on the path get only surface attention. The seed that falls on the rocky soil finds the ground too shallow to take root. The seed that falls among the thorns finds other vegetation, or life interests, too thick and is choked out. Only the good soil receives the seed, allows it to take root and brings forth fruit.

Paul's concern here is to till up the soil, break up the rock, pull out the weeds, so that the word might be able to take permanent root, and establish these hearers as firm believers.

Here Paul quotes Psalm 95:7 - 11. It is a Psalm sung at the Temple by the priests or Levites. It first lifts up praise to the Lord. Second it warns the people to listen to God as he speaks to them and not loose faith as they did in the desert wilderness at Sinai. They trusted God for their passage out of Egypt, but the wilderness freighted them. They rebelled and lost faith. As a result a whole generation was kept from the Chosen Land, here called the rest (*κατάπαυσις* - katapausin or a resting place).

Verses 12 - 19

The "derash," or interpretation is made. Israel has been redeemed again. They have been led out of their sin, given redemption, released from the bondage of the Torah. They must not now turn back to the security of "Egypt." They must encourage each other to hold firm the trust they had at first when they heard Messiah's Gospel.

Those who rebelled in the desert were among those Moses led out of Egypt. They were children of the covenant. But, God punished their rebellion because they sinned and failed to trust God. They never entered into the promises set before them.

This line of thought continues in chapter 4:1 - 13.

COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Chapter 4 - Outline: C-3(c)

Verses 1 - 3a

In “Midrash” the interpretation often is spun off from certain words in the text which suggest a further truth. In the following passage the word is “rest.” In the Psalm 95 it is clearly used as a synonym for the Chosen Land. However it is also used as the “Sabbath rest.” Paul will work off of both uses in the passage under consideration.

Paul says the promise of “rest” is a present promise as well as one confined to the past history of Israel. Part of Paul’s vocabulary in his epistles is the phrase “in Messiah.” He sees our placement spiritually “in Messiah” as parallel to the Chosen People living in the Chosen Land. This is why the Book of Joshua can be studied as a series of lessons on the “life in Messiah.” There is a parallel between the battle to possess Israel and the battle to possess Messiah and the Christian life.

Just as for Israel in the time of Moses, the promise of rest has been given. However, it must be claimed by faith. Those who believe enter the “rest.” Those who fail to trust do not enter.

Verse 3b - 11

Here Paul shifts the Midrash to the idea of “Sabbath rest,” and picks up on the idea that God rested on the Sabbath. Paul fastens on the expression from Psalm 95:7 - “Today, if you will hear.” Since this was sung to Israel in the time of David it did not

necessarily speak of the Sinai experience. “Today” carries into the future. As a matter of fact it carries into Israel’s present experience of hearing the Gospel. Again they have been called to enter into “rest,” a ceasing from works to enter the realm of grace.

The future reach of the Psalm certainly goes beyond Joshua, since it is sung at the Temple. Therefore, Israel is warned not to fall into disobedience again, failing to enter the “rest” now offered in the preaching of the Gospel Word.

Verses 12 - 13

Here the “Church of the Circumcision” is reminded of the power of God’s word. They are being called to resist those who would call them away from faith in Messiah, and back to unbelieving Judaism. God’s word is a double-edged sword (δίστομον - diastomon - a sword with two mouths). Nothing escapes the eye of God. They cannot be double minded in their commitment to Messiah. They must trust him with their whole heart, and enter the rest he offers.

The Son and Aron (4:14 - 7:28)

Messiah a High Priest Who Understands - ch. 4:14 - 16)

Outline D1

Vs. 14 - This idea of Messiah (anointed one) was introduced back in 2:17. Here it will receive much more extensive exposition.

At the beginning of the section we have a clear declaration. Jesus, our Messiah, is a great High Priest who has ascended into heaven

where he carries out his office in the presence of God. Therefore, we have every reason to hold firmly to our faith.

Vs. 15 -16 - In these verses we are assured that Messiah understands our weaknesses. He shared our humanity. He was tested just as we are tested. Yet he did not sin (ἁμαρτίας - hamartias - sin, missing the target or mark). However, we can approach the throne of grace knowing we will find mercy and help.

The “throne of grace” is prefigured in the Tabernacle and the Temple as the “Mercy Seat” of the Ark of the Covenant. This is where the High Priest makes atonement for the sins of Israel and the world. In biblical times, up to the time of this writing, it was a fearful place. A place where God “wrote his name.” Here words are used which can only be possible because of the ministry of our Messiah who is now High Priest.

Confidence - (προσερχόμεθα - proserchometha - approach with confidence)

Mercy - (ἔλεος - eleos, mercy, kindness, probably the equivalent of the Hebrew “Hesed”)

Grace - (χάριτος - charitos - gift)

COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Chapter 5 - Outline: D, 2 & 3

Messiah as High Priest

Verses 1 -3

Again, the emphasis on the humanity of Messiah is crucial. Their ministry was/is to represent man to God, and to offer sacrifices for sin. It is therefore essential that the High Priest be from among men, so that he can empathize with mankind in his weakness. The Aaronic priests were required to offer sacrifices for their own sins as well as for the people, accenting the requirement that they be from among men.

It may be that behind this emphasis in Hebrews is the idea that Messiah may be a heavenly being, as pictured in Daniel, without being human. Paul's teaching is that this cannot be. Messiah is in fact exalted, but he is from humanity.

Verses 4 - 6

The office of High Priest is an appointed or anointed office. One does not choose it, but he is chosen for it. This was true of Aaron and of Messiah.

Now, it is here where Paul has a theological problem, or would have were it not for Psalm 110:4. The priesthood, including the office of High Priest, was confined to the tribe of Levi, of which Aaron, Moses' brother was a member. Jesus was not of Levi, but of Judah. How then could he be a priest, much less a High Priest.

The answer comes from Psalm 110. This is a Psalm about David who is the precursor to Messiah. David is seen as a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18ff). Melchizedek means, in Hebrew “King of Righteousness.” We are also told that he is King of Salem, or Jerusalem. He is not of Israel, since Israel does not yet exist. Yet, his priesthood is recognized by Abraham, who gives him the tithe due to his God.

When David conquers Jerusalem in about 1000 BC he also becomes King of Salem, and therefore a priest after the order of Melchizedek. Messiah Jesus is the heir of David’s throne, and therefore a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

When Paul again quotes Psalm 2:7 as he did in the beginning of the book, he identifies Jesus and David. “You are my son. Today I have become your Father.” By the same logic “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” applies to Messiah, son of David.

Verses 7 - 9 (The High Priest Who Suffers)

Paul’s attention is here on the suffering of Jesus, especially at Gethsemane. Again, the thought behind this emphasis may be the reluctance of the Jewish community to accept that Messiah must suffer. Certainly this is true in Islam. But, Paul presses the point that through the suffering (ἐμαθεν ἀφ’ ὧν ἔπαθεν τὴν ὑπακοήν - emathen ap on epathen ten upokoen - discover from that endurance obedience) Messiah understands obedience.

Once he was made “perfect” (τελειωθείς - teleiotheis, complete, mature, reached his reason for being) he became the source of our eternal salvation and was designated “High Priest in the Order of Melchizedek.” Notice again that Messiah’s Sonship and his Priesthood are earned by his obedience. They are not something he had as “born of the virgin Mary.”

Verses 11 - 14

We begin here the Third Warning, which runs through chapter 6:8. The first paragraph is an undisguised scold. Paul tells them that he has much more to say about the Melchizedekian priesthood, but they are so immature, he is not sure they are ready for it. They are still in need of spiritual milk, rather than the solid food of the Word of God.

In verse 14 he proves his point. If they were mature, if they had been feeding on spiritual meat they would know how to distinguish between “good and evil” (καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ - kalou te kai kakou - good from evil, or the right from the harmful). This sentence is a prelude for telling these doubters to grow up. They need to learn from the Word of God and become secure in their faith.

COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Chapter 6 - Outline: D,3,b.,c.,4

Verses 1 - 3

Paul seeks to soften the scolding with an encouragement to “grow up,” to “go on to maturity. They need to go beyond the foundations:

- A. Repentance
- B. Faith
- C. Baptism
- D. Acceptance into the fellowship
- E. The teaching of final resurrection
- F. Final judgment

Paul will attempt to take them deeper (vs.3), however, there is a caveat. If their faith has been only superficial, not “saving faith,” they are in mortal danger.

Verses 4 - 8

The best way to understand this passage is in the light of Jesus’ teaching on the “soils.” Even the Master’s language is reflected in verse 8. It is my own belief that God gives grace to the seeker prior to “saving grace” which enables the seeker to decide for or against Messiah and his Gospel. Otherwise deciding would be impossible because of the ravages of sin upon the will.

Paul uses the word “enlightened” in verse 4. The word in Greek is φωτισθέντας or photisthentas - shining a light upon. In other words enough light has been given for the person to taste grace. Again the Greek says δωρεάς της ἐπουρανίου , doreas tes ephouraniou. It is a

gift that accompanies the Word of God. Perhaps Paul intentionally does not use the word “charis” in Greek, which is usually translated “grace” or gift. He chooses another word. This light is enough to allow a decision.

If this light is rejected it is like crucifying Messiah afresh. There is no promise it will ever be offered again. The process begins which the Scriptures call “hardening of the heart.”

The image changes in verse 7. If the heart drinks the rain of the Word of God and bears fruit, saving grace will be given. If the soil of the heart produces only thorns and thistles only judgment remains.

Verses 9 - 12

Paul knows the warning has been severe. He wants the hearer to be assured of his love and appreciation. He calls them to “press on,” to follow the lead of those who have passed through doubt and have inherited the promise.

The certainty of God’s promises is illustrated by the story of Abraham, who because he believed, heard the unbreakable promise of God that he would bless him. God swore to Abraham in his own name, since there was no name greater. God has likewise given us such a promise in Messiah who has passed into heaven, entered the Holy of Holies, stands in the presence of the Almighty himself and pleads our case as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

We are now back to where this section started. The parenthesis began at 5:11 where Paul said he had much more to say about Melchizedek. Now he is ready to say it.

COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Chapter 7 - Outline: D,5

Verses 1 - 2 - PESHAT - simple meaning

This entire chapter is a Midrash on Genesis 14:18 - 20 and Psalm 110:4. It is in classic form starting with "Peshat," or the simple meaning, and proceeding through to "Sod," or the mystical or secret sense. Remember the anagram - **PARDES**. We will begin with the simple sense, or "Pasha" in verses one and two.

The story comes from Genesis 14. Abraham is returning from defeating the coalition that attacked Sodom and captured his nephew Lot and his family. On the way he meets the King of Salem (Jerusalem). Abraham pays tithes to him and receives his blessing. The meaning of the names are spelled out. "Salem" means "peace," and Melchizedek means "King of Righteousness." This priest is also a king of "peace" and "righteousness." This is the plane sense of the text of Genesis.

Verse 3 - REMEZ - hints or clues

Here we enter into Psalm 110:4, which has already been put into the mix in chapter 5:6. The Psalm picks up a hint or clue in the Genesis text which Paul calls to our attention. Melchizedek has no lineage, and no posterity. He simply appears and disappears. He does, have a title. He is King of Salem. Thus when David becomes King of Salem the Psalmist tells us he takes the office of Melchizedek. He becomes a priest after the order of Melchizedek. He begins the process of planning and building the Temple, although he is never allowed to actually construct it. He organizes the priestly courses and the Levite choirs. He is a priest of an order independent of the Levitical priesthood.

Moreover, the line of David is the Messianic line. Messiah is to be born of David's line. David is promised (II Samuel 7:13) that God "will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father and he will be my son." In this sense Messiah Jesus is "like" Melchizedek. He remains a priest forever. Paul may also be making a subtitle reference to the incarnation here, but what is clear is Messiah's eternal priestly function.

Verses 4 - 10 - DERASH - interpretation

Now we are ready for the interpretation. We shall look at the superiority of Messiah's priesthood to the Levitical priesthood.

First, the Levites, as descendants of Abraham and not yet a part of history, paid tithes to Melchizedek in Abraham. The priesthood of Melchizedek thus transcends the priesthood of Levi. "The lesser person (Abraham, and all his descendants) is blessed by the greater (Melchizedek). - vs. 7."

Thus, the priesthood of Messiah is greater than the Levitical priesthood.

Verses 11 - 28 - SOD - The mystery of the secret

In what way is the priesthood of Messiah better?

First, "perfection" (τελείωσις - teleiōsis - completion, fulfillment, consummation) could not be achieved through the Aaronic priesthood. Therefore a new and entirely different order needed to be established. A priesthood from Judah, after the order of Melchizedek. This was a priesthood that could reach into eternity, whereas the Aaronic priesthood was merely temporal.

Again from Psalm 110:4 this new priesthood has been confirmed by a divine oath. “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: You are a priest forever...” Therefore we have “**a better hope (vs. 19).**”

Because of the eternal nature of Messiah’s office we also have “**a better covenant (vs.22).**” Our High Priest is our permanent, present in the heavens, perfect intercessor (vs. 25). He offers “**a better sacrifice (vs. 27).**” It needed to be offered only once for all. The Levitical priests needed to offer continual sacrifices, first for their own sins, and then for the people. The Son offered himself, who was the “perfect” - (τετελειωμένον - teteleiomenon - made complete, finished, nothing need be added). Messiah is, therefore the perfect priest as well as the perfect sacrifice.

COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Chapter 8 - Outline E,1 & 2

Verses 1 - 2

Here we begin a section which could be entitled **The Greater Sanctuary**. We have seen Messiah as:

Greater than the angels

Greater than Moses

Greater than Levi or Aaron

Now we see that he ministers in a **Greater Sanctuary, The True Tabernacle**.

At the beginning of the discussion we are made aware that Messiah is performing his ministry in the **“True Tabernacle (vs. 2).”** The entire history of the Tabernacle is understood as an instruction and a pointer to the reality of God’s presence, and the ways of approach to that presence. Messiah now sits at the right hand of God’s throne in heaven, the reality to which the earthly sanctuaries only point.

Verses 3 - 5

This concept is spelled out further in these verses. Messiah does not minister in the earthly Temple, because that Temple is still being ministered in by priests according to the law of Moses. Note here that this Midrash is being written while the Temple still stands, and the sacrificial system is still being practiced. However, this Temple is merely a copy (Gr. ὑποδείγματι - upodeigmata; pattern, image, imitation). It is a shadow (σκιά skia; shadow or faint outline) of the real.

The ministry of Jesus is superior to theirs, and is being performed in the real sanctuary in heaven. He also mediates a superior covenant which is spoken of by the Prophets.

Verses 7 - 13

Most of this portion is taken up by an extensive quotation from Jeremiah 31:31 - 34. Jeremiah prophesied just prior to the destruction of the first Temple, and the exile of Judah. This promise of a "New Covenant" forms a part of God's promise to restore Israel. This covenant, according to the prophecy has these components:

- a. It will differ from the Mosaic Covenant**
The people could rebel against the Covenant made under Moses, because it was external.
- b. This Covenant will be internal. Those included in this covenant will have changed hearts.**
- c. This covenant will guarantee for those included forgiveness of sins**

In both verses 7 and 13 Paul makes the point that the old, or Mosaic, covenant was not a finished product. It was preparatory for a new and better covenant to come. This, for the author, is the essential meaning of Jeremiah's prophecy.

On the difference between the Mosaic and Messianic Covenants

When Paul speaks about the obsolescence (Greek: πεπαλαίωκεν - from palaioken: meaning old, worn out. Comes into English as a prefix: paleo, as in Paleolithic) he does not mean that the Old covenant was false, or wrong. From the beginning of chapter 9 we know he has in view the liturgical aspects of the Torah. These, of course, are fulfilled in Messiah. However, the moral and civil aspects of the Torah are also somewhat involved.

The chief difference between the covenants is that the Mosaic Covenant is made with an ethnic entity. Israel, as a nation, had this agreement with God. It involved both Law (the moral law) and Grace (the sacrificial system). It offered a personal relationship with God through faith. However, since an individual was born into Israel, and males received the sign of the covenant by circumcision, there was no assurance that a personal relationship with God would be claimed. As a result, one could be in the Covenant people without a changed heart.

The Messianic Covenant in contrast is only entered by grace through faith. One is not born into it. One receives it as a gift of God voluntarily. All that is pointed to in the Law now becomes for the people of the New Covenant internal, written in their minds and hearts. The Torah will not be something that needs to be imposed on them. They will delight in it. They will “meditate on it day and night.”

What Paul says will disappear is the religious ritual which is perfected in Messiah. He is now ready to discuss this fulfillment in detail in chapter 9.



COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Chapter 9 -Outline E,3a & b, 4a & b

Verses 1 - 10: A description of the “Model”

These verses offer us a careful description of the Tabernacle, or later the Temple, especially in the light of the celebration of Yom Kippur, or Day of Atonement. The golden Alter of Incense is placed inside the curtain because the odor is designed to pass beyond the “veil” and present itself at the throne. Also, because on Yom Kippur the incense is carried into the Holy of Holies.

The key phrases here are first in verse 7: “once a year.” In other words the sacrifice on Yom Kippur is a repeatable sacrifice. It cannot release the people from the guilt of sin in any permanent sense. Thus it is an “illustration” (Gr. παραβολή - parable, or parable, figure, illustration, comparison) (vs. 9) for the present to show a more permanent covenant is necessary. A new order has now come in Messiah to which all these things point.

Verses 11 - 14: A New High Priest for the Real “Temple”

The new High Priest is Messiah himself. The real “Temple” is the presence of the Almighty God. The earthly Temple only mirrors that presence. The real Temple is “not made with hands.” The Greek here is interesting. The word is χειροποιήτου, or cheiropoiatou, meaning made by hand, or the skill of the hands of men. The real Temple is not part of “creation.” It is God himself. Messiah enters the presence of God himself and presents his own blood before the throne (12) which merits eternal redemption. The Greek is λύτρωσιν or lutrosin, which means redemption, liberation or setting free. This redemption is eternal (αιωνίαν -aionian - eternal, unending, everlasting.)

Verses 13 and 14 are a classic “a fortiori” (to the greater) argument. Such an argument states - if this is so, how much more this. If the blood of sacrificial animals cleanses, then how much more the blood of Messiah himself.

Messiah offers his blood “through the eternal Spirit” (διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου - dia pneumatos aioniou). There is nothing complicated about these words. However, the phrase is profound. The offering itself is made “through the eternal Spirit.” In other words the offering is made to God through God. It is this offering that is “greater” in the argument. It is so great that it delivers us from death.

The concept of “unblemished” (ἄμωμον - amomou, or without rebuke, without blame without fault) is easy to grasp. Messiah was perfectly obedient to the Father in his humanity. This corresponds to the requirement of the Torah that the sacrifices be without blemish. But what is the meaning of “to God through God.”

Let me suggest that this is an almost hidden reference to the incarnation. If the “Word had become flesh,” - If Messiah was “in very nature God (Philip. 2:6), then in some sense God went through death with Messiah. Of course God cannot die, but in some sense God experienced death in the death of Jesus. Messiah offered himself “through the eternal Spirit.” This is precisely what gave infinite value to Messiah’s death. This is something we cannot comprehend, but it is something we can understand. It is one of those aspects of “maturity” to which Paul wants us to move (6:1).

Verse 15: Messiah Mediator of a New Covenant

Καὶ διὰ τοῦτο διαθήκης καινῆς μεσίτης ἐστίν, - Kai dia diathekes kaines mesite estin: Translation - And through this a new covenant mediator exists. At the Last Passover Jesus told his Apostles that he the wine was to remind them of “the blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:27 & 28).” The first covenant established the Torah. It also established temporary “parables” that pointed to the final atonement. Now the Mediator of the New Covenant has fulfilled the promise. The eternal inheritance is the possession of the “called.”

A Word About the Language of “Covenant”

The Greek work used by Paul in the verse above, translated “covenant” is “diatheke,” as indicated above. Here we observe that Paul, as well as the other writers of Scripture thought in Hebrew and wrote in Greek. The Hebrew word which is closest to “diatheke” is “brith,” meaning covenant. However, in Greek the word “diatheke” also can mean “will,” as in last will and testament.

In the following section Paul picks up on this language ambiguity to create an illustration. “It is like this“, Paul is saying.

A will does not take effect until the party who makes it dies, or in the terms of the illustration, sheds his blood. Even the first covenant required the shedding of blood in its confirmation ceremony (Ex. 24:4 - 8) which Paul reviews here.

So when Messiah enters the true sanctuary (24) he entered it with the sacrifice of his own blood. It is a confirmation made only once. It does not have to be repeated. The sacrifice is once for all (27). Salvation has come in its final form to Israel which has waited for this fulfillment under the Mosaic covenant.

COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Chapter 10 - Outline I,E,4,c - II,B

Verses 1 - 18 A New Sacrifice; Temporary vs. "Once for All"

Verses 1 - 4; Animal sacrifices are merely a temporary provision of
grace

Like the Tabernacle and the Temple, animal sacrifices are merely a shadow (σκιά - skian) of the more perfect provision to come. This is evident from the very nature of the Temple ritual, where the sacrifices need to be continually repeated. The phrase "year after year" is a translation of the adverb (διηγουέες - dienekes) "continually." If these sacrifices were of permanently effective they would cease to be offered.

The implication here is that they are currently being offered. Therefore the Temple is still in operation, and the Midrash is being written prior to its destruction in 70 AD.

We need to see that Paul grants that the sacrifices are brought in the spirit of true worship. It is the sacrifices that are deficient, not the motivation of the worshipers. Guilt remains a problem for the worshiper because they continue to sin, and therefore need to continue the sacrifices. At best they cover past sin. They cannot atone for the future or deal with the problem of guilt "once for all."

In his use of the word "year" (ἐνιαυτόν - eniauton) in verse 3 Paul seems to have in mind particularly the "Day of Atonement." On that day the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies to offer the blood of the sacrifices for the entire nation of Israel. It is this image he focuses on starting at verse 19.

The conclusion in verse 4 is that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. It is not that they are wrong. They are but a shadow of the real, and as such point us to the real. Verse 3 tells us they are a reminder of sin. Sin is far too serious a condition to be cured by the sacrifice of animals, which are not created in the image of God. They remind us that we need a more radical, a more permanent solution. This remedy is provided in Messiah.

Verses 5 - 10; The more perfect sacrifice

The text for the next commentary comes from Psalm 40, verses 6-8. There is a different reading in the Masoretic, or Hebrew text, than there is in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew). The Hebrew reads in verse 6b "My ears you have pierced." This would indicate the state of subservience of a servant to his master. The Septuagint text translates this "A body you prepared for me." Although the central idea of both phrases is clearly obedience, they are different. Paul is clearly using the Septuagint, probably because that was what was available to him. There is no conflict in the doctrinal teaching involved.

Again, the Psalm is a David psalm. The flow of the logic continues as previously.

David is the head of God's household on earth
He is a man after God's own heart
He is "anointed" as King
He is thus given the title of God's son

David is the forerunner of the greater king and the greater son to come - The Messiah

Thus, what is said by and about David is a hint, or **remez**, which enables us to interpret the meaning of The text for the Messianic age and the New Covenant

The Messiah set aside the “shadow” sacrifices. He became the sacrifice by offering his own body. As a result we have been made holy (ἡγιασμένοι - agiasmenoi) through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus, the Messiah, once for all.

Verses 11 - 18; The presentation of the sacrifice

The Aaronic priests can never “sit down.” Their work is never done. They offer the sacrifices “day after day,” (ἡμέραν - emeran). But, when Messiah, High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, offers his sacrifice he sit down at the right hand of God. He is finished. His work is done. Now he waits for the consummation when he places his foot on the neck of his enemies (Jos. 10:24) as a sign of conquest.

By one sacrifice he has finished (“perfected” - τετελείωκεν) those who are “being made holy” - (ἁγιαζομένους. - agiazomenous). This is a present participle in the Greek. The guilt problem is solved, and in that sense we are “perfected.” However, the work of changing our character, our sinful nature, is still in process.

How is this process being carried out. For the answer we return to a passage we considered previously, 8:8 - 12. Two affirmations are made concerning the New or Messianic Covenant.

1. I will remember their sins no more - The guilt problem

2. I will put my laws I their hearts - The sanctification problem

A Call To Draw Near To God On The Ground Of Messiah's Sacrifice - Chapter 4:19 - 39

Verses 19 - 25 Assurance of Faith

The “we” in verse 19 emphasizes that Paul is speaking as a Jewish believer. Behind these verses is the image of the High Priest entering the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur, presenting the blood of the sacrifice. We enter through the curtain because a way has been prepared for us by Messiah. We remember at this point that the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom as Jesus died upon the cross (Matt. 27:51). Messiah enters for us, and so we enter and present the blood upon the throne, or the “Mercy Seat.”

The phrase “through the curtain, that is his body” catches the theological truth expressed in John 1:14. Jesus body is the “Tabernacle” in which God dwells. Jesus speaks of his body as a new Temple (Jn.2:21). In the accusations against him at his trial this saying is remembered (Mt. 26:61 and Mk. 14:48).

Verses 21 and 22 continue the Temple imagery. Our hearts are “sprinkled” with the Messiah’s blood, and we are relieved of guilt. Our bodies have been washed in the Temple laver, and thus we free from the power of sin.

Verses 23 - 26 exhort hope in the faithful High Priest. Rather than

Loosing our way these believers need to constantly meet together for mutual encouragement in loving God and doing his work in the world.

Verses 26 - 31 - The terrible consequences of falling away.

The sin referred to here is the sin of apostasy, or turning away from God to idols. The context of the Torah referred to in verse 28 is found in Deuteronomy 17:2 -7. It has to do with turning back from the worship of Yahwah to the worship of the pagan gods. The punishment was death. Paul says the penalty for turning back from Messiah, once one has come near will be more severe. It involves:

Trampling the Son of God underfoot,
Treating the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing,
Insulting the Holy Spirit.

It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Verses 32 - 39 Remember the early days and stand your ground

Paul tells these believers he has confidence they will persevere. They have gone through persecution. They have stood by each other through trial. Surely they will not turn back now. They will live by their faith (Hab. 2:3-4 and Rom. 1:17).

COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Chapter 11 - Outline II, C, 1-5

Introduction

Chapter 11 & 12 are Midrash on two verses quoted at the end of chapter 10, Habakkuk 2:3 & 4

“It will certainly come and will not delay...but the righteous will live by his faith.”

Chapter 11 will define faith, and then give examples of it from the Torah. Chapter 12 will call the reader to follow these examples in their own faithfulness to the Gospel.

Verses 1 - 3 The definition

Faith (pistos in Greek) means trust. It is trust in what is yet hoped for and not seen. It is “being sure” and being “certain” because we trust in the God who has given his word.

In the same way we believe God created the universe by speaking. It was not made of things visible, but by the Word of God. This is the classic doctrine of creation “ex nihilo” - out of nothing. It is God’s Word we trust, and it is not “nothing,” it is that which created the universe, and we can trust it.

Verses 4 - 40 The Honor Roll of the Faithful

There are sixteen names mentioned here specifically. Other are implied. They are offered in evidence that being called to faith is not new. It has always been so. What is new is the arrival of the New Covenant in Messiah.

Abel - Abel is said to have offered a “better sacrifice.” If he is an illustration of faith, some word of God must have been spoken in which he trusted. That word is not recorded either here or in Genesis, but the implication is clear. Abel trusted. Cain did not.

Enoch - “Enoch live 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away (Gen. 5:23 & 24).” The commentary concludes that since God was pleased with Enoch, it was because of Enoch’s faith, because without faith it is impossible to please God. The two phrases: “the righteous shall live by faith” and “without faith it is impossible to please God” are seen as equivalent by Paul. The subject is extensively covered by Paul in the early chapters of Romans starting with the quotation from Habakkuk in chapter 1:17.

Noah - The point is made that Noah had a word from God which he believed against all the evidence. Because of this trust he was declared righteous. There is a lot more we would like to know about Noah. In II Peter 2:5 he is called a “preacher of righteousness.” This would assume that he called on his community to believe, but they would not.

Abraham - Three incidents from the life of Abraham are isolated to illustrate faith: Abraham’s call to leave his home, the promise of a son, and the “acadah,” or the “binding” of Isaac.

Abraham was asked to move on faith. He did not know where he was going. He was for a city that he trusted God would show him. Not only did he not know where he was going, but when it was revealed to him, he was told (vs. 13 - 16) that he would not possess the land, but only his descendants. If they failed in faith, they could have returned to the land from which they came, but they did not.

We are given a fascinating piece of information about Abraham's faith in verse 19. Paul concludes Abraham believed in the resurrection of the dead. He believed if God had required him to kill Isaac, he would raise him from death, since he had promised that through Isaac he would raise up offspring. The text of Genesis 22: 5 supports this conclusion. Abraham said to his servants when he and Isaac went off alone to make the sacrifice, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

The resurrection of Messiah was a sticking point with non-believing Jews. Paul here makes a strong point for the Gospel. Messiah was crucified, bound by death, and God raised him. The precedent can be seen in the record of Abraham who believed, where they do not. It is also a overpowering reason for the believing Jews to remain faithful to the Gospel.

Isaac, Jacob and Esau - These three are mentioned only briefly to point out that their blessings were in regard to the future. Jacob passed on the blessing to his sons, and to the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh in regard to a future time.

Joseph - Joseph gave instructions to take his bones with them when they went to the Chosen Land (Genesis 50:25). God had promised. Joseph believed.

Moses - Moses parents, Amram and Jockebed (see Ex. 6:20), exercised faith when they hid Moses. Amram and Jockebed may have been distant relations rather than immediate parents.

Moses exercised faith when:

He identified with his people and their covenant promises.

He led his people out of Egypt.

He kept the Passover.

He passes through the Reed Sea (Yom Suph)

(Joshua) - Joshua is not named, but he was leader of the armies of Israel.

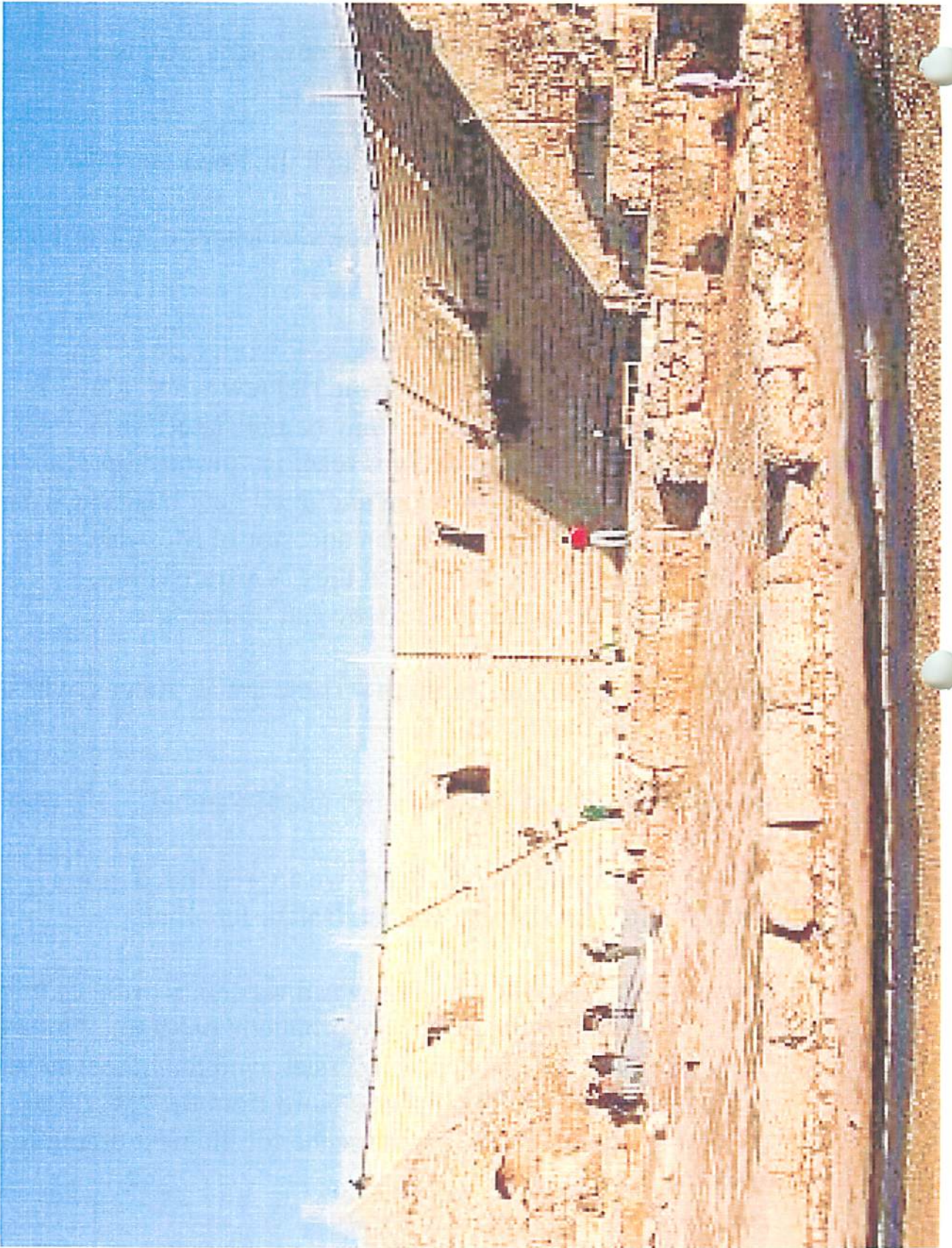
Rahab - There is no doubt that the Greek word here (πόρνη - porne) means prostitute. However, the Hebrew word (zonah) which describes her in Joshua 2:1 may be translated “innkeeper.” If Paul is using the LXX he likely is reading “porne,” but Rahab appears to be a highly independent and intelligent business woman in the Joshua story. She becomes an ancestor of Messiah. This would not be an error in Paul, but in the LXX translation. Fortunately we have a Hebrew text we can double check.

Gideon, Barak, Samson, Japheth - These are all Judges, whose stories are told in that book.

David and Samuel - in the books of I and II Samuel

The Prophets - Under this category we are reminded of the exploits of Elijah and Elisha, Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah,

They were the heroes of God. The world was not worthy of them. Yet, none of them saw the end of the prophetic program. None of them saw Messiah. We have seen Messiah, and the heroes now can enjoy the fulfillment of the prophetic word from the “World to Come” along with us. This sets the scene for the next dramatic image in the exposition.



COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS Chapter 12 - Outline II, D - 1,2,3,

Verses 1 - 3 - Our turn to run

Assuming Paul is writing in Caesarea the use of this simile would be a natural. The huge Roman theater in Caesarea has been uncovered today and is in use. Set along the Mediterranean coast, Paul could not have been housed far from Herod's theater.

In the final verses of chapter 11, beginning with verse 32, Paul posits a vast number of faith heroes he has not room to mention. In 12:1 he sees himself, and the present day Jewish believers, in a vast theater surrounded (περικειμενον - perikeimenon) by an audience of the faithful saints of the past. It is our turn to run. They are watching and waiting to see how well we do.

Jesus is also there. He stands at the end of the race, waiting to welcome those who finish the course (See II Tim. 4:6 - 8). In order to finish we need to do two things.

First, we need to lay aside our sin (αμαρτιαν - hamartian) which hinders and entangles us and run with perseverance (υπεμενειν - upemeinen - patience, endurance).

Second, we need to fix our eyes on Jesus who stands at the finish line to greet us. And, we need to remember who he is.

- * The perfecter of our faith
- * Who endured the cross, in spite of it's shame
- * Who now sits glorified in the Father's presence

He ran the race before us, so he could encourage us to press on and not grow weary.

Verses 4 - 12 - The hardship is merely the Father's discipline

Unlike Messiah, those to whom this study is addressed have not yet been called upon to die for their faith. They may have been going through difficult times, but these times should be understood in terms of Proverbs 3:11 and 12. These are verses which remind us that fathers “discipline” their children because they love them.

The word “discipline” used here is not the general word for “teaching” as used in “disciple.” It is the word for nurturing a child or the education of children. In Greek it is παιδείαν, or paideion. You may recognize the Greek root “paidia” as in our English word “pediatrician” or “pediacare.” The King James translates it “chastening,” but that may be too narrow. At any rate, the thought is that the Father nurtures his children because he loves them and wants them to grow up strong.

Remember we are still within the simile of running the race set before us. That kind of training is hard. That kind of training is often painful (vs. 11). The results which are being sought are “holiness (vs. 10),” “righteousness (vs. 11),” and “peace (vs.11).” We are trained (γεγυμνασμένοις - ge gymnasmenois) by this suffering. The Greek word is the word from which we get gymnasium. In the classical world it was a training school with a heavy emphasis on athletics.

Verse 12 summarizes. Such suffering puts us in shape, so that we are not disabled during the race, and allowed to finish the course.

Verses 14 - 17 - Practical holiness

This first admonition is a challenge simply stated. We are to live at peace (Ειρήνην - Eirenen) with all men, and at the same time be holy (ἁγιασμόν - agiasmon). In other words we are to associate with society, seek to be at peace with all we meet, and at the same time be separate (holy) unto the Lord. Jesus prays for his Disciples (Jn. 17), not that they be taken out of the world, but that they might be “sanctified,” made holy in the world. This is the same Greek word Paul uses.

Without this holiness no one will see the Lord. However, this “separating” comes by “grace” (χάριτος - charitos). It is God who marks us out for himself. Those to whom Paul writes are admonished not to miss this “grace” and develop some root of bitterness. If they are tempted to go back to the unbelieving Judaism they left, it would be because of pride: resentment that God’s grace has marked out non-Jews for “holiness” as well as those under the covenant of Moses.

They are to shun sexual immorality and materialism, of which Esau is the classic example.

Verses 18 - 28 - The two mountains

Paul suggested in verse 15 that his readers may be tempted to refuse grace out of pride. This would mean choosing Moses, but refusing Messiah. Paul has clearly stated that Moses was faithful in all God’s house (3:2). However Messiah has come to complete, to fulfill, to bring to a triumphal conclusion that which Moses introduced. He illustrates it by contrasting two mountains: Sinai and Zion.

Sinai was grand, awesome, and terrifying. It gave us the Torah. But, the Torah was demanding. Paul does not mention it here, but Sinai also introduced grace in the sacrificial system.

Zion, and Messiah who reigns in the heavenly Jerusalem, has given us a finished salvation. He reigns with God, the departed saints and the legions of angels in the glory to which we are headed. Our names are already in the book. Messiah is mediator of a New Covenant.

The blood of Able cried out for justice. The blood of Messiah grants forgiveness and reconciliation.

Once again the warning comes. Israel has suffered in the past from rejecting the word of God. Haggai 2:6 warns that God will shake the earth and the heavens. Only that which is beyond change, established forever, “once for all” will resist the final judgment. Since our Messiah has established a “Kingdom that can not be shaken” we would be foolish to reject it. For our God is (Deut. 4:24) a consuming fire.

COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Chapter 13 - Outline II, E - III, E

Verses 1 - 17 - Practical Christian Living

Love (1) - Love each other as brothers and sisters. Interestingly the word used is not “agape,” but “philea” (φιλοξενίας). Although I would not want to make too much of it, the first two times Jesus asked Peter after the resurrection (Jn. 21), “Do you love me,” Jesus used “agape.” On these two occasions Peter answered with “philea.” The third time Jesus used “philea,” and Peter answered with “philea.” This word for brotherly love is not a weak word. It is the word comrades in arms would use.

My thought is that here Paul is particularly concerned that the Hebrew believers and the gentile believers see themselves as brothers and sisters in the Kingdom and love each other.

Hospitality (2) - Angels were very real for Paul. Remember his experience in Prison in Philippi. Although Paul did not see the angel, Peter did (Acts 12:7 & 8). The prison recollection may have led him to his next thought.

Compassion for Prisoners - Paul himself is in confinement in Caesarea. Others are certainly in prison for their faith. It is true today as well in India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, China and many other places. Paul feels deeply for the prisoners.

Marriage (4) - The home is the base teaching unit for believers. It is our school of faithfulness. It must be kept pure.

Materialism (5 & 6) Love of money is contrasted with the promise of God's presence and protection from Deut. 31:6 and Psalm 118:6 & 7. We are secure in the Lord. That should be enough.

Respect for Leaders (7 & 8) Leadership in the Church is seen by Paul as faithful teaching and faithful living. In both they imitate Messiah.

Strange teaching (9 - 14) Paul has specifically in mind here the desire for holiness (separation to God). Messiah has taught us we are made holy by grace. We are no longer made holy by eating the fellowship offerings of the Temple. Jesus has made the only offering we need. He was sacrificed outside the city, outside the Temple, outside the camp. He made us holy through his blood (12). It cannot be added to or improved upon. It is done.

Our service (15 & 16) Praise to God; Lifting up the name of Jesus before the world; doing good deeds (Mitzvot); sharing what God had given us with others - these things are our service.

Again - respect your leaders (17) Their lot is a privilege, but also an immense responsibility. They need to give an account to God. James tells it like it is (3:1). "Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly." Paul is concerned that the members of the congregations not make the burden heavier, but, by following them, to give them something about which to rejoice.

Pray for us (18 & 19) Paul's requests are specific. He wants their prayers that he might not be tempted to do anything contrary to Messiah's will. He also would like to be released from confinement.

A Classic Benediction (20 & 21) Paul seems to summarize the entire burden of this work in the benediction.

God is a God of reconciliation

Messiah has established a new and eternal covenant

He has defeated death in the resurrection

He is our Good Shepherd

He equips us to do his will

He works in us to accomplish
that will

His is the Glory for ever and ever

Paul calls HEBREWS a letter (22) He uses the Greek word “epistle,” although we know it is not in letter form. He also apologizes for it being so short.

Timothy is free (23) We know Timothy was working at Ephesus during Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome. He was probably there at this writing, and remained there through Paul’s fourth missionary journey and into his second imprisonment in Rome. This work is written about 59 - 61 A.D. Paul is martyred about 67/68 A.D. after returning from Spain and touching in at the various churches he founded.

There is no indication that John is yet at Ephesus. This is one reason we conclude that Revelation is written much later.

It seems Paul is looking forward to linking up with Timothy somewhere along the line, but we don’t know where.

Leaders from Rome (24) Some of the leadership from Italy had been visiting Paul at Caesarea. He sends their greeting.

Conclusion - Grace be with you all.