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46



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# Hebrews

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Chiastic Structures and  
Audience Response

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BY  
John Paul Heil

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The Catholic Biblical Quarterly  
Monograph Series

46

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# Contents

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## ABBREVIATIONS • *xi*

- I. INTRODUCTION • *I*
  - A. New Proposal for the Structure of Hebrews • *I*
  - B. Authorship and Literary Genre • *17*
  - C. Situation of the Audience • *20*
  - D. Literary-Rhetorical, Audience-Oriented Method • *24*
  - E. Summary • *25*
2. HEBREWS 1:1-4 • *26*
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 1:1-4 • *26*
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 1:1-4 • *27*
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 1:1-4 • *33*
3. HEBREWS 1:5-14 • *35*
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 1:5-14 • *35*
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 1:5-14 • *36*
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 1:5-14 • *46*
4. HEBREWS 2:1-4 • *48*
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 2:1-4 • *48*
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 2:1-4 • *49*
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 2:1-4 • *53*
5. HEBREWS 2:5-9 • *55*
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 2:5-9 • *55*
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 2:5-9 • *56*
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 2:5-9 • *62*

6. HEBREWS 2:10-18 • 64
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 2:10-18 • 64
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 2:10-18 • 66
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 2:10-18 • 74
7. HEBREWS 3:1-6 • 76
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 3:1-6 • 76
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 3:1-6 • 77
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 3:1-6 • 84
8. HEBREWS 3:7-11 • 86
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 3:7-11 • 86
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 3:7-11 • 87
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 3:7-11 • 92
9. HEBREWS 3:12-19 • 94
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 3:12-19 • 94
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 3:12-19 • 95
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 3:12-19 • 102
10. HEBREWS 4:1-11 • 104
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 4:1-11 • 104
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 4:1-11 • 105
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 4:1-11 • 115
11. HEBREWS 4:12-13 • 117
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 4:12-13 • 117
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 4:12-13 • 118
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 4:12-13 • 124
12. HEBREWS 4:14-5:10 • 126
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 4:14-5:10 • 126
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 4:14-5:10 • 128
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 4:14-5:10 • 137
13. HEBREWS 5:11-6:12 • 139
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 5:11-6:12 • 140
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 5:11-6:12 • 141
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 5:11-6:12 • 151

14. HEBREWS 6:13-20 • 153
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 6:13-20 • 153
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 6:13-20 • 154
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 6:13-20 • 158
15. HEBREWS 7:1-10 • 160
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 7:1-10 • 160
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 7:1-10 • 161
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 7:1-10 • 168
16. HEBREWS 7:11-17 • 170
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 7:11-17 • 170
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 7:11-17 • 171
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 7:11-17 • 177
17. HEBREWS 7:18-28 • 179
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 7:18-28 • 179
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 7:18-28 • 180
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 7:18-28 • 190
18. HEBREWS 8:1-6 • 192
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 8:1-6 • 192
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 8:1-6 • 193
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 8:1-6 • 199
19. HEBREWS 8:7-13 • 201
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 8:7-13 • 201
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 8:7-13 • 202
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 8:7-13 • 211
20. HEBREWS 9:1-10 • 212
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 9:1-10 • 212
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 9:1-10 • 214
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 9:1-10 • 225
21. HEBREWS 9:11-14 • 227
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 9:11-14 • 227
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 9:11-14 • 228
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 9:11-14 • 233

- 22. HEBREWS 9:15-23 • 235
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 9:15-23 • 235
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 9:15-23 • 236
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 9:15-23 • 247
- 23. HEBREWS 9:24-28 • 249
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 9:24-28 • 249
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 9:24-28 • 250
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 9:24-28 • 257
- 24. HEBREWS 10:1-14 • 259
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 10:1-14 • 259
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 10:1-14 • 261
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 10:1-14 • 271
- 25. HEBREWS 10:15-30 • 273
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 10:15-30 • 274
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 10:15-30 • 275
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 10:15-30 • 288
- 26. HEBREWS 10:31-39 • 290
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 10:31-39 • 290
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 10:31-39 • 291
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 10:31-39 • 299
- 27. HEBREWS 11:1-7 • 300
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 11:1-7 • 300
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 11:1-7 • 301
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 11:1-7 • 311
- 28. HEBREWS 11:8-19 • 314
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 11:8-19 • 315
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 11:8-19 • 316
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 11:8-19 • 324
- 29. HEBREWS 11:20-31 • 326
  - A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 11:20-31 • 326
  - B. Audience Response to Hebrews 11:20-31 • 327
  - C. Summary on Hebrews 11:20-31 • 336



30.	HEBREWS 11:32-40 • 338
	A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 11:32-40 • 338
	B. Audience Response to Hebrews 11:32-40 • 340
	C. Summary on Hebrews 11:32-40 • 349
31.	HEBREWS 12:1-11 • 352
	A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 12:1-11 • 352
	B. Audience Response to Hebrews 12:1-11 • 354
	C. Summary on Hebrews 12:1-11 • 365
32.	HEBREWS 12:12-29 • 367
	A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 12:12-29 • 368
	B. Audience Response to Hebrews 12:12-29 • 369
	C. Summary on Hebrews 12:12-29 • 388
33.	HEBREWS 13:1-16 • 390
	A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 13:1-16 • 391
	B. Audience Response to Hebrews 13:1-16 • 392
	C. Summary on Hebrews 13:1-16 • 408
34.	HEBREWS 13:17-25 • 410
	A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 13:17-25 • 410
	B. Audience Response to Hebrews 13:17-25 • 412
	C. Summary on Hebrews 13:17-25 • 425
35.	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION • 428
	BIBLIOGRAPHY • 435
	SCRIPTURE INDEX • 455
	AUTHOR INDEX • 472



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# Abbreviations

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AB	Anchor Bible
AnBib	Analecta biblica
Ang	<i>Angelicum</i>
AsTJ	<i>Asbury Theological Journal</i>
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDAG	Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3d ed. Chicago, 1999
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BK	<i>Bibel und Kirche</i>
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BRev	<i>Bible Review</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BT	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft von Alten und Neuen Testament
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CTR	<i>Criswell Theological Review</i>
CTQ	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>DivThom</i>	<i>Divus Thomas</i>
EDNT	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by H. Balz, G. Schneider. ET. Grand Rapids, 1990-1993
ETR	<i>Etudes théologiques et religieuses</i>
EvQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
ExpTim	<i>Expository Times</i>
HeyJ	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>

HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IBS	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JOTT	<i>Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods: Supplement Series
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KD	<i>Kerygma und Dogma</i>
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
MSJ	<i>The Master's Seminary Journal</i>
Neot	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NRTh	<i>La nouvelle revue théologique</i>
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTL	New Testament Library
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
ÖTK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuch-Kommentar
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
ResQ	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
RRef	<i>La revue réformée</i>
SacPag	Sacra Pagina
SBLAbib	Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SR	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
TJ	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
T&K	<i>Texte &amp; Kontexte</i>
TLNT	<i>Theological Lexicon of the New Testament</i> . C. Spicq. Translated and edited by J. D. Ernest. 3 vols. Peabody, Mass., 1994
TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TQ	<i>Theologische Quartalschrift</i>

<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>



## Introduction

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### A. New Proposal for the Structure of Hebrews

There have been no lack of attempts to address the vexing problem of the literary structure of the NT document designated “To Hebrews” (Πρὸς Ἑβραίους).<sup>1</sup> Yet none of the proposals of the past has proven to be entirely satisfying to the majority of scholars of this fascinating and exquisitely crafted text.<sup>2</sup> In this book I will present a new proposal for a comprehensive chiastic structure that aims to account for all of the salient textual details operative within the rich complexity of this magnificent and most intrigu-

<sup>1</sup> For examples and discussions, see G. E. Rice, “Apostasy as a Motif and Its Effect on the Structure of Hebrews,” *AUSS* 23 (1985): 29–35; Albert Vanhoye, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Subsidia Biblica; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989); Barnabas Lindars, “The Rhetorical Structure of Hebrews,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 382–406; James Swetnam, “The Structure of Hebrews: A Fresh Look,” *Melita Theologica* 41 (1990): 25–46; Steve Stanley, “The Structure of Hebrews from Three Perspectives,” *Tyn-Bul* 45 (1994): 245–71; George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (NovTSup 73; Leiden: Brill, 1994); Cynthia Long Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship Between Form and Meaning* (LNTS 297; London: Clark, 2005); Gabriella Gelardini, “*Verhärtet eure Herzen nicht*: Der Hebräer, eine Synagogenhomilie zu Tischa be-Aw (BIS 83; Leiden: Brill, 2007); idem, “From ‘Linguistic Turn’ and Hebrews Scholarship to *Anadiplosis Iterata*: The Enigma of a Structure,” *HTR* 102 (2009): 51–73; Barry C. Joslin, “Can Hebrews be Structured?: An Assessment of Eight Approaches,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 7 (2007): 99–129; Paul David Landgraf, “The Structure of Hebrews: A Word of Exhortation in Light of the Day of Atonement,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham, et al.; LNTS 387; London: Clark, 2008), 19–27.

<sup>2</sup> Joslin (“Hebrews,” 122) concludes that “there is little consensus regarding the structure of Hebrews. . . . Given the rise in interest regarding the epistle to the Hebrews as a whole, we should look forward to further research in this area.”

ing masterpiece. This new proposal is distinguished by the discovery of multiple levels of macro- and microchiasmic patterns that, in a consistent and concerted way, drive the rhetorical rhythm within the persuasive strategy of Hebrews as “the word of the encouragement” (Heb 13:22).

To be absolutely convincing, the determination of an extended chiasmic structure should be based upon a methodology with rigorous criteria. It must be clear that the chiasm has not been subjectively imposed upon the text but actually subsists objectively within the text. My proposal will be guided by the following list of nine criteria for detecting an extended chiasm:

- 1) There must be a problem in perceiving the structure of the text in question, which more conventional outlines fail to resolve.
- 2) There must be clear examples of parallelism between the two “halves” of the hypothesized chiasm, to which commentators call attention even when they propose quite different outlines for the text overall.
- 3) Linguistic (or grammatical) parallelism as well as conceptual (or structural) parallelism should characterize most if not all of the corresponding pairs of subdivisions.
- 4) The linguistic parallelism should involve central or dominant imagery or terminology important to the rhetorical strategy of the text.
- 5) Both linguistic and conceptual parallelism should involve words and ideas not regularly found elsewhere within the proposed chiasm.
- 6) Multiple sets of correspondences between passages opposite each other in the chiasm as well as multiple members of the chiasm itself are desirable.
- 7) The outline should divide the text at natural breaks which would be agreed upon even by those proposing very different structures to account for the whole.
- 8) The central or pivotal as well as the final or climactic elements normally play key roles in the rhetorical strategy of the chiasm.
- 9) Ruptures in the outline should be avoided if at all possible.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For a different version of this list and an example of an extended biblical chiasm, see Craig L. Blomberg, “The Structure of 2 Corinthians 1–7,” *CTR* 4 (1989): 4–8. And for more discussion of criteria and examples, see Wayne Brouwer, *The Literary Development of John 13–17: A Chiasmic Reading* (SBLDS 182; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000). See also John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in the New Testament,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (ed. John W. Welch; Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1981), 211–49; idem, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus,” in *Chiasmus Bibliography* (eds. John W. Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay; Provo: Research,



An important and distinctive feature of this investigation is that all of the proposed chiasms are based on precise linguistic parallels found within the text itself, rather than on thematic or conceptual parallels, which can often be subjective. Indeed, the main criterion for the establishment of chiasms in this investigation is the demonstration of these linguistic parallels. I will seek to determine how the subsequent occurrence(s) of a paralleled word or phrase develops the first occurrence after a central unparallelled element or central parallel elements serve as a pivot from the first to the second half of the chiasm.

Since they are based strictly on linguistic parallels, some of the proposed chiasms may or may not exhibit a balance in the length of the various parallel elements or units—one parallel element or unit may be much longer or much shorter than its corresponding parallel. This may seem odd to a modern audience, but an ancient audience would presumably be attuned to the key linguistic parallels that are heard rather than the balance of length between the elements or units of a given chiasm. The main presupposition of this investigation is that if there are demonstrable linguistic parallels with a pivotal section between them, then a chiasm is operative regardless of a certain lack of balance between various elements or units.

Furthermore, some of the linguistic parallels involve what might be considered by a modern audience as rather ordinary or trivial words, unlikely to be key words in chiastic parallels. But it should be kept in mind that what may seem to be insignificant words or phrases on the surface to a modern audience may have been very significant indeed to the particular rhetorical strategy of the author and the particular situation of the original audience as they listened to the entire oral performance of Hebrews. In some cases the parallels are between cognates or between synonyms, antonyms, and/or alliterative terms.

Not all of the proposed chiasms have the same number of elements or units. Some chiasms may exhibit a single unparallelled central element, e. g. A-B-C-B'-A', while others may exhibit dual, parallel central or pivotal elements, e. g. A-B-C-C'-B'-A'. Nevertheless, both of these types operate as chiasms in the ears of the implied audience, since they both involve a pivot

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1999), 157–74; Ian H. Thomson, *Chiasmus in the Pauline Letters* (JSNTSup 111; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 13–45; Mark Wilson, *The Victor Sayings in the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007), 3–8; David A. DeSilva, “X Marks the Spot?: A Critique of the Use of Chiasmus in Macro-Structural Analyses of Revelation,” *JSNT* 30 (2008): 343–71.

from the first to the second half of the chiasm. In one type a central unparallelled element serves as the pivot, whereas in the other type two parallel elements together serve as the pivot to the second half of parallel elements. In addition, it may often be more accurate to speak of the central element or elements as the pivotal point of the chiasm and the final A' element as the climax. This is important to keep in mind, lest one think that chiasmic patterns are a type of circular or merely repetitive argument, rather than exhibiting an ongoing, dynamic development.

Chiastic patterns serve to organize the content to be heard and not only aid the memory of the one performing a document, but also make it easier for the implied audience to follow and remember the content. A chiasm works by leading its audience through introductory elements to a central, pivotal point or points, and then reaching its conclusion by recalling and developing, via the chiasmic parallels, aspects of the initial elements that led to the central, pivotal point or points. Since chiasms were apparently very common in ancient oral-auricular and rhetorical cultures,<sup>4</sup> the original audience may and need not necessarily have been consciously identifying any of these chiasmic structures in themselves as they heard them. They unconsciously experienced the chiasmic phenomenon as an organizing dynamic, which had a subtle but purposeful effect on how they perceived the content. But I would suggest that a discovery, delineation, and bringing to consciousness of the underlying chiasmic structures of ancient documents can greatly aid the modern audience to a better interpretation of them.<sup>5</sup>

In what follows, then, I will first demonstrate how the text of Hebrews divides itself into three macrochiastic levels. The first level divides the entire text into three main sections in a basic A-B-A' chiastic pattern. The second level divides each of these three main sections into eleven distinct units arranged in an A-B-C-D-E-F-E'-D'-C'-B'-A' pattern. The third level divides the first five as well as the final five units of each of these main sections into a total of six A-B-C-B'-A' patterns. Furthermore, each of the distinct units exhibits its own microchiastic structure, with some of them containing additional smaller chiasmic patterns. All of these various levels of chiasmic structures are consistently based on very precise linguistic parallels found in the text itself. Where applicable, I will point out how

<sup>4</sup> For some of the evidence of this, see Brouwer, *Literary Development*, 23-27.

<sup>5</sup> John Breck, *The Shape of Biblical Language: Chiasmus in the Scriptures and Beyond* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994).

other lexical and grammatical features often confirm the integrity of these units. In addition, various transitional words that connect a unit to the unit that immediately precedes it will be illustrated. These various transitional words, which occur at the conclusion of one unit and at the beginning of the following unit, indicate that the chiasmic units are heard as a cohesive sequence.<sup>6</sup>

### *1. First Macrochiastic Level*

- A) Heb 1:1-5:10: Be Faithful in Heart to Grace from the Son and High Priest  
B) Heb 5:11-9:28: We Await the High Priest Who Offered Himself to Intercede  
A') Heb 10:1-13:25: By Faith with Grace in Heart Let Us Do the Will of the Living God

The terms in the title of each main section have been chosen in an attempt to illustrate, as closely as possible, the broadest and most fundamental chiasmic pattern embracing the entire document, as well as to capture some of the distinctiveness of each section. The first words in the title for the first section (A), “be faithful,” represent the implicit positive exhortation for the audience, as a counterpart to the negative example provided by the only two occurrences in Hebrews of the noun “unfaithfulness.” First, the audience are exhorted: “See to it, brothers, that there not be in any of you an evil heart of unfaithfulness (ἀπιστίας) in falling away from the living God” (3:12). And then the audience are pointedly reminded: “And we see that they were not able to enter because of unfaithfulness (ἀπιστίαν)” (3:19). Hence, the audience are to make every effort to remain faithful.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the fundamental theme of faith in Hebrews finds most of its expressions in the A and A' main sections. The adjective, “faithful” (πιστός), occurs only in these two main sections, applied first to Jesus as high priest (2:17), and then to Moses and Jesus (3:2, 5) in the A section. These occurrences are chiasmically and progressively paralleled by the application of this same adjective to God, considered to be “faithful” as

<sup>6</sup> On the interpretive significance of chiasmic structures, see Ronald E. Man, “The Value of Chiasm for New Testament Interpretation,” *BSac* 141 (1984): 146–57; Augustine Stock, “Chiasmic Awareness and Education in Antiquity,” *BTB* 14 (1984): 23–27; John Breck, “Biblical Chiasmus: Exploring Structure for Meaning,” *BTB* 17 (1987): 70–74.

<sup>7</sup> The collective noun “audience” will be used as a plural noun, so that it conforms to the Greek text of Hebrews, which employs plural terms in reference to its audience.

the “one who promised” (10:23; 11:11) in the A' main section. Likewise, the verb, “to believe,” occurs only twice in Hebrews, once in each of these two main sections. In the A section it includes the audience in a statement without an explicitly expressed object of believing: “For we who believed (πιστεύσαντες) are entering into the rest” (4:3). And in the A' section this initial occurrence is chiastically paralleled by the final occurrence, explicitly referring to God as the object of believing: “For it is necessary that one approaching God believe (πιστεῦσαι) that he exists” (11:6).

Although forms of the noun “faith” occur in all three main sections, with one occurrence in the A section, two in the B section (6:1, 12), and twenty-nine in the A' section, there is, nevertheless, a chiastic pattern operative, as the dative singular form of this noun occurs only in the A and A' sections. It is introduced in the A section in a reference to unbelievers in the past as a negative example for the audience: “For indeed we have received good news just as they did, but the word for hearing did not benefit them, who were not united in faith (πίστει) with those who heard” (4:2). This negative example is then chiastically countered in an overwhelming repetition of the same form (πίστει) eighteen times in 11:3–31 of the A' section to describe distinguished believers in the past as positive examples for the audience.<sup>8</sup>

The next key term in the determination of this first macrochiastic level is the word “heart” (καρδιά), which occurs eleven times in Hebrews—six times in the A section, which are then chiastically paralleled by four occurrences in the A' section. It does occur once in the B section, but here it provides the basis for a noteworthy chiastic pivot to the further occurrences

<sup>8</sup> On the theme of faith in Hebrews, see Dennis Hamm, “Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews: The Jesus Factor,” *CBQ* 52 (1990): 270–91; Barnabas Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews* (New Testament Theology; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 108–18; Thomas Söding, “Zuversicht und Geduld im Schauen auf Jesus: Zum Glaubensbegriff des Hebräerbriefes,” *ZNW* 82 (1991): 214–41; Alan D. Bulley, “Death and Rhetoric in the Hebrews ‘Hymn to Faith’,” *SR* 25 (1996): 409–23; Victor Rhee, “Chiasm and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 11,” *BSac* 155 (1998): 327–45; idem, *Faith in Hebrews: Analysis Within the Context of Christology, Eschatology, and Ethics* (New York: Lang, 2001); Todd D. Still, “*Christos* as *Pistos*: The Faith(fulness) of Jesus in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *CBQ* 69 (2007): 746–55; Matthew J. Marohl, *Faithfulness and the Purpose of Hebrews: A Social Identity Approach* (PTMS 82; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2008); Jason A. Whitlark, *Enabling Fidelity to God: Perseverance in Hebrews in Light of Reciprocity Systems in the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2008); Dennis R. Lindsay, “*Pistis* and ‘*Emunah*’: The Nature of Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham, et al.; LNTS 387; London: Clark, 2008), 158–69.

of this term in the A' section. The first five occurrences in the A section are rather negative with references to “hardened hearts” (3:8, 15; 4:7), “wandering heart” (3:10), and “evil heart” (3:12). The sixth and final occurrence in this section begins to change the focus to a more positive description with its reference to the living word of God that is able to scrutinize the deliberations and thoughts of the “heart” (4:12).

A positive focus emerges more explicitly in the only occurrence of the term in the B section in the quotation from Jer 38:31-34 (LXX), in which God promises a new covenant, “giving my laws into their mind and upon their hearts (καρδίας) I will inscribe them” (8:10). This provides the basis for a chiasmic pivot from the word order of “mind-hearts” to that of “hearts-mind” in the repetition of the same quotation in the first occurrence of “heart” in the A' section, “giving my laws upon their hearts (καρδίας) and into their mind I will inscribe them” (10:16). After this transition to a more positive focus regarding “hearts,” the negative references in the A section are chiastically countered by the positive references in the A' section. The audience are exhorted, “let us approach with a true heart (καρδίας) in assurance of faith, sprinkled with regard to the hearts (καρδίας) from an evil conscience” (10:22).<sup>9</sup> Finally, the audience are assured, “for it is beneficent for the heart (καρδίαν) to be confirmed by grace” (13:9). This relating of “heart” to “grace” provides us with a fitting transition for the consideration of the next key term in this first macrochiastic level.

The term “grace” (χάρις) occurs eight times in Hebrews, in which the initial three occurrences in the A section are chiastically paralleled by the final five occurrences in the A' section. The first occurrence sets the tone for the theme of God’s grace as fundamental to the central concept of salvation from death to resurrected, eschatological, eternal life through the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus: “But now we see Jesus, made lower briefly than the angels because of the suffering of death, with glory and honor crowned, so that by the grace (χάρτι) of God, on behalf of all he might taste death” (2:9). In the final two occurrences in the A section the audience are exhorted to seek the assistance of this grace, “let us approach then with confidence the throne of grace (χάριτος), so that we may receive mercy and may find grace (χάριτι) for timely help” (4:16).

In the first chiasmic parallel to the term “grace” in the A' section the audience are warned not to reject this grace by abandoning their worshipping

<sup>9</sup> Cf. “evil heart” in 3:12 of the A section, the only other occurrence of the term “evil” (πονηρός) in Hebrews.

assembly and thus continuing to sin (10:25-26): “How much worse a punishment do you think is worthy one who tramples under foot the Son of God and considers unclean the blood of the covenant, in which he was made holy, and insults the Spirit of grace (χάριτος)?” (10:29). The audience are then warned to make sure every one of them has the assistance of this grace: “See to it lest anyone be lacking of the grace (χάριτος) of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up may cause trouble and through it many may become defiled” (12:15). They are then exhorted regarding the key role of this grace for their worship, “let us have grace (χάριν), through which we may offer worship pleasing to God with reverence and awe” (12:28). After the assertion that relates grace to the heart, “for it is beneficent for the heart to be confirmed by grace (χάρτι)” (13:9), the audience hear the final greeting at the conclusion of Hebrews, “the grace (χάρις) be with all of you” (13:25), which serves as the climactic prayer-wish for the grace of God delineated previously and now generously available through Jesus.

The final phrase in the title of the A section, “from the Son and High Priest,” contains the two key titular concepts employed to describe the significance of Jesus in Hebrews, which begins by referring to a “son” in whom God finally spoke (1:2), who is later identified as “Jesus” (2:9), the “Son of God” who relates to the audience as his “brothers” (2:11-12), and then designated as a “high priest,” likened in every way with his “brothers” (2:17).<sup>10</sup> All three terms—Jesus, Son of God, and high priest—are combined in the exhortation that introduces the conclusion of the A section, “having then a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to the confession” (4:14). The A section then terminates with a climactic assertion, “although being a son, he learned from the things he suffered obedience, and having been made perfect, he became for all those who obey him a source of eternal salvation, having been designated by God high priest according to the order of Melchizedek” (5:8-10).

The title of the second main section (B) of this first macrochiastic level contains three key terms unique to this section: “awaiting (eagerly),” “offered himself,” and “intercede.” The first, “awaiting,” occurs only once in Hebrews, in the statement that “Christ offered once ‘to offer up the sins of many’ (cf. Isa 53:12), a second time without sin will be seen, by those eagerly awaiting (ἀπεκδεχόμενοι) him, for salvation” (9:28). The closely related term, “waiting,” occurs only twice in Hebrews, both times in the A’ section. Having offered a sacrifice for all time, Jesus Christ “sat at the right

<sup>10</sup> The audience are directly addressed as “brothers” (ἀδελφοί) in 3:1, 12; 10:19; 13:22.

hand of God, henceforth waiting (ἐκδεχόμενος) until his enemies are placed as a footstool for his feet" (10:13; cf. LXX Ps 109:1). Abraham sojourned in the land of the promise (11:9), "for he was waiting (ἐξεδέχετο) for the city having foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (11:10).

Oriented toward the future, final accomplishment of God's salvation, these terms for "awaiting/waiting" take their place within the central theme of hope that pervades Hebrews. The essential term of "hope" (ἐλπίς) within this theme plays a noteworthy role within the chiasmic dynamics of this first macrochiasmic level. Introduced by the verb "hold to" (κατέχω), the term occurs initially in the first main section (A) in the exhortation, "if we hold to (κατάσχωμεν) the confidence and to the boasting of the hope (ἐλπίδος)" (3:6). Again introduced by the same verb, the term occurs a final time in the concluding main section (A') in the exhortation, "let us hold to (κατέχωμεν) the confession of the hope (ἐλπίδος) unwaveringly" (10:23), the combination of "hold to" with "hope" thus creating a chiasmic parallelism.<sup>11</sup>

In between, in the B section, the term of "hope" occurs thrice. First, the audience are exhorted, "but we desire each of you to demonstrate the same eagerness for the assurance of the hope (ἐλπίδος) until the end" (6:11). Then they are exhorted, "we who have taken refuge may have a strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope (ἐλπίδος) lying ahead" (6:18).<sup>12</sup> Finally, the audience are assured, "for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand there is the introduction of a better hope (ἐλπίδος) through which we are drawing near to God" (7:19).

The term "son" is used only in the title of the A section, because nine of its explicit references to Jesus as Son of God occur there (1:2; 1:5[2x]; 1:8; 2:10; 3:6; 4:14; 5:5, 8), while there are only three such occurrences in the B section (6:6; 7:3, 18) and only one in the A' section (10:29).<sup>13</sup> That the term "high priest" is used in the title of both the A and B main sections, but not in the final A' main section, reflects the distribution of this term within

<sup>11</sup> The verb "hold to" (κατέχω) occurs only one other time in Hebrews in 3:14, but without the term "hope" as its explicit object, as in the chiasmic parallelism between 3:6 and 10:23.

<sup>12</sup> Note how this middle occurrence within the B section, with its use of the verb "hold fast to" (κρατῆσαι), approximates the first and final exhortations regarding hope in 3:6 and 10:23.

<sup>13</sup> J. Daryl Charles, "The Angels, Sonship and Birthright in the Letter to the Hebrews," *JETS* 33 (1990): 171–78; Kenneth L. Schenck, "A Celebration of the Enthroned Son: The Catena of Hebrews 1," *JBL* 120 (2001): 469–85; Scott D. Mackie, "Confession of the Son of God in Hebrews," *NTS* 53 (2007): 114–29.

Hebrews. This key titular term occurs seven times in the A section (2:17; 3:1; 4:14, 15; 5:1, 5, 10), nine times in the central B section (6:20; 7:26, 27, 28; 8:1, 3; 9:7, 11, 25), but only once in the A' section (13:11). Furthermore, in this final occurrence the term refers to the earthly high priest, so that there is no use of the term “high priest” as an explicit designation of Jesus in the A' section.<sup>14</sup>

The third person singular reflexive pronoun in the accusative case, “himself” (ἐαυτόν), occurs once in the A section (5:5: “glorified not himself”) and once in the A' section (12:3: “endured such disputing against himself”) in reference to Jesus. But it occurs thrice as the object of “offering,” with Jesus, the high priest, as both the subject and object, exclusively in the B section. Jesus offered sacrifice for sins, “once for all having offered up himself (ἐαυτὸν ἀνενέγκας)” (7:27). If the blood of animals makes holy those defiled for the cleansing of the flesh (9:13), “how much more will the blood of the Christ, who through the Holy Spirit offered himself (ἐαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν) unblemished to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God” (9:14). Finally, Christ entered heaven in the presence of God on behalf of us (9:24), “not that he might offer himself (προσφέρει ἐαυτόν) repeatedly” (9:25).<sup>15</sup>

The term “intercede” is included within the title of the B main section, since it occurs exclusively in this section: Because Jesus remains forever, he has the priesthood that is permanent (7:24), “whence also he is able to save completely those who approach God through him, always living to intercede (ἐντυγχάνειν) on behalf of them” (7:25). In addition, the B section contains three of the four occurrences of terms related to the theme of intercession, “guarantee” and “guarantor.”

<sup>14</sup> John M. Scholer, *Proleptic Priests: Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (JSNTSup 49; Sheffield: JSOT, 1991); Marie E. Isaacs, “Priesthood and the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *HeyJ* 38 (1997): 51–62; James Swetnam, “A Merciful and Trustworthy High Priest: Interpreting Hebrews 2:17,” *Pacific Journal of Theology* 21 (1999): 6–25; James Kurian, *Jesus Our High Priest: Ps 110.4 as the Substructure of Heb 5.1–7.28* (European University Studies, Series 23; Theology 693; Frankfurt: Lang, 2000); Deborah W. Rooke, “Jesus as Royal Priest: Reflections on the Interpretation of the Melchizedek Tradition in Heb 7,” *Bib* 81 (2000): 81–94; Patrick Gray, “Brotherly Love and the High Priest Christology of Hebrews,” *JBL* 122 (2003): 335–51; A. Orlov, “The Heir of Righteousness and the King of Righteousness: The Priestly Noachic Polemics in 2 Enoch and the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *JTS* 58 (2007): 45–65.

<sup>15</sup> Richard D. Nelson, “‘He Offered Himself’: Sacrifice in Hebrews,” *Int* 57 (2003): 251–65.



The theme of “guaranteeing” in Hebrews is introduced by the verb with God as its subject. When God planned to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his plan, “he guaranteed (ἐμεσίτευσεν) it with an oath” (6:17). Jesus then emerges as God’s guarantor. As high priest (8:1), Jesus “has obtained a more excellent ministry, to the degree that he is guarantor (μεσίτης) of a better covenant, which on the basis of better promises was given law” (8:6). Jesus thus “is guarantor (μεσίτης) of a new covenant” (9:15). The term “guarantor” occurs a final time in the A' section in the assertion that “you have approached . . . Jesus, guarantor (μεσίτη) of a new covenant” (12:22, 24), which can be distinguished from the occurrences in the B section both by the use of “guarantor” as object rather than subject and by a variation in the terminology for the expression “new covenant” (διαθήκης καινῆς in 9:15; διαθήκης νέας in 12:24).<sup>16</sup>

As discussed above, the phrase “By Faith with Grace in Heart” was chosen as the first part of the title of the A' main section because of its chiasmic parallelism with the A section. It remains to consider the formulation “Let Us Do the Will” and the expression “Living God” in the concluding portion of the title of the A' section.

The theme of doing the will of God as the sacrifice that constitutes worship truly pleasing to God occurs exclusively in the A' section. It begins with a quotation of Ps 39:8-9 (LXX) attributed to Jesus upon his entering the world (10:5), “behold, I have come, as in the scroll of the book it is written concerning me, to do (ποιῆσαι), O God, your will (τὸ θέλημά σου)” (10:7). When Jesus said, “behold, I have come to do your will (τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου)” (10:9), he did away with the first covenant, that he might establish the second, “in which will (θέληματι) we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all” (10:10). Consequently, the audience are similarly expected to do the will of God in order to acquire God’s promise: “For you have need of endurance so that, doing the will of God (τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ ποιήσαντες), you may acquire the promise” (10:36). And, at the conclusion of Hebrews the audience hear the author’s climactic prayer that God “provide you with every good thing

<sup>16</sup> John Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* (SNTSMS 75; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Scott W. Hahn, “A Broken Covenant and the Curse of Death: A Study of Hebrews 9:15–22,” *CBQ* 66 (2004): 416–36; idem, “Covenant, Cult, and the Curse-of-Death: Διαθήκη In Heb 9:15–22,” in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights* (ed. Gabriella Gelardini; BIS 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 65–88; Susan Haber, “From Priestly Torah to Christ Cultus: The Re-Vision of Covenant and Cult in Hebrews,” *JNT* 28 (2005): 105–24.

in order to do the will of him (τὸ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ), doing among us what is pleasing before him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for the ages of the ages. Amen” (13:21).

The expression “living God,” a description embracing the ongoing vibrant activity of God, who has power over life and death, from initial creation to re-creation in resurrected, eternal life, occurs four times in Hebrews—once in the A section, once in the B section, but twice, in a climactic fashion, in the A' section. In the A section it is introduced ominously in the warning: “See to it, brothers, that there not be in anyone of you an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the living God (θεοῦ ζῶντος)” (3:12).<sup>17</sup> In the B section it is used much more favorably in reference to the empowerment for worship provided by the unique sacrifice of Jesus: “How much more will the blood of the Christ, who through the Holy Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God (θεῷ ζῶντι)” (9:14).

The two final occurrences of “living God” in the A' section reprise and develop both the ominous occurrence in the A section and the more favorable one in the B section. After hearing scriptural references to God as judge of his people (10:30), the audience are told, “it is fearful to fall into the hands of the living God (θεοῦ ζῶντος)” (10:31). Finally and climactically, after hearing that they have not approached the fearful Mount Sinai (12:18-21), the audience are told, “rather you have approached Mount Zion, the city of the living God (θεοῦ ζῶντος)” (12:22).<sup>18</sup>

The term “living God” is key to the major theme in Hebrews of salvation from death to resurrected, eternal life through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus, as it expresses the source of the hoped-for goal of this salvation. Jesus shared the blood and flesh of the children God gave him, so that through death he might destroy the power of death that enslaves us in fear all of our lives (2:13-15). Jesus is a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (6:20), who “goes on living (ζῆν)” eternally (7:8). As such a high priest, Jesus “is able to save completely those who approach God through him, always living (ζῶν) to intercede on behalf of them” (7:25). The blood of the Christ will “cleanse our conscience from dead works to

<sup>17</sup> Note the closely related “living (ζῶν) is the the word of God (θεοῦ)” in 4:12.

<sup>18</sup> Patrick Gray, *Godly Fear: The Epistle to the Hebrews and Greco-Roman Critiques of Superstition* (SBLAbib 16; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); Kiwoong Son, *Zion Symbolism in Hebrews: Hebrews 12:18-24 as a Hermeneutical Key to the Epistle* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2005).

offer worship to the living God (θεῷ ζῶντι) (9:14). Through the blood and flesh of his self-sacrifice Jesus inaugurated for us a fresh and “living” (ζῶσαν) way for entrance into the heavenly “holy things” to worship the living God (10:19-20). Each individual in the audience is called to be a “just one,” who “from faith will live (ζήσεται)” eternally (10:38). Disciplined by their earthly fathers, the audience are asked to endure God’s discipline for their eternal life: “Shall we not all the more then be subjected to the father of spirits and live (ζήσομεν)?” (12:9).

To sum up, then, in the A section (1:1-5:10) of this first macrochiastic level the audience are exhorted to be faithful in their hearts to the grace of God now generously available to us from Jesus as the Son in whom God, as the “living” God, is still speaking to us, and as the faithful and merciful high priest who has become a source of eternal salvation for all who faithfully obey him. The B section (5:11-9:28) then deepens the audience’s appreciation for the death and resurrection/exaltation of Jesus as his heavenly high priestly worship in which his unique self-sacrifice expiated our sins. This enabled him to continually intercede for us, so that we may offer worship pleasing to the living God, as we eagerly await the second coming of the Christ in hope for final salvation from death to eternal life, the life of the living God. In the A' section (10:1-13:25), by way of chiastic development of the A section, the audience are exhorted, by their persevering faith and with their hearts confirmed by God’s generous grace, with and through Jesus to offer worship pleasing to God in hope for final salvation from death to eternal life by doing the will of the living God.

## *2. Second Macrochiastic Level*

- A) Heb 1:1-5:10: Be Faithful in Heart to Grace from the Son and High Priest
- AA) Heb 1:1-4: **God Spoke** to Us in a **Son** Who Made a Cleansing for Sins
- AB) Heb 1:5-14: Angels Are **Spirits** to Assist Those Inheriting Salvation
- AC) Heb 2:1-4: How Will We Escape, Neglecting the **Word** of Salvation?
- AD) Heb 2:5-9: We **Note** Jesus Who on Behalf of All Might Taste Death
- AE) Heb 2:10-18: Those Who Are **Being Tested** He Is Able to Help
- AF) Heb 3:1-6: Jesus as Son Faithful beyond Moses
- AE') Heb 3:7-11: Those Who **Tested** Will Never Enter into My Rest
- AD') Heb 3:12-19: We **Note** the Unfaithful Were Not Able to Enter the Rest

- AC') Heb 4:1-11: The **Word** of Rest They Heard Did Not Benefit Them  
 AB') Heb 4:12-13: The Living Word of God Penetrates Soul and **Spirit**  
 AA') Heb 4:14-5:10: **God Spoke** to the **Son** as a Priest Who Sacrifices for **Sins**
- B) Heb 5:11-9:28: We Await the High Priest Who Offered Himself to Intercede  
 BA) Heb 5:11-6:12: Imitate Those Inheriting the Promises of **Salvation**  
 BB) Heb 6:13-20: As **Heirs** Hold Fast to the Hope as a **Firm** Anchor  
 BC) Heb 7:1-10: See How Great Is Melchizedek Who Goes On **Living**  
 BD) Heb 7:11-17: According to the Order of Melchizedek not **Aaron**  
 BE) Heb 7:18-28: He Is Able to Save the **People** from **Sins**  
 BF) Heb 8:1-6: High Priest of Things Shown to Moses  
 BE') Heb 8:7-13: The **People** Whose **Sins** God Does Not Remember  
 BD') Heb 9:1-10: **Aaronic** Sacrifices Do Not Perfect Us in Conscience  
 BC') Heb 9:11-14: Blood of Christ Cleanses Our Conscience for **Living**  
 God  
 BB') Heb 9:15-23: We May Receive the Eternal **Inheritance** of **Firm** Covenant  
 BA') Heb 9:24-28: Christ Will Bring **Salvation** to Those Eagerly Awaiting Him
- A') Heb 10:1-13:25: By Faith with Grace in Heart Let Us Do the Will of the Living God  
 A'A) Heb 10:1-14: You Have **Provided** a Body for Me **To Do** Your **Will** for the **Good**  
 A'B) Heb 10:15-30: **Hearts Made Holy** Not **Abandoning** as the Lord **Will**  
 Judge  
 A'C) Heb 10:31-39: **Fearful** of **Hands** of the **Living God** for What **Remains**  
 A'D) Heb 11:1-7: An Heir of **Righteousness** according to Faith  
 A'E) Heb 11:8-19: With **Promises** He **Acquired** Him from the **Dead**  
 A'F) Heb 11:20-31: Moses a Model of Faith in Christ  
 A'E') Heb 11:32-40: Their **Dead** Not the **Promise** Did They **Acquire**  
 A'D') Heb 12:1-11: The Peaceful Fruit of **Righteousness**  
 A'C') Heb 12:12-29: **Unfearful Hands** for What **Remains** from the **Living**  
 God  
 A'B') Heb 13:1-16: God **Will** **Judge** Not **Abandon** the **Heart Made Holy** by  
 Jesus  
 A'A') Heb 13:17-25: May God **Provide** You with Every **Good To Do** His **Will**

The above schematic overview illustrates how each of the main A-B-A' sections of the first macrochiastic level is divided into eleven units arranged in chiastic patterns that constitute the second macrochiastic level. The chiastic parallels are indicated by the words in bold type in the titles of each unit. A full explanation of the determination and dynamics of the chiastic

patterns of this second macrochiastic level can be found in the subsequent chapters of this book.

### *3. Third Macrochiastic Level*

Aa) Heb 1:1-2:18: Let Us Not Neglect So Great a Salvation

Aaa) Heb 1:1-4: Having Made a Cleansing for **Sins**

Aab) Heb 1:5-14: God Will Place Your Enemies as a **Footstool for Your Feet**

Aac) Heb 2:1-4: The Confirmed *Word* of Salvation

Aab') Heb 2:5-9: We Do Not Yet See All Things Subjected **under His Feet**

Aaa') Heb 2:10-18: Tested to Expiate **Sins** of Those Being Tested

Ab) Heb 3:1-6: We Are His House If We Hold to the Hope

Aa') Heb 3:7-5:10: For All Who Obey He Became a Source of Eternal Salvation

Aa'a) Heb 3:7-11: Do Not Harden Your Hearts Like Those Who **Tested**

Aa'b) Heb 3:12-19: Take Note That You Do Not Fall Away from the **Living God**

Aa'c) Heb 4:1-11: The *Word* for Hearing

Aa'b') Heb 4:12-13: **Living** is the Word of **God** That Penetrates to the Spirit

Aa'a') Heb 4:14-5:10: We Have a High Priest Who Has Been **Tested** in All Things

Ba) Heb 5:11-7:28: Let Us Approach God through Jesus Who Is Able to Save Us

Baa) Heb 5:11-6:12: The **Word** of Righteousness

Bab) Heb 6:13-20: High Priest Forever **according to the Order of Melchizedek**

Bac) Heb 7:1-10: A High Priest Who Goes On *Living*

Bab') Heb 7:11-17: Priest Forever **according to the Order of Melchizedek**

Baa') Heb 7:18-28: The **Word** of the Oath

Bb) Heb 8:1-6: Guarantor of a Better Covenant with Better Promises

Ba') Heb 8:7-9:28: The Christ Who Offered Himself We Await for Salvation

Ba'a) Heb 8:7-13: The **Sins** of Them I Will Remember No Longer

Ba'b) Heb 9:1-10: The Tablets of the **Covenant**

Ba'c) Heb 9:11-14: That We May Offer Worship to the *Living* God

Ba'b') Heb 9:15-23: Guarantor of a New **Covenant**

Ba'a') Heb 9:24-28: Offered for the **Sins** of Many He Will Be Seen Again Without **Sin**

- A'a) Heb 10:1-11:19: With Faith Let Us Approach the Living God To Live  
 A'aa) Heb 10:1-14: **Waiting** until His Enemies Are Placed as a Footstool for His Feet  
     A'ab) Heb 10:15-30: The Holy Spirit **Testifies** for Us To **Approach**  
     A'ac) Heb 10:31-39: Fearful to Fall into the Hands of the *Living God*  
     A'ab') Heb 11:1-7: Abel and Enoch **Testified To Approach** God  
 A'aa') Heb 11:8-19: **Waiting** for the City Having Foundations Made by God
- A'b) Heb 11:20-31: By Faith Moses Endured the Reproach of the Christ
- A'a') Heb 11:32-13:25: To Live Let Us Offer Worship Pleasing to the Living God  
 A'a'a) Heb 11:32-40: Women Received Their **Dead** from Resurrection  
     A'a'b) Heb 12:1-11: The Peaceful **Fruit** of Righteousness through Discipline  
     A'a'c) Heb 12:12-29: Not What Is Fearful But the City of the *Living God*  
     A'a'b') Heb 13:1-16: Offer to God the **Fruit** of Lips Confessing His Name  
 A'a'a') Heb 13:17-25: God Led Up from the **Dead** the Great Shepherd of the Sheep

The above schematic overview illustrates how each of the eleven-unit main sections of the second macrochiastic level is further divided into three chiastically arranged subsections. The first subsections consist of the first five units of each main section (1:1-2:18; 5:11-7:28; 10:1-11:19), in which each five-unit subsection exhibits its own chiastic arrangement. The second subsections consist of the single sixth unit of each main section (3:1-6; 8:1-6; 11:20-31). And the third subsections consist of the last five units of each main section (3:7-5:10; 8:7-9:28; 11:32-13:25), in which each five-unit subsection exhibits its own chiastic arrangement. The single-unit second (b) subsections thus function as the pivotal sections in the chiastic alternation between the first five-unit (a) subsections and the last five-unit (a') subsections in each main section.

The chiastic parallels within each five-unit subsection are indicated by the words in bold type within the titles of each unit. The italicized words in the titles of each central (c) unit of the five-unit subsections indicate the chiastic parallels between the five-unit subsections within each main section. A full explanation of the determination and dynamics of the various chiastic patterns of this third macrochiastic level, as well as of the various microchiastic structures within each unit, can be found in the subsequent chapters of this book.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> The illustrations of all of these chiastic levels and patterns are merely a visual attempt to indicate to a modern reader what structures the ancient audience were experiencing, but not necessarily consciously detecting, as they listened to the oral performance of the letter.

## B. Authorship and Literary Genre

The author of Hebrews refers to himself with a masculine participle (11:32). Although unknown to us, he was apparently well known to his audience. At one time he had been with his audience, and now hopes to be restored to them (13:19). Accompanied by “our brother Timothy,” who has been “released,” he expects to see them soon (13:23).<sup>20</sup>

He implicitly includes himself among the audience’s leaders, in whom they are to be confident and to whom they are to submit (13:17). He employs the first person plural in directing his audience to “pray for *us*, for *we* are confident that *we* have a beneficent conscience, among all wanting to be well treated” (13:18), before he employs the first person singular to refer exclusively to himself (13:19). Just as their leaders are keeping watch on behalf of “your souls (ψυχῶν)” (13:17), so likewise is the author, who has informed his audience of the hope “we have as an anchor of the soul (ψυχῆς)” (6:19), encouraged them that “we are not of drawing back into destruction, but of faith into preservation of the soul (ψυχῆς)” (10:39), and

<sup>20</sup> That Apollos, who was known as “an eloquent speaker, powerful in the scriptures” (Acts 18:24), and who was associated with Paul, along with Timothy, in Ephesus when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 16:8, 10, 12), authored Hebrews, in view of its eloquent employment of the scriptures, is a plausible hypothesis, but only an hypothesis. See George H. Guthrie, “The Case for Apollos as the Author of Hebrews,” *Faith and Mission* 18 (2001): 41–56; Simon J. Kistemaker, “The Authorship of Hebrews,” *Faith and Mission* 18 (2001): 57–69; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (NLT; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 40–44; Ben Witherington, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2007), 17–24. For detailed discussions of the possible identity of the author, see Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 1–6; Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 14–20; William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (WBC 47a; Dallas: Word Books, 1991), xlix–li; Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 3–21; David A. DeSilva, *Perseverance in Gratitude: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Epistle “to the Hebrews”* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 23–27; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 36; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 42–46; Jennifer L. Koosed and Robert P. Seesengood, “Constructions and Collusions: The Making and Unmaking of Identity in Qoheleth and Hebrews,” in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights* (ed. Gabriella Gelardini; BIS 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 265–80; Iutisone Salevao, *Legitimation in the Letter to the Hebrews: The Construction and Maintenance of a Symbolic Universe* (JSNTSup 219; London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 95–121; Alan C. Mitchell, *Hebrews* (SacPag 13; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007), 2–6. For recent discussions on the relationship of Hebrews to the Pauline letters, see Brevard S. Childs, *The Church’s Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 237–52; Stephen Finlan, *The Apostle Paul and the Pauline Tradition* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2008), 182–86.

urged “that you may not become fatigued, growing weary in your souls (ψυχᾶς)” (12:3).

The audience are to remember their past leaders, who spoke to them the “word (λόγον) of God” and imitate their faith (13:7). Their present leaders are “giving them back a word (λόγον)” (13:17). They are thus implicitly to imitate the faith demonstrated to them by the author, by holding on to “the word (λόγον) of the encouragement,” a designation characterizing the text he has written to them (13:22). Appropriate to his being implicitly a leader himself, the author directs his audience to “greet all your leaders” (13:24). That Hebrews does not begin with an identification of the author who has composed and sent it, indicates that, in contrast to the letters of Paul, the force of its persuasiveness relies less on the personal, apostolic authority of its author and more on its author’s masterful use of scripture as the authoritative word of God within his impressive rhetorical argument.<sup>21</sup> The many explicit scriptural quotations as well as implicit allusions throughout Hebrews indicate that the author obviously presupposes and relies upon his audience’s thorough knowledge of the OT.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Martin Karrer, *Der Brief an die Hebräer: Kapitel 1,1–5,10* (ÖTK 20/1; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus, 2002), 42–44; Robert P. Gordon, *Hebrews: Second Edition* (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2008), 11.

<sup>22</sup> On the use of scripture, particularly the LXX, in Hebrews, see Konrad Taut, *Anleitung zum Schriftverständnis: Die heiligen Schriften nach dem Hebräerbrief* (THEOS 20; Hamburg: Dr. Kovac, 1998); Gareth Lee Cockerill, *Hebrews: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1999), 20–25; Gert Jacobus Steyn, “A Quest for the Vorlage of the ‘Song of Moses’ (Deut 32) Quotations in Hebrews,” *Neot* 34 (2000): 263–72; idem, “Psalm 2 in Hebrews,” *Neot* 37 (2003): 262–82; idem, “An Overview of the Extent and Diversity of Methods Utilised by the Author of Hebrews When Using the Old Testament,” *Neot* 42 (2008): 327–52; Radu Gheorghita, *The Role of the Septuagint in Hebrews: An Investigation of Its Influence with Special Consideration to the Use of Hab 2:3–4 in Heb 10:37–38* (WUNT 2/160; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Harold W. Attridge, “The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Scrolls,” in *When Judaism and Christianity Began: Essays in Memory of Anthony J. Saldarini* (2 vols.; eds. A. J. Avery-Peck, et al.; JSJSup 85; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 2:315–42; Martin Karrer, “The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Septuagint,” in *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures* (eds. Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden; SBLSCS 53; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 335–53; Andreas J. Köstenberger, “The Use of Scripture in the Pastoral and General Epistles and the Book of Revelation,” in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; McMaster New Testament Studies; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 230–54; Angela Rascher, *Schriftauslegung und Christologie im Hebräerbrief* (BZNW 153; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007); D. H. Wenkel, “Gezerah Shavah as Analogy in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *BTB* 37 (2007): 62–68; David M. Allen, *Deuteronomy and Exhortation in Hebrews: A Study in Narrative Re-Presentation* (WUNT 238; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Susan E. Docherty, *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case*



Although Hebrews does not begin with the identification of its sender and recipients, it concludes with customary epistolary characteristics.<sup>23</sup> The author refers to what he has presented in Hebrews as “the word of the encouragement (τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως)” that “I have written by letter (ἐπέστειλα) to you” (13:22).<sup>24</sup> The same terminology is used—“a word of encouragement (λόγος παρακλήσεως)” —to describe the homily or sermon that Paul delivered in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:15). Hence, Hebrews may be considered an epistolary homily or sermon, or more precisely in accord with its own self-description, “the word of the encouragement written by letter,” and intended to be read publicly and heard by its envisioned audience in the communal setting of their worshiping assembly.<sup>25</sup> It not only exemplifies and epitomizes the kind of homily or sermon or “word of encouragement” that was delivered by a leader within a worshiping assembly, but, as I hope to demonstrate, its main thrust is to

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*Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation* (WUNT 2/260; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009); Kenneth L. Schenck, “God Has Spoken: Hebrews’ Theology of the Scriptures,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard J. Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 321–36; Daniel J. Treier, “Speech Acts, Hearing Hearts, and Other Senses: The Doctrine of Scripture Practiced in Hebrews,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard J. Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 337–50.

<sup>23</sup> For an unconvincing attempt to argue that Hebrews 13 was written by a different author than chapters 1–12 and for a different situation, see Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, “The ‘Letter’ to the Hebrews and Its Thirteenth Chapter,” *NTS* 50 (2004): 390–405. See also Donald A. Hagner, *Encountering the Book of Hebrews: An Exposition* (Encountering Biblical Studies; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 29–30.

<sup>24</sup> One of the meanings given for ἐπιστέλλω by BDAG (381) is “inform/instruct by letter.”

<sup>25</sup> Harold W. Attridge, “Paraenesis in a Homily (*Logos Parakleseos*): The Possible Location of, and Socialization in, the ‘Epistle to the Hebrews,’” in *Paraenesis: Act and Form* (eds. Leo G. Perdue and John G. Gammie; Semeia 50; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 211–26; Judith H. Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Truth: Early Christian Homiletics of Rest* (SBLDS 166; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998); Kenneth L. Schenck, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003); Peter Walker, “A Place for Hebrews?: Contexts for a First-Century Sermon,” in *The New Testament in Its First Century Setting: Essays on Context and Background in Honour of B. W. Winter* (eds. P. J. Williams, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 231–49; Gabriella Gelardini, “Hebrews, an Ancient Synagogue Homily for *Tisha be-Av*: Its Function, Its Basis, Its Theological Interpretation,” in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights* (ed. Gabriella Gelardini; BIS 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 107–27; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Hebrews: A Guide* (London: Clark, 2006), 9–14; Antonio Portalatín, *Temporal Oppositions as Hermeneutical Categories in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (European University Studies, Series 23; Theology 833; Frankfurt: Lang, 2006), 9–26.

deepen the understanding and appreciation of its audience, some of whom are abandoning their gathering (10:25), for the significance of what takes place in their communal worship.

### C. Situation of the Audience

The title of the document, “To Hebrews,” was added in the second or third century, and thus cannot be taken as a certain indication of either the geographical destination of the letter or the ethnic composition of its audience.<sup>26</sup> The author’s statement that “those from Italy greet you” (13:24) probably indicates that the letter was sent to an audience located somewhere in Italy, with Rome as a likely destination. It may well have been composed and sent from Ephesus, a city associated with Timothy (Acts 19:22; 1 Cor 16:8; 1 Tim 1:3; 2 Tim 1:18; 4:12; cf. Heb 13:23). But there is no certainty regarding either the geographical provenance or the destination of the letter.

Regarding the date of the letter, many think it was probably written before the destruction of Jerusalem (70 A.D.), reasoning that if the sacrificial cult in the temple there had already been terminated, this fact would surely have been employed within the author’s argument. But the argument is based on scriptural references to the sacrificial cult associated with the tabernacle rather than the temple. And so there are those who argue for a date after the destruction of the temple.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the most that can be said with relative certainty is that Hebrews was written sometime in the latter half of the first century.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> On the title, see Koester, *Hebrews*, 171–73.

<sup>27</sup> For a possible date after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, see Kenneth L. Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice* (SNTSMS 143; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 195–98. See also Ellen Bradshaw Aitken, “Portraying the Temple in Stone and Text: The Arch of Titus and the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights* (ed. Gabriella Gelardini; BIS 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 133–36.

<sup>28</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 9: “The most probable range of dates within which Hebrews was composed is thus 60 to 100 CE. Decisive reasons for a precise dating or narrower range have not been adduced.” See the major commentaries for fuller discussions of the date, provenance, and destination of Hebrews. See also Stanley E. Porter, “The Date of Composition of Hebrews and Use of the Present Tense-Form,” in *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretations in Honour of Michael D. Goulder* (eds. Stanley E. Porter, et al.; BIS 8; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 295–313; Peter Walker, “Jerusalem in Hebrews 13:9–14 and the Dating of the Epistle,” *TynBul* 45 (1994): 39–71.

What does the text of Hebrews tell us about the situation for which the audience need “the word of the encouragement (παρακλήσεως)” to be written to them (13:22)? First, they are in danger of drifting away from and neglecting the word of salvation that began to be spoken to them by the Lord Jesus (2:1-3), the Son in whom God has now definitively spoken (1:1-2). This word continues to be spoken to them as brothers of the Son, the initiator of their salvation (2:10-11), within their worshiping assembly, as indicated by his quoting of LXX Ps 21:23: “I will proclaim your name to my brothers, in the midst of the assembly I will praise you” (2:12).<sup>29</sup>

This word concerns their salvation from enslavement to the fear of death through the death of the Son as high priest (2:14-17) by the grace of God on behalf of all (2:9). The audience are to see to it, then, that there is not in anyone of them an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the living God (3:12). Rather, they are to “encourage” (παρακαλεῖτε) one another to hear the voice of the living God (3:13-15), whose living word they are to respond to with their own word(s) (4:12-13) within their worshiping assembly. They are thus encouraged to hold fast to the confession and to approach with confidence the throne of grace, by being faithful participants within their worshiping assembly, in order to receive mercy and find grace for timely help (4:14-16). In short, in accord with the title of the first macrochiastic level, the audience are encouraged to be faithful in heart to grace from the Son and high priest.

Secondly, the audience need to go beyond the initial word about the Christ that they have heard in their worshiping assembly and move on to a more perfect understanding of it (6:1), to the better things having to do with salvation (6:9). They are to have a strong “encouragement” (παρακλήσιν) to hold fast to the hope lying ahead (6:18), which Jesus has provided in becoming high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (6:20), so that he is able to save completely those who approach God through him, always living to intercede on behalf of them (7:25). They are to deepen

<sup>29</sup> For discussions relevant to the significance of worship for the audience of Hebrews, see David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 247–54; Jorg Christian Salzmänn, *Lehren und Ermahnen: Zur Geschichte des christlichen Wortgottesdienstes in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (WUNT 2/59; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 108–13; Peter Wick, *Die urchristlichen Gottesdienste: Entstehung und Entwicklung im Rahmen der frühjüdischen Tempel-, Synagogen- und Hausfrömmigkeit* (BWANT 150; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002), 313–27; Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 497–504; Gerald L. Borchert, *Worship in the New Testament: Divine Mystery and Human Response* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2008), 176–82.

their understanding of the death of Christ as the self-sacrificial worship of the high priest who offered himself unblemished to God, so that they might worship the living God (9:14; cf. 7:27; 9:25), both within and outside of their worshiping assembly. They are thus to be eagerly awaiting his coming again for their final salvation (9:28). In short, in accord with the title of the second macrochiastic level, the audience are encouraged to be eagerly awaiting the high priest who offered himself to intercede for us.

It is evident that the author aims to deepen the understanding of his audience for the death of Christ as the self-sacrificial worship in heaven of the high priest. They participate in this heavenly worship as a worshiping assembly when they celebrate the eucharistic memorial of the Lord's last supper. It is a presupposition of my investigation that, whether or not the original audience have heard any of the other NT writings, they were very likely familiar with the key terms traditionally used to describe Jesus' last supper. The author thus elaborates and provides deeper meaning and appreciation for such eucharistic terms as "body," "blood of the (new) covenant," "on behalf of," "forgiveness of sins" (cf. Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26; Heb 2:9; 5:1; 6:20; 7:25, 27; 9:7, 14-15, 20, 22, 24; 10:5, 10, 12, 18, 29; 12:24; 13:20). Furthermore, all of the various versions of this traditional terminology have their common OT background in such texts as Exod 24:1-11, Jer 38:31-34 (LXX), and Isa 53:10-12, which the author employs throughout his letter (cf. Heb 8:8-12; 9:20, 28; 10:16-17).<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> For an unpersuasive argument that Hebrews is not concerned with the eucharist, see Ronald Williamson, "The Eucharist and the Epistle to the Hebrews," *NTS* 21 (1974-75): 300-312. Among those who advocate a eucharistic dimension are: Paul Andriessen, "L'Eucharistie dans l'Épître aux Hébreux," *NRTh* 94 (1972): 269-77; James Swetnam, "Christology and the Eucharist in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Bib* 70 (1989): 74-95; Knut Backhaus, *Der Neue Bund und das Werden der Kirche: Die Diatheke-Deutung des Hebräerbriefs im Rahmen der frühchristlichen Theologiegeschichte* (NTAbh 29; Münster: Aschendorff, 1996), 228-32; Arthur A. Just, "Entering Holiness: Christology and Eucharist in Hebrews," *CTQ* 69 (2005): 75-95. As Swetnam ("Christology," 74) points out, "the hypothesis of the importance of the eucharist gives a coherence, relevance, and depth to the letter which is otherwise lacking." See also Frank Crüsemann, "Der neue Bund im Neuen Testament: Erwägungen zum Verständnis des Christusbundes in der Abendmahlstradition und im Hebräerbrief," in *Mincha: Festgabe für Rolf Rendtorff zum 75. Geburtstag* (ed. Erhard Blum; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000), 47-60; Denis Farkasfalvy, "The Eucharistic Provenance of New Testament Texts," in *Rediscovering the Eucharist: Ecumenical Conversations* (ed. Roch A. Kereszty; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2003), 27-51.

Thirdly, with a true heart in assurance of faith, the audience, through their celebration of the eucharist, are to approach and enter the heavenly worship of the living God through the way provided for them by the self-sacrifice of Jesus as high priest (10:19-22; 12:22-29). They are thus to be “encouraging” (παρακαλοῦντες) one another within their worshiping gathering, instead of abandoning it, as some are apparently doing (10:25). If they abandon their worshiping gathering, they would be depriving themselves of the grace of God available to them through their communal worship (10:29; 12:15, 28; 13:9). There they hear the “teaching” (διδασκαλίας) of the living word of God (6:2). There they share in the “fellowship” (κοινωνίας) of professing their faith (13:15-16). There they are to “pray” (προσεύχεσθε) as a community (13:18) with psalms (13:6). And there they share in the eucharistic “breaking of the bread,” prefigured by the “presentation of the loaves (πρόθεσις τῶν ἄρτων)” in the tabernacle (9:2).<sup>31</sup>

They need this grace to be able to persevere in the sufferings they have already endured, so that by thus doing the will of the living God, they may acquire the promise that by their faithful perseverance they will live eternally (10:31-39). They need to remember the “encouragement” (παρακλήσεως) God has addressed to them as “sons” (12:5), and thereby consider their sufferings as the discipline by which they are to subject themselves to the Father of spirits and live eternally (12:6-11). With their hearts confirmed by the grace (13:9) available to them within the celebration of the eucharist, they may offer worship pleasing to God (12:28). Through Jesus they are to offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, both within and outside of their worshiping gathering, by publicly professing their faith, doing good, and not neglecting their fellowship, for with such sacrifices God is pleased (13:15-16). In short, in accord with the title of the third macrochiastic level, the audience are encouraged by faith with grace in heart to live eternally by doing the will of the living God “through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for the ages of the ages. Amen!” (13:22, 25).<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> There are thus indications in Hebrews of the characteristic elements paradigmatic of early Christian communal worship, as expressed in Acts 2:42: “They were devoting themselves to the teaching (διδασκαλίᾳ) of the apostles and to the fellowship (κοινωνία), to the breaking of the bread (κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου) and to the prayers (προσευχαῖς).”

<sup>32</sup> For recent discussions of the situation of the audience in Hebrews, see James W. Thompson, *Hebrews* (Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 6–10; C. Adrian Thomas, *A Case For Mixed-Audience with Reference to the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews* (New York: Lang, 2008).

## D. Literary-Rhetorical, Audience-Oriented Method

As indicated above, Hebrews is an epistolary homily written to be read in a public performance, most likely in a liturgical gathering, as an oral performance substituting for the personal presence of its author (13:23). I will employ a literary-rhetorical method that treats Hebrews as a letter with a rhetorical strategy of persuading its implied audience to the viewpoint of its author.<sup>33</sup> I use the term “rhetorical” in its broadest and most general sense. Rather than applying the categories of either ancient Greco-Roman rhetoric or the modern “new rhetoric” to Hebrews, the rhetorical method I will follow is entirely and rigorously text-centered. I will determine the rhetorical or persuasive strategy of Hebrews by carefully and closely listening to the dynamics of its multiple chiastic structures as key indications for a better understanding and appreciation of how this epistolary homily is to be properly interpreted as “the word of the encouragement” (13:22).<sup>34</sup>

My method is “audience-oriented” in that it is concerned to determine how the implied audience are meant to respond to the rhetorical strategy as it unfolds in the progression of the chiastically arranged textual units of the letter to the Hebrews. The term “audience” will be used throughout the work as a collective plural noun, since in the Greek text plural terms are used in reference to the audience, who are conceived of as a group composed of individual members with responsibilities toward one another. The focus, then, is upon the chiastically concerted way that this implied audience are being encouraged to be faithful in heart to grace from the Son and high priest (1:1-5:10), as we await the high priest who offered himself to intercede for us (5:11-9:28), so that by faith with grace in heart we may live eternally by doing the will of the living God (10:1-13:25).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> On the language of spaces and movement within the rhetorical strategy of Hebrews, see Annang Asumang, *Unlocking the Book of Hebrews: A Spatial Analysis of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> For examples of chiastic structures in other NT letters, see John Paul Heil, “The Chiastic Structure and Meaning of Paul’s Letter to Philemon,” *Bib* 82 (2001): 178–206; idem, *Ephesians: Empowerment to Walk in Love for the Unity of All in Christ* (Studies in Biblical Literature 13; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> For more on the audience-oriented method to be used in this study, see Warren Carter and John Paul Heil, *Matthew’s Parables: Audience-Oriented Perspectives* (CBQMS 30; Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1998), 8–17; John Paul Heil, *The Rhetorical Role of Scripture in 1 Corinthians* (Studies in Biblical Literature 15; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 5–10.

## E. Summary

1) Hebrews is an epistolary homily, self-designated as “the word of the encouragement” (13:22), artfully, intricately, and consistently composed by an author whose identity remains unknown to us, but who was well known to his original audience as one of their leaders, who expects to see them again soon. Its carefully crafted, masterfully complex structure was heard by its audience as a cohesive series of thirty-three microchiastic units coherently arranged in three macrochiastic levels of eleven units each.

2) The following investigation will present a detailed exegetical examination of each chiastic unit in accord with a literary-rhetorical, audience-oriented methodology to illustrate and confirm this new proposal for a comprehensive chiastic structure that indicates how each and every verse plays its concerted role within the persuasive strategy of the letter to the Hebrews as “the word of the encouragement.”

## Hebrews 1:1-4

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- A<sup>1a</sup> Multifacetedly and multifariously much time ago God, having spoken to the fathers in the prophets, <sup>2a</sup> at the end of these days has spoken to us in a Son, whom he *placed* as *heir* of all things (Ps 2:8),  
 B<sup>2b</sup> through whom also he *made* the ages,  
     C<sup>3a</sup> who, being radiance of the glory and representation of the reality of *him*,  
     C'<sup>3b</sup> and bearing up all things by the pronouncement of the power of *him* (Wis 7:25-26),  
 B'<sup>3c</sup> having *made* a cleansing for sins (Job 7:21),  
 A'<sup>3d</sup> *sat* at the right of the Majesty in the heights (Ps 109:1), <sup>4</sup> having become so far better than the angels to the degree that more excellent beyond them he has *inherited a name*.<sup>1</sup>

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 1:1-4

The alliterative correspondence between the syllables in the verbs “placed (ἐ-θη-κεν)” (1:2a) and “sat (ἐ-κά-θι-σεν)” (1:3d), as well as the combination of the cognate noun and verb, “heir (κληρονόμον)” (1:2a) and “inherited (κεκληρονόμηκεν)” (1:4), which terms occur nowhere else within this unit, form the chiastic parallels for the A and A' elements. The

<sup>1</sup> In this and all subsequent chapters references to OT passages are from the LXX, following that version's numbering system. The translation of this and all subsequent units is my own, presenting what I call an “exegetical” translation. The aim is to present a strictly literal translation that attempts, as far as possible, to follow the Greek word order and to render the same Greek words with the same English equivalents. Where possible, I have also tried to represent some of the noteworthy alliteration in the Greek text, e.g. “Multifacetedly and multifariously much time ago” for the impressive alliteration in Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι that introduces the letter in Heb 1:1. See also Paul Dominique Dognin, “Épître aux hébreux, traduction inédite du prologue (He 1,1-4),” *RB* 112 (2005): 80-100.



“heir-inherited” parallel, along with its assonance with “name” (ὄνομα), the climactic final word, also functions as a literary inclusion securing the integrity of this first chiasmic unit (1:1-4). Forms of the verb “made” in “he made (ἐποίησεν) the ages” (1:2b) and “having made (ποιησάμενος) a cleansing for sins” (1:3c) constitute the chiasmic parallels for the B and B' elements. And the only occurrences within this unit of the third person genitive masculine singular of the pronoun “him” referring to God in “the reality of him (αὐτοῦ)” (1:3a) and “the power of him (αὐτοῦ)” (1:3b) determine the chiasmic parallels for the central and pivotal C and C' elements.<sup>2</sup>

### B. Audience Response to Hebrews 1:1-4

#### 1. *Heb 1:1-2a (A): God Has Spoken to Us in a Son He Placed as Heir of All Things*

“The word of the encouragement” written by letter to the audience (Heb 13:22) commences with a superbly artful alliteration attuning their ears for an eloquent discourse to follow: “Multifacetedly and multifariously much time ago God, having spoken to the fathers in the prophets” (1:1). In the Greek text the appealing alliteration of this striking introduction is created by a recurrence of syllables beginning with “π” and “λ” consonants. This sequence operates as a chiasmic-like pattern in itself. After words with syllables beginning with “π” followed by syllables beginning with “λ” (Πο-λυ-με-ρῶς καὶ πο-λυ-τρό-πως πά-λαι), there occurs a word with two syllables beginning with “λ” in the clause, “God having spoken” (ὁ θεὸς λα-λή-σας). This clause functions as a pivot to the second half of the sequence in which words have syllables that no longer begin with “λ,” but with “τ” and “π” (τοῖς πα-τρά-σιν ἐν τοῖς προ-φή-ταις). The initial attention of the audience is thus attracted by a sonorously delightful expression of the manner (“multifacetedly and multifariously”), time (“much time ago”), addressees

<sup>2</sup> For a different construal of the chiasmic structure of Heb 1:1-4, but based on conceptual or thematic rather than on strict linguistic parallels found within the text, see Daniel J. Ebert, “The Chiasmic Structure of the Prologue to Hebrews,” *TJ* 13 (1992): 163–79. See also, Lane, *Hebrews* 1-8, 6-7. For a proposal of a “ring” pattern in Heb 1:1-4, see Paolo Garuti, “Il prologo della lettera agli Ebrei (Eb 1,1-4),” *Sacra Doctrina* 34 (1989): 533–56. See also David Alan Black, “Hebrews 1:1-4: A Study in Discourse Analysis,” *WTJ* 49 (1987): 175–94.

(“to the fathers”), and location (“in the prophets”) of the revelatory activity (“having spoken”) of God.<sup>3</sup>

The audience are then presented with a contrastive parallel progression to the alliterative expression of the continuity in God’s speaking (1:1): “at the end of these days (God) has spoken to us in a Son, whom he placed as heir of all things” (1:2a).<sup>4</sup> The temporal indication of the past in “much time ago” has progressed to the finality of the present in “at the end of these days.” Within this continuity of God’s speaking, the audience hear a grammatical progression in verbal forms from “God having spoken (λαλήσας)” in a participial subordinate clause to God “has spoken” (ἐλάλησεν) in the main clause, which marks the only reprise of syllables beginning with “λ” after their dominance in the first half of the alliterative sequence in 1:1. The addressees have progressed from “the fathers,” the ancestors of the author and audience, to “us,” a direct address that includes the author and his audience. And the expression of the location has progressed from the prepositional phrase, “in the prophets,” a reference to divinely inspired persons, the revelatory speaking of many of whom the audience can still hear in the scriptures, to a phrase introduced by the same preposition, “in a Son,” with the unparalleled additional relative clause, “whom he placed as heir of all things.”

With this description of a Son whom God placed as “heir” (κληρονόμον) of all things (1:2a), the audience hear a scriptural allusion to God’s impressive promise to his royal Son: “Ask from me and I will give you nations as your inheritance (κληρονομίαν) and as your possession the ends of the earth” (Ps 2:8). The allusion enables the audience to appreciate that the Son in whom God has now definitively spoken, God has placed as “heir” divinely entitled to the inheritance not only of “nations” and “the ends of the earth” but, even more expansively, of “all things.”<sup>5</sup>

In sum, from the outset the audience are being attuned to listen to what God, who, in a variety of ways has spoken in the past to the ancestors of

<sup>3</sup> Harold W. Attridge, “God in Hebrews,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard J. Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 95–110.

<sup>4</sup> On the overall continuity here, despite the contrast, see Gene R. Smillie, “Contrast or Continuity in Hebrews 1.1–2?” *NTS* 51 (2005): 543–60. See also David Wider, *Theozentrik und Bekenntnis: Untersuchungen zur Theologie des Redens Gottes im Hebräerbrief* (BZNW 87; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> George H. Guthrie, “Hebrews,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (eds. Gregory K. Beale and Donald A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 924.

the audience in prophetic persons, who still speak divinely inspired words in the scriptures (1:1), has now definitively spoken to them during these present final days in a “Son,” as the divinely designated “heir of all things” (1:2a).

2. *Heb 1:2b (B): Through Whom Also He Made the Ages*

The audience then hear more description of the Son in whom God has spoken and whom God placed as heir of all things (1:2a): “through whom also he made the ages” (1:2b). The audience are further attracted to listen to God speaking in this “Son,” because it is through him that God made “the ages” (τοὺς αἰῶνας), a reference to the world in both its temporal and spatial dimensions, the world in which the audience are now living “at the end of these days” (1:2a).<sup>6</sup>

3. *Heb 1:3a (C): Being Radiance of the Glory and Representation of the Reality of Him*

Next the audience are informed of the lofty status of this Son of God (1:2): “who, being radiance of the glory and representation of the reality of him” (1:3a). At this point the audience are presented with a noteworthy grammatical progression in the use of the relative pronoun to describe the Son. First, as the direct object of God’s activity, the Son is the one “whom” (ὃν) God placed as heir of all things (1:2a). Second, as the agent of God’s activity, the Son is the one “through whom” (δι’ οὗ) God made the ages (1:2b). And third, with the progression to the Son as subject, he possesses a distinctive divine status, as one “who” (ὃς) is continually existing as radiance of the glory and representation of the reality of him, that is, of God himself (1:3a).

This Son continues to exist with a very active divine status, doubly designated for added emphasis (1:3a). First, he continues in “being” (ὢν), an ongoing action expressed with the present active participle, as a “radiance” (ἀπαύγασμα), an active, luminous radiating or shining forth of the heav-

<sup>6</sup> BDAG, 32-33; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 67. See also Edward Adams, “The Cosmology of Hebrews,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard J. Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 122-39.

enly “glory” (δόξης) of God himself. Second, he continues in being as a “representation” (χαρακτήρ), with connotations of “distinguishing trademark” and “outward aspect,”<sup>7</sup> of the very “reality” (ὑποστάσεως), the “substance” or “essence,” of God as the Father who positioned his Son to be heir of all things (1:2a), and as the Creator who made the ages through the agency of this Son (1:2b). Such an impressive divine status further grabs the attention of the audience to listen to what God has spoken to us in a Son (1:2a).

#### 4. *Heb 1:3b (C'): Bearing Up All Things by the Pronouncement of the Power of Him*

The active divine status of the Son continues to be described: “and bearing up all things by the pronouncement of the power of him” (1:3b). The Son whom God placed as heir of “all things (πάντων)” (1:2a) that God created, and the Son through whom God made the ages (1:2b), is the one who continually “bears up” (φέρων, present active participle) or “sustains” in existence “all the things” (τὰ πάντα) that constitute and comprise the universe God created.<sup>8</sup> That he does this by the active “pronouncement” (ῥήματι) of the very power of him, of God himself, serves as the first expression to the audience, as those included among all the things the Son continues to bear up, of how they, as creatures of God, are dependent for their continued existence upon a Son in whom God has spoken to us (1:2a).<sup>9</sup>

With the phrase “by the pronouncement of the power of him,” the audience receive the third, final and climactic, articular genitival expression of an attribute of God that the Son makes actively present. He continues not only to be a radiance “of the glory” (τῆς δόξης) and a representation “of the reality” (τῆς ὑποστάσεως) of him (1:3a), but to bear up all things by

<sup>7</sup> BDAG, 1077-78. “χαρακτήρ,” *EDNT* 3.456: “In Christ, i.e., in his immediate origin in God and in his path of redemption, believers can thus gain a vision of God’s essence and reality.” On χαρακτήρ as indicating subtle resistance to Roman imperial rule here, see Steve Muir, “The Anti-Imperial Rhetoric of Hebrews 1.3: Χαρακτήρ as a ‘Double-Edged Sword,’” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham, et al.; LNTS 387; London: Clark, 2008), 170–86.

<sup>8</sup> Terry J. Wright, “The Seal of Approval: The Interpretation of the Son’s Sustaining Action in Hebrews 1:3,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard J. Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 140–48.

<sup>9</sup> On “pronouncement” (ῥήματι) in reference to the word of God’s power spoken by the Son here, see Walter Radl, “ῥήμα,” *EDNT* 3.210.

the pronouncement “of the power” (τῆς δυνάμεως) of him, of God himself (1:3b). When they hear “the power of him (αὐτοῦ)” in this C' element, the audience experience the pivot of the chiasm from “the reality of him (αὐτοῦ)” in the C element. The pivotal personal pronoun “of him,” in a final emphatic position in both the C and C' elements, moves the audience’s focus on the Son from his radiating of the divine glory and reflecting of the divine reality “of him” to the pronouncing of the divine power “of him”—of the God who has spoken to us in a Son (1:2a).

When the audience hear the Son described as “a radiance (ἀπαύγασμα) of the glory (δόξης)” of God, who bears up all things by the pronouncement of “the power” (τῆς δυνάμεως) of God (1:3ab), they are reminded of an impressive resemblance of the Son to the personified divine wisdom described in Wis 7:25-26: “For she is an aura of the power (τῆς δυνάμεως) of God and a pure effusion of the glory (δόξης) of the Almighty . . . a radiance (ἀπαύγασμα) of eternal light.”<sup>10</sup> This scriptural allusion underscores for the audience the truly sublime divine status of the Son. The audience are thus further induced to listen to how God in his Son, who sustains all things, including themselves, by the pronouncement of the power of God, has spoken more specifically and directly “to us” (1:2a).

##### 5. Heb 1:3c (B'): Having Made a Cleansing for Sins

The description of the activity of the Son continues: “having made a cleansing for sins” (1:3c). At this point the audience hear, via the chiasmic parallels, a progression from the agency of the Son in God’s creative making—“through whom he made (ἐποίησεν) the ages” (1:2b)—in the B element to the Son as subject of an expiatory making—“having made (ποιησάμενος) a cleansing for sins” (1:3c)—in the B' element. The audience, already attuned to the wisdom tradition by the allusion in 1:3ab, may recall Job’s address to God for insight into the Son’s “having made a cleansing for sins (καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος)” as a key for the continuance of their own lives: “And why did you not make (ἐποιήσω) oblivion for my lawlessness and a cleansing for my sin (καθαρισμὸν τῆς ἁμαρτίας μου)? For

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed illustration of the comparison, see Gheorghita (*Septuagint in Hebrews*, 93), who, however, neglects the parallel with “the power.” That these are the only two occurrences in both the OT and NT of the word “radiance” (ἀπαύγασμα) enhances the significance of this allusion.

I will go away into the ground, and I will no longer be rising early in the morning” (Job 7:21).<sup>11</sup> The audience are to appreciate that the Son not only is continually bearing them up within their cosmic, creaturely existence as part of all things (1:3b), but that he has made a cleansing for their sins within their earthly, human existence, as a basis for them to go on living.

6. *Heb 1:3d-4 (A'): Sat at the Right of God and beyond Angels Has Inherited a Name*

This initial description of the impressive activity and striking status of the Son then reaches a climax: “sat at the right of the Majesty in the heights, having become so far better than the angels to the degree that more excellent beyond them he has inherited a name” (1:3d-4). At this point the audience hear a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from the Son as the object of a verb with God as the subject who “placed” (ἐ-θη-κεν) the Son as heir of all things (1:2a) in the A element to the Son, as subject of the alliterative counterpart of the verb, who “sat” (ἐ-κά-θη-σεν) at the right of the Majesty in the heights (1:3d) in the A' element. The Son, having made a cleansing for the sins of human beings on earth, sat “at the right,” the authoritative position of power, of “the Majesty,” that is, of God himself, “in the heights,” that is, in heaven.<sup>12</sup> The audience are to realize, then, that the Son has been privileged to obey the inviting command of God as “the Lord,” who “said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right’” (Ps 109:1).<sup>13</sup> The chiastic parallelism thus facilitates the audience’s understanding that it is because the Son sat at the authoritative right of God in heaven that God placed him as heir of all things.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> This is my own translation. The allusion is noted by Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text with Notes and Essays* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 15; Lane, *Hebrews* 1-8, 15. For more on the background of the purification for sins in 1:3, see Bernhard Heininger, “Sündenreinigung (Hebr 1,3): Christologische Anmerkungen zum Exordium des Hebräerbriefs,” *BZ* 41 (1997): 54–68.

<sup>12</sup> On “at the right” as a position of power, see BDAG, 217-18; Peter von der Osten-Sacken, “δεξιός,” *EDNT* 1.286. On “the Majesty” (τῆς μεγαλωσύνης) as a periphrasis for God, see BDAG, 623. On “in the heights” (ἐν ὑψηλοῖς) as a reference to heaven, see BDAG, 1044.

<sup>13</sup> Harold W. Attridge, “The Psalms in Hebrews,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament* (eds. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken; London: Clark, 2004), 197.

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth L. Schenck, “Keeping His Appointment: Creation and Enthronement in Hebrews,” *JSNT* 66 (1997): 91–117; Scott D. Mackie, “Confession of the Son of God in the Exordium of Hebrews,” *JSNT* 30 (2008): 437–53; Richard J. Bauckham, “The Divinity of

The audience then hear a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the Son whom God placed as “heir” of all things (1:2a) in the A element to the Son who has become vastly superior to the angels, because he has “inherited a name” (1:4) in the A' element. As the final, climactic word, with a reverberating assonance, the “name” (ὄνομα) that the Son conclusively “inherited” and continues to possess (κεκληρονόμηκεν in the perfect tense) underscores the divine, heavenly status of the Son as “heir” (κληρονόμον) of all things.<sup>15</sup> The audience are now poised to hear elaborated the way that God has definitively spoken to us in a Son who has inherited a divine status as the filial heir of all things (1:1-2a). This places him in a divinely authoritative position of power in heaven, as one whose very “name,” his status as the divinely appointed filial heir, is far better and more excellent than the angels themselves (1:3d-4).<sup>16</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 1:1-4

At the outset of “the word of the encouragement” written by letter to them (13:22), the audience are attracted by a delightfully alliterative introduction attuning their ears for an eloquent presentation focused on the way that God now speaks to us in a Son (1:1-2a). At the center of the chiasmic pattern that compactly structures this first unit in 1:1-4, the audience experience a pivot in the description of the Son from being a radiating reflection of the glory and distinctive representation of the reality of *him*, of God himself (1:3a), to “bearing up,” and thus sustaining, all things in the cosmos by the pronouncement of the power of *him*—God (1:3b). Then the audience hear a progression from the Son through whom God *made* “the ages,” the temporal and spatial dimensions of the creation in which the audience and all of us live (1:2b), to the Son who *made* a cleansing for

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Jesus Christ in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard J. Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 15–36.

<sup>15</sup> On “name” as not merely an identifying label, but as a term expressing the essential characteristics or status of a person, see BDAG, 712; Lars Hartman, “ὄνομα,” *EDNT* 2.519. On the background and significance of the terms “heir” and “inherit” here, see Johannes H. Friedrich, “κληρονόμῳ,” *EDNT* 2.298–99.

<sup>16</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 48. See also John Webster, “One Who Is Son: Theological Reflections on the Exordium to the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard J. Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 69–94.

the sins of human beings, the sins which can extinguish our hope to go on living (1:3c).

Finally, the audience are presented with a progression from the Son whom God *placed* as *heir* of all things (1:2a) to the Son who *sat* at the authoritative and powerful right side of God in heaven, having become far better and more excellent in divine status than the angels themselves, since, from God as his Father, he *inherited a name* (1:3d-4). Thus, through their reception of these parallel progressions operating distinctively and dynamically within the rhetorical rhythm of the chiastic structure, the audience are poised to hear how God, who spoke in a rich variety of ways in the past to the ancestors in the prophets, has now definitively, “at the end of these days,” spoken to us in a Son (1:1-2a).



## Hebrews 1:5-14

- A<sup>5</sup> For to *which of the angels* did he *ever* say, “Son of mine are you, today I have begotten you (Ps 2:7)?” And again, “I will be to him as a Father, and he will be to me as a Son (2 Sam 7:14)?”<sup>6</sup> And again, when he leads the firstborn into the heavenly world, he says, “And let all the angels of God worship him (Deut 32:43; Ps 96:7).”<sup>7</sup> And of the angels he says, “He who makes his angels *spirits* and his *ministers* a flame of fire (Ps 103:4),”<sup>8</sup> but of the Son, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the staff of uprightness is a staff of your kingdom.”<sup>9</sup> You loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your partners (Ps 44:7-8).”<sup>10</sup> And, “You at the beginnings, Lord, founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands.
- B<sup>11a</sup> They will perish, *but you* are continuing,  
 C<sup>11b</sup> and all *like a garment* will become old,  
 D<sup>12a</sup> and like a cloak you will roll them up,  
 C<sup>12b</sup> *like a garment* indeed they will be changed.
- B<sup>12c</sup> *But you* are the same and your years will not cease (Ps 101:26-28).”
- A<sup>13</sup> But to *which of the angels* has he *ever* said, “Sit at my right, until I place your enemies as a footstool for your feet (Ps 109:1)?”<sup>14</sup> Are they not all *ministering spirits* sent for assistance on account of those who are going to inherit salvation?

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 1:5-14

The articular genitive plural “the angels (τῶν ἀγγέλων),” which occurs at the conclusion (1:4) of the previous unit, recurs at the beginning (1:5) of this unit to function as a thematically key transitional term contributing to the cohesion linking the AA (1:1-4) to the AB (1:5-14) chiastic units. There are correspondences between the clauses, “for to which (τίνι) of the angels (τῶν ἀγγέλων) did he ever (ποτε) say” (1:5) and “but to which (τίνα) of the

angels (τῶν ἀγγέλων) has he ever (ποτε) said” (1:13), as well as between the words “spirits (πνεύματα) and his ministers (λειτουργούς)” (1:7) and “ministering spirits (λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα)” (1:14), the only occurrences of these terms in this unit. They form the chiastic parallels for the A (1:5-10) and the A' (1:13-14) elements.<sup>1</sup>

The only occurrences in Hebrews of the second person nominative singular personal pronoun followed by a coordinating conjunction, “but you” (σὺ δέ) in 1:11a and 1:12c, establish the chiastic parallels for the B and B' elements.<sup>2</sup> The only occurrences in Hebrews of the simile “like a garment (ὡς ἱμάτιον)” in 1:11b and 1:12b determine the chiastic parallels for the C and C' elements. And the only occurrence in Hebrews of the formulation “like a cloak you will roll up” (ὥσει περιβόλαιον ἐλίξεις) in 1:12a functions as the unparalleled central D element.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 1:5-14

### 1. Heb 1:5-10 (A): *The Angels He Makes Spirits and Ministers*

Having been introduced to the theme of the relationship between a Son in whom God has spoken (1:1-2) and the angels (1:4), the audience are presented with an interrogative prelude, “For to which of the angels did he ever say” (1:5a), to a series of scriptural quotations which they hear as a chiastic pattern:

- a) “*Son* of mine are *you*, today I have begotten *you* (Ps 2:7)?” And again, “I will be to him as a Father, and he will be to me as a *Son* (2 Sam 7:14)?” (1:5b).
- b) And again, when he leads the firstborn into the heavenly world, *he says*, “And let all the *angels* of God worship him (Deut 32:43; Ps 96:7)” (1:6).
- b') And of the *angels he says*, “He who makes his *angels* spirits and his ministers a flame of fire (Ps 103:4)” (1:7),
- a') but of the *Son*, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the staff of uprightness is a staff of your kingdom. You loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, anointed *you* with the oil of glad-

<sup>1</sup> The word “angels” occurs also in 1:6-7, but not as an articular genitive plural as in 1:5 and 1:13.

<sup>2</sup> The second person singular nominative of the personal pronoun also occurs in 1:5 and 1:10 of this unit, but not in combination with the same coordinating conjunction, “δέ,” as in 1:11a and 1:12c.

ness beyond your partners (Ps 44:7-8).” And, “*You* at the beginnings, Lord, founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands (Ps 101:26)” (1:8-10).

When the audience hear “of the angels he says” (ἁγγέλους λέγει) and “he who makes angels (ἁγγέλους)” in the “b” sub-element (1:7), they experience the chiasitic pivot from the parallels, “he says” (λέγει) and “all the angels (ἁγγελοι) of God,” in the “b” sub-element (1:6), the only occurrences of these terms in this chiasitic sub-unit (1:5b-10). They then are presented with a progression, via the chiasitic parallels, from the occurrences of the words “son” (υἱός, υἱόν) and “you” (σύ, σε) in the “a” sub-element (1:5b) to the occurrences of the words “son (υἱόν)” (1:8) and “you” (σε, 1:9; σύ, 1:10) in the “a” sub-element, the only occurrences of these terms in this chiasitic sub-unit.

The audience hear the “a” sub-element (1:5b) that introduces this chiasitic sub-unit (1:5b-10) as yet another chiasitic pattern:

- a) “*Son* of mine are you,
- b) *I* today have begotten you (Ps 2:7).”
- c) And again,
- b') “*I* will be to him as a Father,
- a') and he will be to me as a *Son* (2 Sam 7:14).”<sup>3</sup>

After the unparalleled center, “and again” (c), the audience hear a chiasitic parallel pivot from “*I* (ἐγώ) today have begotten you” (b) to “*I* (ἐγώ) will be to him as a Father” (b'), the only occurrences of the first person nominative pronoun in this chiasitic pattern (1:5b). They are then presented with a progression, via the chiasitic parallels, from “*Son* (υἱός) of mine are you” (a) to “and he will be to me as a *Son* (υἱόν)” (a'), the only occurrences in the chiasitic pattern of the term “*Son*.” In addition, these occurrences of “*Son*” serve as a literary inclusion, with “*Son*” as both the initial and the final word of the chiasitic pattern.

<sup>3</sup> The combination of these two scriptural quotations by the words “son” and “I” that they have in common for a new, mutual interpretation of them exemplifies the exegetical procedure known as *gezera shava*. See David Instone Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis Before 70 CE* (TSAJ 30; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 18; Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 929. See also Herbert W. Bateman, *Early Jewish Hermeneutics and Hebrews 1:5–13: The Impact of Early Jewish Exegesis on the Interpretation of a Significant New Testament Passage* (New York: Lang, 1997).

The audience begin to hear how God has definitively spoken to us in a Son (1:1-2), with a direct address never spoken to any of the angels (1:5a), in a quotation of Ps 2:7, “Son of mine are you, I today have begotten you.” To the one whom God himself has installed as king (Ps 2:6) God emphatically declares as his very own Son—“Son of mine are you” (a). With an explicit employment of the otherwise superfluous first person singular pronoun for added emphasis, God himself declares to his Son that “I today have begotten you” (b). God has implicitly become the Father of his royal Son “today,” that is, in accord with the new context of this quotation within Hebrews, when God placed the Son “as heir of all things” (1:2a cf. Ps 2:8).

After the chiastic pivot, “and again” (c), with the quotation of 2 Sam 7:14, the audience hear a progression in God’s emphatic declaration concerning his Fatherhood of his royal Son. Whereas God implicitly declared himself to be the Father of his Son in a direct address to his Son with the second person singular pronoun, “I today have begotten you (σε)” (b), God now promises that he himself will be explicitly the Father of his Son in an indirect address to the audience by referring to his Son with the third person singular pronoun, “I will be to him (αὐτῷ) as a Father” (b’). The audience are then presented with a chiastic progression in God’s emphatic declaration concerning the sonship of his royal Son. Whereas God declared the Son to be his very own Son in a direct address to the son with the second person singular pronoun, “Son of mine are you (σὺ)” (a), God now promises a relationship of mutual allegiance between himself and his Son in an indirect address to the audience by referring to his son with the third person singular pronoun, “and he (αὐτός) will be to me as a son” (a’).

In sum, this chiastic sequence (1:5b) begins with God’s emphatic direct address to his royal Son, declaring to him that (a) he is indeed God’s very own Son (b) whom God himself has begotten. It then progresses to (b’) God’s emphatic indirect address to the audience about his royal Son, promising not only his own allegiance as the divine Father of his Son (a’) but the mutual allegiance of the Son with his divine Father. Induced to listen to how God has spoken to us in a Son (1:2), the audience have heard God’s voice speak with scriptural authority both to the Son and to them about the mutual allegiance of the Son with his divine Father, preparing them for an elaboration of this mutual, paternal-filial allegiance that God never promised for any of the angels (1:5a).

In a manner reminiscent of God leading his chosen people Israel as his “firstborn” son/heir into the promised land long ago in the Exodus event,

when God now leads his firstborn Son into the heavenly world,<sup>4</sup> he says, “And let the angels of God worship him (Deut 32:43; Ps 96:7)” (1:6).<sup>5</sup> Not only has God placed the Son as the filial “heir” of all things (1:2a), who, more excellent beyond the angels, has “inherited” a name (1:4), but God leads this Son into the heavenly world as his specially chosen and favored “firstborn” (πρωτότοκον). As the chain of scriptural quotations linked by words they share continues, God calls for all the angels of God to worship “him” (αὐτῷ), the Son concerning whom God pledged that “I will be to him (αὐτῷ) as a Father” (2 Sam 7:14 in 1:5). God’s authoritative invitation to let all the angels of God “worship” (προσκυνήσάτωσαν) his firstborn son, as God leads him into the realm of heavenly worship, underscores the divine status of the Son as superior to that of the angels (1:4-5). The audience are thus further persuaded to listen to God’s definitive speaking in a Son (1:1-2), who, as God’s specially favored “firstborn,” is worthy of their own worship.

<sup>4</sup> There is a noteworthy similarity between Hebrews, which states, “when” (ὅταν) God “leads” (εἰσαγάγῃ) the “firstborn” (πρωτότοκον), the Son whom God placed as “heir” (κληρονόμον) of all things (1:2a), who “inherited” (κεκληρονόμηκεν) a name (1:4), into the “heavenly world (οἰκουμένην)” (1:6), and the address to Israel in Deut 11:29. It states, “when (ὅταν) the Lord your God leads (εἰσαγάγῃ) you into the land into which you are crossing there to inherit (κληρονομήσαι) it.” And see the use of the same form of the verb for the same event in Exod 13:5, 11; 23:20; Deut 6:10, 23; 7:1. In addition, in Exod 4:22 God declares that Israel is “my firstborn (πρωτότοκός) son.” And, in Exod 16:35 the promised land into which Israel came is described as an “inhabited (οἰκουμένην) land.” On the use of this same word in Heb 1:6, Allen (*Deuteronomy*, 55) points out that “οἰκουμένη (1:6) is better understood as the heavenly arena; the verse speaks to the ascension and exaltation of the Son when he is reintroduced into the heavenly realm that he vacated during his earthly existence.” See also Horst Balz, “οἰκουμένη,” *EDNT* 2.504; Ardel B. Caneday, “The Eschatological World Already Subjected to the Son: The Οἰκουμένη of Hebrews 1.6 and the Son’s Enthronement,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham, et al.; LNTS 387; London: Clark, 2008), 28–39. On the significance of the Exodus event in Hebrews, see Matthew Thiessen, “Hebrews and the End of the Exodus,” *NovT* 49 (2007): 353–69.

<sup>5</sup> The scriptural quotation in Heb 1:6 exhibits noteworthy similarities to both Deut 32:43 and Ps 96:7. For the discussion of this and other OT background, see Gareth Lee Cockerill, “Hebrews 1:6: Source and Significance,” *BBR* 9 (1999): 51–64; R. Timothy McLay, *The Use of the Septuagint in New Testament Research* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 107–14; idem, “Biblical Texts and the Scriptures for the New Testament Church,” in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament* (ed. Stanley E. Porter; McMaster New Testament Studies; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 44–55; Gheorghita, *Septuagint*, 40–43; Karrer, “Hebrews,” 349–53; Rascher, *Schriftauslegung*, 89–91; Allen, *Deuteronomy*, 44–58.

The linking of scriptural quotations by words they share continues, as the audience experience a chiastic pivot from the “b” (1:6) to the “b’” (1:7) sub-element in this chiastic pattern. After the invitation for the “angels” (ἄγγελοι) of God to worship the firstborn Son whom God leads into the heavenly realm (1:6), the audience hear the scriptural voice of God through Ps 103:4 say of the “angels” (ἁγγέλους), “He who makes his angels (ἁγγέλους) spirits and his ministers a flame of fire” (1:7). That God “makes” (ποιῶν) his angels spirits continues the demonstration of the Son’s superiority over them, as they are embraced by the ages God “made” (ἐποίησεν) through the Son (1:2). And that the angels are further described as God’s “ministers” (leitourgoús) extends their role in worship. Not only are the angels themselves to worship the firstborn son whom God leads into the heavenly realm, but, as “ministers” of God they also are to assist others, particularly the audience, in this heavenly worship of God’s first-born Son.<sup>6</sup>

The chain continues with a link contrasting what God’s scriptural voice says “of” (πρός) the angels (1:7a) with what it says “of” (πρός) the Son (1:8a). But the verbal linkage within the quotations themselves continues not with the immediately preceding scriptural quotation, which speaks only of the angels (1:7), but with the one prior to that, which includes a reference to the Son. The God who said, “And let all of the angels of God (θεοῦ) worship him” (1:6), now says of the Son through Ps 44:7-8, “Your throne, O God (θεός), is forever and ever, and the staff of uprightness is a staff of your kingdom. You loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God (θεός), your God (θεός), anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your partners” (1:8-9).<sup>7</sup> Through this verbal linkage the audience experience a remarkable progression from God inviting the angels of “God” to worship his Son, to God addressing and acknowledging his Son to be also “God” (1:8), to God affirming himself as the “God,” who, emphatically as the “God” of his Son, anointed him (1:9).

The royal status of the Son, himself “God,” is developed. The “throne” on which the royal Son “sat at the right of the Majesty in the heights” of heaven (1:3), is now described as an eternal throne, remaining “forever and

<sup>6</sup> BDAG, 591; Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 42. On the OT background of Heb 1:7, see L. T. Swinson, “‘Wind’ and ‘Fire’ in Hebrews 1:7: A Reflection Upon the Use of Psalm 104 (103),” *TJ* 28 (2007): 215–28.

<sup>7</sup> Herbert W. Bateman, “Psalm 45:6–7 and Its Christological Contributions to Hebrews,” *TJ* 22 (2001): 3–21; Gert Jacobus Steyn, “The Vorlage of Psalm 45:6–7 (44:7–8) in Hebrews 1:8–9,” *HTS Theological Studies* 60 (2004): 1085–1103.

ever,” while the “staff” or rule that characterizes his kingdom is that of uprightness (1:8). Because he loved righteousness and hated lawlessness, God, the God who pledged to be to him as a Father (2:5), anointed him as his royal Son with the oil of festive “gladness” (ἀγαλλιάσεως) or rejoicing appropriate for him as the object of worship.<sup>8</sup> That God himself anointed him “beyond” (παρά) his “partners,” that is, the angels as his heavenly companions or associates (1:9), adds to the audience’s appreciation of the superiority of God’s divine royal Son, who “beyond” (παρ’) the angels themselves has inherited a name (1:4).<sup>9</sup>

As the scriptural voice of God continues to address the divine royal Son through Ps 101:26, “You at the beginnings, Lord, founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands” (1:10), the audience experience the completion of a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the “a” (1:5) to the “a” sub-element (1:8-10). God’s adoption of the “Son” (υἱός) as his very own and God’s promise that he will be to the divine Father as a “Son” (υἱόν) in the “a” sub-element progress to God’s astounding address of the “Son” (υἱόν) as also “God” (1:8) in the “a” sub-element. That God has begotten “you” (σε) in the “a” sub-element progresses to God has anointed “you” (σε) as his royal Son (1:9) in the “a” sub-element. And God’s emphatic direct address of adoption to his Son, “Son of mine are you (σύ),” in the “a” sub-element progresses to God’s emphatic direct address of the divine lordship to his royal Son, “You (σύ) at the beginnings, Lord” (1:10), in the “a” sub-element.

Through this concerted quoting of scripture, the author enables his audience to hear the authoritative voice of God himself reinforcing his direct address of his royal Son as “God” (1:8) by also addressing him as divine “Lord.” And that at the beginnings God’s royal Son, as the divine Lord, founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of his hands (1:10) develops the royal Son’s role in creation as the one through whom God made the ages (1:2).

In sum, this chiasmic A element (1:5-10), itself containing a chiasm, encourages the audience to consider the royal Son of God, whom the angels themselves not only are called to worship, but made to be ministers of worship (1:6-7), as worthy of their own worship. Indeed, the audience are to

<sup>8</sup> BDAG, 4; Alfons Weiser, “ἀγαλλιάω,” *EDNT* 1.8: “with the ‘oil of gladness,’ i.e., with the ointment used at joyous celebrations.”

<sup>9</sup> That these are the first two occurrences in Hebrews of the preposition “beyond” (παρά) facilitates this connection.

appreciate that the royal Son, whom God himself adopted and pledged that he would be a Son to him as the Father (1:5), God addressed not only as divine “Lord” (1:10) but as also “God.” God the Father anointed him as superior to the angels with the oil of a festive gladness appropriate to worshipping him as the divine royal Son of God eternally enthroned in heaven (1:8-9).

2. *Heb 1:11a (B): They Will Perish But You Are Continuing*

The audience continue to hear the scriptural voice of God speaking to us *in* a Son (1:2) through his direct address *to* the Son, as the divine royal Son (1:5-10) superior to the angels (1:4-5), as the quotation of the same psalm continues with Ps 101:27a, “They will perish, but you are continuing” (1:11a). At this point the audience have heard a progression from God’s direct and emphatic addresses of the Son’s adoption, “Son of mine are you (σὺ)” (1:5), and of his royal Son’s divine lordship, “You (σὺ) at the beginnings, Lord” (1:10), to God’s direct and emphatic address of his royal Son’s eternity, “But you (σὺ) are continuing.” In contrast to the earth and the heavens that will perish (1:10-11a), God’s royal Son, whose heavenly throne is “forever and ever” (1:8), is continuing to exist for all eternity.

3. *Heb 1:11b (C): And All Like a Garment Will Become Old*

The scriptural voice of God continues to speak to the audience with the quotation of Ps 101:27b, “And all like a garment will become old” (1:11b). All of creation, embraced by the earth, which the royal Son as divine Lord founded, and by the heavens, which are the work of his hands (1:10), like a garment of clothing that deteriorates with age will become old. But the audience are to appreciate the contrast to the royal Son, who is continuing forever (1:11a).

4. *Heb 1:12a (D): And Like a Cloak You Will Roll Them Up*

The scriptural quotation continues with Ps 101:27c, distinguished as a direct address to the divine royal Son, “And like a cloak you will roll them up” (1:12a). Once all of creation becomes old like a worn-out garment,



God's royal Son, as the divine Lord, with the hands with which he fashioned the heavens (1:10), will roll them up like a cloak that has become so old that it is no longer useful.

5. *Heb 1:12b (C'): Like a Garment Indeed They Will Be Changed*

The scriptural quotation continues with Ps 101:27d, a further description of what will happen to all of the earth and the heavens, "Like a garment indeed they will be changed" (1:12b).<sup>10</sup> After hearing God's direct address to his divine royal Son, promising that he will roll up all of creation like a worn-out cloak, the central D element (1:12a) of the chiasm, the audience experience a pivot of chiastic parallels from the C (1:11b) to the C' (1:12b) element. "And like a garment (ὡς ἱμάτιον) they will become old" progresses to "like a garment (ὡς ἱμάτιον) indeed they will be changed."<sup>11</sup> The intensified progression from a pejorative expression, "will become old," to a more optimistic one, "indeed will be changed" (by God, divine passive), raises a hope for the audience that all of creation will one day be divinely transformed into something new and different.

6. *Heb 1:12c (B'): But You Are the Same and Your Years Will Not Cease*

The audience continue to hear the scriptural voice of God speaking to them through a direct address to the royal Son, as the quotation concludes with Ps 101:28, "But you are the same and your years will not cease" (1:12c). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from the B (1:11a) to the B' (1:12c) element. "But you (σὺ δέ) are continuing" progresses to "but you (σὺ δέ) are the same and your years will not cease." The audience are to appreciate that, in contrast to all of creation, which will become old, be "rolled up," and indeed be radically changed (1:11b-12b), the divine royal Son will be unchangeably the same forever, and, as one who is ever continuing to exist (1:11a), his years will never cease.

<sup>10</sup> The words "like a garment" (ὡς ἱμάτιον) in 1:12b, which do not appear in the LXX of Ps 101:27d, facilitate the chiastic parallelism with 1:11b.

<sup>11</sup> The conjunction καί is translated as "indeed" here, since it functions adverbially as a marker to indicate an emphatic intensification; BDAG, 495-96.

The occurrences of the second person genitive singular pronoun at the conclusion of the quotation of Ps 101:26-28 in “your (σου) years” (1:12c) and at the beginning of it in “your (σου) hands” (1:10) serve as the connecting words linking this quotation to the previous quotation of Ps 44:7-8 within this ongoing chain of scriptural quotations. The connection is with the fourfold occurrence of the same pronoun, all in reference to the divine royal Son, in “your (σου) throne,” “your (σου) kingdom” (1:8), “your (σου) God” (1:9), and “your (σου) hands” (1:10). In addition, God’s promise, continuing his pledge to be the Father to his divine Son (1:5), that “your years will not cease” (1:12c) climaxes the threefold scriptural declaration of the eternal nature of the Son, whose “throne will be forever and ever” (1:8) and who is ever “continuing” in existence (1:11). All of this scriptural description of his divine character continues to add to the audience’s appreciation of God’s royal Son as a most worthy and appropriate object of worship not only by the angels of God (1:6) but by themselves as well.<sup>12</sup>

#### 7. Heb 1:13-14 (A'): The Angels Are All Ministering Spirits

At the climactic conclusion of this chain of scriptural quotations (1:5-13), in which God is speaking to us in a Son (1:2) through direct addresses to his Son, the audience are again presented with rhetorically potent questions comparing the angels to the divine royal Son (1:5): “But to which of the angels has he ever said, ‘Sit at my right, until I place your enemies as a footstool for your feet (Ps 109:1)’? Are they not all ministering spirits sent for assistance on account of those who are going to inherit salvation?” (1:13-14). At this point the audience are presented with a progression in questions about the angels, via the chiastic parallels, from the A (5-10) to the A' (1:13-14) element. “For to which (τίνι) of the angels (τῶν ἀγγέλων) did he ever (ποτε) say” (1:5), the angels, whom God “makes his spirits (πνεύματα) and his ministers (λειτουργούς)” (1:7), progresses to “But to which (τίνα) of the angels (τῶν ἀγγέλων) has he ever (ποτε) said” (1:13), the angels, who are “ministering (λειτουργικά) spirits (πνεύματα) sent for assistance on account of those who are going to inherit salvation” (1:14).

The occurrences of the second person genitive singular pronoun in “your (σου) enemies as a footstool for your (σου) feet” (1:13) serve as the connect-

<sup>12</sup> Steve Motyer, “The Psalm Quotations of Hebrews 1: A Hermeneutic-Free Zone?” *TynBul* 50 (1999): 3-22; Rascher, *Schriftauslegung*, 77-79.

ing words linking this scriptural quotation of Ps 109:1 with the preceding quotations of both Ps 44:7-8 in 1:8-9 and Ps 101:26-28 in 1:10-12 through the multiple occurrences of the same pronoun. The audience are to appreciate especially the complementary connection between the “hands” and the “feet” of the divine royal Son. Whereas God acknowledged that the “heavens are the work of *your* (σου) hands” (1:10), the hands with which the divine royal Son will roll them up like a cloak (1:12a), God now promises that he will place “your enemies as a footstool for *your* feet.”

Furthermore, the only occurrences in this unit of the first person genitive singular pronoun as emphatic references to God himself in “Son of mine (μου) are you,” introducing the first scriptural quotation of Ps 2:7 in 1:5, and in “Sit at my (μου) right,” concluding the final, climactic quotation of Ps 109:1 in 1:13, serve as a literary inclusion appropriately enclosing the entire chain of quotations. In it the authoritative scriptural voice of God himself speaks to the audience through speaking to his divine royal Son. And the prominent promise of God the Father pledging that “he will be to me (μοι) as a Son” (1:5) is fittingly fulfilled by the invitation of the Father to his divine royal Son, “Sit at *my* right (ἐκ δεξιῶν)” (1:13), the position of divine power in heaven. This is an invitation that, as the audience recall, the divine royal Son has already worthily accepted when he “sat at the right (ἐν δεξιᾷ) of the Majesty in the heights” (1:3).

Although the divine royal Son has already gained the privilege of sitting at the right of God in the heavenly heights (1:3), there remains a future, yet to be fulfilled, dimension of the divinely issued invitation for him to do so. The God who “placed” (ἔθηκεν) the son as heir of all things (1:2) is the Father who now promises his divine royal son that he will sit at his right until “I place (θῶ) your enemies as a footstool for your feet” (1:13). God himself pledges that he will place the enemies of his royal Son, which are yet to be identified and delineated for the audience, in utter subjection to the rule of the “throne” and “staff” of his kingdom (1:8). The reverberating redundancy of references to “foot/feet” in the phrase “*footstool* for your *feet* (ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου)” intensively reinforces the extreme subjugation of the enemies beneath the exalted and triumphant divine royal Son enthroned eternally in heaven.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Susan E. Docherty, “The Text Form of the OT Citations in Hebrews Chapter 1 and the Implications for the Study of the Septuagint,” *NTS* 55 (2009): 355–65. On the meaning of making someone a “footstool” (ὑποπόδιον) for someone else, BDAG (1040) states: “subject one person to another, so that the other can put a foot on the subject’s neck.”

A provocative rhetorical question elicits the audience's appreciation that all of the angels, whom God makes his "spirits (πνεύματα) and his ministers (λειτουργούς)" (1:7), God sends as his "ministering (λειτουργικά) spirits (πνεύματα)" on a mission to assist in their worship of the divine royal Son (1:6) those who are going to inherit salvation (1:14). The audience are to see themselves among those who are going to "inherit" (κληρονομεῖν) salvation from the divine royal Son, who, as "heir" (κληρονόμον) of all things (1:2), has, beyond the angels themselves, "inherited" (κεκληρονόμηκεν) a name (1:4), and who, as God the Father's favored "firstborn" Son, is entitled to the inheritance (1:6). What this "salvation" more precisely entails has yet to be fully disclosed and described for the audience, however the implication at this point is that they are to have the hope of inheriting the "salvation" resulting from God's pledge to place "enemies" in utter subjugation to his divine royal Son who sits in heaven enthroned eternally at the powerful and authoritative right side of God (1:13), having made purification for sins (1:3).<sup>14</sup>

In sum, in this A' element (1:13-14) the audience are to hear God speaking to them in a Son (1:2) by directly addressing his royal divine Son, rather than any of the angels, through the quotation of Ps 109:1, in which God extends the invitation for the Son to sit at his authoritative right side in a position of power. As among those who have the hope of inheriting the salvation implied by God's promise to place the enemies of his Son in utter subjugation to him as a footstool for his feet, the audience are to avail themselves of the assistance of the angels of God as spirits ministering at the worship (1:6-7) of God's divine royal Son triumphantly enthroned eternally in the heights of heaven.

### C. Summary on Hebrews 1:5-14

The mention of "the angels" (1:4) at the conclusion of the AA chiasmic unit (1:1-4) provides the link to the AB chiasmic unit (1:5-14), which begins with a reference to "the angels" (1:5). In this AB unit the audience are invited to hear God speaking to them in a Son (1:1-2) by way of a chain

<sup>14</sup> John P. Meier, "Structure and Theology in Heb 1,1-14," *Bib 66* (1985): 168-89; idem, "Symmetry and Thought in Heb 1,5-14," *Bib 66* (1985): 504-33; I. Howard Marshall, "Soteriology in Hebrews," in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard J. Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 253-77.

of scriptural quotations in which he directly addresses his divine royal Son rather than any of the angels. At the center of the chiasm the audience hear God declare to the Son that the Son himself will “roll up” the heavens and earth of creation “like a cloak” (1:12a) with the hands with which he fashioned them (1:10). The chiastic pivot moves from God’s declarations that all of creation “like a garment” will become old (1:11b) to “like a garment” indeed they will be changed by God into something new and different (1:12b). The audience then experience the chiastic progression in God’s direct declarations to the Son regarding the Son’s eternal nature—from his continuing (1:11a) to his being the same and his years never ceasing (1:12c).

Finally, the audience are presented with a chiastic progression centered on the worship of God’s divine royal Son. First, they hear God pledge to be a Father not to any of the angels but to his divine royal Son, whom the angels, as God’s ministering spirits, are invited to worship as God leads his Son into the heavenly world to sit on his eternal throne above all the angels and all of creation (1:5-10). Then, the audience, as among those who are going to inherit salvation, are invited to avail themselves of the assistance of the angels, as God’s ministering spirits, for the audience’s own worship of the divine royal Son enthroned eternally in heavenly triumph over his enemies (1:13-14).

## Hebrews 2:1-4

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- A<sup>2:1</sup> Therefore it is necessary for *us* all the more to attend to the things that have been *heard*, lest we drift away. <sup>2a</sup> For if the word *spoken through* angels became *firm*
- B<sup>2b</sup> and every transgression and disobedience *received* a just recompense,
- C<sup>3a</sup> how will we escape, neglecting so great a salvation,
- B'<sup>3b</sup> which, having *received* a beginning
- A'<sup>3c</sup> of being *spoken through* the Lord, was *confirmed* for *us* by those who *heard*,
- <sup>4</sup> God additionally testifying with signs together with wonders and various acts of power and distributions of the Holy Spirit according to his willing?

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 2:1-4

The genitive plural “angels (ἁγγέλων),” which occurs near the conclusion (1:13) of the previous unit, recurs near the beginning (2:2a) of this unit to function as a thematically key transitional term contributing to the cohesion linking the AB (1:5-14) to the AC (2:1-4) chiastic units. The theme regarding the angels thus moves the focus of the audience from what God did not speak *to* any of the angels to what God spoke *through* the angels.

The words “us” (ἡμᾶς) and “heard” (ἀκουσθεῖσιν) in 2:1, and “spoken” (λαληθεῖς), “through” (δι’), and “firm” (βέβαιος), in 2:2a correspond with “spoken” (λαλεῖσθαι), “through” (διά), “confirmed” (ἐβεβαιώθη), “us” (ἡμᾶς), and “heard” (ἀκουσάντων) in 2:3c, all of whose grammatical forms occur nowhere else in this unit. They establish the chiastic parallels between the A (2:1-2a) and A' (2:3c-4) elements. The correspondences between the verbs “received” (ἔλαβεν) in 2:2b and “received” (λαβοῦσα) in 2:3b, the only occurrences of this verb in the unit, determine the chiastic parallels between the B and B' elements. And the question, “how will we escape, neglecting so great a salvation,” whose linguistic terms are unparal-

leed within the unit, serves as the central, pivotal C (2:3a) element for this chiasm.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 2:1-4

### 1. *Heb 2:1-2a (A): We Need To Hear, Based on the Firm Word Spoken through Angels*

Having heard God speaking to them in a Son (1:1-2) by directly addressing the divine royal Son, rather than any of the angels, through a cohesive chain of scriptural quotations (1:5-14), the audience are presented with an exhortation that serves as a warning for them, in which the author includes himself: “Therefore it is necessary for us all the more to attend to the things that have been heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels became firm” (2:1-2a). It is necessary for “us” (ἡμᾶς), that is, the audience and the author as those included among the “us” (ἡμῖν) to whom God has now spoken in a Son (1:2), all the more to attend to “the things that have been heard” (2:1a). This refers not only to the things that have been heard by “us” in the things God has spoken to us in addressing his divine royal Son through the preceding chain of scriptural quotations (1:5-14), but also to the things that have been heard by “the fathers” to whom God has spoken in the past in the prophets through the scriptures (1:1).

In an alliterative wordplay, the audience and author are “all the more to attend (περισσοτέρως προσέχειν)” to the things that have been heard, lest “we drift away (παραρυῶμεν)” (2:1).<sup>1</sup> The audience are thus warned that their inattentiveness to what God has spoken to them, both in the prophets heard in the scriptures (1:1) and in a Son heard through the preceding chain of scriptural quotations (1:5-14), may result in their “drifting away” or “being washed away” in the manner of an unanchored or unsteady ship at sea.<sup>2</sup>

The audience are then presented with the beginning of a conditional clause, reminding them that “the word spoken through angels,” a reference to the Mosaic law given by God to his chosen people, Israel, which was regarded in some traditions as spoken to Moses through the media-

<sup>1</sup> For a possible echo of Deut 4:9 and 32:46 in Heb 2:1, see Allen, *Deuteronomy*, 91-94.

<sup>2</sup> BDAG, 770.

tion of angels (Gal 3:19; Acts 7:30, 38, 53), “became firm” (2:2a).<sup>3</sup> That the word of God, the law spoken at Sinai, became “firm” (βέβαιος) means not only that it offers a firm, steady, or secure foundation or “anchor” as a counter to the danger of the audience “drifting away” (2:1), but also that it is “firm” in the sense of having binding judicial validity for the audience.<sup>4</sup>

2. *Heb 2:2b (B): Every Transgression and Disobedience Received a Just Recompense*

The conditional clause continues: “and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense” (2:2b). The judicial dimension of the legally “firm” or “valid” word spoken through angels (2:2a) is developed with the reminder that every transgression and disobedience of this “word,” that is, the Mosaic law, received a just recompense, thus underlining the need for the audience all the more to be attentive to it, in order to avoid the just penalty of the recompense rendered by God. The reverberating alliteration resounding throughout the vocabulary employed here contributes to the close connection between the audience’s possible inattentiveness to “every transgression and disobedience (πᾶσα παράβασις καὶ παρακοή)” and the danger of them “drifting away (παραρῶμεν)” (2:1). That “every transgression and disobedience,” terms synonymous with “sins,” received a just recompense contributes to the audience’s appreciation for the salvific action of the Son, who “made purification for sins” (1:3).

3. *Heb 2:3a (C): How Will We Escape, Neglecting So Great a Salvation?*

The audience are then presented with an ominously potent, thought-provoking rhetorical question: “How will we escape, neglecting so great a salvation?” (2:3a). The implication is that “we,” audience and author, will not be able to escape the just penalty of a recompense from God, if, through inattentiveness to the things that have been heard (2:1), we neglect so great a salvation. The attractiveness of the “salvation” (σωτηρίαν) the audience are to have the hope of inheriting (1:14) is developed with a description enhancing its significance as “so great (τηλικαύτης) a salvation (σωτηρίας).”

<sup>3</sup> On a possible background in Deut 33:2, see Allen, *Deuteronomy*, 104-6.

<sup>4</sup> BDAG, 172; Albert Fuchs, “βέβαιος,” *EDNT* 1.211.



The audience are thus attuned for further delineation of why this salvation, which includes the divine royal Son's having made purification for sins (1:3) and anticipates the further salvific action that God will place his enemies as a footstool for his feet, as the Son now sits enthroned in heavenly exaltation at the powerful right side of God (1:3, 14), is "so great a salvation."<sup>5</sup>

*4. Heb 2:3b (B'): Which, Having Received a Beginning*

The further delineation of "so great a salvation" (2:3a) that the audience awaits commences immediately: "which, having received a beginning" (2:3b). At this point, after the unparalleled central C element of the chiasm, "how will we escape, neglecting so great a salvation?," the audience experience a pivotal progression from a just recompense that every transgression and disobedience "received" (ἐλαβεν) in the B element (2:2b) to a beginning which so great a salvation "received" (λαβοῦσα) in the B' element. This pivotal chiasmic progression thus establishes for the audience a noteworthy contrast between the just penalty of the recompense received for every transgression and disobedience under the Mosaic law and the beginning received for so great a salvation, which the audience hope to inherit (1:14). The implication is that this salvation is "so great" because it includes being saved from the just penalty of the recompense received for every transgression and disobedience against God under the Mosaic law.

*5. Heb 2:3c-4 (A'): Spoken through the Lord, Confirmed for Us by Those Who Heard*

The audience then hear the completion of the description of "so great a salvation" (2:3a), which received a beginning (2:3b): "of being spoken through the Lord, was confirmed for us by those who heard, God additionally testifying with signs together with wonders and various acts of power and distributions of the Holy Spirit according to his willing" (2:3c-4). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from "the word spoken (λαληθεῖς) through (δι') angels became firm (βέβαιος)" (2:2a) in the A element to "(a beginning of) being

<sup>5</sup> "So great" (τηλικαύτης) is a "strengthened form of τηλικος," according to BDAG, 1001-2.

spoken (λαλεισθαι) through (διὰ) the Lord, was confirmed (ἐβεβαιώθη) (2:3c) in the A' element. And, "it is necessary for us (ἡμᾶς) all the more to attend to the things that have been heard (ἀκουσθεῖσιν)" (2:1) in the A element progresses to "it was confirmed for us (ἡμᾶς) by those who heard (ἀκουσάντων)" (2:3c) in the A' element.

In contrast to "the word," the Mosaic law, which was spoken by God (divine passive) through angels (2:2a), "so great a salvation," which the audience are not to neglect (2:3a), received a beginning of being spoken by God (divine passive) through the Lord (κυρίου)" (2:3c). This contrast deepens the audience's appreciation for the superiority of the divine royal Son, whom God addressed as "Lord" (κύριε) of creation (1:10), and in whom God has spoken to us (1:2) by directly addressing him through the string of scriptural quotations the audience just heard (1:5-14), to the angels, no one of whom was addressed by God as his Son (1:5, 13). But the audience are also alerted to a superiority of "so great a salvation," which was spoken through the divine royal Son as Lord, to "the word" of the Mosaic law, which was spoken merely through angels.<sup>6</sup>

Whereas the word of the Mosaic law became "firm" (2:2a), so that it is necessary for "us" all the more to attend to the things that have been "heard" in it, lest we drift away (2:1), "so great a salvation" was "confirmed" for "us" by those who "heard" (2:3c). That this great salvation was "confirmed" (ἐβεβαιώθη) for us, and not merely became "firm" (βέβαιος) like the word of the Mosaic law, indicates that it as an even more secure "anchor," assuring that, by heeding it, we will not "drift away." That there are those who "heard" (ἀκουσάντων) the beginning (2:3b) of so great a salvation (2:3a) being spoken through the Lord, so that they have confirmed it for "us," audience and author, strengthens the appeal for "us" all the more to attend to the things that have been "heard (ἀκουσθεῖσιν)" (2:1). These things included especially the preceding chain of scriptural quotations (1:5-14), in which God spoke to "us" (1:2) through addressing his Son as "God" (1:8) and "Lord" (1:10).

Along with this confirmation for us by those who heard the beginning of so great a salvation before the audience have heard it (2:3c), is God's

<sup>6</sup> "Lord" in 2:3 refers not to the divine royal Son but to God, according to Michael Bachmann, "...gesprochen durch den Herrn" (Hebr 2,3): Erwägungen zum Reden Gottes und Jesu im Hebräerbrief," *Bib* 71 (1990): 365-94. But the only preceding occurrence of "Lord" at this point in Hebrews refers to the Son (1:10), who has also been addressed as "God" (1:8). God the Father, however, is the one speaking. Hence, God as "Lord" Father has spoken through his "Lord" Son.

additional “testifying with signs together with wonders and various acts of power and distributions of the Holy Spirit according to his willing” (2:4). Such testifying by God often occurred in the context of a worshipping assembly.<sup>7</sup> That God’s testifying included distributions of the Holy “Spirit” (πνεύματος), often manifest and evident in the worshipping assembly, resonates with the worship dimension heard earlier by the audience regarding the angels.<sup>8</sup> After God invited the angels to worship his firstborn Son (1:6), they are described as his “spirits” (πνεύματα) and his “ministers” of worship (1:7). And the audience have been induced to acknowledge that all the angels are “ministering spirits (πνεύματα)” sent to assist in the worship by those who are going to inherit salvation (1:14). In this A' element, then, the confirmation given us by those who heard previously, as well as God’s further testifying, provide the audience with a firm “anchor,” lest they “drift away” (2:1) and neglect “so great a salvation” that they can hear spoken about especially and preeminently in their worshipping assembly.

### C. Summary on Hebrews 2:1-4

The mention of the “angels” (1:13) toward the conclusion of the AB chiastic unit (1:5-14) serves as the linking term to the AC chiastic unit (2:1-4), whose introduction refers to the word spoken through “angels” (2:2). In this AC unit (2:1-4) the audience are exhorted on the necessity for them all the more to attend to the things that have been heard (2:1), not only the things God has spoken to the fathers in the prophets (1:1), but the things God has spoken to us in a Son (1:2). These include particularly the things God has spoken to us by directly addressing his divine royal Son, rather than any of the angels, through the preceding chain of scriptural quotations (1:5-14). At the center of the chiasm the audience are presented with the ominous question: “How will we escape, neglecting so great a salvation?” (2:3a), the “salvation” they hope to inherit (1:14). The audience then experience a chiastic pivot of parallels that serves to contrast the penalty

<sup>7</sup> Acts 14:1-3: in the Jewish synagogue at Iconium; 1 Cor 12:4-11: in the worshipping assembly at Corinth.

<sup>8</sup> On the role of the Holy Spirit in 2:1-4, see Martin Emmrich, *Pneumatological Concepts in the Epistle to the Hebrews: Amtsscharisma, Prophet, & Guide of the Eschatological Exodus* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2003), 64-68; David M. Allen, “The Holy Spirit as Gift or Giver?: Retaining the Pentecostal Dimension of Hebrews 2.4,” *BT* 59 (2008): 151-58.

of the just recompense that every transgression and disobedience of the Mosaic law “received” (2:2b) with the beginning that such a great salvation “received” (2:3b).

Furthermore, the audience hear a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the word of the Mosaic law “spoken through” angels that became “firm” (2:2a) to the beginning of so great a salvation being “spoken through” the Lord that was “confirmed” (2:3c). The implication is that the beginning of the great salvation spoken through the Lord that was confirmed is now superior to the word of the Mosaic law spoken merely through angels that became merely firm. The audience also hear a progression from the necessity for “us” to attend to the things that have been “heard”, lest they drift away (2:1) to the beginning of the great salvation that was confirmed for “us” by those who “heard” it previously (2:3c). This “confirmation” along with God’s additional testifying (2:4) provide the audience with a secure “anchor” for their assurance, so that they do not neglect so great a salvation by “drifting away” from their worshiping assembly, where they can hear such a great salvation spoken through the Lord.

## Hebrews 2:5-9

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- A<sup>5</sup> For not to *angels* did he subject the heavenly world, the one coming, about which we are speaking. <sup>6</sup> But someone testified somewhere, saying, “What is man that you remember him, or a son of man that you care for him?”  
<sup>7</sup> You *made him lower briefly beyond the angels, with glory and honor you crowned him*,  
 B<sup>8a</sup> *all things you subjected* under his feet” (Ps 8:5-7). In *subjecting to him all things* he left nothing to *him* unsubjected.  
 B<sup>8b</sup> Yet now we do not see *all things subjected to him*,  
 A'<sup>9</sup> but we are taking note of Jesus, the one *briefly beyond the angels made lower*, on account of the suffering of death, *with glory and honor crowned*, so that, by the grace of God, on behalf of all he might taste death.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 2:5-9

Verbs to express “testifying”—“God additionally testifying with (συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος)” (2:4) and “someone testified (διεμαρτύρατο) somewhere” (2:6)—serve as the transitional words linking the AC (2:1-4) to the AD (2:5-9) chiastic unit. The transition keeps the audience’s attention on listening to the testimony they have been given to confirm so great a salvation they are not to neglect (2:3-4).

“Angels” (ἁγγέλοις) in 2:5 and “made him lower (ἡλάττωσας) briefly than the angels (βραχύ τι παρ’ ἁγγέλους), with glory and honor you crowned (δόξη καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφάνωσας) him” in 2:7 correspond with “the one made lower (ἡλαττωμένον) briefly than the angels (βραχύ τι παρ’ ἁγγέλους) . . . with glory and honor crowned (δόξη καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον)” in 2:9. These correspondences establish the chiastic parallels between the A (2:5-7) and A' (2:9) elements. The formulations, “all things you subjected (πάντα ὑπέταξας) under his feet; in subjecting (ὑποτάξαι) to him (αὐτῷ) all things

(τὰ πάντα) he left nothing to him (αὐτῷ) unsubjected” in 2:8a, and “all things subjected (τὰ πάντα ὑποτεταγμένα) to him (αὐτῷ)” in 2:8b, set the parallels between the B and B' elements, which serve as the central, pivotal elements of the chiasm.

In addition, within the third macrochiastic level of the letter to the Hebrews, this Aab' unit (2:5-9), which occurs after the central and pivotal Aac unit (2:1-4), exhibits a parallel relationship with the Aab unit (1:5-14). The parallelism is evident, first of all, in the occurrences of the term “heavenly world”—“when he (God) leads the firstborn into the heavenly world (οἰκουμένην)” (1:6) in the Aab unit, and “not to angels did he (God) subject the heavenly world (οἰκουμένην)” (2:5) in the Aab' unit.<sup>1</sup> Also contributing to the parallelism is the verbal form to express “going” or “coming”—“those who are going (μέλλοντας) to inherit salvation” (1:14) in the Aab unit, and “the heavenly world, the one coming (μέλλουσιν)” (2:5) in the Aab' unit. Finally, the parallelism is confirmed by expressions involving subjugation under the “feet” of the divine royal Son—God promises to “place your enemies as a footstool for your feet (ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου)” (1:13) in the Aab unit, and God “subjected all things under his feet (ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ)” (2:8) in the Aab' unit.<sup>2</sup>

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 2:5-9

### 1. Heb 2:5-7 (A): Made Lower Briefly than the Angels, with Glory and Honor Crowned

The audience hear the A element (2:5-7) of this chiastic unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) For not to *angels* did he subject the heavenly world, the one coming, about which we are speaking. But someone testified somewhere, saying (2:5-6a),
- b) “What is *man* that you remember him (2:6b),
- b') or a son of *man* that you care for him (2:6c)?
- a') You made him lower briefly beyond the *angels*, with glory and honor you crowned him (2:7).

<sup>1</sup> Whereas οἰκουμένη often refers to the inhabited, earthly world, in Hebrews it refers to the heavenly world (see ch. 3).

<sup>2</sup> For the outline and description of the third macrochiastic level, see ch. 1.

When the audience hear “the son of man that (ἀνθρώπου ὅτι) you care for him” in the “b” sub-element (2:6c), they experience the chiasmic pivot from the parallel, “what is man that (ἄνθρωπος ὅτι) you remember him” in the “b” sub-element (2:6b), the only occurrences of these terms in this chiasmic sub-unit. They then are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the occurrences of the word “angels”—“not to angels (ἀγγέλοις)” in the “a” sub-element (2:5-6a) and “lower briefly beyond the angels (ἀγγέλους)” in the “a” sub-element (2:7), the only occurrences of this word in this chiasmic sub-unit.

Having heard the questions that introduce the comparison of the angels to the superior divine royal Son—“For to which of the angels did he ever say?” (1:5a) and “But to which of the angels has he ever said?” (1:13), the audience now hear the blunt assertion, “For not to angels did he subject the heavenly world, the one coming, about which we are speaking” (2:5). Although, as the audience have heard, God invited, through a quotation of scripture, all the angels of God to worship his firstborn divine royal Son, when God leads him into the “heavenly world (οἰκουμένην)” (1:6), God did not subject under the power and authority of the angels this “heavenly world (οἰκουμένην).” That this heavenly world is described as “the one coming (μέλλουσιν),” that is, the one that is destined to arrive at the future, final time of salvation, links it to the audience as among “those who are going (μέλλοντες) to inherit salvation (1:14). This “so great a salvation” (2:3) that the audience are “going” to inherit is thus implicitly part of the “coming” heavenly world, about which “we”—author and audience—are speaking, in which the angels themselves worship and, as “ministering spirits,” assist others to worship the firstborn divine royal Son (1:14).

In development of “God additionally testifying with (συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος) signs together with wonders and various acts of power and distributions of the Holy Spirit according to his willing” (2:4) to further confirm “so great a salvation” the audience are not to neglect (2:3), the audience hear, “But someone testified (διεμαρτύρατο) somewhere, saying” (2:6a). In contrast to God, whose testifying included his speaking to us by directly addressing his divine royal Son through scriptural quotations (1:1-2, 5-13), “someone” (τις), an anonymous, generic, representative human being, testified “somewhere” (πού), that is, somewhere in scripture as the word of God.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 944. Koester, *Hebrews*, 214: “Introducing OT quotations without identifying their location may reflect the idea that the OT is the word of God, for if God or the Spirit is its true source, there is little need to cite particular biblical authors.”

This “someone” testified “somewhere” (2:6a) by quoting from Ps 8:5-7.<sup>4</sup> Whereas God spoke to us by directly addressing his divine royal Son through quotations of scripture (1:1-2, 5-13), this “someone” directly addressed God, speaking through a quotation of scripture on behalf of all human beings: “What is man that you remember him” (2:6b). When the audience hear the continuation of the quote, “or a son of man that you care for him?” (2:6c), they experience the pivotal progression of this chiastic sub-unit (2:5-7) from a reference to mankind in general, “what is man that (ἄνθρωπος ὅτι) you remember him” to a reference to God’s royal Son as a member of mankind, “or a son of man that (ἀνθρώπου ὅτι) you care for him?” The audience’s identification of a “son” (υἱός) here as God’s royal Son has been prepared by the previous references to him with the only other occurrences at this point in Hebrews of “son” in 1:2, 5(bis), and 8.<sup>5</sup> The question of God’s care for his divine royal Son as a “son of man” thus has implications for God’s remembrance of mankind in general.

The audience are then presented, via the chiastic parallels, with a final progression within the sub-unit that comprises the A element (2:5-7). Although not to “angels” (ἁγγέλοις) did God subject the coming heavenly world (2:5), the continuation of the scriptural quotation acknowledges that God made his divine royal Son, as a member of mankind (2:6c), lower briefly beyond the “angels (ἁγγέλους)” (2:7a). That God made his divine royal Son lower briefly “beyond” (πᾶρ) the angels further elaborates for the audience the “name,” that is, the identifiable characteristics and essential qualities, which the divine royal Son inherited as more excellent “beyond” (πᾶρ) the angels (1:4). In other words, not only is the divine royal Son more excellent “beyond” the angels because of his seat at the right of the Majesty in the heights of heaven (1:3d), where all the angels of God are to worship him (1:6), but, before taking that heavenly seat, he was made lower briefly “beyond” the angels on the earth by becoming a human being.

That “with (divine) glory (cf. 1:3) and honor” God “crowned” his divine royal Son (2:7b) develops his significance as a “son of man” (2:6c). The audience are to appreciate that it is precisely from the divine royal Son’s

<sup>4</sup> Gert Jacobus Steyn, “Some Observations About the *Vorlage* of Ps 8:5-7 in Heb 2:6-8,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 24 (2003): 493-514; George H. Guthrie and R. D. Quinn, “A Discourse Analysis of the Use of Psalm 8:4-6 in Hebrews 2:5-9,” *JETS* 49 (2006): 235-46; Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 944-47; Rascher, *Schriftauslegung*, 53-56.

<sup>5</sup> “Son of man” here, however, is not used as the christological title found elsewhere in the NT; see Rascher, *Schriftauslegung*, 55.



status as a son of mankind, a human being like them, made briefly lower beyond the angels, that God exalted and “crowned” him “with glory and honor.” With this divine glory and honor, he took his seat at God’s right in the heights of heaven (1:3), worthy to be worshiped not only by all the angels of God (1:6), but by the audience as well as by all human beings with the assistance of the angels as God’s “ministering spirits” (1:7, 14).

In sum, by means of the chiasmic pattern of this A element (2:5-7), the audience experience a pivot in focus, through a scriptural quote (Ps 8:5-7) spoken by a representative human being (2:6a), from mankind in general as an object of God’s remembrance (2:6b) to the divine Son as an object of God’s care precisely as a “son of man,” a human being himself (2:6c). The audience are to appreciate that God made his divine royal Son lower briefly beyond the angels, to whom, in implied contrast to this Son, he did not subject the heavenly world (2:5). God crowned his divine royal Son, as a human being, with a glory and honor (2:7) that renders him worthy to be worshiped not only by all the angels of God but by the audience as well as by all human beings (1:6-7, 14).

## *2. Heb 2:8a (B): God Subjected All Things to Him*

The audience then hear the conclusion of the scriptural quotation of Ps 8:5-7, spoken to God by some anonymous, representative human being who testified somewhere in the earthly realm, as well as further elaboration of it by the author: “‘all things you subjected under his feet.’ In subjecting to him all things he left nothing to him unsubjected” (2:8a). In contrast to the angels, to whom God did not “subject” (ὑπέταξεν) the coming heavenly world (2:5), God “subjected” (ὑπέταξας) all things under the feet of his divine royal Son. That God subjected “all things” (πάντα) under his feet develops the audience’s appreciation of the divine royal Son not only as the one bearing up “all things” (τὰ πάντα) by the pronouncement of God’s power (1:3), but as a Son whom God placed as heir of “all things (πάντων)” (1:2). And the assertion from a scriptural quote (Ps 8:7) that God subjected all things “under his feet” (ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ) reinforces God’s promise from a scriptural quote (Ps 109:1) of placing the enemies of his Son, seated at God’s right in heavenly enthronement, in a position of utter subjugation to the Son, as a “footstool for your feet (ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου)” (1:13).

Having heard the completion of the scriptural quotation from Ps 8:5-7, the audience are then impressed with a striking intensification of God's subjection of all things under the feet of his divine royal Son. In his own words the author assures his audience that in subjecting to his divine royal Son all things God left absolutely nothing to him unsubjected (2:8a).

### 3. *Heb 2:8b (B'): Yet Now We Do Not See All Things Subjected to Him*

The author then speaks for himself, his audience, and all human beings, in establishing the yet to be fulfilled promise of God regarding his heavenly enthroned divine royal Son: "Yet now we do not see all things subjected to him" (2:8b). At this point the audience are presented with the central, chiasmic pivot of parallels from the B (2:8a) to the B' (2:8b) element of this fourth unit (2:5-9). In the B element the audience heard the human speaker of the scriptural quotation acknowledge that God "subjected all things" (πάντα ὑπέταξας) under the feet of his divine royal Son. The author intensively reinforced this for his audience by pointedly asserting that in "subjecting" (ὑποτάξαι) "to him" (αὐτῷ) "all things" (τὰ πάντα) God left nothing "to him" (αὐτῷ) unsubjected.<sup>6</sup> And now, in the B' element, the author draws his audience as well as all human beings into his declaration that now "we" do not yet see "all things subjected" (τὰ πάντα ὑποτεταγμένα) "to him" (αὐτῷ).

This promise of a future subjection of all things to the divine royal Son adds to the hope that has been awakened in the audience, as among those who are going to inherit salvation (1:14) from the Son as heir of "all things" (1:2). So great is this salvation they are not to neglect (2:3), since the future subjection of "all things," which we now do not yet see (2:8b), but which has been definitively promised (2:8a), includes the placing as a footstool under his feet the Son's "enemies" (1:13). These "enemies," although not precisely delineated at this point, implicitly and ominously represent a menacing threat to the lives of the audience as well as of all human beings.

<sup>6</sup> There is some doubt whether the first "to him" (αὐτῷ) originally belonged to the text; see Bruce Manning Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: Second Edition* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 594.

4. Heb 2:9 (A'): *Made Lower Briefly than the Angels, with Glory and Honor Crowned*

For the first time in Hebrews, the audience hear the divine royal Son identified by name: “but we are taking note of Jesus, the one briefly beyond the angels made lower, on account of the suffering of death, with glory and honor crowned, so that, by the grace of God, on behalf of all he might taste death” (2:9).<sup>7</sup> At this point the audience hear a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the A (2:5-7) to this A' element. In the A element the audience heard that God “made lower” (ἡλάττωσας) his divine royal Son, as a son of mankind (2:6c), “briefly beyond the angels” (βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους), the “angels” (ἀγγέλοις) to whom God did not subject the coming heavenly world (2:5), and that “with glory and honor you crowned” (δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφάνωσας) him (2:7). And now, in the A' element, the audience hear that we are taking note of Jesus, the one “briefly beyond the angels” (βραχύ τι παρ' ἀγγέλους) “made lower” (ἡλαττωμένον), and “with glory and honor crowned” (δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον). Thus, the heavenly enthroned divine royal Son, briefly beyond the angels made lower as a human being, is now explicitly identified for the audience as “Jesus,” the one of whom we are taking note.

Although we do not yet physically “see” (ὁρῶμεν) all things subjected to the divine royal Son (2:8b), as authoritatively asserted by the scripture quotation (2:8a), we are presently “taking note” (βλέπομεν), that is, directing our attention to, Jesus.<sup>8</sup> As a “son of man” (2:6c), a human being, Jesus was briefly beyond the angels made lower by God “because of” or “on account of” (διὰ) the suffering of death—that is, so that he might suffer his own death as a human being, as well as on account of the suffering of death that all human beings in general must undergo. Furthermore, it is on account of this human suffering of death that Jesus was crowned by God with glory and honor in heavenly enthronement. The ultimate purpose within God’s plan of Jesus becoming a human being by being made lower beyond the angels was so that, by the grace of God, on behalf of all

<sup>7</sup> On the dubious variant “without God” (χωρίς θεοῦ) instead of “grace of God” (χάρτι θεοῦ) in 2:9, see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 594.

<sup>8</sup> On the meaning of βλέπω in Hebrews as “take note,” “pay attention to,” or “be concerned about,” see Paul-Gerd Müller, “βλέπω,” *EDNT* 1.222. Thus, βλέπομεν in 2:9 is distinct in meaning from the physical seeing expressed by ὁρῶμεν in 2:8; see Westcott, *Hebrews*, 45; *contra* Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 154.

human beings, he might “taste” (γεύσῃται), that is, “fully experience” the suffering of death (2:9).<sup>9</sup>

Along with the explicit identification of the divine royal Son, who is also a “son of man,” a human being, as “Jesus,” in this A' element (2:9) the audience receive further implicit delineation of the great salvation they are not to neglect (2:3). This salvation that the audience hope to inherit (1:14) is “so great” because it includes salvation from the power of death, implicitly among the “enemies” God will place in total subjection as a “footstool for the feet” of his heavenly enthroned divine royal Son (1:13). This salvation is for all human beings, on behalf of whom Jesus, himself a human being, fully experienced the death all human beings must experience, before he was exalted from this death to a seat at God’s right (1:3), crowned with heavenly glory and honor. The audience are thus being further persuaded of the worthiness of Jesus, the human “son of man” (2:6c) who is also the royal Son of God, to be worshiped by them, with the assistance of the angels as God’s “ministering spirits” (1:14).

### C. Summary on Hebrews 2:5-9

As a link between the AC (2:1-4) and this AD chiastic unit (2:5-9), the additional “testifying” by God to confirm how great is the salvation we should not neglect (2:3-4) is continued by the testimony of a human being, as “someone testified somewhere” (2:6a). In 2:5-7 of this AD unit the audience experience within the quotation of Ps 8:5-7 a chiastic pivot from a reference to mankind in general (“what is man,” 2:6b) to the divine royal Son as a specific human being (“or a son of man,” 2:6c). In a further chiasmic progression the audience learn that although it was not to angels but to his Son that God subjected the coming heavenly world (2:5), the Son, as a human being, God made lower beyond the angels before God crowned him with heavenly glory and honor (2:7).

At the center of this chiastic AD unit the audience experience a pivot of parallels. The scriptural assertion that God subjected all things under the feet of his divine royal Son, and the author’s reinforcing assertion that in

<sup>9</sup> BDAG, 195; Hans-Jürgen van der Minde, “γεύσῃται,” *EDNT* 1.246. See also Craig L. Blomberg, “‘But We See Jesus’: The Relationship Between the Son of Man in Hebrews 2.6 and 2.9 and the Implications for English Translations,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham, et al.; LNTS 387; London: Clark, 2008), 88–99.

subjecting to him all things God left nothing to him unsubjected (2:8a), progress to the author's declaration on behalf of himself, his audience, and all human beings, that we do not yet see all things subjected to him (2:8b).

In addition, the audience experience macrochiastic progressions of parallels from the Aab (1:5-14) to this Aab' (2:5-9) unit. Although God invited all the angels of God to worship his divine royal Son when God led him into the heavenly world (1:6), God did not subject this heavenly world to angels (2:5). The salvation that those, including the audience, are "going" to inherit (1:14) is tied to this future heavenly world, the one that is "coming" (2:5). And God's scriptural promise of placing his divine royal Son's enemies as a footstool for his feet (1:13) is reinforced by the scriptural assertion, spoken to God by a human being, that God has subjected all things under the feet of his divine royal Son (2:8a).

By means of the final chiastic progression of parallels within this AD unit, the audience's attention is directed to Jesus as the human being made lower briefly beyond the angels (2:6-7), to whom God did not subject the coming heavenly world (2:5). It was on account of the suffering of death—not only the death that Jesus himself suffered, but the death that all human beings must suffer—that Jesus was crowned with heavenly glory and honor, so that, by the grace of God, on behalf of all human beings he might fully experience the suffering of death (2:9). Hence, the audience are to deepen their appreciation of Jesus, crowned with heavenly glory and honor after suffering death as a human being, as worthy of their worship.

## Hebrews 2:10-18

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- A<sup>10</sup> For it was fitting for him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the *initiator* of their salvation, through *sufferings*, perfect.
- B<sup>11</sup> For indeed he who makes holy and those who are being made holy are all from one, for which reason he is not ashamed to call them *brothers*,  
<sup>12</sup> saying, “I will proclaim your name to my *brothers*, in the midst of the assembly I will praise you (Ps 21:23),”
- C<sup>13a</sup> *and again*, “I will be confident in him (Isa 8:17b; cf. 2 Sam 22:3a),”
- C<sup>13b</sup> *and again*, “Behold *I* and the children whom God gave to me (Isa 8:18a).”
- B<sup>14</sup> Since then the children have shared in blood and flesh, he also similarly partook with them, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the strength of death, that is the devil,<sup>15</sup> and free those, as many as by fear of death through all their life were held in slavery.<sup>16</sup> For surely not angels does he take hold of, but rather the descendants of Abraham he takes hold of,<sup>17a</sup> whence he was obligated in all things with his *brothers* to be likened,
- A<sup>17b</sup> so that he might become a merciful and faithful *high priest* in things regarding God in order to expiate the sins of the people,<sup>18</sup> for in what he himself *suffered* in being tested, those who are being tested he is able to help.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 2:10-18

The transitional words—“suffering(s),” “glory,” “all”—are embedded within a chiastic sequence in 2:9b-10d that creates an extended close connection between the AD (2:5-9) and AE (2:10-18) units:

- a) on account of the *suffering* of death (2:9b),
- b) with *glory* and honor crowned (2:9c),

- c) so that by the grace of God, on behalf of *all* he might taste death (2:9d).
- d) For it was fitting for him (2:10a),
- c') for whom are *all* things and through whom are *all* things (2:10b),
- b') in leading many sons into *glory* (2:10c),
- a') to make the initiator of their salvation, through *sufferings*, perfect (2:10d).

The only occurrences in this sequence of the word “suffering”—“the suffering (πάθημα) of death” in 2:9b and “through sufferings (παθημάτων)” in 2:10d—establish the chiasmic parallels between the “a” and “a” sub-elements. The only occurrences in this sequence of the word “glory”—“with glory (δόξη)” in 2:9c and “into glory (δόξαν)” in 2:10c—determine the chiasmic parallels between the “b” and “b” sub-elements. The only occurrences in this sequence of the word “all”—“on behalf of all (παντός)” in 2:9d and “for whom are all (πάντα) things and through whom are all (πάντα) things” in 2:10b—form the chiasmic parallels between the “c” and “c” sub-elements. The clause that introduces this fifth unit (2:10-18), “for it was fitting for him” in 2:10a, serves as the unparalleled, central “d” sub-element of the chiasmic sequence in 2:9b-10d.

With regard to the chiasmic structure of this unit (2:10-18), there is an alliterative link between the words “initiator” and “high priest”—“the initiator (ἀρχηγόν) of their salvation” in 2:10 corresponds with “a merciful and faithful high priest (ἀρχιερέως)” in 2:17b. And “through sufferings (παθημάτων)” in 2:10 corresponds with “in what he himself suffered (πέπονθεν)” in 2:18. These correspondences establish the parallels between the A (2:10) and A' (2:17b-18) elements. The only occurrences in this unit of the word “brothers”—“to call them brothers (ἀδελφούς)” in 2:11, “to my brothers (ἀδελφοῖς)” in 2:12, and “with his brothers (ἀδελφοῖς)” in 2:17a—determine the parallels between the B (2:11-12) and the B' (2:14-17a) elements. And the only occurrences in this unit of the combination “and again” with “I”—“and again (καὶ πάλιν) I (ἐγώ) will be confident” in 2:13a as well as “and again (καὶ πάλιν), ‘Behold I (ἐγώ)’” in 2:13b—form the parallels for the central and pivotal C (2:13a) and C' (2:13b) elements.

With regard to the third macrochiasmic level, this Aaa' unit (2:10-18) exhibits a parallel relationship with the Aaa unit (1:1-4). The first two occurrences in Hebrews of the word “name”—“he has inherited a name (ὄνομα)” in 1:4 and “I will proclaim your name (ὄνομά) to my brothers” in 2:12—contribute to this parallelism. And the first two occurrences in Hebrews of the word “sins”—“having made purification for sins

(ἁμαρτιῶν)” in 1:3 and “to expiate the sins (ἁμαρτίας) of the people” in 2:17—further confirm this macrochiastic parallelism.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 2:10-18

### 1. *Heb 2:10 (A): To Make the Initiator of Their Salvation, through Sufferings, Perfect*

Having heard that it was by the grace of God that Jesus might fully experience death on behalf of all human beings (2:9), the audience now hear more about this gracious God: “For it was fitting for him, for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in leading many sons into glory, to make the initiator of their salvation, through sufferings, perfect” (2:10). The audience are to appreciate what was “fitting” or “appropriate” (ἔπρεπεν) for such a gracious God (2:10a): First, Jesus might taste death on behalf of “all” human beings (2:9d), because they are among “all” the things created for God and “all” the things created through God (2:10b). Second, God might lead many “sons,” the fellow human beings of Jesus, a “son” of mankind (2:6), into heavenly “glory” (2:10c), since Jesus, the divine royal Son, was crowned with heavenly “glory” and honor (2:9c). And third, on account of the “suffering” of death that all human “sons” must undergo (2:9b), for God to make the initiator of the salvation of all human beings, through “sufferings,” perfect (2:10d).<sup>1</sup>

The audience have heard that God has spoken to us in a “Son (υἱῷ)” (1:2), whom God, through scriptural quotations, addressed as “Son (υἱός) of mine” and promised that “he will be to me as a Son (υἱόν)” (1:5). Indeed, God addressed the “Son” (υἱόν) as God himself, whose heavenly throne is forever and ever (1:8). This divine royal Son was also referred to as a “son (υἱός) of man” (2:6), a member of mankind, a human being. And now the audience are to consider themselves to be among the many “sons” (υἱούς), the “sons” both of mankind and of God, whom God is “leading” (ἀγαγόντα) “into” (εἰς) the same heavenly “glory” with which Jesus, the royal Son of God and a son of mankind, was crowned (2:9),

<sup>1</sup> God’s propriety here indicates not only who God is, but also why God’s final and definitive plan of bringing human beings to salvation should be convincing for the audience, according to Alan C. Mitchell, “The Use of πρέπειν and Rhetorical Propriety in Hebrews 2:10,” *CBQ* 54 (1992): 681–701.



when God “leads” (εἰσαγάγει) him as the firstborn “into” (εἰς) the heavenly world (1:6).

That it was fitting for God to make the initiator of the “salvation” (σωτηρίας) of the many “sons” God is leading into glory perfect (2:10) further elucidates the “salvation” (σωτηρίαν) the audience, as among the many human “sons” of God, have the hope of “inheriting” (1:14). The audience are not to neglect a “salvation” (σωτηρίας) that is so great (2:3), because it was through the sufferings of death (2:9), which all human beings must undergo, that God made Jesus, the initiator of this salvation “perfect” (τελειῶσαι), that is, capable of being seated at the right of God in heavenly glory (1:3, 13), worthy to be worshiped (1:6).<sup>2</sup>

The alliteration between God’s “leading” (ἀγαγόντα) and the term “initiator” (ἀρχηγόν) lends a connotation of “leader” to the word here translated as “initiator” (2:10). On the other hand, the wordplay between the term “perfect” (τελειῶσαι), with its connotation of “bringing to an end,” “finishing,” or “completing,” highlights the connotation of “initiating” or “beginning” present in the term ἀρχηγόν, which, through the combined effect of the alliteration and wordplay, acquires a sense of “initiating leader.” The Jesus “perfected” through the suffering of death on behalf of all human beings (2:9) is thus the “Son” who serves as both the “initiator” and “leader” for the many “sons,” including the audience. The salvation he both initiates and leads them to is so great, they ought not to neglect it (2:3).

## 2. Heb 2:11-12 (B): To Call Them Brothers To Whom I Will Proclaim Your Name

The audience hear more about Jesus as the initiating leader of their salvation (2:10): “For indeed he who makes holy and those who are being made holy are all from one, for which reason he is not ashamed to call them

<sup>2</sup> On the cultic sense of being made “perfect” in Hebrews, see Hans Hübner, “τελειῶ,” *EDNT* 3.345. See also David Peterson, *Hebrews and Perfection: An Examination of the Concept of Perfection in the “Epistle to the Hebrews”* (SNTSMS 47; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Kevin B. McCruden, “Christ’s Perfection in Hebrews: Divine Beneficence as an Exegetical Key to Hebrews 2:10,” *BR* 47 (2002): 40–62; Gordon J. Thomas, “The Perfection of Christ and the Perfecting of Believers in Hebrews,” in *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament* (eds. Kent E. Brower and Andy Johnson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 293–310.

brothers, saying, ‘I will proclaim your name to my brothers, in the midst of the assembly I will praise you (Ps 21:23)’” (2:11-12). The Jesus whom, through the sufferings of death, God perfected (2:10) to be an object of heavenly worship (1:6), is the one who “makes holy” (ἀγιάζων), that is, sets apart from the common, profane, or unclean and dedicates or consecrates for the purpose of honoring or worshiping God.<sup>3</sup> The audience are to consider themselves as among those who are “being made holy” (ἀγιάζόμενοι) by Jesus (2:11). That Jesus, himself perfected, is making them holy means that they are on the way of being perfected for their role in the heavenly worship. As among those who are going to inherit the salvation Jesus initiated, they are being made holy and thus being perfected to approach and worship God, as well as Jesus, the divine royal Son, who is also God (1:8-12), with the assistance of the angels God sent as ministering spirits (1:14).

That he who makes holy and those who are being made holy are “all from one” (ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντες) (2:11) means that both Jesus and those, including the audience, he is making holy have a common human as well as divine origin. Jesus and those he is making holy are “all from one” mankind, “sons” of mankind (ἀνθρώπου), as indicated by the scriptural quotation of Ps 8:5 in 2:6. And not only is Jesus the royal “Son” of God (1:2, 5, 8), but the human beings he is making holy are also the many “sons” God is leading to glory through Jesus, the “one” God “for whom” (δι’ ὃν) are all things and “through whom” (δι’ οὗ) are all things (2:10).<sup>4</sup>

Because “he who makes holy and those who are being made holy” have a common human as well as divine origin, Jesus is “not ashamed” (οὐκ ἐπαισχύνεται), the negative understatement to the scriptural declaration that God has “crowned him with glory and honor” (2:7, 9), to acknowledge them as his fellow “brothers” (2:11). The audience are to appreciate that they not only are among the many “sons” God is leading to heavenly glory (2:10), but also are among the “brothers” unashamedly recognized as such by Jesus, the divine royal Son.

In a preceding chain of scriptural quotations God spoke directly to and about his divine royal Son to the audience (1:5-13). Now the divine royal Son, Jesus, through a scriptural quotation of Ps 21:23, responds to that concerted address, speaking directly to and about God for the benefit of

<sup>3</sup> Horst Balz, “ἅγιος,” *EDNT* 1.16-20; BDAG, 9-10.

<sup>4</sup> For a different interpretation of “all from one” as a reference to descent from Abraham, see James Swetnam, “Ἐξ ἑνός in Hebrews 2:11,” *Bib* 88 (2007): 517-25. But at 2:11 the audience have not yet heard an explicit reference to Abraham.

the audience as among his “brothers” (2:12). With his scriptural voice Jesus promises God that he will proclaim God’s “name” to “my brothers.”

While the “name” of God refers to the totality of the essential qualities and attributes that identify God and thus cannot be limited to any one word, the preeminent attribute by which God has identified himself at this point is that of “Father.” At the beginning of the scriptural sequence (1:5-13) God, with his scriptural voice, promised his royal Son that “I will be to him as a Father, and he will be to me as a Son” (2 Sam 7:14 in 1:5). Now that “Son,” who more excellent beyond the angels has inherited a “name (ὄνομα)” (1:4), promises God that “I will proclaim your name (ὄνομα) to my brothers” (2:12). Thus, the audience are to realize that God is the Father not only of Jesus, his divine royal “Son,” but of them as among the many “sons” God is leading to glory (2:10), those Jesus, without shame, calls his “brothers.”

In a continuation of his scriptural voice (Ps 21:23) Jesus promises that he will praise God “in the midst of the assembly,” which, in accord with the poetic parallelism of the psalm, further describes “my brothers” as a communal “gathering” or “assembly” (ἐκκλησία) of Jesus’ human brothers on earth (2:12). That “I will praise” (ὑμνήσω) God in the midst of this brotherly “assembly” endows it with a worshiping dimension.<sup>5</sup> This develops for the audience the letter’s ongoing theme of worship. The heavenly enthroned divine royal Son worthy of the audience’s worship, together with and assisted by God’s angels (1:6, 14), is the Jesus who promises to worship God by “praising” him in the midst of an earthly assembly of his brothers. As among these brothers, the audience now anticipate hearing more precisely how Jesus will fulfill this promise of praising God in their midst and proclaiming God’s name to them.

### 3. Heb 2:13a (C): *And Again, I Will Be Confident in Him*

The audience hear a continuation of the scriptural voice of Jesus with a quotation from Isa 8:17b (cf. Isa 12:2a; 2 Sam 22:3a): “And again, ‘I will be confident in him’” (2:13a). Having heard Jesus speaking to them indirectly by directly addressing God in the previous scriptural quotation (2:12), the audience now hear Jesus speaking more directly to them by referring to God in the third, rather than second, person.

<sup>5</sup> Monika Rutenfranz, “ὑμνέω,” *EDNT* 3.393; BDAG, 1027.

This replicates the previous pattern when the audience heard the scriptural voice of God, with emphatic uses of the first person singular pronoun, first address the divine Son directly, “I (ἐγώ) today have begotten you,” before referring to him in the third person, “and again (καὶ πάλιν), ‘I will be to him (ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ) as a Father, and he will be to me as a Son’” (1:5). Now the audience hear the corresponding promise, with another emphatic use of the first person singular pronoun, to this promise of God by his divine royal Son, Jesus: “And again (καὶ πάλιν), ‘I will be confident in him’ (ἐγὼ ἔσομαι πεποιθὼς ἐπ’ αὐτῷ)” (2:13a). Jesus’ promise that “I will be confident in him,” that is, place his trust or faith in the God who promised to be a Father to him begins to delineate one of the ways in which Jesus “will praise” God in the midst of the assembly of his brothers (2:12). This “confidence” of Jesus, the divine royal Son, in God as his Father thus serves as a model for the audience, as among the “brothers” of this “Son” of God (2:11-12), the many “sons” God is leading to heavenly glory (2:10).

#### 4. *Heb 2:13b (C’): And Again, Behold I and the Children Whom God Gave to Me*

The scriptural sequence continues, as the audience hear Jesus quoting Isa 8:18a: “And again, ‘Behold I and the children whom God gave to me’” (2:13b). At this point the audience are presented with the central chiastic pivot of this unit from “and again (καὶ πάλιν), ‘I (ἐγώ) will be confident’” in the C element (2:13b) to “and again (καὶ πάλιν), ‘Behold I (ἐγώ)’” in this C’ element. As among the many “sons” God is leading to heavenly glory, the “brothers” of Jesus, the audience are now to consider themselves among the “children” God gave to Jesus, his divine royal Son. In further correspondence to God’s scriptural promise that “I will be to him as a Father, and he will be to me (μοι) as a Son” (1:5) is Jesus’ scriptural proclamation, “Behold I and the children God gave to me (μοι).” The divine royal Son, Jesus, who professed his confident faith and trust in God as his Father (2:13a), God has entrusted with God’s “children,” who include the audience, to make them holy as the initiating leader of their salvation, so that they, like him, may be perfected for heavenly worship (2:10-12).

5. *Heb 2:14-17a (B'): He Was Obligated in All Things with His Brothers To Be Likened*

The audience experience the B' element of this unit as a chiastic sequence in itself:

- a) Since then the children *have shared* in blood and flesh, he also similarly partook with them (2:14a),
- b) so that through *death* he might destroy the one who has the strength of *death* (2:14b),
- c) that is the devil (2:14c),
- b') and free those, as many as by fear of *death* through all their life were held in slavery (2:15).
- a') For surely not angels does he take hold of, but rather the descendants of Abraham he takes hold of, whence he was obligated in all things with his brothers *to be likened* (2:16-17a).

The only occurrences in this sequence of the conceptually similar and assonant verb forms—“have shared” (κεκοινώνηκεν) in 2:14a and “to be likened” (ὁμοιωθῆναι) in 2:17a—establish the chiastic parallels for the “a” and “a'” sub-elements. The only occurrences in this sequence of the word “death”—“through death (θανάτου)” and “of death (θανάτου)” in 2:14b and “of death (θανάτου)” in 2:15—determine the chiastic parallels for the “b” and “b'” sub-elements. And the explanatory clause, “that is the devil,” in 2:14c serves as the unparalleled, central “c” sub-element.

Since the “children,” that is, the “children” whom God gave to Jesus (2:13b), “have shared in blood and flesh,” that is, possess a common humanity, so Jesus, the divine royal Son, demonstrated his solidarity with them by similarly partaking of their human condition (2:14a). That through “death” (θανάτου) Jesus might destroy the one who has the strength of “death (θανάτου)” (2:14b) elucidates for the audience why, on account of the suffering of “death” (θανάτου), Jesus might fully experience “death” (θανάτου) on behalf of all human beings by the grace of God (2:9). The identification of the one who has the strength of death as “the devil (διάβολον),” who, as the leader of all demonic powers is the chief adversary or enemy of God, further specifies for the audience the “enemies”

God has promised to place in subjugation “as a footstool for the feet” of his divine royal son (1:13).<sup>6</sup>

After the identification of the devil (2:14c) as the one who has the strength of death, the audience are presented with a progression from Jesus, through his “death,” destroying the one who has the strength of “death” (2:14b) to Jesus freeing those, as many as by fear of “death” through all their life were “held” or “bound” (ἔνχοι) in slavery (2:15). Jesus was to “free” (ἀπαλλάξῃ) the “children” God gave him, his fellow human “brothers” (2:11-14), from the “slavery” (δουλείας) of their life-long fear of death. This further specifies for the audience what is involved in the “salvation” to which Jesus is leading them as among the many sons of God (2:10), the “salvation” that is so great they ought not to neglect it (2:3), the “salvation” they, as “sons,” hope to inherit (1:14).<sup>7</sup>

That Jesus surely does not take hold of, as the initiating leader of salvation (2:10), “angels” (2:16) continues the various contrasts that have been developed for the audience between angels and the divine royal Son (1:4-7, 13; 2:5, 7, 9). But that Jesus rather takes hold of the “descendants of Abraham” (2:16), the preeminent ancestor of God’s chosen people, further solidifies his solidarity with the human condition of the audience as among the “children” God gave him (2:13-14), his fellow “brothers” (2:11-12), the many “sons” of God (2:10), who hope to “inherit” salvation (1:14).<sup>8</sup>

That Jesus was obligated in all things with his “brothers” (ἀδελφοῖς) to be likened (2:17a) further underscores, via the chiasmic progression of parallels between the B (2:11-12) and B' (2:14-17a) elements of this unit, his solidarity with the audience as his human “brothers” (ἀδελφοίς). He promises to proclaim God’s name to them (2:12), to those he is not ashamed to call his “brothers (ἀδελφούς)” (2:11). And that Jesus was obligated in

<sup>6</sup> Otto Böcher, “διάβολος,” *EDNT* 1.297-98; BDAG, 226-27. That each of the twelve words preceding the term “devil” in 2:14 begin with or contain the Greek letter “τ” serves as a lexical-rhetorical device to underline “devil” as the climactic center of this chiasmic sequence. This deliberate employment of the letter “τ” may be a symbol for the death of Jesus on a cross, according to T. E. Schmidt, “The Letter *Tau* as the Cross: Ornament and Content in Hebrews 2.14,” *Bib* 76 (1995): 75-84.

<sup>7</sup> Gray, *Godly Fear*, 111-38; Knut Backhaus, “Zwei harte Knoten: Todes- und Gerichtsangst im Hebräerbrief,” *NTS* 55 (2009): 198-217.

<sup>8</sup> Otto Betz, “Ἀβραάμ,” *EDNT* 1.2-4. Hebrews 2:16 should be translated: “For it [fear of death] does not seize angels, but it does indeed take hold of the seed of Abraham,” according to Michael E. Gudorf, “Through a Classical Lens: Hebrews 2:16,” *JBL* 119 (2000): 105-8. But that Jesus is the subject of the preceding verbs in 2:14-15 does not favor this suggestion.

all things with his brothers “to be likened” reinforces his partaking of the human “blood and flesh” that the audience as among the children God gave him (2:13b) “have shared in” (2:14a).

6. *Heb 2:17b-18 (A'): A Merciful and Faithful High Priest Who Himself Suffered*

The audience then hear why Jesus was obligated in all things with them, as among his brothers, to be likened (2:17a): “so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things regarding God in order to expiate the sins of the people, for in what he himself suffered in being tested, those who are being tested he is able to help” (2:17b-18). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels. In the A element Jesus is the “initiator” or “initiating leader” (ἀρχηγόν), whom God made perfect through “sufferings (παθημάτων)” (2:10). This progresses in the A' element to Jesus as a merciful and faithful “high priest” (ἀρχιερεύς) in things regarding God (2:17b), for in what he himself “suffered” (πέπονθεν) in being tested, those who are being tested he is able to help (2:18). On the macrochiastic level, Jesus becomes a merciful and faithful high priest in order to expiate the “sins” (ἁμαρτίας) of the people (2:17b) in this fifth unit (2:10-18). This makes more explicit for the audience the high priestly character of Jesus as the heavenly enthroned divine royal Son, who, having made purification for “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν), sat at the right of God (1:3) in the first unit (1:1-4).

Jesus’ becoming a merciful and faithful high priest to expiate the sins of the “people” (λαοῦ) of God (2:17b) continues this unit’s various designations that characterize the social groupings of which the audience are a part. The audience are among the many “sons” God is leading to glory (2:10), the “brothers” Jesus is not ashamed to acknowledge as such and to whom he promises to proclaim God’s name (2:11-12), and the “children” whom God gave to Jesus and with whom Jesus, the divine royal Son, shared a common humanity (2:13-14). The audience are now to consider themselves as members of this chosen “people” of God whose sins Jesus expiated as a merciful and faithful high priest. Furthermore, the audience, as among those who are “being made holy” (ἀγιάζόμενοι) by the one who “makes holy” (ἀγιάζων), the Jesus made perfect through sufferings (2:10-11), are also to see themselves among those who are “being tested”

(πειραζόμενοι), whom Jesus, in what he himself suffered in “being tested” (πειρασθείς), is able to help (2:18).<sup>9</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 2:10-18

The close connection between the AD (2:5-9) and this AE chiastic unit (2:10-18) is secured by a chiastic sequence of transitional words. After hearing the center of this chiastic sequence in the declaration, “for it was fitting for” God (2:10a), the audience are presented with a pivotal progression making them realize that “all” human beings on behalf of whom Jesus might fully experience death by the grace of God (2:9d) are among “all” the things that are from God and “all” the things that are through God (2:10b). The audience are among the many sons God is leading to heavenly “glory” (2:10c), the same heavenly “glory” and honor with which Jesus, the divine royal Son, is crowned (2:9c). And it was fitting for God to make Jesus, as the initiator of their salvation, perfect through “sufferings” (2:10d), which include the “suffering” of death all human beings must undergo (2:9b).

At the center of this AE chiastic unit the audience experience a pivotal progression in the scriptural voice of Jesus from his emphatic promise that “I” will be confident in God (Isa 8:17b in 2:13a) to his emphatic proclamation, “Behold I” and the children, which include the audience, whom God gave to him (Isa 8:18a in 2:13b). After the climactic identification of the devil (2:14c), the audience experience a further pivotal progression from Jesus, through “death,” destroying the devil as the one who has the strength of “death” (2:14b) to Jesus freeing all human beings held in slavery through all their life by the fear of “death” (2:15). And the audience are presented with the progression from Jesus not being ashamed to call them “brothers” (2:11) and through a scriptural quotation (Ps 21:23) promising to proclaim God’s name to his “brothers” (2:12) to Jesus “being likened” in all things with his “brothers” (2:17a). They are the children who “have shared” in the blood and flesh of humanity, which Jesus similarly partook of with them (2:14a).

<sup>9</sup> Swetnam, “A Merciful and Trustworthy High Priest,” 6–25; K. DeYoung, “Divine Impassibility and the Passion of Christ in the Book of Hebrews,” *WTJ* 68 (2006): 41–50. The presentation of Jesus as a high priest in Hebrews has its closest parallels in the Qumran texts, according to Eric F. Mason, *‘You Are a Priest Forever’: Second Temple Jewish Messianism and the Priestly Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews* (STDJ 74; Leiden: Brill, 2008).



Furthermore, the audience are presented with the progression from Jesus who, as the “initiator” of their salvation, was made perfect through “sufferings” (2:10) to Jesus becoming a merciful and faithful “high priest” (2:17b), who in what he himself “suffered” in being tested, those who are being tested he is able to help (2:18). On the third macrochiastic level, the audience are to appreciate the appropriate progression from Jesus as the one who, beyond the angels, has inherited a “name” (1:4) to Jesus’ scriptural promise to proclaim to his brothers the “name” of God (2:12). Finally, the audience experience a macrochiastic progression from Jesus as the heavenly enthroned divine royal Son having made purification for “sins” (1:3) to Jesus becoming a merciful and faithful high priest in order to expiate the “sins” of the people of God (2:17b), among whom are the audience. Thus, the audience, as among those who are being tested and being made holy, are persuaded to seek help and the expiation of their sins from the Jesus who is worthy of their worship as the heavenly enthroned divine royal Son, who is also a merciful and faithful high priest.

## Hebrews 3:1-6

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- A<sup>3:1</sup> Whence, holy brothers, partners of a heavenly calling, turn attention to the apostle and high priest of *our* confession, Jesus,  
 B<sup>2</sup> being *faithful* to the one who made him, as also *Moses in (all) his house* (Num 12:7). <sup>3a</sup> For this one has been considered worthy of greater glory beyond *Moses*,  
 C<sup>3b</sup> just as greater honor than the house has the *one who furnishes* it.  
 D<sup>4a</sup> For every house is furnished by someone,  
 C'<sup>4b</sup> but the *one who furnishes* all things is God.  
 B'<sup>5</sup> And *Moses was faithful in all his house* as an attendant for testimony of the things that would be spoken,  
 A'<sup>6</sup> but Christ as Son over his house, whose house are *we*, if to the boldness and to the boast of the hope we hold.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 3:1-6

The first two occurrences in Hebrews of the term “high priest”—“a merciful and faithful high priest (ἀρχιερεύς)” in 2:17b and “the apostle and high priest (ἀρχιερέα)” in 3:1—serve as the transitional words connecting the AE (2:10-18) to this AF chiastic unit (3:1-6). These transitional words keep the audience’s attention focused for a further development of the character of Jesus as a “faithful high priest.”

The only occurrences in this AF unit of the first person plural pronoun—“our (ἡμῶν) confession” in 3:1 and “whose house are we (ἡμεῖς)” in 3:6—establish the parallels for the A (3:1) and A' (3:6) elements of the chiasm. The only occurrences in this unit of the adjective “faithful” and the name “Moses”—“faithful (πιστόν) to the one who made him” in 3:2, “Moses in (all) his house (Μωϋσῆς ἐν [ὅλῳ] τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ)” in 3:2, and “beyond Moses (Μωϋσῆν)” in 3:3a, as well as “Moses (Μωϋσῆς) was faith-

ful (πιστός) in all his house (ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ) in 3:5—set the parallels for the B (3:2-3a) and B' (3:5) elements.<sup>1</sup> The only occurrences in this unit of the aorist active nominative masculine singular participle for the verb “furnish”—“the one who furnishes (ὁ κατασκευάσας) it” in 3:3b and “the one (ὁ) who furnishes (κατασκευάσας) all things” in 3:4b—form the parallels for the C (3:3b) and C' (3:4b) elements. The clause, “for every house is furnished by someone,” in 3:4a serves as the central, unparalleled D element.<sup>2</sup>

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 3:1-6

### 1. *Heb 3:1 (A): Turn Attention to the Apostle and High Priest of Our Confession, Jesus*

Having heard that Jesus is a merciful and faithful high priest, who can help them (2:17b-18), the audience are now directed to focus their attention upon Jesus as apostle and high priest: “Whence, holy brothers, partners of a heavenly calling, turn attention to the apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus” (3:1). The author applies his reasoning regarding the necessity for Jesus to suffer death like all of his human brothers (2:14-16), “whence (ὅθεν) he was obligated in all things with his brothers (ἀδελφοῖς) to be likened” (2:17a), directly to the audience, “whence (ὅθεν), holy brothers (ἀδελφοί).” That the audience are addressed as “holy” (ἅγιοι) brothers resonates with their “being made holy” (ἀγιάζομενοι) by the Jesus “who makes holy (ἀγιάζων)” (2:11), that is, consecrates or dedicates them to be “perfected,” so that they are worthy and fit to participate in heavenly worship (2:10). That they are “partners (μέτοχοι) of a heavenly calling” reinforces this worshiping resonance, as it associates them with the angels as the heavenly “partners” (μετόχους) of the Jesus (1:9) the angels are called to worship when God leads him into the heavenly world (1:6).

The designation of Jesus as a “merciful and faithful” high priest is now developed, as the audience are directed to turn their attention to Jesus as the “apostle” and high priest of our confession (3:1). That Jesus is the high

<sup>1</sup> There is some doubt as to whether “all” (ὅλῳ) in 3:2 is original; see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 594-95.

<sup>2</sup> This clause contains the only occurrence in Hebrews of the third person singular present passive indicative verb “is furnished” (κατασκευάζεται). On the meanings of “prepare,” “furnish,” or “equip” for this verb, see BDAG, 526-27.

priest as well as “apostle” (ἀπόστολον), that is, one sent by God, continues the focus on heavenly worship, as it recalls for the audience the angels being “sent” (ἀποστελλόμενα) by God as “ministering spirits” to assist them in their heavenly worship as those who are going to inherit salvation (1:14).<sup>3</sup> The audience are to direct their attention to Jesus as the apostle and high priest of our “confession” (ὁμολογίας), that is, as the object of our public confession of faith, allegiance, and homage that takes place preeminently in the worshipping assembly, but extends as well to the domain of daily living in the society outside of the worshipping assembly. The “Jesus” of whom we are taking note (2:9) is the “Jesus” of our public confession, the worthy object of our faith and worship.

## 2. *Heb 3:2-3a (B): Faithful beyond Moses in All His House*

The audience hear further description of Jesus, as the apostle and high priest of our confession (3:1): “being faithful to the one who made him, as also Moses in (all) his house (Num 12:7). For this one has been considered worthy of greater glory beyond Moses” (3:2-3a). The audience learn that for Jesus to be a “faithful” (πιστός) high priest (2:17b) means his being “faithful” (πιστόν) to the one who made him, faithful to God not only as the God who created him, but as the God who “made” (ποίησαντι), that is, sent, placed, or appointed him in his position as high priest in the heavenly worship. This is similar to God “making” (ποιῶν) the angels his spirits and his ministers (1:7), so that they can be ministering spirits sent by God for assistance in the heavenly worship (1:14).

Jesus is faithful to the God who made him, as also Moses was faithful to God in all God’s “house (οἶκος)” (3:2), that is, in accord with the scriptural allusion to Num 12:7, in all God’s “household” as a designation for the people of God entrusted to the leadership of Moses.<sup>4</sup> This designation of God’s people as a “house,” which often refers to the temple where God

<sup>3</sup> Jan-Adolf, Bühner, “ἀπόστολος,” *EDNT* 1.146: “Only in Heb 3:1 is Christ called ἀπόστολος; he is ἀπόστολος as the high priest in the heavenly sanctuary, entrusted with this task by God.” See also James Swetnam, “ὁ ἀπόστολος in Hebrews 3,1,” *Bib* 89 (2008): 252–62.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Weigandt, “οἶκος,” *EDNT* 2.502; John William Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Numbers* (SBLSCS 46; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 187: “Usually, God’s house refers to temple or shrine, but here the figure is that of one who is πιστός in God’s household; he is a trustworthy servant.”

dwells and is worshiped, points to God's people as a worshiping assembly.<sup>5</sup> The audience are being invited to compare the faithfulness of Jesus as the high priest sent by God for his role in heavenly worship (3:1) to the faithfulness of Moses within God's "house," that is, within God's people as a worshiping assembly.

"This one," that is, Jesus, being radiance of the "glory" (δόξης) of God (1:3), has been considered worthy by God (divine passive) of greater "glory" (δόξης) beyond Moses (3:3a). Indeed, God crowned him, as his divine royal Son enthroned at the right of God (1:4, 13), with heavenly "glory" (δόξη) and honor (2:7, 9), the same heavenly "glory" (δόξαν) to which God is leading the "many sons" that include the audience (2:10). Not only has Jesus as the divine royal Son inherited a name "beyond" (πάρ) the angels (1:4), and been anointed by God with the oil of gladness "beyond" (πάρ) the angels as his heavenly partners (1:9), but he has been considered worthy of greater glory "beyond" (πάρ) Moses.

*3. Heb 3:3b (C): Just as Greater Honor than the House Has the One Who Furnishes It*

The comparison between the faithfulness of Jesus, the apostle and high priest (3:1), with the faithfulness of Moses in God's "house" (3:2-3a) continues: "just as greater honor than the house has the one who furnishes it" (3:3b). As the divine royal Son crowned by God with glory and "honor" (τιμῇ) in his heavenly enthronement (2:7, 9), Jesus has greater "honor" (τιμὴν) than the "house," God's people as a worshiping assembly, because he is the one who "furnishes," that is, prepares or equips the "house" for its worship.

*4. Heb 3:4a (D): For Every House Is Furnished by Someone*

The comparison regarding the "house" is generalized: "For every house is furnished by someone" (3:4a). The audience must acknowledge that

<sup>5</sup> Weigandt, "οἶκος," 501; Victor H. Matthews, "House," *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible D-H Volume 2* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007) 902: "When speaking of God's temple, *house* may refer to any place dedicated to God's worship."

every “house” needs to be “furnished,” that is, prepared or equipped by someone in order to fulfill its function and purpose.

5. *Heb 3:4b (C'): But the One Who Furnishes All Things Is God*

The audience learn who ultimately provides everything a “house” needs: “but the one who furnishes all things is God” (3:4b). Having heard the central and unparalleled D element (3:4a) of this chiastic unit, the audience experience a pivot of chiastic parallels from the “one who furnishes” (ὁ κατασκευάσας) the house, namely, Jesus (3:1-3a), in the C element (3:3b) to the “one who furnishes” (ὁ κατασκευάσας) all things for a house (3:4a), namely, God, in the C' element (3:4b). This means that both God the Father (1:5) and Jesus as the royal Son who is also God (1:8) furnish everything the “house” as God’s people need to fulfill their function as a worshipping assembly.

At this point the audience have been given various indications of what God—both the Father and Son—has provided for the “house” of God to fulfill its function as a worshipping assembly. First, the scriptural voice of God the Father indicates that the Son is an *object* of heavenly worship. When he leads the firstborn into the heavenly world, he says, “Let the angels of God worship him” (1:6). Not only are the angels themselves to worship the divine royal Son, but God has sent them, as “ministering spirits” (1:7), to assist in the heavenly worship of the Son by those who are going to inherit salvation (1:14), the members of God’s “house” as a worshipping assembly.

Second, God has testified “with signs together with wonders and various acts of power and distributions of the Holy Spirit” (2:4) to confirm the word of “so great a salvation” (2:3) as the *motivation* “furnished” for the heavenly worship in God’s “house.” Jesus is the initiator of this salvation as the divine, but also human, Son who, by the grace of God, suffered death on behalf of all human beings to free them from enslavement to the power of the death they fear all their lives (2:9-15). This great salvation thus reinforces the worthiness of the divine Son as an object of the heavenly worship God has “furnished” for the “house” as a worshipping assembly.

Third, the divine Son, Jesus, the “apostle” sent by God as a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God (2:17; 3:1), serves as a *mediator* “furnished” for the heavenly worship of God’s “house.” As high

priest, the divine Son made purification for sins (1:3) to expiate the sins of the people (2:17), making them holy, so that they can be “perfected” (2:10-11), and thus made worthy and fit for the heavenly worship of God. And, as the divine Son, Jesus is the one in whom God the Father has spoken the word of “so great a salvation” (1:1-2; 2:3) that “furnishes” the motivation for the heavenly worship in God’s “house,” thus serving as a mediator between God and God’s “house” to enable the worship of God by God’s people. But the audience have been led to expect further development in Jesus’ speaking of the word of salvation, further “furnishing” of the “house” as a worshipping assembly, in accord with his scriptural promise, “I will proclaim your name to my brothers, in the midst of the assembly I will praise you” (2:12).

*6. Heb 3:5 (B’): Moses Was Faithful in All His House as an Attendant*

The audience receive further elaboration of the faithfulness of Moses (3:2): “And Moses was faithful in all his house as an attendant for testimony of the things that would be spoken” (3:5). At this point the audience experience a progression, via the chiastic parallels, in the comparison of Jesus with Moses. The focus is on Jesus being “faithful” (πιστόν) as also “Moses in all his house (Μωϋσῆς ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ),” but Jesus being considered worthy of greater honor beyond “Moses (Μωϋσῆν)” in the B element (3:2-3a). This progresses to a focus on “Moses” (Μωϋσῆς) who was “faithful” (πιστός) “in all his house (ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ) as an attendant for testimony of the things that would be spoken” in this B’ element (3:5).

Moses was faithful in all God’s “house” as an “attendant” (θεράπων), that is, an “aide” or “servant” in a cultic setting of worship in the “house” of God, God’s people as a worshipping assembly (3:5).<sup>6</sup> That Moses was faithful in God’s “house” as a cultic “attendant for testimony” (θεράπων εἰς μαρτύριον) complements, as “furnishings” God provides for his “house” (3:4) to be a worshipping assembly, the angels God sent as “ministering spirits for assistance” (λειτουργικά πνεύματα εἰς διακονίαν). The “testimony

<sup>6</sup> BDAG, 453. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 207: “θεράπων is used of a temple servant; otherwise it implies a cultic office. Moses is referred to, or refers to himself, as God’s θεράπων.” Koester, *Hebrews*, 246: “A ‘servant’ [θεράπων] was also one who ministered in the Temple or ‘house’ of God (Tob 1:7).”

(μαρτύριον) of the things that would be spoken” that Moses gives as a cultic attendant foreshadows what someone “testified” (διεμαρτύρατο) through the word of scripture (2:6), as well as God’s additionally “testify-ing” (συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος) to the word of salvation (2:4) that received a beginning of being spoken through the Lord (2:3).

God’s promise that “mouth to mouth I will speak (λαλήσω)” to Moses (Num 12:8) as the faithful attendant in all God’s house (Num 12:7) serves as the scriptural basis for his testimony of “the things that would be spoken (λαληθησομένων)” (3:5) by God (divine passive). Moses provides testimony that God “having spoken (λαλήσας) to the fathers in the prophets” (1:1), has now “spoken” (ἐλάλησεν) to us in a Son (1:2). This “word spoken (λαληθείς) through angels” (2:2) anticipates the word of salvation that received “a beginning of being spoken (λαλεῖσθαι) through the Lord” (2:3), the salvation concerning the heavenly world about which “we are speaking (λαλοῦμεν)” (2:5) in this letter. Moses was faithful in all God’s house as an attendant for testimony of “the things that would be spoken.” This attunes the ears of the audience to hear a further word regarding salvation that will be spoken to God’s “house” as a worshipping assembly, in accord with the scriptural promise of Jesus that “I will proclaim your name to my brothers, in the midst of the assembly I will praise you” (2:12).<sup>7</sup>

#### 7. *Heb 3:6 (A'): Christ as Son over God's House, Whose House Are We*

The audience are presented with the conclusion of the comparison of the faithfulness of Moses with that of Jesus: “but Christ as Son over his house, whose house are we, if to the boldness and to the boast of the hope we hold” (3:6). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from “the apostle and high priest of our (ἡμῶν) confession, Jesus,” in the A element (3:1) to “Christ as Son over his house, whose house are we (ἡμεῖς)” in the A' element (3:6). The designation of Jesus, the high priest and divine royal Son, as “Christ” (Χριστός), that is, “anointed one,” has its basis in the authoritative scriptural address of God the Father to God the Son, as heard previously by the audience: “You loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, anointed (ἔχρισέν) you with the oil of gladness beyond your partners” (Ps 44:8 in 1:9). As Son, Jesus is the “Christ” anointed by

<sup>7</sup> James Swetnam, “Τῶν λαληθησομένων in Hebrews 3,5,” *Bib* 90 (2009): 93–100.



God beyond the angels, his “partners” in the heavenly world, with the oil of “gladness or rejoicing” appropriate for him as an object of joyous worship.

Whereas Moses was faithful to God “in” (ἐν) all God’s “house,” the worshiping assembly or household of God, as an “attendant” to assist in the worship (3:5), Christ was faithful to God as the “Son” who is “over” (ἐπὶ) God’s “house” (3:6), as the object of the worship (1:6). That Christ is over God’s “house” as “Son” (υἱός) reminds the audience that in this lofty position Christ is both a human “son” (υἱός) of mankind (2:6) and the divine royal “Son” (υἱόν), eternally enthroned in heaven (1:8) over the “house.” In leading many “sons” (υἱούς) to heavenly glory, God has thus enthroned in heaven the initiator of their salvation, Jesus (2:10), the Christ who is “Son” over God’s “house” comprised of the “many sons” that include the audience. That Christ is enthroned over the “house” of God as “Son,” God’s “firstborn” (1:6) with the right of inheritance, indeed the “heir” of all things (1:2), bolsters the hope of the audience as among the “sons” of God who have the assured hope of “those who are going to inherit salvation” (1:14).

The emphatic affirmation, “whose house are *we* (ἡμεῖς)” (3:6), identifies the author and audience with the “house” of God as a worshiping assembly or household. It keeps the audience’s focus on their hope for the salvation initiated by the Son enthroned over them as the “house” of the Son. It does so by recalling the only previous emphatic utterance in Hebrews of the first person plural pronoun in the author’s earnest warning, “how will *we* (ἡμεῖς) escape, neglecting so great a salvation?” (2:3).

That “we” are the divine royal Son’s “house” (3:6) emphatically underscores and sums up the audience’s status as members of the Son’s familial “household.” They are among the many “sons” God is leading to heavenly glory (2:10). As holy “brothers” who are partners of a heavenly calling (3:1), the audience are among the “brothers” Jesus has become like in all things (2:17), those whom Jesus is not ashamed to call “brothers” (2:11), promising to proclaim God’s name to them as his “brothers” in the midst of the worshiping assembly (2:12). Indeed, the audience are among the “children” God entrusted to Jesus, as the divine royal Son (2:13) enthroned over the “house,” the “children” whose humanity he shared (2:14). As the initiator of their salvation (2:10), then, he might free his human “household” of fellow “children,” “sons,” and “brothers” from their life-long enslavement to the fear of death (2:15).

But there is a condition the audience must meet to remain identified as the familial “house” of the divine royal Son. They are to hold to “the boldness and the boast of the hope” (3:6). The “boldness” (παρρησίαν) to which they are to hold connotes a confident and courageous speaking out freely, publicly, and openly.<sup>8</sup> It resonates with “our confession (ὁμολογίας)” of the apostle and high priest, Jesus (3:1), and thus includes speaking out boldly not only within but outside of the “house” as a worshipping assembly.<sup>9</sup> The “boast (καύχημα) of the hope” to which they are to hold similarly connotes a proud assurance, joyous exulting, and public proclaiming, both inside and outside of their worshipping assembly.<sup>10</sup> They are to confidently and courageously “boast” of their hope to inherit salvation (1:14), the “so great a salvation” they are not to neglect (2:3), the salvation initiated by the divine royal Son in freeing them from their life-long enslavement to the fear of death (2:10-15).<sup>11</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 3:1-6

The assertion that Jesus might become a merciful and faithful “high priest” (2:17) at the conclusion of the AE chiastic unit (2:10-18) serves as a literary and thematic link to the AF chiastic unit (3:1-6), which begins with a directive to turn attention to the apostle and “high priest” of our confession, Jesus (3:1). At the center of this AF unit the audience hear the assertion that every “house,” referring in the context to a familial household as a worshipping assembly, is furnished for worship by someone (3:4a). The audience then experience a chiastic pivot of parallels from the refer-

<sup>8</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 247: “‘Boldness’ includes both the internal disposition of confidence or courage and the external expression of clear and public speaking.” According to Attridge (*Hebrews*, 112), “boldness” here “refers to a public demonstration of Christian commitment.” See also Johnson, *Hebrews*, 110-11; Gray, *Godly Fear*, 138-43; Alan C. Mitchell, “Holding on to Confidence: Παρρησία in Hebrews,” in *Friendship, Flattery, and Frankness of Speech* (ed. John T. Fitzgerald; NovTSup 82; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 203-26.

<sup>9</sup> Horst Balz, “παρρησία,” *EDNT* 3.47: “One should determinedly hold fast (κατάσχωμεν) to this παρρησία as to the ὁμολογία (3:1; also 4:14; 10:23).”

<sup>10</sup> Josef Zmijewski, “καυχῶμαι,” *EDNT* 2.277; Westcott, *Hebrews*, 78: “The Christian hope is one of courageous exultation.”

<sup>11</sup> B. R. Scott, “Jesus’ Superiority Over Moses in Hebrews 3:1-6,” *BSac* 155 (1998): 201-10; James Swetnam, “The Structure of Hebrews 1,1-3,6,” *Melita Theologica* 43 (1992): 58-66; Bryan J. Whitfield, “Pioneer and Perfecter: Joshua Traditions and the Christology of Hebrews,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham, et al.; LNTS 387; London: Clark, 2008), 80-87.

ence to Jesus as “the one who furnishes” the house (3:3b) to the reference to God as “the one who furnishes” all things (3:4b) for every house. Then the audience hear a progression from Jesus being “faithful” to God, as also “Moses in all his (God’s) house,” but considered worthy of greater glory beyond “Moses” (3:2-3a), to the notice that “Moses” was “faithful in all his (God’s) house” as an attendant to assist the worshiping assembly by providing testimony of the things that would be spoken by God (3:5).

Finally, the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the directive for them, addressed as holy brothers, who are partners of a heavenly calling, to turn their attention to the apostle and high priest of “our” public confession, Jesus (3:1). This progresses to the climactic conclusion that Christ was faithful as God’s Son over the house, whose familial house are “we,” if we meet the condition of functioning as his worshiping household by holding to the boldness of confidently and courageously speaking out publicly and by holding to the exultant boast of the hope (3:6). The hope is that of inheriting “so great a salvation” from enslavement to the fear of death, the salvation that has been initiated by Jesus (2:10-15), the Christ who is the high priest faithful to God as the divine royal Son enthroned over us as his familial “house” of worship (3:1, 6).

## Hebrews 3:7-11

- A<sup>7</sup> *Therefore*, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today when you hear his voice,<sup>8a</sup> ‘do not harden your *hearts*”  
 B<sup>8b</sup> as in the rebellion during the day of the *testing* in the wilderness,  
 B'<sup>9</sup> where your fathers *tested* by trial though they saw my works<sup>10a</sup> for forty years.  
 A'<sup>10b</sup> *Therefore* I became provoked with that generation and I *said*, “They are always wandering in the *heart*, and they have not known my ways,”<sup>11</sup> as I swore in my anger, “They will never enter into my rest!”” (Ps 94:7-11).

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 3:7-11

The closely related expressions for divine revelation—“the things that would be spoken (λαληθησομένων)” in 3:5 and “the Holy Spirit says (λέγει)” in 3:7—serve as the link connecting the AF (3:1-6) to this AE' (3:7-11) chiastic unit.<sup>1</sup> These expressions keep the focus of the audience on the word that God is speaking to us, the word heard preeminently in the “house,” their worshiping assembly.<sup>2</sup>

The first two occurrences in Hebrews of the conjunction “therefore” (διό) are in 3:7 and 3:10b. There are only two occurrences in this unit of the verb “say”—“the Holy Spirit says (λέγει)” in 3:7 and “I (God) said (εἶπον)” in 3:10. These, as well as the first two occurrences in Hebrews of the word “heart”—“do not harden your hearts (καρδίας)” in 3:8a and “they are always wandering in the heart (καρδίᾳ)” in 3:10b, provide the parallels for

<sup>1</sup> The audience have previously heard the verb “to speak” (λαλέω) as an expression for divine revelation in 1:1, 2; 2:2, 3, and the verb “to say” (λέγω) as an introduction to the divine revelation expressed in explicit quotations of scripture in 1:5, 6, 7, 13; 2:6, 12.

<sup>2</sup> On 3:7-11 as the beginning of an exegetical homily on Psalm 94, see Attridge, “Psalms,” 205-6; Rascher, *Schriftauslegung*, 196-200.

the A (3:7-8a) and A' (3:10b-11) elements of this chiastic unit. And the only occurrences in this unit of words for “testing”—“during the day of the testing (πειρασμοῦ)” in 3:8b and “your fathers tested (ἐπείρασαν)” in 3:9—serve as the pivotal parallels for the B (3:8b) and B' (3:9-10a) elements.

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, after the central and pivotal AF chiastic unit (3:1-6) the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the AE' (3:7-11) and the AE (2:10-18) units provided by expressions for “testing.” Passive expressions of “testing”—“for in what he himself suffered in being tested (πειρασθείς), those who are being tested (πειραζομένοις) he is able to help” (2:18)—in the AE unit progress, via the chiastic parallels, to active expressions—“as in the rebellion during the day of the testing (πειρασμοῦ) in the wilderness, where your fathers tested (ἐπείρασαν)” (3:8b-9)—in the AE' unit.<sup>3</sup>

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 3:7-11

### 1. *Heb 3:7-8a (A): Do Not Harden Your Hearts*

Having heard of the testimony of Moses for “the things that would be spoken” (3:5), the audience now hear a scriptural warning “spoken” by the Holy Spirit: “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today when you hear his voice, “do not harden your hearts”’” (3:7-8a).<sup>4</sup> Having heard of God’s additionally testifying, with distributions of the “Holy Spirit (πνεύματος ἁγίου)” (2:4), to “so great a salvation” that began to be spoken through the Lord (2:3), the audience are now told what the “Holy Spirit” (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον) says. Having heard scriptural quotations spoken by God the Father (1:5, 6, 7, 13), by a representative human being (2:6), and by God the Son (2:12), the audience now hear a quotation from Psalm 94 spoken by the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For an outline of the second macrochiastic level of Hebrews, see ch. 1.

<sup>4</sup> On the translation of ἔδν as “when” here, see BDAG, 268.

<sup>5</sup> On the interpretation of Psalm 94 (MT 95) here, see Peter E. Enns, “Creation and Re-Creation: Psalm 95 and Its Interpretation in Hebrews 3:1-4:13,” *WTJ* 55 (1993): 255-80; idem, “The Interpretation of Psalm 95 and Its Interpretation in Hebrews 3:1-4:13,” in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals* (eds. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 352-63; Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 952-56.

The previous scriptural quotations addressed the audience indirectly by directly addressing either God the Son (1:5, 6, 7, 13) or God the Father (2:6, 12). But this one spoken by the Holy Spirit addresses the audience directly and explicitly with an urgent appeal: “Today when you hear his voice” (Ps 94:7b in 3:7). As part of the psalm, “today” (σήμερον) referred to the festival day of worship on which the psalm was sung. But now it is applied to the days of the audience. Indeed, “the psalm was composed in such a way that the prophetic warning contained in vv. 7-11 always referred to the *hic et nunc*.”<sup>6</sup> It thus now applies to the “here and now,” the “today,” on which the audience are listening to this homiletic letter as a worshipping assembly.<sup>7</sup> “Today” reminds the audience of the decisive time in which they are living. It is one of the days “at the end of these days (ἡμερῶν)” in which God has definitively spoken to us in a Son (1:2), and it recalls what God spoke to his Son, “I today (σήμερον) have begotten you” (1:5).

That “today” the audience are to “hear (ἀκούσητε) his voice” (3:7), that is, the voice of God the Father, who has spoken to us in his divine royal Son and high priest, reinforces the previous exhortation for the audience “to attend to the things that have been heard (ἀκουσθεῖσιν), lest we drift away” (2:1). These “things that have been heard” include preeminently the word of “so great a salvation” that received a beginning of being spoken through the Lord, and was confirmed for us by those who “heard (ἀκουσάντων)” (2:3). The audience are now likewise urged to “hear” and thus attentively listen to the voice of God that has spoken to them throughout the letter to this point, the voice of God that is still speaking to them “today.”<sup>8</sup>

The mention of the “voice” of God refers the audience back to what they have heard that “voice” speak to them previously in the letter. It also prepares them to hear what the “voice” of God will now speak to them within the quotation of the psalm they are now listening to as a worshipping assembly. As part of their worship “today,” the audience are to hear the “voice” of God that implores them, “Do not harden your hearts” (Ps 94:8a in 3:8a). The audience are not to metaphorically “harden” (σκληρύνετε),

<sup>6</sup> Thiessen, “Hebrews,” 357.

<sup>7</sup> The previous verse of the psalm has summoned the congregation to the worship of God: “Come, let us worship and fall prostrate before him” (Ps 94:6). See also Attridge, “Psalms,” 206.

<sup>8</sup> Jon Laansma, “Hidden Stories in Hebrews: Cosmology and Theology,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham, et al.; LNTS 387; London: Clark, 2008), 11.

that is, close their “hearts” (καρδίας) in resistance to God’s will.<sup>9</sup> They are rather to open their “hearts,” that is, their inner persons, the very center or core of their beings, which are determinative for their lives, to the voice of God.<sup>10</sup>

2. *Heb 3:8b (B): As in the Rebellion During the Day of the Testing in the Wilderness*

The voice of God within the psalm as quoted by the Holy Spirit (3:7-8a) continues to address the audience: “as in the rebellion during the day of the testing in the wilderness” (3:8b). The audience are not to “harden” their hearts in resistance as did the Israelites whom God led out of Egypt in the Exodus event. They were involved in a bitter “rebellion” (παραπικρασμῶ) against God, a rebellion further described by an alliterative embellishment as the “testing” (πειρασμοῦ), which connotes both their being tested by God and their testing of God. When the audience hear the voice of God “today (σήμερον)” (3:7), they are to avoid hardening their hearts in a rebellion against God as during the “day” (ἡμέραν) of the testing when the people of Israel wandered in the wilderness.

3. *Heb 3:9-10a (B’): Where Your Fathers Tested by Trial Though They Saw My Works*

The scriptural voice of God then elaborates for the audience what took place during the embittered testing when the people of Israel wandered in the wilderness (3:8b): “where your fathers tested by trial though they saw my works for forty years” (3:9-10a). At this point the audience are presented with this unit’s chiastic pivot of parallels from “the testing (πειρασμοῦ) in the wilderness” (3:8b), with its connotation of being tested by and testing of God, in the B element to the further specification of “where your fathers tested (ἐπείρασαν) by trial” (3:9) in the B’ element. In addition, the

<sup>9</sup> Peter Fiedler, “σκληροκαρδία,” *EDNT* 3.254. Koester, *Hebrews*, 255: “Hardness of heart is a metaphor for those who refuse to do God’s will.”

<sup>10</sup> Alexander Sand, “καρδία,” *EDNT* 2.250-51: “Καρδία refers thus to the *inner person*, the seat of understanding, knowledge, and will, and takes on as well the meaning *conscience*. . . . the center of the person, that which determines one’s life and from which one must determine one’s life.”

audience experience the ironic distortion from a passive to an active “testing” with regard to God—from God the Son and high priest, who, through what he suffered in “being tested” (πειρασθείς), is able to help those who are “being tested” (πειραζομένοις) (2:18), to the “fathers” (πατέρες) who “tested” God “the Father (πατέρα)” (1:5) in the wilderness. The ancestral “fathers” tested God by trial despite the fact that they saw the miraculous works of God that sustained them in the wilderness for forty years, the works that are among the multifaceted and multifarious ways in which God spoke of old to the “fathers (πατέρας)” (1:1).

#### 4. *Heb 3:10b-11 (A'): They Are Always Wandering in the Heart*

Through the scriptural quotation God himself speaks to the audience regarding their fathers who tested their Father (3:9-10a): “Therefore I became provoked with that generation and I said, ‘They are always wandering in the heart, and they have not known my ways,’ as I swore in my anger, ‘They will never enter into my rest!’” (3:10b-11). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from what the Holy Spirit says in quoting from Psalm 94—“therefore (διό), as the Holy Spirit says (λέγει)” (3:7)—in the A element to what God says within the same psalm—“therefore (διό) I became provoked with that generation and I said (εἶπον)” (3:10b)—in the A' element. In addition, the audience experience the chiasmic progression from God’s warning regarding their own hearts—“do not harden your hearts (καρδίας)” (3:8a)—in the A element to the provoked God’s declaration regarding their ancestors’ hearts—“They are always wandering in the heart (καρδίᾳ)” (3:10b)—in the A' element.

The audience are to avoid not only “hardening” their hearts (3:8a) but the example of their ancestral fathers who were always “wandering” (πλανῶνται) in the heart (3:10b). This reinforces the author’s previous exhortations “to attend to the things that have been heard, lest we drift away (παραρῶμεν)” (2:1) and that “we,” who are the “house” of Jesus Christ as the divine royal Son and high priest, “hold” (κατάσχωμεν) “to the boldness and to the boast of the hope” (3:6). Not only are the audience to keep their hearts open rather than closed in hardened resistance to God’s will, but to keep their hearts attentively focused on what God is speaking to them, particularly as a worshiping assembly, rather than “wandering” in their heart or “drifting away.”



Not only has “that generation” of the audience’s ancestral fathers always been wandering in the heart, but they have not known “my ways (τὰς ὁδούς μου)” (3:10b), the ways that God prescribed for them to behave and the ways that God himself acts, despite the fact that “they saw (εἶδον) my works (τὰ ἔργα μου)” (3:9).<sup>11</sup> This alerts the audience, who, although we do not yet “see” (ὁρῶμεν) all things subjected to God’s Son (2:8b), but “are taking note” (βλέπομεν) of Jesus (2:9a), to learn to obey the ways of God from him. He knew God’s ways as the one who, on account of the suffering of death, was crowned by God with heavenly glory and honor, so that, by the grace of God, on behalf of all he might fully experience death (2:9). And he knew God’s ways as the divine royal Son who was obligated by God in all things with his human brothers to be likened, “so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God in order to expiate the sins of the people, for in what he himself suffered in being tested, those who are being tested he is able to help” (2:17-18).

Although the audience’s ancestral fathers saw “my” (μου) works for forty years (3:9-10a), they have not known “my” (μου) ways (3:10b). Consequently, God swore in “my” (μου) anger that they will never enter into “my” (μου) rest (3:11). For the wilderness generation, that they will never “enter into my rest (εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου)” meant that they will not enter into the land of Canaan as their promised rest and inheritance. Moses told them that “you have not yet come into the rest and into the inheritance (εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν καὶ εἰς τὴν κληρονομίαν) which the Lord your God is giving you” (Deut 12:9). But God’s “rest” also refers to the place of worshipping God in the sanctuary in Jerusalem/Zion, which has its counterpart in the sanctuary in heaven. Within the Jerusalem temple Solomon declared, “Blessed be the Lord today who has given rest (κατάπαυσιν) to his people Israel” (3 Kgdms 8:56). In reference to chosen Zion God declares, “This is my rest (κατάπαυσις μου) forever” (Ps 131:14). And God indicates that “my rest” is ultimately in heaven, when he says, “Heaven is my throne . . . what is the place of my rest (καταπαύσεώς μου)?” (Isa 66:1).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 256: “Not recognizing the ways of God meant that Moses’ generation did not grasp either the favor that God had shown them or the consequences of rebelling against him.” Johnson, *Hebrews*, 116: “Their ‘not knowing’ is not really a form of ignorance, but a form of rebellious disobedience.”

<sup>12</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 257-58; Son, *Zion*, 138. Otfried Hofius, “κατάπαυσις,” *EDNT* 2.266: “The author understands the κατάπαυσις mentioned in the Psalm to be the heavenly dwelling of God, which God has appointed as the eschatological *resting place* for his

The audience then are not to harden their hearts in resistance to God's will, but open them to attentively listening to and learning God's ways from the divine royal Son, who promises that he will proclaim God's name to his brothers in the midst of the worshipping assembly (2:12). Unlike their ancestral fathers with wandering hearts, the audience will then be able to "enter into my rest (εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου)" (3:11), the "rest" of God's heavenly sanctuary where they will be able to worship God. The audience will then be among the many sons God is "leading" (ἀγαγόντα) "into glory (εἰς δόξαν)" (2:10), the heavenly glory of God's rest. They will then not have "drifted away" (2:1) and neglected "so great a salvation" (2:3) that they hope to inherit as God's sons (1:14b). Indeed, they, along with the angels of God as ministering spirits (1:14a), will then be able to worship the divine firstborn Son, whom God "leads" (εἰσαγάγει) "into the heavenly world (εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην)" (1:6), into God's heavenly rest where God is worshiped in glory.<sup>13</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 3:7-11

What the Holy Spirit "says" (3:7) at the beginning of this AE' chiasmic unit (3:7-11) provides the catch word that links this unit with the AF unit (3:1-6). This keeps the audience's attention focused upon the divine revelation expressed toward the conclusion of that unit with its reference to the things that would be "spoken" (3:5) by God in the "house," the worshipping assembly of God's people. At the center of this AE' unit the audience hear a pivot of chiasmic parallels from the day of the "testing" in the wilderness (3:8b) to the description of the wilderness as the place where your fathers "tested" by trial though they saw my works for forty years (3:9-10a).

In addition, at this point the audience experience a macrochiasmic progression of parallels from the AE unit (2:10-18) to this AE' unit (3:7-11). They hear an ironic distortion in expressions from a passive to an active "testing" with regard to God. The audience were told that in what Jesus, as the merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God in order to expiate the sins of the people (2:17), suffered in being "tested," those who

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people." See also Otfried Hofius, *Katapausis: Die Vorstellung von endzeitlichen Ruheort im Hebräerbrief* (WUNT 11; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1970); Wray, *Rest*.

<sup>13</sup> On entering God's rest as indicating the opportunity to worship God joyfully in the heavenly security of God's presence, see Randall C. Gleason, "The Old Testament Background of Rest in Hebrews 3:7-4:11," *BSac* 157 (2000): 281-303.

are being “tested” he is able to help (2:18). But now the audience hear that their ancestral “fathers” in the wilderness “tested” God “the Father” (1:5) by trial even though they saw the miraculous works of God that sustained them for forty years (3:9-10a).

As the audience hear what the Holy Spirit “says” in quoting from Psalm 94, they are warned by the scriptural voice of God speaking to them today as a worshiping assembly not to harden their “hearts” in resistance to God’s will (3:7-8a). They then experience a progression of chiastic parallels as they hear what God “said” about the wilderness generation that provoked him, namely, that they are always wandering in the “heart,” and have not known the ways of God (3:10b) despite seeing the wonderful works of God for forty years. Consequently, the audience, who are taking note of Jesus (2:9), are to learn the ways and will of God from him, the divine royal Son, who promises that he will proclaim God’s name to his brothers in the midst of the worshiping assembly (2:12). By not “hardening” their hearts or “wandering” in their hearts so that they “drift away” (2:1) in resistance to these divine voices from the word of “so great a salvation” (2:3), the audience can thus, unlike their ancestral fathers, enter into God’s final, definitive, and eternal “rest” (3:11), the “rest” in which they will be able to worship God in the heavenly sanctuary.

## Hebrews 3:12-19

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- A<sup>12</sup> *Take note*, brothers, lest there be in anyone of you an evil heart of *unfaithfulness* in falling away from the living God,  
 B<sup>13</sup> but encourage one another during each day, while it is called “today,” so that not anyone of you may become hardened by the deceit of *sin*,  
 C<sup>14</sup> *for* we have become partners of the Christ, if we hold the beginning of the reality firm until the end, <sup>15</sup> while it is said, “Today when you *hear* his voice, ‘do not harden your hearts as in the *rebellion*’” (Ps 94:7-8).  
 C'<sup>16</sup> *For* which of those who *heard rebelled*? Was it not all those who came out of Egypt through Moses?  
 B'<sup>17</sup> With whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not those who *sinned*, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?  
 A'<sup>18</sup> And with whom did he swear that they should not enter into his rest, if not those who disobeyed? <sup>19</sup> And we *take note* that they were not able to enter because of *unfaithfulness*.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 3:12-19

The occurrences of the word “heart”—“they are always wandering in the heart (καρδία)” in 3:10b and “lest there be in anyone of you an evil heart (καρδία)” in 3:12—serve as the catch words that connect the AE' (3:7-11) to this AD' (3:12-19) chiastic unit. After the negative example of the ancestral fathers in the wilderness, whom God declared “always wandering in the heart,” the focus returns to the “heart” of the audience, who were warned at the beginning of the AE' unit, “do not harden your hearts” (3:8a).

There are only two occurrences in this unit of the verb “take note”—“Take note (βλέπετε), brothers” in 3:12 and “we take note (βλέπομεν)” in 3:19. These, as well as the only two occurrences in Hebrews of the noun

“unfaithfulness”—“an evil heart of unfaithfulness (ἀπιστίας)” in 3:12 and “they were not able to enter because of unfaithfulness (ἀπιστίαν)” in 3:19, provide the parallels for the A (3:12) and the A' (3:18-19) elements of this chiastic unit. The only occurrences in this unit of words for “sin”—“the deceit of sin (ἁμαρτίας)” in 3:13 and “those who sinned (ἁμαρτήσασιν)” in 3:17—serve as the parallels for the B (3:13) and B' (3:17) elements. The only occurrences in this unit of the conjunction “for (γάρ)” are in 3:14, 16. These, and the only occurrences of the verb “hear”—“today if you hear (ἀκούσητε) his voice” in 3:15 and “those who heard (ἀκούσαντες)” in 3:16, and of expressions for “rebellion”—“as in the rebellion (παραπικρασμῷ)” in 3:15 and “they rebelled (παρεπίκραναν)” in 3:16, establish the parallels for the chiastic pivot between the C (3:14-15) and C' (3:16) elements.

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the AD (2:5-9) and AD' (3:12-19) units provided by the first three occurrences in Hebrews of the verb “take note.” The declaration that “we are taking note (βλέπομεν) of Jesus” (2:9) in the AD unit progresses, via the chiastic parallels, to both the imperative “take note (βλέπετε), brothers” (3:12), and the declaration that “we take note (βλέπομεν) that they were not able to enter” (3:19) in the AD' unit.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 3:12-19

### 1. *Heb 3:12 (A): Take Note Lest There Be in Any of You an Evil Heart of Unfaithfulness*

The audience were presented with the negative example of their ancestral fathers, who, a provoked God declared, “are always wandering in the heart, and they have not known my ways,” so that “they will never enter into my rest!” (3:10b-11). They are now warned, “take note, brothers, lest there be in anyone of you an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the living God” (3:12). Having heard the declaration that “we are taking note (βλέπομεν) of Jesus” (2:9), the audience are cautioned to “take note” (βλέπετε) of themselves as “brothers.”

Not only are the audience in a “brotherly” relationship with one another and with the author, but they are “brothers” (ἀδελφοί) of Jesus (3:12). Previously addressed as “holy brothers (ἀδελφοί),” who are “partners of a heavenly calling,” they were directed to “turn attention to the apostle and high priest of our professing, Jesus” (3:1). Jesus “was obligated in all things

with his brothers (ἀδελφοῖς) to be likened, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest” (2:17). The audience are numbered among those whom Jesus is not ashamed to call “brothers (ἀδελφούς)” (2:11), the “many sons” God is leading into heavenly glory (2:10). Indeed, hearing the letter while gathered together as “brothers” in their liturgical assembly, the audience have been attuned to listen for the fulfillment of the scriptural promise that Jesus will proclaim God’s name “to my brothers (ἀδελφοῖς)” in the midst of the assembly (2:12).

Especially as “brothers” of Jesus, the audience are to take note lest there be any individual among them with “an evil heart (καρδία) of unfaithfulness” (3:12), which would liken them to their ancestral fathers, who were “wandering in the heart (καρδίᾳ)” (3:10), forbidden to enter into God’s own heavenly rest (3:11). Furthermore, if the audience were to have any member with an evil heart of “unfaithfulness” (ἀπιστίας), they would not be like their “brother,” Jesus, who likened himself to his “brothers” in all things, so that he might become a merciful and “faithful” (πιστός) high priest (2:17). Indeed, Jesus was “faithful” (πιστόν) to the God who made and sent him as high priest (3:1-2), “faithful” (πιστός) as the messianic Son over God’s “house”—the people of God as a worshipping “household” or assembly, among whom are the audience (3:5-6). And Jesus faithfully placed his confidence in the God who entrusted him with the “children” (2:13) within God’s plan of leading “many sons,” including the audience, into heavenly glory (2:10).

The “unfaithfulness” (ἀπιστίας) of having an evil heart is further explained by its dire consequence, closely connected through an embellished alliteration, namely, “in falling away (ἀποστήναι) from (ἀπό) the living God” (3:12). To fall away from the living God would mean for the audience not to enter into God’s own heavenly “rest” (3:11), the heavenly glory (2:10) and the heavenly world where God and his Son are worshiped (1:6). For the audience to fall away from the “living” (ζώντος) God underscores that they would be falling away from the eternally “living” God who grants eternal “life” after death. This “living” God sent Jesus as his faithful Son and high priest (2:17; 3:1-6) to be like his “brothers,” the “children” God gave him (2:13), in all things, including the undergoing of death, “so that through death he might destroy the one who has the strength of death, that is the devil, and free those, as many as by fear of death through all their life were held in slavery” (2:14-15). The audience are not, through unfaithfulness, to fall away from the eternally “living” God, who can free

them from the fear of an eternal death that enslaves them through all of their mortal “living (ζῆν)” (2:15).<sup>1</sup>

2. *Heb 3:13 (B): That Not Any of You May Become Hardened by the Deceit of Sin*

The concern for every individual member of the audience continues: “but encourage one another during each day, while it is called ‘today,’ so that not anyone of you may become hardened by the deceit of sin” (3:13). In contrast to “during the day” (κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν) on which (3:8) the ancestral fathers tested God (3:9), the audience of “brothers” are to encourage one another “during each day” (καθ’ ἐκάστην ἡμέραν). They are to encourage one another during each day, while it is called “today” (σήμερον), that is, each day on which it is called by God (divine passive) as the “today” (σήμερον) when they are to hear God’s voice (3:7), in other words, each day on which they are gathered together to listen to God speaking to them as a worshipping assembly. If the audience are encouraging one another within their worshipping assembly, then they will not be “drifting away” (2:1), “wandering in the heart” like their ancestral fathers (3:10).

That the audience are to encourage one another, so that not anyone of them may become “hardened” (σκληρυνθῆ) by the deceit of sin (3:13), reinforces God’s scriptural command that they not “harden” (σκληρύνετε) their hearts (3:8) when they hear his voice (3:7). Not anyone of them is to become hardened by “the deceit of sin (ἁμαρτίας),” because sin, as an offense against God, renders one incapable of worshipping God. It was to expiate the “sins” (ἁμαρτίας) of the people, so that they could truly worship God, that Jesus became a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God (2:17), and having made purification for “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν), sat at the right of God in the height of heaven (1:3). The very close connection among “unfaithfulness” (ἀπιστίας), “falling away from (ἀποστῆναι ἀπὸ) the living God” (3:12), and the “deceit of sin” (ἀπάτη τῆς ἁμαρτίας) is underlined for the audience by the distinctive alliteration that links them.

<sup>1</sup> On the designation “living” God, see Koester, *Hebrews*, 258-59; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 117: “The use of the designation is particularly apt here, since to turn away from the living God is to turn toward death.” Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 166: “God is the ‘living God’ because he is the source of life. The predicate *living* also indicates that the one true God is the Creator of life who also saves from death.”

3. *Heb 3:14-15 (C): If You Hear His Voice, Harden Not Your Hearts as in the Rebellion*

Having been told by the author to encourage one another (3:13), the audience now hear a further encouragement from the author, reinforced by a repetition of the scriptural voice of God in Ps 94:7-8: “for we have become partners of the Christ, if we hold the beginning of the reality firm until the end, while it is said, ‘Today when you hear his voice, “do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion”’” (3:14-15). That we have become “partners” (μέτοχοι) of the “Christ” (Χριστοῦ) reminds the audience of “brothers” (3:1, 12) that they are “partners” (μέτοχοι) of a heavenly calling (3:1). They have been called to be heavenly partners of the “Christ” (Χριστός) who is over them as the “house” of the worship of God (3:6), like the angels, who are “partners” (μετόχους) beyond whom God “anointed” (ἔχρισέν) his Son as the “Christ,” the “anointed one” (1:9). As God called the angels, so he is calling the audience, who have become heavenly partners of the Christ, to worship this Christ as his anointed firstborn Son whom he led into the heavenly world (1:6).<sup>2</sup>

For the audience to be partners of the Christ in heavenly worship, they must “hold the beginning of the reality firm until the end” (3:14). The beginning of the “reality” (ὑποστάσεως), resonating with the Son’s being the representation of the “reality” (ὑποστάσεως) of God (1:3), refers to the beginning of the divine reality of the word of God’s great salvation. The audience are to persevere in holding the “beginning” (ἀρχήν) of the reality “firm” (βεβαίαν) until the end. This reinforces the exhortation that they are not to neglect so great a salvation, the divine word of which, having received a “beginning” (ἀρχήν) of being spoken through the Lord, was “confirmed” (ἐβεβαιώθη) for us by those who heard (2:3), thus made “firm” (βεβαίος) like the word spoken through angels (2:2).

That the audience are to hold the “beginning” (ἀρχήν) of the reality firm until the “end” (τέλους) implies their willingness to undergo suffering in their perseverance (3:14), as it resonates with God’s making the “initiator” (ἀρχηγόν) of their salvation, through sufferings, “perfect” (τελειῶσαι), in leading many sons into heavenly glory (2:10). The audience were encouraged that they are Christ’s “house” of worship, “if to

<sup>2</sup> Being a “partner” connotes being a “partaker” or “participant,” according to Enrique Nardoni, “Partakers in Christ (Hebrews 3.14),” *NTS* 37 (1991): 456–72.



the boldness and to the boast of the hope we hold (κατάσχωμεν)” (3:6). And now they are similarly encouraged that they have become partners of the Christ, “if we hold (κατάσχωμεν) the beginning of the reality firm until the end” (3:14).

This encouragement of the audience is further motivated by a repetition of the scriptural voice of God, as recorded in Ps 94:7-8, which they just heard in 3:7-8. They are to hold the beginning of the word of their great salvation, spoken by the divine voice, firm until the end, “while it is said (by the Holy Spirit of God; cf. 3:7), ‘Today when you hear his voice, “do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion”’” (3:15). When the audience, during the “today” in which they have gathered as a worshiping assembly to listen to this letter, hear the voice of God speaking of their great salvation, they are to heed that voice by not hardening their hearts, not closing them in resistance, to that divine word of salvation, as in the rebellion of their ancestral fathers.

#### *4. Heb 3:16 (C'): Which of Those Who Heard Rebelled?*

The audience are then presented with thought provoking questions: “For which of those who heard rebelled? Was it not all those who came out of Egypt through Moses?” (3:16). At this point the audience are presented with this chiasmic unit’s central pivot of parallels. It pivots from the use of the conjunction “for” to introduce a focus upon the audience’s relationship with Christ—“for (γάρ) we have become partners of the Christ” (3:14) in the C element—to the use of the conjunction “for” to introduce a question concerning their ancestral fathers—“for (γάρ) which of those who heard rebelled?” (3:16a) in the C' element. Additionally, they experience a pivot in parallels from the scriptural command regarding their “hearing” of God’s voice—“Today, when you hear (ἀκούσητε) his voice” (3:15) in the C element—to the question regarding their ancestors who “heard” God’s voice—“which of those who heard (ἀκούσαντες)” (3:16a) in the C' element. And finally, they hear a pivotal progression from the scriptural command for them not to harden their hearts “as in the rebellion (παραπικρασμῷ)” against God in the wilderness (3:15) in the C element to the question of which ancestors actually “rebelled (παρεπικράναν)” (3:16a) in the C' element.

The second question in the C' element leads the audience to admit that absolutely “all” of those who came out of Egypt through Moses rebelled against God (3:16b). Even though the ancestors heard the very voice of God, they still rebelled. And the fact that it was through Moses, who was faithful in all of God’s house (3:2, 5), that they came out of Egypt did not prevent them from rebelling against God. This alerts the audience to the possibility that anyone or all of them, despite hearing the very voice of God, and despite being the very “house” of Christ himself, the faithful Son considered worthy of greater glory beyond Moses (3:3), could rebel against God, as did all of their ancestral fathers in the wilderness.

*5. Heb 3:17 (B'): It Was Those Who Sinned Whose Corpses Fell in the Wilderness*

The audience are asked to further ponder the negative example of their ancestral fathers through two more questions: “With whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?” (3:17). Here the audience experience a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the warning that not anyone of them become hardened by the deceit of “sin” (ἁμαρτίας) in the B element (3:13) to the negative example of their ancestors who “sinned” (ἁμαρτήσασιν) in the wilderness in the B' element (3:17).

Reminded of God’s announcement that “I became provoked (προσώχθισα) with that generation” (3:10b), because they tested by trial even though they saw God’s miraculous works (3:9) “for forty years (τεσσεράκοντα ἔτη)” (3:10a), the audience are asked, “With whom was he provoked (προσώχθισεν) for forty years (τεσσεράκοντα ἔτη)?” (3:17a). The answer to which the audience must admit, that it was those who “sinned” (3:17b), reinforces the exhortation that not anyone of them become hardened by the deceit of “sin” (3:13).

That it was those who sinned whose corpses fell “in the wilderness (ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ)” (3:17b), in fulfillment of the prophetic warning by Moses (Num 14:29, 32), recalls the rebellion during the day of testing “in the wilderness (ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ)” (3:8), and thus underlines how sin resulted in the death that prevented the ancestors from entering into God’s own rest (3:11). That their ancestral fathers fell to their death rather than entering into God’s own rest bolsters the exhortation for the audience to take note lest there be

anyone of them with an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the “living God” (3:12), the God who grants eternal life after death to those who enter into his heavenly rest.

*6. Heb 3:18-19 (A'): We Take Note That They Did Not Enter because of Unfaithfulness*

The audience are presented with yet another thought provoking question followed by an ominous observation provided by the example of their ancestral fathers: “And with whom did he swear that they should not enter into his rest, if not those who disobeyed? And we take note that they were not able to enter because of unfaithfulness” (3:18-19). The audience now experience a progression from the command to “take note” (βλέπετε) lest anyone have an evil heart of “unfaithfulness (ἀπιστίας)” (3:12) in the A element to the declaration that “we take note” (βλέπομεν) that the ancestors were not able to enter God’s rest because of “unfaithfulness (ἀπιστίαν)” (3:19) in the A' element.

Reminded of God’s scriptural pronouncement that “I swore in my anger, ‘They will never enter into my rest!’” (Ps 94:11 in 3:11), the audience are led to admit that those with whom God swore that they should not enter into his rest were those who disobeyed (3:18). That it was those who “disobeyed” (ἀπειθήσασιν) indicates to the audience that when they hear the voice of God, they are to respond not with hardness of heart that leads to testing and rebellion against God but with faithful obedience to what they hear.

Having been commanded to “take note” (βλέπετε) regarding themselves, lest there be in anyone of them an evil heart (3:12), the audience are now joined with the author in their communal declaration that “we take note” (βλέπομεν) regarding those who were not able to enter into God’s rest (3:19). But this ominous observation of which “we are taking note” regarding those whose deaths prevented them from entering into God’s rest stands in contrast with the optimistic observation of which “we are taking note” (βλέπομεν) regarding Jesus who, by the grace of God, tasted death on behalf of all (2:9). And this is in accord with God’s salvific plan of leading many sons into glory (2:10), the glory of God’s heavenly rest.

That we take note that they were not able to enter into God’s rest because of “unfaithfulness” (3:19) further describes the consequence of those who

“disobeyed” (3:18), enhanced by the alliteration linking “unfaithfulness” (ἀπιστίαν) to “they disobeyed” (ἀπειθήσασιν). But this ominous observation regarding the consequence of their “unfaithfulness” also reinforces the exhortation for the audience to take note lest there be in anyone of them an evil heart of “unfaithfulness” (ἀπιστίας) in falling away from the living God (3:12). In contrast to the negative example of their ancestral fathers in the wilderness, who were not able to enter into God’s own rest, the audience are to respond with obedience and faithfulness when, as a worshipping assembly, they hear the voice of the “living” God, the God who invites them to enter into the heavenly rest of his eternal “living.”

### C. Summary on Hebrews 3:12-19

The scriptural declaration toward the conclusion of the AE' unit (3:7-11) that the wilderness generation were always wandering in the “heart” (3:10) supplies the transitional catch word that links this unit with the following AD' unit (3:12-19), which begins with the hortatory directive that not anyone in the audience have an evil “heart” (3:12). Not only are the audience directed at the beginning of the AD' unit to “take note” lest there be in anyone of them an evil heart (3:12), but they are included in the declaration at the conclusion of the AD' unit that “we take note” that the ancestral fathers were not able to enter into God’s rest (3:19). With regard to the second macrochiastic level, then, the audience experience a parallel progression that contrasts their “taking note” of the ancestors who died in the wilderness, according to the AD' unit, with their “taking note” of Jesus, who tasted death on behalf of all (2:9), according to the AD unit (2:5-9).

At the center of this AD' unit the audience are presented with a pivot of chiastic parallels. It pivots from the scriptural command that when “you hear” God’s voice, do not harden your hearts as in the “rebellion” (3:15) to the question of which of those who “heard” God’s voice “rebelled,” followed by the thought provoking answer that it was all of those who came out of Egypt through Moses (3:16), despite his faithfulness as a leader. When the audience hear that it was those who “sinned,” whose corpses fell in the wilderness, with whom God was provoked for forty years (3:17), they experience the chiastic parallel progression from the exhortation that not anyone of them become hardened by the deceit of “sin” (3:13).

Finally, the ominous observation that “we are taking note” that the ancestral fathers in the wilderness were not able to enter into God’s rest because of their disobedient “unfaithfulness” (3:18-19) poignantly reinforces the exhortation for the audience to “take note” lest there be in anyone of them an evil heart of “unfaithfulness” in falling away from the living God (3:12). Thus, when the audience, as a worshiping assembly, hear the voice of the “living” God, they are to respond with obedient faithfulness to that voice, which invites them to enter into the glory of God’s own heavenly rest and the eternal life of the “living” God.

## Hebrews 4:1-11

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- A <sup>41</sup> Let us be afraid *then*, lest, while the promise *to enter into his rest* is left, *anyone* of you seem to have been lacking. <sup>2</sup> For indeed we have *received good news* just as they did, but the word for *hearing* did not benefit them, who were not united in faith with those who *heard*. <sup>3a</sup> For we are entering into the rest, we who believed,
- B <sup>3b</sup> just as *he has said*, “As I swore in my anger, ‘*They will never enter into my rest!*’” (Ps 94:11),
- B' <sup>3c</sup> and yet the works have been produced from the founding of the world.  
<sup>4</sup> For *he has said* somewhere about the seventh day thus, “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works” (Gen 2:2), <sup>5</sup> and in this again, “*They will never enter into my rest!*” (Ps 94:11).
- A' <sup>6</sup> Since *then* it remains for some *to enter* into it, and those who previously *received good news* did not enter because of disobedience, <sup>7</sup> again he sets a certain day, “Today,” in David saying after so long a time, just as it was said before, “Today if you *hear* his voice, do not harden your hearts” (Ps 94:7-8).  
<sup>8</sup> For if Joshua gave them rest, he would not have spoken after these things about another “day.” <sup>9</sup> So a sabbath rest remains for the people of God.  
<sup>10</sup> For the one who enters *into his rest* also himself rests from his works just as God from his own works. <sup>11</sup> Let us strive *then to enter* into that rest, so that not *anyone* may fall in the same pattern of disobedience.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 4:1-11

The occurrences of the infinitive “to enter”—“we take note that they were not able to enter (εἰσελθεῖν) because of unfaithfulness” in 3:19 and “let us be afraid then, lest, while the promise to enter (εἰσελθεῖν) into his rest is left, anyone of you seem to have been lacking” in 4:1—serve as the transitional catch words that link the AD' (3:12-19) to this AC' (4:1-11)

unit. The transition thus keeps the focus of the audience on the theme of entering into God's own rest.

The only occurrences in this unit of the conjunction “then” (οὖν) and of the aorist infinitive “to enter” (εἰσελθεῖν) are in 4:1, 6, 11. The phrase “into his rest” (εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ) occurs in this unit only in 4:1, 10. The indefinite pronoun “anyone” (τις) is found in this unit only in 4:1, 11. There are three expressions for “hearing” in this unit—“the word for hearing (ἀκοῆς)” and “those who heard (ἀκούσασιν)” in 4:2 and “if you hear (ἀκούσητε) his voice” in 4:7. There are only two occurrences in Hebrews of the verb for “receiving good news”—“we have received good news (εὐηγγελισμένοι)” in 4:2 and “those who previously received good news (εὐαγγελισθέντες)” in 4:6. These linguistic correspondences establish the chiasmic parallels for the A (4:1-3a) and A' (4:6-11) elements. And the only occurrences in this unit of “he has said (εἶρηκεν)” in 4:3b, 4, and of the statement that “they will never enter into my rest (εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου)” in 4:3b, 5, determine the chiasmic parallels for the pivotal B (4:3b) and the B' (4:3c-5) elements.

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, the occurrences of the term “word”—“for if the word (λόγος) spoken through angels became firm” in 2:2 and “the word (λόγος) for hearing did not benefit them” in 4:2—function as the parallels between the AC (2:1-4) and AC' (4:1-11) units. That these are the first two occurrences of the term “word” in Hebrews enhances the significance of this parallelism.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 4:1-11

### 1. Heb 4:1-3a (A): We Have Received Good News Just as They Did

The audience hear the A element (4:1-3a) of this unit as a chiasmic pattern in itself:

- a) Let us be afraid then, lest, while the promise *to enter into his rest* is left, any-one of you seem to have been lacking. *For* indeed we have received good news (4:1-2a)
- b) just as they did, but the word for *hearing* did not benefit them (4:2b),
- b') who were not united in faith with those who *heard* (4:2c).
- a') *For* we are *entering into the rest*, we who believed (4:3a).

When the audience hear “who were not united in faith with those who heard (ἀκούσασιν)” in the “b” sub-element (4:2c), they experience the chiastic pivot from the parallel, “but the word for hearing (ἀκοῆς) did not benefit them” in the “b” sub-element (4:2b), the only occurrences of terms for “hearing” in this chiastic sub-unit. They then are presented with a progression from the expression “to enter into his rest” (εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ) and the conjunction “for” (γάρ) in the “a” sub-element (4:1-2a) to the conjunction “for” (γάρ) and the expression “we are entering into the rest” (εἰσερχόμεθα γὰρ εἰς [τὴν] κατάπαυσιν) in the “a” sub-element (4:3a). These are the only occurrences of these terms in this chiastic sub-unit. In addition, with the statement that “we are entering into the rest, we who believed,” in the “a” sub-element, the focus returns directly upon the audience, as in the “a” sub-element, after the focus on the unbelieving ancestors in the “b” and “b” sub-elements.

Previously the audience received a warning, employing the conjunction “lest,” directed to all of them as a community—“it is necessary for us all the more to attend to the things that have been heard, lest (μήποτε) we drift away” (2:1). Then they received another “lest” warning concerning each of them as individuals within the community—“Take note, brothers, lest (μήποτε) there be in anyone of you (ἐν τινι ὑμῶν) an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the living God” (3:12). Rather, they are to encourage one another, so that not “anyone of you” (τις ἐξ ὑμῶν) may become hardened by the deceit of sin (3:13). And now, the audience receive yet another “lest” warning that intensifies the concern for each one of them—“let us be afraid then, lest (μήποτε), while the promise to enter into his rest is left, any of you (τις ἐξ ὑμῶν) seem to have been lacking” (4:1). The warning for the audience “to take note (βλέπετε)” (3:12) and the ominous observation that “we take note (βλέπομεν)” (3:19) have progressed to the even stronger and more ominous, “let us be afraid (φοβηθῶμεν) then” (4:1).<sup>1</sup>

God has sworn that those who disobeyed would not “enter into his rest (εἰσελεύσεσθαι εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ)” (3:18) because of unfaithfulness (3:19). But the audience are reminded that the promise “to enter into his rest” (εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ) still remains, and that is why they are to be afraid lest anyone of them seem to have been lacking (4:1).

<sup>1</sup> Gray, *Godly Fear*, 142-43; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 124: “In this instance, fear is a positive impetus. They are not to be ‘fearful’ of someone or something, but rather ‘fear lest’ they fall short of their destination.”



That the promise still remains is then reinforced and elaborated by the declaration that “indeed we have received good news” (4:2a), enhanced by the assonance linking “promise” (ἐπαγγελίας) with the reception of “good news” (εὐηγγελισμένοι).

We have received the good news promising entrance into God’s own rest, “just as they did” (4:2b). The ancestral fathers received good news “as a promise that God would deliver them from slavery and bring them to Canaan (Exod 3:16-17; 4:27-31; cf. 6:1-9).”<sup>2</sup> We also received good news as the “word” (λόγος, 2:2) of so great a salvation (2:3), the salvation that frees those held in slavery by the fear of death through all their life (2:15), with its promise of entrance into heavenly glory (1:14; 2:10), the eternal rest of the living God (3:11-12). That the “word” (λόγος) for “hearing” (ἀκοῆς) did not benefit them (4:2b) recalls and reinforces for the audience that those ancestors who “heard” (ἀκούσαντες), nevertheless, rebelled against God in the wilderness (3:16). They thus failed to heed the urgent appeal of Ps 94:7 to “hear” (ἀκούσητε) the voice of God’s word promising good news (3:7, 15).

The word for “hearing” (ἀκοῆς) did not benefit them (4:2b), because they were not united in faith with those who “heard (ἀκούσασιν)” (4:2c), that is, those who really “heard” by responding with faith and obedience. They were not “united” or “joined” (συγκεκρασμένους) in faith with the exceptions to those who heard but rebelled in the wilderness (3:16), namely, Joshua and Caleb (Num 14:26-30).<sup>3</sup> But they also did not share the faith of those who “heard” (ἀκουσάντων) and confirmed for us the word of so great a salvation (2:3), the word included among the things spoken by God and “heard” (ἀκουσθεῖσιν) by us (2:1).

We who have received the good news (4:2a), with its still remaining promise “to enter into his rest (εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ)” (4:1), have begun to realize the fulfillment of that promise, as we are indeed “entering into the rest (εἰσερχόμεθα γὰρ εἰς [τὴν] κατάπαυσιν), we who believed” (4:3a). That we are those who have in fact “believed” (πιστεύσαντες) means that we are united in “faith” (πίστει) with those who really “heard” in the sense of responding to what they heard by believing (4:2c). That we are already “entering” into the rest impresses upon the audience that, although

<sup>2</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 269.

<sup>3</sup> For the text-critical choice of the variant συγκεκρασμένους, see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 595; Attridge, *Hebrews*, 125; Koester, *Hebrews*, 270. On the allusion to Joshua and Caleb, see Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 243; Koester, *Hebrews*, 270.

not yet complete, the process of their entering into the heavenly glory of the eternal rest of the living God has begun and is underway.

## 2. *Heb 4:3b (B): He Has Said They Will Never Enter into My Rest*

The audience are presented again with the scriptural voice of God from Ps 94:11: “just as he has said, ‘As I swore in my anger, “They will never enter into my rest!”’” (4:3b). After the audience were reminded, through the quotation of Ps 94:7-10, that the ancestral fathers of the wilderness generation who tested God in the rebellion were wandering in their heart without knowing God’s ways (3:8-10), they were presented with God’s insistent, dramatic, and definitive declaration, “As I swore in my anger, ‘They will never enter into my rest!’” (3:11). The audience then received the clarification that it was with those who disobeyed that God swore that they should not enter into his rest (3:18) because of their unfaithfulness (3:19).

And now, as confirmation that the word for hearing did not benefit those of the wilderness generation who were not united in faith with those who heard (4:2), the audience hear a verbatim reiteration of the scriptural voice of God that has definitively spoken, “As I swore in my anger, ‘They will never enter into my rest!’” (4:3b). Although they, the disobedient and unfaithful ancestors, will never enter into God’s rest, the audience, “we who believed,” are already entering into that rest (4:3a), as the promise of entering still remains.

## 3. *Heb 4:3c-5 (B'): He Has Said Again They Will Never Enter into My Rest*

The audience hear the B' element (4:3c-5) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) *and yet* (4:3c)
- b) the *works* have been produced from the founding of the world (4:3d).
- c) For he has said somewhere about the *seventh day* thus (4:4a),
  - d) “And God rested (4:4b)
  - c') on the *seventh day* (4:4c)
  - b') from all his *works* (Gen 2:2)” (4:4d),
- a') *and* in this again, “They will never enter into my rest (Ps 94:11!)” (4:5).

After the audience hear “and God rested” in the central and unparalleled “d” sub-element (4:4b), they experience a pivot in parallels regarding the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the “seventh day”—from “he has said somewhere about the seventh day (ἐβδόμης) thus” in the “c” sub-element (4:4a) to “on the seventh day (ἐβδόμη)” in the “c’” sub-element (4:4c). They then experience a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, regarding the only occurrences in this sub-unit of “works”—from “the works (ἔργων) have been produced from the founding of the world” in the “b” sub-element (4:3d) to “from all his works (ἔργων)” in the “b’” sub-element (4:4d). Finally, they are presented with a progression involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the conjunction “and” not immediately followed by a verb (cf. 4:4c)—from “and yet” (καίτοι) in the “a” sub-element (4:3c) to “and in this (καὶ ἐν τούτῳ) again” in the “a’” sub-element (4:5).

At this point the audience are also presented with the pivot of parallels at the center of this chiasmic unit (4:1-11). The scriptural voice of God, “he has said” (εἶρηκεν), introduces the quotation from Ps 94:11 with its definitive pronouncement, “they will never enter into my rest” (εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου) in the B element (4:3b). This progresses to a repetition of the scriptural voice of God, “he has said” (εἶρηκεν), introducing both the quotation from Gen 2:2 and the reiterated quotation from Ps 94:11, “they will never enter into my rest” (εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου) in the B’ element (4:3c-5).

The statement that the “works” (ἔργων) of God’s creation have been produced from the founding of the world (4:3d) resonates with the scriptural declaration from Ps 101:26, which was addressed to the divine Son: “You at the beginnings, Lord, founded the earth, and the heavens are the works (ἔργα) of your hands” (1:10). It intensifies the failure of the wilderness ancestors to enter into God’s rest “though they saw my works (ἔργα) for forty years” (3:9-10a). The works of God, which imply a consequent rest of God, have been produced and still are being produced from the founding of the world.<sup>4</sup> They are not limited to the works of God that the wilderness ancestors saw for forty years without entering into God’s rest. This further indicates to the audience that the promise to enter into God’s rest still remains (4:1) for those who did not see the works of God that their ancestors saw for forty years.

<sup>4</sup> For this sense of the aorist passive participle “produced” (γενηθέντων), see Johnson, *Hebrews*, 127.

The divine voice, “he has said” (εἶρηκεν), introduced the quotation from Ps 94:11 that reiterated God’s decisive declaration, “They will never enter into my rest!” (4:3; cf. 3:11, 18). Now that same divine voice, “he has said” (εἶρηκεν), introduces a quotation from “somewhere,” that is, from somewhere in scripture as the word of God (cf. 2:6), in this case from Gen 2:2, about the seventh day thus, “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works” (4:4). That God “rested” (κατέπαυσεν) on the seventh day of creation from all his works expands the previous references to God’s “rest (κατάπαυσιν)” (3:11, 18; 4:1, 3) beyond the “rest” of the promised land intended for the ancestors after they saw God’s “works” for forty years in the wilderness (3:9) to the more fundamental “rest” of God after creation. All of the “works” (ἔργων) from which God rested on the seventh day include the “works” (ἔργων) of God’s creation that have been produced and are still being produced from the founding of the world (4:3d).

The words, “and in this again,” that is, in “this” quoting of scripture (cf. 1:5, 6; 2:13), introduce yet another reiteration of Ps 94:11, with particular focus on the concept of God’s “rest”: “They will never enter into my rest!” (4:5; cf. 3:11, 18; 4:3). When the audience hear the words “my rest (κατάπαυσίν)” this time, they know that they refer to the “rest” of God on the seventh day of creation when God “rested” (κατέπαυσεν) from all his works (4:4), and thus that the promise to enter into this “rest” still remains for them (4:1).

#### 4. Heb 4:6-11 (A'): Those Who Previously Received Good News Did Not Enter

The audience hear the A' element (4:6-11) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) Since *then* it *remains* for some to *enter* into it, and those who previously received good news did not *enter* because of *disobedience* (4:6),
  - b) again he sets a certain *day* (4:7a),
    - c) “*Today*” (4:7b),
      - d) in David saying after so long a time, just as it was said before (4:7c),
        - c') “*Today* if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts (Ps 94:7-8)” (4:7d).
    - b') For if Joshua gave them rest, he would not have spoken after these things about another “*day*” (4:8).
  - a') So a sabbath rest *remains* for the people of God. For the one who enters into

his rest also himself rests from his works just as God from his own works. Let us strive *then* to *enter* into that rest, so that no one may fall in the same pattern of *disobedience* (4:9-11).

After the audience hear “in David saying after so long a time, just as it was said before” in the central and unparalleled “d” sub-element (4:7c), they experience a pivot of parallels involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of “today”—from “today” (σήμερον) in the “c” sub-element (4:7b) to “today (σήμερον) if you hear his voice” in the “c” sub-element (4:7d). They then hear a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of “day”—from “again he sets a certain day (ἡμέραν)” in the “b” sub-element (4:7a) to “he would not have spoken after these things about another ‘day’ (ἡμέρας)” in the “b” sub-element (4:8). Finally, it is stated that “then (οὖν) it remains (ἀπολείπεται) for some to enter (εἰσελθεῖν) into it, and those who previously received good news did not enter (εἰσῆλθον) because of disobedience (ἀπειθείαν)” in the “a” sub-element (4:6). This progresses to “a sabbath rest remains (ἀπολείπεται) . . . let us strive then (οὖν) to enter (εἰσελθεῖν) into that rest, so that no one may fall in the same pattern of disobedience (ἀπειθείας)” in the “a” sub-element (4:9-11). These are the only occurrences of these particular parallel terms in this sub-unit.

At this point the audience are also presented with the final progression of parallels from the A (4:1-3a) to the A' (4:6-11) elements in this chiasmic unit (4:1-11). They hear progressions from “let us be afraid then (οὖν), lest, while the promise to enter (εἰσελθεῖν) into his rest (εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ) is left” (4:1) to “since then (οὖν) it remains for some to enter (εἰσελθεῖν) into it” (4:6), “the one who enters into his rest (εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ)” (4:10), and “let us strive then (οὖν) to enter (εἰσελθεῖν) into that rest” (4:11); from “indeed we have received good news (εὐηγγελισμένοι)” (4:2) to “those who previously received good news (εὐαγγελισθέντες)” (4:6); and finally from “the word for hearing (ἀκοῆς)” and “those who heard (ἀκούσασιν)” (4:2) to “if you hear (ἀκούσητε) his voice” (4:7).

The statement, “since then it remains (ἀπολείπεται) for some to enter (εἰσελθεῖν) into it” (4:6a), begins to draw out the consequences for the audience of the fact that the promise to enter into God’s rest was not limited to the rest their ancestors failed to enter, despite seeing the works of God for forty years in the wilderness (4:5; cf. 3:7-11, 16-19). The promise to enter was constituted more broadly and fundamentally by God’s rest on the seventh day of creation from all of his works (Gen 2:2), the works

that have been and still are being produced from the founding of the world (4:3-4). It confirms for the audience that the promise “to enter” (εἰσελθεῖν) is still “left” and “remains” (καταλειπομένης) for them (4:1).

Indeed, although “those who previously received good news (εὐαγγελισθέντες) did not enter because of disobedience” (4:6b), we also “have received good news (εὐηγγελισμένοι)” (4:2a) of the promised rest of God, and are already entering into that rest (4:3a). Having taken note that the ancestors in the wilderness were not able to enter “because of unfaithfulness (δι’ ἀπιστίαν)” (3:19), the audience are now told that they did not enter “because of disobedience” (δι’ ἀπειθειαν), thus underlining the need for the audience to hear the voice of God with a response not only of faith but of obedience.

With an “again” (πάλιν) that indicates a continuation of references to scripture (cf. 1:5-6; 2:13; 4:5), the audience are told that the God who rested, according to Gen 2:2, on the seventh “day (ἡμέρᾳ)” (4:4) “sets” or “determines” (ὀρίζει) another day, a “certain day (ἡμέραν)” (4:7a).<sup>5</sup> This “day” stands in contrast to the “day (ἡμέραν) of testing in the wilderness” (3:8), as it reminds the audience of their need to “encourage one another during each day (ἡμέραν)” (3:13). This “certain day” is the “today” (σήμερον) of Ps 94:7, that God establishes “in (ἐν) David,” as the author of Psalm 94 (cf. v. 1) and one of the prophets “in” (ἐν) whom God spoke in the past (1:1). In or through David, God continues speaking the urgent appeal of this Psalm, even after so long a time since the wilderness period, every time it is performed for the audience, just as it was said previously and so decisively by God himself (divine passive), “Today (σήμερον) if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts (Ps 94:7-8)” (4:7).

The ancestors in the wilderness were not united in faith with those who “heard” (ἀκούσασιν), and, consequently, the word for “hearing” (ἀκοῆς) did not benefit them (4:2). In contrast, the audience are not to harden their hearts when “you hear” (ἀκούσητε) the voice of God “today (σήμερον)” (4:7), that is, here and now, the “day” on which the audience are listening to this homiletic letter as a worshiping assembly. This reinforces for the audience the exhortation that “Today (σήμερον) when you hear (ἀκούσητε) his voice, ‘do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion’” (Ps 94:7-8), when those who “heard” (ἀκούσαντες), nevertheless rebelled (3:15-16). It reinforces what the Holy Spirit says to the audience, namely, “Today (σήμερον) when you hear (ἀκούσητε) his voice, ‘do not harden your hearts’” (3:7-8).

<sup>5</sup> Gerhard Schneider, “ὀρίζω,” *EDNT* 2.532; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 251.

Finally, it reinforces the exhortation for the audience not to neglect the word of so great a salvation that was confirmed for us by those who “heard (ἀκουσάντων)” (2:3), but rather to attend to the things that have been “heard” (ἀκουσθεῖσιν), lest we drift away (2:1).

In the next statement, “for if Joshua gave them rest” (4:8a), “Joshua” (Ἰησοῦς) refers to the faithful leader who brought those ancestors who did not rebel and die in the wilderness under the leadership of Moses (3:16-17) into the promised land of Canaan (cf. Josh 21:43; 22:4). This faithful leader of the past shares the name of the faithful leader of the present, “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦν), of whom the audience are taking note (2:9) and to whom they are to turn their attention as the apostle and high priest of our professing (3:1). “If Joshua gave rest (κατέπαυσεν) to them” refers not to the “rest” of the promised land of Canaan, but to the more fundamental “rest” promised by God who “rested” (κατέπαυσεν) on the seventh day of creation from all his works (4:4).

If Joshua had given those he led this “rest,” then God would not have spoken after these things regarding the wilderness generation “about (περί) another day (ἡμέρας)” (4:8b). God spoke not only “about” (περί) the seventh “day” (ἡμέρα) of creation on which he rested (4:4), but the “certain day (ἡμέραν),” that is, the “today” of Ps 94:7-8, when God spoke through David long after the wilderness generation and still speaks “today,” calling the audience not to harden their hearts when they hear the voice of God (4:7) that promises entrance into God’s own rest.

That a “sabbath rest” (σαββατισμός) remains for the people of God (4:9) confirms that the “other day” about which God has spoken (4:8) refers both to the “seventh day,” the day for observance of God’s sabbath rest (4:4), and to the “day,” the “today,” for hearing the voice of God during worship (4:7). This resonates with the “sabbath rest” as a day not only for rest but for the worship of God.<sup>6</sup> That a sabbath rest “remains” (ἀπολείπεται) for the people of God (4:9) also confirms that it “remains” (ἀπολείπεται) for some to enter into God’s own rest (4:6). The audience are to appreciate, then, that a sabbath rest remains for them as among the chosen “people” (λαῶ) of God, the “people” (λαοῦ) whose sins Jesus expiated as the merci-

<sup>6</sup> Otfried, Hofius, “σαββατισμός,” *EDNT* 3.219: “The statement in Heb 4:9f. remains dependent on a Jewish sabbath theology that associates the idea of sabbath rest with ideas of worship and praise of God. Accordingly, the author of Hebrews understands by σαββατισμός the eternal sabbath celebration of salvation, i.e., the perfected community’s worship before God’s throne.”

ful and faithful high priest of God (2:17; 1:3), thus eliminating an obstacle preventing them from entering into God's own sabbath rest.<sup>7</sup>

Since "the promise to enter (εἰσελθεῖν) into his rest (εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ) is left" (4:1), every member of God's people who "enters (εἰσελθὼν) into his rest (εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ)" also himself "rests" (κατέπαυσεν) from his works just as God "rested (κατέπαυσεν)" (4:4) from his own works of creation on the seventh day (4:10). This is thus God's own eternal and heavenly "rest," the "rest" that Joshua did not give (κατέπαυσεν) to the wilderness ancestors (4:8). It is available to each and every member of the audience.

After the exhortation that introduced this unit, "let us be afraid then (οὖν), lest, while the promise to enter (εἰσελθεῖν) into his rest is left" (4:1a), the audience receive a closing climactic exhortation, "let us strive then (οὖν) to enter (εἰσελθεῖν) into that rest" (4:11a). Although the audience were told that already "we are entering into the rest" (4:3a), their entrance is not yet complete, so that it is still necessary for them to strive to enter into it finally.

The concern in the opening exhortation for every individual member of the audience, lest "anyone (τις) of you seem to have been lacking" (4:1b), continues in the closing exhortation, "that not anyone (τις) may fall in the same pattern of disobedience" (4:11b). That not anyone of them may "fall" (πέσῃ) in the same pattern of disobedience warns the audience not to follow the pattern of the ancestors whose corpses "fell" (ἔπεσεν) in the wilderness after they sinned (3:17). And that not anyone of them may fall in the same pattern of "disobedience" (ἀπειθείας) reminds the audience that those who previously received good news did not enter because of "disobedience (ἀπειθειαν)" (4:6). Indeed, it was with those who "disobeyed" (ἀπειθήσασιν) that God swore that they should not enter into his rest (3:18).

With regard to the concern for each and every individual member among them, the audience were told to take note lest there be in "anyone" (τις) of you an evil heart of unfaithfulness (3:12; cf. 3:19). They are to encourage one another, so that not "anyone" (τις) of them may become hardened by the deceit of sin (3:13; cf. 3:17). They are to be afraid lest "anyone" (τις) of them seem to have been lacking" (4:1). And now, they are to strive to enter into that rest, so that not "anyone" (τις) of them may fall in the same pattern of disobedience (4:11; cf. 4:16; 3:18). At this point, then, each and every member of the audience has been urged to avoid not only unfaithfulness, the deceit of sin, and being deficient, but also the disobedience of a

<sup>7</sup> H. Weiss, "Sabbatismos in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *CBQ* 58 (1996): 674–89.



heart hardened to the salvific voice of God that prevents final entrance into the eternal and heavenly rest of the living God.<sup>8</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 4:1-11

The declaration at the conclusion of the AD' unit (3:12-19) that the wilderness generation were not able “to enter” into God’s rest (3:19) provides the transitional catch word that links this unit with the following AC' unit (4:1-11), which begins with the notice that the promise “to enter” into God’s rest still remains (4:1). These catch words thus indicate to the audience a continuation of the theme of entering into God’s own rest.

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, when the audience are told that the “word” for hearing did not benefit the wilderness generation (4:2) in this AC' unit, they are presented with the parallel to the AC unit, which contains the only previous occurrence in Hebrews of the significant term “word.” They are reminded that we received good news as the “word” (2:2) of so great a salvation (2:3), the salvation that frees those held in slavery by the fear of death through all their life (2:15), with its promise of entrance into heavenly glory (1:14; 2:10), the eternal rest of the living God (3:11-12). This macrochiastic parallelism thus implicitly warns the audience to make sure that, in contrast to the wilderness generation, they benefit from this “word” for hearing by not failing to enter into God’s own rest.

At the center of this AC' unit the audience are presented with a pivot of chiastic parallels involving repetitions of the scriptural voice of God quoting Ps 94:11. They thus hear a pivotal progression from God “has said” that “they,” the wilderness generation, “will not enter into my rest!” (4:3b) to God “has said” again, in addition to stating that he rested on the seventh day from all his works (Gen 2:2), that “they will not enter into my rest!” (4:3c-5).

When the audience hear that it remains for some “to enter” into God’s rest, and those who previously “received good news” did not enter because of disobedience (4:6), that the promise “to enter” into his rest still remains (4:1) is confirmed for them, since they have “received good news” and are

<sup>8</sup> See also David A. DeSilva, “Entering God’s Rest: Eschatology and the Socio-Rhetorical Strategy of Hebrews,” *TJ* 21 (2000): 25-43; Samuel Bénétreau, “Le repos du pèlerin (Hébreux 3,7-4,11),” *ETR* 78 (2003): 203-23; David M. Allen, “More Than Just Numbers: Deuteronomic Influence in Hebrews 3:7-4:11,” *TynBul* 58 (2007): 129-49.

entering into the rest as those who have believed (4:2-3a). And when the audience receive the appeal from Ps 94:7-8, that when they “hear” God’s voice, they are not to harden their hearts (4:7), they are invited to be united in faith with those who “heard,” in contrast to the wilderness generation whom the word for “hearing” did not benefit (4:2).

When the audience hear that the individual who enters “into his rest” himself rests from his works just as God did (4:10), that the promise to enter “into his rest” still remains for each one of them is further confirmed (4:1). And finally, the climactic closing exhortation, that since “then” it remains for some “to enter” (4:6), we are to strive “then” “to enter” into that rest, so that not “anyone” may fall in the same pattern of disobedience (4:11) as the wilderness generation, reinforces the concern for each and every member of the audience. The exhortation that introduced this unit urged that we are to be afraid “then,” lest, while the promise “to enter” into his rest is left, “anyone” of the audience seem to have been lacking (4:1).

## Hebrews 4:12-13

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A <sup>12a</sup> For living is *the word* of God

B <sup>12b</sup> and effective and sharper than *every* two-edged sword and penetrating as far as a division of soul and spirit, as well as of joints and marrow, and able to scrutinize deliberations and thoughts of the heart. <sup>13a</sup> And no creature is invisible before *him*,

B' <sup>13b</sup> but *all things* are naked and laid bare to the eyes of *him*,

A' <sup>13c</sup> regarding whom there is upon us *the word*.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 4:12-13

The term “God” occurs in the assertion, “For the one who enters into his rest also himself rests from his works just as God (θεός) from his own works” (4:10), toward the conclusion of the AC' unit (4:1-11). This occurrence serves as the transitional catch word that connects this unit to the following AB' unit (4:12-13), which begins with the assertion, “For living is the word of God (θεοῦ)” (4:12a). Through these catch words the audience experience a transition in themes from that of entering into God’s very own rest to that of the word of God that is “living.”

The only occurrences in this unit of the term “the word”—“for living is the word (ὁ λόγος) of God” in 4:12a and “regarding whom there is upon us the word (ὁ λόγος)” in 4:13c—establish the parallels for the A (4:12a) and A' (4:13c) elements of this chiastic unit. And the only occurrences in this unit of the adjective “every” or “all”—“every (πᾶσαν) two-edged sword” in 4:12b and “all things (πάντα) are naked” in 4:13b, as well as of the third person singular masculine pronoun “him”—“no creature is invisible before him (αὐτοῦ)” in 4:13a and “laid bare to the eyes of him (αὐτοῦ)” in 4:13b, determine the parallels for the B (4:12b-13a) and the B' (4:13b) elements.

With regard to the third macrochiastic level, this Aa'b' unit (4:12-13), which occurs after the central and pivotal Aa'c unit (4:1-11), exhibits a parallel relationship with the Aa'b unit (3:12-19). This parallelism is evident in the only occurrences within these two units of the terms “living” and “God”—“in falling away from the living God (θεοῦ ζῶντος)” in 3:12 and “living (ζῶν) is the word of God (θεοῦ)” in 4:12a.

And with regard to the second macrochiastic level, the occurrences of the term “spirit”—“he who makes his angels spirits (πνεύματα)” in 1:7 and “are they not all ministering spirits (πνεύματα)” in 1:14, as well as “penetrating as far as a division of soul and spirit (πνεύματος)” in 4:12—function as the parallels between the AB (1:5-14) and AB' (4:12-13) units. These are the only occurrences of “spirit” to this point in Hebrews that do not refer to the “Holy Spirit” (cf. 2:4; 3:7).

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 4:12-13

### 1. Heb 4:12a (A): For Living Is the Word of God

After the exhortation for us to strive to enter into God's own rest, lest anyone fall in the same pattern of disobedience as the wilderness generation (4:11), the audience are presented with the assertion, “For living is the word of God” (4:12a). Having been exhorted to join the author in striving to enter into the sabbath rest that remains for the people of “God (θεοῦ)” (4:9), the rest that includes resting from one's own works as “God” (θεός) rests from his works (4:10), the audience are told that the word of “God” (θεοῦ) regarding this rest is living. That the word of God is “living,” with “living” accentuated as the emphatic initial word of the sentence, first of all, refers to its vital relevance and vibrancy for the lives of those who hear it. For the audience as a worshiping assembly, the “word” of God is “living” as the “voice” of God from Ps 94:7-11. This voice is actively available and “alive” for them to hear “today,” inviting them not to harden their hearts but rather to enter into God's own rest (3:7, 15; 4:7).

That emphatically “living (ζῶν)” is the word of God (4:12a), most especially, means that this word not only offers life but, as a performative speech act, produces and makes “living” a reality for the audience as among those who are to respond obediently to the word's invitation to enter into God's own rest. The “living” that the word of God makes possible is that of the “living” (ζῶντος) God himself (3:12), the God who lives eternally, resting

from his works. This “living” rest is available also to everyone who enters into God’s own rest (4:10). By making the “living” of God’s own eternal life of rest a reality for those who obey, the “living” word of God frees those held in slavery by the fear of death through all their “life (ζῆν)” (2:15).<sup>1</sup>

The “word” (λόγος) of God that is living (4:12a) is the “word” (λόγος) for hearing, which did not benefit the ancestors of the wilderness generation who were not united in faith with those who heard (4:2). The audience have already been exhorted not to neglect to hear with a response of obedient faith, in contrast to the wilderness generation, the “word” (λόγος) of so great a salvation (2:2-3). This is the living word that not only promises but can produce for each and every one of them a living beyond this mortal life entangled in slavery to the fear of death (2:15), a living of the eternal life and heavenly rest of the living God himself (3:12).<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Heb 4:12b-13a (B): *Sharper than Every Sword and No One Is Invisible before Him*

The audience then receive more description of the dynamic word of God. It is emphatically “living” (4:12a), “and effective and sharper than every two-edged sword and penetrating as far as a division of soul and spirit, as well as of joints and marrow, and able to scrutinize deliberations and thoughts of the heart. And no creature is invisible before him” (4:12b-13a). That the living word is “effective” (ἐνεργής) indicates its ability to make its promise of “life” presently active. The word’s effectiveness as a “living” word reaches into the inner depth of one’s being. As sharper than every double-edged cutting instrument, the word penetrates into a person’s “soul and spirit, as well as joints and marrow,” otherwise impenetrable and indivisible dimensions of a person’s inner being.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On Deut 32:47 as the most prominent OT background to Heb 4:12a, see Allen, *Deuteronomy*, 94-97.

<sup>2</sup> For a proposal that the “living word of God” is a christological personification, see James Swetnam, “Jesus as λόγος in Hebrews 4:12-13,” *Bib* 62 (1981): 214-24; idem, “Another Note on Λόγος as Christ in Hebrews 4,12-13,” *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 18 (2005): 129-33. But the context does not seem to substantiate this. See also Koester, *Hebrews*, 273.

<sup>3</sup> For a sacrificial interpretation of the metaphor of the “sword” with Eucharistic implications, see Paolo Garuti, “Il coltello sacrificale, il λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ e l’isonomia eucaristica in Eb 4,12-13,” *Ang* 82 (2005): 783-802.

The living and powerfully effective word of God that penetrates to the human “spirit (πνεύματος)” (4:12b) is included in what is said by the Holy “Spirit (πνεῦμα)” of God (3:7), and resonates with the acts of power that come from this divine Holy “Spirit (πνεύματος)” (2:4). That the living word of the living God (3:12) reaches to the human “spirit” reminds the audience that human beings have a spiritual dimension which likens them to the angels, whom God makes “spirits” (πνεύματα) and ministers (1:7) in accord with their role of worshiping the firstborn Son in the heavenly world (1:6). That the word of God touches the human “spirit” with its promise of the eternal life of the living God thus facilitates the participation of the audience as human beings in the heavenly worship of the divine Son through the assistance of angels as ministering “spirits” (πνεύματα) sent by God (1:14).

That the living and effective word of God is able to scrutinize deliberations and thoughts of the “heart (καρδίας)” (4:12b) reinforces the previous pleas for the audience as a whole not to harden their “hearts (καρδίας)” (3:8, 15; 4:7). That this “living” (ζών) word of God is able to scrutinize the deliberations and thoughts of the “heart” of every individual human being sharpens the warning for the audience to take note that there not be in anyone of them an evil “heart” (καρδία) of unfaithfulness in falling away from the “living” (ζώντος) God (3:12). In contrast to the wilderness generation who were wandering in the “heart (καρδία)” (3:10) which God’s living word can scrutinize, the audience are to know the ways of God in their “heart,” lest they fall short of entering into God’s own eternal life of heavenly rest (3:16-19).<sup>4</sup>

But this living, effective, penetrating, and innerly scrutinizing dimension of the word of God, in accord with its comparison to a double-edged sword, cuts both ways. It not only warns but encourages the audience. As the word of so great a salvation (2:2-3), the “living” word (4:12a) of the “living” God (3:12) is the word about the Jesus who shared in our humanity so that through “death” he might destroy the one who has the strength of “death,” the devil (2:14). The living word about the eternal life that conquers the power of death through the death of Jesus is innerly effective, working interiorly (ἐν-εργής) and able to scrutinize the inner deliberations (ἐν-θυμήσεων) and inner thoughts (ἐν-νοιών) of the heart. This assures the audience at the very inner core and depth of their persons of their freedom

<sup>4</sup> The warning aspect of the “word of God” here is denied by Gene R. Smillie, “ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ” in Hebrews 4:12-13,” *NovT* 46 (2004): 338-59.

from the fear of death in which they were held or entangled (ἐν-οχοῦ) in slavery all of their life (2:15).<sup>5</sup>

The assertion that “no creature is invisible before him” (4:13a) moves the focus of the audience from the living word of God (4:12a) to the living God himself.<sup>6</sup> That no creature, and thus no individual member of the audience, is invisible before God reinforces the warning that there not be in anyone in the audience an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the living God (3:12), since hardened and wandering hearts (3:8, 10, 15; 4:7) cannot be hidden from the penetrating scrutiny of God himself. But that no creature is invisible before God also encourages each individual member of the audience, as an earthly creature who will perish (1:11). Each human, mortal creature who is enslaved by the fear of a final and definitive death (2:15) is not hidden before God, who offers entrance into a sabbath rest. Thus, each creature of God may rest from his or her own works, just as the Creator, in the heavenly rest of the eternal life of the living God (4:9-11).

### 3. Heb 4:13b (B'): But All Things Are Naked and Laid Bare to the Eyes of Him

The audience receive more information about the relationship of creatures to the living God who created them (4:12b-13a): “but all things are naked and laid bare to the eyes of him” (4:13b). At this point the audience are presented with a pivot of parallels at the center of this chiasmic unit (4:12-13). They hear a progression from “every (πᾶσαν) two-edged sword” (4:12b) and “no creature is invisible before him (αὐτοῦ)” (4:13a) in the B (4:12b-13a) element to “all things (πάντα) are naked and laid bare to the eyes of him (αὐτοῦ)” in the B' (4:13b) element.

The focus of the audience on the living word of God as effectively sharper than “every” two-edged sword in its penetrating ability (4:12b) broadens to a focus on “all things” in general being naked and laid bare to the eyes of “him,” God himself (4:13b), an elaboration upon the assertion that no creature is invisible before “him,” God himself (4:13a). This elaborated assertion reinforces the warning that there not be in anyone in

<sup>5</sup> Gray, *Godly Fear*, 114-15; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 101: “The author suggests that fear of death leads to a slavery that is not acute—arising in moments of crisis—but rather chronic, and therefore more fundamentally shapes human choices.”

<sup>6</sup> The genitive “God” (θεοῦ) rather than the nominative “word” (λόγος) in 4:12a serves as the antecedent for the genitive “him” (αὐτοῦ) in 4:13a.

the audience an evil, hardened, or wandering heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the living God (3:12; cf. 3:8, 10, 15; 4:7), since all things are susceptible to the searching, scrutinizing “eyes” of the God able to see whether a person knows the ways of God (3:10).

This elaborated assertion (4:13b) also reinforces the encouragement for every individual in the audience that God has the merciful “eyes” to see everyone who is enslaved by the fear of a death that can deprive one of God’s eternal life (2:15). That “all things (πάντα) are naked and laid bare (γυμνὰ καὶ τετραηλισμένα)” to the “eyes” of God, in other words, that “all things” are in a position of being at the mercy of God, assures the audience that God “sees,” as do we, that “all things” (πάντα) have not yet been “subjected” (ὑποτεταγμένα) to Jesus, the divine Son (2:8). Among all these things yet to be subjected under the feet of the heavenly enthroned Jesus are his enemies (1:13), preeminent among whom is the devil, who wields the power of death (2:14). That all things are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the living God thus bolsters the hope of the audience that God sees their vulnerability to the fear of a death preventing their entrance into the heavenly rest of God’s eternal life.

#### *4. Heb 4:13c (A'): Regarding Whom There Is upon Us the Word*

The audience are then directly confronted with the ramifications of what they have just heard about God (4:12-13b): “regarding whom there is upon us the word” (4:13c). At this point the audience experience a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from “the word (ὁ λόγος) of God” in the A (4:12a) element to “regarding whom there is upon us the word (ὁ λόγος)” in the A' (4:13c) element.

The phrase “regarding whom (πρὸς ὃν)” (4:13c) keeps the focus of the audience on “him” (αὐτοῦ), the God to the eyes of whom all things are naked and laid bare (4:13b), on “him” (αὐτοῦ), the God before whom no creature is invisible (4:13a), and on the God whose word is living, effective, penetrating, and scrutinizing (4:12). As the audience recall, it was in things “regarding God” (πρὸς τὸν θεόν) that Jesus became a merciful and faithful high priest (2:17), able to help those being tested (2:18). The audience, then, have been attuned and alerted to look to Jesus for help as they are confronted with the things “regarding God,” the things involved especially in hearing the living word of the living God with a heart open to knowing



the ways of God (3:10) in leading many sons into heavenly glory (2:10), into the sabbath rest of God's eternal life (4:9-11). And this confrontation is reinforced as "there is upon us (ἡμῖν)," the audience, "the word" (4:13c), recalling that God has spoken to "us" (ἡμῖν) in a Son (1:2).

That regarding God there is upon us "the word (ὁ λόγος)" (4:13c) presents the audience with a double meaning. First, "the word" refers to "the word (ὁ λόγος)" from God that is living (4:12a) and that is now directed "to" or "upon" us, with its innerly effective, powerfully penetrating, and sharply double-edged message of both warning and encouragement. As the word voiced by God himself that we, the audience as a worshiping assembly, are to hear "today" (3:7, 13, 15; 4:7), it warns against a hardened heart of unfaithfulness closed to knowing the ways of God (3:8, 10, 12, 15; 4:7). But, at the same time, as the "living" word of the "living" God (3:12), it encourages faithful obedience to God with its promise of entrance into the heavenly sabbath rest of the eternal life of God himself (4:9-11).

Secondly, that regarding God there is upon us "the word" (4:13c) refers to "the word" that we, the audience as a worshiping assembly, are to return to God in response to God's word to us. In other words, we are now confronted with the decision of how we are going to respond to the "living" word of God with its double-edged message of both warning and encouragement. The expectation is for the audience to respond with "the word" of their communal confession of faithful obedience to "the word" of God. This accords with the previous exhortation that the audience, as holy brothers and partners of a heavenly calling, are to turn attention to the apostle and high priest of "our confession," Jesus (3:1), who was faithful to the one who made him (3:2a). Thus, "the word" (ὁ λόγος) that is incumbent upon "us" (ἡμῖν) as our response to "the word" of God to us resonates with "our confession" (ὁμολογίας ἡμῶν) as our communal word of response to the faithfulness of Jesus with our own faithful obedience.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Gene R. Smillie, "'The Other λόγος' at the End of Heb. 4:13," *NovT* 47 (2005): 25: "Not only is ὁμολογία cognate with λόγος (from ὁμολογέω, literally 'to say together the same words,' hence 'con-fession'), but it is also the natural sequence to what the author has just been saying . . . Ὁμολογία and ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος, then, are both invitations to affirm or profess the word the readers have heard. At the end of v. 13, the author says in effect, 'Now it is our turn to return the word to him.'" See also Eve-Marie Becker, "'Gottes Wort' und 'Unser Wort': Bemerkungen zu Heb 4,12-13," *BZ* 44 (2000): 254-62.

### C. Summary on Hebrews 4:12-13

The reference to “God” resting from his own works (4:10) towards the end of the AC' unit (4:1-11) serves as the catch word connecting this unit with the following AB' unit (4:12-13), which begins with a declaration about the word of “God” that is living (4:12a). These transitional words thus keep the focus of the audience on entering into the sabbath rest that still remains for them as among the people of “God” (4:9), the living God whose eternal life of rest is available to the audience.

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, when the audience hear about the living word of God that penetrates as far as a division of soul and “spirit” (4:12b) in the AB' unit (4:12-13), they are reminded of the spiritual dimension of their human nature that likens them to the angels God made as “spirits” and ministers (1:7), indeed as ministering “spirits” sent by God to assist the audience (1:14) in their worship of the Son in the heavenly world (1:6) in the AB unit (1:5-14). And, with regard to the third macrochiastic level, when the audience hear that “living” is the word of “God” (4:12a) in the Aa'b' unit (4:12-13), they recall the previous exhortation that there not be in anyone of them an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the “living God” (3:12) in the Aa'b unit (3:12-19).

At the center of this AB' unit the audience are presented with a pivot of chiastic parallels from the notice that no creature, whom the word of God scrutinizes and penetrates in a manner sharper than “every” two-edged sword, is invisible before “him,” God himself (4:12b-13a), to the declaration that “all things” are naked and laid bare to the eyes of “him,” God himself (4:13b). The double-edged way that the living word of God cuts to the very inner core, to the inner deliberations and inner thoughts of the heart, of each individual communicates to the audience a double-edged message. On the one hand, it reinforces the previous warnings for them not to harden their hearts to knowing the ways of God when they hear the voice of God during the “today” of their worshiping assembly. On the other hand, as the “living” word of God that is innerly effective, it encourages the audience with its promise of entrance into the heavenly sabbath rest of God’s own eternal life that can free them from their life long entanglement in slavery to the fear of a death that can deprive them of this eternal life.

Finally, when the audience hear in the climactic conclusion of this unit that regarding God there is upon us “the word” (4:13c), they realize that “the word” of God that is living (4:12a), innerly effective, potently pen-

etrating, and keenly scrutinizing has confronted them at the very core of their beings, within their spirits and hearts, with its double-edged message of both warning and encouragement (4:12b-13b). Now it is incumbent upon the audience to respond to “the word” of God that is “living,” with its promise of entrance into the eternal rest and life of the “living” God, with “the word” of their communal confession of faithful obedience.

## Hebrews 4:14–5:10

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- A<sup>14</sup> Having then a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to the confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is not *able* to *sympathize* with our weaknesses, but one who has been tested in all things in likeness, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us approach then with boldness the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help. <sup>5:1</sup> For every high priest from men taken, on behalf of men is appointed in things regarding God, so that he may *offer* both gifts and sacrifices on behalf of sins, <sup>2</sup> being *able* to *deal patiently* with those who are ignorant and wandering, since he himself is surrounded by weakness <sup>3</sup> and on account of this he is obligated, *just as* concerning the people, so also concerning himself, to *offer* concerning sins.
- B<sup>4</sup> And *not* by *himself* does anyone take the honor *but* is called by God even as also Aaron.
- B'<sup>5</sup> So also the Christ did *not* glorify *himself* in becoming high priest, *but* the one who spoke to him, “Son of mine are you, I today have begotten you” (Ps 2:7).
- A'<sup>6</sup> *Just as* also in another place he says, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Ps 109:4), <sup>7</sup> who in the days of his flesh *offered* both prayers and supplications with strong outcrying and tears to the one who is *able* to save him from death, and he was heard from his reverence, <sup>8</sup> although being a Son, he learned from the things he *suffered* obedience, <sup>9</sup> and having been made perfect, he became for all those who obey him a source of eternal salvation, <sup>10</sup> having been designated by God high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 4:14-5:10

The declaration that the word is incumbent upon us, which brings the AB' unit (4:12-13) to its climactic conclusion, provides the transitional catch

word that connects this unit with the following AA' unit (4:14–5:10). The link occurs at the beginning of this unit in the exhortation, “let us hold fast to the confession” (4:14). The term “confession” (ὁμολογίας), literally “a saying together of the same words,” shares a similar sound and meaning with the term “the word” (ὁ λόγος). These transitional catch words keep the focus on the communal response of the audience as a worshiping assembly to the living word of God.

There are a number of parallels establishing the chiasmic relationship between the A (4:14–5:3) and A' (5:6–10) elements of this unit. These elements contain the only occurrences in this unit of the verb “be able”—“we do not have a high priest who is not able (δυνάμενον)” in 4:15, “being able (δυνάμενος)” in 5:2, and “to the one who is able (δυνάμενον)” in 5:7. They exhibit verbs with the concept of “suffering” (παθεῖν) in their roots—“to sympathize (συμπαθεῖν) with our weaknesses” in 4:15, “to deal patiently (μετριοπαθεῖν)” in 5:2, and “he learned from the things he suffered (ἔπαθεν) obedience” in 5:8. They feature the only instances in this unit of the verb for “offer”—“so that he may offer (προσφέρειν) both gifts and sacrifices” in 5:1, “to offer (προσφέρειν) concerning sins” in 5:3, and “who in the days of his flesh offered (προσενέγκας) both prayers and supplications” in 5:7. Finally, these elements contain the only occurrences in this unit of the conjunction “just as”—“just as (καθώς) concerning the people” in 5:3 and “just as (καθώς) also in another place” in 5:6.

Two instances of distinctive terminology determine the parallels for the pivotal B (5:4) and B' (5:5) elements of this chiasmic unit. These elements feature the only occurrences in this unit of the negation of the masculine singular reflexive pronoun “himself” and the conjunction “but”—“not by himself (οὐχ ἑαυτῷ) does anyone take the honor but (ἀλλά) is called by God” in 5:4 and “Christ did not (οὐχ) glorify himself (ἑαυτόν) in becoming high priest, but (ἀλλ') the one who spoke to him” in 5:5.

With regard to the third macrochiasmic level, this Aa'a' unit (4:14–5:10) exhibits a parallel relationship with the Aa'a unit (3:7–11). This parallelism is evident in the occurrences in these two units of the verb “test”—“where your fathers tested (ἐπείρασαν)” in 3:9 and “one who has been tested (πεπειρασμένον) in all things in likeness” in 4:15.

And with regard to the second macrochiasmic level, there are a number of parallels indicated between the AA (1:1–4) and the AA' (4:14–5:10) units. A first parallelism involves the term “Son” in reference to Jesus—“in a Son (υἱῷ)” in 1:2, “Son (υἱόν) of God” in 4:14, “my Son (υἱός) are you” in 5:5,

and “although being a Son (υἱός)” in 5:8. A second concerns references to “God”—“much time ago God (θεός)” in 1:1, “Son of God (θεοῦ)” in 4:14, “things regarding God (θεόν)” in 5:1, “is called by God (θεοῦ)” in 5:4, and “having been designated by God (θεοῦ)” in 5:10. A third features occurrences of the term “sin”—“having made purification for sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)” in 1:3, “yet without sin (ἁμαρτίας)” in 4:15, “on behalf of sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)” in 5:1, and “concerning sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)” in 5:3. A fourth parallelism is exhibited by occurrences of the verb “speak” with God as subject—“God, having spoken (λαλήσας) to the fathers . . . has spoken (ἐλάλησεν) to us” in 1:1-2 and “the one who spoke (λαλήσας) to him” in 5:5.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 4:14-5:10

### 1. Heb 4:14-5:3 (A): Able To Sympathize, Deal Patiently, and Offer

The audience hear the A element (4:14-5:3) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) Having then a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to the confession. For we do not have a high priest who is not *able* to *sympathize* with our *weaknesses*, but one who has been tested in all things in likeness, yet without *sin*. Let us approach then with boldness the throne of grace, *so that* we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help (4:14-16).
- b) For every high priest from *men* (5:1a)
  - c) taken (5:1b),
  - b') on behalf of *men* is appointed in things regarding God (5:1c),
- a') *so that* he may offer both gifts and sacrifices on behalf of *sins*, being *able* to *deal patiently* with those who are ignorant and wandering, since he himself is surrounded by *weakness* and on account of this he is obligated, just as concerning the people, so also concerning himself, to offer concerning *sins* (5:1d-3).

After the audience hear the verb “taken” in the central and unparallelized “c” sub-element (5:1b), they experience a pivot in parallels regarding the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the term “men”—from “every high priest from men (ἀνθρώπων)” in the “b” sub-element (5:1a) to “on behalf of men (ἀνθρώπων)” in the “b'” sub-element (5:1c). They are then presented with several progressions from the “a” (4:14-16) to the “a'” (5:1d-3) sub-elements. “So that (ἵνα) we may receive mercy and may find

grace for timely help” (4:16) progresses to “so that (ἵνα) he may offer” (5:1d). “One who has been tested in all things in likeness, yet without sin (ἁμαρτίας)” (4:15) progresses to “offer both gifts and sacrifices on behalf of sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)” (5:1d) as well as to “concerning sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)” (5:3). And, “able (δυνάμενον) to sympathize (συμπαθεῖν) with our weaknesses (ἀσθενείας)” (4:15) progresses to “being able (δυνάμενος) to deal patiently (μετριοπαθεῖν) with those who are ignorant and erring, since he himself is surrounded by weakness (ἀσθενείαν)” (5:2).

Regarding God “there is upon us the word (ὁ λόγος)” (4:13), with its implication that it is incumbent upon us to respond to “the word” (ὁ λόγος) of God that is living and effective (4:12). The audience are thus exhorted to continue to make that response by holding fast to the “confession” (ὁμολογίας)—their saying together of words in response to the word of God (4:14). That they are to hold fast to the “confession,” because they have “a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God” (4:14), reinforces the previous exhortation for the audience, as “partners of a heavenly calling,” to “turn attention to the apostle and high priest of our confession (ὁμολογίας), Jesus” (3:1).

As a worshiping assembly, the audience are to hold fast to the “confession” in response to the living word of God concerning the great salvation accomplished by Jesus as the great high priest and Son of God.<sup>1</sup> Jesus has “passed through the “heavens (οὐρανούς)” (4:14) in a celestial, ceremonial procession preliminary not only to his role as the great high priest in the heavenly worship but to his exaltation as the royally enthroned Son of God and object of heavenly worship by the angels (1:6; cf. 1:3, 13; 2:9–10). The audience are invited to this heavenly worship as “partners of a heavenly (ἐπουρανίου) calling” (3:1).<sup>2</sup>

The double negative expression, “we do not (οὐ) have a high priest who is not (μή) able to sympathize with our weaknesses” (4:15), underscores that we have a high priest definitely able to “sympathize” or “suffer with” (συμπαθεῖν) us in our weaknesses.<sup>3</sup> That we have a high priest “able” (δυνάμενον) to “suffer with” (συμπαθεῖν) us in our weaknesses, as one who has been “tested (πεπειρασμένον)” (4:15) stands in stark contrast to

<sup>1</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 140: “The maintenance of the confession probably involved preservation of a commitment made in a liturgical context, but cannot be limited to that.”

<sup>2</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 282: “Jesus passes through the heavens like a priest moving through the forecourt of a sanctuary and into the holy of holies.” See also Johnson, *Hebrews*, 139.

<sup>3</sup> Ceslas Spicq, “συμπαθεῖν, *TLNT* 3.319–20. Johnson, *Hebrews*, 141: “Christ entered fully into the human experience of suffering.”

the rebellion during the day of the “testing” (πειρασμοῦ) in the wilderness (3:8), where the fathers “tested” (ἐπείρασαν) God by trial though they saw God’s works (3:9). It reinforces the previous assertion that “in what he himself suffered (πέπονθεν) in being tested (πειρασθείς), those who are being tested (πειραζόμενοις) he is able (δύναται) to help” (2:18). And that we have as “high priest” (ἀρχιερέα) one who has been tested “in all things” (κατὰ πάντα) in “likeness” (ὁμοιότητα) to us (4:15) reaffirms that he was obligated “in all things” (κατὰ πάντα) with his brothers to be “likened” (ὁμοιωθῆναι), so that he might become a merciful and faithful “high priest (ἀρχιερέως)” (2:17).

We have a high priest able to sympathize with our weaknesses as one tested in all things in likeness to us, yet without “sin (ἁμαρτίας)” (4:15). This encourages the audience not to become hardened by the deceit of “sin (ἁμαρτίας)” (3:13). As the audience have been informed, Jesus became a merciful and faithful high priest in things regarding God in order to expiate the “sins” (ἁμαρτίας) of the people (2:17), the sins that prevent the audience as the people of God from the worthy worship of God. Indeed, having made purification for “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν), Jesus, as the exalted Son of God, “sat at the right of the Majesty in the heights” (1:3), and thus became a focus of heavenly worship for the audience, assisted by the ministering angels (1:6-7, 13-14; 3:1; 4:14).

As the worshipping “house” or household of Christ, the audience were previously exhorted that they are to hold to the confident and openly expressed “boldness (παρρησίαν)” (3:6) that accompanies their confession of Jesus as the high priest (3:1). And now they are exhorted that, with the “boldness” (παρρησίας) that accompanies this confession to which they are to hold fast (4:14), they are to approach the “throne” (θρόνῳ) of grace (4:16).<sup>4</sup> The exalted Jesus as the divine Son of God sits upon this “throne” of grace (1:3, 13), the eternal “throne” (θρόνος) of God in heaven (1:8). Since Jesus, as the great high priest and Son of God, “has passed through” (διεληλυθότα) the heavens in a cultic procession preliminary to his role in the heavenly worship, the audience are now able, with boldness, to cultically “approach” (προσερχόμεθα), within their communal worship, this heavenly throne of grace.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 284: “Boldness (παρρησία) includes both an internal disposition of confidence and an external expression that is clear and public.”

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Palzkill, “προσερχομαι,” *EDNT* 3.163-64. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 269: “Προσερχομαι in Hebrews is always used in a cultic sense, of worshippers approaching



That the audience, as a worshiping community, are to approach with boldness the heavenly throne of grace, so that they may receive “mercy (ἐλεος)” (4:16), resonates with Jesus becoming a “merciful” (ἐλεήμων) and faithful high priest in things regarding God in order to expiate the sins of the people (2:17; cf. 1:3). The audience, then, are to approach the throne of grace in order to receive divine mercy with regard to their weaknesses and sins.

That the audience are to approach the throne of “grace” (χάριτος), in order to find “grace” (χάριτι) for timely help (4:16) encourages them to experience, within their communal worship, the “grace” (χάριτι) of God that allowed Jesus to taste death on behalf of all people (2:9). This is the salvific death that frees all people from slavery to the fear of a death that deprives one of eternal life with God (2:14–15). That they may find grace for timely “help” (βοήθειαν) follows upon the assertion that Jesus, as the merciful and faithful high priest, tested in all things in likeness to us, yet without sin (4:15), is able to “help” (βοηθῆσαι) the audience as among those who are being tested with regard to their weaknesses and sinfulness (2:18).<sup>6</sup>

Having been presented with the question of God’s concern for humanity in the quotation of Ps 8:5, “What is man (ἄνθρωπος) that you remember him, or a son of man (ἀνθρώπου) that you care for him?” (2:6), the audience now hear of God’s establishment of the high priesthood from and for the sake of human beings. Every high priest is taken by God (divine passive) from “men” (ἀνθρώπων), and on behalf of “men” (ἀνθρώπων) is appointed by God (divine passive) in things regarding God (5:1). Every high priest is a human being appointed by God on behalf of human beings “in things regarding God” (τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν), so that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices on behalf of “sins (ἁμαρτιών)” (5:1). This further explains the obligation for Jesus to become in all things like his fellow human beings, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest “in things regarding God” (τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν) in order to expiate the “sins” (ἁμαρτίας) of the people (2:17).

Every high priest is “able” (δυνάμενος) to “deal patiently” (μετριοπαθεῖν) with those who are ignorant and wandering, since he himself is surrounded by “weakness (ἀσθένεια)” (5:2). This reinforces the exhortation for the

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God, either generally (11:6), in the OT ritual (10:1; 12:18), or through Christ, as here.”

<sup>6</sup> Victor Rhee, “The Christological Aspects of Faith in Hebrews 3:1–4:16,” *Filología Neotestamentaria* 13 (2000): 75–88.

audience to approach with boldness the throne of grace, in order to receive mercy and find grace for timely help (4:16) from Jesus as the great high priest “able” (δυνάμενον) to “sympathize” (συμπαθεῖν) with our “weaknesses” (ἀσθενείας) (4:15). And that Jesus, like every high priest, is able to deal patiently with those who are “ignorant” (ἀγνοοῦσιν) and “wandering” (πλανωμένοις) (5:2) reassures the audience of his timely help for them (4:16) in their vulnerability to become like their ancestors who were always “wandering” (πλανῶνται) in their heart and did “not know” (οὐκ ἔγνωσαν) the ways of God (3:10).

Every high priest is “obligated” (ὀφείλει), just as concerning the “people” (λαοῦ), so also concerning himself, to offer concerning “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν) (5:3; cf. 5:1). This further explains for the audience why, although Jesus is without “sin (ἁμαρτίας)” (4:15), he was “obligated” (ὀφείλεν) in all things with his brothers to be likened, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things regarding God in order to expiate the “sins” (ἁμαρτίας) of the “people (λαοῦ)” (2:17). And it reinforces the exhortation for no member of the audience to become hardened by the deceit of “sin (ἁμαρτίας)” (3:13). In dealing with their weaknesses and sinfulness, the audience, as among the “people” (λαῶ) of God for whom a heavenly sabbath rest remains (4:9), have been assured that they may approach with boldness the heavenly throne of grace. They may receive mercy and find grace for timely help (4:16) from Jesus, the great high priest and divine Son of God (4:14). Indeed, having made purification for “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν), he sat at the right of God on that heavenly throne (1:3).

## *2. Heb 5:4 (B): Not by Himself Does Anyone Take the Honor But Is Called by God*

The audience receive further description of what is involved in becoming a high priest: “And not by himself does anyone take the honor but is called by God even as also Aaron” (5:4). That no human being takes on his own initiative the “honor” (τιμήν) of becoming a high priest but is called to it by God reminds the audience of the honor Jesus received from God. As the divine royal Son crowned by God with glory and “honor” (τιμή) in his heavenly enthronement (2:7, 9), Jesus has greater “honor” (τιμήν) than the “house,” God’s people as a worshiping assembly, because he is the one who furnishes it for worship (3:3). And as the audience are to recall, Aaron, the

brother of Moses, was called by God for the honor of serving as a priest (Exod 28:1).

*3. Heb 5:5 (B'): Christ Did Not Glorify Himself in Becoming High Priest*

The audience then hear how Jesus was called by the scriptural voice of God for the honor of becoming high priest: “So also the Christ did not glorify himself in becoming high priest, but the one who spoke to him, ‘Son of mine are you, I today have begotten you’ (Ps 2:7)” (5:5). At this point the audience are presented with a pivot of parallels at the center of this chiastic unit (4:14–5:10). They hear a progression from “not by himself (οὐχ ἑαυτῷ) does anyone take the honor but (ἀλλά) is called by God in the B (5:4) element to “the Christ did not (οὐχ) glorify himself (ἑαυτόν) in becoming high priest, but (ἀλλ’) the one who spoke to him” in the B’ (5:5) element.

That the Christ did not “glorify” (ἐδόξασεν) himself in becoming high priest but was glorified by God reminds the audience that Jesus has been considered by God to be worthy of greater “glory” (δόξης) beyond Moses (3:3). With “glory” (δόξη) and honor God crowned him (2:7, 9), as the heavenly enthroned divine Son, who is the radiance of God’s heavenly “glory (δόξης)” (1:3). It is through this glorified Son that God intends to lead his many sons to this same heavenly “glory (δόξαν)” (2:10), the many “sons” who include the audience.

The audience were made aware of how God’s Son is distinguished beyond the angels by the God who “spoke” (ἐλάλησεν) to us in a Son (1:2) through his scriptural voice that with divine authority pronounced to the Son (Ps 2:7), “Son of mine are you, I today have begotten you” (1:5). And now the audience realize that the authoritative call which God “spoke” (λαλήσας) in glorifying Christ to become a high priest is the same as the call to his divine Sonship through that same scriptural voice, “Son of mine are you, I today have begotten you” (5:5).

*4. Heb 5:6-10 (A'): He Offered to the One Able to Save and Learned from Suffering*

The audience hear the A' element (5:6-10) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) Just as also in another place he says, “You are a priest *forever according to the order of Melchizedek*” (Ps 109:4), who in the days of his flesh offered both prayers and supplications with strong outcrying and tears to the one who is able to *save* him from death, and he was heard from his reverence (5:6-7),
- b) although being a Son, he learned from the things he suffered *obedience* (5:8),
- b') and having been made perfect, he became for all those who *obey* him (5:9a)
- a') a source of *eternal salvation*, having been designated by God high priest *according to the order of Melchizedek* (5:9b-10).

When the audience hear “all those who obey (ὕπακούουσιν) him” in the “b” sub-element (5:9a), they experience a pivot in parallels from “he learned from the things he suffered obedience (ὕπακοήν)” in the “b” sub-element (5:8), the only other occurrence in this sub-unit of a term expressing “obedience.” They are then presented with several progressions from the “a” (5:6-7) to the “a’” (5:9b-10) sub-elements. “A priest forever (αἰῶνα)” (5:6) progresses to “eternal (αἰωνίου) salvation” (5:9b). “The one who is able to save (σῶζειν) him from death” (5:7) progresses to “a source of eternal salvation (σωτηρίας)” (5:9b). “A priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ)” (5:6) progresses to “high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ)” (5:10).

At this point the audience are also presented with the final progression of parallels from the A (4:14-5:3) to the A' (5:6-10) elements in this chiasmic unit (4:14-5:10). “Just as (καθώς) concerning the people” (5:3) progresses to “just as (καθώς) also in another place” (5:6). “So that he may offer (προσφέρειν) both gifts and sacrifices on behalf of sins” (5:1) as well as “to offer (προσφέρειν) concerning sins” (5:3) progress to “who in the days of his flesh offered (προσενέγκας) both prayers and supplications” (5:7). “Able (δυνάμενον) to sympathize (συμπαθεῖν) with our weaknesses” (4:15) and “being able (δυνάμενος) to deal patiently (μετριοπαθεῖν) with those who are ignorant and wandering” (5:2) progress to “able (δυνάμενον) to save him from death” (5:7) and “he learned from the things he suffered (ἔπαθεν) obedience” (5:8).

The authoritative call which God spoke in glorifying Christ to become a high priest is the same as the call to his divine Sonship through the scriptural voice of God (Ps 2:7), “Son of mine are you (σύ), I today have begotten you” (5:5). This is confirmed and reinforced as the audience are informed that “just as in another place” in scripture (Ps 109:4) the voice of God

says, “You (σύ) are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (5:6).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, just as the heavenly throne of Jesus as the exalted divine Son is “forever (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) and ever” (1:8), so the Son is a priest “forever (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) according to the order of Melchizedek.”<sup>8</sup>

As the audience were reminded, every high priest is taken from men and appointed on behalf of men in things regarding God, “so that he may offer (προσφέρειν) both gifts and sacrifices on behalf of sins” (5:1) and “to offer (προσφέρειν) concerning sins” (5:3). And now they are informed that Jesus, as high priest, “offered (προσενέγκας) both prayers and supplications” (5:7). And that he did so “in the days of his flesh (σαρκός)” (5:7) reminds the audience that Jesus, as high priest, was a human being who shared in their “blood and flesh (σαρκός)” (2:14). The audience are to appreciate that he offered prayers and supplications not just for himself but for them as his fellow human beings.<sup>9</sup>

As a high priest, Jesus is “able” (δυνάμενος) to deal patiently with those who are ignorant and wandering, since he himself is surrounded by weakness (5:2), “able (δυνάμενον) to sympathize with our weaknesses (4:15), and is “able” (δύναται) to help those who are being tested (2:18). He thus offered both prayers and supplications with strong outcrying and tears to the God “able” (δυνάμενον) to save him from death (5:7). That Jesus prayed so ardently to be saved from “death” (θανάτου) resonates with his sharing in the human condition of the audience, so that through “death” (θανάτου) he might destroy the one who has the strength of “death” (θανάτου), the devil, and free those, as many as by fear of “death” (θανάτου) through all their life were held in slavery (2:14–15). The audience are to appreciate that Jesus became their fellow human being, so that through his suffering of

<sup>7</sup> The occurrence of the nominative of the second person singular pronoun “you” (σύ) that the proclamations of Ps 2:7 and Ps 109:4 share allow them to be combined for mutual interpretation in accord with the exegetical practice of *gezera shava*. The LXX version of Ps 109:4 includes the verb “you are (εἶ)”; see Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 960; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 109–10.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas Farrow, “Melchizedek and Modernity,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard J. Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 281–301.

<sup>9</sup> Claire Clivaz, “Hebrews 5.7, Jesus’ Prayer on the Mount of Olives and Jewish Christianity: Hearing Early Christian Voices in Canonical and Apocryphal Texts,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham, et al.; LNTS 387; London: Clark, 2008), 188–209; Bruce L. McCormick, “‘With Loud Cries and Tears’: The Humanity of the Son in the Epistle to the Hebrews,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard J. Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 37–68.

“death” (θανάτου), by the grace of God, he might taste “death” (θανάτου) on behalf of all (2:9).

That Jesus “was heard from his reverence” (5:7) means that his prayer was answered in the sense not of his escaping the physical death all human beings undergo, but of being saved from eternal death by the God who raised him from the dead and exalted him to a seat at his right on the heavenly throne.<sup>10</sup> That the prayers and supplications Jesus offered as high priest on behalf of human beings to the God able to “save” (σώζειν) him from death were answered deepens the audience’s appreciation for the significance of Jesus suffering death on behalf of all. Through the sufferings that culminated in his death and perfected him, Jesus became the initiator of “salvation” (σωτηρίας) from eternal death (2:10), the great “salvation” (σωτηρίας) from eternal death the audience are not to neglect (2:3), the “salvation” (σωτηρίαν) from eternal death they are going to inherit (1:14).<sup>11</sup>

Although being a “Son” (υἱός), indeed the “Son” (υἰόν) of God (4:14), to whom the scriptural voice of God (Ps 2:7) declared, “Son (υἱός) of mine are you” (5:5; cf. 1:2, 5, 8; 3:6), Jesus learned from the things he suffered obedience (5:8). The close connection between what Jesus “learned” (ἐμαθεν) from the things he “suffered” (ἐπαθεν) is underscored by the similar sound of the two verbal forms employed. The audience have heard previously that in what Jesus himself “suffered” (πέπονθεν) in being tested, those who are being tested he is able to help (2:18). That Jesus, as a Son of God, learned from the things he suffered obedience to God thus implies that he is able to help the audience learn obedience to God from the things they suffer. And for the audience to learn “obedience” (ὕπακοήν) to God from the things they suffer would help them to avoid falling in the same pattern of “disobedience” (ἀπειθείας) of their ancestors (4:11) who, as those “disobedient” (ἀπειθήσασιν) to God (3:18), did not enter into God’s own rest because of their “disobedience (ἀπειθειαν)” (4:6).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 288: “God did not deliver Jesus from crucifixion, but he did deliver him from death by raising him to life again.”

<sup>11</sup> P. Trummer, “‘Erhört aus Gottesfurcht’ Hebr 5,7: Vom Sinn des Leidens Jesu,” *BK* 48 (1993): 188–96.

<sup>12</sup> James Swetnam, “The Crux at Hebrews 5,7–8,” *Bib* 81 (2000): 347–61; idem, “The Context of the Crux at Hebrews 5,7–8,” *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 14 (2001): 101–20; Christopher Richardson, “The Passion: Reconsidering Hebrews 5,7–8,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham, et al.; LNTS 387; London: Clark, 2008), 51–67.

Jesus was made “perfect” (τελειωθείς) as a “Son” (υἱός) who learned from the things he “suffered” (ἔπαθεν) obedience (5:8), so that he became for all those who obey him a source of eternal “salvation (σωτηρίας)” (5:9). This recalls and reinforces for the audience how it was fitting for God in leading many “sons” (υἱούς) to heavenly glory to make the initiator of their “salvation” (σωτηρίας), through “sufferings” (παθημάτων), “perfect (τελειῶσαι)” (2:10). The audience are not to neglect so great a salvation (2:3) they are going to inherit (1:14), because it is an “eternal” (αἰωνίου) salvation that saves them from their life long fear of an eternal death (2:14–15) that would prevent their entering into the eternal life in the heavenly rest of the living God. To gain this eternal salvation the audience are thus to “obey” (ὑπακούουσιν) the Son who learned from the things he suffered “obedience” (ὑπακοήν) to God. That Jesus was designated by God high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (5:10) reinforces God’s scriptural declaration (Ps 109:4) to his Son, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (5:6).

### C. Summary on Hebrews 4:14–5:10

The declaration at the conclusion of the AB' unit (4:12–13) that regarding God “there is upon us *the word*” implies that we are responsible to respond to the living word of God (4:12) with our own word(s). The term “word” thus serves as the transitional catch word connecting this unit with the following AA' unit (4:14–5:10), which begins with an exhortation for us to hold fast to the “confession” (4:14), that is, our public and communal saying together of the same “words” in response to the “word” of God. These transitional catch words keep the focus of the audience on their communal response as a worshiping assembly who listen to the living word of God.

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, in this AA' unit (4:14–5:10) the audience hear that Christ, the “Son” of “God” (4:14), although without “sin” (4:15), yet appointed as a high priest to offer on behalf of “sins” (5:1) and concerning “sins” (5:3), was called to become a high priest by the “God” (5:4) who “spoke” to him, “Son of mine are you, I today have begotten you (Ps 2:7)” (5:5). As a “Son” who learned obedience from what he suffered (5:8), Christ became for all of those who obey him a source of eternal salvation (5:9), having been designated by “God” high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (5:10). This final unit of the first

macrochiastic section of Hebrews (1:1-5:10) thus presents the audience with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from the first unit. In the first AA unit (1:1-4) they heard that “God,” having “spoken” to the fathers in the prophets (1:1), has now “spoken” to us in a “Son” (1:2), who, having made purification for “sins,” sat at the right of the divine Majesty in the heavenly heights (1:3).

With regard to the third macrochiastic level, in this Aa'a' unit (4:14-5:10) the audience hear that in Jesus we do not have a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been “tested” in all things (4:15). In the Aa'a unit (3:7-11) they hear that in the rebellion during the day of the “testing” in the wilderness (3:8), their fathers “tested” God by trial though they saw God’s works (3:9). The positive, beneficial “testing” of Jesus thus presents the audience with a stark contrast, via the chiastic parallels, with the negative, destructive “testing” of the ancestors in the wilderness.

At the center of this AA' unit the audience are presented with a pivot of chiastic parallels from the notice that “not” by “himself” does anyone take the honor of being high priest “but” is called by God (5:4) to the declaration that Christ did “not” glorify “himself” in becoming high priest, “but” was called by the God who spoke to him (5:5). In the first part of this unit the audience were told that in Jesus we do not have a high priest who is not “able” to “sympathize” or “suffer with” our weaknesses (4:15), but as a high priest who is to “offer” concerning sins (5:1, 3), is “able” to “deal patiently” or “suffer” with those who are ignorant and wandering (5:2). They are then presented with a climactic progression, via the chiastic parallels, in the last part of this unit. They hear that Christ in the days of his flesh “offered” both prayers and supplications with strong outcrying and tears to the one who is “able” to save him from death, and he was heard from his reverence (5:7). The climactic conclusion of the unit invites the audience to obey him as a Son who learned obedience from what he “suffered” (5:8) and thus became a source of eternal salvation, having been designated by God himself as high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (5:9-10).



## Hebrews 5:11–6:12

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- A<sup>11</sup> Concerning which much for us is the word, and it is difficult to explain in speaking it, since you have *become sluggish* in hearing.<sup>12</sup> For though you ought to be teachers by this time, you again *have* need for someone to teach you the elements of the beginning of the sayings of God, and you have *become* those *having* a need of milk and not solid food.<sup>13</sup> For everyone who partakes of milk is inexperienced of the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.<sup>14</sup> But solid food is of the *perfected*, of those who because of their maturity *have* faculties trained for distinguishing of the beneficent and of the baneful.<sup>1</sup> <sup>6:1a</sup> Therefore, departing from the word at the beginning about the Christ, let us *bear* forward toward the *perfection*,
- B<sup>1b</sup> not again laying down a foundation of *repentance* from dead works and of faith in God,<sup>2</sup> of teaching about baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.<sup>3</sup> And this we will do, if God permits.
- C<sup>4a</sup> For it is impossible for those once enlightened, having *tasted* of the heavenly gift,
- D<sup>4b</sup> and having become partners of the Holy Spirit,
- C<sup>5</sup> and having *tasted* the beneficent pronouncement of God and the powers of the age to come,
- B<sup>6</sup> and having fallen away, again to renew to *repentance*, recrucifying for themselves the Son of God and holding him up to contempt.<sup>2</sup>
- A<sup>7</sup> For earth that drinks the rain coming upon it repeatedly and produces useful vegetation for those on account of whom it is cultivated, shares a blessing

<sup>1</sup> On the translation “because of their maturity” for διὰ τὴν ἑξίν, see J. A. L. Lee, “Hebrews 5:14 and ἑξίν: A History of Misunderstanding,” *NovT* 39 (1997): 151–76. The translation “of the beneficent and of the baneful” is an attempt to convey a sense of the alliterative artistry in καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ, as well as to use terms more specific than the general terms “good and evil.”

<sup>2</sup> On “recrucifying” as the appropriate translation for ἀνασταυροῦντας because of the context, see BDAG, 72.

from God.<sup>8</sup> But *bearing* forth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and near a curse, whose *end* is a burning.<sup>9</sup> But we are confident concerning you, beloved, of better things, indeed those *having* to do with salvation, even if we speak thus.<sup>10</sup> For God is not unjust so as to neglect your work and the love which you demonstrated for his name, having assisted the holy ones, and continuing to assist.<sup>11</sup> But we desire each of you to demonstrate the same eagerness for the assurance of the hope until the *end*,<sup>12</sup> so that you may not *become sluggish*, but imitators of those who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 5:11-6:12

The occurrence of what the scriptural voice of God “says” (λέγει) in the quotation of Ps 109:4 toward the conclusion (5:6) of the AA' unit (4:14-5:10) provides the transitional catch word for the connection to the following BA unit (5:11-6:12). This unit begins with a reference to the “word” (λόγος) that is difficult to explain in “speaking” (λέγειν) it (5:11). The connection thus creates a transition from what God “speaks” to what the author is “speaking” about and by means of a “word.”

There are a number of parallels establishing the chiastic relationship between the A (5:11-6:11a) and A' (6:7-12) elements of this unit. These elements contain the only occurrences in Hebrews of the term “sluggish”—“you have become sluggish (νωθροί) in hearing” in 5:11 and “so that you may not become sluggish (νωθροί)” in 6:12. In addition, they contain the only occurrences in this unit of the verbs “become” and “have.” “You have become (γεγόνατε) sluggish” occurs in 5:11. “You again have (ἔχετε) need . . . and you have become (γεγόνατε) those having (ἔχοντες) a need” occurs in 5:12. “Those who by practice have (ἔχοντων) faculties” occurs in 5:14. “Those having (ἔχόμενα) to do with salvation” occurs in 6:9. And “that you may not become (γένησθε) sluggish” occurs in 6:12. And they contain the only occurrences in this unit of terms for “bearing” and “perfection” or “end”—“solid food is of the perfected (τελείων)” in 5:14, “let us bear (φερώμεθα) forward toward the perfection (τελειότητα)” in 6:11a, “bearing forth (ἐκφέρουσα) thorns and thistles . . . whose end (τέλος) is a burning” in 6:8, and “for the assurance of the hope until the end (τέλους)” in 6:11.

The only occurrences in this unit of the word “repentance” determine the parallels for the B (6:1b-3) and B' (6:6) elements—“not again laying

down a foundation of repentance (μετανοίας)” in 6:1b and “to renew to repentance (μετάνοιαν)” in 6:6. And the only occurrences in this unit of the verb for “taste” secure the parallels for the C (6:4a) and C' (6:5) elements—“having tasted (γευσασμένους) of the heavenly gift” in 6:4a and “having tasted (γευσασμένους) the beneficent pronouncement” in 6:5. Finally, at the center of this unit is an unparalleled D (6:4b) element—“and having become partners of the Holy Spirit.”

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 5:11-6:12

### 1. *Heb 5:11-6:1a (A): You Have Become Sluggish in Hearing*

The audience hear the A element (5:11-6:1a) of this unit as a chiasmic pattern in itself:

- a) Concerning which much for us is the word, and it is difficult to explain in speaking it, since you have become sluggish in hearing. For though you ought to be teachers by this time, you again *have* need for someone to teach you the elements of *the beginning* of the sayings of God, and you have become those *having* a need (5:11-12a)
- b) of *milk* and not *solid food* (5:12b)
- b') For everyone who partakes of *milk* is inexperienced of the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But *solid food* is of the perfected (5:13-14a),
- a') of those who because of their maturity *have* faculties trained for distinguishing of the beneficent and of the baneful. Therefore, departing from the word at *the beginning* about the Christ, let us bear forward toward the perfection (5:14b-6:1a).

When the audience hear the words “milk (γάλακτος)” (5:13) and “solid food (στερεὰ τροφή)” (5:14a) in the “b” sub-element, they experience a pivot of parallels involving the only other occurrence in this sub-unit (5:11-6:1a) of these terms in the phrase “of milk (γάλακτος) and not solid food (στερεᾶς τροφῆς)” (5:12b) in the “b” sub-element. “You again have (ἔχετε) need for someone to teach you the elements of the beginning (τῆς ἀρχῆς) of the sayings of God, and you have become those having (ἔχοντες) a need” (5:12a) in the “a” sub-element progresses to “those who by practice have (ἐχόντων) faculties” (5:14b) and “departing from the word at the beginning

(τῆς ἀρχῆς) about the Christ” (6:1a) in the “a” sub-element. These are the only occurrences of the terms “have” and “the beginning” in this sub-unit.

“Concerning which much for us is the word (περὶ οὗ πολὺς ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος)” (5:11a) recalls and resonates with “regarding whom there is upon us the word (πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος)” (4:13b), in which “the word” refers both to the living word of God (4:12) and the word of our necessary response to it. Most recently the audience heard the word of God spoken in the quotation of Ps 109:4 in which God, in reference to Jesus Christ as his divine Son (5:5), “says” (λέγει), “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (5:6). The “word” concerning which there is much for us refers not only to this scriptural word of God and the necessary word of our response to it, but to the word of the author’s explanation of it. This is confirmed as the author tells the audience, “and it is difficult to explain in speaking (λέγειν) it, since you have become sluggish in hearing” (5:11b).

That the audience have become sluggish in their “hearing” (ἀκοαῖς) of the word (5:11) alerts them to the danger of becoming like their unfaithful and disobedient ancestors whom the word for “hearing” (ἀκοῆς) did not benefit, since they were not united in faith with those who “heard” (ἀκούσασιν)” (4:2). It reinforces the refrain of the warning from Ps 94:7-8, “Today if you hear (ἀκούσητε) his voice, do not harden your hearts” (3:7, 15; 4:7). The audience are not to become like those who “heard” (ἀκούσαντες) but rebelled (3:16). Rather, they are to become like those who “heard” (ἀκουσάντων) and confirmed for us the word of so great a salvation (2:3). They are to attend to the things that have been “heard” (ἀκουσθεῖσιν), lest they drift away (2:1).

As those who have “become” (γεγόνατε) sluggish in hearing (5:11), the audience have “become” (γεγόνατε) as those having a need of “milk” and not “solid food” (5:12).<sup>3</sup> Although the audience have need for someone to teach them the elements of the beginning of the sayings of God, and have become those having a need of “milk” and not “solid food,” they are prodded to want to become the teachers they ought to be by this time (5:12). No one in the audience should want to be considered an “infant,” one who partakes of “milk” and is thus inexperienced of the “solid food” of the word of righteousness (5:13). The “word” (λόγος) of God that demands the word of our response and that is difficult for the author to explain (5:11) is now described as the “word” (λόγου) of “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνης),

<sup>3</sup> A. Hilhorst, “Sind die Hebräer träge geworden? Zu den Aussagen über die Adressaten in Hebr 5 und 6,” *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 12 (1999): 161–66.

the word concerned with God's doing of what is right for us as our God and Father and our response of doing God's will as his people and sons. Reminded that the divine Son loved "righteousness" (δικαιοσύνην) and hated lawlessness (1:9), the audience are attuned to hear more about what is involved in this "word of righteousness."

That "solid food" is of the "perfected (τελείων)" (5:14a) connotes that the "solid food" of the word of righteousness is a matter of those who are "perfected" in the sense of having become adults rather than infants (5:13). But it also reminds the audience that "solid food" is a matter of those who are "perfected" in the sense of having been made fit or worthy for their role in worship. Having learned obedience from what he suffered, Jesus was made "perfect" (τελειωθείς), that is, fit for his role in worship as high priest, so that he became a source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (5:9). As among those who obey him, the audience are among those who are being made holy for worship by the Jesus who makes holy (2:11), since God made him "perfect" (τελειῶσαι) through sufferings (2:10). The audience are being persuaded to become "perfected"—mature adults fit for proper worship.

Instead of those who "have" (ἔχετε) need for someone to teach them the elements of the beginning of the sayings of God, and those "having" (ἔχοντες) a need of milk rather than solid food (5:12), the audience should be those who because of their maturity "have" (ἔχόντων) faculties trained for distinguishing of the beneficent and of the baneful (5:14b). To be able to distinguish what is beneficial and what is harmful will aid both the liturgical and ethical dimensions of their worship.

Since the audience again have need for someone to teach them the elements of "the beginning" of the sayings of God (5:12a), the author will commence his instruction departing from the word at "the beginning" about the Christ (6:1a). Departing from the "word" (λόγον) at the beginning about the Christ is aimed at making the audience experienced for the "solid food" of the "word" (λόγου) of righteousness (5:13). They are thus invited to bear forward with the help of the author toward the "perfection (τελειότητα)" (6:1a), toward becoming "perfected" (τελείων) as mature adults made fit for proper worship (5:14).

## *2. Heb 6:1b-3 (B): A Foundation of Repentance*

The audience are further informed about the nature of the instruction the author is offering them: "not again laying down a foundation of repen-

tance from dead works and of faith in God, of teaching about baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permits” (6:1b-3). Although the audience again have need for someone to teach them the elements of the beginning of the sayings of God (5:12), the author is not going to give a detailed explanation of them. He presupposes their familiarity with the foundational teaching by reminding them of what they have already experienced in becoming believers. They have repented from “dead works,” the sinful works that lead to eternal death, and placed their faith in God (6:1b). They know the difference between the ritual baptism they underwent in becoming Christians and other baptisms, the significance of the ritual laying on of hands, the fundamental teaching about the final resurrection of the dead and the “eternal” (αἰωνίου) judgment (6:2) involved in “eternal” (αἰωνίου) salvation (5:9). Finally, the audience are made aware that bearing forward toward the perfection (6:1a) is a matter of the gracious permission of the God in whom they believe (6:3).

### 3. *Heb 6:4a (C): Having Tasted of the Heavenly Gift*

The author continues his instruction: “For it is impossible for those once enlightened, having tasted of the heavenly gift” (6:4a). The audience begin to be alerted to what is impossible for them as among those once “enlightened” (φωτισθέντας) by God (divine passive) in becoming believers at their baptism. Their having been enlightened includes having “tasted” (γευσαμένους) of the heavenly gift given them as a result of the grace of God by which Jesus might “taste” (γεύσεται) death on behalf of all (2:9), the death through which he destroyed the power of death and freed those enslaved by the life long fear of a death depriving them of eternal life (2:14-15). This “tasting” alludes to but is not limited to their communal eating of the eucharistic meal.<sup>4</sup> As partners of a “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίου) calling (3:1) to participate in the heavenly worship, the audience have already begun to experience and share in this “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίου) gift of God’s grace.

<sup>4</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 320: “Γεύομαι is used in connection with the Lord’s Supper in Acts 20:11 . . . The language of the present passage is not specific enough either to limit the reference to the eucharist, or to exclude such a reference entirely.”

4. *Heb 6:4b (D): And Having Become Partners of the Holy Spirit*

As among those once enlightened and having tasted of the heavenly gift (6:4a), the audience continue to be addressed: “and having become partners of the Holy Spirit” (6:4b). That the audience have become partners of the “Holy Spirit” (πνεύματος ἁγίου) reminds them of the distributions of the “Holy Spirit” (πνεύματος ἁγίου) they shared in (2:4) when they were enlightened after their initial hearing of the word of so great a salvation (2:2-3). They have become partners of the Holy Spirit as those who have together shared in hearing the “Holy Spirit” (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον) speak to them the exhortation of Ps 94:7-8, “Today when you hear his voice, ‘do not harden your hearts’” (3:7-8a).

As “partners” (μέτοχοι) of the Christ (3:14), as those who together comprise the “house” of Christ (3:6), the worshiping assembly of “partners” (μέτοχοι) called to partake of and share in the heavenly liturgy (3:1), the audience have also become “partners” (μετόχους) of the Holy Spirit (6:4b). Following upon the reference to “partaking” (μετέχων) in the sense of sharing in the drinking of milk (5:13), and to having “tasted” of the heavenly gift as an allusion to sharing in the eucharistic meal (6:4a), having become “partners” in the sense of “partakers” reinforces the allusion to sharing in the eucharistic meal as a heavenly gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

5. *Heb 6:5 (C'): Having Tasted the Pronouncement of God*

In addition to having become partners of the Holy Spirit (6:4b) the audience are among those “having tasted the beneficent pronouncement of God and the powers of the age to come” (6:5). At this point, after the central and unparalleled D element (6:4b) of this chiastic unit, the audience are presented with a pivot of parallels. They experience a progression from “having tasted (γευσσάμενους) of the heavenly gift” in the C element (6:4a) to “having tasted (γευσσάμενους) the beneficent pronouncement of God” in the C' element (6:5).

That the audience have “tasted” or experienced the pronouncement of God (6:5a), with its allusion to their hearing the word of God that is proclaimed in the worshiping assembly, complements their having “tasted” of

<sup>5</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 321: “The meaning of μέτοχος varies between companionship and participation; here the latter predominates.” See also Allen, *Deuteronomy*, 128 n. 96.

the heavenly gift (6:4a), with its allusion to their partaking of the eucharistic meal in the worshipping assembly. That they have tasted the “beneficent” (καλόν) pronouncement of God implies their status as adults who because of their maturity have faculties trained for distinguishing of the “beneficent” (καλοῦ) and of the baneful (5:14).

Their having tasted the “powers” (δυνάμεις) of the age to come (6:5b) reminds the audience of the various “acts of power” (δυνάμεσιν) they experienced together with those who heard the word of so great a salvation (2:4). As among those who are “going” (μέλλοντας) to inherit salvation (1:14), the audience have already tasted the powers of the age “to come” (μέλλοντος), that is, of the heavenly world, the “coming” (μέλλουσαν) one (2:5) that has been subjected under the feet of Jesus as the heavenly enthroned divine Son (2:8-9). They have already tasted and thus experienced the beneficent “pronouncement” (ῥῆμα) of God (6:5a), that is, the word of so great a salvation (2:2-3), initiated by Jesus (2:10), the Son of God who is bearing up all things by the “pronouncement” (ῥήματι) of the “power” (δυνάμεως) of God (1:3).

#### *6. Heb 6:6 (B'): Again To Renew to Repentance*

The audience are warned of what more precisely will be impossible for them as among those who have been enlightened by God (6:4-5): “and having fallen away, again to renew to repentance, recrucifying for themselves the Son of God and holding him up to contempt” (6:6). At this point the audience experience a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from “not again laying down a foundation of repentance (μετανοίας)” (6:1b) in the B element (6:1b-3) to “again to renew to repentance (μετάνοιαν)” in this B' element.

The audience have been exhorted to attend to the things that have been heard “lest we drift away (παραρῶμεν)” (2:1). They have been warned lest there be in anyone of them an evil heart of unfaithfulness in “falling away” (ἀποστήναι) from the living God (3:12). They have been exhorted to strive to enter into God’s own rest so that not anyone of them may “fall” (πέσῃ) in the same pattern of disobedience (4:11) as their rebellious and sinful ancestors who were not able to enter into God’s rest because of their disobedience and unfaithfulness (3:16-19; 4:6). And now they are warned that in the event of their having “fallen away” (παραπεσόντας), it will be impos-



sible for them, whose faith has already been founded on their repentance (6:1b), to again renew to repentance (6:6). The God who swore in his anger that the rebellious and fallen away ancestors will never enter into his rest (3:7, 18; 4:3, 5) will surely not restore the audience to repentance, if they should fall away as apostates.

It is impossible for those who would fall away to renew again to repentance, since, by falling away from the foundation of their repentance (6:1b), namely the high-priestly sacrificial death of Jesus (2:14–18), they would in effect be recrucifying for themselves the Son of God and holding him up to contempt (6:6).<sup>6</sup> That it is as impossible again to renew to repentance as it is unthinkable disgracefully to recrucify for themselves the Son of God is underscored by the alliterative link between “renew” (ἀνακαινίζειν) and “recrucifying” (ἀνασταυροῦντας). The warning against falling away from the faith they confess as a worshiping community and thus recrucifying for themselves and holding up to contempt “the Son of God” (τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ) reinforces the exhortation that we are to hold fast to the confession, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus “the Son of God (τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ)” (4:14).

“Holding him up to contempt” completes a chiasmic sub-unit in 6:6 based on alliterative parallels in the verbal forms:

- a) and having fallen away (παραπεσόντας),
  - b) again to renew (ἀνακαινίζειν) to repentance,
  - b') recrucifying (ἀνασταυροῦντας) for themselves the Son of God
- a') and holding him up to contempt (παραδειγματίζοντας).

The chiastic pattern underlines how falling away in unfaithfulness and disobedience from the confession of the worshiping assembly amounts in the end to the audience holding up the Son of God to contempt, recrucifying him for themselves so that it is impossible again to renew to repentance.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 169: “Christ’s sacrificial death is the only way to a true and effective cleansing of conscience and remission of sin. It is the bedrock on which the ‘foundation’ (6:1) of repentance is built. Those who reject this necessary presupposition of repentance simply, and virtually by definition, cannot repent.”

<sup>7</sup> J. C. McCullough, “The Impossibility of a Second Repentance in Hebrews,” *Biblical Theology* 20 (1974): 1–7; Leopold Sabourin, “Crucifying Afresh for One’s Repentance (Heb 6:4–6),” *BTB* 6 (1976): 264–71; Verlyn D. Verbrugge, “Towards a New Interpretation of Hebrews 6:4–6,” *Calvin Theological Journal* 15 (1980): 61–73; R. B. Compton, “Persevering and Falling Away: A Reexamination of Hebrews 6:4–6,” *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 1 (1996): 135–67; D. B. Armistead, “The ‘Believer’ Who Falls Away: Heb

## 7. Heb 6:7-12 (A'): That You May Not Become Sluggish

The audience hear the A' element (6:7-12) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) For earth that drinks the rain coming upon it repeatedly and produces useful vegetation for those on account of whom it is cultivated, shares a *blessing* from God. But bearing forth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and near a curse, whose *end* is a burning (6:7-8).
- b) But we are confident concerning *you*, beloved, of better things, indeed those having to do with salvation, even if we speak thus. For God is not unjust so as to neglect *your* work and the love which you *demonstrated* for his name (6:9-10a),
- c) having *assisted* the holy ones (6:10b),
- c') and continuing to *assist* (6:10c).
- b') But we desire each of *you* to *demonstrate* the same eagerness (6:11a)
- a') for the assurance of the hope until the *end*, so that you may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience are inheriting the *promises* (6:11b-12).

When the audience hear the verb “continuing to assist (διακονοῦντες)” (6:10c) in the “c” sub-element, they experience a pivot of parallels involving the only other occurrence in Hebrews of this verb in the clause “having assisted (διακονήσαντες) the holy ones” (6:10b) in the “c” sub-element. They are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from “concerning you (ὑμῶν)” (6:9) and “your (ὑμῶν) work and the love which you demonstrated (ἐνεδείξασθε)” (6:10a) in the “b” sub-element to “we desire each of you (ὑμῶν) to demonstrate (ἐνδείκνυσθαι)” (6:11a), the only other occurrence in Hebrews of this verb, in the “b” sub-element. And finally, they experience a development, via the chiastic parallels, from “shares a blessing (εὐλογίας) from God” (6:7) and “whose end (τέλος) is a burning” (6:8) in the “a” sub-element to “the hope until the end (τέλους)”

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6:4-6 and the Perseverance of the Saints,” *Stulos Theological Journal* 2 (1996): 139-46; David Mathewson, “Reading Heb 6:4-6 in Light of the Old Testament,” *WTJ* 61 (1999): 209-25; Andreas H. Snyman, “Hebrews 6:4-6: From a Semiotic Discourse Perspective,” in *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament: Approaches & Results* (eds. Jeffrey T. Reed and Stanley E. Porter; JSNTSup 170; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 354-68; Martin Emmrich, “Hebrews 6:4-6—Again! (A Pneumatological Inquiry),” *WTJ* 65 (2003): 83-95; Casey Wayne Davis, “Hebrews 6:4-6 from an Oral Critical Perspective,” *JETS* 51 (2008): 753-67.

(6:11b) and “inheriting the promises (ἐπαγγελίας)” (6:12) in the “a” sub-element.<sup>8</sup>

At this point the audience are also presented with the final progression of parallels from the A (5:11–6:1a) to the A' (6:7–12) elements in this chiasmic unit (5:11–6:12). “Solid food is of the perfected (τελειών)” (5:14) and “let us bear (φερώμεθα) forward toward the perfection (τελειότητα)” (6:1a) progress to “bearing forth (ἐκφέρουσα) thorns and thistles, it is rejected and near a curse, whose end (τέλος) is a burning” (6:8) and to “for the assurance of the hope until the end (τέλους)” (6:11). “You have become sluggish (νωθοὶ γεγόνατε)” (5:11), “you have become (γεγόνατε) those having (ἔχοντες) a need” (5:12), and “those who because of their maturity have (ἔχόντων) faculties” (5:14) progress to “those having (ἔχόμενα) to do with salvation” (6:9) and “so that you may not become sluggish (νωθοὶ γένησθε)” (6:12).

By means of agricultural imagery and in view of the divine gifts they have graciously been granted (6:4–5), the audience are exhorted to compare themselves with earth that drinks the rain that comes upon it repeatedly as a divine gift. It produces useful vegetation for those on account of whom it is cultivated, and thus shares a blessing from God (6:7). With a continuation of the imagery, they are warned not to be like earth bearing forth “thorns and thistles” as a result of their sinfulness (cf. Gen 3:17–18). Such earth is rejected and near a curse, so that its end or destiny is a “burning,” an image of divine judgment (6:8).<sup>9</sup> That the audience are not to become like earth bearing forth (ἐκφέρουσα) thorns and thistles, so that its end or destiny (τέλος) is a burning, reinforces the author’s exhortation, “let us bear (φερώμεθα) forward toward the perfection (τελειότητα),” the end or destiny divinely intended for them (6:1a), the goal of the “solid food” that is “of the perfected (τελείων)” (5:14).<sup>10</sup>

Although the audience have been addressed as “you” who again “have” (ἔχετε) need for someone to teach them the elements of the beginning of the sayings of God, and have become those “having” (ἔχοντες) a need

<sup>8</sup> The words “blessing” and “promises” are considered parallels because of their close conceptual and alliterative links.

<sup>9</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 316. On the OT background of the blessing/cursing imagery here, see Allen, *Deuteronomy*, 127–34.

<sup>10</sup> Randall C. Gleason, “The Old Testament Background of the Warning in Hebrews 6:4–8,” *BSac* 155 (1998): 62–91; David A. DeSilva, “Hebrews 6:4–8: A Socio-Rhetorical Investigation (Part 1),” *TynBul* 50 (1999): 33–57; idem, “Hebrews 6:4–8: A Socio-Rhetorical Investigation (Part 2),” *TynBul* 50 (1999): 225–35.

of “milk” and not “solid food” (5:12), they ought to be those “having” (ἔχόντων) faculties trained for the distinguishing of the beneficent and of the baneful (5:14). Nevertheless, even though the author speaks in a way that warns them of bad things, if they fall away (6:6), namely their eternal destruction (6:8), he is confident concerning them, addressed as “beloved,” of better things, namely those “having” (ἔχόμενα) to do with salvation (6:9). These better things that have to do with “salvation” (σωτηρίας) remind the audience that Jesus became a source of eternal “salvation” (σωτηρίας) for all who obey him (5:9), that God made him the initiator of their “salvation (σωτηρίας)” (2:10), the so great a “salvation” (σωτηρίας) they are to be sure not to neglect (2:3). This is the “salvation” (σωτηρίαν) they are on the way to inheriting (1:14).

The understatement through double negative, that God is “not” (οὐ) “unjust” (ἄδικος), boosts the assurance that God will surely remember the work and love the audience demonstrated for his “name (ὄνομα)” (6:10a), the “name” (ὄνομα) that the scriptural voice of Jesus promised to proclaim to the audience, as his brothers, within their worshiping assembly (2:12). They not only have assisted the “holy ones” (ἁγίοις) among them as “holy” (ἅγιοι) brothers (3:1) of Jesus (cf. 2:11, 12, 17), but are continuing to assist them (6:10bc).

God will surely not neglect “your” (ὁμῶν) work and the love which “you demonstrated” (ἐνεδείξασθε) for his name (6:10a). The author thus desires that each of “you” (ὁμῶν), each individual in the audience, “demonstrate” (ἐνδείκνυσθαι) the same eagerness, and thus persevere for the assurance of the “hope” (ἐλπίδος), the “hope” (ἐλπίδος) the audience as the worshiping household of Christ are to hold (3:6), until the “end (τέλους)” (6:11). This reinforces the exhortation that we hold the beginning of the reality firm until the “end (τέλους)” (3:14). Such perseverance will assure that the “end” (τέλος) for the audience is not the “burning” of divine judgment (6:8), and will facilitate their bearing forward with the author toward “perfection (τελειότητα)” (6:1a).

This is so that “you,” the audience, who have “become sluggish” (νωθοὶ γέγονατε) in hearing (5:11) may now not “become sluggish (νωθοὶ γένησθε)” (6:12). As among those who are going to “inherit” (κληρονομεῖν) salvation (1:14) as brothers of the divine Son who “inherited” (κεκληρονόμηκεν) a name more excellent beyond the angels (1:4), they are rather to become imitators of those who through faith and

patience are “inheriting” (κληρονομούντων) the promises (6:12). These “promises” (ἐπαγγελίας) include the “promise” (ἐπαγγελίας) of entering into God’s own rest (4:1), as well as the promised “blessing (εὐλογίας)” from God (6:7).<sup>11</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 5:11–6:12

Toward the conclusion of the AA' unit (4:14–5:10) the scriptural voice of God, in quoting Ps 109:4, “says” concerning Christ as the Son of God that “you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (5:6). The word that God “says” here provides the transition to the BA unit (5:11–6:12), which begins by focusing the audience on how much is involved in this “word,” and how difficult it is for the author to explain in “speaking” it, since they have become sluggish in hearing (5:11).

After an unparalleled central element, “and having become partners of the Holy Spirit” (6:4b), the audience are presented with a pivot of chiasmic parallels from their having “tasted” of the heavenly gift, as those enlightened by God in becoming believers (6:4a), to their having “tasted” the beneficent pronouncement of God and the powers of the age to come (6:5). They then experience a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the author’s intention not to lay down again a foundation of “repentance” (6:1b) to the impossibility for the audience, if they fall away in unfaithfulness and disobedience, again to renew to “repentance” (6:6).

And finally, they are presented with a development from the exhortation that, with the solid food that is of the “perfected” (5:14), they “bear” forward with the author toward the end or “perfection” (6:1a) of being fit for heavenly worship, to the warning that they not “bear forth” the thorns and thistles of sinfulness, whose “end” is a burning of divine judgment (6:8). They are rather to persevere with assurance of the hope until the “end” (6:11). They again “have” need for someone to teach them the elements of the beginning of the sayings of God, and have “become” those “having” a need of milk and not solid food (5:12). But they should be those “having” faculties trained for the distinguishing of the beneficent and of the bane-

<sup>11</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 318. See also Brent Nongbri, “A Touch of Condemnation in a Word of Exhortation: Apocalyptic Language and Graeco-Roman Rhetoric in Hebrews 6:4–12,” *NovT* 45 (2003): 265–79.

ful (5:14). Nevertheless, the author is confident concerning them of better things, indeed those “having” to do with salvation (6:9). Although they have “become sluggish” in hearing (5:11), they are now not to “become sluggish,” but rather imitators of those who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises (6:12).

## Hebrews 6:13-20

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- A<sup>13</sup> For when God promised to Abraham, since he *had* by no one greater to swear, swore by himself,<sup>14</sup> saying, “Indeed, blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you” (Gen 22:17).<sup>15</sup> And so having patience, he obtained the promise.
- B<sup>16</sup> For men swear by someone greater, and, for confirmation, a limit to all dispute for them is the *oath*.
- B’<sup>17</sup> When God even more planned to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his plan, he guaranteed it with an *oath*,<sup>18a</sup> so that through two unchangeable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie,
- A’<sup>18b</sup> we who have taken refuge may *have* a strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope lying ahead,<sup>19</sup> which we *have* as an anchor of the soul, both sure and firm, and which enters into the interior of the veil,<sup>20</sup> where as forerunner on behalf of us Jesus entered, according to the order of Melchizedek having become high priest forever.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 6:13-20

The last word of the BA unit (5:11-6:12), “promises” (ἐπαγγελίας), serves as the thematic catch word connecting this unit to the BB unit (6:13-20), which commences, “For when God promised (ἐπαγγειλάμενος) to Abraham.” There is thus a transition from being imitators of those who through faith and patience are inheriting the “promises” to the example of what was involved when God “promised” to Abraham.

The only occurrences in this BB unit of the verb “have”—“since he had (εἶχεν) by no one greater to swear” in 6:13, “we who have taken refuge may have (ἔχωμεν) a strong encouragement” in 6:18, and “which we have (ἔχομεν) as an anchor of the soul” in 6:19—establish the parallels for the A (6:13-15) and A’ (6:18b-19) elements of this unit. And the only occurrences

in Hebrews of the noun “oath”—“a limit to all dispute for them is the oath (ὄρκος)” in 6:16 and “he guaranteed it with an oath (ὄρκῳ)” in 6:17—determine the parallels for the pivotal B (6:16) and B' (6:17-18a) elements.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 6:13-20

### 1. Heb 6:13-15 (A): Since God Had by No One Greater To Swear

The audience hear the A element (6:13-15) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) For when God *promised* to Abraham (6:13a),
  - b) since he had *by no one* greater to *swear* (6:13b),
    - b') *swore by himself*, saying, “Indeed, blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you (Gen 22:17)” (6:13c-14).
  - a') And so having patience, he obtained the *promise* (6:15).

When the audience hear that God “swore (ῥωμοσεν) by himself (καθ’ ἑαυτοῦ)” (6:13c) in the “b” sub-element, they experience a pivot of parallels involving the only other occurrence in this sub-unit (6:13-15) of these expressions in the clause, “since he had by no one (κατ’ οὐδενός) greater to swear (ὀμόσαι)” (6:13b), in the “b” sub-element. They are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels established by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of expressions for “promise”—from “God promised (ἐπαγγελιάμενος) to Abraham” (6:13a) in the “a” sub-element to “he obtained the promise (ἐπαγγελίας)” (6:15) in the “a” sub-element.

The audience have been exhorted not to become sluggish, but rather to become imitators of those who through faith and patience are inheriting the “promises (ἐπαγγελίας)” (6:12) that include the “promise” (ἐπαγγελίας) to enter into God’s own heavenly rest (4:1), as well as the promised “blessing” from God (6:7). And now, as those among Abraham’s descendants of whom Jesus has taken hold (2:16), their attention is focused on what was involved when God “promised” (ἐπαγγελιάμενος) to Abraham (6:13a).

Regarding their faithless ancestors, the audience have heard the scriptural voice of God decisively pronounce, “As I swore (ῥωμοσα) in my anger, ‘They will never enter into my rest!’ (Ps 94:11)” (3:11; 4:3). The audience were also confronted with a question warning them against the disobedience of their ancestors, “And with whom did he swear (ῥωμοσεν) that they



should not enter into his rest, if not those who disobeyed?” (3:18). And now, in contrast, regarding their faithful ancestor Abraham, they again hear the scriptural voice of God, who since he had by no one greater to “swear” (ὀμόσαι), “swore” (ᾤμοσεν) by himself (6:13bc), emphatically promise, “Indeed, blessing I will bless (εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω) you, and multiplying I will multiply you (Gen 22:17)” (6:14). Abraham thus exemplifies for them how “earth that drinks the rain coming upon it repeatedly and produces useful vegetation for those on account of whom it is cultivated, shares a blessing (εὐλογία) from God” (6:7). That, “having patience” (μακροθυμίας), Abraham obtained the “promise (ἐπαγγελίας)” (6:15) of the blessing reinforces the exhortation for the audience to become imitators of those who through faith and “patience” (μακροθυμίας) are inheriting the “promises (ἐπαγγελίας)” (6:12).<sup>1</sup>

## *2. Heb 6:16 (B): A Limit to All Dispute Is the Oath*

The focus becomes the importance of the oath in swearing: “For men swear by someone greater, and, for confirmation, a limit to all dispute for them is the oath” (6:16). In contrast to God, who in his promise to Abraham had no one “greater” (μείζων) by whom to “swear” (ὀμόσαι), so that he “swore” (ᾤμοσεν) by himself (6:13), men “swear” (ὀμνύουσιν) by someone “greater” (μείζων) than themselves, and the oath that results from such swearing serves as the confirmation that places a limit to all dispute.

## *3. Heb 6:17-18b (B'): He Guaranteed It with an Oath*

The audience hear the B' element (6:17-18b) of this unit as a chiasmic pattern in itself:

- a) When *God* even more planned to show to the heirs of the promise (6:17a)
- b) the *unchangeableness* of his plan (6:17b),
- c) he guaranteed it with an oath (6:17c),
- b') so that through two *unchangeable* things (6:18a),
- a') in which it was impossible for *God* to lie (6:18b),

<sup>1</sup> The “promise” Abraham obtained refers to the birth and preservation of Isaac; Koester, *Hebrews*, 326; see also Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 338-39; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 168-69.

After the unparalleled and central “c” sub-element, “he guaranteed it with an oath” (6:17c), the audience hear a pivot of chiastic parallels from “the unchangeableness (ἀμετάθετον) of his plan” (6:17b) in the “b” sub-element to “so that through two unchangeable (ἀμεταθέτων) things” (6:18a) in the “b” sub-element. These are the only occurrences in Hebrews of the adjective “unchangeable.” They are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels established by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the term “God”—from “when God (θεός) even more planned to show to the heirs of the promise” (6:17a) in the “a” sub-element to “in which it was impossible for God (θεόν) to lie” (6:18b) in the “a” sub-element.

At this point the audience are also presented with a pivotal progression of parallels involving the term “oath” from the B (6:16) to the B' (6:17-18b) elements in this chiastic unit (6:13-20). They hear a progression from “a limit to all dispute for them is the oath (ὄρκος)” (6:16) to “he guaranteed it with an oath (ὄρκῳ)” (6:17c). Just as an “oath” is required for the confirmation that puts a limit to all dispute when men swear, so God guaranteed the promise made to Abraham with an “oath.” God did this in planning to show the unchangeableness of his plan to the “heirs” (κληρονόμοις) of the “promise” (ἐπαγγελίας) made to Abraham (6:17ab), among whom are the audience as imitators of those who through faith and patience are “inheriting” (κληρονομοούντων) the “promises (ἐπαγγελίας)” (6:12). Consequently, in going beyond human swearing, God guaranteed the promise even more with an oath, so that two unchangeable things—both the promise and the oath—were involved (6:18a). In these it was “impossible” (ἀδύνατον) for God to lie (6:18b), recalling and reinforcing how it is “impossible” (ἀδύνατον) for those once enlightened (6:4), and having fallen away, again to renew to repentance (6:6).

#### *4. Heb 6:18c-20 (A'): We May Have Encouragement for the Hope We Have*

The consequences for author and audience of God's unchangeable promise and oath are drawn out: “we who have taken refuge may have a strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope lying ahead, which we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and firm, and which enters into the interior of the veil, where as forerunner on behalf of us Jesus entered, according to the order of Melchizedek having become high priest forever”

(6:18c-20). At this point the audience are presented with a progression from the A (6:13-15) to the A' (6:18c-20) elements of this chiasmic unit via the chiasmic parallels established by occurrences of the verb “have.” They hear a progression from “since he had (εἶχεν) by no one greater to swear” (6:13) to “we who have taken refuge may have (ἔχωμεν) a strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope lying ahead, which we have (ἔχομεν) as an anchor of the soul” (6:18c-19).

When God promised to Abraham, since he “had” by no one greater to swear, he swore by himself (6:13), and thus guaranteed the promise with an oath (6:17). Consequently, “we,” including author and audience, who have taken refuge in the security provided by God may “have” a strong encouragement because of the hope we “have” as an anchor of the soul (6:18c-19). That we may have a “strong” (ισχυράν) encouragement echoes the “strong” (ισχυράς) outcrying of the prayers and supplications of Christ that were heard by God (5:7). And that we may have a strong encouragement to “hold fast” (κρατῆσαι) to the “hope” (ἐλπίδος) lying ahead (6:18c) reinforces the exhortations that we “hold fast” (κρατῶμεν) to the confession (4:14), that to the boldness and to the boast of the “hope” (ἐλπίδος) we hold (3:6), and that we show eagerness for the assurance of the “hope” (ἐλπίδος) until the end (6:11).

We have this hope lying ahead as an anchor of the “soul (ψυχῆς)” (6:19), the “soul” (ψυχῆς) that the living word of God profoundly penetrates (4:12). That this hope is an anchor of the soul that is both sure and “firm” (βεβαίαν) (6:19), “firm” (βέβαιος) like the word of God spoken through angels (2:2), reinforces the exhortation that we hold the beginning of the reality “firm” (βεβαίαν) until the end (3:14). As a secure and firm “anchor” of the soul, this hope encourages us to attend to the things that have been heard, lest we “drift away” like an unanchored ship (2:1).<sup>2</sup> It further encourages us not to be “wandering” in heart or to “fall away” like the unfaithful and disobedient ancestors (3:10, 12, 16-19; 4:6, 11).

In contrast to the unfaithful and disobedient ancestors who failed to “enter” (εἰσελθεῖν) into God’s heavenly rest (3:19; cf. 3:11, 18; 4:3, 5, 6), this hope “enters” (εἰσερχομένην) into the interior of the veil, the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary (6:19). This is where, as forerunner on behalf of us, Jesus “entered” (εἰσῆλθεν), according to the order of

<sup>2</sup> On “drift away” (παραινῶμεν) here as a nautical metaphor, see BDAG, 770.

Melchizedek having become high priest forever (6:20).<sup>3</sup> This “entrance” of Jesus as a hope that is a sure and firm anchor of the soul into the heavenly sanctuary bolsters the exhortation that we strive to “enter” (εἰσελθεῖν) into the heavenly sabbath rest of God (4:11), the rest we are even now “entering” (εἰσερχόμεθα) into as those who believed (4:3).

That Jesus entered “on behalf” (ὕπέρ) of us relates his high priestly activity directly to the audience, as it recalls that every high priest taken from men is appointed “on behalf” (ὕπέρ) of men in things regarding God, so that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices “on behalf” (ὕπέρ) of sins (5:1). It was by the grace of God that Jesus might taste death “on behalf” (ὕπέρ) of everyone (2:9). That Jesus became “according to the order of Melchizedek high priest forever” (6:20) reminds the audience that he was designated by God as “high priest according to the order of Melchizedek” (5:10) in accord with God’s scriptural pronouncement from Ps 109:4, addressed to Jesus, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (5:6). This unit thus concludes on the emphatically climactic note of the eternity of Jesus’ high priesthood—that it is according to the order of Melchizedek that Jesus became high priest forever.<sup>4</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 6:13-20

The preceding BA unit (5:11-6:12) concluded with an exhortation for the audience not to become sluggish, but rather to become imitators of those who through faith and patience are inheriting the “promises” (6:12). The BB unit (6:13-20) then commences with what was involved when God

<sup>3</sup> Regarding “enters into the interior of the veil (καταπετάσματος)” in 6:19, Otfried Hofius (“καταπετάσμα,” *EDNT* 2.266) states: “In the heavenly sanctuary a *curtain* . . . veils the dwelling of God with the throne of glory. Heb 6:19 and 10:20 refer to this curtain . . . Τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος in Heb 6:19 (cf. Lev 16:2, 12, 15 LXX) designates the most holy place . . . this ‘object of hope’ can be described as a ‘secure and steadfast anchor of the soul which enters into the [heavenly] most holy place’ (6:19f.).” See also BDAG, 524; R. E. Gane, “Re-Opening *Katapetasma* (‘Veil’) in Hebrews 6:19,” *AUSS* 38 (2000): 5–8; R. M. Davidson, “Christ’s Entry ‘Within the Veil’ in Hebrews 6:19–20: The Old Testament Background,” *AUSS* 39 (2001): 175–90; Norman H. Young, “Where Jesus Has Gone as a Forerunner on Our Behalf (Hebrews 6:20),” *AUSS* 39 (2001): 165–73; idem, “The Day of Dedication or the Day of Atonement?: The Old Testament Background to Hebrews 6:19–20 Revisited,” *AUSS* 40 (2002): 61–68; C. P. Cosaert, “The Use of Ἅγιος for the Sanctuary in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Philo, and Josephus,” *AUSS* 42 (2004): 91–103.

<sup>4</sup> D. R. Worley, “Fleeing to Two Immutable Things, God’s Oath-Taking and Oath-Witnessing: The Use of Litigant Oath in Hebrews 6:12–20,” *ResQ* 36 (1994): 223–36.

“promised” to Abraham (6:13), a prime example of one of those whose faith and patience the audience are to imitate.

In the central elements of this BB unit the audience are presented with a pivot of chiasmic parallels from the “oath” with which men swear for a confirmation that places a limit to all dispute (6:16) to the “oath” with which God guaranteed the promise to Abraham to show the heirs of the promise, among whom are the audience, the unchangeableness of his plan (6:17). They then experience a progression, via the chiasmic parallels established by occurrences of the verb “have,” from God, when he promised to Abraham, swearing by himself, since he “had” by no one greater to swear (6:13), to what the audience now may “have” as a result of God’s swearing the promise with an oath. “We”—author, audience, and all believers—who have taken refuge in the divine guarantee established by God’s unchangeable oath and promise may “have” a strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope lying ahead (6:18). We “have” this hope as a sure and firm anchor of the soul, which enters into the interior of the veil, the most holy place in the heavenly sanctuary (6:19). This is where Jesus, the high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek, entered as forerunner on behalf of us (6:20).

## Hebrews 7:1-10

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- A<sup>7:1a</sup> For this *Melchizedek*, king of Salem, priest of the God Most High, having *met* Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings
- B<sup>1b</sup> and having *blessed* him,<sup>2</sup> to whom also a *tenth* of everything Abraham apportioned, first being interpreted king of righteousness and then king of Salem, that is, king of peace,<sup>3</sup> without father, without mother, without genealogy, neither beginning of days nor end of *life* does he have, having been made like the Son of God, remains a priest for all time.<sup>4</sup> See how great is this one, to whom also a *tenth* from the choice spoils Abraham the patriarch gave.<sup>5a</sup> And those of the sons of *Levi* who *receive* the priesthood have a commandment to *tithe* the people according to the law,
- C<sup>5b</sup> that is, *their* brothers,
- D<sup>5c</sup> although they have come from the loins of Abraham.
- C'<sup>6a</sup> But he who was not of *their* ancestry
- B'<sup>6b</sup> *took a tithe* from Abraham and *blessed* the one having the promises.  
<sup>7</sup> Without any dispute the inferior is *blessed* by the superior.<sup>8</sup> And here, on the one hand, men who die *receive tithes*, but, there, on the other hand, one is testified that he goes on *living*.<sup>9</sup> And so to speak, through Abraham even *Levi*, who *receives tithes*, *was tithed*.
- A'<sup>10</sup> For he was still in the loins of his father when *Melchizedek met* him.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 7:1-10

The name “Melchizedek” in the conclusion of the BB unit (6:13-20) serves as the catch word connecting this unit to the following BC unit (7:1-10), which commences with a reference to “Melchizedek” as king and priest. This sets the stage for an explanation in the BC unit of the climactic emphasis upon the eternity of Jesus’ high priesthood at the close of the BB unit—it is according to the order of Melchizedek that Jesus became “high priest forever” (6:20).

The only occurrences in this unit of “Melchizedek” and in Hebrews of the verb “meet” establish the chiasmic parallels for the A (7:1a) and A' (7:10) elements of this unit. In 7:1a “Melchizedek (Μελχισέδεκ), king of Salem, priest of the God Most High, having met (συναντήσας) Abraham.” And in 7:10 “he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek (Μελχισέδεκ) met (συνήντησεν) him.”

There are three occurrences in this unit of the verb “bless”—“having blessed (εὐλόγησας) him” in 7:1b and “blessed (εὐλόγηκεν) the one having the promises” in 7:6 as well as “without any dispute the inferior is blessed (εὐλογεῖται) by the superior” in 7:7. There are two expressions for “life”—“nor end of life (ζωῆς) does he have” in 7:3 and “he goes on living (ζῆ)” in 7:8. And there are two occurrences of the verb “receive”—“who receive (λαμβάνοντες) the priesthood” in 7:5a and “men who die receive (λαμβάνουσιν) tithes” in 7:8. These correspondences determine the parallels for the B (7:1b-5a) and B' (7:6b-9) elements. In addition, these elements contain the only occurrences in Hebrews of expressions for “tenth” or “tithe.” “A tenth (δεκάτην) of everything” occurs in 7:2, “a tenth (δεκάτην) of his spoils” in 7:4, “a commandment to tithe (ἀποδεκατοῦν) the people” in 7:5a, “took tithes (δεδεκάτωκεν)” in 7:6b, “receive tithes (δεκάτας)” in 7:8, and “who receives tithes (δεκάτας), was tithed (δεδεκάτωται)” in 7:9. They also contain the only occurrences in Hebrews of the name “Levi”—“sons of Levi (Λευί)” in 7:5a and “even Levi (Λευί)” in 7:9.

The only occurrences in this unit of the masculine genitive plural personal pronoun “their”—“their (αὐτῶν) brothers” in 7:5b and “their (αὐτῶν) ancestry” in 7:6a—secure the parallels for the C (7:5b) and C' (7:6a) elements. And finally, the central, unparalleled D (7:5c) element is distinguished by the only occurrences in this unit of the terms “although” and “come from”—“although (καίπερ) they have come from (ἐξεληλυθότας) the loins of Abraham.”

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 7:1-10

### 1. Heb 7:1a (A): Melchizedek Having Met Abraham

Having just heard that it is according to the order of Melchizedek that Jesus became high priest forever (6:20), the audience now hear more about the significance of Melchizedek: “For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the God Most High, having met Abraham returning from the

defeat of the kings” (7:1a). By way of an allusion to Gen 14:17-20, the audience are reminded that Melchizedek was both a king and a priest. This king met Abraham on his return from the defeat of other kings, the Abraham to whom God swore the promise of a blessing (6:13), the preeminent patriarch of whom the audience are to consider themselves descendants (2:16).

## 2. *Heb 7:1b-5a (B): Nor End of Life Does He Have*

The audience hear the B element (7:1b-5a) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) and having blessed him, *to whom also a tenth* of everything *Abraham* apportioned, first being interpreted king of righteousness and then king of Salem, that is, king of peace, without father, without mother, without genealogy (7:1b-3a),
  - b) *neither* beginning of days (7:3b)
  - b') *nor* end of life does he have (7:3c),
- a') having been made like the Son of God, remains a priest for all time. See how great is this one, *to whom also a tenth* from the choice spoils *Abraham* the patriarch gave. And those of the sons of Levi who receive the priesthood have a commandment to tithe the people according to the law (7:3d-5a),

When the audience hear the central “b” and “b'” sub-elements, they experience a pivot of parallels involving the only occurrences, not only in this sub-unit (7:1b-5a) but in Hebrews, of the coordinating conjunctions “neither-nor”—“neither (μήτε) beginning of days” (7:3b) “nor (μήτε) end of life does he have” (7:3c). This also involves the antithetical pivot from “beginning” (ἀρχήν) to “end” (τέλος).<sup>1</sup> They are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels established by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the term “tenth” and the name “Abraham.” “To whom also a tenth (ὃ καὶ δεκάτην) of everything Abraham (Ἀβραάμ) apportioned” (7:2) in the “a” sub-element progresses to “to whom also a tenth (ὃ καὶ δεκάτην) of the choice spoils Abraham (Ἀβραάμ) the patriarch gave” (7:4) in the “a'” sub-element.

<sup>1</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 190 n. 57: “The anthesis of ἀρχ- and τελ- stems is a favorite of our author. Cf. 2:10; 3:14; 12:2.”



The Abraham whom God, swearing by himself, promised to bless (6:13), saying, “Indeed, blessing I will bless (εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω) you, and multiplying I will multiply you (Gen 22:17)” (6:14), Melchizedek actually “blessed (εὐλογήσας)” (7:1b). In addition, Abraham apportioned a tenth of everything he had to Melchizedek. Based on a translation of his name from the Hebrew (*melchi*=my king and *zedek*=righteousness), Melchizedek can be interpreted as a “king of righteousness (βασιλεὺς δικαιοσύνης)” (7:2).<sup>2</sup> This interpretation hints at his relevance for the audience, who are to be experienced in the word of “righteousness (δικαιοσύνης)” (5:13), in order to be among the mature and perfected (5:14-6:1). It also assimilates him to Jesus as the heavenly enthroned divine royal Son, the scepter of whose “kingdom” (βασιλείας) is uprightness (1:8) and who loved “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνην) but hated lawlessness (1:9). As king of “Salem,” a place many identified with Jerusalem and a name that can be understood as a transliteration of the Hebrew term for “peace,” Melchizedek is interpreted as both a king of righteousness and a king of peace (7:2).<sup>3</sup>

Since the scriptural tradition does not mention his father, mother, or genealogy, Melchizedek is understood to have neither the beginning of days nor end of life (7:3). Having been thus made eternal like the divine Son of God, whose heavenly royal throne is “forever and ever (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος)” (1:8), Melchizedek remains a priest for “all time (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές)” (7:3).<sup>4</sup> This explains for the audience why it is “according to the order of Melchizedek” that Jesus became a high priest “forever (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα)” (6:20; cf. 5:6). Both Melchizedek and Jesus have an eternal priesthood.<sup>5</sup>

The audience are to consider how great is “this one” (οὗτος), that is, “this” (οὗτος) Melchizedek (7:1), as the one to whom Abraham the patri-

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Schröger, “Μελχισέδεκ,” *EDNT* 2.405. See also T. C. De Kruijf, “The Priest-King Melchizedek: The Reception of Gen 14,18–20 in Hebrews Mediated by Psalm 110,” *Bijdragen* 54 (1993): 393–406; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Melchizedek in the MT, LXX, and the NT,” *Bib* 81 (2000): 63–69; Gerd Jacobus Steyn, “The Vorlage of the Melchizedek Phrases in Heb 7.1–4,” *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 13 (2002): 207–23; Gareth Lee Cockerill, “Melchizedek Without Speculation: Hebrews 7.1–25 and Genesis 14.17–24,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham, et al.; LNTS 387; London: Clark, 2008), 128–44.

<sup>3</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 341–42; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 177: “The qualities of righteousness and peace classically represent the prophetic hopes of Israel.”

<sup>4</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 343: “The direction of thought is important: the Son of God is not like Melchizedek; rather, Melchizedek is like the Son of God, who is the principal reality.”

<sup>5</sup> Jerome H. Neyrey, “‘Without Beginning of Days or End of Life’ (Hebrews 7:3): Topos for a True Deity,” *CBQ* 53 (1991): 439–55; Eric F. Mason, “Hebrews 7:3 and the Relationship Between Melchizedek and Jesus,” *BR* 50 (2005): 41–62.

arch gave a tenth from the choice spoils (7:4). At this point the audience are presented with a progression concerning Melchizedek as the one to whom Abraham apportioned a tenth of everything (7:2). That Abraham “apportioned” (ἐμέρισεν), with its connotation of paying what is due from obligation, has progressed to “he gave” (ἔδωκεν), with its connotation of freely and spontaneously giving a gift. “Of everything” (ἀπὸ πάντων) is now specified as “from the choice spoils” (ἐκ τῶν ἀκροθινίων). And Abraham is now emphatically described as “the patriarch,” with its connotation of “the preeminent patriarch.” In other words, the audience are to consider how great this Melchizedek truly must be, if even Abraham, *the* patriarch, freely gave him a tenth from the choice spoils of his victory over the kings.<sup>6</sup>

Abraham, the patriarch, freely gave as a gracious gift a “tenth” or “tithe” (δεκάτην) from the choice spoils of victory to Melchizedek, the king and priest (7:4). In contrast, those of the sons of Levi who receive the priesthood have a commandment to “tithe” (ἀποδεκατοῦν) the people according to the law (7:5a).<sup>7</sup> The “people” (λαόν) they, as priests, tithe are the “people” (λαοῦ) for whose sins they are to offer (5:3), the “people” (λαῶ) of God for whom a sabbath rest remains (4:9), and the “people” (λαοῦ) for whom Jesus became a merciful and faithful high priest in order to expiate their sins (2:17).

### 3. *Heb 7:5b (C): Their Brothers*

The people whom the priests from the sons of Levi have a commandment to tithe according to the law are then further specified: “that is, their brothers” (7:5b). Although the people were equal to them as their fellow “brothers” (ἀδελφούς), nevertheless, the Levitical priests took tithes from

<sup>6</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 1-8, 168: “The term ἀκροθινίων, denoting the best or choicest of the spoils, appears to have been chosen to sharpen the impression of Melchizedek’s exalted stature. . . . The term ὁ πατριάρχης, ‘the patriarch,’ which is placed at the end of the sentence for emphasis, serves to underscore the stature of Abraham as the progenitor of Israel. But Abraham is exalted in v 4 only to emphasize the exalted status of Melchizedek even more.” See also Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 361. Koester, *Hebrews*, 343: “Abraham’s relationship to Melchizedek sets a precedent for the relationship of Abraham’s descendants (2:16) to Christ.”

<sup>7</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 196: “The formulation gives an initial hint of the inferior status of the Levites. They have a ‘command’ (ἐντολήν) to receive tithes based on the law (κατὰ τὸν νόμον). The collocation of the two terms is common in Hebrews and the negative appraisal of both becomes clear as the argument of the chapter proceeds.”

them.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, Jesus, the merciful and faithful high priest, became like his “brothers” (ἀδελφοίς) in all things (2:17). He was not ashamed to call his fellow human beings “brothers” (ἀδελφούς), saying, in quoting Ps 21:23, “I will proclaim your name to my brothers (ἀδελφοίς), in the midst of the assembly I will praise you” (2:11-12). Addressed as “brothers (ἀδελφοί)” (3:1, 12), the audience are numbered, not among the tithed “brothers” of the Levitical priests, but among the “brothers” to whom Jesus promises to proclaim God’s name and in the midst of whose worshipping assembly he promises to praise God.

4. *Heb 7:5c (D): Although They Have Come from the Loins of Abraham*

The brothers tithed by the Levitical priests are further described: “although they have come from the loins of Abraham” (7:5c). Not only are the people from whom the Levitical priests took tithes their fellow brothers, but they share a common origin as descendants of Abraham, as those who “have come from the loins of Abraham.” This emphatically reinforces for the audience how the Levitical priests take tithes from those who are equal to them in status.<sup>9</sup>

5. *Heb 7:6a (C’): But He Who Was Not of Their Ancestry*

The focus returns to Melchizedek: “But he who was not of their ancestry” (7:6a). At this point, after the unparalleled central D element, the audience are presented with a pivot of parallels from the C to this C’ element involving the pronoun “their.” In contrast to the Levitical priests who tithed the people who were “their” (αὐτῶν) brothers (7:5b), even though they shared with them descent from Abraham (7:5c), Melchizedek was not of “their” (αὐτῶν) Abrahamic ancestry.

<sup>8</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 344: “Referring to ‘the people’ as ‘their brethren’ lessens the contrast between priests and laity.”

<sup>9</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 364: “There is increasing emphasis from τὸν λαόν to τοὺς ἀδελφούς αὐτῶν and ἐξεληλυθότας ἐκ τῆς ὁσφύος Ἀβραάμ.” Johnson, *Hebrews*, 179: “The tax, or tithe, in other words, was not paid from outsiders, but from fellow Israelites.” Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 140: “The parity of the Levites and their kindred suggests that their reception of tithes is something less than Melchizedek’s receiving from Abraham, thus implying the superiority of Melchizedek over Abraham.”

## 6. Heb 7:6b-9 (B'): One Is Testified That He Goes On Living

The audience hear the B' element (7:6b-9) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) *took a tithe* from *Abraham* (7:6b)
- b) and *blessed* the one having the promises (7:6c).
- b') Without any dispute the inferior is *blessed* by the superior (7:7).
- a') And here, on the one hand, men who die receive tithes, but, there, on the other hand, one is testified that he goes on living. And so to speak, through *Abraham* even *Levi*, who receives tithes, *was tithed* (7:8-9).

When the audience hear that “without any dispute the inferior is blessed (εὐλογεῖται) by the superior” (7:7) in the “b” sub-element, they experience a pivot of chiastic parallels established by the only other occurrence in this sub-unit of the verb “bless”—“and blessed (εὐλόγηκεν) the one having the promises” (7:6c). They are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels established by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the name “Abraham” and the verb “tithe,” from “took a tithe (δεδεκάτωκεν) from Abraham (Ἀβραάμ)” (7:6b) in the “a” sub-element to “through Abraham (Ἀβραάμ) even Levi, who receives tithes, was tithed (δεδεκάτωται)” (7:9) in the “a” sub-element.

At this point the audience are also presented with a series of progressions, via the chiastic parallels, from the B (7:1b-5a) to the B' (7:6b-9) elements of this unit (7:1-10). “Having blessed (εὐλογήσας) him” (7:1b) progresses to “blessed (εὐλόγηκεν) the one having the promises” (7:6c) and “the inferior is blessed (εὐλογεῖται) by the superior” (7:7). “To whom also a tenth (δεκάτην)” (7:2 and 7:4) progresses to “receive(s) tithes (δεκάτας)” (7:8 and 7:9). “Nor end of life (ζωῆς) does he have” (7:3c) progresses to “he goes on living (ζῆ)” (7:8). “Sons of Levi (Λεवी) who receive (λαμβάνοντες)” (7:5a) progresses to “even Levi (Λεवी), who receives (λαμβάνων)” (7:9). And “a commandment to tithe (ἀποδεκατοῦν)” (7:5a) progresses to “took a tithe (δεδεκάτωκεν)” (7:6b) and “was tithed (δεδεκάτωται)” (7:9).

Whereas those of the sons of Levi who receive the priesthood have a commandment “to tithe” (ἀποδεκατοῦν) the people according to the law, even though they share with them descent from Abraham (7:5), the priest Melchizedek “took a tithe” (δεδεκάτωκεν) from Abraham himself (7:6b). Having “blessed” (εὐλογήσας) Abraham upon his return from the defeat of the kings (7:1), Melchizedek “blessed” (εὐλόγηκεν) the one having the

“promises (ἐπαγγελίας)” (7:6c), the “promises” (ἐπαγγελίας) the audience are inheriting (6:12). These include the “promise” (ἐπαγγελίας) Abraham obtained by having patience (6:15, 17), and the “promise” (ἐπαγγελίας) of entering into God’s own heavenly rest (4:1).<sup>10</sup> This indicates the superiority of Melchizedek to Abraham, since in this case it is without any dispute that the inferior, Abraham as the one tithed, is blessed (εὐλογεῖται) by the superior, Melchizedek as the one who took the tithe (7:7).<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to Melchizedek, to whom a “tenth” or “tithe” (δεκάτην) from the choice spoils Abraham the patriarch gave (7:2, 4), the sons of Levi receive “tithes (δεκάτας)” (7:8) from the people who are their fellow brothers and fellow descendants of Abraham (7:5). Whereas men who “die” (ἀποθνήσκοντες) “receive” (λαμβάνουσιν) tithes (7:8), namely, the sons of Levi who “receive” (λαμβάνοντες) the priesthood and have a commandment to tithe the people (7:5a), Melchizedek is testified as one who goes on “living (ζῆ)” (7:8), since he does not have an end of “life (ζωῆς)” (7:3c).<sup>12</sup> The audience are to realize, then, that through Abraham, who gave a tithe to the priest Melchizedek, even Levi, who “receives” (λαμβάνων) “tithes (δεκάτας)” (7:9), since the sons of Levi who “receive” (λαμβάνοντες) the priesthood have a commandment to “tithe” (ἀποδεκατοῦν) the people according to the law (7:5a), was himself “tithed (δεδεκάτωται)” (7:9).

### 7. Heb 7:10 (A'): When Melchizedek Met Him

The audience then receive the explanation confirming that when Abraham was tithed by the priest Melchizedek, Levi himself was also tithed (7:9): “For he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him” (7:10). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from “this Melchizedek (Μελχισέδεκ), king of Salem, priest of the God Most High, having met (συναντήσας) Abraham” (7:1a)

<sup>10</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 366: “The use of the absolute expression ‘the promise(s)’ is normal in Hebrews, and even where the article is not used, the promise is, or the promises are, assumed to be too well known to need specifying . . . Here the point is not the content of the promises, but the status conferred on Abraham by his having received them.”

<sup>11</sup> Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 141: “The author is not laying down a general rule, as there are biblical examples of greater individuals being blessed by lesser ones. He is merely referring to the case at hand, namely that Abraham in this instance is the lesser and Melchizedek the greater, since the former paid a tithe to the latter.”

<sup>12</sup> Gard Granerød, “Melchizedek in Hebrews 7,” *Bib* 90 (2009): 188–202.

in the A element to “when Melchizedek (Μελχισέδεκ) met (συνήντησεν) him” in the A' element of this chiastic unit (7:1-10).

The audience are to appreciate that Levi, who was still in the loins of his father Abraham when he was met by the priest Melchizedek, was himself tithed when Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek. This means that the Levitical priesthood is inferior to the eternal priesthood of Jesus, which is according to the order of the Melchizedek (5:6, 10; 6:20) who goes on living (7:8). In being made eternal like the Son of God, Melchizedek remains a priest for all time (7:3d). Whereas the sons of Levi who receive the priesthood tithe those who come from the “loins” (ὀσφύος) of Abraham (7:5c), Levi himself was still in the “loins” (ὀσφύϊ) of his father Abraham when he was tithed by Melchizedek, the eternal priest of the God Most High.<sup>13</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 7:1-10

The preceding BB unit (6:13-20) concluded on the note that it was according to the order of “Melchizedek” that Jesus became a high priest forever (6:20). This BC unit (7:1-10) then commences by keeping the audience’s focus on this “Melchizedek” described as king of Salem and priest of the God Most High (7:1a), and eventually explains that he is a king and high priest forever, since he does not have end of life (7:3c) but goes on living (7:8).

The unparalleled central element of this chiastic unit reinforces for the audience how the Levitical priests tithe their own people with whom they share a common Abrahamic descent—“although they have come from the loins of Abraham” (7:5c). The audience then experience a pivot of chiastic parallels from “their” brothers, which further describes the people tithed by the Levitical priests (7:5b), to the notice that the priest Melchizedek was not of “their” Abrahamic ancestry (7:6a).

Then the audience are presented with a series of progressions, via the chiastic parallels. Melchizedek having “blessed” Abraham (7:1b), to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a “tenth” or “tithe” of the choice spoils of

<sup>13</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 369: “The point of v. 10 lies rather in its first word ἔτι: the first readers of the epistle needed to be reminded that Levi had not yet begun his independent existence, and was thus involved in all that Abraham did. A logical basis is thus given for the permanent effect of Abraham’s submission to Melchizedek, which so far has only been implied. The apparent jump from Abraham to the levitical priests in vv. 5 and 8 is finally justified.”

his victory over the kings (7:4), progresses to the Melchizedek who “took a tithe” from Abraham and “blessed” him as the one having the promises (7:6bc), demonstrating how the inferior Abraham is “blessed” by the superior Melchizedek (7:7). That the sons of “Levi” who “receive” the priesthood have a commandment to “tithe” the people according to the law (7:5a) progresses to even “Levi,” who “receives” “tithes” through his sons who “receive” “tithes” (7:8), was himself “tithed” by Melchizedek (7:9), underlining the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood to that of Melchizedek. And Melchizedek, as one who does not have an end of “life,” so that, having been made like the Son of God, remains a priest forever (7:3) progresses to the priest Melchizedek who, in contrast to the Levitical priests who die, goes on “living” (7:8).

Finally, the audience are presented with a chiastic progression of parallels climactically confirming Melchizedek’s superiority to the Levitical priests. “Melchizedek” as king of Salem and priest of the God Most High “met” Abraham upon Abraham’s return from the defeat of the kings (7:1a). This progresses to “Melchizedek” who “met” Abraham while Levi, whose sons tithe their own people, their fellow brothers, although they come from the loins of Abraham, was still in the loins of Abraham the patriarch (7:10), so that Levi himself, father of the Levitical priests who die, was already tithed by the Melchizedek without genealogy, the eternal priest who goes on living.

## Hebrews 7:11-17

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- A<sup>11</sup> If then there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood, for the people on the basis of it were *given law*, what further need *according to the order of Melchizedek* for a different priest to *arise* and not said to be according to the order of Aaron? <sup>12</sup>For the priesthood being changed, of necessity a change of *law* also *comes about*.
- B<sup>13</sup> For he of whom these things are said, partook in a different *tribe*, from which *no one* attended to the altar.
- C<sup>14a</sup> For it is clear that our Lord sprang up from Judah,
- B'<sup>14b</sup> about which *tribe* Moses spoke *nothing* concerning priests.
- A'<sup>15</sup> And it is even more yet quite clear, if according to the likeness of Melchizedek a different priest *arises*, <sup>16</sup>who not according to a *law* of a fleshly commandment has *come about* but according to the power of an indestructible life. <sup>17</sup>For it is testified that “you are a priest forever *according to the order of Melchizedek*” (Ps 109:4).

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 7:11-17

The preceding BC unit (7:1-10) concludes with a reference to Melchizedek, noting that Levi was still in the loins of his father Abraham when Melchizedek met him (7:10). This reference to Melchizedek serves as the transitional catch word for the connection to the BD unit (7:11-17), whose opening verse contains a reference to the order of Melchizedek in relation to that of Aaron (7:11). These catch words keep the focus on the comparison between the different priesthoods of Levi and of Melchizedek.

The only occurrences in this unit of the phrase “according to the order of Melchizedek,” of expressions involving “law,” and of the verb “comes about,” as well as the only occurrences in Hebrews of the verb “arise,” establish the chiasmic parallels for the A (7:11-12) and A' (7:15-17)



elements of this unit. “For the people on the basis of it were given law (νενομοθέτηται) . . . what further need according to the order of Melchizedek (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ) for a different priest to arise (ἀνίστασθαι) . . . For the priesthood being changed, of necessity a change of law (νόμου) also comes about (γίνεται)” occurs in 7:11-12. And “a different priest arises (ἀνίσταται), who not according to a law (νόμον) of a fleshly commandment has come about (γέγονεν) . . . For it is testified that ‘you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ)’ (Ps 109:4)” occurs in 7:15-17.

The parallels for the B (7:13) and B' (7:14b) elements are determined by the only occurrences in Hebrews of the term “tribe” and in this unit of the term “no one/nothing”—“partook in a different tribe (φυλῆς), from which no one (οὐδεὶς) attended to the altar” in 7:13 and “about which tribe (φυλὴν) Moses spoke nothing (οὐδέν) concerning priests” in 7:14b. And finally, the central unparalleled C (7:14a) element is distinguished by the only occurrences in this unit of the term “Judah” and in Hebrews of the adjective “clear” and the verb “spring up”—“For it is clear (πρόδηλον) that our Lord sprang up (ἀνατέταλκεν) from Judah.”

In addition, within the third macrochiastic level of the letter to the Hebrews, this Bab' unit (7:11-17), which occurs after the central and pivotal Bac unit (7:1-10), exhibits a parallel relationship with the Bab unit (6:13-20). The parallelism is indicated by the only occurrences in this macrochiastic section (5:11-7:28) of the phrase “according to the order of Melchizedek.” “Where as forerunner on behalf of us Jesus entered, according to the order of Melchizedek (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ) becoming high priest forever” occurs in 6:20. And “what further need according to the order of Melchizedek (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ) for a different priest to arise” occurs in 7:11, while “you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ)” occurs in 7:17.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 7:11-17

### *1. Heb 7:11-12 (A): According to the Order of Melchizedek for Another Priest To Arise*

The audience hear the A element (7:11-12) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) If then there was perfection through the Levitical *priesthood*, for the people on the basis of it were *given law* (7:11a),
- b) what further need *according to the order* of Melchizedek (7:11b)
- c) for a different priest to arise (7:11c)
- b') and not said to be *according to the order* of Aaron? (7:11d)
- a') For the *priesthood* being changed, of necessity a change of *law* also comes about (7:12).

After the central and unparalleled “c” sub-element (7:11c), “for a different priest to arise,” the audience experience a pivot of chiastic parallels established by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the phrase “according to the order.” “According to the order (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν) of Melchizedek” (7:11b) in the “b” sub-element progresses to “according to the order (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν) of Aaron” (7:11d) in the “b” sub-element. They then are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels determined by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the term “priesthood” and of expressions for “law.” “Through the Levitical priesthood (ιερωσύνης), for the people on the basis of it were given law (νενομοθέτηται),” (7:11a) in the “a” sub-element progresses to “for the priesthood (ιερωσύνης) being changed, of necessity a change of law (νόμου) also comes about,” (7:12) in the “a” sub-element.

The audience are presented with a poignant rhetorical question, provoking them to compare further the Levitical priesthood of Aaron with that of Melchizedek: “If then there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood, for the people on the basis of it were given law, what further need according to the order of Melchizedek for a different priest to arise and not said to be according to the order of Aaron?” (7:11). The implication that “perfection” (τελείωσις) of priestly worship was unattainable through the Levitical priesthood alerts the audience to the impossibility for them, by means of this Levitical priesthood, to bear forward toward the mature “perfection” (τελειότητα) the author envisions for them (6:1). Namely, they are to be numbered among the “perfected” (τελειών), those mature and completely fit for heavenly worship (5:14). The audience are reminded that God made the initiator of their salvation, Jesus, “perfect” (τελειῶσαι) through sufferings (2:10), so that having been made “perfect” (τελειωθείς), he became for all those who obey him a source of eternal salvation, having been designated by God high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (5:9).

Not only do the sons of Levi who receive the priesthood have a commandment to tithe the “people” (λαόν) according to the “law (νόμου)”

(7:5), but, as the audience are reminded, the “people” (λαός) “were given law” (νενομοθέτηται) on the basis of the Levitical priesthood (7:11a).<sup>1</sup> Every high priest is obligated by law to offer concerning the sins of the “people (λαοῦ)” (5:3). Jesus became a merciful and faithful high priest in order to expiate the sins of the “people (λαοῦ)” (2:17). And the audience are included in this “people” (λαῶ) of God for whom the heavenly sabbath rest of God remains (4:9).

There is a question of what further “need” (χρεία) according to the order of Melchizedek for a different priest to “arise,” that is, not only to appear but to be raised from the dead to heavenly exaltation, and not said to be according to the order of Aaron, since there was no perfection through the Levitical priesthood (7:11). This recalls and resonates with the “need” (χρεῖαν) for the audience, who have a “need” (χρεῖαν) for “milk” and not “solid food,” to be taught the basics (5:12), in order to attain perfection (6:1). Although, like “Aaron,” Jesus was called to be a priest by God (5:4), he represents a “different” (ἕτερον) priest to arise and not be “said” or “called” according to the order of “Aaron,” the order of the Levitical priesthood, but, as called by God in “another” or “different” (ἑτέρω) place in scripture, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Ps 109:4)” (5:6).<sup>2</sup>

The rhetorical question has established the “need” for a different priest to arise not according to the order of Aaron but according to the order of Melchizedek, since there was no perfection through the Levitical “priesthood” (ιερωσύνης), the basis for the people to be “given law (νενομοθέτηται)” (7:11). This “need” progresses to the “necessity,” with the “priesthood” (ιερωσύνης) being changed, of a corresponding change of “law (νόμου)” (7:12). The audience are now prepared to hear more about what is involved in this change of law.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 372: “[I]n the author’s view, the Mosaic law is essentially a set of cultic regulations in which the role of priests is fundamental. Priesthood and law are indissolubly bound together; and within this relation, priesthood is logically prior. The present clause therefore means ‘the levitical priesthood . . . was the basis of the Law given to the people’.”

<sup>2</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 353: “The new priest is not ‘another’ in the same line, but one of a ‘different’ sort. The verb ‘raise up’ can be used for someone who assumes a position, such as a king or prophet. The verb was also used for Jesus’ resurrection to indestructible life. Both senses fit this context.”

<sup>3</sup> Barry C. Joslin, “Hebrews 7–10 and the Transformation of the Law,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham, et

2. *Heb 7:13 (B): A Different Tribe from Which No One Attended to the Altar*

The different priest to arise according to a changed order of priesthood (7:11-12) continues to be described: “For he of whom these things are said, partook in a different tribe, from which no one attended to the altar” (7:13). He of whom these things are “said” (λέγεται) by God (divine passive) refers to the different priest to arise and not “said” (λέγεσθαι) by God to be according to the order of Aaron (7:11). He is a “different” (ἕτερον) priest because not only is his priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek rather than the order of Aaron (7:11), but he partook in a tribe “different” (ἐτέρας) from that of Levi.

That he “partook” (μετέσχηκεν) in a different tribe (7:13) further specifies for the audience the significance of the fact that, since the children whom God gave him (2:13) shared in blood and flesh, he similarly “partook” (μετέσχευ) with them. This is so that through his death he might destroy the one who has the strength of death, that is the devil (2:14), and free those, as many as by fear of death through all their life were held in slavery (2:15). That from this tribe no one attended to the altar (7:13) indicates the non-priestly nature of his human lineage, underlined by the artful assonance between “partook” (μετέσχηκεν) and “attended” (προσέσχηκεν).

3. *Heb 7:14a (C): For It Is Clear That Our Lord Sprang Up from Judah*

The different tribe in which the different priest partook is specified: “For it is clear that our Lord sprang up from Judah” (7:14a). The different priest to “arise” (ἀνίστασθαι) according to the order of Melchizedek (7:11) originally “sprang up” (ἀνατέταλκεν) from the tribe of Judah rather than from the priestly tribe of Levi.<sup>4</sup> That the different priest is referred to as our “Lord” (κύριος) reminds the audience of his divine lordship over them,

al.; LNTS 387; London: Clark, 2008), 100–117; Mary Schmitt, “Restructuring Views on Law in Hebrews 7:12,” *JBL* 128 (2009): 189–201.

<sup>4</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews*, 187: The verb “sprang up” is “used literally for the ‘rising’ of the stars or the sun ‘in the east,’ but influenced by the prophecy of Num 24:17, ‘a star shall arise from Jacob,’ it can also suggest the coming of the Messiah (see Jer 23:5; Zech 3:8; 6:12; Matt 4:16; Luke 1:78; see also Isa 11:1). As with the verb ἀνίστημι [in 7:11], the author may deliberately intend this allusion, which gains even further depth if ‘arising’ also includes the resurrection and exaltation of the Messiah.” See also Koester, *Hebrews*, 354–55; Lane, *Hebrews* 1–8, 182.

even while elaborating on his human origin. The great salvation the audience are not to neglect received a beginning of being spoken through this divine “Lord (κυρίου)” (2:3), with God additionally testifying to it (2:4). And the scriptural voice of God himself addressed his divine royal Son as the Lord of creation: “You at the beginnings, Lord (κύριε), founded the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands (Ps 101:26)” (1:10).

4. *Heb 7:14b (B'): About Which Tribe Moses Spoke Nothing concerning Priests*

The tribe of Judah from which our Lord sprang up (7:14a) is further described: “about which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priests” (7:14b). At this point, after the central and unparalleled C element—“for it is clear that our Lord sprang up from Judah” (7:14a), the audience experience a pivot of chiastic parallels. The pivot moves from “a different tribe (φυλῆς)” and “no one (οὐδεὶς)” in the B element (7:13) to “about which tribe (φυλὴν)” and “Moses spoke nothing (οὐδέν)” in this B' element.

That Moses spoke nothing concerning priests about the tribe of Judah from which our Lord sprang up (7:14) reinforces for the audience the non-priestly nature of the different tribe in which a different priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek (7:11) partook, even though no one from that tribe previously attended to the altar (7:13). The Moses who was faithful in all God's house as an attendant for testimony of the things that would be “spoken (λαληθησομένων)” (3:5) “spoke” (ἐλάλησεν) nothing concerning priests with regard to the ancestral tribe from which our Lord sprang up (7:14).<sup>5</sup>

5. *Heb 7:15-17 (A'): A Different Priest Arises according to the Order of Melchizedek*

After an emphatically elaborate introduction, “and it is even more yet quite clear” (7:15a), the audience hear the remainder of the A' element (7:15b-17) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) if *according to the likeness of Melchizedek* (7:15b)
- b) a different *priest* arises (7:15c),

<sup>5</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 355: “Moses' blessing to Judah (Deut 33:7) said nothing about priests, whereas Moses asked God to give Levi priestly lots (Deut 33:8-11).”

- c) who *not according* to a law of a fleshly commandment (7:16a)
- d) has come about (7:16b)
- c') *but according* to the power of an indestructible life (7:16c).
- b') For it is testified that “you are a *priest* forever (7:17a)
- a') *according to the order of Melchizedek* (Ps 109:4)” (7:17b).

After the central “d” sub-element—“has come about (γέγονεν)” (7:16b), which is unparalleled in this sub-unit, the audience experience a pivot in antithetical parallels from “not according to (οὐ κατὰ) a law of a fleshly commandment” (7:16a) in the “c” sub-element to “but according to (ἀλλὰ κατὰ) the power of an indestructible life” (7:16c) in the “c’” sub-element.<sup>6</sup> They are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels established by occurrences of the term “priest” and of prepositional phrases involving Melchizedek. “A different priest (ἱερεὺς) arises” (7:15b) in the “b” sub-element progresses to “you are a priest (ἱερεὺς) forever” (7:17a) in the “b’” sub-element. And “according to the likeness of Melchizedek (κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα Μελχισέδεκ)” (7:15a) in the “a” sub-element progresses to “according to the order of Melchizedek (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ)” (7:17b) in the “a’” sub-element.

Whereas it is “clear” (πρόδηλον) that our Lord sprang up from the tribe of Judah (7:14a), it is “even more” (περισσότερον) yet “quite clear” (κατάδηλόν) in God’s plan, if our Lord arises as a different priest according to the likeness of Melchizedek (7:15). This recalls that when God “even more” (περισσότερον) planned to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his plan, he guaranteed it with an oath (6:17). The high priest who is able to sympathize with our weaknesses, as one who has been tested in all things in “likeness” (ὁμοιότητα) to us, yet without sin (4:15), is the “different priest who arises” (ἀνίσταται ἱερεὺς ἕτερος) according to the “likeness” (ὁμοιότητα) of Melchizedek (7:15). He is “the different priest to arise” (ἕτερον ἀνίστασθαι ἱερέα) and not said to be according to the order of Aaron (7:11). The audience are thus to appreciate not only his difference from Levitical priests but also his likeness to both Melchizedek and to themselves.

According to the likeness of Melchizedek a different priest arises, one who “has come about” (γέγονεν) not according to a “law” (νόμον) of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an indestructible life (7:16). This represents the change of “law” (νόμου), the “law given” (νενομοθέτηται) on the basis of the Levitical priesthood (7:11a), that

<sup>6</sup> These are the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the preposition “according to” (κατὰ) with anarthrous objects; cf. 7:15, 17.

“comes about” (γίνεται) of necessity when there is a change of priesthood (7:12). This different priest has come about “not according to” (οὐ κατὰ) a law of a fleshly “commandment” (ἐντολῆς), like the “commandment” (ἐντολήν) to tithe the people according to the “law” (νόμον) that those sons of Levi who receive the priesthood have (7:5), “but according to” (ἀλλὰ κατὰ) the power of an indestructible life (7:16).

That this different priest has come about according to the power of an indestructible “life (ζωῆς)” (7:16) further specifies his likeness to Melchizedek (7:15), who does not have end of “life” (ζωῆς), but remains a priest for all time (7:3), as he “goes on living” (ζῆ) forever (7:8). This life has its source in the “living” (ζῶντος) God from whom the audience are to make sure that none of them falls away (3:12; cf. 4:12). It reminds the audience that Jesus partook of their humanity, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the strength of death, that is the devil, and free those, as many as by fear of death through all their “life” (ζῆν) were held in slavery (2:14-15).

As Melchizedek, who remains a “priest” (ἱερέυς) for all time (7:3), is “testified” (μαρτυρούμενος) that he goes on living (7:8), so regarding the different “priest” (ἱερέυς) who arises (7:15c), it is “testified” (μαρτυρεῖται) by the scriptural voice of God in Ps 109:4 that “you are a priest (ἱερέυς) forever” (7:17a). That it is testified that “you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ)” (7:17b) explains what it means for a different priest to arise “according to the likeness of Melchizedek (κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα Μελχισέδεκ)” (7:15b). It means he arises “according” (κατὰ) to the power of an indestructible life (7:16c) that empowers him to remain a priest forever. Since there was no perfection through the Levitical priesthood, so that there was need for a different priest to arise “according to the order of Melchizedek (κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ)” (7:11), the audience are now poised to hear how this different, eternal priest brings about perfection.<sup>7</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 7:11-17

When the audience are asked at the beginning of this BD unit (7:11-17), “what further need according to the order of Melchizedek for a dif-

<sup>7</sup> David M. Moffitt, “‘If Another Priest Arises’: Jesus’ Resurrection and the High Priestly Christology of Hebrews,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham, et al.; LNTS 378; London: Clark, 2008), 68–79.

ferent priest to arise?” (7:11), they hear the catch word, “Melchizedek,” that serves as the transitional connection from the previous BC unit (7:1-10). This unit concludes with the notice that Levi was still in the loins of his father Abraham when Melchizedek met him (7:10). These catch words retain the audience’s focus on the key figure of Melchizedek in the comparison of his superior priesthood to that of the sons of Levi.

With regard to the third macrochiastic level, at this point the audience have heard the central, unparalleled Bac unit (7:1-10) with its description of Melchizedek as a priest who goes on living forever (7:8). Then, at the climactic conclusion of this Bab' unit (7:11-17), the audience hear the quotation of Ps 109:4 in reference to the “different priest” to arise (7:11, 15), “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (7:17). This reminds the audience that Jesus, as forerunner on our behalf, entered into the interior of the heavenly veil, “according to the order of Melchizedek becoming high priest forever” (6:20), as stated at the climactic conclusion of the Bab unit (6:13-20).

“For it is clear that our Lord sprang up from Judah” (7:14a) stands as the central, unparalleled element of this chiastic unit (7:11-17). After the audience hear it, they experience a pivot of chiastic parallels from the notice that our Lord partook in a different “tribe” from which “no one” attended to the altar (7:13) to the explanation of Judah as that “tribe” about which Moses spoke “nothing” concerning priests (7:14b).

The audience then are presented with a series of progressions, via the chiastic parallels. Since there was no perfection through the Levitical priesthood, on the basis of which the people were “given law,” there was need for a different priest to “arise” not according to the Levitical order of Aaron (7:11), and that means a change of “law” also “comes about” (7:12). This progresses to the very clear assertion that this different priest who “arises” has “come about” not according to a “law” of a fleshly commandment but according to the power of an indestructible life (7:15-16). And since this different priest arises “according to the order of Melchizedek” (7:11), the scriptural voice of God in Ps 109:4 testifies that “you are priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (7:17). Consequently, the audience are now poised to hear how this different priest, who, like Melchizedek, is a priest *forever* according to the divine *power of an indestructible life*, brings about the perfection the Levitical priests could not.



## Hebrews 7:18-28

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- A<sup>18</sup> For on the one hand a removal of a former commandment comes about because of its *weakness* and uselessness,<sup>19</sup> For *the law* made nothing *perfect*. On the other hand there is the introduction of a better hope through which we are drawing near to God.<sup>20</sup> And as much as this was not without an *oath-taking*, for they without an *oath-taking* have become priests,<sup>21</sup> but with an *oath-taking* through the one saying to him, “The Lord has sworn and will not change, ‘You are a priest forever’” (Ps 109:4),<sup>22</sup> by so much has Jesus become the surety of a better covenant.
- B<sup>23</sup> And they, on the one hand, who have become priests were many because they were prevented by death from *remaining on*,
- B'<sup>24</sup> but he, on the other hand, because he *remains* forever, has the priesthood that is permanent,<sup>25</sup> whence also he is able to save completely those who approach God through him, always living to intercede on behalf of them.
- A'<sup>26</sup> For such a high priest is indeed fitting for us—devout, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, having become higher than the heavens,<sup>27</sup> who does not have each day a necessity, just as the high priests, first on behalf of his own sins to offer up sacrifices then of the people, for this he did once for all having offered up himself.<sup>28</sup> For *the law* appoints men having *weakness* as high priests, but the word of the *oath-taking* that is after *the law* a Son who forever has been made *perfect*.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 7:18-28

Toward the conclusion of the preceding BD unit (7:11-17) is the statement that a different priest arises, who not according to a law of a fleshly “commandment” (ἐντολῆς) “has come about (γέγονεν)” (7:16). This provides the catch words connecting this unit to the following BE unit (7:18-28), which begins by stating that a removal of a former “commandment”

(ἐντολῆς) “comes about” (γίνεται) because of its weakness and uselessness (7:18). The transition thus keeps a focus on what comes about when a commandment of the law in regard to priesthood is changed.

The only occurrences in this unit (7:18-28) of expressions for “weakness,” “the law, and “make perfect,” as well as the only occurrences in Hebrews of “oath-taking,” establish the chiasmic parallels for the A (7:18-22) and A' (7:26-28) elements. “Because of its weakness (ἀσθενές)” occurs in 7:18 and “men having weakness (ἀσθενείαν)” in 7:28. “For the law (ὁ νόμος) made nothing perfect (ἐτελείωσεν)” occurs in 7:19 and “for the law (ὁ νόμος) appoints men” as well as “after the law (τὸν νόμον) a Son who forever has been made perfect (τετελειωμένον)” in 7:28. “Without an oath-taking (ὀρκωμοσίας), for they without an oath-taking (ὀρκωμοσίας) have become priests, but with an oath-taking (ὀρκωμοσίας)” occurs in 7:20-21 and “the word of the oath-taking (ὀρκωμοσίας)” in 7:28. The parallels for the B (7:23) and B' (7:24-25) elements are set by the only occurrences in this unit of expressions for “remaining”—“they were prevented by death from remaining on (παραμένειν)” in 7:23 and “because he remains (μένειν) forever” in 7:24.

Within the third macrochiastic level of the letter to the Hebrews, this Baa' unit (7:18-28) exhibits a parallel relationship with the Baa unit (5:11-6:12). The parallelism is indicated by the only occurrences in this macrochiastic section (5:11-7:28) of terms for “word”—“concerning which much for us is the word (λόγος)” in 5:11, “inexperienced of the word (λόγου) of righteousness” in 5:13, “departing from the word (λόγον)” in 6:1, and the word (λόγος) of the oath-taking” in 7:28.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 7:18-28

### 1. Heb 7:18-22 (A): A Priest Forever with an Oath-Taking

Attention is drawn to the importance of oath-taking in becoming a priest: “For on the one hand a removal of a former commandment comes about because of its weakness and uselessness, for the law made nothing perfect. On the other hand there is the introduction of a better hope through which we are drawing near to God. And as much as this was not without an oath-taking, for they without an oath-taking have become priests, but with an oath-taking through the one saying to him, ‘The Lord

has sworn and will not change, “You are a priest forever” (Ps 109:4), by so much has Jesus become the surety of a better covenant” (7:18-22).

The audience have heard that there was no “perfection” (τελείωσις) through the Levitical priesthood, on the basis of which the people were “given law” (νενομοθέτηται), so that there was need for a different priest to arise, meaning that of necessity a change of “law” (νόμου) also “comes about (γίνεται)” (7:11-12). This change happens when a different priest arises, who not according to the “law” (νόμον) of a fleshly “commandment” (ἐντολῆς) “has come about” (γέγονεν), but according to the power of an indestructible life (7:15-16). And now they hear that a removal of a former “commandment” (ἐντολῆς) “comes about” (γίνεται) because of its weakness and uselessness, for the law (ὁ νόμος) made nothing perfect (ἐτελείωσεν)” (7:18-19a).<sup>1</sup> The audience are prepared to hear how the arrival of a different priest that brings a removal of a commandment of the law results in perfection.

The audience hear the remainder of the A element (7:18-22) of this unit as a chiasmic pattern in itself:

- a) On the other hand there is the introduction of a *better* hope through which we are drawing near to God (7:19b).
- b) And as much as this was not without an *oath-taking*, for they without an *oath-taking* have become *priests* (7:20),
- b') but with an *oath-taking* through the one saying to him, “The Lord has sworn and will not change, ‘You are a *priest* forever’ (Ps 109:4)” (7:21),
- a') by so much has Jesus become the surety of a *better* covenant (7:22).

When the audience hear “with an oath-taking (ὀρκωμοσίας)” and “you are a priest (ἱερεὺς) forever” (7:21) in the “b” sub-element, they experience a pivot of parallels at the center of the chiasm from “not without an oath-taking (ὀρκωμοσίας), for they without an oath-taking (ὀρκωμοσίας) have become priests (ἱερεῖς)” (7:20) in the “b” sub-element. These are the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the terms “oath-taking” and “priest.” They are then presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the term “better”—from “a better (κρείττονος) hope” (7:19b) in the “a” sub-element to “a better (κρείττονος) covenant” (7:22) in the “a” sub-element.

<sup>1</sup> The alliteration and assonance among the terms “removal” (ἀθέτησις), “weakness” (ἀσθενές), and “uselessness” (ἀνωφελές) underscore their close connection.

In contrast to the removal of a weak and useless commandment of the law that made nothing “perfect” (7:18-19a), that is, fit for the heavenly worship of God, there is the “introduction” (ἐπείσπαγωγή) by God of a better hope through which we are drawing near to God in a complete way, especially for participation in heavenly worship (7:19b).<sup>2</sup> This recalls God “leading in” (εἰσαγάγη) the firstborn Son into the heavenly world (1:6). This “better” (κρείττονος) hope takes its place in the line of those things the audience are to appreciate as “better”—Melchizedek as the “superior” or “better one” (κρείττονος) who blesses Abraham as his inferior (7:7), the “better” (κρείσσονα) things having to do with salvation (6:9), and the divine Son who has become so far “better” (κρείττων) than the angels (1:4).

The introduction of a better “hope” (ἐλπίδος) through which we are drawing near to God (7:19b) refers to the “hope” (ἐλπίδος) lying ahead, to which we may have a strong encouragement to hold fast (6:18). This better hope has been described as a sure and firm anchor of the soul which enters into the interior of the heavenly veil, where as forerunner on behalf of us Jesus entered (6:19-20a). The implication is that Jesus himself, as the eternal high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (6:20b), is this “better hope” through which we are drawing near to God. This is the “hope” (ἐλπίδος) of which each of us—each member of the audience—is to demonstrate the same eagerness for the assurance until the end (6:11). It is the “hope” (ἐλπίδος) to whose boldness and boast we are to hold as the worshipping household of Christ (3:6).<sup>3</sup>

“As much as” (καθ’ ὅσον) this introduction of a better hope was not without an oath-taking (7:20a) resonates with the greater glory of Jesus beyond Moses “just as” (καθ’ ὅσον) greater honor than the house has the one who furnishes it (3:3). The audience are to appreciate that this introduction of a better hope constituted by the establishment of Jesus Christ as an eternal high priest (7:19b) took place with an oath-taking, the significance of which is emphatically reinforced by means of a double negative—

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 148-49: “The noun ‘introduction,’ ἐπείσπαγωγή, means something that is present in a way it was not before. It occurs only here in the NT.” Koester, *Hebrews*, 336: “People could draw near to God in prayer and faith under the Mosaic Law, but Hebrews maintains that the priestly work of Christ enables people from all times and places to come before God in this complete way.”

<sup>3</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews*, 189: “Here, as in 6:15-19, the term ‘hope’ (ἐλπίς) is a way of designating Jesus himself. Because he has entered into God’s presence (6:20), the author and readers can declare with confidence that ‘through it’ (the hope that is Jesus) they are ‘approaching God.’”

“not without (οὐ χωρίς) an oath-taking” (7:20a). This is in contrast to the sons of Levi who have become priests (7:5) without an oath-taking (7:20b). But Jesus has become an eternal priest with an oath-taking through the God who pronounced the oath to him in Ps 109:4, “The Lord has sworn and will not change, ‘You are a priest forever’” (7:21). That the Lord God has “sworn” (ὤμοσεν) and will not change stands in contrast to what he “swore” (ὤμοσεν) to the unfaithful ancestors who disobeyed during the wandering in the wilderness (3:18), when he pronounced the oath of Ps 94:11, “As I swore (ὤμοσα) in my anger, ‘They will never enter into my rest!’” (3:11; 4:3).

That the Lord has “sworn” (ὤμοσεν) and “will not change (οὐ μεταμεληθήσεται)” (7:21) stands in continuity with the oath he promised to Abraham when he “swore” (ὤμοσεν) by himself, since he had by no one greater to “swear (ὀμόσαι)” (6:13). And it confirms that whereas men “swear” (ὀμνύουσιν) by someone greater, and, for confirmation, a limit to all dispute for them is the oath (6:16), when God even more planned to show the “unchangeableness” (ἀμετάθετον) of his plan, guaranteed it with an oath (6:17). This is so that it was through two “unchangeable” (ἀμεταθέτων) things, in which it was impossible for God to lie (6:18). The audience are to appreciate the superior authoritativeness of the unchangeable oath by which God emphatically swore to Jesus, “You are a priest forever” (7:21). The introduction of Jesus as a “better” (κρείττονος) hope through which we are drawing near to God (7:19b), the “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς) who entered into the interior of the heavenly veil as forerunner on our behalf (6:20), has thus progressed to the eternal priest “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς) as the surety of a “better” (κρείττονος) covenant (7:22).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The proper name “Jesus” stands in an emphatic final position in 7:22, recalling the previous occurrence of this name in 6:20. Johnson, *Hebrews*, 192-93: “Jesus is called the ἔγγυος of a better covenant. This term has the sense of a pledge, surety, or guarantee, for a contract. One party puts up such a pledge to ensure the other party that the contractual obligations will be met, at loss to himself if he fails to meet the obligations.” Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 153: “In the Hebrew Bible the word ‘covenant’ is commonly used to describe a relationship with God, either of an individual or of Israel as a people. . . . In secular Greek the word διαθήκη signifies a ‘testament’ or a ‘will.’” See also Peter Pilhofer, “ΚΡΕΙΤΤΟΝΟΣ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗΣ ΕΠΙΥΟΣ: Die Bedeutung der Präexistenzchristologie für die Theologie des Hebräerbriefs,” *TLZ* 121 (1996): 319-28; Peter Gräbe, “The New Covenant and Christian Identity in Hebrews,” in *A Cloud of Witnesses: The Theology of Hebrews in Its Ancient Contexts* (eds. Richard Bauckham, et al.; LNTS 387; London: Clark, 2008), 118-27; Barry C. Joslin, *Hebrews, Christ, and the Law: The Theology of the Mosaic Law in Hebrews 7:1-10:18* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2008).

2. *Heb 7:23 (B): They Were Prevented by Death from Remaining On*

The comparison with the Levitical priests continues: “And they, on the one hand, who have become priests were many because they were prevented by death from remaining on” (7:23). Not only did the sons of Levi “become priests” (ἱερεῖς γεγονότες) without an oath-taking (7:20), but they who have “become priests” (γεγονότες ἱερεῖς) were many. That they were many because they were prevented by death from “remaining on” (παρὰμένειν) highlights for the audience their difference from Melchizedek, who “remains” (μένει) a priest for all time (7:3). That they were prevented by “death” (θανάτῳ) indicates to the audience their contrast with Jesus whom God saved from “death (θανάτου)” (5:7), so that through his “death” (θανάτου) he might destroy the one who has the strength of “death” (θανάτου), that is the devil, and free those who by the fear of “death” (θανάτου) were held in slavery through all their life (2:14-15). Jesus underwent the suffering of “death” (θανάτου) and was crowned with glory and honor, so that, by the grace of God, he might taste “death” (θανάτου) on behalf of all (2:9).

3. *Heb 7:24-25 (B'): But He Remains Forever*

The focus returns to the priesthood of Jesus: “but he, on the other hand, because he remains forever, has the priesthood that is permanent, whence also he is able to save completely those who approach God through him, always living to intercede on behalf of them” (7:24-25). At this point, the audience experience a pivot of chiastic parallels involving expressions for “remaining”—from “they were prevented by death from remaining on (παρὰμένειν)” (7:23) in the B element to “he remains (μένειν) forever” (7:24) in the B' element.

In contrast to the Levitical priests who were many because they were prevented by death from “remaining on” (7:23), Jesus, because he “remains” a priest “forever” (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα), possesses the priesthood that is permanent (7:24). This recalls and reinforces for the audience that Jesus is a priest “forever” (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) according to the order of Melchizedek (5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21), and that he possesses a heavenly royal throne that is “forever (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα)” and ever (1:8). The permanent “priesthood” (ἱερωσύνην) Jesus

possesses represents the change of “priesthood” (ιερωσύνης) that took place (7:12), since through the Levitical “priesthood” (ιερωσύνης) there was no perfection (7:11).

Although there was no “perfection” (τελείωσις) through the Levitical priesthood (7:11), since the law involved with it made nothing “perfect (ἐτελείωσεν)” (7:18), Jesus, possessing the priesthood that is permanent (7:24), is able to save “completely” (παντελής) or “perfectly” for all time (7:25).<sup>5</sup> Having been made “perfect” (τελειωθείς), he became for all those who obey him a source of eternal salvation (5:9). Indeed, it was fitting for God to make Jesus, as the initiator of salvation, “perfect” (τελειῶσαι) through sufferings (2:10).

Since his prayers and supplications to the God who is “able” (δυνάμενον) to “save” (σώζειν) him from death were heard from his reverence (5:7), Jesus is “able” (δύναται) to “save” (σώζειν) completely and forever those who approach God through him” (7:25). The audience were previously exhorted, “Let us approach (προσερχώμεθα) then with boldness the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help” (4:16). Now they are to realize that Jesus is able to save them completely and forever as those who, as a worshiping assembly drawing near to “God (τῷ θεῷ)” (7:19), “approach” (προσερχομένους) “God” (τῷ θεῷ) through him.<sup>6</sup>

The close connection between Jesus as he who is “able to save completely” (σώζειν εἰς τὸ παντελὲς δύναται) and he who is “always living to intercede” (πάντοτε ζῶν εἰς τὸ ἐντυγχάνειν) is underscored by the similar construction and alliteration of the expressions (7:25). Jesus is always “living” (ζῶν) to intercede, because, according to the power of an indestruc-

<sup>5</sup> Regarding παντελής, Mitchell (*Hebrews*, 154) notes that it “carries both a temporal sense (forever) and a modal sense (completely). Whereas in the past commentators may have been split over which to choose, more recent interpreters prefer to retain the ambiguity of the term by including both meanings. Thus Jesus saves both ‘completely’ and ‘for all time.’” Attridge, *Hebrews*, 210: “[T]he very ambiguity of the phrase probably appealed to our author. Christ, because of his ‘inviolable’ priesthood, is able to offer participation in the same transcendent sphere of which he is a part. At the same time, the hallmark of Christ’s priestly status, and of the salvation it provides, is their eternal quality.”

<sup>6</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 1-8, 189: “The designation of those for whom Christ cares continually as τοὺς προσερχομένους, ‘those who approach [God],’ which makes use of an equivalent expression for the description of the community in v 19, is appropriate to the cultic imagery in the context. In the LXX the Greek expressions προσέρχεσθαι, ‘to approach,’ and ἐγγίξιν, ‘to draw near,’ are used interchangeably for the approach to God in worship.”

tible “life (ζωής)” (7:16), he became a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek, who goes on “living (ζῆ)” (7:8), not having an end of “life (ζωής)” (7:3). That Jesus is always “living” connotes his heavenly divine life, resonating with the word of the “living” (ζῶντος) God (3:12) that is itself always “living (ζῶν)” (4:12). He is thus able to free those, as many as by fear of death through all their “life” or “living” (ζῆν) were held in slavery (2:15). That Jesus is always living to intercede “on behalf of” (ὑπέρ) them, the audience who are to approach God through him (7:25), is a consequence of his entrance into the interior of the heavenly veil (6:19) as forerunner “on behalf of” (ὑπέρ) us (6:20).<sup>7</sup>

#### 4. Heb 7:26-28 (A'): The Word of the Oath-Taking Appoints a Son Forever Perfect

The audience hear the A' element (7:26-28) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) For such a *high priest* is indeed fitting for us—devout, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, having become higher than the heavens, who does not *have* each day a necessity, just as the *high priests* (7:26-27a),
- b) first on behalf of his own sins to *offer up* sacrifices (7:27b)
- c) then of the people (7:27c),
- b') for this he did once for all having *offered up* himself (7:27d).
- a') For the law appoints men *having* weakness as *high priests*, but the word of

<sup>7</sup> Horst Balz, “ἐντυγχάνω,” *EDNT* 1.461-62: “ἐντυγχάνω . . . belongs primarily to the conceptual world of the ruler’s court, where accusations against another and where requests on behalf of another are made with the hope of receiving a hearing. The narrower theological usage of the verbs in Romans 8 and Hebrews 7 take on their meaning from this background. . . . In Heb 7:25 Christ is the one who is high priest for eternity. Early Christian tradition thus brings together the motif of Christ’s exaltation with that of the intercessory or priestly approach of the exalted one to God’s right hand for the believer. Here Christ does not—as in Jewish texts—declare the merits of the faithful, but as the one who has always stood on their side interceding, he gives assistance.” Lane, *Hebrews* 1-8, 190: “With his exaltation to heaven, Jesus became the permanent intercessor for his people. . . . The direct result of his intercessory activity is the sustaining of the people and the securing of all that is necessary to the eschatological salvation mentioned in the previous clause.” See also James C. Miller, “Paul and Hebrews: A Comparison of Narrative Worlds,” in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights* (ed. Gabriella Gelardini; BIS 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 260–61.



the oath-taking that is after the law a Son who forever has been made perfect (7:28).

After the central and unparalleled “c” sub-element, “then of the people” (7:27c)—the only occurrence of the term “people” (λαός) in this unit, the audience experience a pivot of parallels established by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of expressions for “offer up.” “Offer up (ἀναφέρειν) sacrifices” (7:27b) in the “b” sub-element progresses to “having offered up (ἀνενέγκας) himself” (7:27d) in the “b” sub-element. Finally, the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels determined by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of terms for “high priest” and of the verb “have.” “Such a high priest (ἀρχιερεύς) . . . does not have (ἔχει) each day a necessity, just as the high priests (ἀρχιερεῖς)” (7:26-27a) in the “a” sub-element progresses to “the law appoints men having (ἔχοντας) weakness as high priests (ἀρχιερεῖς)” (7:28) in the “a” sub-element.

At this point the audience also experience a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the A (7:18-22) to the A' (7:26-28) element of this chiasmic unit. The A element asserts that a removal of a former commandment comes about because of its “weakness” (ἀσθενές) and uselessness, for “the law” (ὁ νόμος) made nothing “perfect (ἐτελείωσεν)” (7:19). It also asserts that Jesus became a priest forever not without an “oath-taking” (ὀρκωμοσίας), for they without an “oath-taking” (ὀρκωμοσίας) have become priests, but Jesus with an “oath-taking (ὀρκωμοσίας)” (7:20-21). These assertions progress to the assertion in the A' element that “the law” (ὁ νόμος) appoints men having “weakness” (ἀσθενείαν) as high priests, but the word of the “oath-taking” (ὀρκωμοσίας) that is after “the law” (τὸν νόμον) a Son who forever has been made “perfect (τετελειωμένον)” (7:28).

Just as it was “fitting” (ἔπρεπεν) for God, in leading many sons into glory, to make the initiator of their salvation, through sufferings perfect (2:10), so such a high priest—devout, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, having become higher than the heavens, is indeed “fitting” (ἔπρεπεν) for us (7:26). “Having become” (γενόμενος) so far better than the angels as more excellent beyond them he has inherited a name (1:4), Jesus sat at the right of the divine Majesty in the “heights (ὑψηλοῖς)” (1:3). And according to the order of Melchizedek “having become” (γενόμενος) high priest forever (6:20), Jesus is a high priest

“having become” (γενόμενος) “higher” (ὕψηλότερος) than the “heavens” (οὐρανῶν). These are the “heavens” (οὐρανοί) that are the works of his hands (1:10), the “heavens” (οὐρανοῦς) through which he has passed as our great high priest (4:14).<sup>8</sup>

As one who “has” (ἔχει) the priesthood that is permanent (7:24), Jesus does not “have” (ἔχει) each day a “necessity” (ἀνάγκην)—in accord with the “necessity” (ἀνάγκης) of a change in law when there is a change in priesthood (7:12), just as the Levitical high priests, first on behalf of his own sins to offer up sacrifices, then of the people (7:27). Every high priest is appointed by God to offer both gifts and “sacrifices” (θυσίας) on behalf of “sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)” (5:1). And he is obligated, just as concerning the “people” (λαοῦ), so also concerning himself, to offer concerning “sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)” (5:3). But Jesus, being without “sin (ἁμαρτίας)” (4:15) and separated from “sinners (ἁμαρτωλῶν)” (7:26), has no necessity on behalf of his own “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν) to offer up “sacrifices” (θυσίας), before offering them up for the sins of the “people (λαοῦ)” (7:27). He became a merciful and faithful high priest to expiate not his own sins but the “sins” (ἁμαρτίας) of the “people (λαοῦ)” (2:17). Indeed, having made purification for “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν), he sat at the right of the divine Majesty in the heavenly heights (1:3), empowered to intercede on behalf of the people—among whom are the audience—who approach God through him (7:25).

The Levitical high priests have a necessity “each day” (καθ’ ἡμέραν) to “offer up” (ἀναφέρειν) sacrifices for their own sins before offering for the sins of the people.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, Jesus did this “once for all” (ἐφάπαξ), that is, a completely effective “once” at his sacrificial death and a singularly definitive “for all time,” having “offered up” (ἀνενέγκας) himself (7:27).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The only two occurrences of the adjective “high” (ὕψιλος) in Hebrews are in 1:3 and 7:26, enhancing this echo. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 394: “Γενόμενος may imply the action of God.” Attridge, *Hebrews*, 213: “That Christ has become ‘higher (ὕψηλότερος) than the heavens’ is another retrospective phrase reminiscent of earlier references to the exaltation, as well as of the ‘heavenly’ dimension of Christ’s priesthood as sketched in this chapter.”

<sup>9</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 213: “But the double offering involved is clearly that of the Day of Atonement, which, as the author knows (9:7), was a once-yearly observance. . . . our author has somehow conflated the daily sacrifices with that of the Day of Atonement, which is for him the paradigm sacrifice.”

<sup>10</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 368: “The terms ἐφάπαξ (7:27; 9:12; 10:10) and ἅπαξ (6:4; 9:7, 26-28; 10:2; 12:26-27) have the quantitative sense of singularity and the qualitative sense of completeness. Christ’s sacrifice was singular because it achieved complete cleansing for sin, whereas the multiple Levitical sacrifices did not achieve complete cleansing, and therefore had to be repeated.” See also James W. Thompson, “EPHAPAX: The One and the Many in Hebrews,” *NTS* 53 (2007): 566–81.

The Christ who did not glorify “himself” (ἐαυτόν) in becoming high priest (5:5) once for all offered up “himself” (ἐαυτόν).<sup>11</sup>

In contrast to Jesus, a “high priest” (ἀρχιερεύς) separated from sinners (7:26), other “high priests” (ἀρχιερεῖς) have a necessity to offer up sacrifices not only for the sins of the people but for their own sins (7:27), because the law appoints men having weakness as “high priests (ἀρχιερεῖς)” (7:28). That “the law” (ὁ νόμος) appoints men having “weakness” (ἀσθενείαν) as high priests recalls that every high priest, who is taken from men and appointed by God on behalf of men (5:1) is surrounded by “weakness (ἀσθενείαν)” (5:2). It also recalls that a removal of a former commandment comes about because of its “weakness” (ἀσθενέες) and uselessness (7:18), for “the law” (ὁ νόμος) made nothing perfect (7:19a). In Jesus, however, we have a high priest able to sympathize with our “weaknesses (ἀσθενείας)” (4:15).

The word of the “oath-taking” (ὀρκωμοσίας) that is after “the law (τὸν νόμον)” (7:28) recalls that Jesus became a priest not without an “oath-taking” (ὀρκωμοσίας), whereas the sons of Levi without an “oath-taking” (ὀρκωμοσίας) have become priests (7:20). But Jesus became a priest emphatically with an “oath-taking” (ὀρκωμοσίας) through the God who declared to him, “The Lord has sworn and will not change, ‘You are a priest forever’ (Ps 109:4)” (7:21). The audience are thus to appreciate that by the authoritative and definitive word of the oath-taking God appointed Jesus not only a priest forever but also a Son. In contrast to “the law” (ὁ νόμος) that made nothing “perfect (ἐτελείωσεν)” (7:19a), as there was no “perfection” (τελείωσις) through the Levitical priesthood (7:11), Jesus forever has been made permanently, absolutely, and enduringly “perfect (τετελειωμένον)” (7:28). He is thus completely and fully fit for his role in the heavenly worship. This is the Jesus whom, through suffering, God made “perfect (τελειῶσαι)” (2:10), the Son who learned from the things he suffered obedience (5:8), and having been made “perfect” (τελειωθεῖς) by God, became a source of eternal salvation for all who obey him (5:9).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Christian A. Eberhart, “Characteristics of Sacrificial Metaphors in Hebrews,” in *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods—New Insights* (ed. Gabriella Gelardini; BIS 75; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 56–57; Barry C. Joslin, “Christ Bore the Sins of Many: Substitution and the Atonement in Hebrews,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 11 (2007): 74–103.

<sup>12</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 1-8, 196: “The verb τελειοῦν, ‘to perfect,’ is accordingly best understood in a dynamic sense as referring to the whole process by which Jesus was personally prepared and vocationally qualified for his continuing ministry in the presence of God. In v 28 that ministry is contemplated as an accomplished fact of singular importance to the stability of the community addressed.” See also Paolo Garuti, “Ebri

## C. Summary on Hebrews 7:18-28

When the audience are told at the beginning of this BE unit (7:18-28) that a removal of a former “commandment comes about” because of its weakness and uselessness (7:18), they hear the catch words that indicate the transition from the preceding BD unit (7:11-17). Toward the conclusion of that unit the audience were told that a different priest arises, who not according to a law of a fleshly “commandment has come about” (7:16). The audience have thus been prompted to listen for more about what comes about when a commandment of the law in regard to priesthood is changed.

With regard to the third macrochiastic level, at this point the audience are presented with a progression from the Baa unit (5:11-6:12) to this Baa' unit (7:18-28), via the chiastic parallels determined by the only occurrences in this macrochiastic section (5:11-7:28) of terms for “word.” The climactic “word” of the oath-taking by which God appointed Jesus not only a priest forever (7:21) but a Son who forever has been made perfect (7:28) echoes the “word” from which the author wishes to depart (6:1), the “word” of righteousness (5:13), concerning which much is the “word” and it is difficult to explain, since the audience have become sluggish in hearing (5:11).

At the center of this chiastic unit the audience experience a pivot of chiastic parallels. Whereas the sons of Levi were many because they were prevented by death from “remaining on” (7:23), Jesus, because he “remains” forever, has the priesthood that is permanent (7:24).

The audience are then presented with a series of progressions via the chiastic parallels. That a removal of a former commandment comes about because of its “weakness” and uselessness, for “the law” made nothing perfect (7:18-19a) progresses to the explanation that “the law” appoints men having “weakness” as high priests (7:28). The introduction of a better hope through which we are drawing near to God (7:19b) was not without an “oath-taking.” For the sons of Levi without an “oath-taking” have become priests (7:20), but Jesus with an “oath-taking” through God authoritatively and emphatically declaring to him, “The Lord has sworn and will not change, ‘You are a priest forever’ (Ps 109:4)” (7:21), so that Jesus has become the surety of a better covenant (7:22). This progresses to the word of the “oath-taking” that is after “the law,” by which God, in contrast to “the law” that made nothing “perfect” (7:19a), appoints Jesus as a Son who

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7,1-28: Un problema giuridico,” *DivThom* 97 (1994): 9-105; D. J. MacLeod, “Christ, the Believer’s High Priest: An Exposition of Hebrews 7:26-28,” *BSac* 162 (2005): 331-43.

forever has been made completely, definitively, and enduringly “perfect” by God (7:28).

As a Son who “forever” has been made perfect by God (7:28), Jesus has a priesthood that is permanent, because he remains “forever” (7:24), declared by God with an oath-taking as a priest “forever” (7:21). Thus, Jesus is able to save completely those among the audience who, as a worshiping assembly, approach God through him, the priest and Son always living to intercede on behalf of them (7:25).

## Hebrews 8:1-6

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- A<sup>8:1</sup> The main point of the things being said—we have such a high priest, who sat at the right of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,<sup>2a</sup> a *minister* of the holy things
- B<sup>2b</sup> and of the *tabernacle*, the true one, which the Lord, not man, set up.
- C<sup>3</sup> For every high priest is appointed to *offer* both *gifts* and sacrifices; whence it is necessary for this one also to have something which he may *offer*.
- D<sup>4a</sup> If then he would *be* on earth,
- D'<sup>4b</sup> he would not *be* a priest,
- C'<sup>4c</sup> there being those who *offer* the *gifts* according to a law,
- B'<sup>5</sup> who offer worship in a pattern and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses, who was about to complete the *tabernacle* was warned. For he says, “See that you make everything according to the model shown to you on the mountain” (Exod 25:40).
- A'<sup>6</sup> But now he has obtained a more excellent *ministry*, to the degree that he is guarantor of a better covenant, which on the basis of better promises was given law.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 8:1-6

At the conclusion of the preceding BE unit (7:18-28) is the statement that the law appoints men having weakness as “high priests” (ἀρχιερεῖς), but the word of the oath-taking that is after the law appoints the Jesus who is a priest forever (7:21) as also a Son who forever has been made perfect (7:28). At the beginning of this BF unit (8:1-6) is the statement that we have such a “high priest (ἀρχιερέα)” (8:1). These occurrences of terms for “high priest” thus serve as the transitional catch words connecting these units as they keep a focus on the theme of high priesthood.

The only occurrences in this unit of expressions for “minister/ministry” establish the chiasmic parallels for the A (8:1-2a) and A' (8:6) elements—“a minister (λειτουργός) of the holy things” in 8:2a and “a more excellent ministry (λειτουργίας)” in 8:6. The only occurrences in this unit of “tabernacle” determine the parallels for the B (8:2b) and the B' (8:5) elements—“the true tabernacle (σκηνής)” in 8:2b and “who was about to complete the tabernacle (σκηνήν)” in 8:5. The parallels for the C (8:3) and C' (8:4c) elements are indicated by the only occurrences in this unit of the verb “to offer” and the noun “gift”—“appointed to offer (προσφέρειν) gifts (δῶρά) . . . which he may offer (προσενέγκῃ)” in 8:3 and “those who offer (προσφερόντων) the gifts (δῶρα)” in 8:4c. Finally, the only occurrences in this unit of the third person singular imperfect indicative active of the verb “to be” form the pivotal parallels for the central D (8:4a) and D' (8:4b) elements of the chiasm—“if then he would be (ἦν) on earth” in 8:4a and “he would not be (ἦν) a priest” in 8:4b.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 8:1-6

### 1. Heb 8:1-2a (A): A Minister of the Holy Things

The author focuses what is being said for the audience: “The main point of the things being said—we have such a high priest, who sat at the right of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the holy things” (8:1-2a). The main point of the things the audience have heard “being said” (λεγόμενοις), not only by the author but by God (cf. λέγοντος in 7:21; λέγεται in 7:13; λέγεσθαι in 7:11), is that we have “such” (τοιούτον) a “high priest (ἀρχιερέα)” (8:1). We have “such” (τοιούτος) a “high priest” (ἀρχιερεύς) who is fitting for us—devout, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, having become higher than the heavens (7:26), who once for all offered up himself for the sins of the people (7:27). He is such a high priest who is both a priest forever (7:21) and a divine Son who forever has been made perfect (7:28).

That such a “high priest we have (ἔχομεν ἀρχιερέα)” (8:1) resonates with the hope which “we have” (ἔχομεν) as an anchor of the soul, both sure and firm, and which enters into the interior of the heavenly veil (6:19). This hope is Jesus himself who, as forerunner on behalf of us entered, according to the order of Melchizedek having become “high priest” (ἀρχιερεύς)

forever (6:20). It includes the situation of the audience “having” (ἔχοντες) a great “high priest” (ἀρχιερέα) who has passed through the heavens (4:14). For we do not “have a high priest” (ἔχομεν ἀρχιερέα) who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses (4:15).

With an allusion to Ps 109:1, the audience have heard that, as the divine Son, Jesus “sat at the right of the Majesty in the heights (ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς)” (1:3). And now they hear that, as such a high priest, Jesus “sat at the right of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens (ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θρόνου τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς)” (8:1). That as such a high priest Jesus sat at the right of the heavenly “throne” (θρόνου) reinforces the exhortation that we approach with boldness the “throne” (θρόνῳ) of grace, so that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help (4:16) from Jesus our sympathetic high priest (4:15), whose “throne” (θρόνος) as divine Son is eternal (1:8). That as such a high priest Jesus sat at the right of the throne of the divine Majesty in the “heavens” (οὐρανοῖς) resonates with his having become higher than the “heavens” (οὐρανῶν) as such a high priest (7:26), the “heavens” (οὐρανούς) through which he passed as our great high priest (4:14), the “heavens” (οὐρανοί) that are the works of the hands of Jesus as the eternal divine Son (1:10).

As the audience have heard, the angels are God’s “ministers (λειτουργοῦς)” (1:7) and “ministering” (λειτουργικά) spirits who assist in the heavenly worship (1:14). But Jesus’ divinely authoritative seat as “such” a high priest at the right of the Majesty in the heavens (8:1) positions and empowers him for his high priestly role as “minister” (λειτουργός) of “the holy things” (τῶν ἁγίων), the things involved in the heavenly worship (8:2a) in which the audience are being invited to participate.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *Heb 8:2b (B): The True Tabernacle Which the Lord Set Up*

In Jesus we have a high priest who is a minister of “the holy things” (8:2a) and “of the tabernacle, the true one, which the Lord, not man, set up (cf. Num 24:6)” (8:2b). The audience are to appreciate that, as the high priest who sat at the right of the throne of God in the heavens (8:1), Jesus

<sup>1</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 1-8, 205: “The term λειτουργός is here virtually equivalent to ἀρχιερεὺς, ‘high priest,’ but emphasizes the cultic rather than the official aspect of the office. It implies activity (cf. 7:25), and not merely status.” Although often understood to refer to “the holy place” or “the sanctuary,” τῶν ἁγίων literally means “the holy things,” the things consecrated to God that render their location “the holy place” or “the sanctuary.” See Balz, “ἅγιος,” 17.



is a minister of the “tabernacle” (σκηνῆς), *the* true one, that is the place of heavenly worship, which the Lord, not a human being, erected.<sup>2</sup> The “Lord” (κύριος) God, the “Lord” (κύριος) who has sworn that Jesus is a priest forever (7:21), erected it not on earth but in heaven.<sup>3</sup>

3. *Heb 8:3 (C): Every High Priest Is Appointed To Offer Gifts*

The cultic role of a high priestly minister is then explained: “For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; whence it is necessary for this one also to have something which he may offer” (8:3). “For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices” (πᾶς γὰρ ἀρχιερεὺς εἰς τὸ προσφέρειν δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίας καθίσταται) reminds the audience of what they heard previously: “For every high priest (πᾶς γὰρ ἀρχιερεὺς) from men taken, on behalf of men is appointed (καθίσταται) in things regarding God, so that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices (ἵνα προσφέρῃ δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίας) on behalf of sins” (5:1). Thus it is necessary that “this one” (τοῦτον), that is, “such” (τοιούτον) a high priest that we have (8:1), to have something which he may offer. Whereas in the days of his flesh while on earth he “offered” (προσενέγκας) both prayers and supplications with strong outcrying and tears to the one who is able to save him from death, and he was heard from his reverence (5:7), as a high priestly minister in the heavenly worship it is necessary that he have something which he may “offer” (προσενέγκῃ). The audience are now awaiting an elaboration on what that “something” entails.

4. *Heb 8:4a (D): If Then He Would Be on Earth*

The audience begin to hear of the distinction of Jesus as a heavenly rather than earthly high priest: “If then he would be on earth” (8:4a). This

<sup>2</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 401: “Apart from 11:9, where it has the literal meaning ‘tent,’ σκηνή is used in Hebrews of a place of worship, either heavenly, as here and in 9:11, or earthly, under the Mosaic dispensation (8:5; 9:8, 21; 13:10). . . . In the present verse, the article before σκηνῆς indicates assumed information: ‘the well-known scriptural tabernacle’; the word order, and the repeated article, of τῆς σκηνῆς τῆς ἀληθινῆς, are emphatic.” Koester, *Hebrews*, 376: “The ‘true’ is heavenly and abiding in contrast to what is earthly and transient.”

<sup>3</sup> Albert Vanhoye, “La ‘teleiosis’ du Christ: Point capital de la Christologie sacerdotale d’Hébreux,” *NTS* 42 (1996): 321–38.

theoretical supposition about a possible earthly priesthood of Jesus serves to reinforce the focus of the audience on his role as a heavenly high priest.

*5. Heb 8:4b (D'): He Would Not Be a Priest*

The proposed supposition concludes that “he would not be a priest” (8:4b). At this point the audience experience a pivot in chiasmic parallels from “if then he would be (ἦν) on earth” (8:4a) in the D element to “he would not be (ἦν) a priest” in this D' element. This pivotal progression of parallels thus underlines for the audience the heavenly rather than earthly nature of this “priest” (ἱερεὺς), Jesus, as a “priest” (ἱερεὺς) forever according to the order of Melchizedek (5:6; 7:3, 15, 17, 21).

*6. Heb 8:4c (C'): Those Who Offer the Gifts according to Law*

Why Jesus would not be a priest if he would be on earth (8:4ab) is elaborated: “there being those who offer the gifts according to a law” (8:4c). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from “to offer (προσφέρειν) gifts (δῶρα)” and “something which he may offer (προσενέγκη)” (8:3) in the C element to “there being those who offer (προσφερόντων) the gifts (δῶρα) according to a law” (8:4c) in the C' element.

Whereas every high priest is appointed to offer gifts (8:3), those who offer gifts do so “according to a law (κατὰ νόμον)” (8:4c). This reminds the audience that Jesus arose as a different priest who has come about not “according to a law” (κατὰ νόμον) of a fleshly commandment but according to the power of an indestructible life (7:16).

*7. Heb 8:5 (B'): The Tabernacle Moses Was about To Complete*

Those who offer the gifts according to a law (8:4c) are further described: “who offer worship in a pattern and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses, who was about to complete the tabernacle was warned. For he says, ‘See that you make everything according to the model shown to you on the mountain (Exod 25:40)’” (8:5). At this point the audience experience a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the B to the B' elements

of this unit. The focus on the true, heavenly “tabernacle” (σκηνης) that the Lord set up (8:2b) progresses to a consideration of the earthly “tabernacle” (σκηνην) Moses was about to complete (8:5).

Previously the audience were exhorted to strive to enter into the heavenly rest of God himself, so that not anyone of them may fall in the same “pattern” (ὑποδείγματι) of disobedience as the wilderness ancestors (4:11), against whom God swore that they will never enter into his heavenly rest (3:11, 18; 4:3, 5). The negativity of this earthly “pattern” is implicitly present now as the audience hear about those who offer worship in a mere earthly “pattern” (ὑποδείγματι) and shadow of the heavenly things (8:5a). That they offer worship only in a pattern and shadow of the “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίων) things deepens the audience’s appreciation that they are those who have already tasted of the “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίου) gift (6:4), and who are partners of a “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίου) calling (3:1).

The audience have heard that in Jesus we have a heavenly enthroned high priest (8:1) who is a minister of the true, heavenly “tabernacle” (σκηνης), which the Lord God, not man, set up (8:2). In contrast, they now hear of the earthly “tabernacle” (σκηνην) to be completed by Moses, whom the scriptural voice of God warned in Exod 25:40 to see to it that he make everything according to the model shown to him by God (divine passive) on the mountain, an earthly correspondence to heaven (8:5b).<sup>4</sup> This continues the separation from and superiority of the heavenly high priest Jesus with regard to Moses. As the audience were told, Moses spoke nothing concerning priests about the tribe of Judah from which our Lord Jesus sprang up (7:14). Whereas those who came out of Egypt through Moses rebelled against God in the wilderness (3:16), Jesus enters into the interior of the heavenly veil as forerunner on behalf of us (6:19-20), the initiator of our salvation (2:10). And whereas Moses was faithful in all God’s house (3:2, 5), Jesus was considered worthy of greater glory beyond Moses as the heavenly enthroned divine Son over God’s house of worship (3:6).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The alliterative *inclusio* that begins and ends the quotation from Exod 25:40, “see (ὄρα)” and “on the mountain (ὄρει)” underlines the importance of making the tabernacle according to what is “seen” and shown on the “mountain.”

<sup>5</sup> Hermut Löhr, “Umriss’ und ‘Schatten’: Bemerkungen zur Zitierung von Ex 25,40 in Hebr 8,” *ZNW* 84 (1993): 218–32; Rascher, *Schriftauslegung*, 163–66.

8. *Heb 8:6 (A')*: But Now He Has Obtained a More Excellent Ministry

The audience hear more about the distinctiveness of Jesus as a heavenly high priest: “But now he has obtained a more excellent ministry, to the degree that he is guarantor of a better covenant, which on the basis of better promises was given law” (8:6). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from Jesus as a “minister” (λειτουργός) of the holy things (8:2a) in the A element to Jesus as the one who has obtained a more excellent “ministry (λειτουργία)” (8:6) in this A' element.

As the heavenly enthroned divine Son (1:3), Jesus has become so far “better” (κρείττων) than the angels “to the degree” (ὅσῳ) that “more excellent” (διαφορώτερον) beyond them he has inherited a name (1:4). And as the heavenly enthroned high priest who is a minister of the true, heavenly tabernacle (8:1-2), Jesus has obtained a “more excellent” (διαφορωτέρας) ministry, “to the degree” (ὅσῳ) that he is guarantor of a “better” (κρείττονός) covenant (8:6). The author has encouraged the audience to obtain the “better” (κρείσσονα) things having to do with salvation (6:9). Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek as the superior or “better” (κρείττονος) one (7:7). There is the introduction of a “better” (κρείττονος) hope, Jesus himself, through which we are drawing near to God (7:19). And Jesus has become the surety of a “better” (κρείττονος) covenant (7:22). But now the audience are to appreciate that Jesus is guarantor of a “better” (κρείττονός) covenant, which on the basis of “better” (κρείττοσιν) promises was given law (8:6).<sup>6</sup>

The “promise” (ἐπαγγελίας) to enter into God’s own heavenly rest still remains for the audience (4:1). The audience are to become imitators of those who through faith and patience are inheriting the “promises (ἐπαγγελίας)” (6:12). Having patience, which serves as an example for the audience to emulate, Abraham obtained the “promise (ἐπαγγελίας)” (6:15).

<sup>6</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 410: “In Hebrews, as elsewhere in the Bible, the covenant, whether old or new, is not a mutual agreement, contract, or negotiation, for which an arbitrator may be needed; it is a unilateral gift from God. . . . Christ’s mediation is thought of in Hebrews as similarly unilateral. He is an intermediary from God to humanity; his action on behalf of humanity in relation to God, though part of his priestly ministry, is described in other terms.” Thus, “guarantor” (μεσίτης) in 8:6 also means “mediator” or “intermediary”; see Koester, *Hebrews*, 378-79. Dieter Sängler, “μεσίτης,” *EDNT* 2.411: “Jesus as the μεσίτης is the *guarantor* and pledge of the final divine promise.”

When God planned to show to the heirs, which include the audience, of the “promise” (ἐπαγγελίας) the unchangeableness of his plan, he guaranteed it with an oath (6:17). And Melchizedek blessed Abraham as the one having the “promises (ἐπαγγελίας)” the audience are to inherit (7:6). But now the audience are to appreciate that Jesus is guarantor of a better covenant, which was given law on the basis of better “promises (ἐπαγγελίας)” (8:6).

Those of the sons of Levi who receive the priesthood have a commandment to tithe the people according to the “law (νόμον)” (7:5). But when the priesthood is changed, of necessity a change of “law” (νόμου) also comes about (7:12). Indeed, Jesus, arising as a different priest according to the order of Melchizedek (7:15), has come about not according to the “law” (νόμον) of a fleshly commandment but according to the power of an indestructible life (7:16). For the “law” (νόμος) made nothing perfect (7:19). Indeed, the “law” (νόμος) appoints men having weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath-taking that is after the “law” (νόμον) a Son who forever has been made perfect” (7:28). And so the audience are to appreciate that whereas the people were “given law” (νενομοθέτηται) “on the basis of” (ἐπί) the imperfect Levitical priesthood (7:11), Jesus, as heavenly high priest, is guarantor of a better covenant, which “on the basis of” (ἐπί) better promises was “given law (νενομοθέτηται)” (8:6).

### C. Summary on Hebrews 8:1-6

When the audience are told at the beginning of this BF unit (8:1-6) that the main point of the things being said is that we have such a “high priest” (8:1), they hear the catch word that indicates the transition from the preceding BE unit (7:18-28). At the conclusion of that unit the audience were told that the law appoints men having weakness as “high priests,” but the word of the oath-taking that is after the law a Son who forever has been made perfect (7:28). This eternally perfected divine Son is thus the kind of “high priest” we have.

At the center of this chiasmic unit the audience experience a pivot of chiasmic parallels involving a proposed supposition that if Jesus would “be” on earth (8:4a), he would not “be” a priest (8:4b). This pivot thus underlines for the audience the heavenly nature of Jesus’ unique priesthood.

The audience are then presented with a series of progressions via the chiasmic parallels. That every high priest is appointed “to offer” both “gifts”

and sacrifices; whence it is necessary for Jesus also to have something which he may “offer” (8:3) progresses to there being those who “offer” the “gifts” according to a law (8:4c). The focus on the “tabernacle,” the true one, which the Lord, not man, set up (8:2b) progresses to the “tabernacle” Moses was about to complete in accord with the instructions of the scriptural voice of God (Exod 25:40) that he make everything according to the model shown to him by God on the mountain (8:5). The main point of the things being said by the author as well as by God is that in Jesus we have a high priest who is also the heavenly enthroned and divinely perfected Son, a “minister” of the heavenly holy things (8:1-2a). This progresses to the audience’s appreciation that Jesus has obtained a more excellent “ministry,” to the degree that he is guarantor of a better covenant, which on the basis of better promises was given law (8:6).

The audience are thus poised for elaboration of what the “something” is that Jesus as the heavenly high priest has to offer as a minister who has obtained a more excellent ministry. How is he the guarantor of a better covenant, which was given law on the basis of better promises?

## Hebrews 8:7-13

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A' <sup>7</sup> For if that *first* one were faultless, for a second one would not have been sought a place. <sup>8</sup> For finding fault with them, he says, “Behold days are coming, says the *Lord*, when I will complete with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a *new* covenant,” <sup>9</sup> not according to the covenant, which I made with their fathers on the day of my taking hold of their hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, for they did not stay in my covenant, and I neglected them, says the *Lord*, <sup>10a</sup> for this is the covenant, which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the *Lord*, giving my laws into their mind and upon their hearts I will inscribe them,

B' <sup>10b</sup> and I will be to them *as God*,

B' <sup>10c</sup> and they will be to me *as people*.

A' <sup>11</sup> And they will certainly not teach each his fellow citizen and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the *Lord*,’ for all of them will know me from small to great, <sup>12</sup> for I will be merciful to the wrongdoings of them and the sins of them I will certainly remember no longer” (Jer 38:31-34).

<sup>13</sup> In saying “*new*,” he makes old the *first*, and what is becoming old and aging is near to disappearing.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 8:7-13

At the conclusion of the preceding BF unit (8:1-6) is the assertion that Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry, to the degree that he is guarantor of a better “covenant (διαθήκης)” (8:6). Toward the beginning of this BE' unit (8:7-13) is the quotation from Jer 38:31: “Behold days are coming, says the Lord, when I will complete with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant (διαθήκην)” (8:8). These occurrences of the term “covenant” thus serve as the transitional catch words connecting these units as they move the focus from the covenant as “better” to the covenant as “new.”

The only occurrences in this unit of the terms “first,” “Lord,” and “new” establish the parallels for the A (8:7-10a) and A' (8:11-13) elements of this chiastic unit. “If that first (πρώτη) one were faultless” occurs in 8:7 and “he makes old the first (πρώτην)” in 8:13. “Says the Lord (κύριος)” occurs in 8:8, 9, 10a and “know the Lord (κύριον)” in 8:11. “A new (καινήν) covenant” occurs in 8:8 and “in saying ‘new’ (καινήν)” in 8:13. And the only occurrences in this unit of the preposition εἰς with an anarthrous object provide the alliterative parallels for the B (8:10b) and the B' (8:10c) elements—“I will be to them as God (εἰς θεόν)” in 8:10b and “they will be to me as people (εἰς λαόν)” in 8:10c.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, after the central and pivotal BF chiastic unit (8:1-6) the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the BE' (8:7-13) and the BE (7:18-28) units provided by the terms “people” and “sins.” Jesus “does not have every day a necessity, just as the high priests, first on behalf of his own sins (ἁμαρτιῶν) to offer up sacrifices then of the people (λαοῦ), for this he did once for all having offered up himself” (7:27) in the BE unit. And God’s scriptural word promises that “they will be to me as people (λαόν)” (8:10d) and “the sins (ἁμαρτιῶν) of them I will certainly remember no longer” (8:12) in the BE' unit.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 8:7-13

### 1. Heb 8:7-10a (A): The Lord Will Replace the First with a New Covenant

The audience hear the A element (8:7-10a) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) For if *that* first one were faultless, for a second one would not have been sought a place. For finding fault with *them*, he says, “Behold *days* are coming, says the Lord, when I will complete with the *house* of Israel and with the *house* of Judah a new covenant, not according to the covenant, which I made with their fathers on the *day* of my taking hold of their hand to lead *them* out of the land of Egypt (8:7-9c),
- b) *for* they did not stay in my *covenant* (8:9d),
- c) and I neglected them, says the Lord (8:9e),
- b') *for* this is the *covenant* (8:10a),

<sup>1</sup> The same preposition occurs in 8:10a but with an articular object—“into their mind” (εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν).



- a') which I will covenant with the *house* of Israel after *those days*, says the Lord, giving my laws into their mind and upon their hearts I will inscribe *them* (8:10b).

After the central and unparalleled “c” sub-element, which contains the only occurrence of the verb “neglect” in this sub-unit—“and I neglected (ἡμέλησα) them, says the Lord” (8:9e), the audience experience a pivot of parallels involving the noun “covenant” following the conjunction “for.” “For (ὅτι) they did not stay in my covenant (διαθήκη)” (8:9d) in the “b” sub-element progresses to “for (ὅτι) this is the covenant (διαθήκη)” (8:10a) in the “b” sub-element. The audience are then presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels established by occurrences of “that/those,” “them,” “day(s),” and “house,” from the “a” to the “a” sub-elements. It begins with “for if that (ἐκείνη) first one were faultless . . . finding fault with them (αὐτούς), he says, ‘Behold days (ἡμέραι) are coming . . . when I will complete with the house (οἶκον) of Israel and with the house (οἶκον) of Judah a new covenant, not according to the covenant, which I made with their fathers on the day (ἡμέρα) of my taking hold of their hand to lead them (αὐτούς)’” (8:7-9c). And then progresses to “I will covenant with the house (οἶκον) of Israel after those (ἐκείνας) days (ἡμέρας), says the Lord, giving my laws into their mind and upon their hearts I will inscribe them (αὐτούς)” (8:10b).

After being told that Jesus “has obtained a more excellent ministry, to the degree that he is guarantor of a better covenant, which on the basis of better promises was given law” (8:6), the audience hear that if that “first one,” that is the first covenant, were faultless, a place would not have been sought by God (divine passive) for a second covenant (8:7). They then hear the remainder of this “a” sub-element (8:7-9c) as yet another chiasmic pattern in itself:

- a) For finding fault with *them*, he says (8:8a),
  - b) “Behold *days* are coming, says the Lord, when I will complete with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah (8:8b)
  - c) a new *covenant* (8:8c)
  - c') not according to the *covenant* (8:9a),
  - b') which I made with their fathers on the *day* (8:9b)
- a') of my taking hold of their hand to lead *them* out of the land of Egypt” (8:9c).

At the center of this chiasmic sub-unit (8:8-9c) the audience experience a pivot of parallels established by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of

the term “covenant”—from “a new covenant (διαθήκην)” (8:8c) in the “c” sub-element to “not according to the covenant (διαθήκην)” (8:9a) in the “c” sub-element. They are then presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels determined by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the term “day,” from “behold days (ἡμέραι) are coming” (8:8b) in the “b” sub-element to “which I made with their fathers on the day (ἡμέρα)” (8:9b) in the “b” sub-element. Finally, the audience are provided a progression, via the chiasmic parallels formed by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the third person plural accusative masculine pronoun “them,” from “finding fault with them (αὐτούς)” (8:8a) in the “a” sub-element to “taking hold of their hand to lead them (αὐτούς)” (8:9c) in the “a” sub-element.

That the first covenant was not “faultless” (ἄμεμπτος), so that God sought a place for a second (8:7) is reinforced for the audience with the reference to God “finding fault” (μεμφόμενος) with “them” (αὐτούς), that is, with those with whom he made the first covenant (8:8a).<sup>2</sup> Consequently, as God “says” (λέγει) in pronouncing the promise from the quotation of Jer 38:31-34, “Behold days are coming,” emphatically underscored as the authoritative word of God by “says (λέγει) the Lord,” “when I will complete with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant” (8:8). Recalling that at the end of these “days” (ἡμερῶν) God has spoken to us in a Son (1:2), the audience realize that they are now living in the quotation’s coming “days” (ἡμέραι) promised by God.<sup>3</sup> The promise of God that “I will complete” (συντελέσω) a new covenant connotes its perfection as a covenant that will not be broken.<sup>4</sup> God will complete a new covenant not only with the house of Israel but with the house of “Judah” (Ἰούδα), recalling that our Lord sprang up from “Judah (Ἰούδα)” (7:14).

This promised new covenant to be completed in the “days” (ἡμέραι) that are coming will not be in accord with the covenant (8:9a) God made with their “fathers” (πατράσιν; cf. 1:1) on that past “day (ἡμέρα)” (8:9b) of

<sup>2</sup> For the text-critical preference of the accusative αὐτούς rather than the variant dative αὐτοῖς for “them,” see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 597; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 415; Koester, *Hebrews*, 385.

<sup>3</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 227; Koester, *Hebrews*, 385: “In Hebrews the coming days have arrived (Heb 1:2), although final redemption remains future.”

<sup>4</sup> On the verb “I will complete,” Attridge (*Hebrews*, 227) notes: “While the verb used here is not synonymous with τελειοῦν, it recalls the prominent motif of Christ’s perfection and one of the effects of the new covenant and its sacrifice will be the perfection of believers.” According to Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 416), Hebrews may be following the usage of Jer 41:8, 15, “in reserving συντελέω for a covenant which is not broken.” See also Joslin, *Hebrews*, 186 n. 49.

his taking hold of their hand to lead “them” (αὐτούς), the same “them” (αὐτούς) with whom he found fault (8:8a), out of the land of Egypt (8:9c). God’s “taking hold” (ἐπιλαβομένου) of their hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, that is out of slavery, was the precedent for Jesus not “taking hold” (ἐπιλαμβάνεται) of angels but “taking hold” (ἐπιλαμβάνεται) rather of the descendants of Abraham, his fellow human beings (2:16), in freeing them from slavery to the fear of death (2:15). That God led them out of the land of “Egypt” (Αἰγύπτου) reminds the audience that those who came out of “Egypt” (Αἰγύπτου) through Moses rebelled against God (3:16).

The audience hear the scriptural voice of God declare that as a consequence of their not staying in God’s covenant (8:9d), God has “neglected” (ἡμέλησα) them, emphatically underlined by “says the Lord (κύριος)” God (8:9e). This reinforces the previous cohortative question of how we will escape, “neglecting” (ἀμελήσαντες) so great a salvation, which received a beginning of being spoken through the “Lord” (κυρίου) Jesus Christ (2:3).<sup>5</sup> Since they did not stay in God’s first covenant, the scriptural voice of God promises that “this is the covenant” (8:10a) that he will covenant with the house of Israel after “those days” (ἡμέρας ἐκείνας), that is, after the promised coming “days (ἡμέραι)” (8:8b) following “that” (ἐκείνη) first covenant (8:7), again, for the third time, emphatically underscored with “says the Lord” (8:10b; cf. 8:8b, 9e). According to this new covenant, God will give his laws into their mind and upon their hearts he will inscribe “them” (αὐτούς)” (8:10b). God’s laws will thus be within “them” (αὐτούς) with whom he found fault (8:8a), despite leading “them” (αὐτούς) out of the land of Egypt (8:9c).

The audience have heard how laws associated with the first covenant regulated in an external way. The sons of Levi who receive the priesthood have a commandment to tithe the people according to the “law” (νόμον) that is external to them (7:5). On the basis of the Levitical priesthood the people “were given law” (νενομοθέτηται) that is external to them (7:11). Levites became priests according to an external “law” (νόμον) of a fleshly commandment (7:16). Earthly priests offer gifts according to a “law” (νόμον) that is external to them (8:4).

But the audience have also been alerted to anticipate that a change of priesthood brings a necessary change to this external “law (νόμου)” (7:12), for this “law” (νόμος) made nothing perfect (7:19). This external “law”

<sup>5</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 386; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 416: “Elsewhere in the Greek Bible, ἀμελέω is always used pejoratively with a human subject.”

(νόμος) appoints men having weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath-taking that is after this external “law” (νόμον) appoints a Son who forever has been made perfect (7:28). Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry, to the degree that he is guarantor of a better covenant, which on the basis of better promises “was given law (νενομοθέτηται)” (8:6). And now the scriptural voice of God promises the arrival of that necessary change to laws which are internal, “giving my laws (νόμους) into their mind and upon their hearts I will inscribe them” (8:10b).<sup>6</sup> The progression from the singular “law” to the plural “laws” indicates that the many individual laws broken in the past can now be kept because they are no longer external but internal.<sup>7</sup>

Previously the audience have heard the scriptural voice of God in the exhortation from Ps 94:7-11, “today when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts (καρδίας)” (3:8), and “they are always wandering in the heart (καρδία), and they have not known my ways” (3:10). They were warned “lest there be in anyone of you an evil heart (καρδία) of unfaithfulness in falling away from the living God” (3:12). They were again repeatedly exhorted, “today when you hear his voice, ‘do not harden your hearts (καρδίας) as in the rebellion’” (3:15), and “today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts (καρδίας)” (4:7). They have heard that the living word of God “is able to scrutinize deliberations and thoughts of the heart (καρδίας)” (4:12). And now, they hear the scriptural word of God promise to give his laws into their mind and “upon their hearts (καρδίας) I will inscribe them” (8:10b). The audience are thus attracted to what this new covenant can do in their own hearts, so that not anyone of them will have an evil heart of unfaithfulness causing them to fall away from the living God who offers eternal life.

<sup>6</sup> Joslin, *Hebrews*, 222-23: The law “is no longer seen as an intimidating external set of regulations, but has been internalized as a blessing of God that renews and changes the heart. . . . The writer of Hebrews can speak of the law’s inability to bring about perfection and the limits of its cultic requirements (external), and at the same time affirm with Jeremiah that in the New Covenant there is a positive value ascribed to the law (fulfilled and internalized). . . . That which is internalized has significant correspondence to the Mosaic commandments (continuity), yet not complete correspondence due to fulfillment (discontinuity).”

<sup>7</sup> Joslin, *Hebrews*, 199-200. Koester, *Hebrews*, 387: “Hebrews warns about hard and evil hearts that lead people astray, and the new covenant is instituted in order that hearts might be true rather than evil, and faithful rather than faithless. Completeness of obedience, rather than internalization, is the concern.”

2. *Heb 8:10c (B): And I Will Be to Them as God*

The promise pronounced by the scriptural voice of God from Jer 38:33 continues: “and I will be to them as God” (8:10c). God will not only give his laws into “their” (αὐτῶν) minds and inscribe them upon “their” (αὐτῶν) hearts (8:10b), but he will be to “them” (αὐτοῖς) as God. This scriptural promise of God, “and I will be to them as God” (καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς θεόν) reminds the audience of God’s corresponding scriptural promise (2 Sam 7:14) to Jesus, “I will be to him as a Father (ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα)” (1:5e). They have also been presented with the model that the scriptural promise (Isa 8:17b) pronounced by Jesus provided for responding to such a divine promise: “I will be confident in him (ἐγὼ ἔσομαι πεποιθὼς ἐπ’ αὐτῷ)” (2:13a).

3. *Heb 8:10d (B’): And They Will Be to Me as People*

The covenantal promise pronounced by the scriptural voice of God continues: “and they will be to me as people” (8:10d). At this point the audience experience the pivot in parallels from the B (8:10c) to the B’ element of this chiastic unit, from “I will be to them as God (εἰς θεόν)” to “and they will be to me as people (εἰς λαόν).”

Here God promises that although “they” (αὐτοί) did not stay in God’s first covenant (8:9d), now, in this new covenant, “they” (αὐτοί) will be to God as a people. Just as God’s scriptural promise that “I will be to him as Father” (1:5e) concluded with the reciprocal promise that “and he will be to me as a Son (καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν)” (1:5f), so now God’s scriptural promise that “I will be to them as God” (8:10c) concludes with the reciprocal promise that “and they will be to me as people (καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μοι εἰς λαόν)” (8:10d). The two parts of this reciprocal promise thus complete the familiar OT covenantal formula uniquely relating God to the people of God.<sup>8</sup>

The audience are thus to appreciate this close relationship between Jesus as the divine Son and high priest with the people of God. They have heard

<sup>8</sup> According to Johnson (*Hebrews*, 208) the formula can be translated literally as “I will be God with respect to them and they will be a people with respect to me.” Koester, *Hebrews*, 387: “This summarizes the covenantal relationship (Exod 6:7; 29:45; Lev 26:12; Deut 26:17-18; Jer 7:23; 24:7; 30:22; Ezek 11:20; 37:27; Hos 2:23; Zech 8:8; 2 Cor 6:16; Rev 21:3). The formula highlights the uniqueness of God’s relationship to his people.”

how Jesus became a merciful and faithful high priest in things regarding God in order to expiate the sins of the “people (λαοῦ)” (2:17), and that a sabbath rest remains for the “people” (λαῶ) of God (4:9). Every Levitical high priest is obligated, just as concerning the “people” (λαοῦ), so also concerning himself, to offer concerning sins (5:3). The Levitical priests tithe the “people” (λαόν) according to the law (7:5), and it was on the basis of the Levitical priesthood that the “people” (λαός) were given law (7:11). Jesus does not have every day the necessity, as the Levitical high priests, first on behalf of his own sins to offer up sacrifices then of the “people” (λαοῦ), for this he did once for all having offered up himself (7:27). This is the “people,” among whom are the audience, and regarding whom God now promises in this new covenant that “they will be to me as people (λαόν)” (8:10d). They will be God’s own people as a consequence of God’s promise to Jesus that “he will be to me as a Son” (1:5), since, as the heavenly enthroned divine Son, Jesus is also the eternal high priest of the people of God (7:28-8:6).

#### 4. Heb 8:11-13 (A'): In Saying “New” the Lord Makes Old the First Covenant

The audience hear the A' element (8:11-13) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) “And they will certainly not teach each his fellow citizen and each his brother, *saying*, ‘Know the Lord’ (8:11a),
- b) *for* all of *them* will know me from small to great (8:11b),
- b') *for* I will be merciful to the wrongdoings of *them* and the sins of *them* I will certainly remember no longer” (8:12).
- a') In *saying* “new,” he makes old the first, and what is becoming old and aging is near to disappearing (8:13).

At the center of this chiastic sub-unit the audience experience a pivot in parallels established by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the subordinating conjunction “for” (ὅτι) and the third person plural masculine genitive pronoun “them” (αὐτῶν). The pivot proceeds from “for (ὅτι) all of them (αὐτῶν) will know me” (8:11b) in the “b” sub-element to “for (ὅτι) I will be merciful to the wrongdoings of them (αὐτῶν) and the sins of them (αὐτῶν) I will certainly remember no longer” (8:12) in the “b” sub-

element. They are then presented with a progression of chiasmic parallels determined by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the verb “say”—from “saying (λέγων), ‘Know the Lord’” (8:11a), in the “a” sub-element to “in saying (λέγειν) ‘new’” (8:13) in the “a” sub-element.

At this point the audience are also presented with a progression of parallels from the A (8:7-10a) to the A' (8:11-13) elements of this chiasmic unit. “If that first (πρώτη) one were faultless” (8:7) progresses to “he makes old the first (πρώτην)” (8:13); the three occurrences of “says the Lord (κύριος)” (8:8, 9, 10a) progress to “know the Lord (κύριον)” (8:11); and “a new (καινήν) covenant” (8:8) progresses to “in saying ‘new’ (καινήν)” (8:13).

Although the audience have need for someone to “teach” (διδάσκειν) them the elements of the beginning of the sayings of God (5:12), in the new covenant the people of God will certainly not “teach” (διδάξωσιν) each his fellow citizen and each his brother to know the Lord (8:11a). The concern for each individual—that “each” (ἕκαστος) will not need to teach his fellow citizen and “each” (ἕκαστος) will not need to teach his brother—reinforces the exhortation that “each” (ἕκαστον) individual in the audience demonstrate the same eagerness for the assurance of the hope until the end (6:11). Although the scriptural voice of God from Ps 94:10 declared of the wilderness generation that “they have not known (ἔγνωσαν) my ways” (3:10), in this new covenant the scriptural voice of God from Jer 38:34 declares that individuals will not need to tell one another, “Know (γνῶθι) the Lord.” And that they will not need to teach one another to know the “Lord” (κύριον) follows from the previous threefold emphatic reverberation of “says the Lord (κύριος)” (8:8, 9, 10), which undergirds the pronouncement of the new covenant with a divinely definitive authority.

In this new covenant all of “them” (αὐτῶν), all of the people of God, from small to great will know the Lord (8:11b) as a God who will be merciful to the wrongdoings of “them” (αὐτῶν) and the sins of “them” (αὐτῶν) he will certainly remember no longer (8:12). That they will “certainly not” (οὐ μὴ) need to teach one another to know the Lord (8:11a) is reinforced by the Lord’s emphatically authoritative covenantal promise that he will “certainly not” (οὐ μὴ) remember their sins “any more” (ἔτι). The covenantal promise that “the sins of them I will (ἔσομαι) certainly remember no longer” specifies for the audience the significance of the promise that “I will (ἔσομαι) be to them as God” (8:10c). The God who “remembers” (μνησκει) the people he created (2:6) will certainly “remember” (μνησθῶ) their sins no longer.

At the beginning of the letter the audience were told that the divine Son, having made purification for “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν), sat at the right of the Majesty in the heights of heaven (1:3). Jesus became a merciful and faithful high priest in things regarding God in order to expiate the “sins” (ἁμαρτίας) of the people (2:17). The audience were exhorted to encourage one another that not anyone of them may become hardened by the deceit of “sin (ἁμαρτίας)” (3:13). In Jesus we have a high priest who is without “sin (ἁμαρτίας)” (4:15). Every Levitical high priest is to offer gifts and sacrifices on behalf of “sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)” (5:1), and is obligated, just as concerning the people, so also concerning himself, to offer concerning “sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)” (5:3). But Jesus does not have every day a necessity, like the Levitical high priests, first on behalf of his own “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν) to offer up sacrifices then of the people, for this he did once for all having offered up himself (7:27). The audience are thus to appreciate how the covenantal promise of God that “the sins (ἁμαρτιῶν) of them I will certainly remember no longer” (8:12) is based on this definitive self-sacrifice of Jesus as the heavenly enthroned divine Son and eternal high priest.<sup>9</sup>

God’s “saying” (λέγειν) “new (καινήν)” (8:13), thus underlining the newness of the “new” (καινήν) covenant (8:8), reinforces his covenantal promise that the people of God will not need to teach one another, “saying” (λέγων), “Know the Lord” (8:11). In saying “new,” God “makes old” (πεπαλαίωκεν) the “first” (πρώτην)—that “first” (πρώτη) covenant that was not faultless (8:7), and what is “becoming old” (παλαιούμενον) and aging is near to disappearing (8:13), reminding the audience that all of creation “will become old” (παλαιωθήσονται) and perish in contrast to Jesus as the exalted divine Son, who continues eternally (1:11). Just as earth that bears forth thorns and thistles is rejected and “near” (ἐγγύς) a curse, whose end is a burning (6:8), so the first covenant that is becoming old and aging is “near” (ἐγγύς) to disappearing. The audience are thus to deepen their appreciation for what this “new” covenant, which supplants the old and aging one that is near to disappearing, promises.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Sebastian Fuhrmann, “Failures Forgotten: The Soteriology in Hebrews Revisited in the Light of Its Quotation of Jeremiah 38:31–34 [LXX],” *Neot* 41 (2007): 295–316.

<sup>10</sup> R. Daniels, “How Does the Church Relate to the New Covenant? or Whose New Covenant Is It, Anyway?” *Faith & Mission* 16 (1999): 64–98.



### C. Summary on Hebrews 8:7-13

When the audience are told toward the beginning of this BE' unit (8:7-13) of God's promise of a new "covenant" (8:8), they hear the catch word that indicates the transition from the preceding BF unit (8:1-6). At the conclusion of that unit the audience were assured that Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry, to the degree that he is guarantor of a better "covenant" (8:6). The transition has moved the audience's attention from the covenant as "better" to that same covenant as "new."

In addition, at this point the audience experience a macrochiastic progression of parallels, involving the terms "sins" and "people," from the BE unit (7:18-28) to this BE' unit (8:7-13). In the BE unit they were assured that the high priest Jesus does not have every day a necessity, like the Levitical high priests, first on behalf of his own "sins" to offer up sacrifices then of the "people," for this he did once for all having offered up himself (7:27). This definitive self-sacrifice of the eternal high priest Jesus provides the basis for God's covenantal promise in the BE' unit that the "sins" of his "people," in accord with his promise that "I will be to them as God, and they will be to me as people" (8:10), God will certainly remember no longer (8:12).

At the center of this chiastic unit the audience experience a pivot of chiastic parallels within the scriptural quotation of Jer 38:31-34 from God's promise that "I will be to them as God" (8:10b) to the reciprocal promise that "they will be to me as people" (8:10c). After this familiar formulation, occurring frequently in the OT, of the covenantal relationship between God and the people of God, the audience are presented with a series of progressions via the chiastic parallels. The threefold refrain, "says the Lord" (8:8, 9, 10), that emphatically undergirds the promises of the covenant with divine authority progresses to God's promise that his people will not need to teach each other to know the "Lord," for every individual among them will know God (8:11) as a merciful God (8:12), whose laws God will give into their mind and inscribe upon their hearts (8:10). That the "first" covenant was not faultless (8:7), so that God sought a place for a second, "new" covenant (8:8) progresses to the climactic assertion that in saying "new" God makes old the "first" covenant, and what is becoming old and aging is near to disappearing (8:13), thus prompting the audience's deep appreciation for what this new covenant promises.

## Hebrews 9:1-10

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- A<sup>9a</sup> Even the first then had *regulations* for offering of worship and an earthly holy place.
- B<sup>2</sup> For a *tabernacle* was *furnished*, the first, in which were the lampstand and the table and the presentation of the loaves, which is *said* to be “holy things”.<sup>3</sup> And behind the *second* veil a *tabernacle* which is *said* to be “holy things of *holy things*,”
- C<sup>4a</sup> *having* a *golden* altar of incense and the ark of *the covenant*
- D<sup>4b</sup> covered on all sides with gold,
- C'<sup>4c</sup> in which were a *golden* jar *having* the manna and the staff of Aaron that sprouted and the tablets of *the covenant*,
- B'<sup>5</sup> and above it the cherubim of glory overshadowing the place of expiation. Concerning which things it is not now time to *speak* in detail.<sup>6</sup> These things thus *furnished*, into the first *tabernacle* continually go the priests completing the offerings of worship,<sup>7</sup> but into the *second* once a year only the high priest, not without blood which he offers on behalf of himself and of the inadvertent sins of the people,<sup>8</sup> this the Holy Spirit indicating, that the way to “the *holy things*” had not appeared while the first *tabernacle* had standing,
- A'<sup>9</sup> which is a parable for the time that has arrived, according to which both gifts and sacrifices are being offered not able according to conscience to make perfect the one offering worship,<sup>10</sup> only on the basis of foods and drinks and various baptisms, *regulations* of the flesh imposed until the time of correction.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 9:1-10

At the conclusion of the BE' unit (8:7-13) is the assertion that God makes old the “first” (πρώτην), that is the first covenant, and that what is becoming old and aging is near to disappearing (8:13). At the beginning of the following BD' unit (9:1-10) is the assertion that even this “first” (πρώτην)

covenant had regulations for offering of worship and an earthly holy place (9:1). These occurrences of the term “first” thus serve as the transitional catch words connecting these units as they retain a focus upon the “first” covenant to be replaced by the “new” covenant.

The only occurrences in Hebrews of the term “regulations” establish the parallels for the A (9:1) and A' (9:9-10) elements of this chiastic unit—“even the first then had regulations (δικαιώματα)” in 9:1 and “regulations (δικαιώματα) of the flesh” in 9:10. The only occurrences in this unit of the terms “tabernacle,” “furnish,” “say,” “second,” and the neuter plural genitive of the adjective “holy” determine the parallels for the B (9:2-3) and the B' (9:5-8) elements. “For a tabernacle (σκηνή) was furnished (κατεσκευάσθη) . . . which is said (λέγεται) to be ‘holy things.’ And behind the second (δεύτερον) veil a tabernacle (σκηνή) which is said (λεγομένη) to be ‘holy things of holy things (ἁγίων)’” occurs in 9:2-3. And “it is not now time to speak (λέγειν) in detail” occurs in 9:5, “these things thus furnished (κατεσκευασμένων), into the first tabernacle (σκηνήν)” in 9:6, “into the second (δευτέρα)” in 9:7, “the way to ‘the holy things (ἁγίων)’” in 9:8, and “while the first tabernacle (σκηνης) had standing” in 9:8.

The only occurrences in Hebrews of the adjective “golden” and of the present active nominative feminine singular participle “having,” as well as the only occurrences in this unit of the term “covenant,” form the parallels for the C (9:4a) and C' (9:4c) elements. “Having (ἔχουσα) a golden (χρυσῶν) altar of incense and the ark of the covenant (τῆς διαθήκης)” occurs in 9:4a and “in which were a golden (χρυσῇ) jar having (ἔχουσα) the manna and the staff of Aaron that sprouted and the tablets of the covenant (τῆς διαθήκης)” in 9:4c. The central and unparalleled D (9:4b) element comprises three terms that occur only here in Hebrews—“covered on all sides with gold” (περικεκαλυμμένην πάντοθεν χρυσίῳ).

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the BD (7:11-17) and BD' (9:1-10) units provided by the name of “Aaron.” In the BD unit the question is raised, “If then there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood, for the people on the basis of it were given law, what further need according to the order of Melchizedek for a different priest to arise and not said to be according to the order of Aaron?” (7:11). And in the BD' unit one of the items included in the ark of the covenant is “the staff of Aaron that sprouted” (9:4).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There are no occurrences in Hebrews of the name of Aaron between these; the only other occurrence is in 5:4.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 9:1-10

1. *Heb 9:1 (A): Regulations for Offering of Worship and an Earthly Holy Place*

The audience hear more about the first covenant: “Even the first then had regulations for offering of worship and an earthly holy place” (9:1). The “first” (πρώτη) covenant was not faultless, so that a place was sought for a second one (8:7). And although in announcing a new covenant, God makes old the “first” (πρώτην) covenant, so that it is near to disappearing (8:13), even the “first” (πρώτη) covenant had regulations for “offering of worship” (λατρείας), that is, the sacrificial worship of God, and an earthly holy place where that worship took place. But, as the audience recall, the earthly priests who offer the gifts according to a law (8:4), “offer worship” (λατρεύουσιν) in only a pattern and shadow of the heavenly things (8:5).

2. *Heb 9:2-3 (B): The Tabernacles and Holy Things*

The regulations for sacrificial worship in the first covenant (9:1) begin to be delineated: “For a tabernacle was furnished, the first, in which were the lampstand and the table and the presentation of the loaves, which is said to be ‘holy things.’ And behind the second veil a tabernacle which is said to be ‘holy things of holy things’” (9:2-3). The earthly holy place for sacrificial worship that the covenant, “the first” (ἡ πρώτη), had (9:1), that is, “the first” (ἡ πρώτη) which was not faultless (8:7), is further described as a tabernacle, “the first” (ἡ πρώτη).<sup>2</sup> This pointed designation closely associates this first tabernacle with the faulty first covenant that is becoming old, aging, and near to disappearing (8:13).<sup>3</sup>

That this first tabernacle was “furnished (κατεσκευάσθη)” (9:2) implies that it was ultimately furnished by God (divine passive). About to complete the tabernacle, Moses was warned by the scriptural voice of God in Exod 25:40 to make everything according to the model shown to him by God on the mountain (8:5). And the audience have heard that Jesus has been

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 173: “Although the use of πρώτη, ‘first,’ suggests that the author has more than one tent in mind, it will become clear in the next verse that he understands the sanctuary to be divided into two spaces.”

<sup>3</sup> Steve Stanley, “Hebrews 9:6–10: The ‘Parable’ of the Tabernacle,” *NovT* 37 (1995): 386–87: “[T]here is also an aspect of the first tent that makes it inferior to the second tent or holy of holies, just as the first covenant is inferior to the new covenant.”

considered worthy of greater glory beyond Moses, just as greater honor than the house has the one who “furnishes” (κατασκευάσας) it (3:3). For every house is “furnished” (κατασκευάζεται) by someone, but the one who “furnishes” (κατασκευάσας) all things is God (3:4).

This first tabernacle that was furnished by God also is “said” (λέγεται) by God (divine passive; cf. 7:13) to be “holy things” (ἅγια), since it contains the lampstand (Exod 25:31-39) and the table (Exod 25:23-30) and the presentation of the loaves (Exod 25:30; 2 Chr 13:11) as the “holy things” furnished by God for sacrificial worship (9:2).<sup>4</sup> And behind the “second” (δεύτερον) veil, analogous to the “second” (δευτέρως) covenant coming after the faulty first covenant (8:7), is a tabernacle which is “said” (λεγόμενη) by God (divine passive) to be “holy things of holy things (ἅγια ἁγίων)” (9:3; cf. Lev 6:10, 18, 22; 7:1, 6; 10:12, 17; 14:13; 1 Chr 23:13; Ezek 43:12).<sup>5</sup>

That this tabernacle is behind the second “veil” (καταπέτασμα) reminds the audience of the interior of the “veil (καταπετάσματος)” (6:19), where as forerunner on behalf of us Jesus entered, according to the order of Melchizedek having become high priest forever (6:20). This “tabernacle” (σκηνή), as well as the first “tabernacle (σκηνή)” (9:2), also recall for the audience the “tabernacle” (σκηνήν) completed by Moses in which earthly priests offer worship in only a pattern and shadow of the heavenly things (8:5). It stands in contrast, then, to the “tabernacle” (σκηνης), the true one, which the Lord, not man set up, and of which the high priest Jesus is a minister of the heavenly “holy things (ἁγίων)” (8:2).

### 3. Heb 9:4a (C): Having a Golden Altar of Incense and the Ark of the Covenant

The tabernacle behind the second veil is further described: “having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant” (9:4a).<sup>6</sup> The first tab-

<sup>4</sup> James Swetnam, “Hebrews 9,2: Some Suggestions About Text and Context,” *Melita Theologica* 51 (2000): 163–85.

<sup>5</sup> For detailed discussions of the OT background here, see William L. Lane, *Hebrews* 9–13 (WBC 47b; Dallas: Word Books, 1991), 219–20; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 421–24; Koester, *Hebrews*, 394; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 217–19; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 173–74. On the expression ἅγια ἁγίων, Lane (*Hebrews* 9–13, 220) notes: “The force of this expression is that of an emphatic superlative (‘the Most Holy Place’).”

<sup>6</sup> Westcott (*Hebrews*, 247) notes: “It is further to be observed that the word θυμιατήριον is left indefinite. . . . the writer . . . says simply χρυσοῦν θυμιατήριον, ‘a golden incense

ernacle was appropriately called “holy things,” since it was furnished with such holy things for offering of worship as the lampstand, the table, and the presentation of the loaves (9:2). But the second tabernacle was called “holy things of holy things,” or “most holy of things,” since it had an altar of incense, whose golden adornment is pointedly emphasized. “Golden” (χρυσοῦν) is heard by the audience as the first word in the clause, set off from “altar of incense” by the intervening participle “having.” In addition, this second tabernacle had “the ark of the covenant,” that is, of the first covenant, the one which is old, aging, and near to disappearing (8:13).<sup>7</sup>

#### 4. *Heb 9:4b (D): Covered on All Sides with Gold*

The ark of the covenant (9:4a) is further described as “covered on all sides with gold” (9:4b). Just as the “golden” (χρυσοῦν) adornment of the altar of incense inside the second tabernacle was highlighted for the audience, so they are to appreciate that the ark of the covenant was covered on all sides with “gold” (χρυσίῳ), appropriate to its character as one of the “holiest of holy things” (9:3).

#### 5. *Heb 9:4c (C'): The Tablets of the Covenant and a Golden Jar Having the Manna*

The contents of the ark of the covenant (9:4a) are then delineated: “in which were a golden jar having the manna and the staff of Aaron that sprouted and the tablets of the covenant” (9:4c). At this point, after the central and unparalleled D element, “covered on all sides with gold” (9:4b), the audience experience a pivot of parallels from the C to the C' element of this chiastic unit. The description of the second tabernacle as “having” (ἔχουσα) a golden (χρυσοῦν) altar of incense and the ark of the covenant (τῆς διαθήκης)” (9:4a) progresses to that of the contents of the ark of the

(altar).’ The word is descriptive and not the technical name of a special object.” F. Di Giovambattista, “Eb 9,2–5: la Tenda del Convegno nel Giorno dell’Espiazione. La *crux interpretum* di χρυσοῦν θυμιατήριον (9,4),” *Lugano Theological Review* 4 (1999): 29–52.

<sup>7</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 221: “The ark of the covenant was the most important object located within the Most Holy Place. It was a chest made of acacia wood and was covered on all sides with gold, with rings of gold in each corner through which the staves for lifting and transporting the ark from one place to another were to be permanently inserted (Exod 25:10-15; 37:1-5). The lid of the chest was the focal point for atonement.”

covenant, “in which were a golden (χρυσῇ) jar having (ἔχουσα) the manna and the staff of Aaron that sprouted and the tablets of the covenant (τῆς διαθήκης)” (9:4c).

With this reference to a golden jar, the audience have heard a triplet of expressions of the golden adornment of items within the second tabernacle. The triplet began with a focus on the second tabernacle as “having a golden altar of incense (χρυσοῦν ἔχουσα θυμιατήριον)” (9:4a), in which the adjective “golden” enhances the description of an indefinite “altar of incense.” It progressed to a focus on a definite “the ark of the covenant” (τὴν κιβωτὸν τῆς διαθήκης), whose complete golden adornment is highlighted with the use of the noun “gold” in the description of it as “covered on all sides with gold (περικεκαλυμμένην πάντοθεν χρυσίῳ)” (9:4b). And it concludes here with the mention of the first item within the ark of the covenant, “a golden jar having the manna (στάμνος χρυσῇ ἔχουσα τὸ μάννα)” (9:4c), in which the adjective “golden” enhances the description of an initially indefinite “jar.”<sup>8</sup> That these items are adorned with the precious metal of gold underscores for the audience their character as among the “holy things of holy things” God has furnished for sacrificial worship in the most holy place of God’s presence (9:1-3).<sup>9</sup>

Within the golden ark of the covenant was also “the staff of Aaron that sprouted” (9:4c). The miraculous sprouting of a flower from Aaron’s staff divinely confirmed the Levitical priesthood.<sup>10</sup> Hence its appropriateness as one of the “holy things of holy things” that God furnished for sacrificial worship in the tabernacle (9:1-3). The mention of the “staff” (ῥάβδος) of Aaron recalls for the audience the scriptural voice of God from Ps 44:7 addressed to Jesus as the heavenly enthroned eternal divine Son: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the staff (ῥάβδος) of uprightness is a staff (ῥάβδος) of your kingdom” (1:8). As the “staff” of Aaron indicated

<sup>8</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 395: “Manna was the food that appeared on the ground each day during Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness (Exod 16:31). About two quarts of it were preserved in a jar (Exod 16:32-34). The jar was made of gold according to Exod 16:33 LXX (but not MT).”

<sup>9</sup> Wescott, *Hebrews*, 248: “The solemn repetition of the word [‘gold’] emphasises the splendour of this typical sanctuary. Gold was the characteristic metal of the Holy of Holies.”

<sup>10</sup> Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 175: “The budding rod of Aaron, according to Num 17:16-24 (LXX), was placed by Moses in the Holy of Holies. Twelve staffs with the names of the heads of the tribes were to be placed in the sanctuary, before the Lord. Aaron’s name was to be inscribed on the staff of Levi. When Moses returned the next day he saw that Aaron’s rod had sprouted a flower. This indicated that he was chosen by God for the priesthood.”

that the tribe of Levi were divinely qualified to be earthly priests, so the audience are to appreciate that the “staff” of Jesus’ eternal enthronement indicates that he is divinely qualified to be the heavenly high priest. But that it is the staff of “Aaron” also reminds the audience that Jesus arose as a different priest, not according to the order of “Aaron” (7:11), although he was called by God to be a priest, just as was “Aaron” (5:4).

Also within the golden ark of “the covenant (τῆς διαθήκης)” (9:4a) were the tablets of “the covenant (τῆς διαθήκης)” (9:4c), on which were written the Law God gave to Moses.<sup>11</sup> Hence their appropriateness as among the “holy things of holy things” that God furnished for sacrificial worship in the tabernacle (9:1-3). But the ark and these tablets within it are of the first covenant that is old, aging, and near to disappearing (8:13). This repeated mention of the old “covenant” reminds the audience of the new “covenant” (διαθήκην) God promised (8:8), which is not according to the old “covenant” (διαθήκην), for the people did not stay in that “covenant (διαθήκη)” (8:9). This is the new “covenant” (διαθήκη) that, as God promises, “I will covenant” (διαθήσομαι) with them, “giving my laws into their mind and upon their hearts I will inscribe them, and I will be to them as God, and they will be to me as people” (8:10). As the heavenly high priest, Jesus is guarantor of this better “covenant (διαθήκης)” (8:6), having become the surety of this better “covenant (διαθήκης)” (7:22).

#### 6. *Heb 9:5-8 (B'): First Tabernacle Not the Way to the Holy Things*

The description of the golden ark of the covenant (9:4) continues: “and above it the cherubim of glory overshadowing the place of expiation. Concerning which things it is not now time to speak in detail” (9:5). Climaxing the descriptive enumeration of the “holy things of holy things” God furnished for sacrificial worship in the second tabernacle (9:1-3) is the focus on the “cherubim,” that is, the two winged figures, of God’s glory above the golden ark of the covenant.<sup>12</sup> They were overshadowing the “place of

<sup>11</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 396: “Moses was understood to have received two stone ‘tablets of the covenant’ (Deut 9:9) on which the Law had been written by the finger of God (Deut 9:10; cf. Exod 34:27-28; 1 Kgs 8:9; 2 Chron 5:10). The tablets were put into the ark (Deut 10:1-5).”

<sup>12</sup> Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 175: “Exodus 25:18-22 describes two cherubim of hammered gold that faced each other with their wings spread. They were placed on each side of the mercy seat that was on the ark itself.” Koester, *Hebrews*, 396: “The genitive ‘of glory’



expiation” or “mercy seat” (ἱλαστήριον), the special cultic place at which atonement of sins was made during the sacrificial worship in the tabernacle.<sup>13</sup> That they were “overshadowing” (κατασκιάζοντα) it resonates alliteratively with the notice that the tabernacle was “furnished” (κατεσκευάσθη) by God for sacrificial worship.<sup>14</sup>

The description of them as the cherubim of God’s “glory (δόξης)” (9:5) reminds the audience that Jesus has been considered worthy of greater “glory” (δόξης) beyond Moses (3:3). It is through him, who was crowned with divine “glory” (δόξη) and honor (2:7, 9), that God will lead many sons to heavenly “glory (δόξαν)” (2:10). Indeed, Jesus, as God’s Son, is the radiance of the “glory” of God (1:3).

The author informs his audience that “concerning which things,” that is, the “holy things” God furnished for sacrificial worship, which he has been describing (9:1-5a), “it is not now time to speak in detail” (9:5b). What is “said” (λέγεται) by God to be “holy things” (9:2) and what is “said” (λεγομένη) by God to be “holy things of holy things” (9:3) in the B element thus progresses to the notice that the author will not now “speak” (λέγειν) further about these things in this B' element. Indicating that there is more that could be said regarding these things, the author abruptly concludes his description, with a poignant implication that at this time there is a more important point for the audience to consider.

The audience then hear the remainder of this B' element (9:6-8) as a chiasmic pattern in itself:

- a) These things thus furnished, into *the first tabernacle* (9:6a)
- b) continually go the *priests* completing the offerings of worship (9:6b),
- c) but into the second (9:7a)
- b') once a year only the *high priest*, not without blood which he offers on behalf of himself and of the inadvertent sins of the people, this the Holy Spirit indicating, that the way to “the holy things” had not appeared (9:7b-8a)
- a') while *the first tabernacle* had standing (9:8b).

could describe the cherubim themselves, but the context makes it likely that the glory is ‘God’s glory.’”

<sup>13</sup> Jürgen Roloff, “ἱλαστήριον,” *EDNT* 2.186: “Ἱλαστήριον . . . was the most important cult object in the most holy place in the tabernacle and the temple. It was a gold plate placed on the ark of the covenant. . . . As such it was the place at which atonement was made for the entire community of Israel.”

<sup>14</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 430: “The author’s choice of the word [κατασκιάζοντα] may be influenced by the wish to make an oral inclusion with κατεσκευάσθη in v. 2.”

After the central and unparalleled “c” sub-element, “but into the second” (9:7a), the audience experience a pivot of chiastic parallels from the “b” to the “b” sub-element, involving the terms “priests/high priest”—from “continually go the priests (ἱερεῖς)” (9:6b) to “once a year only the high priest (ἀρχιερέως)” (9:7b). They are then presented with a progression of parallels from the “a” to the “a” sub-element, established by the term “the first tabernacle”—from “into the first tabernacle (τὴν πρώτην σκηνήν)” (9:6a) to “while the first tabernacle (τῆς πρώτης σκηνῆς) had standing” (9:8b).

At this point the audience are presented with the remainder of the progression of parallels from the B to the B' element. In the B element they hear the statement that the first “tabernacle (σκηνή) was furnished (κατεσκευάσθη)” (9:2) and that “behind the second (δεύτερον) veil is a tabernacle (σκηνή) which is said to be ‘holy things of holy things (ἁγίων)’” (9:3). This progresses in the B' element to the notice that “these things thus furnished (κατεσκευασμένων), into the first tabernacle (σκηνήν) continually go the priests” (9:6) and that “into the second (δευτέραν) once a year only the high priest” (9:7) goes, concluding that “the way to ‘the holy things (ἁγίων)’ had not appeared while the first tabernacle (σκηνῆς) had standing” (9:8).

“These things thus furnished” (9:6a) refers to the things just described as furnished by God for sacrificial worship in the earthly holy place (9:1), a description that began with “the first tabernacle” that was “furnished” by God (9:2). Into “the first tabernacle” continually go the priests “completing” (ἐπιτελοῦντες) the “offerings of worship (λατρείας)” (9:6b).<sup>15</sup> As the audience recall, this is in the earthly tabernacle Moses was to “complete” (ἐπιτελεῖν) as only a pattern and shadow of the heavenly things (8:5), the earthly holy place for which there were regulations for “offering of worship” (λατρείας) under the first covenant (9:1).

Whereas into the first tabernacle continually go the priests completing the offerings of worship (9:6), into the “second” (δευτέραν), that is, the one behind the “second” (δεύτερον) veil, the tabernacle which is said to be “holy things of holy things” (9:3), once a year only goes the high priest (9:7a). This, as the audience recall, is the tabernacle analogously associated

<sup>15</sup> Dennis Hamm, “Praying ‘Regularly’ (not ‘Constantly’): A Note on the Cultic Background of *dia pantos* in Luke 24:53, Acts 10:2 and Hebrews 9:6, 13:15,” *ExpTim* 116 (2004): 50–52.

with the new, “second” (δευτέρας) covenant God sought to replace the old and aging first one (8:7).

As “high priest” (ἀρχιερεύς) he goes not without blood which he “offers” (προσφέρει) on behalf of himself and of the inadvertent sins of the “people (λαοῦ)” (9:7b).<sup>16</sup> This reminds the audience that every “high priest” (ἀρχιερεύς) is appointed so that he may “offer” (προσφέρειν) both gifts and sacrifices on behalf of sins (5:1). He is obligated, just as concerning the “people” (λαοῦ), so also concerning himself, to “offer” (προσφέρειν) concerning sins (5:3). But, as the audience are to appreciate, Jesus is a heavenly “high priest (ἀρχιερεύς)” (7:26) who does not have every day a necessity, just as the earthly “high priests” (ἀρχιερεῖς), first on behalf of his own sins to “offer up” (ἀναφέρειν) sacrifices then of the “people” (λαοῦ), for this he did once for all having “offered up” (ἀνενέγκας) himself (7:27). As every “high priest” (ἀρχιερεύς) is appointed to “offer” (προσφέρειν) gifts and sacrifices, Jesus, the heavenly and eternally perfected “high priest” (ἀρχιερέα) that we have (8:1), also has something which he may “offer (προσενέγκη)” (8:3).

The audience are aware of the distributions of the “Holy Spirit” (πνεύματος ἁγίου) according to the will of God (2:4). The “Holy Spirit” (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον) drew the audience’s attention to the scriptural voice of God (3:7). The audience have become partners of the “Holy Spirit (πνεύματος ἁγίου)” (6:4). And now the “Holy Spirit” (τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου) indicates that the way to “the holy things” had not appeared while the first tabernacle had standing (9:8). The way to the heavenly “holy things (ἁγίων)” had not appeared while the first “tabernacle” (σκηνῆς) had standing, because with that tabernacle appeared the way to the second “tabernacle” (σκηνή) and the earthly “holy things of holy things (ἁγίων)” (9:3). But, as the audience are to appreciate, in Jesus we have a heavenly high priest (8:1), who is a minister of the heavenly “holy things” (ἁγίων) and of the heavenly “tabernacle” (σκηνῆς), the true one, which the Lord, not man, set up (8:2).

That the way to the heavenly holy things had not appeared while the “first” (πρώτης) tabernacle had “standing (στάσιν)” (9:8) resonates with

<sup>16</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews*, 223: “This last term, τοῦ λαοῦ ἀγνοημάτων, (lit. ‘the ignorances of the people’) is strange and not well attested in the LXX, but it apparently reflects a distinction made by Num 15:22-30 and Lev 4:2-17 between ‘unwitting’ sins and others. The distinction does not, however, occur among the regulations for the Day of Atonement. Leviticus 16:16 and 30 declare that ‘all sins’ are expiated by the ritual.”

the fact that the analogous “first” (πρώτη) covenant was not faultless, so that for a second one God sought a “place (τόπος)” (8:7). The “standing” the first tabernacle had includes its position as the “first” (πρώτην) tabernacle into which the earthly priests go continually (9:6), while into the second once a year only the high priest goes (9:7a). This “first” (πρώτη) tabernacle (9:2) refers to the earthly holy place under the “first” (πρώτη) covenant (9:1). But in speaking of a new covenant, God makes old the “first” (πρώτην), and what is becoming old and aging is near to disappearing (8:13). The implication is that the first earthly tabernacle has likewise become old, as the standing it had prevented the appearance for the way to the heavenly holy things in the heavenly tabernacle (8:1-2).<sup>17</sup>

*7. Heb 9:9-10 (A'): Regulations of the Flesh Imposed until the Time of Correction*

The audience hear the A' element (9:9-10) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) which is a parable for the *time* that has arrived (9:9a),
  - b) *according to* which both gifts and sacrifices are being offered (9:9b)
  - c) not able (9:9c)
  - b') *according to* conscience to make perfect the one offering worship (9:9d),
- a') only on the basis of foods and drinks and various baptisms, regulations of the flesh imposed until the *time* of correction (9:10).

After the central “c” sub-element, “not able (μὴ δυνάμεναι)” (9:9c), unparalleled within this sub-unit, the audience experience a pivot of parallels established by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the preposition “according to.” The pivot proceeds from “according to (κατά) which both gifts and sacrifices are being offered” (9:9b) in the “b” sub-element to “according to (κατά) conscience” (9:9d) in the “b” sub-element. The audience are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels formed by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the term “time”—from “this is a parable for the time (καιρόν) that has arrived” (9:9a) in the “a” sub-element to “until the time (καιροῦ) of correction” (9:10) in the “a” sub-element.

<sup>17</sup> Clinton Wahlen, “‘The Pathway Into the Holy Places’ (Heb 9:8): Does It End at the Cross?” *Journal of Asia Adventist Seminary* 11 (2008): 43–55.

At this point the audience are also presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the A to the A' elements of this chiasmic unit (9:1-10). The “regulations” (δικαιώματα) for offering of worship (9:1) progress to “regulations” (δικαιώματα) of the flesh imposed until the time of correction (9:10).

The first tabernacle is a “parable” (παραβολή), that is, a comparison or analogy, for the present time of the audience, the “end of these days” (1:2), that has now “arrived” (ἐνεστηκότα), with the perfect tense underlining the definitiveness and ongoing nature of the arrival (9:9a). This is the time in which the first covenant is becoming old, aging, and near to disappearing, because God has promised a new covenant (8:13); it is the time in which the audience have already “tasted the beneficent pronouncement of God and the powers of the age to come” (6:5).

According to this “parable” or “analogy” between the first covenant and the first tabernacle, “both gifts and sacrifices are being offered (δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίαι προσφέρονται)” (9:9b). This reminds the audience that under the first covenant every high priest is appointed “to offer both gifts and sacrifices (προσφέρειν δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίας)” (8:3), and that every high priest is appointed so that he “may offer both gifts and sacrifices” (προσφέρη δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίας) on behalf of sins (5:1).

These gifts and sacrifices are not “able” (δυνάμεναι), that is, do not have the power (9:9c), according to conscience to make perfect the one offering worship (9:9d).<sup>18</sup> Their powerlessness aligns them with the wilderness ancestors who were not “able” (ἠδυνήθησαν) to enter into God’s promised heavenly rest because of unfaithfulness (3:19). This is in contrast, as the audience are to appreciate, with Jesus, who is “able” (δύναται) to save completely those who approach God through him (7:25). This power comes from the God who was “able” (δυνάμενον) to save him from death (5:7). As a high priest, Jesus is thus “able” (δυνάμενος) to deal patiently with those who are ignorant and wandering (5:2). In Jesus we do not have a high priest who is not “able” (δυνάμενον) to sympathize with our weaknesses (4:15). Indeed, in what Jesus himself suffered in being tested, those who are being tested he is “able” (δύναται) to help (2:18).

The inability (9:9c) of the gifts and sacrifices being offered “according to” the parable (9:9b) pivots the focus of the audience to what is “according to conscience (συνείδησιν),” that is, the consciousness or awareness of the sins on behalf of which the gifts and sacrifices are being offered (9:9d;

<sup>18</sup> On the significance of “not being able,” see Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 441-42.

5:1; 9:7).<sup>19</sup> They are not able according to conscience to “make perfect” (τελειῶσαι) the one offering worship (9:9d), because under the first covenant the law “made perfect (ἐτελειώσεν)” nothing (7:19) and there was no “perfection” (τελείωσις) through the Levitical priesthood (7:11). But, in a contrast the audience are to appreciate, Jesus is the initiator of their salvation whom God, through sufferings, “made perfect (τελειῶσαι)” (2:10). And having been “made perfect” (τελειωθεῖς), Jesus became for all those who obey him a source of eternal salvation (5:9). Indeed, as the divine Son appointed by God as a heavenly high priest, Jesus forever has been “made perfect (τετελειωμένον)” (7:28). The gifts and sacrifices offered under the first covenant are not able to make perfect the one “offering worship” (λατρεύοντα), because the high priests who offer them (8:4) “offer worship” (λατρεύουσιν) in only a pattern and shadow of the heavenly things (8:5).

These gifts and sacrifices being offered under the first covenant are not able according to conscience to “make perfect” (τελειῶσαι) the one offering worship (9:9), since they are offered “only on the basis of foods and drinks and various baptisms (βαπτισμοῖς)” (9:10a).<sup>20</sup> But, as the audience have been exhorted, they are to bear forward toward the “perfection (τελειότητα)” (6:1) that goes beyond the teaching about “baptisms (βαπτισμῶν)” (6:2). The implication is that to reach perfection they are to go beyond the gifts and sacrifices offered under the first covenant.

These gifts and sacrifices being offered according to the “regulations” (δικαιώματα) for offering of worship under the first covenant (9:1) are “regulations” (δικαιώματα) of the flesh imposed until the time of correction or setting things right (9:10b).<sup>21</sup> Recalling when Jesus was on earth in the days of his “flesh (σαρκός)” (5:7), when he shared in blood and “flesh (σαρκός)” (2:14), that these regulations are of the “flesh” (σαρκός) underscores their earthly, external dimension and thus their powerlessness to make the one offering worship perfect according to an internal conscience (9:9). But, as the audience are to appreciate, Jesus arises as a different priest who has come about not according to the law of a “fleshly” (σαρκίνης) command-

<sup>19</sup> For more on “conscience” here, see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 242; Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 225; Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 442; Koester, *Hebrews*, 399; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 226.

<sup>20</sup> For more regarding “foods and drinks and various baptisms” here, see Koester, *Hebrews*, 399; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 225-26.

<sup>21</sup> On “correction” or “setting things right” (διορθώσεως), Mitchell (*Hebrews*, 178) notes: “‘Time to set things right’ may also be translated as ‘time of correction,’ a term that can refer to the correction of a law. The expression occurs only here in the NT.”

ment but according to the power of an indestructible life (7:16). These regulations of the flesh are imposed by God (divine passive) until the “time” (καιροῦ) of correction, of setting things right. It is the “time” (καιρόν) that has now arrived (9:9) for the audience, as the time when the “first” covenant and its analogous “first” tabernacle are becoming old, aging, and near to disappearing, because of the arrival of the new covenant promised by God (8:13).<sup>22</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 9:1-10

When the audience are told at the beginning of this BD' unit (9:1-10) that even this “first” covenant had regulations for offering of worship and an earthly holy place (9:1), they hear the catch word that indicates the transition from the preceding BE' unit (8:7-13). At the conclusion of that unit the audience were informed that God makes old the “first,” that is the first covenant, and that what is becoming old and aging is near to disappearing (8:13). The transition retains the focus of the audience upon the “first” covenant to be replaced by the “new” covenant.

At this point the audience also experience a macrochiastic progression of parallels, involving the name of “Aaron,” from the BD unit (7:11-17) to this BD' unit (9:1-10). In the BD unit the audience are presented with a query that denigrates the Levitical priesthood associated with Aaron, “If then there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood, for the people on the basis of it were given law, what further need according to the order of Melchizedek for a different priest to arise and not said to be according to the order of Aaron?” (7:11). And in the BD' unit they hear that one of the items included in the ark of the covenant is “the staff of Aaron that sprouted” (9:4) to confirm the legitimacy of the Levitical priesthood that has proven to be deficient.

This chiastic unit's central and unparalleled element describes for the audience the ark of the covenant as “covered on all sides with gold” (9:4b). The audience then experience a pivot of parallels from the description of the second tabernacle “having” a “golden” altar of incense and the ark of “the covenant” (9:4a) to the description of the contents of this ark in

<sup>22</sup> Felix H. Cortez, “From the Holy to the Most Holy Place: The Period of Hebrews 9:6–10 and the Day of Atonement as a Metaphor of Transition,” *JBL* 125 (2006): 527–47.

which were a “golden” jar “having” the manna and the staff of Aaron that sprouted and the tablets of “the covenant” (9:4c).

The audience are then presented with a progression from a description of the first earthly “tabernacle” that was “furnished” by God and “said” to be “holy things” (9:2) and of the “tabernacle” behind the “second” veil “said” to be “holy things of holy things” (9:3) to the conclusion of these descriptions concerning things of which it is not now time to “speak” in detail (9:5). After noting the things that have been “furnished” (9:6a), the progression goes on to describe the sacrificial worship that takes place, as into the first “tabernacle” continually go the priests to complete the offerings of worship (9:6b). But into the “second” goes once a year only the high priest, not without blood which he offers on behalf of himself and of the inadvertent sins of the people (9:7). Yet the Holy Spirit indicates that the way to the heavenly “holy things” had not appeared while the first earthly “tabernacle” had standing (9:8).

Finally, the audience experience a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the “regulations” for offering of worship and the earthly holy place that the first covenant had (9:1) to the gifts and sacrifices offered under the first covenant, which do not have the power, with regard to the consciousness of sins, to make perfect the one offering worship (9:9b). They are merely “regulations” of the flesh imposed by God until the time of correction or of setting things right (9:10), the time that has now definitively arrived (9:9a) for the audience, as the time in which the old “first” covenant is being replaced by the new covenant promised by God (8:13).



## Hebrews 9:11-14

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- A<sup>11</sup> *Christ*, having come as high priest of the good things that have come to be,  
 through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is,  
 not of this creation,  
 B<sup>12a</sup> not through the blood of *goats* and calves but through his own blood,  
 C<sup>12b</sup> he entered once for all into “the holy things,” finding eternal  
 redemption.  
 B'<sup>13</sup> For if the blood of *goats* and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer’s ashes  
 makes holy those defiled for the cleansing of the flesh,  
 A'<sup>14</sup> how much more will the blood of the *Christ*, who through the eternal Spirit  
 offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our conscience from dead  
 works to offer worship to the living God.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 9:11-14

Toward the conclusion of the BD' unit (9:1-10) is a reference to the standing of the first “tabernacle (σκηνης)” (9:8) under the first covenant. At the beginning of the BC' unit (9:11-14) is a reference to the more perfect “tabernacle” (σκηνης) not made by hands (9:11). These occurrences of the term “tabernacle” serve as the catch words connecting these units as they move the focus of the place for sacrificial worship from the earthly to the heavenly tabernacle.

The only occurrences in this unit of the term “Christ” establish the parallels for the A (9:11) and A' (9:14) elements of this chiastic unit—“Christ (Χριστός), having come as high priest” in 9:11 and “the blood of the Christ (Χριστοῦ)” in 9:14. The only occurrences in this unit of the term “goats” sets the parallels for the B (9:12a) and B' (9:13) elements—“through the blood of goats (τράγων)” in 9:12a and “if the blood of goats (τράγων)” in 9:13. The unparalleled C (9:12b) element features the only occurrence in

Hebrews of the term “redemption”—“he entered once for all into ‘the holy things,’ finding eternal redemption (λύτρωσιν).”

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the BC (7:1-10) and BC' (9:11-14) units provided by terms referring to living eternally. In the BC unit “one (Melchizedek) is testified that he goes on living (ζῆ)” (7:8) and in the BC' unit the blood of Christ will “cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living (ζῶντι) God” (9:14).

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 9:11-14

### 1. *Heb 9:11 (A): Christ Came as High Priest of the Good Things That Have Come*

The audience hear more about the heavenly high priesthood of Jesus Christ: “Christ, having come as high priest of the good things that have come to be, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hands, that is, not of this creation” (9:11). Christ, the Christ Jesus who, as the divine Son, did not glorify himself in “becoming” (γενηθῆναι) “high priest (ἀρχιερέα)” (5:5), “has come” (παραγενόμενος) as “high priest” (ἀρχιερεύς) of the good things that “have come to be” (γενομένων). The adroit alliteration underscores for the audience the close connection between the good things that have come to be and the coming of Christ as heavenly high priest. Although the way to “the holy things” (τῶν ἁγίων) had not appeared while the first tabernacle had standing (9:8), Christ has come as high priest of “the good things that have come to be” (τῶν γενομένων ἀγαθῶν). These “good things” include the “better promises” and “better covenant” of which Jesus is the guarantor (8:6) and surety (7:22), indeed the “better things” having to do with salvation (6:9).<sup>1</sup>

The audience’s attention is drawn to the tabernacle with the heavenly attribute of being “greater (μείζονος)” (9:11b), resonating with the God of whom no one is “greater (μείζονος)” (6:13, 16). As the “more perfect” (τελειοτέρας) tabernacle, it stands in contrast to the first tabernacle’s gifts and sacrifices not able to “make perfect” (τελειῶσαι) the one offering worship (9:9), as the law “made perfect” (ἐτελείωσεν) nothing (7:19), for there was no “perfection” (τελείωσις) through the Levitical, earthly

<sup>1</sup> Sebastian Fuhrmann, “Christ Grown Into Perfection: Hebrews 9,11 from a Christological Point of View,” *Bib* 89 (2008): 92–100.

priesthood (7:11). This “more perfect” tabernacle is appropriately associated with Jesus as the heavenly high priest who has been “made perfect” (τετελειωμένον) forever (7:28). Having been “made perfect” (τελειωθείς), he became for all those who obey him a source of eternal salvation (5:9), as one whom God “made perfect” (τελειῶσαι) through sufferings (2:10). This “more perfect” tabernacle recalls the exhortation for the audience to bear forward toward the “perfection (τελειότητα)” (6:1), in order to be among those “perfected” (τελείων) for heavenly worship (5:14).

That the greater and more perfect tabernacle is “not made by hands” (οὐ χειροποιήτου) means that it is heavenly rather than earthly, and thus not of this “creation (κτίσεως)” (9:11b), in which no “creature” (κτίσις) is invisible before God (4:13). It thus resonates with the “tabernacle” (σκηνης), the true one, which the Lord, not man, set up, the tabernacle of which Jesus as heavenly high priest is minister of the holy things (8:2). As the greater, more perfect, and heavenly “tabernacle” (σκηνης), it stands in sharp contrast to the earthly first “tabernacle” (σκηνης), whose standing blocked the appearance of the way to the heavenly “holy things” (9:8).

## *2. Heb 9:12a (B): Not through the Blood of Goats But through His Own Blood*

The focus becomes the blood of sacrificial victims: “not through the blood of goats and calves but through his own blood” (9:12a). Not through the “blood” (αἵματος) of goats and calves recalls that once a year only the earthly high priest, not without “blood” (αἵματος) offers on behalf of himself and of the inadvertent sins of the people (9:7). Through “his own blood (αἵματος)” refers to the “blood” (αἵματος) that Jesus, as a human being, shares with the children God gave him (2:14). “His own” (ιδίου) blood stands in contrast to “his own” (ιδίων) sins on behalf of which an earthly high priest offers sacrifice (7:27). And “through his own blood” associates Jesus with the one who enters into God’s heavenly rest and rests from his works just as God from “his own” (ιδίων) works (4:10).

## *3. Heb 9:12b (C): He Entered into “the Holy Things” Finding Eternal Redemption*

The audience are then informed of the result of Jesus’ offering of worship in the heavenly tabernacle (9:11-12a): “he entered once for all into ‘the holy things,’ finding eternal redemption” (9:12b). That Jesus “entered”

(εἰσῆλθεν) once for all into the heavenly “holy things” resonates with the description of Jesus as our hope, as an anchor of the soul, which “enters” (εἰσερχομένην) into the interior of the heavenly veil (6:19), where as forerunner on behalf of us Jesus “entered” (εἰσῆλθεν), according to the order of Melchizedek having become high priest forever (6:20). Although the unfaithful and disobedient ancestors failed “to enter” (εἰσελθεῖν) into God’s own heavenly rest (3:11, 18, 19; 4:3, 5, 6), the promise “to enter” (εἰσελθεῖν) into that rest still remains for the audience (4:1). Indeed, we who believed are already “entering” (εἰσερχόμεθα) into it (4:3). But the question for the audience is how Jesus’ entrance into the heavenly “holy things” relates to the exhortation for them to strive “to enter” (εἰσελθεῖν) into God’s own heavenly rest (4:11).

That, as heavenly high priest, Jesus entered “once for all” (ἐφάπαξ) into the heavenly “holy things” (9:12b) resonates with the assertion that he does not have a necessity, like earthly high priests, to offer up sacrifices first on behalf of his own sins and then of the people, for this he did “once for all” (ἐφάπαξ) when he offered up himself (7:27). Jesus’ entrance into the heavenly “holy things” (ἅγια) indicates that the way to the heavenly “holy things” (ἁγίων), which was blocked while the earthly first tabernacle had standing, has now appeared (9:8).

Upon entering once for all into the heavenly “holy things,” Jesus found “eternal” (αἰωνίαν) redemption (9:12b). This resonates with Jesus becoming for all those who obey him a source of “eternal” (αἰωνίου) salvation (5:9), a salvation that is vital in view of “eternal” (αἰωνίου) judgment (6:2). Jesus’ finding of an eternal “redemption” or “ransoming” (λύτρωσιν) coincides with his “freeing” of human beings held in “slavery” by fear of death all their life (2:15).<sup>2</sup> His “finding” (εὐράμενος) of an eternal redemption provides further basis and impetus to the exhortation for the audience to approach with boldness the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and may “find” (εὐρωμεν) grace for timely help (4:16). We may “find” that grace because Jesus, as heavenly high priest, “found” eternal redemption.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews*, 236: “The noun λύτρον is literally the price paid for the release of something held by another, thus a ‘ransom’ or ‘redemption’; λύτρωσις, in turn, is the act of paying such a ransom, thereby accomplishing the liberation of that which is being held.”

<sup>3</sup> F. Laub, “Ein für allemal hineingegangen in das Allerheiligste” (Hebr 9,12)—Zum Verständnis des Kreuzestodes im Hebräerbrief,” *BZ* 35 (1991): 65–85.

4. *Heb 9:13 (B'): If the Blood of Goats Makes Holy Those Defiled for Cleansing of Flesh*

The audience are then led to consider the significance of earthly sacrificial worship: “For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer’s ashes makes holy those defiled for the cleansing of the flesh” (9:13). At this point, after the central and unparalleled C element, “he entered once for all into ‘the holy things,’ finding eternal redemption” (9:12b), the audience experience a pivot in parallels from the B to the B’ elements of this chiastic unit. That Jesus entered into the heavenly “holy things” not through the blood of “goats (τράγων)” (9:12a) progresses to a focus on the blood of “goats” (τράγων) which makes holy those defiled for the cleansing of the flesh.

Whereas the “blood” (αἷμα) of animals, of goats and bulls, makes holy those “defiled” or “made common (κεκοινωμένους)” (9:13), Jesus joined his brothers and the children God gave him (2:12-13), who “share in” or “have in common” (κεκοινώνηκεν) human “blood” (αἵματος) and flesh (2:14).<sup>4</sup> That the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer’s ashes “makes holy” (ἀγιάζει) those defiled (9:13) stands in contrast to Jesus as the one who “makes holy” (ἀγιάζων) his brothers, his fellow human beings including the audience, who are being “made holy (ἀγιάζόμενοι)” (2:11). That animal sacrifices make holy those defiled for the cleansing of the “flesh (σαρκός)” (9:13) underscores for the audience that, as regulations of the “flesh” (σαρκός) imposed until the time of correction (9:10), they do not have the power according to conscience to make perfect the one offering worship (9:9).

5. *Heb 9:14 (A'): The Blood of Christ Will Cleanse Our Conscience To Offer Worship*

The comparison of the blood of animals (9:13) with that of Christ is completed: “how much more will the blood of the Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God” (9:14). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic

<sup>4</sup> The verbal root in 2:14 is κοινώω and in 9:13 κοινώνέω, but their meanings overlap; see BDAG, 552.

parallels, from the A to the A' elements of this chiastic unit. The focus on “Christ” (Χριστός) having come as heavenly high priest (9:11) progresses to the focus on the blood of the “Christ” (Χριστοῦ) who offered himself as a sacrifice unblemished to God.

In contrast to the “blood” (αἷμα) of goats and bulls (9:13) offered by earthly high priests is the “blood” (αἷμα) of the Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God (9:14a). It is through the assistance of the “eternal” (αἰωνίου) Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God, that Jesus found “eternal” (αἰωνίαν) redemption (9:12b), and so became a source of “eternal” (αἰωνίου) salvation for all who obey him (5:9), and who will undergo “eternal” (αἰωνίου) judgment (6:2). Although the divine Holy “Spirit” (πνεύματος) indicated that the way to the heavenly “holy things” had not appeared while the earthly first tabernacle had standing (9:8), through the divine eternal “Spirit” (πνεύματος), Jesus, through the heavenly tabernacle (9:11), entered once for all into the heavenly “holy things” (9:12a).<sup>5</sup>

That Jesus “offered himself” (ἐαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν) unblemished to God (9:14a) reinforces the fulfillment of the necessity for him as a high priest to have something which he may “offer (προσενέγκῃ)” (8:3). It resonates with the assertion that he does not have the necessity, like earthly high priests, first on behalf of his own sins to offer up sacrifices then of the people, for this he did once for all having “offered up himself (ἐαυτὸν ἀνενέγκας)” (7:27). And that Jesus offered himself “unblemished” (ἄμωμον) to God resonates with the assertions that in Jesus we have a high priest who is “undefiled (ἀμίαντος)” (7:26) and able to sympathize with our weaknesses as one tested in all things, but “without sin (χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας)” (4:15).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Martin Emmrich, “‘Amtscharisma’: Through the Eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14),” *BBR* 12 (2002): 17–32; idem, *Pneumatological Concepts*, 13: “The Spirit is called ‘eternal Spirit’ to bring out the (extraordinary) eschatological significance of the Spirit’s assistance in Christ’s once-for-all priestly action ‘at the conclusion of the ages’ (9:26). In fact, the agency of the Spirit in Christ’s atoning approach becomes part of the ‘time of reconstruction’ (9:10) mentioned earlier in the discourse.” Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 457: “Hebrews’ explicit references to the Holy Spirit (in contrast to those of Paul) are otherwise related to scripture, which may be why the author chooses a different expression here; more probably, the author wishes to relate the Spirit to the redemption of v. 12 and the inheritance of v. 15, both of which are described as ‘eternal.’”

<sup>6</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9–13, 240: “The word ἄμωμον has the ring of sacrificial terminology. In the LXX and elsewhere in Jewish hellenistic sources this term denotes the absence of defects in a sacrificial animal. It was chosen to emphasize the perfection of Christ’s sacrifice. The sinless high priest (4:15; 7:26) was also the spotless victim.”

Gifts and sacrifices are “offered” (προσφέρονται) in the earthly tabernacle which are not able according to “conscience” (συνείδησιν) to make perfect the one “offering worship (λατρεύοντα)” (9:9). But the blood of the Christ, who through the eternal Spirit “offered” (προσήνεγκεν) himself unblemished to God, will cleanse our “conscience” (συνείδησιν) from dead works to “offer worship” (λατρεύειν) to the living God (9:14). In contrast to the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer’s ashes that makes holy those defiled for the “cleansing” (καθαρότητα) of the flesh (9:13), the blood of the Christ “will cleanse” (καθαριεῖ) our conscience.

That the blood of the Christ will cleanse our conscience “from dead works” (ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων), the sinful “dead” works that are incompatible with and make impossible the worship of the “living” God (9:14), recalls that repentance “from dead works” (ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων) provides a foundation for the audience to bear forward toward the perfection required for heavenly worship and rest (6:1). The cleansing of our conscience from dead works to worship the “living God” (θεῷ ζῶντι) recalls the warning lest there be in anyone within the audience an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the “living God (θεοῦ ζώντος)” (3:12).<sup>7</sup> In contrast to the “dead works” that originated with human sinfulness, the “works” (ἔργων) of the living God have been produced from the foundation of the world (4:3). That the living God rested from all his “works” (ἔργων) on the seventh day of creation (4:4) is the basis for one who enters into God’s own heavenly sabbath rest to rest from his “works” (ἔργων) just as did the living God (4:10). A conscience cleansed from dead works enables the audience to offer worship to the living God, reinforcing the exhortation that we strive to enter into God’s own heavenly rest (4:11).

### C. Summary on Hebrews 9:11-14

When the audience are informed at the beginning of this BC' unit (9:11-14) that, as a heavenly high priest, Christ entered through the greater and more perfect “tabernacle” not made by hands, that is, not of this creation and thus heavenly (9:11), they hear the catch word that signals the transition from the preceding BD' unit (9:1-10). Toward the conclusion of that unit the audience were told that the way to the heavenly “holy things” had

<sup>7</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews*, 238: “In 3:12 readers were warned not to fall ‘away from the living God’ (ἀπὸ θεοῦ ζώντος), which neatly matches ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων in the present passage.”

not appeared while the earthly first “tabernacle” had standing (9:8). The transition thus moves the focus of the audience on the location of sacrificial worship from the earthly to the heavenly tabernacle.

At this point the audience also experience a macrochiastic progression of parallels, involving the verb “to live,” from the BC unit (7:1-10) to this BC' unit (9:11-14). In the BC unit the audience learn that the high priest Melchizedek, according to whose order Jesus is a heavenly high priest (5:6, 10; 6:20), goes on “living” eternally (7:8). And in the BC' unit they hear that the blood of the Christ, the heavenly high priest (9:11), will cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the eternally “living” God (9:14).

This chiastic unit's central and unparalleled element declares to the audience that, as a heavenly high priest, Christ entered once for all into the heavenly “holy things,” finding eternal redemption (9:12b). The audience then experience a pivot of parallels from the contrast between the blood of “goats” and calves and that of Christ's own blood (9:12a) to the blood of “goats” and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer's ashes that makes holy those defiled for the cleansing of the flesh (9:13). The audience are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from “Christ” having come as high priest of the good things that have come to be (9:11) to the blood of the “Christ,” who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God. This is the blood that will cleanse our conscience from sinful “dead” works to offer worship to the “living” God (9:14), as we strive to enter into God's own heavenly rest (4:11).



## Hebrews 9:15-23

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- A<sup>15</sup> And on account of this he is guarantor of a new covenant, so that, a death having occurred for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant, those who have been called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. <sup>16</sup> For where there is a covenant, there is a *necessity* that a death be borne of the one who covenanted. <sup>17</sup> For a covenant on the basis of the dead becomes firm, since it never has strength while the one who covenanted is living. <sup>18</sup> Whence not even the first was inaugurated without blood.
- B<sup>19a</sup> For every commandment having been spoken *according to the law* to all the people by Moses,
- C<sup>19b</sup> taking the blood of the calves and the goats with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, he *sprinkled* both the book itself and all the people,
- D<sup>20</sup> saying, “This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded to you” (Exod 24:8).
- C’<sup>21</sup> And the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he likewise *sprinkled* with blood.
- B’<sup>22</sup> And almost everything is cleansed by blood *according to the law*, and without the shedding of blood no forgiveness occurs.
- A’<sup>23</sup> There was a *necessity* then that the patterns of the things in the heavens be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices beyond these.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 9:15-23

At the conclusion of the BC' unit (9:11-14) is a reference to the “eternal” (αἰωνίου) Spirit through which Christ offered himself unblemished to God (9:14). At the beginning of this BB' unit (9:15-23) is a reference to the promise of the “eternal” (αἰωνίου) inheritance those who have been called might receive (9:15). These occurrences of the term “eternal” thus serve as the transitional catch words connecting these units as they move the focus from the eternal Spirit to the eternal inheritance.

The only occurrences in this unit of the term “necessity” establish the parallels for the A (9:15-18) and A' (9:23) elements of this chiastic unit—“there is a necessity (ἀνάγκη) that a death be borne” in 9:16 and “there was a necessity (ἀνάγκη) then that the patterns of the things in the heavens be cleansed with these” in 9:23. The only occurrences in this unit of the prepositional phrase “according to the law” set the parallels for the B (9:19a) and B' (9:22) elements—“every commandment having been spoken according to the law (κατὰ τὸν νόμον)” in 9:19a and “almost everything is cleansed by blood according to the law (κατὰ τὸν νόμον)” in 9:22. The only occurrences in this unit of the verb “sprinkle” form the parallels for the C (9:19b) and C' (9:21) elements—Moses “sprinkled (ἐρράντισεν) both the book itself and all the people” in 9:19b and “the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he likewise sprinkled (ἐρράντισεν) with blood” in 9:21. Finally, the unparalleled D (9:20) element features the only explicit quotation of Exod 24:8 in Hebrews—“This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded to you.”

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the BB (6:13-20) and BB' (9:15-23) units provided by the terms “heirs/inheritance” and “firm.” In the BB unit are references to “the heirs (κληρονόμοις) of the promise” of God (6:17) and to an anchor of the soul which is “both sure and firm (βεβαίαν)” (6:19). In the BB' unit are references to “the eternal inheritance (κληρονομίας)” of God (9:15) and to a covenant becoming “firm (βεβαία)” (9:17).

With regard to the third macrochiastic level, this Ba'b' unit (9:15-23) exhibits a parallel relationship with the Ba'b unit (9:1-10). The parallels are indicated by multiple occurrences of the term “covenant.” After the central and pivotal Ba'c unit (9:11-14), which contains no references to “covenant,” the two occurrences of “covenant” in the Ba'b unit—“the ark of the covenant (διαθήκης)” and “the tablets of the covenant (διαθήκης)” (9:4)—are paralleled by the five occurrences of “covenant” in the Ba'b' unit. They are climaxed by the scriptural reference to “the blood of the covenant (διαθήκης)” (9:20; cf. 9:15, 16, 17).

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 9:15-23

### 1. Heb 9:15-18 (A): *Necessity That a Death Be Borne of the One Who Covenanted*

The audience hear the A (9:15-18) element of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) And on account of this he is guarantor of a *new* covenant, so that, a death having occurred for deliverance from transgressions under the *first* covenant, those who have been called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where there is a covenant (9:15-16a),
- b) there is a necessity that a death be borne of the one who *covenanted* (9:16b).
- c) For a covenant on the basis of the dead becomes firm (9:17a),
- b') since it never has strength while the one who *covenanted* is living (9:17b).
- a') Whence not even the *first* was *inaugurated* without blood (9:18).

The central “c” sub-element of this chiasmic sub-unit, “for a covenant on the basis of the dead becomes firm” (9:17a), exhibits the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the terms “dead” (νεκροῖς) and “firm” (βεβαία). After the audience hear this central sub-element, they experience a pivot of parallels established by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the verb “to covenant”—from “a death be borne of the one who covenanted (διαθεμένου)” (9:16b) in the “b” sub-element to “while the one who covenanted (διαθέμενος) is living” (9:17b) in the “b’” sub-element. Finally, the audience are presented with a progression of parallels formed by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the term “first” and expressions involving what is “new.” The references to a “new” (καινῆς) and a “first” (πρώτη) covenant (9:15) in the “a” sub-element progress to the statement that not even the “first” (πρώτη) covenant was “inaugurated” (ἐγκεκαίνισται) without blood (9:18) in the “a’” sub-element.

Because the blood of the Christ, who entered into the heavenly “holy things” (9:12) and offered himself unblemished to God, will cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14), he is “guarantor” (μεσίτης) of a “new covenant (διαθήκης καινῆς)” (9:15a; cf. 7:22). This reminds the audience that Jesus, as a heavenly high priest, has obtained a more excellent ministry of worship, to the degree that he is “guarantor” (μεσίτης) of a better “covenant (διαθήκης)” (8:6). This better covenant is the “new covenant” (διαθήκην καινήν) promised in Jer 38:31-34 by the scriptural voice of God (8:8). In speaking of this “new” (καινήν) covenant, God makes old the first covenant, and what is becoming old and aging is near to disappearing (8:13).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 241. According to Johnson (*Hebrews*, 239), Jesus, as “guarantor” or “mediator” (μεσίτης) of a new covenant, “does not serve simply as one who negotiates externally between two parties. He bears both parties within himself. His offering of his own blood makes him at once priest and sacrifice. . . . Christ’s ‘blameless’ offering of himself shows, as Jeremiah prophesied, that this covenant is not only ‘new’ chronologically

The Levitical priests were many because they were prevented by “death” (θανάτω) from remaining on (7:23). But the “death” (θανάτου) of Jesus as heavenly high priest, who in the days of his flesh offered both prayers and supplications with strong outcrying and tears to the God able to save him from “death (θανάτου)” (5:7), occurred for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant (9:15b). This reminds the audience that Jesus shared in the blood and flesh of human beings so that through “death” (θανάτου) he might destroy the one who has the strength of “death” (θανάτου), that is the devil, and free those, as many as by fear of “death” (θανάτου) through all their life were held in slavery (2:14-15). After his suffering of “death” (θανάτου), Jesus was crowned by God with heavenly honor and glory, so that, by the grace of God, on behalf of all he might taste “death (θανάτου)” (2:9).

That the death of Jesus occurred for “deliverance (ἀπολύτρωσιν)” (9:15b) resonates with his finding “redemption” (λύτρωσιν), when he entered once for all into the heavenly “holy things” (9:12) and offered himself unblemished to God (9:14). That his death occurred for deliverance from transgressions under the “first” (πρώτη) covenant (9:15b) recalls the “first” (πρώτη) covenant with its regulations for offering of worship and an earthly holy place (9:1). This is the “first” (πρώτην) covenant that God makes old in speaking of a new covenant (8:13), for which God sought a place because the “first” (πρώτη) covenant was not faultless (8:7). And that his death occurred for deliverance from “transgressions” (παραβάσεων) under the first covenant resonates for the audience with the stipulation that under the first covenant every “transgression” (παράβασις) and disobedience received a just recompense (2:2).

Jesus, whose death occurred for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant, is guarantor of a new covenant, so that those who have been called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (9:15). Those who have been “called” (κεκλημένοι) refers to those, including the audience, whom Jesus, as the one “called” (καλούμενος) by God to become a heavenly high priest (5:4), is not ashamed to “call” (καλεῖν) brothers (2:11). As holy brothers, they are thus partners of a heavenly “calling (κλήσεως)” (3:1). That those who have been called “might receive” (λάβωσιν) the promise of the eternal inheritance resonates with the exhortation for us to approach with boldness the heavenly throne of grace, so

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but ontologically, for it essentially engages the internal dispositions of humans, enabling them to ‘know God’ (8:11).”

that we “may receive” (λάβωμεν) mercy and may find grace for timely help (4:16).

That those who have been called might receive the promise of the “eternal inheritance (αἰωνίου κληρονομίας)” (9:15) resonates with the “eternal redemption” (αἰωνίαν λύτρωσιν) that Jesus as the heavenly high priest found when he entered once for all into the heavenly “holy things” (9:12), and through the “eternal Spirit” (πνεύματος αἰωνίου) offered himself unblemished to God (9:14). The eternal redemption that Jesus found makes it possible for those who have been called to receive the promise of the eternal “inheritance,” as those who are going to “inherit salvation (κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν)” (1:14). This is the “eternal salvation” (σωτηρίας αἰωνίου) of which Jesus became a source for all who obey him (5:9), the “salvation” (σωτηρίας) of which he is the initiator (2:10), the very great “salvation” (σωτηρίας) the audience are to be careful not to neglect (2:3).<sup>2</sup>

The “promise” (ἐπαγγελίαν) of this eternal “inheritance” (κληρονομίας) that those who have been called might receive (9:15), the inheritance which is eternal salvation (2:10; 5:9), recalls the “promise” (ἐπαγγελίας) that still is left for the audience to enter into the heavenly rest of the eternally living God (4:1).<sup>3</sup> It resonates with the exhortation for the audience to become imitators of those who through faith and patience are “inheriting the promises (κληρονομούντων τὰς ἐπαγγελίας)” (6:12). Having patience, Abraham obtained the “promise (ἐπαγγελίας)” as a model for the audience (6:15). The audience are thus to consider themselves as among the “heirs of the promise” (κληρονόμοις τῆς ἐπαγγελίας) to whom God determined to show the unchangeableness of his plan, as he “guaranteed” (ἐμεσίτευσεν) it with an oath (6:17). And Jesus, as “heir” (κληρονόμον) of all things (1:2), who through his heavenly enthronement has “inherited” (κεκληρονόμηκεν) a name beyond the angels (1:4), is “guarantor” (μεσίτης) of a new covenant, so that those who have been called, among whom are the audience, might receive “the promise of the eternal inheritance” (9:15).

By way of further explanation for the audience, where there is a “covenant (διαθήκη)” (9:16a), whether the first “covenant” (διαθήκη) or the new “covenant” (διαθήκης) of which Jesus is the guarantor (9:15), there is a necessity that a death be borne of the one who covenanted” (9:16b). The dimension of a “will” or “testament” for inheritance that is connoted by

<sup>2</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 241: “The promise concerns the enjoyment of eternal salvation.”

<sup>3</sup> An artful alliteration underlines the close association between “those who have been called” (κεκλημένοι) and the eternal “inheritance” (κληρονομίας).

the concept of a “covenant” now comes into play for the audience.<sup>4</sup> The necessary “death” (θάνατον) to be borne is the “death” (θανάτου) of Jesus himself that occurred for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant (9:15).

As heavenly high priest, Jesus does not have a “necessity” (ἀνάγκην), like the earthly Levitical high priests, first on behalf of his own sins to offer up sacrifices then of the people, for this he did once for all having offered up himself (7:27). But there is the “necessity” (ἀνάγκη) that a death, his own death, be borne by him as the one who covenanted (9:16b) a new covenant of which he is guarantor (9:15). This accords with the “necessity” (ἀνάγκης) of a change in law, when there is a change from an earthly to a heavenly priesthood (7:12).

His own death is “borne” (φέρεισθαι) by Jesus (9:16b), the divine Son who “bears” (φέρων) up all things by the pronouncement of God’s power (1:3). This “bearing” of his own death by Jesus reinforces the exhortation that we “bear” (φέρωμεθα) forward toward the perfection this death makes available to us for our role in heavenly worship (6:1). That Jesus, the heavenly divine Son and high priest, bore his own death as the one who “covenanted” (9:16b) explicates how he is guarantor of a new covenant as a “will” or “testament,” so that those called might receive the eternal inheritance (9:15). Jesus as the one who “covenanted” (διαθεμένου) a new covenant of which he is guarantor thus coincides with God as the one who promised a new covenant that “I will covenant” (διαθήσομαι) with the people of God (8:10), among whom are the audience.<sup>5</sup>

That a “covenant” on the basis of the “dead” becomes firm (9:17a) further explains the necessity for Jesus to bear his own “death,” and thus become one of the “dead,” as the one who “covenanted” (9:16), so that he is guaran-

<sup>4</sup> Allen, *Deuteronomy*, 180-81: “Hebrews is engaging in some form of word play in 9:15-17; there is some development from ‘covenant’ (v15) to ‘covenant-testament’ (vv16-17) and back to ‘covenant’ (v18) that permits Hebrews to illustrate its argument. The wordplay, however, remains thematically consistent with the overall Sinai covenant discourse and similarly does not require a move to another semantic domain; διαθήκη-as-covenant-testament is merely one element of the Sinai covenant narrative in which Hebrews is interested, namely the precedent for a transfer of Mosaic authority. No tangential argument is being made. . . . Hebrews’ wordplay in 9:16-17 invites the scenario of a διαθήκη that is both covenantal *and* testamentary, both cultic *and* hereditary.” See also Scott R. Murray, “The Concept of διαθήκη in the Letter to the Hebrews,” *CTQ* 66 (2002): 41-60; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 240-41.

<sup>5</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 418: “Although God promised the new covenant (8:10), Jesus is the testator who dies.”

tor of a new covenant (9:15). But the generalizing plural in the phrase “on the basis of the dead (νεκροῖς)” also resonates with the result of this self-sacrificial death of Jesus in cleansing our conscience from “dead” (νεκρῶν) works, the “dead” (νεκρῶν) works from which we are to repent (6:1), so that we may offer worship to the living God (9:14). As a reference to the new covenant, that a covenant on the basis of the “dead” becomes firm reminds the audience of the “dead” (νεκρῶν) who are to be raised (6:2).

That the new covenant on the basis of the self-sacrificial death Jesus offered upon entering into the heavenly tabernacle (9:11-14) becomes “firm (βεβαία)” (9:17a) reinforces the hope we have in Jesus as an anchor of the soul, both sure and “firm” (βεβαίαν). It enters into the interior of the heavenly veil (6:19), where as forerunner on behalf of us Jesus entered as the eternal high priest (6:20). It bolsters the exhortation for the audience’s perseverance. To become partners of the Christ, we must hold the beginning of the reality “firm” (βεβαίαν) until the end (3:14), inspired by the authoritative “firmness” of this new covenant that resonates with the word spoken by God through angels that became “firm (βέβαιος)” (2:2), and with the great salvation spoken through the Lord and divinely “confirmed” (ἐβεβαιώθη) for us by those who heard (2:3).

It was necessary for Jesus to bear his own death as the one who “covenanted (διαθεμένου)” (9:16b), and thus became guarantor of a new covenant (9:15), since no covenant, but specifically this new covenant, has strength while the one who “covenanted” (διαθέμενος) is living (9:17b). The new covenant “has strength” (ισχύει), then, because of the self-sacrificial death of Jesus. Such “strength” bolsters the exhortation for the audience to have a “strong” (ισχυράν) encouragement to hold fast to the hope lying ahead (6:18), the hope that Jesus himself represents as a sure and “firm” anchor of the soul, because of offering himself when he entered into the interior of the heavenly veil as heavenly high priest (6:19-20). And such “strength” is the result of the self-sacrificial death of Jesus as the eternal high priest, who in the days of his flesh offered both prayers and supplications with “strong” (ισχυρᾶς) outcrying and tears to the God able to save him from death, and he was heard from his reverence (5:7). In other words, the new covenant “has strength” because of the “strong” offering of Jesus as high priest.

The new covenant did not have strength while Jesus, as the one who covenanted, was “living (ζῆ)” (9:17b), that is, living with human beings who through all their “life,” their earthly “living” (ζῆν), were held in slavery by

fear of death (2:15). But as the eternal, heavenly high priest according to the order of Melchizedek who goes on “living (ζῆν)” (7:8), Jesus is able to save completely those who approach God through him, always living (ζῶν) to intercede on behalf of them (7:25). Through his self-sacrificial death Jesus enables the audience, who are to heed the “living” (ζῶν) word of God (4:12), to offer worship to the “living” (ζῶντι) God (9:14), rather than falling away and failing to enter into the heavenly, sabbath rest of the eternally “living” (ζῶντος) God (3:12).

After the assertion that Jesus is guarantor of a “new” (καινῆς) covenant, whose death occurred for deliverance from transgressions under the “first” (πρώτη) covenant (9:15), the attention of the audience is drawn to that first covenant with the statement that not even the “first” (πρώτη) was “inaugurated” (ἐγκεκαίνισται) without blood (9:18). The focus thus moves from the deaths (9:15-17) to the sacrificial blood involved in covenant making. That not even the first covenant was inaugurated “without blood” (χωρὶς αἵματος) recalls that into the second tabernacle once a year only the earthly Levitical high priest enters, not “without blood” (χωρὶς αἵματος) which he offers on behalf of himself and of the inadvertent sins of the people (9:7). But as the heavenly high priest, Christ entered the heavenly “holy things” not through the “blood” (αἷματος) of goats and calves but through his own “blood (αἷματος)” (9:12). If the “blood” (αἷμα) of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer’s ashes makes holy those defiled for the cleansing of the flesh (9:13), even more will the sacrificial “blood” (αἷμα) of the Christ cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14).

## *2. Heb 9:19a (B): Every Commandment Spoken according to the Law to All the People*

How the first covenant was inaugurated is further explained: “For every commandment having been spoken according to the law to all the people by Moses” (9:19a). The audience have heard that those of the sons of Levi who receive the priesthood have a “commandment” (ἐντολήν) to tithe the “people” (λαόν) “according to the law” (κατὰ τὸν νόμον) of Moses (7:5). Although the “people” (λαός) on the basis of this Levitical priesthood “were given the law” (νενομοθέτηται) of Moses, there was no perfection through it (7:11). Consequently, from a tribe about which Moses “spoke”



(ἐλάλησεν) nothing concerning priests (7:14), Jesus arose as a different priest (7:15), who not “according to a law” (κατὰ νόμον) of a fleshly “commandment” (ἐντολῆς) has come about but according to the power of an indestructible life (7:16). For the “law” (νόμος) of Moses appoints men having weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath-taking that is after the “law” (νόμον) a Son who forever has been made perfect (7:28). But now the audience are reminded of the role of the Mosaic law in the inauguration of the first covenant, when every “commandment” (ἐντολῆς) was “spoken” (λαληθείσης) “according to the law” (κατὰ τὸν νόμον) to all the “people” (λαῶ) by Moses.

*3. Heb 9:19b (C): With Blood Moses Sprinkled the Book and All the People*

The recounting of what Moses did in the inauguration of the first covenant continues (9:18-19a): “taking the blood of the calves and the goats with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, he sprinkled both the book itself and all the people” (9:19b). The audience have heard that it was not through the blood of “goats” (τράγων) and “calves” (μόσχων) but through his own blood that Jesus entered once for all into the heavenly “holy things,” finding eternal redemption (9:12). For the blood of “goats” (τράγων) and bulls and the “sprinkling” (ῥαντίζουσα) of a heifer’s ashes makes holy those defiled for the cleansing of the flesh only (9:13). And now they hear that when Moses inaugurated the first covenant, he took the blood of the “calves” (μόσχων) and the “goats” (τράγων) along with water and scarlet and hyssop and “sprinkled” (ἐρράντισεν) both the book that contained every commandment of the law and all the people to whom every commandment was spoken by Moses (9:19).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 419: “The author seems to conflate details from various rituals. Hyssop was a plant that was used to daub blood on the doorposts at Passover (Exod 12:22) and as a flail for purification (Ps 51:7). Hyssop, scarlet material, and water were used in the cleansing of lepers (Lev 14:4-6, 49-52) and in the rite of the red heifer that purified those defiled by contact with a corpse (Num 19:1-10, 17-18; cf. Heb 9:13). . . . Exodus and Hebrews agree that blood was spattered upon the people but where Exod 24:6 says that blood was poured on the *altar*, Hebrews says that Moses spattered blood upon the *book*. For Hebrews, the Law and sacrifices are inseparable. ‘The book’ presumably included the Ten Commandments (Exod 20:1-17) and the covenant code (Exod 21:1-23:33).” See also Attridge, *Hebrews*, 257; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 241.

4. *Heb 9:20 (D): The Blood of the Covenant Which God Has Commanded to You*

The audience are then reminded of the words from Exod 24:8 which Moses pronounced when he sprinkled the blood on both the book of the law and all the people: “saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded to you’” (9:20). That “this” (τοῦτο), that is, the “blood” (αἷμα) of the calves and of the goats (9:19b), is the “blood” (αἷμα) of the covenant provides the audience with scriptural confirmation that not even the first covenant was inaugurated without “blood (αἵματος)” (9:18). And that this is the blood of the covenant which God has “commanded” (ἐνετείλατο) to you reminds the audience that every “commandment” (ἐντολής) which Moses spoke according to the law to all the people (9:19a) was commanded by God himself.<sup>7</sup>

5. *Heb 9:21 (C'): The Tabernacle and Vessels Moses Likewise Sprinkled with Blood*

The focus on the sprinkling of blood by Moses when inaugurating the first covenant continues: “And the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he likewise sprinkled with blood” (9:21). At this point, after the central and unparalleled D element (9:20), the quotation of Exod 24:8, the audience experience a pivot of parallels from the C to the C' element of this chiastic unit. To the statement that Moses “sprinkled” (ἐρράντισεν) both the book itself and all the people (9:19b) is added that the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he likewise “sprinkled” (ἐρράντισεν) with blood (9:21).

“The tabernacle” (τὴν σκηνήν) that Moses sprinkled with blood (9:21) refers to “the tabernacle” (τὴν σκηνήν) on earth about which Moses, in completing it, was warned in Exod 25:40 to make everything according to the model shown to him by God on the heavenly mountain (8:5). That Moses likewise sprinkled all the vessels of the “ministry” (λειτουργίας) for earthly worship reminds the audience that Jesus, as the heavenly high priest, has obtained a more excellent “ministry” (λειτουργίας) for heavenly

<sup>7</sup> On how the quotation of Exod 24:8 in Heb 9:20 differs from the LXX, see Attridge, *Hebrews*, 257-58. He adds: “The use of τοῦτο may indicate the influence of the eucharistic words of institution” (cf. Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:24-25). See also Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 469.

worship (8:6). The “blood” (αἷματι) with which Moses sprinkled the earthly tabernacle and the vessels for the ministry of worship is the “blood” (αἷμα) of the covenant (9:20), the sacrificial “blood” (αἷμα) of the calves and the goats (9:19). It presents the audience with a sharp contrast to Jesus’ own “blood” (αἷματος) through which he entered once for all into the heavenly tabernacle (9:12).

6. *Heb 9:22 (B’): Almost Everything Is Cleansed by Blood according to the Law*

The cleansing dimension of the blood of the first covenant is then generalized: “And almost everything is cleansed by blood according to the law, and without the shedding of blood no forgiveness occurs” (9:22). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from the B to the B’ elements of this chiastic unit. That Moses spoke every commandment “according to the law” (κατὰ τὸν νόμον) to all the people (9:19a) progresses to the notice that almost everything is cleansed by blood “according to the law (κατὰ τὸν νόμον)” (9:22a).

Not only “all” (πάντα) the people (9:19) and “all” (πάντα) the vessels of the ministry that Moses sprinkled with blood (9:21), but almost “everything” (πάντα) is cleansed by blood according to the law (9:22). That no forgiveness of sins “without the shedding of blood” (χωρὶς αἱματεκχυσίας) occurs (9:22) presents the audience with an emphatic intensification of the assertion that not even the first covenant was inaugurated “without blood (χωρὶς αἵματος)” (9:18). Indeed, once a year only the high priest enters into the earthly tabernacle, not “without blood” (χωρὶς αἵματος) which he offers on behalf of himself and of the inadvertent sins of the people (9:7).<sup>8</sup> This shifts the focus of the audience from the cleansing with sprinkled blood to the basis for it in the sacrificial shedding of blood. Forgiveness of sins occurs with the shedding of blood and everything is “cleansed”

<sup>8</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 246. On αἱματεκχυσία, Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 474) notes that “this is the first extant occurrence of this term. Scholars disagree about whether it is coined by the author. . . . There are many OT references to the pouring out of blood in sacrifice on or around the altar. It is the cultic act of applying the blood to the altar, rather than directly the killing of the victim, which is crucial, but in OT ritual the two are closely associated, and in the death of Christ they coincide. Here there is possible a distant allusion to the eucharistic tradition.” Note the references to “shedding” or “pouring out” (ἐκχυννόμενον) of blood in Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20.

(καθαρίζεται) by blood, a “cleansing” (καθαρότητα) of the flesh only (9:13). This reminds the audience that the blood of the Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, having made a “cleansing” (καθαρισμόν) for sins (1:3), “will cleanse” (καθαριεῖ) our conscience from sinful dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14).<sup>9</sup>

7. *Heb 9:23 (A'): Necessity for the Cleansing of Heavenly Things with Better Sacrifices*

The focus on sacrificial cleansing (9:22) continues: “There was a necessity then that the patterns of the things in the heavens be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices beyond these” (9:23). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the A to the A' elements of this chiasmic unit. The “necessity” (ἀνάγκη) that a death be borne of the one who covenanted (9:16) progresses to the “necessity” (ἀνάγκη) that the patterns of the things in the heavens be cleansed (9:23a).

There was a necessity that the “patterns” (ὑποδείγματα) of the things “in the heavens” (ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς), that is, “in the heavens” (ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς) where the high priest Jesus sat at the right of the throne of the divine Majesty (8:1), be “cleansed” (καθαρίζεσθαι) with these (9:23a), with the items, especially the blood of the animals (9:19-21), by which everything is “cleansed (καθαρίζεται)” (9:22).<sup>10</sup> This resonates with what the audience have heard about the worship offered by earthly priests, namely, that they offer worship in a “pattern” (ὑποδείγματι) and shadow of the “heavenly things (ἐπουρανίων)” (8:5), the “heavenly things” (ἐπουράνια) which are to be cleansed with better sacrifices beyond these animal sacrifices (9:23b).

That there is a necessity for the heavenly things themselves to be cleansed with “better” (κρείττοσιν) sacrifices (9:23), which points to the self-sacrifice of Jesus as a “better” sacrifice, adds to what the audience have heard regarding the “better” things associated with Jesus. He has become so far “better” (κρείττων) than the angels to the degree that more excellent beyond them he has inherited a name (1:4). He represents a “better”

<sup>9</sup> J. S. Wiid, “The Testamental Significance of διαθήκη in Hebrews 9:15–22,” *Neot* 26 (1992): 149–56; L. Lincoln, “Translating Hebrews 9:15–22 in Its Hebraic Context,” *JOTT* 12 (1999): 1–29; Hahn, “Broken Covenant”; idem, “Covenant.”

<sup>10</sup> According to Attridge (*Hebrews*, 261) “these” (τούτοις) is “a disparaging reference to the animals’ blood and purifying implements listed in vs 19.”

(κρείττονος) hope through which we are drawing near to God (7:19). He has become the surety of a “better” (κρείττονος) covenant (7:22). And he is guarantor of a “better” (κρείττονος) covenant, which on the basis of “better” (κρείττοσιν) promises was given law (8:6).

The audience were informed that every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and “sacrifices” (θυσίας) on behalf of sins (5:1; 8:3). But the gifts and “sacrifices” (θυσίαι) offered in the earthly tabernacle are not able according to conscience to make perfect the one offering worship (9:9). The heavenly high priest Jesus, however, does not have a necessity, like the earthly high priests, first on behalf of his own sins to offer up “sacrifices” (θυσίας) then of the people, for this he did once for all having offered up himself (7:27). And so, that there is a necessity for the heavenly things themselves to be cleansed with better “sacrifices” (θυσίας) than these animal sacrifices (9:23) prepares the audience to hear more about the better sacrifice Jesus offered as heavenly high priest.<sup>11</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 9:15-23

At the beginning of this BB' unit (9:15-23) the audience hear that those who have been called might receive the promise of the “eternal” inheritance (9:15). This provides the catch word for the connection to the preceding BC' unit (9:11-14), which concluded with a reference to the “eternal” Spirit through which Jesus offered himself unblemished to God (9:14). The focus of the audience thus moves from the eternal Spirit to the eternal inheritance.

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, the audience, as among those who have been called, hear in this BB' unit (9:15-23) of the eternal “inheritance” they might receive (9:15) based on a covenant becoming “firm” (9:17). This reminds them that, according to the BB unit (6:13-20), as among the “heirs” of the promise of God (6:17), in Jesus they have an anchor of the soul which is both sure and “firm” (6:19). And with regard to the third macrochiastic level, after the central and pivotal Ba'c unit (9:11-14), which contains no references to “covenant,” the audience hear

<sup>11</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 478: “The plural θυσίαι, applied to the new covenant, is generic (cf. νεκροίς, v. 17) and imprecise. The author is still drawing parallels between the old order and the new; the time has not yet come for him to emphasize, as in v. 26, the uniqueness of Christ’s self-offering.”

five occurrences of “covenant” in this Ba'b' unit (9:15-23), climaxed by the scriptural reference to the blood of the “covenant” (9:20; cf. 9:15, 16, 17). This further develops for the audience the significance of the description in the Ba'b unit (9:1-10) of the ark of the “covenant” containing the tablets of the “covenant” (9:4).

The central and unparalleled element of this chiasmic unit presents the audience with the quotation of Exod 24:8 by Moses when he inaugurated the first covenant—“This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded to you” (9:20). The audience then experience a pivot of parallels involving “sprinkling” by Moses—from the notice that Moses, taking the blood of the calves and the goats with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, “sprinkled” both the book itself and all the people (9:19b) to the additional note that he likewise “sprinkled” with blood the earthly tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry for worship (9:21). The audience are then presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the report that every commandment was spoken “according to the law” to all the people by Moses (9:19a) to the declaration that almost everything is cleansed by blood “according to the law,” and without the shedding of blood no forgiveness occurs (9:22).

And finally, the audience are presented with a progression via the chiasmic parallels established by the notion of “necessity” regarding the inauguration of covenants. First, they are told of the “necessity” that a death be borne of the one who covenanted (9:16), a reference to the death of Jesus as guarantor of a new covenant, so that, his death having occurred for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant, those who have been called, among whom are the audience, might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (9:15). Then they are told of the “necessity” that the earthly patterns of the things in the heavens be cleansed with the blood of animal sacrifices, but that the heavenly things themselves be cleansed with better sacrifices beyond these (9:23). The audience are thus poised to hear more about the better, self-sacrifice of the heavenly high priest Jesus.

## Hebrews 9:24-28

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- A<sup>24a</sup> For *Christ* did not enter into “holy things” made by hands, a copy of the true ones, but into heaven itself,  
 B<sup>24b</sup> *now* to be *manifested* in the presence of God on behalf of us.  
 C<sup>25a</sup> Not that *repeatedly* he might offer himself,  
 D<sup>25b</sup> just as the high priest enters into “the holy things” each year with blood not his own,  
 C'<sup>26a</sup> since then it would be necessary for him *repeatedly* to suffer from the founding of the world.  
 B'<sup>26b</sup> But *now* once at the completion of the ages for the removal of sin through his sacrifice he has *appeared*.  
 A'<sup>27</sup> And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after this judgment,  
<sup>28</sup> so also the *Christ* offered once “to offer up the sins of many” (Isa 53:12), a second time without sin will be seen, by those eagerly awaiting him, for salvation.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 9:24-28

At the conclusion of the BB' unit (9:15-23) are references to “the things in the heavens (οὐρανοῖς)” and “the heavenly things (ἐπουράνια) themselves” (9:23). At the beginning of the BA' unit (9:24-28) is a reference to “heaven (οὐρανόν) itself” (9:24). These occurrences of terms for “heaven” thus serve as the transitional catch words connecting these units as they move the focus from the earthly to the heavenly location of sacrificial worship.

The only occurrences in this unit of the term “Christ” establish the parallels for the A (9:24a) and A' (9:27-28) elements of this chiastic unit—“Christ (Χριστός) did not enter into ‘holy things’ made by hands” in 9:24a and “the Christ (Χριστός) offered once” in 9:28. The only occurrences in this unit of terms for “now” and of verbs for “manifest/appear” set the

parallels for the B (9:24b) and B' (9:26b) elements—"now (νῦν) to be manifested (ἐμφανισθῆναι)" in 9:24b and "now (νυνί) once at the completion of the ages for the removal of sins through his sacrifice he has appeared (πεφανερώται)" in 9:26b. The only occurrences in this unit of the adverb "repeatedly" form the parallels for the C (9:25a) and C' (9:26a) elements—"not that he might offer himself repeatedly (πολλάκις)" in 9:25a and "it would be necessary for him repeatedly (πολλάκις) to suffer" in 9:26a. Finally, the unparalleled D (9:25b) element features the only occurrences in this unit of the term "high priest" and the phrase "each year with blood not his own"—"just as the high priest enters into 'the holy things' each year with blood not his own."

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the BA (5:11-6:12) and BA' (9:24-28) units provided by the term "salvation." In the BA unit is a reference to the better things having to do with "salvation (σωτηρίας)" (6:9). And in the BA' unit is the assertion that Christ will be seen a second time for "salvation (σωτηρίαν)" (9:28).

With regard to the third macrochiastic level, this Ba'a' unit (9:24-28) exhibits a parallel relationship with the Ba'a unit (8:7-13). The parallels are indicated by occurrences of the term for "sins." In the Ba'a unit is the promise of God in Jer 38:34 that "the sins (ἁμαρτιῶν) of them I will certainly remember no longer" (8:12). And in the Ba'a' unit are the assertions that Christ "now once at the completion of the ages for the removal of sin (ἁμαρτίας) through his sacrifice has appeared" (9:26) and that "the Christ offered once 'to offer up the sins (ἁμαρτίας) of many' (Isa 53:12), a second time without sin (ἁμαρτίας) will be seen" (9:28).

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 9:24-28

### 1. *Heb 9:24a (A): Christ Entered into Heaven Itself*

Why there was a necessity for the heavenly things themselves to be cleansed with better sacrifices (9:23) is further explained: "For Christ did not enter into 'holy things' made by hands, a copy of the true ones, but into heaven itself" (9:24a). The audience have heard that when Christ came as high priest of the good things that have come to be, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not "made by hands" (χειροποιήτου), that is, not of this creation (9:11), he "entered" (εἰσῆλθεν) once for all into the heavenly



“holy things (ἅγια)” (9:12). And now they hear that Christ did not “enter” (εἰσῆλθεν) into “holy things” (ἅγια) “made by hands” (χειροποίητα), a copy of the true ones, but into heaven itself. That the earthly holy things made by hands are a mere copy of the “true” (ἀληθινῶν) heavenly holy things reminds the audience that Christ is a minister of the holy things and of the tabernacle, the “true” (ἀληθινῆς) one, which the Lord, not man, set up (8:2). They are a mere “copy” or “antitype” (ἀντίτυπα) of the heavenly holy things, because God told Moses to make everything in the earthly tabernacle according to the “model” or “type” (τύπον) shown to him on the heavenly mountain (8:5).<sup>1</sup>

That Christ entered into “heaven” (οὐρανόν) itself (9:24a) resonates with the necessity that the “heavenly” (ἐπουράνια) things themselves be cleansed with better sacrifices than those employed to cleanse the earthly patterns of the things in the “heavens (οὐρανοῖς)” (9:23). It recalls that in Christ we have a high priest who sat at the right of the throne of the divine Majesty in the “heavens (οὐρανοῖς)” (8:1), who is higher than the “heavens (οὐρανῶν)” (7:26), who has passed through the “heavens (οὐρανοῦς)” (4:14), and the works of whose hands are the “heavens (οὐρανοί)” (1:10).

## 2. Heb 9:24b (B): Now To Be Manifested in the Presence of God on Behalf of Us

Why Christ entered into heaven itself (9:24a) is explained: “now to be manifested in the presence of God on behalf of us” (9:24b).<sup>2</sup> That Christ “entered” (εἰσῆλθεν) into heaven itself to be manifested in the very presence of, literally before the “face” of, God himself “on behalf of us” (ὕπὲρ ἡμῶν) reminds the audience that it was into the heavenly interior of the veil (6:19) that Jesus “entered” (εἰσῆλθεν) as forerunner “on behalf of us” (ὕπὲρ ἡμῶν), according to the order of Melchizedek having become high priest forever (6:20). Because Jesus remains forever and has the priesthood that is permanent (7:24), he is able to save completely those, among whom

<sup>1</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 421: “The Tabernacle was the earthly ‘antitype’ of the heavenly ‘type’. . . . God commanded Moses to make the earthly tent (Heb 8:5), but the contrasts between heaven and earth, and the pejorative ‘made with hands’ imply that it was inferior to its heavenly type.”

<sup>2</sup> On the verb “to be manifested” (ἐμφανισθῆναι) here, Westcott (*Hebrews*, 272) notes that it “conveys the thought of that being made a clear object of sight, which under ordinary circumstances is not so.”

are the audience, who approach God through him, always living to intercede “on behalf of them (ὕπὲρ αὐτῶν)” (7:25).<sup>3</sup>

### 3. *Heb 9:25a (C): Not That Repeatedly He Might Offer Himself*

The heavenly self-offering of Christ (9:24) continues to be described: “Not that repeatedly he might offer himself” (9:25a). As high priest Christ entered into the heavenly “holy things” not that he might “repeatedly” (πολλάκις) “offer” (προσφέρειν) “himself” (ἑαυτόν), like the rains that come upon the earth “repeatedly (πολλάκις)” (6:7). This reminds the audience that Christ, who did not glorify “himself” (ἑαυτόν) in becoming high priest (5:5), does not have every day a necessity, like the earthly high priests, first on behalf of his own sins to “offer up” (ἀναφέρειν) sacrifices then of the people, for this he did once for all having “offered up” (ἀνενέγκας) “himself (ἑαυτόν)” (7:27). Indeed, as the audience have been assured, the blood of the Christ, who through the eternal Spirit “offered” (προσήνεγκεν) “himself” (ἑαυτόν) unblemished to God, in contrast to the earthly high priest who “offers” (προσφέρει) merely on behalf of “himself (ἑαυτοῦ)” (9:7), will cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14).

### 4. *Heb 9:25b (D): The High Priest Enters Each Year with Blood Not His Own*

The self-offering of Christ in heaven (9:24-25a) is compared to the sacrifices of the high priest on earth: “just as the high priest enters into ‘the holy things’ each year with blood not his own” (9:25b). In contrast to Christ, who did not “enter” (εἰσῆλθεν) into the “holy things” (ἅγια) made by hands but into heaven itself (9:24), not that repeatedly he might offer himself (9:25a), the Levitical high priest “enters” (εἰσέρχεται) into the “holy things” (ἅγια) on earth each year. That he enters “each year” (κατ’

<sup>3</sup> Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 194: “In the LXX people come ‘before the face of God’ in a worship setting.” Koester, *Hebrews*, 422: “The Hebrew expression ‘appear before the face of God’ referred to people coming to the sanctuary. In the LXX seeking God’s face meant seeking help in prayer and seeing God’s face meant receiving favor from God. This sense is appropriate here.”

ἐνιαυτόν) with “blood” (αἷματι) not his own reminds the audience that into the earthly tabernacle enters “once a year” (ἅπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ) the high priest, not without “blood” (αἷματος) which he offers on behalf of himself and of the inadvertent sins of the people (9:7). And that the earthly high priest enters each year with blood “not his own” (ἀλλοτρίῳ) stands in keen contrast to Christ’s entrance into heaven to offer “himself” (ἐαυτόν).

5. *Heb 9:26a (C'): Since Then It Would Be Necessary for Him Repeatedly To Suffer*

The reason Christ did not offer himself repeatedly (9:25a) like the earthly high priest who offers blood not his own each year (9:25b) is given: “since then it would be necessary for him repeatedly to suffer from the founding of the world” (9:26a). At this point, after the central and unparalleled D element (9:25b), the audience experience a pivot in parallels from the C to this C' element. Not that “repeatedly” (πολλάκις) he might offer himself (9:25a) progresses to a concern of the necessity for him “repeatedly” (πολλάκις) to suffer.

The notion of Christ repeatedly offering himself (9:25a) presents the audience with a glaring absurdity. It would be necessary for him repeatedly to “suffer (παθεῖν)” from the founding of the world (9:26a), as the divine Son who learned from the things he “suffered” (ἔπαθεν) obedience (5:8), and as the merciful and faithful high priest who “suffered” (πέπονθεν) in being tested like his fellow human beings (2:18). For Christ repeatedly to suffer “from the founding of the world” (ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου) would be a ridiculous necessity, as it would mean his suffering, as the one through whom God made the ages (1:2), from the time the works of creation were produced, that is, “from the founding of the world (ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου)” when time began (4:3).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 484: “[T]he author does not distinguish between the creation of the universe and that of the human race.” Koester, *Hebrews*, 422: “The author assumes that the Son of God existed from the foundation of the world (1:2) when God’s works were completed (4:3). He also assumes that sin has been in the world virtually since its founding, so that human beings have needed atonement since primeval times.”

6. *Heb 9:26b (B'):* *But Now Once at the Completion of the Ages He Has Appeared*

The singularity of Christ's high priestly sacrifice in heaven is elaborated: "But now once at the completion of the ages for the removal of sin through his sacrifice he has appeared" (9:26b). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from the B to this B' element. That Christ entered into heaven itself "now" (νῦν) to be "manifested" (ἐμφανισθῆναι) (9:24b) progresses to "now" (νῦν) once at the completion of the ages he has "appeared" (πεφάνερωται).

Christ entered into heaven itself "now" (νῦν) to be manifested in the presence of God on behalf of us (9:24b) for the removal of sin through his sacrifice "now" (νῦν) that he has appeared at the completion of the ages (9:26b). Instead of repeatedly offering himself (9:25a) and repeatedly suffering from the founding of the world (9:26a), Christ "once" (ἅπαξ) at the completion of the "ages" (αἰώνων), the "ages" (αἰώνας) made through him, the divine Son in whom God has spoken to us at the end of these days (1:2), for the removal of sin has appeared. This is in contrast to the earthly high priest, who "once" (ἅπαξ) a year offers on behalf of himself and of the inadvertent sins of the people (9:7). That Christ has appeared for the "removal" (ἀθέτησιν) of sin resonates with the need for the "removal" (ἀθέτησις) of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (7:18).

Christ's "sacrifice" (θυσίας) of himself in heaven through which was the removal of sin (9:26b) serves as the preeminent example of the better "sacrifices" (θυσίας) necessary to cleanse the heavenly things themselves (9:23). It provides the alternative for the earthly "sacrifices" (θυσίαι) that are not able according to conscience to make perfect the one offering worship (9:9). It satisfies the necessity for Christ as a high priest to have something to offer, since every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and "sacrifices (θυσίας)" (8:3), that is, "sacrifices" (θυσίας) for sins (5:1). And it reinforces for the audience that Christ does not have every day a necessity, like the earthly high priests, first on behalf of his own sins to offer up "sacrifices" (θυσίας) then of the people, for this he did once for all having offered up himself (7:27).

The Christ who entered into heaven itself now to be "manifested" (ἐμφανισθῆναι) in the presence of God on behalf of us (9:24), now at the completion of the ages for the removal of sin through his sacrifice has

“appeared” (πεφανερώται) on earth (9:26b). This “appearance” of Christ indicates that the way to the heavenly “holy things,” which the Holy Spirit indicated had not “appeared” (πεφανερώσθαι) while the earthly tabernacle had standing (9:9), has now appeared on earth for the benefit of the audience.<sup>5</sup>

7. *Heb 9:27-28 (A'): Christ Offered Once for Sins Will Be Seen Again for Salvation*

The audience hear the A' element (9:27-28) of this unit as the completion of a chiastic pattern in itself that began with the B' element (9:26b):

- a) But now once at the completion of the ages for the removal of *sin* through his sacrifice he has appeared (9:26b).
- b) And *just as* it is appointed for men to die once (9:27a),
- c) and after this judgment (9:27b),
- b') *so also* the Christ offered once (9:28a)
- a') “to offer up the *sins* of many” (Isa 53:12), a second time without *sin* will be seen, by those eagerly awaiting him, for salvation (9:28b).

After the unparalleled “c” sub-element, which contains the only occurrence in this sub-unit of the word “judgment” (κρίσις), the audience experience a pivot in parallels constituted by a “just as/so also” comparison from the “b” sub-element—“just as (καθ’ ὅσον) it is appointed for men to die once” (9:27a)—to the “b’” sub-element—“so also (οὕτως) the Christ offered once” (9:28a). They are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels formed by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of terms for “sin”—from “the removal of sin (ἁμαρτίας)” (9:26b) in the “a” sub-element to “the sins (ἁμαρτίας) of many” and “without sin (ἁμαρτίας)” (9:28b) in the “a’” sub-element.

That it is appointed for men to die “once (ἅπαξ)” (9:27a), and after this judgment (9:27b) for eternity (cf. 6:2), so that the Christ was offered “once (ἅπαξ)” (9:28a), corresponds to his appearance “once” (ἅπαξ) at the

<sup>5</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 265: “The ‘manifestation’ of Christ in his sacrificial death is the point at which another manifestation or revelation occurs, the opening of the ‘way’ of access to the ‘sanctuary’ where God is truly present.” Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 485: “Christ’s appearance makes possible believers’ access to God. The context requires a reference to Christ’s appearance on earth for the sake of humanity, not his appearance in heaven (already mentioned in v. 24).”

completion of the ages for the removal of sin through his sacrifice (9:26b). That it is appointed for “men” (ἄνθρωποις) to “die” (ἀποθανεῖν) once recalls for the audience that, in contrast to “men” (ἄνθρωποι) who “die” (ἀποθνήσκοντες), the priest Melchizedek goes on living forever (7:8). And it is according to the order of Melchizedek that Christ is a high priest forever (5:6; 6:20; 7:17).

That the “Christ,” the “Christ” who entered into heaven itself, now to be manifested in the presence of God on behalf of us (9:24), was “offered” (προσενεχθείς) once (9:28a) corresponds to the necessity that he not repeatedly “offer” (προσφέρει) himself (9:25a). With an alliterative allusion to Isa 53:12, it is explained that he was “offered” (προσενεχθείς) once to take upon himself and “offer up” (ἀνενεγκεῖν) the sins of many (9:28b). This recalls that he does not have a necessity, like earthly high priests, first on behalf of his own sins to “offer up” (ἀναφέρειν) sacrifices then of the people, for this he did once for all having “offered up” (ἀνενέγκας) himself (7:27).

This elaborates for the audience Christ’s appearance for the removal of “sin” (ἁμαρτίας) through his sacrifice (9:26b). It is the removal of the “sins” (ἁμαρτίας) of “many” (πολλῶν), which recalls God’s plan to lead “many” (πολλούς) sons into heavenly glory (2:10), but includes the sins of all people, as “many” can be considered virtually equivalent to “all” (cf. 2:9: “on behalf of all (παντός) he might taste death”).<sup>6</sup> This removal of “sin” reminds the audience of the last time they heard about “sin,” as it serves to fulfill God’s promise from Jer 38:34 that “the sins (ἁμαρτιῶν) of them I will certainly remember no longer” (8:12). The Christ, who as high priest was “separated from sinners (κεχωρισμένος ἀπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν)” (7:26) and who was “without sin (χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας)” (4:15), has appeared on earth for the removal of “sin” (ἁμαρτίας) through his sacrifice (9:26b). He will be seen a second time on earth “without sin” (χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας), that is, not only without his own sin but without the sins of all sinners, by those eagerly awaiting him, including the audience, for salvation (9:28b).<sup>7</sup>

That Christ will be seen by those eagerly awaiting him a second time for “salvation (σωτηρίαν)” (9:28b) resonates with the last time the audience

<sup>6</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 487: “Reference to the ‘many’ is not to be understood as limiting the effects of Christ’s sacrifice to those who accept it in faith. The implied contrast . . . is rather between the one sacrifice and the great number of those who benefit from it.”

<sup>7</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 487: “Despite the author’s insistence up to now on the once-for-all nature of Christ’s sacrifice, he believes that Christ will appear a second time; but his return, unlike his first coming, will have nothing to do with atonement for sin.”

heard about “salvation”—the author’s disclosure that “we are confident concerning you, beloved, of better things, indeed those having to do with salvation (σωτηρίας)” (6:9). It recalls that Christ, the initiator of their “salvation (σωτηρίας)” (2:10), became for all of those who obey him, among whom the audience are to include themselves, a source of eternal “salvation (σωτηρίας)” (5:9). And it reinforces the exhortation for the audience, as those who have the hope of inheriting “salvation (σωτηρίαν)” (1:14), not to neglect so great a “salvation (σωτηρίας)” (2:3) that awaits them when Christ comes a second time.

### C. Summary on Hebrews 9:24-28

At the beginning of this BA' unit (9:24-28) the audience hear that, as high priest, Christ entered into “heaven” itself (9:24). This provides the catch word for the connection to the preceding BB' unit (9:15-23), which concluded with a reference to the necessity that the patterns of the things in the “heavens” be cleansed with animal sacrifices but the “heavenly” things themselves with better sacrifices beyond these (9:23). These occurrences of terms for “heaven” thus move the focus of the audience from the earthly to the heavenly location of sacrificial worship.

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, the audience hear in this BA' unit (9:24-28) the assertion that Christ will be seen a second time for “salvation” (9:28). This reminds them of the last time they heard of “salvation,” namely in the BA (5:11-6:12) unit, when the author expressed his confidence in the audience’s attainment of the better things having to do with “salvation” (6:9). And with regard to the third macrochiastic level, the audience hear in this Ba'a' unit (9:24-28) the assertions that Christ now once at the completion of the ages for the removal of “sin” through his sacrifice has appeared on earth (9:26) and that the Christ offered once to offer up the “sins” of many (Isa 53:12), a second time without “sin” will be seen on earth (9:28). This reminds the audience of the last time they heard of “sin,” namely in the Ba'a unit (8:7-13), in the promise of God from Jer 38:34 that the “sins” of them he will certainly remember no longer (8:12).

The central and unparalleled element of this chiastic unit presents the audience with the point of comparison for the singular entrance into heaven of Christ as high priest with his self-sacrifice—“just as the high priest enters into ‘the holy things’ each year with blood not his own”

(9:25b). The audience then experience a pivot of parallels involving the adverb “repeatedly”—from the assertion that he not “repeatedly” offer himself (9:25a) to the explanation that then it would be necessary for him “repeatedly” to suffer from the founding of the world (9:26a). The audience are then presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the notice that Christ entered into heaven “now” to be “manifested” in the presence of God on behalf of us (9:24b) to “now” once at the completion of the ages for the removal of sin through his sacrifice he has “appeared” on earth (9:26b).

And finally, the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels formed by references to “Christ.” The statement that “Christ” did not enter into “holy things” made by hands, a copy of the true ones, but into heaven itself (9:24a) progresses to the comparison that just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after this judgment, so also the “Christ” offered once “to offer up the sins of many” (Isa 53:12), a second time without sin will be seen on earth. Indeed, he will be seen by those eagerly awaiting him, including the audience, for final, eternal salvation (9:27-28).



## Hebrews 10:1-14

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- A<sup>10:1</sup> *For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, not the image itself of the things, each year with the same sacrifices, which they offer for all time, never is able those who approach to make perfect.* <sup>2</sup>Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because *those* offering worship, once having been cleansed, would have had no further consciousness of sins? <sup>3</sup>But in those same (sacrifices) there is remembrance of sins each year. <sup>4</sup>*For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.*
- B<sup>5</sup> Therefore entering into the world, he *says*, “Sacrifice and offering *you did not want*, but a *body* you provided for me. <sup>6</sup>*Holocausts and sin offerings you took no pleasure in.* <sup>7</sup>Then I said, ‘Behold I have come, as in the scroll of the book it is written concerning me, *to do, O God, your will*’” (Ps 39:7-9).
- B<sup>8</sup> *Saying above, “Sacrifices and offerings and holocausts and sin offerings you did not want nor take pleasure in,”* which according to a law are offered, <sup>9</sup>then he said, “Behold I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first, that he might establish the second, <sup>10</sup>in which will we have been made holy through the offering of the *body* of Jesus Christ once for all.
- A<sup>11</sup> And every priest stands each day ministering and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which *are never able* to cast off sins. <sup>12</sup>But this one, on behalf of sins one sacrifice having offered *for all time*, sat at the right of God, <sup>13</sup>henceforth waiting until his enemies are placed as a footstool for his feet (Ps 109:1). <sup>14</sup>*For by one offering he has made perfect for all time those who are being made holy.*

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 10:1-14

Toward the conclusion of the BA' unit (9:24-28) is a reference to the singular “sacrifice” (θυσία) of Christ through which is the removal of sins

(9:26). At the beginning of the A'A unit (10:1-14) is a reference to the yearly "sacrifices" (θυσίαις) offered by the high priests on earth (10:1). These occurrences of terms for "sacrifice" thus serve as the transitional catch words connecting these units as they move the focus from the one sacrifice of Christ as the heavenly high priest to the many sacrifices offered by the Levitical priests on earth.

The only occurrences in Hebrews of the expression "never able," in this unit of the coordinating conjunction "for," of the expression "for all time," of the third person masculine accusative definite article "those," and of the verb "make perfect" establish the parallels for the A (10:1-4) and A' (10:11-14) elements of this chiasmic unit. "For (γάρ) the law" occurs in 10:1, "for (γάρ) it is impossible" in 10:4, and "for (γάρ) by one offering" in 10:14. "Which they offer for all time (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές)" occurs in 10:1, "one sacrifice offered for all time (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές)" in 10:12, and "he has made perfect for all time (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές)" in 10:14. "Never is able those (οὐδέποτε δύναται τοὺς) who approach to make perfect (τελειῶσαι)" occurs in 10:1, "those (τοὺς) offering worship" in 10:2, "which are never able (οὐδέποτε δύνανται) to cast off sins" in 10:11, and "he has made perfect (τετελείωκεν) for all time those (τοὺς) who are being made holy" in 10:14.

And the only occurrences in Hebrews of the expressions "you did not want," "holocausts and sin offerings you took no pleasure in," "behold, I have come to do your will," and in this unit of the terms "say," "body," and "then," determine the parallels for the B (10:5-7) and the B' (10:8-10) elements. "He says (λέγει)" occurs in 10:5, "then (τότε) I said (εἶπον)" in 10:7, "saying (λέγων) above" in 10:8, and "then (τότε) he said (εἶρηκεν)" in 10:9. "Sacrifice and offering you did not want (οὐκ ἠθέλησας)" occurs in 10:5 and "sacrifices and offerings and holocausts and sin offerings you did not want (οὐκ ἠθέλησας)" in 10:8. "A body (σῶμα) you provided for me" occurs in 10:5 and "through the offering of the body (σώματος) of Jesus Christ" in 10:10. "Holocausts and sin offerings you took no pleasure in (ὀλοκαυτώματα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας οὐκ εὐδόκησας)" occurs in 10:6 and "sacrifices and offerings and holocausts and sin offerings you did not want nor take pleasure in (ὀλοκαυτώματα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας . . . οὐδὲ εὐδόκησας)" in 10:8. "Behold I have come (ἰδοὺ ἦκω), as in the scroll of the book it is written concerning me, to do (ποιῆσαι), O God, your will (τὸ θέλημα σου)" occurs in 10:7 and "behold I have come to do your will (ἰδοὺ ἦκω τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου)" in 10:9.

B. Audience Response to Hebrews 10:1-14

1. Heb 10:1-4 (A): *Sacrifices Offered For All Time Not Able To Make Perfect*

The audience hear the A element (10:1-4) of this unit as a chiasmic pattern in itself:

- a) *For* the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, not the image itself of the things (10:1a),
- b) *each year* (10:1b)
- c) with the *same* sacrifices (10:1c),
- d) which they *offer* for all time, never is able *those* who approach (10:1d)
- e) to make perfect (10:1e).
- d') Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be *offered*, because *those* offering worship, once having been cleansed, would have had no further consciousness of sins? (10:2)
- c') But in those *same* (sacrifices) there is remembrance of sins (10:3a)
- b') *each year* (10:3b).
- a') *For* it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (10:4).

After the central and unparalleled “e” sub-element, which contains the only occurrence in this sub-unit of the verb “to make perfect (τελειῶσαι)” (10:1e), the audience experience a pivot in parallels from the “d” to the “d’” sub-elements, formed by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the verb “offer” and the third person plural masculine accusative definite article “those.” “Which they offer (προσφέρουσιν) for all time, never is able those (τούς) who approach” (10:1d) progresses to “ceased to be offered (προσφερόμεναι), because those (τούς) offering worship” (10:2). They are then presented with a progression from the “c” to the “c’” sub-elements, via the chiasmic parallels involving the only references in this sub-unit to the “same” sacrifices—from “with the same (αὐταῖς) sacrifices” (10:1c) to “in those same (αὐταῖς) (sacrifices)” (10:3a).

After this they hear a progression from the “b” to the “b’” sub-elements, via the chiasmic parallels formed by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the term “each year (κατ’ ἐνιαυτόν)” (10:1b, 3b). And finally, they are presented with a progression from the “a” to the “a’” sub-elements, via the chiasmic parallels involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the con-

junction “for”—from “for (γάρ) the law” (10:1a) to “for (γάρ) it is impossible” (10:4).

That the law has only a “shadow” (σκιάν) of the good things to come (10:1) reminds the audience that the priests on earth offer worship in only a pattern and “shadow” (σκιᾶ) of the heavenly things (8:5). Whereas the law has only a shadow of the “good things” (ἀγαθῶν) “to come” (μελλόντων), resonating with “the powers of the age to come (μέλλοντος)” (6:5) and with “the heavenly world, the one coming (μέλλουσαν)” (2:5), Christ has come as high priest of the “good things” (ἀγαθῶν) that have come to be (9:11). That the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, not the image itself of the “things (πραγμάτων)” (10:1), recalls the unchangeable “things” (πραγμάτων) of God that give the audience a strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope lying ahead (6:18).

Although earthly priests “each year” (κατ’ ἐνιαυτόν) “offer” (προσφέρουσιν) the same animal sacrifices (10:1), recalling that the high priest enters into “the holy things” “each year” (κατ’ ἐνιαυτόν) with blood not his own, the heavenly high priest Jesus does not need repeatedly to “offer” (προσφέρει) himself (9:25). The law, according to which the Levitical high priests “offer” (προσφέρουσιν) the same “sacrifices” (θυσίας), “never is able” (οὐδέποτε δύναται) those who “approach” (προσερχομένους) to “make perfect (τελειῶσαι)” (10:1). This reminds the audience that in the earthly tabernacle “sacrifices” (θυσίαι) are being “offered” (προσφέρονται) “not able” (μὴ δυνάμεναι) according to conscience to “make perfect” (τελειῶσαι) the one offering worship (9:9). The “law” (νόμος) is never able to make perfect those who approach, because the “law” (νόμος) appoints men having weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath-taking that is after the “law” (νόμον) appoints a Son, the heavenly high priest Jesus, who forever has been “made perfect (τετελειωμένον)” (7:28).

In contrast to the eternal Melchizedek, who, having been made like the Son of God, remains a priest “for all time (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές)” (7:3), the mortal Levitical priests offer the same sacrifices year after year “for all time (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές)” (10:1). And in contrast to the law that is “never able” (οὐδέποτε δύναται) to make perfect those who “approach” (προσερχομένους) for worship (10:1), the heavenly high priest Jesus is “able” (δύναται) to save completely those who “approach” (προσερχομένους) God through him, always living to intercede on behalf of them (7:25). This reinforces the exhortation that, since we do not have a high priest who is “not able” (μὴ δυνάμενον) to sympathize with our weaknesses (4:15), let us “approach” (προσερχώμεθα)

then with boldness the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help (4:16).

The audience are then presented with a question that leads them to an affirmative answer in agreement with the author. Would the same sacrifices the Levitical priests “offer” (προσφέρουσιν) for all time but are never able to make perfect those who approach for worship (10:1), not have ceased to be “offered” (προσφερόμεναι), if those “offering worship” (λατρεύοντας), once having been “cleansed” (κεκαθαρισμένους), would have had no further “consciousness” (συνείδησιν) of sins? (10:2). This reminds the audience that sacrifices are being “offered” (προσφέρονται) not able according to “conscience” (συνείδησιν) to make perfect the one “offering worship (λατρεύοντα)” (9:9). But the blood of the Christ, who through the eternal Spirit “offered” (προσηνέγκεν) himself unblemished to God, will “cleanse” (καθαριεῖ) our “conscience” (συνείδησιν) from sinful dead works to “offer worship” (λατρεύειν) to the living God (9:14).

The audience are to appreciate the irony that in those “same” (αὐταῖς) sacrifices, that is, the “same” (αὐταῖς) sacrifices the Levitical high priests offer “each year” (κατ’ ἐνιαυτόν) for all time (10:1), there is “each year” (κατ’ ἐνιαυτόν) only the continual remembrance of “sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)” (10:3), rather than a cleansing of the consciousness of “sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)” (10:2). It is “impossible” (ἀδύνατον) for those once enlightened (6:4), and having fallen away, again to renew to repentance (6:6). It is “impossible” (ἀδύνατον) for God to lie (6:18). Similarly, it is “impossible” (ἀδύνατον) for the “blood of bulls and goats” (αἷμα ταύρων καὶ τράγων), that is, the “blood of bulls and goats” (αἷμα ταύρων καὶ τράγων) which cannot make holy those defiled for the cleansing of the flesh (9:13), to “take away” (ἀφαιρεῖν) “sins (ἁμαρτίας)” (10:4). This is in contrast to Christ, who now once at the completion of the ages for the “removal” (ἀθέτησιν) of “sin” (ἁμαρτίας) through his sacrifice has appeared (9:26). Indeed, Christ, offered once “to offer up (ἀνενεγκεῖν) the sins (ἁμαρτίας) of many” (Isa 53:12), a second time without “sin” (ἁμαρτίας) will be seen, by those eagerly awaiting him, among whom are the audience, for final, eternal salvation (9:28).

## *2. Heb 10:5-7 (B): Behold I Have Come To Do O God Your Will*

The audience learn that the self-offering of Jesus as heavenly high priest began upon his entrance into the earthly world with a quotation from Ps

39:7-9: “Therefore entering into the world, he says, ‘Sacrifice and offering you did not want, but a body you provided for me. Holocausts and sin offerings you took no pleasure in. Then I said, “Behold I have come, as in the scroll of the book it is written concerning me, to do, O God, your will”’” (10:5-7).

The scriptural quotation attributed to Jesus upon “entering” (εἰσερχόμενος) into the earthly world (10:5) complements what the audience have heard regarding his self-offering upon entering into the heavenly world. In contrast to the Levitical high priest, who “enters” (εἰσέρχεται) into the earthly “holy things” each year with blood not his own (9:25), Christ did not “enter” (εἰσῆλθεν) into “holy things” made by hands, a copy of the true ones, but into heaven itself, now to be manifested in the presence of God on behalf of us (9:24). Not through the blood of goats and calves but through his own blood he “entered” (εἰσῆλθεν) once for all into the heavenly “holy things,” finding eternal redemption (9:12). Jesus represents the hope which we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and firm, and which “enters” (εἰσερχομένην) into the interior of the heavenly veil, where as forerunner on behalf of us Jesus “entered” (εἰσῆλθεν), according to the order of Melchizedek having become high priest forever (6:19-20). And when God “leads” (εἰσαγάγει) the firstborn into the heavenly world, he says, “And let all the angels of God worship him (Deut 32:43; Ps 96:7)” (1:6).

What Jesus “says” (λέγει) (10:5a) in quoting Ps 39:7-9 complements what God “says” (λέγει) (8:8, 9, 10) in quoting Jer 38:31-34, the promise of a new covenant.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the same animal “sacrifices” (θυσίαις) which the Levitical priests “offer” (προσφέρουσιν) repeatedly (10:1), the scriptural voice of Jesus acknowledges that “sacrifice” (θυσίαν) and “offering” (προσφοράν) God did not want (10:5b). What the scriptural voice of Jesus then declares to God, “but a body you provided for me (μοι)” (10:5c), resonates with what he said in quoting Isa 8:18a, “behold I and the children whom God gave to me (μοι)” (2:13). This indicates a connection between the “body” God provided Jesus for his self-sacrifice and the “children,” including the audience, God entrusted to Jesus as a merciful and faithful

<sup>1</sup> The occurrences of the verbal form “he says” (λέγει) in 8:8, 9, 10 are the last times the audience have heard it before hearing it used for Jesus in 10:5. On the two quotations, Guthrie (“Hebrews,” 977) notes: “Both emphasize the internalization of the law, rivet attention with ἰδοὺ (‘behold’), have something ‘written,’ contain references to ‘sin,’ and refer to God.”

high priest (2:14-18). In accord with the assertion that it is impossible for the blood of goats and bulls to take away “sins (ἁμαρτίας)” (10:4), the scriptural voice of Jesus declares to God, “holocausts and sin offerings (περὶ ἁμαρτίας) you took no pleasure in” (10:6), even though every high priest is obligated to offer sacrifices “concerning sins (περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν)” (5:3).<sup>2</sup>

When God became provoked with the faithless and disobedient wilderness generation, his scriptural voice from the quotation of Ps 94:7-11 declared, “I said (εἶπον), ‘They are always wandering in the heart, and they have not known my ways’” (3:10). The audience are to appreciate the contrast, as the scriptural voice of Jesus now declares, “I said (εἶπον), ‘Behold I have come, as in the scroll of the book it is written concerning me, to do, O God, your will’” (10:7). In continuity with the scriptural declaration of Jesus, “Behold (ἰδοῦ) I and the children God gave to me” (2:13), and in correspondence to the scriptural promise of God, “Behold (ἰδοῦ) days are coming” (8:8), Jesus now declares, “Behold (ἰδοῦ) I have come.” Moses sprinkled the “book” (βιβλίον) of the covenant containing the written will of God (9:19), and now the scriptural voice of Jesus pledges that he has come, as in the scroll of the “book” (βιβλίον) it is written concerning him, to do the will of God.<sup>3</sup> Although, as Jesus acknowledged to God, sacrifice and offering “you did not want or will (ἠθέλησας),” he pronounces that he has come precisely “to do, O God, your will (θέλημά).”<sup>4</sup>

### 3. *Heb 10:8-10 (B’): Behold I Have Come To Do Your Will*

The significance for the audience of the scriptural pledge of Jesus to offer his body in order to do the will of God is announced: “Saying above, ‘Sacrifices and offerings and holocausts and sin offerings you did not want nor take pleasure in,’ which according to law are offered, then he said, ‘Behold I have come to do your will.’ He does away with the first, that he

<sup>2</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 502: “Περὶ ἁμαρτίας is frequently used in the LXX virtually as a compound noun.”

<sup>3</sup> On the phrase “in the scroll (κεφαλίδι) of the book,” Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 502) notes: “The κεφαλὴ is the knob on the end of a book roll, hence by extension the roll itself.” Koester, *Hebrews*, 433: “[I]n this context the ‘book’ is probably the Mosaic Law, as in Heb 9:19.”

<sup>4</sup> Karen H. Jobes, “Rhetorical Achievement in the Hebrews 10 ‘Misquote’ of Psalm 40,” *Bib* 72 (1991): 387–96; idem, “The Function of Paronomasia in Hebrews 10:5–7,” *TJ* 13 (1992): 181–91; R. H. van der Bergh, “A Textual Comparison of Hebrews 10:5b-7 and LXX Psalm 39:7–9,” *Neot* 42 (2008): 353–82.

might establish the second, in which will we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (10:8-10).

At this point the audience experience a pivot of parallels from the B (10:5-7) to the B' (10:8-10) elements of this chiastic unit. “He says (λέγει)” (10:5) progresses to “saying (λέγων) above” (10:8). “Sacrifice and offering you did not want (οὐκ ἠθέλησας) . . . Holocausts and sin offerings you took no pleasure in (ὀλοκαυτώματα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας οὐκ εὐδόκησας)” (10:5-6) progresses to “holocausts and sin offerings you did not want nor take pleasure in (ὀλοκαυτώματα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας οὐκ ἠθέλησας οὐδὲ εὐδόκησας)” (10:8). “A body (σῶμα) you provided for me” (10:5) progresses to “we have been made holy through the offering of the body (σώματος) of Jesus Christ once for all” (10:10). “Then (τότε) I said (εἶπον)” (10:7) progresses to “then (τότε) he said (εἶρηκεν)” (10:9). And “Behold I have come (ἰδοὺ ἤκω), as in the scroll of the book it is written concerning me, to do (ποιῆσαι), O God, your will (τὸ θέλημά σου)” (10:7) progresses to “Behold I have come to do your will (ἰδοὺ ἤκω τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου)” (10:9).

It is brought to the attention of the audience that the sacrifices and offerings and holocausts and sin offerings which God did not want nor take pleasure in (10:5-6, 8a) are “offered” (προσφέρονται) “according to a law (κατὰ νόμον)” (10:8b). This reminds the audience that the “law” (νόμος), according to which each year the Levitical high priests “offer” (προσφέρουσιν) the same sacrifices, never is able to make perfect those who approach for worship (10:1). Otherwise, these sacrifices would have ceased to be “offered (προσφερόμεναι)” (10:2). It underscores how Jesus is a heavenly high priest, as it recalls that if he would be on earth, he would not be a priest, there being those who “offer” (προσφερόντων) the gifts “according to a law (κατὰ νόμον)” (8:4). And it reminds the audience that Jesus has arisen as a different priest, who not “according to a law” (κατὰ νόμον) of a fleshly commandment has come about, but according to the power of an indestructible life (7:16).

The scriptural voice of Jesus in the first person, “Then I said, ‘Behold I have come, as in the scroll of the book it is written concerning me, to do, O God, your will’” (10:7) is reinforced and refocused for the audience, as it is abbreviated and reported in the third person, “Then he said, ‘Behold I have come to do your will’” (10:9a). That Jesus does away with the “first” (πρῶτον), the will of God as understood under the first covenant, that he might establish the “second” (δεύτερον), the will of God as now understood under the new, second covenant (10:9b), resonates with the asser-



tion that if that “first” (πρώτη) covenant were faultless, for a “second” (δευτέρως) God would not have sought a place (8:7). That Jesus “does away” (ἀναιρεῖ) with the first, in ironic contrast to the impossibility for the blood of bulls and goats to “take away” (ἀφαιρεῖν) sins (10:4), indicates his role in the “disappearing” (ἀφανισμοῦ) of the “first” (πρώτην) covenant that is becoming old and aging, now that a new, second covenant has been announced (8:13).<sup>5</sup>

The audience are made aware that in this “will” (θελήματι), that is, the “will” (θέλημα) of God that Jesus has come to do (10:7, 9), we have been “made holy” (ἡγιασμένοι) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (10:10). This reminds the audience of their close fraternal relationship to Jesus, as it recalls that the Jesus who “makes holy” (ἀγιάζων) and those who are being “made holy” (ἀγιαζόμενοι) are all from one, for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brothers (2:11). And it implies the cleansing of their conscience for the heavenly worship of God. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer’s ashes “makes holy” (ἀγιάζει) those defiled for the cleansing of the flesh (9:13), how much more will the blood of the Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14).

In contrast to the “offering” (προσφοράν) and “offerings” (προσφοράς) God did not want (10:5, 8), it is through the “offering” (προσφορᾶς) of the “body” (σῶματος) of Jesus Christ once for all, the “body” (σῶμα) God provided for him (10:5), that we have been made holy (10:10). The audience have heard references to “Jesus” (2:9; 3:1; 4:14; 6:20; 7:22) and to “Christ” (3:6, 14; 5:5; 6:1; 9:11, 14, 24, 28), but this is the first occurrence of the two words together, thus emphasizing the identity of the body offered in self-sacrifice. That the body of Jesus Christ was offered definitively “once for all” (ἐφάπαξ) recalls that he entered “once for all” (ἐφάπαξ) into the heavenly “holy things,” finding eternal redemption (9:12), and that he does not have a necessity, like the Levitical high priests, first for his own sins to offer up sacrifices then of the people, for this he did “once for all” (ἐφάπαξ) having offered up himself (7:27).

<sup>5</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 504-5; Koester, *Hebrews*, 439: “The principal contrast is between the lack of accomplishment of God’s will under the Law and the completion of God’s will by Christ. Christ came to do God’s will through a blood sacrifice that had an internal dimension of obedience and an external dimension in the offering of his body through crucifixion.”

4. Heb 10:11-14 (A'): He Has Made Perfect For All Time Those Being Made Holy

The audience hear the A' (10:11-14) element of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) And every priest stands each day ministering and *offering* repeatedly the same *sacrifices* (10:11a),
  - b) which are never able to cast off *sins* (10:11b).
  - b') But this one, on behalf of *sins* one (10:12a)
- a') *sacrifice* having *offered* for all time, sat at the right of God, henceforth waiting until his enemies are placed as a footstool for his feet (Ps 109:1). For by one *offering* he has made perfect for all time those who are being made holy (10:12b-14).

At the center of this chiastic sub-unit the audience experience a pivot of parallels, involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the term “sins,” from “to cast off sins (ἁμαρτίας)” (10:11b) in the “b” sub-element to “on behalf of sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)” (10:12a) in the “b'” sub-element. They are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels formed by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of terms for “offering” and “sacrifice”—from “offering (προσφέρων) repeatedly the same sacrifices (θυσίας)” (10:11a) in the “a” sub-element to “sacrifice (θυσίαν) having offered (προσενέγκας) for all time” (10:12b) and “by one offering (προσφορᾷ)” (10:14) in the “a'” sub-element.

As the audience were informed, “every” (πᾶς) “high priest” (ἀρχιερέυς) is appointed to “offer” (προσφέρειν) both gifts and “sacrifices (θυσίας)” (8:3). More precisely, “every” (πᾶς) “high priest” (ἀρχιερέυς) is appointed in things regarding God, so that he may “offer” (προσφέρειν) both gifts and “sacrifices” (θυσίας) on behalf of “sins (ἁμαρτιῶν)” (5:1). But now they hear that “every” (πᾶς) Levitical “priest” (ιερέυς) stands each day ministering and “offering” (προσφέρων) repeatedly the same “sacrifices” (θυσίας), which are never able to cast off “sins (ἁμαρτίας)” (10:11).

That every Levitical priest stands “each day” (καθ' ἡμέραν) offering the same sacrifices (10:11) presents a contrast to Jesus, who does not have “each day” (καθ' ἡμέραν) a necessity, like the Levitical high priests, first on behalf of his own sins to offer up sacrifices then of the people, for this he did once for all having offered up himself (7:27). In contrast to Jesus, who does not “repeatedly” (πολλάκις) offer himself (9:25), since then it would

be necessary for him “repeatedly” (πολλάκις) to suffer from the foundation of the world (9:26), every Levitical priest stands each day ministering and offering “repeatedly” (πολλάκις) the same sacrifices (10:11). Since the same sacrifices offered by all of the Levitical priests are “never able” (οὐδέποτε δύνανται) to cast off sins (10:11), the law is “never able” (οὐδέποτε δύνανται) to make perfect those who approach for worship (10:1; cf. 7:19, 28; 9:22).

That Jesus Christ is pointedly referred to here as “this one (οὗτος)” (10:12) resonates with how great is “this one (οὗτος)” (7:4), that is, “this” (οὗτος) unique high priest Melchizedek (7:1), who was made like the Son of God (7:3). It reminds the audience that Jesus Christ is “this one” (οὗτος), who has been considered worthy of greater glory beyond Moses (3:3). In contrast to every Levitical priest “offering” (προσφέρων) repeatedly the same “sacrifices” (θυσίας), which are never able to cast off “sins (ἁμαρτίας)” (10:11), Jesus Christ “offered” (προσενέγκας) one “sacrifice” (θυσίαν) on “behalf of sins” (ὕπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν), in accord with the duty of every high priest to offer sacrifices “on behalf of sins (ὕπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν)” (5:1), for all time (10:12). In contrast to the Levitical priests, who each year offer the same sacrifices “for all time (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές)” (10:1), Jesus Christ offered one sacrifice, the body God provided him (10:5, 10), “for all time (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές)” (10:12), while thus, like Melchizedek, remaining an eternal priest “for all time (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές)” (7:3).

The audience hear the “a” sub-element (10:12b-14) of this sub-unit (10:11-14) as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) sacrifice having offered *for all time*, sat at the right of God (10:12b),
  - b) henceforth waiting until *his* enemies are placed (10:13a)
  - b') as a footstool for *his* feet (10:13b; cf. Ps 109:1)
- a') For by one offering he has made perfect *for all time* those who are being made holy (10:14).

At the center of this chiastic sub-unit the audience experience a pivot of parallels, involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the pronoun “his” in the genitive masculine third person singular—from “his (αὐτοῦ) enemies” (10:13a) in the “b” sub-element to “a footstool for his (αὐτοῦ) feet” (10:13b) in the “b” sub-element. They are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels formed by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the phrase “for all time”—from “having offered for all time (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές)” (10:12b) in the “a” sub-element to “he has made perfect for all time (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές)” (10:14) in the “a” sub-element.

That Jesus Christ, having offered one sacrifice for all time on behalf of “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν), “sat at the right” (ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ) of God (10:12) in accord with Ps 109:1 reinforces for the audience the assertion that in Jesus Christ we have a high priest who “sat at the right” (ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ) of the throne of the divine Majesty in the heavens (8:1). It recalls that Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, having made a cleansing for “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν), “sat at the right” (ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ) of the divine Majesty in the heights of heaven (1:3). That henceforth he is waiting “until his enemies are placed as a footstool for his feet (ἕως τεθῶσιν οἱ ἐχθροὶ αὐτοῦ ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ)” (10:13) echoes the explicit citation of Ps 109:1, addressed directly, not to any of the angels, but to the Son of God: “Sit at my right (κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου), until I place your enemies as a footstool for your feet (ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου)” (1:13).

That the heavenly enthroned Jesus Christ is still “waiting” (ἐκδεχόμενος) until his enemies are placed by God as a footstool for his feet (10:13) reminds the audience that the great salvation they are not to neglect (2:3) is still to be consummated. Indeed, the Christ, offered once “to offer up the sins of many” (Isa 53:12), a second time without sin will be seen, by those “eagerly awaiting” (ἀπεκδεχόμενοις) him, among whom are the audience, for final, eternal salvation (9:28).<sup>6</sup>

By “one offering” (μῆ προσφορᾷ), the “one sacrifice” (μίαν θυσίαν) offered for all time (10:12), through the “offering” (προσφορᾶς) of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (10:10), Jesus Christ has made perfect for all time those who are being made holy (10:14). In contrast to the law, which never is able to “make perfect” (τελειῶσαι) those who approach for worship (10:1; cf. 9:9; 7:19), Jesus Christ, the divinely appointed Son, who forever “has been made perfect (τετελειωμένον)” (7:28; cf. 5:9; 2:10), “has made perfect” (τετελείωκεν) for all time those who are being made holy. Through his one sacrifice offered “for all time” (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές) on behalf of sins (10:12), Jesus Christ has made perfect “for all time” (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές) those who are being made holy (10:14). Although the law never is able to make perfect “those” (τούς) who approach for worship (10:1), because “those” (τούς) offering worship still have consciousness of sins (10:2), by

<sup>6</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 435: “‘Waiting’ suggests rest, but not inactivity, for the seated Christ intercedes for others (4:14-16; 7:25; 9:24). The ‘enemies’ are not identified. Christ’s exaltation was a victory over the devil (2:14-15), and the author may have thought of the enemies as other superhuman powers, but the idea is not developed.”

one offering of himself, Jesus Christ has made perfect for all time “those” (τούς) who are being made holy.

This emphatically underscores that we, who “have been made holy” (ἡγιασμένοι) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (10:10), are still involved in the ongoing process of “being made holy” (ἁγιαζομένους) and thus fit for worship (10:14).<sup>7</sup> It again reminds the audience that the Jesus who “makes holy” (ἁγιάζων) and those who are being “made holy” (ἁγιαζόμενοι) are all from one, for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brothers (2:11). And it again indicates to the audience the cleansing of their conscience for the heavenly worship of God. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer’s ashes “makes holy” (ἁγιάζει) those defiled for the cleansing of the flesh (9:13), how much more will the blood of the Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14).<sup>8</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 10:1-14

At the beginning of the A'A unit (10:1-14) the audience hear of the yearly “sacrifices” offered by the high priests on earth (10:1). This provides the catch word for the connection to the preceding BA' unit (9:24-28), which concluded with a reference to the singular “sacrifice” of Christ through which is the removal of sins (9:26). These occurrences of terms for “sacrifice” thus move the focus of the audience from the one unique “sacrifice” of Christ as the heavenly high priest to the many “sacrifices” offered by the Levitical priests on earth.

At the center of this chiasitic unit the audience experience a pivot of parallels involving the quotation of Ps 39:7-9, presented as what Jesus “says” upon entering the world. He “says” to God that sacrifice and offering “you did not want,” but a “body” you provided for me (10:5); “holocausts and sin offerings you took no pleasure in” (10:6); “then I said,” “behold I have come,” as in the scroll of the book it is written concerning me, “to do,” O God, “your will” (10:7). This progresses to the explanation that “saying”

<sup>7</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 281: “[T]he appropriation of the enduring effects of Christ’s act is an ongoing present reality.”

<sup>8</sup> S. H. Geiger, “Hebrews 10:14—Τὸς ἁγιαζομένους...: Justification or Sanctification?” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 103 (2006): 281–86.

above that sacrifices and offerings and “holocausts and sin offerings you did not want nor take pleasure in,” which according to a law are offered (10:8), “then he said,” “behold I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first, that he might establish the second (10:9), in which will we have been made holy through the offering of the “body” of Jesus Christ once for all (10:10).

The audience are then presented with a series of progressions, via the chiastic parallels. First, there is a progression from the statement that the law, having only a shadow of the good things to come, not the image itself of the things, “never is able” to make perfect those approaching for worship (10:1) to the notice that every Levitical priest stands each day ministering and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which “are never able” to cast off sins (10:11).

It is further stated that the law, with the same sacrifices that the Levitical priests offer each year “for all time” never is able to “make perfect” “those” approaching for worship (10:1), otherwise they would have ceased to be offered, because “those” offering worship, once having been cleansed, would have had no further consciousness of sins (10:2). But in those same sacrifices there is remembrance of sins each year, as it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (10:3-4). This progresses to the assertion that Jesus Christ, on behalf of sins one sacrifice having offered “for all time,” sat at the right of God (10:12), henceforth waiting until his enemies are placed as a footstool for his feet (10:13; cf. Ps 109:1), for by one offering he has “made perfect” “for all time” “those,” among whom are the audience, who are being made holy (10:14).

## Hebrews 10:15-30

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- A<sup>15</sup> The Holy *Spirit* also *testifies* to us, for after having said, <sup>16</sup> “This is the *covenant* which I will covenant with them after those days, says the *Lord*, giving my *laws* upon their hearts and upon their mind I will inscribe them” (Jer 38:33),
- B<sup>17</sup> (he said) also, “Their *sins* and their lawless deeds I certainly will remember *no longer*” (Jer 38:34b). <sup>18</sup> Where there is forgiveness of these, there is *no longer* offering *for sin*.
- C<sup>19</sup> Having then, brothers, boldness for the entrance to “the holy things” in the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> which fresh and living way he inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh, <sup>21</sup> and a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22a</sup> let us approach with a true *heart* in assurance of *faith*,
- C<sup>22b</sup> sprinkled with regard to the *hearts* from an evil conscience and washed with regard to the body by clean water. <sup>23</sup> Let us hold to the confession of the hope unwaveringly, for *faithful* is the one who promised, <sup>24</sup> and let us turn attention to one another for stirring up love and beneficent works, <sup>25</sup> not abandoning our own gathering, as is the custom of some, but encouraging, and even more so to the degree that you take note of the day drawing near.
- B<sup>26</sup> For if we deliberately go on *sinning* after receiving the knowledge of the truth, a sacrifice *for sins no longer* remains,
- A<sup>27</sup> but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and zeal of fire about to devour the adversaries (Zeph 1:18; Isa 26:11). <sup>28</sup> Anyone rejecting the *law* of Moses dies without pity on the basis of two or three *witnesses* (Deut 17:6). <sup>29</sup> How much worse a punishment do you think is worthy one who tramples under foot the Son of God and considers unclean the blood of the *covenant*, in which he was made holy, and insults the *Spirit* of grace? <sup>30</sup> For we know the one who said, “Mine is vengeance, I will repay” (Deut 32:35), and again, “The *Lord* will judge his people” (Deut 32:36).

## A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 10:15-30

Toward the conclusion of the A'A unit (10:1-14) is a reference to “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν) on behalf of which Jesus Christ offered one sacrifice for all time (10:12). Near the beginning of the A'B unit (10:15-30) is a reference to the “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν) God promises to remember no longer (10:17). These occurrences of the term for “sins” thus serve as the transitional catch words connecting these units as they move the focus from the sins for which Jesus Christ offered himself to the sins God certainly will remember no longer according to Jer 38:34b.

The only occurrences in this unit of the terms “spirit,” “testify/witness,” “covenant,” “Lord,” and “law” establish the parallels for the A (10:15-16) and A' (10:27-30) elements of this chiastic unit. “The Holy Spirit (πνεῦμα) also testifies to us” occurs in 10:15 and “insults the Spirit (πνεῦμα) of grace” in 10:29. “The Holy Spirit also testifies (μαρτυρεῖ) to us” occurs in 10:15 and “on the basis of two or three witnesses (μάρτυσιν)” in 10:28. “This is the covenant (διαθήκη) which I will covenant with them after those days” occurs in 10:16 and “considers unclean the blood of the covenant (διαθήκης)” in 10:29. “Says the Lord (κύριος)” occurs in 10:16 and “the Lord (κύριος) will judge his people” in 10:30. “Giving my laws (νόμους) upon their hearts” occurs in 10:16 and “rejecting the law (νόμον) of Moses” in 10:28.

The only occurrences in this unit of terms for “sin” and of the adverb “no longer” determine the parallels for the B (10:17-18) and B' (10:26) elements. “Their sins (ἁμαρτιῶν) and their lawless deeds I certainly will remember no (οὐ) longer (ἔτι)” occurs in 10:17, “there is no longer (οὐκέτι) offering for sin (περὶ ἁμαρτίας)” in 10:18, and “if we deliberately go on sinning (ἁμαρτανόντων) after receiving the knowledge of the truth, a sacrifice for sins no longer (οὐκέτι περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν) remains” in 10:26. And finally, the only occurrences in this unit of the term “heart” not in a scriptural quotation (cf. 10:16), as well as the only occurrences in this unit for the terms “faith/faithful” secure the parallels for the C (10:19-22a) and C' (10:22b-25) elements. “Let us approach with a true heart (καρδίας) in assurance of faith (πίστεως)” occurs in 10:22a and “sprinkled with regard to the hearts (καρδίας) from an evil conscience . . . let us hold to the confession of the hope unwaveringly, for faithful (πιστός) is the one who promised” in 10:22b-23.



## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 10:15-30

### 1. Heb 10:15-16 (A): The Holy Spirit Testifies to the Covenant

The attention of the audience is drawn once again to the promise of God in the quotation of Jer 38:33: “The Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after having said, ‘This is the covenant which I will covenant with them after those days, says the Lord, giving my laws upon their hearts and upon their mind I will inscribe them’” (10:15-16). It is divinely “testified” (μαρτυρούμενος) according to scripture that Melchizedek goes on living (7:8; cf. 7:3). And it is divinely “testified” (μαρτυρεῖται) concerning Jesus Christ according to Ps 109:4 that “you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (7:17). The audience now hear that the divine Holy Spirit also “testifies” (μαρτυρεῖ) to us in scripture (10:15)—with “testifies” in an emphatic position—in addition to the testimony given by Ps 109:1 (10:12-13).<sup>1</sup> That “the Holy Spirit” (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον) testifies to us as the divine speaker of Jer 38:33 reminds the audience of the scriptural testimony “the Holy Spirit” (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον) gave in speaking Ps 94:7-11, with its warning to the audience, “Today when you hear his voice, ‘do not harden your hearts’” (3:7-8a).<sup>2</sup>

Previously the audience heard Jer 38:33 quoted as follows: “This is the covenant which I will covenant with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord, giving my laws into their mind and upon their hearts I will inscribe them” (8:10). But now they hear it quoted a bit differently: “This is the covenant which I will covenant with them after those days, says the Lord, giving my laws upon their hearts and upon their mind I will inscribe them” (10:16). Instead of “with the house of Israel” (τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ), the covenant is now “with them” (πρὸς αὐτούς), a generalization that facilitates

<sup>1</sup> On the emphatic position of the verb “testifies” (μαρτυρεῖ) in 10:15, see Westcott, *Hebrews*, 316.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews*, 254: “This is the third time that Scripture is said to ‘bear witness’ (see also 7:8, 17), and also the third time that the Holy Spirit is said to speak or reveal through Scripture (see 3:7, and, by implication 9:8). Characteristically, the Scripture is understood as spoken, and as addressed ‘to us’ rather than simply to the past.” Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 268: “The Spirit brings the detail of the text from the past into the present and makes it contemporary with the experience of the readers.”

the application of the new covenant to the contemporary audience.<sup>3</sup> The inversion of the promise into “giving my laws upon their hearts and upon their mind I will inscribe them” (10:16) not only complements the original “giving my laws into their mind and upon their hearts I will inscribe them” (8:10), but reinforces that the covenant is with “them.” The laws of God will be both given and inscribed both “upon the hearts of them” (ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν) and “upon the mind of them” (ἐπὶ τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν).<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Heb 10:17-18 (B): No Longer Offering for Sin as Sins No Longer Remembered

The audience hear the B element (10:17-18) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) (he said) also, “Their *sins* and their lawless deeds (10:17a)
- b) I certainly will remember *no longer* (Jer 38:34b)” (10:17b).<sup>5</sup>
- c) Where there is forgiveness of these (10:18a),
- b') there is *no longer* offering (10:18b)
- a') for *sin*” (10:18c).

After the central and unparalleled “c” sub-element, which contains the only occurrence in this sub-unit of the term “forgiveness,” “where there is forgiveness (ἄφεσις) of these” (10:18a), the audience experience a pivot of parallels from the “b” to the “b'” sub-elements, involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the adverb “no longer.” “I certainly will remember no (οὐ) longer (ἔτι)” (10:17b) progresses to “there is no longer (οὐκέτι) offering” (10:18b). They are then presented with a progression from the “a” to the “a'” sub-elements, via the chiastic parallels formed by the only

<sup>3</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 435: “By referring generally to ‘them’ rather than to ‘the house of Israel,’ the author allows for a connection between the new covenant and all for whom Christ’s blood was shed.” See also Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 513; Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 204.

<sup>4</sup> Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 979: “Further, in place of the preposition εἰς before τὴν διάνοιαν, as at 8:10, the author has written ἐπὶ τὴν διάνοιαν at 10:16, perhaps because the phrase is now positioned with the verb ἐπιγράψω (‘I will write’).”

<sup>5</sup> Attridge (*Hebrews*, 281) notes that while it might be possible to understand the Holy Spirit (10:15) as the subject of an implicit “he then says” before the quotation, “it is more natural to take the phrase ‘the Lord says,’ which is part of the quotation, as introducing its second segment.”

occurrences in this sub-unit of the term “sin”—from “their sins (ἁμαρτιῶν) and their lawless deeds” (10:17a) to “for sin (ἁμαρτίας)” (10:18c).

The scriptural testimony of the Holy Spirit in the reprise of the quotation of Jer 38:33 (10:15-16) continues with a reiteration of the quotation of Jer 38:34b, differently accentuated. Previously the audience heard the quotation of Jer 38:34b as follows: “I will be merciful to their wrongdoings and their sins I will certainly remember no longer” (8:12). But now they hear: “Their sins and their lawless deeds I certainly will remember no longer” (10:17). God’s promise that “I will be merciful to their wrongdoings” has been eliminated in favor of foregrounding “their sins” (τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν), accentuated by the addition of “their lawless deeds” (τῶν ἀνομιῶν αὐτῶν), thus creating the rhythm of an alliterative couplet. This also creates a closer correspondence to the divine promise of “giving my laws (νόμους) upon their hearts” (10:16), as it resonates with the scriptural voice of God in the quotation of Ps 44:8, affirming that the Son of God “loved righteousness and hated lawlessness (ἀνομίαν)” (1:9).<sup>6</sup> And finally, the change from the aorist subjunctive form of the verb “I will remember (μνησθῶ) no longer” (8:12) to the future indicative “I will remember (μνησθήσομαι) no longer” (10:17) lends added emphasis to the decisiveness of the divine promise of forgiveness.

The explanation that where there is “forgiveness” (ἄφεσις) of these sins and lawless deeds, there is no longer offering for sin (10:18) underlines the singularity of the self-offering of the blood that was shed by Christ, as it reminds the audience that without the shedding of blood no “forgiveness” (ἄφεσις) occurs (9:22). In correspondence to the decisive scriptural promise of God in Jer 38:34b that their sins (ἁμαρτιῶν) and their lawless deeds “I certainly will remember no (οὐ) longer (ἔτι)” (10:17), there is “no longer” (οὐκέτι) offering “for sin (περὶ ἁμαρτίας)” (10:18). That there is no longer “offering” (προσφορά) for sin reinforces for the audience that by one “offering” (προσφορᾷ) Christ has made perfect for all time those who are being made holy (10:14), and that we have been made holy through the “offering” (προσφορᾷς) of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (10:10). It confirms the scriptural voice of Christ addressed to God in the quotation of Ps 39:7 that sacrifice and “offering” (προσφορὰν) and holocausts and “sin offerings” (περὶ ἁμαρτίας) you did not want nor take pleasure in (10:5, 8).

<sup>6</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 436: “Since the Son of God hates ‘lawlessness’ (1:9), he purges it from the people of God.”

3. *Heb 10:19-22a (C): Let Us Approach with a True Heart in Assurance of Faith*

In consequence of what has been explained to this point about the significance of the heavenly self-offering of the high priest Jesus, the audience are presented with another exhortation: “Having then, brothers, boldness for the entrance to ‘the holy things’ in the blood of Jesus, which fresh and living way he inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh, and a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in assurance of faith” (10:19-22a). The audience were exhorted to hold fast to the confession, “having” (ἔχοντες) then a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God (4:14). They were then addressed as having become those “having” (ἔχοντες) a need of “milk and not solid food,” including that “you have (ἔχετε) a need for someone to teach you the elements of the beginning of the sayings of God” (5:12). But now they are addressed as those “having” (ἔχοντες) boldness for the entrance to the heavenly “holy things” in the blood of Jesus (10:19).

Addressed as “brothers (ἀδελφοί)” (10:19), the audience are reminded that, as holy “brothers” (ἀδελφοί) who are partners of a heavenly calling (3:1), they have been warned, as “brothers” (ἀδελφοί), to take note lest there be in anyone of them an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the living God (3:12). That they have “boldness” (παρρησίαν) for the entrance to the heavenly “holy things” (10:19) reverberates with the exhortations for them to approach with “boldness” (παρρησίας) the throne of grace (4:16), and to hold to the “boldness” (παρρησίαν) and to the boast of the hope (3:6). Although the “way” (ὁδόν) to the heavenly “holy things” (τῶν ἁγίων) had not appeared while the first earthly tabernacle had standing (9:8), the audience are now assured that we have boldness for the “entrance” (εἰσοδόν) to the heavenly “holy things” (τῶν ἁγίων) in the blood of Jesus (10:19), which fresh and living “way” (ὁδόν) he inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh (10:20).

We have boldness for the entrance to the heavenly “holy things” in the “blood” (αἵματι) of Jesus (10:19), since Christ did not enter into “holy things” made by hands, but into heaven itself (9:24a), as a high priest with “blood” (αἵματι) that is his own (9:25b). This adds to the assurance for the audience that the “blood” (αἷμα) of the Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, will cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14).

Corresponding to the fact that not even the first covenant was “inaugurated” (ἐγκεκαίνισται) without “blood (αἵματος)” (9:18), the bold entrance that we have to the heavenly “holy things” in the “blood” (αἵματι) of Jesus, is the fresh and living way he “inaugurated” (ἐνεκαίνισεν) for us through the veil, that is, his flesh (10:20). That it is a “living” (ζῶσαν) way further reinforces the assurance that the blood of the Christ will cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the “living” (ζῶντι) God (9:14), the God who possesses and promises to bestow eternal life in his heavenly sabbatical rest (4:6-11). This “living” way, as the way to the eternal life offered by the ever “living” God, resonates with the fact that Jesus is an eternal high priest, who is able to save completely those who approach God through him, always “living” (ζῶν) to intercede on behalf of them (7:25). This is the intercession available to the audience as they strive to make sure that there not be in anyone of them an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the “living” (ζῶντος) God (3:12).

In contrast to the “veil” (καταπέτασμα) that closed the way to the earthly “holy things” (9:3), and resonating with the entrance into the interior of the heavenly “veil” (καταπετάσματος) by Jesus as the firm anchor of our soul (6:19), this fresh and living entrance that Jesus inaugurated for us to the heavenly “holy things” is through the “veil” (καταπετάσματος) which is his flesh (10:20). The veil which is “his flesh” (τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ) reminds the audience that it was in the days of “his flesh” (τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ) that the eternal high priest Jesus offered both prayers and supplications with strong outcrying and tears to the God who was able to save him from death, and he was heard from his reverence (5:7). That our entrance to the heavenly “holy things” is in the “blood” (αἵματι) and through the “flesh” (σαρκός) of Jesus (10:19-20) leads the audience to appreciate that the self-offering of Jesus as the eternal high priest was accomplished in and through the “blood” (αἷματος) and “flesh” (σαρκός) he shared with us as our fellow and fraternal human being (2:14).

That the audience are those having in Jesus not only boldness for entrance to the heavenly “holy things” (10:19), but also a “great priest” (ἱερεὰ μέγαν) over the house of God (10:21), reinforces the exhortation for them as those having a “great high priest” (ἀρχιερεὰ μέγαν) who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, to hold fast to the confession (4:14). And that Jesus is a great priest “over the house” (ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον) of God reminds the audience that Christ is such a great priest as the Son “over

the house” (ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον) of God, whose house are we, if to the boldness and to the boast of the hope we hold (3:6).

Since we have boldness for entrance to the heavenly “holy things” and a great priest over the house of God (10:19-21), we are to “approach” (προσερχώμεθα) for the worship of God with a true heart in assurance of faith (10:22a). This is in contrast to those who “approach” (προσερχομένους) with the same sacrifices never able to make them perfect (10:1). It resonates with the fact that Jesus is able to save completely those who “approach” (προσερχομένους) God through him (7:25), and with the exhortation for us to “approach” (προσερχώμεθα) with boldness the throne of grace (4:16).

We are to approach for the worship of God with a “true” (ἀληθινῆς) heart (10:22a), that is, a heart appropriate for the “true” (ἀληθινῶν) “holy things” of heaven itself (9:24), and for the “true” (ἀληθινῆς), heavenly tabernacle (8:2). That we are to approach with a true “heart” (καρδίας) is a consequence of the scriptural promise of God to give and inscribe his laws upon our “hearts (καρδίας)” (10:16; 8:10). And that we are to approach with a true heart in “assurance” (πληροφορία) of “faith (πίστεως)” (10:22a) resonates with the author’s desire that each member of the audience demonstrate the same eagerness for the “assurance” (πληροφορίαν) of the hope until the end (6:11). This is so that the audience may not become sluggish, but imitators of those who through “faith” (πίστεως) and patience are inheriting the promises (6:12).

#### *4. Heb 10:22b-25 (C'): Hearts Sprinkled for Faithful Is the One Who Promised*

The exhortation for the audience to approach for the worship of God (10:19-22a) is extended: “sprinkled with regard to the hearts from an evil conscience and washed with regard to the body by clean water. Let us hold to the confession of the hope unwaveringly, for faithful is the one who promised, and let us turn attention to one another for stirring up love and beneficent works, not abandoning our own gathering, as is the custom of some, but encouraging, and even more so to the degree that you take note of the day drawing near” (10:22b-25). At this point the audience experience a pivot of parallels from the C (10:19-22a) to the C' (10:22b-25) elements of this chiastic unit. The exhortation for us to approach with a true “heart” (καρδίας) in assurance of “faith (πίστεως)” (10:22a) progresses to

the description that we are sprinkled with regard to the “hearts” (καρδίας) from an evil conscience (10:22b) and to the notice that “faithful” (πιστός) is the one who promised (10:23).

Under the old covenant there was a “cleansing” (καθαρότητα) of the flesh by the “sprinkling” (ράντιζουσα) of a heifer’s ashes (9:13). And the old covenant was inaugurated through the sprinkling with blood and “water” (ὕδατος) by Moses, who “sprinkled” (ἐρράντισεν) both the book of the covenant and all the people (9:19), and the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he likewise “sprinkled” (ἐρράντισεν) with blood (9:21). In contrast, we have been “sprinkled” (ῥεραντισμένοι) with regard to the hearts from an evil conscience and washed with regard to the body by “clean” (καθαρῶ) “water” (ὕδατι), a reminder of our initiatory, sacramental baptism (10:22b).<sup>7</sup>

We may approach for the heavenly worship of the living God with a true “heart” (καρδίας) in assurance of “faith” (πίστεως) (10:22a). The reason is that we have been sprinkled with regard to the “hearts” (καρδίας)—the “hearts” (καρδίας) upon which God has promised in the new covenant to give and inscribe his laws (10:16; 8:10)—from an “evil” (πονηρᾶς) “conscience” (συνειδήσεως) and washed with regard to the body by “clean” (καθαρῶ) water (10:22b). This reinforces the exhortations for the audience to take note lest there be in anyone of them an “evil” (πονηρά) “heart” (καρδία) of “unfaithfulness” (ἀπιστίας) in falling away from the living God (3:12), and to heed the voice of God urging them not to harden their “hearts” (καρδίας)” (3:8, 10, 15; 4:7). It means they may offer worship as those having no “consciousness” (συνείδησιν) of sins, since they have been “cleansed (κεκαθαρισμένους)” (10:2). And in contrast to the offering of gifts and sacrifices not able according to “conscience” (συνείδησιν) to make perfect the one offering worship (9:9), it boosts the assurance that the blood of Christ will “cleanse” (καθαριεῖ) our “conscience” (συνείδησιν) from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14).

According to the law of the old covenant almost everything is “cleansed” (καθαρίζεται) by blood (9:22). But in the new covenant the heavenly things are to be “cleansed” (καθαρίζεσθαι) with better sacrifices (9:23). A better sacrifice was the offering of the “body” (σώματος) of Jesus Christ once for all (10:10), the “body” (σῶμα) God provided for him (10:5). The audience

<sup>7</sup> Peter J. Leithart, “Womb of the World: Baptism and the Priesthood of the New Covenant in Hebrews 10.19–22,” *JSNT* 78 (2000): 49–65.

are to appreciate that it is as a consequence of this better sacrificial self-offering that we have been washed with regard to the “body” (σῶμα) by “clean” (καθαρῶ) water (10:22b).<sup>8</sup>

The exhortation for us to approach for worship with a true heart in assurance of “faith” (πίστεως) is strengthened by the further exhortation that, because the one who promised is “faithful” (πιστός), we “hold” (κατέχωμεν) to the “confession” (ὁμολογίαν) of the “hope” (ἐλπίδος) unwaveringly (10:23). This resonates with and reinforces previous exhortations with similar terminology: We may have a strong encouragement to “hold fast” (κρατῆσαι) to the “hope” (ἐλπίδος) lying ahead (6:18). Each should demonstrate the same eagerness for the assurance of the “hope” (ἐλπίδος) until the end (6:11). Let us “hold fast” (κρατῶμεν) to the “confession” (ὁμολογίας)” (4:14). We are to “hold” (κατάσχωμεν) the beginning of the reality firm until the end (3:14). We are to “hold” (κατάσχωμεν) to the boldness and to the boast of the “hope (ἐλπίδος)” (3:6). And we are to turn attention to the apostle and high priest of our “confession” (ὁμολογίας), Jesus (3:1).

Just as Moses was “faithful” (πιστός) in all God’s house (3:5), and Jesus, as a “faithful” (πιστός) high priest (2:17), was “faithful” (πιστόν) to the one who made him (3:2), “faithful” (πιστός) is the God who promised (10:23). That the God who “promised” (ἐπαγγειλάμενος) is faithful reminds the audience that when God “promised” (ἐπαγγειλάμενος) to Abraham (6:13), he guaranteed it with an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope lying ahead, the hope represented by Jesus himself as the eternal high priest in heaven (6:17-20).

Having been directed to “turn attention” (κατανοήσατε) to the apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus (3:1), the audience are now exhorted, “Let us turn attention” (κατανοῶμεν) to one another for stirring up love and beneficent works (10:24). Having been assured that God is not unjust so as to neglect their “work” (ἔργου) and the “love” (ἀγάπης) which they demonstrated for his name (6:10), the audience are now exhorted to

<sup>8</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews*, 258: “Christ has brought about the purification of moral consciousness that the law could never accomplish (9:9, 14; 10:2, 11-14). . . . it is also possible that ‘washing’ simply carries forward the image of purification, extending it to the body as the outward symbol and instrument of faithful obedience (see 10:5, 10), so that as Christ’s faith was enacted by the disposition of his body, so is the faith of his followers expressed fully when the purified internal attitude is expressed in the pure disposition of their bodies.”



turn attention to one another for stirring up “love” (ἀγάπης) and beneficent “works” (ἔργων). They are enabled to stir up “beneficent works” (καλῶν ἔργων), because the foundation of repentance from “dead works” (νεκρῶν ἔργων) and of faith in God has already been laid down for them (6:1), and they have received the promise that the blood of the Christ will cleanse their conscience from “dead works” (νεκρῶν ἔργων) to offer worship to the living God (9:14).

The exhortation for the audience to turn attention to one another for stirring up love and beneficent works (10:24) continues, as they are urged not to abandon, as is the custom of some, “their own” (ἐαυτῶν) gathering for communal worship (10:25a).<sup>9</sup> Rather, they are to be “encouraging” (παρακαλοῦντες) one another, all the more as they “take note” (βλέπετε) of the “day” (ἡμέραν) drawing near (10:25b). This reinforces, as it resonates with, the exhortation that the audience “take note” (βλέπετε) lest there be in anyone of them an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the living God (3:12). They are rather to “encourage” (παρακαλεῖτε) “one another” (ἐαυτούς) during each “day” (ἡμέραν), while it is called “today,” so that not anyone of them may become hardened by the deceit of sin (3:13).

The “day” (ἡμέραν) that is drawing near (10:25) refers to the final, decisive day to come at the end of these “days” (ἡμερῶν) in which God has spoken to us in a Son (1:2).<sup>10</sup> The audience may prepare for this decisive day of final salvation at each “day” (ἡμέραν) set as the “today” for listening during their communal worship to the voice of God urging that they not harden their hearts against the ways of God (4:7), as in the rebellion during the “day” (ἡμέραν) of the testing of God in the wilderness (3:8). Each “today” of their communal gathering for worship serves as the other “day” (ἡμέρας) about which God spoke (4:8), the “today” for hearing the voice of God inviting the audience to enter into God’s own eternal sabbath rest in heaven (4:9-11). That the decisive day of final salvation is “drawing near”

<sup>9</sup> On the term “gathering” or “assembly” (ἐπισυναγωγή), Attridge (*Hebrews*, 290) points out: “It is likely that the author has particularly in mind the assembly of his addressees as a worshipping community.” Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 212: “The noun ἐπισυναγωγή is more vivid than the simpler συναγωγή, and with the ἐπι prefix it has a more specific local sense.” See also Michael Cahill, “The Implications of ἐπισυναγωγή in Hebrews 10:25: The First Eucharistic Homily?” *Questions liturgiques et paroissiales* 74 (1993): 198–207.

<sup>10</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 291: “Expectation of ‘the day’ (τὴν ἡμέραν) based upon the Old Testament’s prophecies of God’s judgment was a common element of the eschatology of early Christians who could, as here, simply refer to the day, or define it as the day of God, or of the Lord. This was a day of judgment and of redemption.”

(ἐγγιζουσιν) reminds the audience of the introduction of a better hope, represented by the heavenly high priest Jesus (6:18-20), through which we are “drawing near” (ἐγγιζομεν) to God (7:19).

*5. Heb 10:26 (B'): If We Go On Sinning a Sacrifice for Sins No Longer Remains*

The audience are then warned: “For if we deliberately go on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth, a sacrifice for sins no longer remains” (10:26). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from the B (10:17-18) to the B' (10:26) elements of this chiastic unit. The scriptural promise from Jer 38:34b is that their “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν) God will remember “no” (οὐ) “longer” (ἔτι) (10:17). And where there is forgiveness of these there is “no longer” (οὐκέτι) offering “for sin (περὶ ἁμαρτίας)” (10:18). This progresses to the warning that if we deliberately go on “sinning” (ἁμαρτανόντων) after receiving the knowledge of the truth, a sacrifice “for sins no longer” (οὐκέτι περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν) remains (10:26).

For the audience deliberately to go on “sinning” (ἁμαρτανόντων) after receiving the knowledge of the truth (10:26a) would liken them to the disobedient and unfaithful ancestors with whom God was provoked. They “sinned” (ἁμαρτήσασιν) and their corpses fell in the wilderness (3:17). A sacrifice “for sins no longer” (οὐκέτι περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν) remains (10:26b), since in the new covenant God promises that their “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν) and their lawless deeds he certainly will remember “no” (οὐ) “longer” (ἔτι) (10:17). And where there is forgiveness of these, there is “no longer” (οὐκέτι) offering “for sin (περὶ ἁμαρτίας)” (10:18). A “sacrifice” (θυσία) for sin no longer remains, since now once at the completion of the ages for the removal of “sin” (ἁμαρτίας) through his “sacrifice” (θυσίας) Christ has appeared (9:26). And Christ did not have a necessity first on behalf of his own “sins” (ἁμαρτιῶν, cf. 5:1) to offer up “sacrifices” (θυσίας) then for the people, for this he did once for all having offered up himself (7:27).

As the audience have heard, a sabbath rest “remains” (ἀπολείπεται) for the people of God (4:9), since it “remains” (ἀπολείπεται) for some to enter into God’s own heavenly rest (4:6). In contrast, a sacrifice for sins no longer “remains” (ἀπολείπεται) for the audience (10:26b). Consequently, they are not to become apostates who go on deliberately sinning (10:26a), but to

focus upon entering into God's own eternal sabbath rest that still remains for them in heaven.

6. *Heb 10:27-30 (A'): Respecting the Blood of the Covenant and the Spirit of Grace*

The audience hear the A' (10:27-30) element of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) but a certain fearful expectation of *judgment* and zeal of fire about to devour the adversaries (Zeph 1:18; Isa 26:11) (10:27).
- b) Anyone *rejecting* the *law* of Moses dies without pity on the basis of two or three witnesses (Deut 17:6) (10:28).
- c) How much worse a punishment do you think is worthy (10:29a)
- b') one who *tramples under foot* the *Son* of God and considers unclean the blood of the covenant, in which he was made holy, and insults the Spirit of grace (10:29b)?
- a') For we know the one who said, "Mine is vengeance, I will repay" (Deut 32:35), and again, "The Lord will *judge* his people (Deut 32:36)" (10:30).

After the central and unparalleled "c" sub-element, which contains the only occurrence in Hebrews of the term "punishment (τιμωρίας)" (10:29a), the audience experience a pivot of chiastic parallels from the "b" to the "b'" sub-elements. "Rejecting" (ἀθετήσας) the "law" (νόμον) of Moses (10:28) progresses to the alliterative and conceptually similar "tramples under foot" (καταπατήσας) the "Son" (υἱόν) of God (10:29b). They are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels formed by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of terms for "judge," from the "a" to the "a'" sub-elements—from a certain fearful expectation of "judgment (κρίσεως)" (10:27) to the Lord will "judge" (κρινεῖ) his people (10:30).

At this point the audience are also presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from the A (10:15-16) to the A' (10:27-30) elements of this chiastic unit. They hear progressions from "the Holy Spirit (πνεῦμα)" (10:15) to "the Spirit (πνεῦμα) of grace" (10:29). "Testifies (μαρτυρεῖ) to us" (10:15) progresses to "two or three witnesses (μάρτυσιν)" (10:28). "The covenant (διαθήκη) which I will covenant with them" (10:16) progresses to "the blood of the covenant (διαθήκης)" (10:29). "Says the Lord (κύριος)" (10:16) progresses to "the Lord (κύριος) will judge his people" (10:30). And

“giving my laws (νόμους) upon their hearts” (10:16) progresses to “rejecting the law (νόμον) of Moses” (10:28).

For those who deliberately go on sinning (10:26) there is a fearful expectation of “judgment (κρίσεως)” (10:27a), the “judgment” (κρίσις) that follows upon death (9:27). With allusions to Zeph 1:18 and Isa 26:11, this judgment is further described as a zeal of divine “fire” (πυρός), which can be associated with the angels God made to be a flame of “fire (πυρός)” (1:7), about to devour the adversaries of God (10:27b). As adversaries of God, apostates who deliberately go on sinning thus join the enemies God will place under the feet of his heavenly enthroned Son (1:13; 10:13). In ironic contrast to Jesus “waiting” (ἐκδεχόμενος) until his enemies are placed as a footstool for his feet (Ps 109:1 in 10:13), for those who deliberately go on sinning there is a fearful “expectation” (ἐκδοχή) of judgment. This warning of a “fearful” (φοβερὰ) expectation of judgment thus reinforces the exhortation for the audience to be “afraid” (φοβηθῶμεν), lest, while the promise to enter into God’s heavenly rest is left, anyone of them seem to have been lacking” (4:1). This is the kind of reverent fear of God that can dissipate one’s human “fear” (φόβω) of death (2:15).

According to Deut 17:6, one of the commandments spoken according to the “law” (νόμον) to all the people by Moses in inaugurating the old covenant (9:19), anyone rejecting the “law” (νόμον) of Moses dies without pity on the basis of two or three witnesses (10:28). The punishment of death on the basis of human “witnesses” (μάρτυσιν) for rejecting an external law reminds the audience of a fundamental difference between the old and the new covenant, according to which it is the Holy Spirit who “testifies (μαρτυρεῖ)” (10:15) that God will place his “laws” (νόμους) upon their hearts and minds (10:16). That such a person “dies” (ἀποθνήσκει) recalls that it is appointed for men to “die” (ἀποθανεῖν) before being judged by God (9:27). It is another reminder to the audience that the human condition according to which men “die” (ἀποθνήσκοντες) is transformed by the human and divine Jesus, an eternal, heavenly high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (7:8).

The seriousness of abandoning the gathering for communal worship (10:25) and deliberately continuing to sin as apostates (10:26) is underscored with a rhetorically provocative question posed to the audience: “How much worse a punishment do you think is worthy one who tramples under foot the Son of God and considers unclean the blood of the covenant, in which he was made holy, and insults the Spirit of grace?” (10:29). If

“rejecting” (ἀθετήσας) the “law” (νόμον) of Moses leads to the death penalty (10:28), the punishment must be even worse for one who metaphorically “tramples under foot” (καταπατήσας), by leaving the community and continuing in apostasy, the very “Son” (υἱόν) of God. A punishment that will be “worthy” (ἄξιωθήσεται) for one who tramples under foot the Son of God presents the audience with an ironically appropriate but sharp contrast to the assertion that Jesus, as the Son God placed over his house (3:6), is considered “worthy” (ἡξιώται) of greater glory beyond Moses (3:3).

To abandon the gathering for worship (10:25) and deliberately to go on sinning (10:26) is to consider unclean “the blood of the covenant (τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης)” (10:29). This is the blood of the new “covenant” (διαθήκη) promised by God (Jer 38:33 in 10:16), which is the “blood” (αἷματι) of Jesus by which we have boldness for entrance into the heavenly “holy things” (10:19), “the blood of the Christ” (τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ) that will cleanse our conscience to offer worship to the living God (9:14). It is the blood that transforms “the blood of the covenant” (τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης), the blood of animals by which Moses inaugurated the old covenant (9:20).

That this is the blood in which the one who considers unclean the blood of the covenant was “made holy (ἡγιασθή)” (10:29) reminds the audience that they are among those who are being “made holy” (ἁγιαζομένους) by the one self-offering of Jesus Christ (10:14), and that we have been “made holy” (ἡγιασμένοι) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (10:10). While the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer’s ashes “makes holy” (ἁγιάζει) those defiled for the cleansing of the flesh (9:13), the blood of the Christ will cleanse our conscience to offer worship to the living God (9:14). For indeed, the Jesus who “makes holy” (ἁγιάζων) and those who are being “made holy” (ἁγιαζόμενοι) are all from one (2:11).<sup>11</sup>

To abandon the gathering for worship (10:25) and deliberately to go on sinning (10:26) is also to insult the “Spirit” (πνεῦμα) of grace (10:29), that is, the Holy “Spirit” (πνεῦμα) who testifies (10:15) to God’s scriptural promise of a new covenant (10:16). The designation of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of “grace” (χάριτος) reinforces the exhortation for the audience to approach with boldness the throne of “grace” (χάριτος), so that we may receive mercy and may find “grace” (χάριν) for timely help (4:16). It reminds the audience that it was by the “grace” (χάρτι) of God that Jesus tasted death on behalf of all (2:9).

<sup>11</sup> R. E. Smith, “Hebrews 10:29: By Which Was Sanctified,” *Notes* 4 (1990): 32–37.

How much worse will be the divine punishment under the new covenant is reinforced for the audience by a couplet of sequential scriptural quotations: “For we know the one who said, ‘Mine is vengeance, I will repay’ (Deut 32:35), and again, ‘The Lord will judge his people (Deut 32:36)’ (10:30). The concluding pronouncement in the third person that the Lord will judge his people climactically complements and caps off the emphatic first person pronouncement that “mine” (ἐμοί) is vengeance, “I” (ἐγώ) will repay. The “Lord” (κύριος), that is, the “Lord” (κύριος) God who promises the new covenant (10:16), will “judge” (κρινεῖ) his people, in accord with a certain fearful expectation of “judgment (κρίσεως)” (10:27) for those who deliberately go on sinning (10:26).<sup>12</sup> The Lord will judge his “people” (λαόν), that is, all the “people” (λαόν) with whom he made the covenant (9:19), by which he promised that “I will be to them as God, and they will be to me as people (λαόν)” (8:10). The audience are to count themselves as belonging to this “people” (λαῶ) of God for whom a heavenly and eternal sabbath rest remains (4:9), the people who are to be judged by God.<sup>13</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 10:15-30

Near the beginning of the A'B unit (10:15-30) the audience hear a reference to the “sins” God promises to remember no longer in the new covenant (10:17). This provides the catch word for the connection to the preceding A'A unit (10:1-14), which concludes with a reference to “sins” on behalf of which Jesus Christ offered one sacrifice for all time (10:12). This transition through occurrences of the term for “sins” thus moves the focus of the audience from the sins for which Jesus Christ offered himself to the sins God certainly will remember no longer according to Jer 38:34b.

At the center of this chiastic unit the audience experience a pivot of parallels within an exhortation for them to approach for the worship of God. Addressed as brothers who have boldness for the entrance to the heavenly “holy things” in the blood of Jesus, which fresh and living way he inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh, and who have a great priest

<sup>12</sup> John Proctor, “Judgement or Vindication?: Deuteronomy 32 in Hebrews 10:30,” *TynBul* 55 (2004): 65-80.

<sup>13</sup> Randall C. Gleason, “The Eschatology of the Warning in Hebrews 10:26-31,” *TynBul* 53 (2002): 97-120; J. P. Tanner, “For Whom Does Hebrews 10:26-31 Teach a ‘Punishment Worse Than Death?’” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 19 (2006): 57-77.

over the house of God, they are to approach for the heavenly worship of God with a true “heart” in assurance of “faith” (10:19-22a). They may do this since they have been sprinkled with regard to the “hearts” from an evil conscience and washed with regard to the body by clean water through their baptism. They are thus to hold to the confession of the hope unwaveringly, for “faithful” is the God who promised. They are to turn attention to one another for stirring up love and beneficent works, rather than abandoning their own gathering for communal worship, as is the custom of some. They are to encourage one another all the more as they take note that the day for the completion of God’s salvation is drawing near (10:22b-25).

The audience are then presented with a series of progressions, via the chiasmic parallels. According to the promise of God in the pronouncement of a new covenant in Jer 38:34b, the “sins” of the people and their lawless deeds God certainly will remember “no longer.” And where there is forgiveness of these, there is “no longer” offering for “sin” (10:17-18). This progresses to the warning that if we deliberately go on “sinning” after receiving the knowledge of the truth, a sacrifice for “sins” “no longer” remains (10:26).

Finally, the audience are reminded that in Jer 38:33 the Holy “Spirit” “testifies” to us in pronouncing a new “covenant” which God will covenant with his people after those days, says the “Lord.” He will give his “laws” upon their hearts and upon their mind he will inscribe them (10:15-16). This progresses to the continuation of the warning that, in accord with allusions to Zeph 1:18 and Isa 26:11, there is a certain fearful expectation of judgment and zeal of fire about to devour the adversaries—those abandoning the gathering for worship and continuing to sin. The audience are reminded that, according to Deut 17:6, anyone rejecting the “law” of Moses dies without pity on the basis of two or three “witnesses.” There follows the foreboding query of how much worse a punishment is worthy for one who tramples under foot the Son of God and considers unclean the blood of the “covenant,” in which he was made holy, and insults the “Spirit” of grace by abandoning the gathering for worship and continuing to sin. This solemn warning is climaxed by a couplet of sequential scriptural quotations from Deut 32:35-36. For we know the God who said, “Mine is vengeance, I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people,” the people who include the audience (10:27-30).

## Hebrews 10:31-39

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- A<sup>31</sup> It is fearful to fall *into* the hands of the *living* God.
- B<sup>32</sup> Remember the previous days, in which, having been enlightened, you *endured* much conflict of sufferings,<sup>33</sup> on the one hand publicly exposed to reproaches and afflictions, on the other hand becoming partners of those so treated.<sup>34a</sup> *For* you even suffered with the prisoners
- C<sup>34b</sup> and accepted the confiscation of your *possessions* with joy,
- C'<sup>34c</sup> knowing that you yourselves have a better *possession* that remains.
- B'<sup>35</sup> Do not throw away then your boldness, which has great recompense.
- <sup>36</sup> *For* you have need of *endurance* so that, doing the will of God, you may acquire the promise.<sup>37</sup> *For* just a little longer (Isa 26:20), the one who is to come will come and he will not delay.
- A'<sup>38</sup> My just one from faith *will live*, and if he draws back my soul does not take pleasure in him” (Hab 2:3-4).<sup>39</sup> But we are not of drawing back *into* destruction, but of faith *into* preservation of the soul.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 10:31-39

Toward the conclusion of the A'B unit (10:15-30) is a reference to a certain “fearful” (φοβερὰ) expectation of God’s judgment (10:27). At the beginning of the A'C unit (10:31-39) is an acknowledgment that it is “fearful” (φοβερόν) to fall into the hands of the living God (10:31). These occurrences of the adjective “fearful” thus serve as the transitional catch words connecting these units as they move the focus from a fearful expectation of judgment to the fearful judgment itself.

The only occurrences in this unit of the preposition “into” and the verb “live” establish the parallels for the A (10:31) and A' (10:38-39) elements of this chiastic unit. “It is fearful to fall into (εἰς) the hands of the living (ζῶντος) God” occurs in 10:31, “my just one from faith will live (ζήσεται)”



in 10:38, and “we are not of drawing back into (εἰς) destruction, but of faith into (εἰς) preservation of the soul” in 10:39. The only occurrences in this unit of expressions for “endurance” and the coordinating conjunction “for” determine the parallels for the B (10:32-34a) and B' (10:35-37) elements. “You endured (ὑπεμείνατε) much conflict of sufferings” occurs in 10:32 and “for (γάρ) you even suffered with the prisoners” in 10:34a. “For (γάρ) you have need of endurance (ὑπομονῆς)” occurs in 10:36 and “for (γάρ) just a little longer” in 10:37. And finally, the only occurrences in Hebrews of expressions for “possession” form the parallels for the central and pivotal C (10:34b) and C' (10:34c) elements—“the confiscation of your possessions (ὑπαρχόντων)” in 10:34b and “you yourselves have a better possession (ὑπαρξιν)” in 10:34c.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 10:31-39

### 1. *Heb 10:31 (A): It Is Fearful To Fall into the Hands of the Living God*

Recalling that there is a certain fearful expectation of God’s judgment (10:27) and the scriptural declaration that “the Lord will judge his people” (Deut 32:36 in 10:30), the audience are told: “It is fearful to fall into the hands of the living God” (10:31). That it is “fearful,” emphatic by virtue of its initial position in the sentence, to “fall” (ἐμπεσεῖν) into the hands of the living God develops the negative, ominous dimension of the audience’s fear of a worse punishment (10:29) from the God who will judge his people. It recalls the punishment of the sinful ancestors with whom God was provoked for forty years. They experienced the fearful punishment of falling into the hands of the living God, as their corpses “fell” (ἔπεσεν) in the wilderness (3:17). Thus, through their disobedience and unfaithfulness, they were not able to enter into God’s own rest (3:18). Such fearfulness reinforces the exhortation that we strive then to enter into God’s rest, so that not any member of the audience may “fall” (πέσῃ) in the same pattern of disobedience as the unfaithful ancestors (4:11).

But that it is fearful to fall into the “hands” (χεῖρας) of the living God (10:31) also develops the positive, hopeful dimension of being fearful with its connotation of respect, reverence, and awe in the presence of the divine.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 296: “[T]he connotations of falling into God’s hands are usually positive.”

It reminds the audience of God's taking hold of the "hand" (χειρός) of his people (by implication with his own hand[s]) to save them from slavery by leading them out of the land of Egypt (8:9). It was through the laying on of human "hands (χειρῶν)" (6:2) that the audience have been recipients of the transmission of the divine power of God's Spirit (6:4). And to fall into the hands of the living God means to fall into the divine "hands" (χειρῶν) that fashioned the heavens (Ps 101:26 in 1:10), the place of God's own heavenly sabbath rest prepared for the audience (4:6, 9-11).

Finally, the reverent fear of falling into the hands of the "living God" (θεοῦ ζῶντος) reinforces the exhortation for the audience to take note lest there be in anyone of them an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the "living God (θεοῦ ζῶντος)" (3:12), thus failing to enter into the eternal life possessed and provided by the ever living God. It also resonates with the assuring promise that it is the blood of the Christ which will cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the "living God (θεῷ ζῶντι)" (9:14).<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Heb 10:32-34a (B): You Have Endured Much Conflict of Sufferings

The audience hear the B element (10:32-34a) of this unit as a chiasmic pattern in itself:

- a) Remember the previous days, in which, having been enlightened, you endured much conflict of *sufferings* (10:32),
- b) *on the one hand* publicly exposed to reproaches and afflictions (10:33a),
- b') *on the other hand* becoming partners of those so treated (10:33b).
- a') For you even *suffered with* the prisoners (10:34a).

At the center of this chiastic sub-unit the audience experience a pivot of parallels from the "b" to the "b'" sub-elements involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the accusative neuter singular demonstrative pronoun. They hear a progression from "on the one hand" (τοῦτο μὲν) publicly exposed to reproaches and afflictions (10:33a) to "on the other

<sup>2</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 544: "[W]hat is to be feared is to fall away from God as the source of life." Koester, *Hebrews*, 454: "Paradoxically, 'the living God' poses a threat of destruction." See also James Swetnam, "Hebrews 10,30-31: A Suggestion," *Bib* 75 (1994): 388-94; D. Cobb, "Tomber dans les mains du Dieu vivant!": Hébreux 10.26-31 et 6.4-12," *RRef* 57 (2006): 27-41.

hand” (τοῦτο δέ) becoming partners of those so treated (10:33b). They are then presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels formed by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of terms for “suffering,” from the “a” to the “a” sub-elements—from “you endured much conflict of sufferings (παθημάτων)” (10:32) to “you even suffered with (συνεπαθήσατε) the prisoners” (10:34a).

The directive for the audience to “remember” (ἀναμνησέσθε) the previous “days” (ἡμέρας) of their sufferings (10:32) makes all the more relevant for them God’s promise of a new covenant in Jer 38:33-34 that “after those days (ἡμέρας)” (10:16; 8:10) he will “remember” (μνησθήσομαι) no longer their sins and their lawless deeds (10:17; 8:12). Having been “enlightened (φωτισθέντες),” recalling that the audience were once “enlightened” (φωτισθέντας) through their initiation as believers (6:4), they endured much conflict of “sufferings (παθημάτων)” (10:32). Such sufferings assimilate them to the singular self-sacrifice of Jesus, whom God made perfect through “sufferings (παθημάτων)” (2:10), and whom, on account of the “suffering” (πάθημα) of death, God crowned with heavenly glory and honor, so that by the grace of God, on behalf of all he might taste death (2:9).

Their sufferings took the form, on the one hand, of being publicly exposed to reproaches and afflictions, and, on the other hand, of becoming partners of those so treated (10:33). That “you even suffered with” (συνεπαθήσατε) the prisoners (10:34a) further assimilates the audience to Jesus as a high priest who is able to “sympathize” (συμπαθήσαι) with our weaknesses (4:15).

### 3. Heb 10:34b (C): And Accepted the Confiscation of Your Possessions with Joy

The remembrance of the audience’s sufferings continues: “and accepted the confiscation of your possessions with joy” (10:34b). The public persecution of the audience for their faith is thus recognized, and the ready “accepting” or “welcoming” (προσεδέξασθε) of the confiscation of their property paradoxically “with joy” is affirmed.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews*, 271: “The verb προσδέχομαι here has the nuance of not only ‘accepting,’ but even of ‘welcoming,’ and that nuance is made explicit by the phrase ‘with joy’ . . . joy is a moral disposition of contentment/receptivity even in the midst of suffering.”

4. *Heb 10:34c (C'): Knowing You Yourselfs Have a Better Possession That Remains*

Why the audience could accept the confiscation of their possessions paradoxically “with joy” (10:34b) is then acknowledged: “knowing that you yourselves have a better possession that remains” (10:34c). At this point the audience experience a pivot of parallels from the C (10:34b) to the C' (10:34c) elements in this chiastic unit. The acceptance of the confiscation of their “possessions” (ὑπαρχόντων) with joy progresses to the reason for this acceptance—knowing that they have a better “possession” (ὑπαρξιν) that remains.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to the unfaithful wilderness generation who did not “know” (ἐγνώσαν) the ways of God (3:10), and in resonance with God’s new covenant promise that his people will not need to teach each other, saying, “know” (γινῶθι) the Lord (8:11), the audience “know” (γινώσκοντες) that they have a better possession that remains (10:34c). That they have a “better” (κρείττονα) possession resonates with the divine Son becoming so far “better” (κρείττων) than the angels (1:4). It recalls the “better” (κρείσσονα) things having to do with salvation (6:9), the “better” or “superior” (κρείττονος) one blessing the inferior (7:7), a “better” (κρείττονος) hope (7:19), a “better” (κρείττονος) covenant (7:22; 8:6) enacted on “better” (κρείττοσιν) promises (8:6), and the “better” (κρείττοσιν) sacrifices (9:23). And that they have a better possession that “remains” (μένουσιν) for eternity resonates with Melchizedek “remaining” (μένει) a priest forever (7:3), as well as with the high priest Jesus who “remains” (μένειν) forever (7:24).

5. *Heb 10:35-37 (B'): For You Have Need of Endurance*

The audience are then further exhorted with the aid of allusions to scripture: “Do not throw away then your boldness, which has great recompense. For you have need of endurance so that, doing the will of God, you may acquire the promise. ‘For just a little longer (Isa 26:20), the one who is to come will come and he will not delay’ (Hab 2:3)” (10:35-37). At

<sup>4</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 300: “The play on words between τῶν ὑπαρχόντων, ‘property,’ ‘possessions,’ in v 34b and ὑπαρξιν, ‘possessions,’ in v 34c is rhetorically effective in developing the contrast between possessions that can be lost through seizure and the permanent possessions Christians enjoy on the basis of their relationship to God through Christ.” See also Attridge, *Hebrews*, 300.

this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the B (10:32-34a) to the B' (10:35-37) elements of this chiasmic unit. “You endured (ὑπεμείνατε) much conflict of sufferings” (10:32), “for (γάρ) you even suffered with the prisoners (10:34a)” progresses to “for (γάρ) you have need of endurance (ὑπομονῆς)” (10:36), “for (γάρ) just a little longer” (10:37).

The exhortation for the audience not to throw away their “boldness (παρρησίαν)” (10:35a) reminds them of the “boldness” (παρρησίαν) they have for the entrance to the heavenly “holy things” in the blood of Jesus (10:19). It reinforces the exhortations that we approach with “boldness” (παρρησίας) the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help (4:16), and that we, as the worshipping “house” of God, hold to the “boldness” (παρρησίαν) and to the boast of the hope (3:6). In contrast to the just “recompense” (μισθαποδοσίαν) that every transgression and disobedience receives (2:2), the boldness the audience are not to throw away has great “recompense” (μισθαποδοσίαν) from God (10:35b).<sup>5</sup>

In line with the exhortation that “you have need (χρεῖαν ἔχετε) for someone to teach you the elements of the beginning of the sayings of God, and you have become those having a need (χρεῖαν ἔχοντες) of milk and not solid food” (5:12), the audience are now told that “you have need” (ἔχετε χρεῖαν) of endurance (10:36a). They have need of endurance so that, “doing” (ποιήσαντες) the “will” (θέλημά) of God, they may acquire the promise (10:36b). This recalls the example provided for the audience by the scriptural voice of Jesus from Ps 39:9, which proclaimed, “Behold I have come, as in the scroll of the book it is written concerning me, to do (ποιῆσαι), O God, your will (θέλημά)” (10:7, 9). Indeed, it is in this “will” (θέληματι) of God that we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (10:10). That they may acquire “the promise” (τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν) refers to “the promise” (τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν) of an eternal inheritance for those who have been called by God for the entrance into heaven (9:15; 3:1).

Upon “entering” or “coming into” (εἰσερχόμενος) the world the first time, Christ, in the quotation attributed to him from Ps 39:9, declared that “I have come” (ἦκω) to do the will of God (10:7, 9). And now, the exhortation for the audience to acquire the promise of the eternal heavenly inheri-

<sup>5</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 551: “Μισθαποδοσίαν here, as elsewhere in Hebrews, is emphatic by position . . . the reward is, however, not material and earthly, but heavenly and lasting (Heb 10:34), promised (v. 36), given by God (11:6), and consisting of life with him.”

tance by doing the will of God (10:36) is bolstered by a combined scriptural quotation from Isa 26:20 and Hab 2:3 urging them to wait “just a little longer, the one who is to come (ἐρχόμενος) will come (ἔξει) and he will not delay” (10:37). This assurance regarding the second coming of Christ thus resonates with the previous prediction that the Christ offered once “to offer up the sins of many” (Isa 53:12), a second time without sin will be seen, by those eagerly awaiting him, for final salvation (9:28).<sup>6</sup>

#### 6. Heb 10:38-39 (A'): My Just One from Faith Will Live

The audience hear the A' element (10:38-39) of this unit as a chiasmic pattern in itself:

- a) “My just one from *faith* will live (10:38a),
- b) and if he *draws back* (10:38b)
- c) my soul does not take pleasure in him (Hab 2:4)” (10:38c).
- b') But we are not of *drawing back* into destruction (10:39a),
- a') but of *faith* into preservation of the soul (10:39b).

At the center of this chiasmic sub-unit is the unparalleled “c” sub-element, which is the final part of the quotation from Hab 2:4 and contains the only occurrence in this sub-unit of the verb “take pleasure”—“my soul does not take pleasure (εὐδοκεῖ) in him” (10:38c). The audience then experience a pivot of parallels from the “b” to the “b'” sub-elements involving the only occurrences in Hebrews of terms for “drawing back”—from “if he draws back (ὑποστειλῆται)” (10:38b) to “we are not of drawing back (ὑποστολῆς) into destruction” (10:39a). Finally, the audience are presented with a progression from the “a” to the “a'” sub-elements, via the chiasmic parallels formed by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the word “faith”—from “my just one from faith (πίστεως) will live” (10:38a) to “but of faith (πίστεως) into preservation of the soul” (10:39b).

Also, at this point, the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the A to the A' elements of this chiasmic unit. The warning that “it is fearful to fall into (εἰς) the hands of the living (ζώντος) God” (10:31) progresses to the scriptural declaration that “my just one

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the scriptural quotations here, see Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 981-84.

from faith will live (ζήσεται)” (10:38) and the resolution that “we are not of drawing back into (εἰς) destruction, but of faith into (εἰς) preservation of the soul” (10:39).

The scriptural declaration by God from Hab 2:4, “my just one from faith (πίστεως) will live” (10:38a), continues the quotation from Hab 2:3, which assures the audience that the Christ “who is to come will come and he will not delay” (10:37). It reinforces the exhortations for the audience to approach for worship with a true heart in assurance of “faith (πίστεως)” (10:22a), and not to become sluggish but imitators of those who through “faith” (πίστεως)—the fundamental “faith” (πίστεως) in God (6:1)—and patience are inheriting the promises (6:12). It reminds the audience not to imitate the wilderness ancestors who were not united in “faith” (πίστει) with those who heard the good news (4:2), even as it reaffirms the faith of the audience, recalling that we are entering into the heavenly rest promised by God, we who “believed (πιστεύσαντες)” (4:3).

God’s scriptural declaration that my just one from faith “will live (ζήσεται)” (10:38a) strengthens the hope of the audience of believers that they will live the future, heavenly life of the “living” (ζώντος) God (10:31). It resonates with the fresh and “living” (ζώσαν) way, as the way to eternal life, that Jesus inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh (10:20). It recalls the promise that the blood of Christ will cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the “living” (ζώντι) God (9:14). God’s just one from faith will live eternally, since Jesus is always “living” (ζών) to intercede on behalf of believers (7:25), the Jesus who is a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, as one who goes on “living” (ζῆ) eternally (7:8). And that God’s just one from “faith” (πίστεως) will live bolsters the warning that there not be in anyone of the audience an evil heart of “unfaithfulness” (ἀπιστίας) in falling away from the eternally “living” (ζώντος) God (3:12).

But God’s scriptural declaration that my just one from faith “will live (ζήσεται)” (10:38a) also exhorts the audience to live presently from their fundamental faith in God. They are to live presently as the one who covenanted, Jesus, was “living” (ζῆ) before his death that made the covenant firm (9:17). They are to live presently from faith because “living” (ζών) is the word of God and effective and sharper than every two-edged sword and penetrating as far as a division of soul and spirit, as well as of joints and marrow, and able to scrutinize deliberations and thoughts of the human heart (4:12). And they are to live presently from faith, with the hope of

eternal life, as those who by fear of death are held in slavery through all their “life (ζῆν)” (2:15).

God’s scriptural promise and exhortation from Hab 2:4, “my just one from faith will live,” concludes with the warning that “if he draws back my soul does not take pleasure (εὐδοκεῖ) in him” (10:38). It was the scriptural voice of Jesus from the quotation of Ps 39:7-9 that provided a model for how the audience can ensure that God will take pleasure in them. Upon entering into the world, Jesus proclaimed to God, “Holocausts and sin offerings you took no pleasure in (εὐδόκησας)” (10:6, 8). And then he said, “Behold I have come to do your will” (10:7, 9). This scriptural pronouncement by Jesus thus reinforces the exhortation for the audience to have the endurance to do the will of God, so that they may secure the pleasure of the ever living God and acquire the promise of eternal life (10:36).

The audience are then exhorted with the resolution that we are not of drawing back “into” (εἰς) destruction, but of faith “into” (εἰς) preservation of the soul (10:39). This further explicates why it is so fearful to fall “into” (εἰς) the hands of the living God (10:31). The judgment of falling “into” the hands of the living God can lead either “into” eternal destruction or “into” eternal life. That we are not of “drawing back” (ὑποστολῆς) into destruction stands in contrast, enhanced by the playful alliteration, to the “endurance” (ὑπομονῆς) the audience need to do the will of God (10:36).<sup>7</sup> But that we are of “faith” (πίστεως) encourages each member of the audience to continue to be God’s just one who, from “faith” (πίστεως), will live both presently and eternally in the heavenly rest of the ever living God (10:38).

And that this faith results in the preservation of the “soul (ψυχῆς)” (10:39)—the better possession that remains (10:34)—ensures the pleasure of God’s “soul” (ψυχῇ) for each believer (10:38). It reminds the audience that in Jesus, as representative of the hope lying ahead (6:18), we have an anchor of the “soul” (ψυχῆς), both sure and firm, which enters into the interior of the heavenly veil (6:19). This scriptural word of God (10:37-38) thus resonates with how the living word of God is penetrating as far as a division of “soul” (ψυχῆς) and spirit (4:12).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 224-25: “The noun ὑποστολῆς, ‘shrinking back,’ plays off the conditional clause, ‘if he shrinks back’ in the previous verse, in keeping with the sermon’s exhortations to advance, approach, and move toward the goal. It has the sense of being in a state of timidity.”

<sup>8</sup> James Swetnam, “A Possible Structure of Hebrews 3,7 -10,39,” *Melita Theologica* 45 (1994): 127-41; Victor Rhee, “Christology, Chiasm, and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 10:19-39,” *Filologia Neotestamentaria* 16 (2003): 33-48.



C. Summary on Hebrews 10:31-39

At the beginning of the A'C unit (10:31-39) the audience are told that it is “fearful” to fall into the hands of the living God (10:31). This provides the catch word for the connection to the preceding A'B unit (10:15-30), which concludes with a reference to a certain “fearful” expectation of God’s judgment (10:27). This transition through occurrences of the word “fearful” thus moves the focus of the audience from a fearful expectation of judgment to the fearful judgment itself.

At the center of this chiasitic unit the audience experience a pivot of parallels involving their “possessions.” They accepted, even welcomed, the confiscation of their “possessions” with a paradoxical joy (10:34b), since they know that they have a better “possession” that remains forever (10:34c).

The audience are then presented with a progression, via the chiasitic parallels involving the explanatory conjunction “for” and focused on their “endurance” through suffering. They are reminded of previous days, in which, having been enlightened, they “endured” much conflict of sufferings, on the one hand publicly exposed to reproaches and afflictions, on the other hand becoming partners of those so treated. “For” they even suffered with the prisoners (10:32-34a). This progresses to the exhortation for them not to throw away their boldness, which has great recompense. “For” they have need of “endurance” so that, doing the will of God, they may acquire the promise of the eternal inheritance. This exhortation is then strengthened with a combined quotation from Isa 26:20 and Hab 2:3 regarding the second coming of Christ: “For” just a little longer, the one who is to come will come and he will not delay (10:35-37).

Finally, the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasitic parallels involving direction “into” and the theme of “living.” The acknowledgment that it is fearfully ominous, yet also reverently awe-inspiring, for the audience to fall “into” the hands of the “living” God (10:31) progresses to the scriptural declaration by God from Hab 2:4 that his just one from faith “will live”—both a promise of eternal life and an exhortation for the present life. After the warning from God that if his just one draws back God’s soul does not take pleasure in him, the audience are persuaded to share the author’s resolute conviction that we are not of drawing back “into” destruction, but of faith “into” preservation of the soul (10:38-39).

## Hebrews 11:1-7

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- A<sup>11:1</sup> Faith is the reality of things being hoped for, demonstration of things not being *noticed*.<sup>2</sup> For in this the elders were testified.<sup>3</sup> By faith we understand the ages to have been provided by the pronouncement of God, so that from things not apparent what is being *noticed* came to be.
- B<sup>4a</sup> By faith Abel offered to *God* a greater sacrifice beyond Cain, through which he was testified to be just, God testifying on the basis of his gifts,
- C<sup>4b</sup> And through this, having died, he is still speaking.
- B<sup>5</sup> By faith Enoch was changed so that he did not see death, and he was not found because God changed him, for before the change he was testified to have pleased *God*.<sup>6</sup> Without faith it is impossible to please, for it is necessary that the one approaching *God* believe that he exists and that for those seeking him he becomes a rewarder.
- A<sup>7</sup> By faith Noah, warned about things not yet being *noticed*, becoming reverent, furnished an ark for the salvation of his house; through which he condemned the world, and of righteousness according to faith he became an heir.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 11:1-7

At the conclusion of the A'C unit (10:31-39) is a proclamation regarding “faith”—“we are not of drawing back into destruction, but of faith (πίστεως) into preservation of the soul” (10:39). At the beginning of the A'D unit (11:1-7) is a description of “faith”—“faith (πίστις) is the reality of things being hoped for” (11:1). These occurrences of the term “faith” thus serve as the transitional catch words connecting these units as they move the focus from the faith the audience possess to a more general consideration of that faith.

The only occurrences in this unit of the verb “to notice” establish the parallels for the A (11:1-3) and A' (11:7) elements of this chiastic unit—“demonstration of things not being noticed (βλεπομένων)” in 11:1, “what is being noticed (βλεπόμενον) came to be” in 11:3, and “things not yet being noticed (βλεπομένων)” in 11:7. The only occurrences in this unit of the articular form of “God” in the dative masculine singular determine the parallels for the B (11:4a) and B' (11:5-6) elements—“offered to God (τῷ θεῷ)” in 11:4a, “to have pleased God (τῷ θεῷ)” in 11:5, and “the one approaching God (τῷ θεῷ)” in 11:6. Finally, the central and unparalleled C (11:4b) element contains the only occurrences in Hebrews of the aorist active nominative masculine singular participle of the verb “to die” and of the third person singular present active indicative of the verb “to speak”—“and through this, having died (ἀποθανών), he is still speaking (λαλεῖ).”

In addition, within the third macrochiastic level of the letter to the Hebrews, this A'ab' unit (11:1-7), which occurs after the central and pivotal A'ac unit (10:31-39), exhibits a parallel relationship with the A'ab unit (10:15-30). The parallels are formed by occurrences of the verbs “testify” and “approach.” “The Holy Spirit also testifies (μαρτυρεῖ)” occurs in 10:15, “the elders were testified (ἐμαρτυρήθησαν)” in 11:2, “through which he was testified (ἐμαρτυρήθη) to be just, God testifying (μαρτυροῦντος)” in 11:4, and “he was testified (μεμαρτύρηται) to have pleased God” in 11:5. “Let us approach (προσερχώμεθα) with a true heart” occurs in 10:22 and “it is necessary that the one approaching (προσερχόμενον) God” in 11:6.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 11:1-7

### 1. Heb 11:1-3 (A): *Things Not Being Noticed and What Is Being Noticed Came To Be*

The audience then hear a description of the faith they possess (10:39): “Faith is the reality of things being hoped for, demonstration of things not being noticed. For in this the elders were testified. By faith we understand the ages to have been provided by the pronouncement of God, so that from things not apparent what is being noticed came to be” (11:1-3). That faith is the “reality” (ὑπόστασις) of things being hoped for (11:1a) indicates that it is a divine “reality” that is made “real” or “realized” in and through one’s faith in God. This resonates with the assertion that the divine Son is

the representation of the “reality” (ὑποστάσεως) of God himself (1:3), and with the exhortation for the audience to hold the beginning of the “reality” (ὑποστάσεως), the making “real” or “realization” of final salvation as partners of the Christ, firm until the end, the actual completion of that hoped for salvation (3:14).<sup>1</sup>

That “faith” (πίστις) is the reality of “things being hoped for (ἐλπιζομένων)” (11:1a) reinforces the exhortation for the audience to hold to the confession of the “hope” (ἐλπίδος) unwaveringly, including the better “hope” (ἐλπίδος) of drawing near to God (7:19), for faithful (πιστός) is the God who promised (10:23). It reinforces the exhortations for the audience to have a strong encouragement to hold fast to the “hope” (ἐλπίδος) lying ahead (6:18), which we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and firm, and which enters into the interior of the heavenly veil, where as forerunner on behalf of us Jesus entered (6:19-20). The audience are to demonstrate the same eagerness for the assurance of the “hope” (ἐλπίδος) until the end (6:11). And, as God’s “house,” his worshipping community, the audience are to hold to the boldness and to the boast of the “hope (ἐλπίδος)” (3:6).<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to the Mosaic law having only a shadow of the good things to come, not the image itself of those divine “things (πραγμάτων)” (10:1), faith is the demonstration, the giving of proof or evidence (ἔλεγχος),

<sup>1</sup> The translation “in faith things hoped for become realized (or, reality)” is suggested by R. G. Hoerber, “On the Translation of Hebrews 11:1,” *Concordia Journal* 21 (1995): 77-79. Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 328-29: “[F]aith celebrates *now* the reality of the *future* blessings that constitute the objective content of hope. The word ὑπόστασις thus has reference to the point of departure and the ground for a now unalterable course of events that will culminate in the realization of the promises of God. From this perspective, πίστις, ‘faith,’ is something objective that bestows upon the objects of hope (ἐλπιζομένων) even now a substantial reality, which will unfold in God’s appointed time. It gives them the force of present realities and enables the person of faith to enjoy the full certainty of future realization.” Johnson, *Hebrews*, 278: “Faith, in this understanding, makes actual, or makes ‘real,’ for the believers the things that are hoped for, as though they were present.” Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 228: “The substance of faith, then, is not something the believer can produce at will, because it rests on a reality that transcends the individual. Still, the experience of trust in that transcendent reality cannot be completely excluded from the believer’s experience of faith.” See also E. Mengelle, “La estructura de Hebreos 11,1,” *Bib* 78 (1997): 534-42.

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 228: “In Hebrews these objects of hope are things yet to be realized, i.e., the final destination of the believers: salvation (1:14; 2:3; 6:9, 11; 7:19, 25; 9:28; 10:23), rest (4:1, 6, 9), perfection (6:1; 11:40), promises (4:1; 6:12, 17; 8:6; 9:15; 10:36), purification of conscience (9:14), eternal inheritance (1:14; 6:12, 17; 9:15), redemption (9:15), and an unshakeable kingdom (12:28).”

of divine “things” (πραγμάτων) not presently being noticed (11:1b).<sup>3</sup> As divine realities, these “things” not yet being noticed resonate with the two unchangeable divine “things” (πραγμάτων)—God’s promise and oath—by which it is impossible for God to lie (6:18).

That faith is a present demonstration of divine things not yet “being noticed (βλεπομένων)” (11:1b) complements the exhortations regarding what the audience are presently to notice. They are not to abandon their own gathering for worship, but rather encourage one another, and even more so to the degree that “you are taking note” (βλέπετε) of the day of future, final salvation that is drawing near (10:25). With their “faith” (πίστις) as a demonstration of divine things not yet being noticed, the audience are to “take note” (βλέπετε) lest there be in anyone of them an evil heart of “unfaithfulness” (ἀπιστίας) in falling away from the living God (3:12), as “we take note” (βλέπομεν) that the wilderness ancestors were not able to enter into God’s own rest because of “unfaithfulness (ἀπιστίαν)” (3:19). Although presently “we are taking note” (βλέπομεν) of Jesus, who, on account of the suffering of death, was crowned by God with heavenly glory and honor (2:9), we do not yet see all things subjected to him (2:8), which accords with our faith as a demonstration or evidence of divine things not yet being noticed.<sup>4</sup>

Melchizedek “is testified” (μαρτυρούμενος) by God, as evident in the scriptures, that he goes on living forever (7:8). It “is testified” (μαρτυρεῖται) by God, as indicated by the scriptures in Ps 109:4, that Jesus is a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (7:17). And the Holy Spirit divinely “testifies” (μαρτυρεῖ), as indicated by the scriptures in Jer 38:33-34, to God’s promise of a new covenant (10:15). Similarly, in this faith that the audience possess (10:38-39; 11:1), the elders, their ancestors in the faith, “were testified” (ἐμαρτυρήθησαν) by God, with the implication that this is evident in the scriptures (11:2).

<sup>3</sup> Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 329: “[F]aith demonstrates the existence of reality that cannot be perceived through objective sense perception. As the complement to ὑπόστασις, ‘reality,’ ἔλεγχος must be understood in the objective sense of ‘proof’ or ‘demonstration,’ the evidential character that deprives uncertainty of any basis. Thus faith confers upon what we do not see the full certainty of a *proof* or *demonstration*; it furnishes *evidence* concerning that which has not been seen.” Johnson, *Hebrews*, 279: “[F]aith acts on unseen things as though they were capable of being seen, because they are understood to be as real, or even more real, than things that can be ‘seen,’ that is, verified by the senses.”

<sup>4</sup> Robert Lawson Brawley, “Discursive Structure and the Unseen in Hebrews 2:8 and 11:1: A Neglected Aspect of the Context,” *CBQ* 55 (1993): 81-98.

That by faith we understand “the ages” (τοὺς αἰῶνας) to have been “provided” (κατηρτίσθαι) by the powerful “pronouncement” (ῥήματι) of God (11:3a) coheres with the divine providence acknowledged by the scriptural voice of Jesus from Ps 39:7, “a body you provided (κατηρτίσω) for me” (10:5), the body Jesus offered in his self-sacrificial doing of the will of God (10:6-10). It was through Jesus as the divine Son that God made “the ages (τοὺς αἰῶνας)” (1:2), and this Son is bearing up all things by the “pronouncement” (ῥήματι) of the power of God (1:3). This deepens the audience’s appreciation that, as those enlightened by faith (6:4), they have already “tasted” the beneficent “pronouncement” (ῥῆμα) of God and the powers of the “age” (αἰῶνος) to come (6:5).

By faith, the faith that is a demonstration of divine things not yet “being noticed (βλεπομένων)” (11:1), we understand the ages to have been provided by the pronouncement of God, so that from divine things not now readily apparent, the divine reality that is now “being noticed” (βλεπόμενον) by faith, came to be through the powerful activity of God (11:3). The powerful pronouncement of God is thus the foundation of faith. The divine realities that the audience are now noticing by faith include that “you are taking note” (βλέπετε) that the day of the consummation of God’s salvation is drawing near (10:25), and that “we are taking note” (βλέπομεν) of Jesus as the divine Son crowned by God with heavenly glory and honor (2:9).<sup>5</sup>

## 2. *Heb 11:4a (B): By Faith Abel Offered to God a Greater Sacrifice*

The faith of Abel, evident from the scriptures in Gen 4:1-5, is elaborated: “By faith Abel offered to God a greater sacrifice beyond Cain, through which he was testified to be just, God testifying on the basis of his gifts” (11:4a). That by faith Abel offered to God a “greater” (πλείονα) sacrifice “beyond” (παρά) his brother Cain likens him to Jesus as the one who has been considered worthy of “greater” (πλείονος) glory “beyond” (παρά) Moses, just as “greater” (πλείονα) honor than “the house,” the worshipping community, has the one who furnishes it for worship (3:3). The greater “sacrifice” (θυσίαν) Abel “offered” (προσήνεγκεν) “to God” (τῷ θεῷ) recalls the one “sacrifice” (θυσίαν) Jesus “offered” (προσενέγκας) for all time (10:12), his own body, which he “offered” (προσήνεγκεν) unblem-

<sup>5</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 330: “[T]hrough the visible we perceive the invisible divine reality as the actual ground of all things because of the intervention of faith.”

ished “to God (τῷ θεῷ)” (9:14), in contrast to the “sacrifice” (θυσίαν) and offering God did not want (10:5).

As one of the elders “testified” (ἐμαρτυρήθησαν) by God in their faith (11:2), Abel was “testified” (ἐμαρτυρήθη) to be just through his faith, God “testifying” (μαρτυροῦντος) on the basis of Abel’s sacrificial gifts (11:4a). That Abel was testified by his “faith” (πίστει) to be “just” (δίκαιός) reminds the audience of God’s hortatory promise from Hab 2:4, “My just one (δίκαιός) from faith (πίστεως) will live” (10:38). That Abel was testified by God to be just on the basis of his “gifts” (δῶροις), the “sacrifice” (θυσίαν) he offered to please God, further likens him to Jesus. As a high priest, Jesus is to offer both “gifts” (δῶρά) and “sacrifices” (θυσίας) for sins (5:1; 8:3). In contrast to the “gifts” (δῶρά) and “sacrifices” (θυσίαι) offered according to a law (8:4), but not able according to conscience to make perfect the one offering worship (9:9), Jesus, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself unblemished to God. It is the sacrificial blood of the Christ that will cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14). Thus, the sacrifice of Abel prefigures that of Jesus and provides the audience with a model of a just one who will live from faith.

### 3. *Heb 11:4b (C): Through This Faith Abel Though Dead Is Still Speaking*

The ongoing significance of Abel’s faith for the audience is indicated: “And through this, having died, he is still speaking” (11:4b). Abel’s having “died” (ἀποθανών) is in accord with the human condition in which anyone may “die” (ἀποθνήσκει) without pity on the basis of two or three witnesses (10:28), in which it is appointed for men to “die” (ἀποθανεῖν) once (9:27), and in which men who “die” (ἀποθνήσκοντες) stand in contrast to one testified to go on living forever (7:8).

God, who in the past has “spoken” (λαλήσας) to the fathers in the prophets (1:1), has now “spoken” (ἐλάλησεν) to us in a Son (1:2). In Ps 94:7-8 the scriptural voice of God has “spoken” (ἐλάλει) to the audience of another “day” to heed his word in order to enter into his heavenly, eternal sabbath rest (4:8). That Abel, although having died, is still “speaking” (λαλεῖ) thus means that he is still speaking to the audience in a divinely revelatory way through this scriptural account about him (11:4b).

Abel, although already having died, still reveals how the audience can conduct themselves in accord with the hortatory promise of God from Hab

2:4, namely, “My just one from faith will live” (10:38). Through “this,” that is, through the faith by which Abel offered to God sacrificial gifts, he was testified to be just (11:4b)—to be God’s just one who lives his life from faith. Abel’s offering of sacrificial gifts, which prefigures Jesus’ offering of himself as a sacrifice, thus indicates how each member of the audience can likewise be God’s just one who presently lives from faith by similarly offering sacrificial gifts to God. That Abel is still speaking, although having died, with its implication that there is a sense in which he is still living, bolsters for the audience the promise that, as God’s just ones who presently live from faith, they will also live eternally.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. *Heb 11:5-6 (B’): Enoch Was Testified To Have Pleased God*

Next the faith of Enoch, with reference to Gen 5:24, is highlighted: “By faith Enoch was changed so that he did not see death, and he was not found because God changed him, for before the change he was testified to have pleased God. Without faith it is impossible to please, for it is necessary that the one approaching God believe that he exists and that for those seeking him he becomes a rewarder” (11:5-6). After the central and unparalleled C element stating that through faith, although having died, Abel is still speaking (11:4b), the audience experience a pivot in chiastic parallels from the B (11:4a) to the B’ (11:5-6) elements of this chiastic unit. That by faith Abel offered to “God” (τῷ θεῷ) a greater sacrifice (11:4a) progresses to the assertions that Enoch was testified to have pleased “God (τῷ θεῷ)” (11:5) and that it is necessary that the one approaching “God” (τῷ θεῷ) believe that he exists (11:6).

<sup>6</sup> According to Lane (*Hebrews* 9-13, 335), the statement in 11:4b “is distinguished from the Jewish traditions about Abel because it reflects no interest in the act of fratricide nor in Abel as the proto-martyr. All of the emphasis falls on the fact that it is *by his faith* (and not by his blood) that Abel continues to speak. The allusion is thus not to Gen 4:10, which speaks of the cry of Abel’s blood from the ground for retribution or reconciliation, but to the record of God’s approval of his integrity and his sacrifice in Gen 4:4. . . . The writer affirms that Abel’s faith continues to speak *to us* through the written record of his action in Scripture, which transmits to us the exemplary character of his offering.” Johnson, *Hebrews*, 281: “Abel anticipates resurrection and demonstrates that ‘the righteous one will live from faith.’” See also Joel N. Lohr, “Righteous Abel, Wicked Cain: Genesis 4:1-16 in the Masoretic Text, the Septuagint, and the New Testament,” *CBQ* 71 (2009): 494; R. Walter L. Moberly, “Exemplars of Faith in Hebrews 11: Abel,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard J. Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 353-63.



The audience have already heard how a “change” from an earthly to a heavenly reality is accomplished by God. Since the Levitical, earthly priesthood is being “changed” (μετατιθεμένης) by God (divine passive) to the heavenly priesthood of Jesus, of necessity a “change” (μετάθεσις) of law also comes about by God (7:12). Jesus is thus a different, heavenly priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (7:17), since Jesus has come about as a heavenly priest not according to a law of a fleshly commandment but according to the divine power of an indestructible, eternal life (7:16). And now the audience hear of a divinely accomplished change from the earthly to the heavenly involving the exemplary faith of Enoch. By faith Enoch was “changed” (μετετέθη) so that he did not see death, and he was not found on earth because God “changed” (μετέθηκεν) him into a heavenly being, for before the “change” (μεταθέσεως) he was testified to have pleased God (11:5; cf. Gen 5:24).

Enoch complements Abel as a model of faith for the audience. Whereas Abel, although having “died” (ἀποθανών), is still speaking to the audience (11:4b), Enoch was changed by God into a heavenly being so that he did not see “death” (θάνατον) while on earth (11:5a). Before the change Enoch was “testified” (μεμαρτύρηται) to have pleased “God (τῷ θεῷ)” (11:5b), thus making explicit the implication that Abel likewise pleased God when he offered to “God” (τῷ θεῷ) a greater sacrifice beyond Cain, through which he was “testified” (ἐμαρτυρήθη) to be just, God “testifying” (μαρτυροῦντος) on the basis of his gifts (11:4a). The faith of Enoch together with the faith of Abel provide the audience with a model for pleasing God by offering sacrificial gifts in order to experience a heavenly existence beyond death on earth.

That Enoch was changed by God into a heavenly being without seeing “death (θάνατον)” (11:5a) deepens the appreciation of the audience for the significance of the death of Jesus while on earth for his status in heaven. The “death” (θάνατον) of Jesus that occurred for deliverance from transgressions under the first covenant (9:15b) represents the necessary “death” (θάνατον) to be borne of the one who covenanted (9:16), making him the guarantor of a new covenant (9:15a), so that those who have been called, including the audience, might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance in heaven (9:15c).

In contrast to the many earthly priests prevented by “death” (θανάτῳ) from remaining on (7:23), Jesus, who was heard from his reverence after praying to the God able to save him from “death (θανάτου)” (5:7), became

a heavenly priest who remains forever (7:24). It was through his “death” (θανάτου) that Jesus might destroy the one who has the strength of “death” (θανάτου), that is the devil (2:14), and free those, as many as by fear of “death” (θανάτου) through all their life were held in slavery (2:15). On account of his suffering of “death” (θανάτου) on earth, Jesus was crowned with heavenly glory and honor, so that, by the grace of God, on behalf of all he might taste “death (θανάτου)” (2:9).

Whereas Enoch was changed by God into a heavenly being so that he did not “see” (ἰδεῖν) death (11:5a), Jesus was to “taste” (γεύσεται) death so that all who must see and taste death on earth may attain to a heavenly existence (2:9).<sup>7</sup> That Enoch was no longer “found” (ἠύρίσκετο) on earth but in heaven (11:5b) reminds the audience of what Jesus “found” in heaven that has significance for them on earth. As high priest, Jesus entered once for all into the heavenly holy things, “finding” (εὐράμενος) eternal redemption from death (9:12). This means that the audience, as a worshiping community, are to approach with boldness the heavenly throne of grace, in order to receive mercy and “find” (εὕρωμεν) grace for timely help on earth (4:16).

The focus then moves from the model of Enoch’s pleasing God (11:5) to pleasing God in general (11:6). Without faith it is impossible for anyone in the audience to “please” (εὐαρεστήσαι) God (11:6a). For it is necessary that the one approaching “God” (τῷ θεῷ) in worship, following upon the example of Enoch, who “pleased” (εὐαρεστηκέναι) “God (τῷ θεῷ)” (11:5c), and of Abel, who offered to “God” (τῷ θεῷ) a greater sacrifice (11:4a), believe that God exists and that for those seeking him he becomes a rewarder (11:6b).<sup>8</sup> That God becomes a “rewarder” (μισθαποδότης) for those seeking him resonates with the promise of a great “recompense” or “reward” (μισθαποδοσίαν) from God for the boldness of the audience (10:35), and with the warning that every transgression and disobedience received a just “recompense” (μισθαποδοσίαν) from God (2:2).<sup>9</sup>

This continues the complementarity of Enoch and Abel as models of faith for the audience. From his faith Abel was testified by God to be just (11:4a), exemplifying the first part of the quotation of Hab 2:4—“My just one from faith will live” (10:38a). From his faith Enoch, who did not see

<sup>7</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 336: “The phrase ‘to see death,’ like the related expression ‘to taste death’ (2:9), is a Semitism for the experience of death.”

<sup>8</sup> Donald E. Hartley, “Heb 11:6—A Reassessment of the Translation ‘God Exists,’” *TJ* 27 (2006): 289–307.

<sup>9</sup> Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 231: “God is presented in Hebrews as a God who rewards justly.”

death on earth but lives in heaven (11:5a), was testified to have “pleased” (εὐαρεστηκέναι) God (11:5c), exemplifying both the first (“from faith will live”) and second part of the same quotation—“and if he draws back my soul does not take pleasure (εὐδοκεῖ) in him” (10:38bc). Just as Abel’s offering a greater sacrifice to God prefigured Jesus’ offering of himself to God, so Enoch’s having pleased God prefigures Jesus’ pleasing of God when, rather than offerings God took no “pleasure” (εὐδόκησας) in (10:6, 8), Jesus offered his own body in doing the will of God (10:5-10).

The exemplary faith of both Enoch and Abel demonstrates how without “faith” (πίστεως) it is impossible for anyone in the audience to please God through worship, for it is necessary that the one “approaching” (προσερχόμενον) God in worship “believe” (πιστεῦσαι) that God exists and that for those seeking him he becomes a rewarder (11:6). The faith of Enoch and Abel thus bolsters the exhortation that we “approach” (προσερχώμεθα) God in worship with a true heart in assurance of “faith (πίστεως)” (10:22). That God rewarded both Abel and Enoch with a significant status beyond death on earth inspires the audience, by approaching God in worship and with faith in his eternal existence, to seek him as the God who can reward them with a heavenly existence beyond death on earth.<sup>10</sup>

5. *Heb 11:7 (A'): By Faith Noah Was Warned about Things Not Yet Being Noticed*

The significance of the exemplary faith of another testified “elder” (11:2), Noah (Gen 6:8-9:17; Sir 44:17-18), is then elaborated: “By faith Noah, warned about things not yet being noticed, becoming reverent, furnished an ark for the salvation of his house; through which he condemned the world, and of righteousness according to faith he became an heir” (11:7). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the A (11:1-3) to the A' (11:7) elements of this chiasmic unit. The statements about faith as “a demonstration of things not being noticed (βλεπομένων)” (11:1) and that “what is being noticed (βλεπόμενον) came to be” (11:3) progress to Noah being “warned about things not yet being noticed (βλεπομένων)” (11:7a).

<sup>10</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 577: “In Enoch’s case, the reward was doubtless that of removal by God from earth to heaven.”

Similar to Moses having been “warned” (κεχηρμάτισται) by God about the heavenly things that provide the model for worship on earth (8:5), by faith Noah was “warned” (χηρματισθείς) by God about heavenly things not yet being “noticed” (βλεπομένων) on earth (11:7a). This recalls that what heavenly reality is being “noticed” (βλεπόμενον) came to be from things not apparent (11:3), so that faith is a demonstration of heavenly things not being “noticed” (βλεπομένων) on earth (11:1). Noah, then, was warned by God about the heavenly realities that are the object of faith and the model for worship on earth.<sup>11</sup>

That by his faith Noah became “reverent” (εὐλαβηθείς) toward God places him in a disposition proper for worship as a model for the audience (11:7b). This is confirmed by the description of the worship of Jesus, who in the days of his flesh offered both prayers and supplications with strong outcrying and tears to the God able to save him from death, and he was heard from his “reverence” (εὐλαβείας) toward God (5:7).

The association of Noah’s faith with worship continues. That the reverent Noah “furnished” (κατεσκεύασεν) an “ark” (κιβωτόν) for the salvation of his “house (τοῦ οἴκου)” (11:7c) associates him with the things “furnished” (κατεσκευασμένων) for worship in the earthly tabernacles (9:6). The first tabernacle was “furnished” (κατεσκευάσθη) with various things for worship (9:2), and the second even included an ark—the “ark” (κιβωτόν) of the covenant—as a furnishing for worship (9:4).<sup>12</sup> As a model of faith, Noah further illustrates for the audience how greater honor than “the house” (τοῦ οἴκου) has the one who “furnishes” (κατασκευάσας) it for worship (3:3). That Noah furnished an ark “for the salvation” (εἰς σωτηρίαν) of his “house” enhances him as a model of faith for the audience, who, as the “house” (οἶκος) of Christ (3:6), are among those who are going to inherit “salvation (σωτηρίαν)” (1:14), those eagerly awaiting the final coming of Christ “for salvation (εἰς σωτηρίαν)” (9:28).

It was through his faith by which the reverent Noah furnished an ark for the salvation of “his house” (τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ) that he condemned the world (11:7) of his day to destruction rather than salvation from the great deluge (Gen 6:13; 7:22-23). The implication is that he condemned “the

<sup>11</sup> Bernhard Heininger, “Hebr 11.7 und das Henochorakel am Ende der Welt,” *NTS* 44 (1998): 115–32.

<sup>12</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 578: “[I]t appears natural to distinguish sharply between Noah’s ark and the ark of the covenant referred to in 9:4; but in fact Noah’s ark was also associated with the making of a covenant (Gn. 6:19; Sir. 44:18), and this fact may have been significant for the author and his readers.”

world” (τὸν κόσμον) on account of unfaithfulness in failing to do the will of God, and thus worship God properly with reverence. The world failed to imitate his reverent faith as the proper disposition for the worship of God.<sup>13</sup> This is confirmed by the recall of Jesus, who, upon entering into “the world (τὸν κόσμον)” (10:5) demonstrated for the world his reverence in the proper worship of God (5:7) as well as his faithfulness as the divine Son over “his house” (τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ)—the house of God that includes the audience (3:6), by his proclamation that he has come to do the will of God (10:7, 9).

Of “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνης) according to faith, the righteousness desirable to God, Noah became an heir (11:7). This associates him with Melchizedek as king of God’s “righteousness (δικαιοσύνης)” (7:2), with the word of God’s “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνης) in which the audience are to be experienced (5:13), and with God’s “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνην) rather than lawlessness that the divine Son of God loved (1:9). As a reverent heir of “righteousness” according to faith, Noah joins Enoch, who “pleased” God (11:5), and Abel, who was “just (δίκαιος)” (11:4), as models for the audience of the hortatory scriptural promise of God from Hab 2:4, “My just one (δίκαιος) from faith will live, and if he draws back my soul takes no pleasure in him” (10:38). That of God’s righteousness according to faith Noah became an “heir” (κληρονόμος) further motivates the audience to imitate his faith, as it associates him with the audience as “heirs” (κληρονόμοις) of God’s promise (6:17), and with Jesus as the Son God placed as “heir” (κληρονόμον) of all things (1:2).<sup>14</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 11:1-7

With the description of “faith” (11:1) at the beginning of the A'D unit (11:1-7) the audience hear the catch word that serves as the transitional connection from the preceding A'C unit (10:31-39), which concludes with the proclamation that we are not of drawing back into destruction, but of “faith” into preservation of the soul (10:39). These occurrences of the term “faith” move the focus of the audience from their own faith to a more

<sup>13</sup> Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 231: “So Noah’s faith itself is the instrument of condemnation.”

<sup>14</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 341: “The concept of ‘an heir of the righteousness according to faith’ implies that others who respond to God with the faith that Noah demonstrated will share with him in the righteousness God bestows upon persons of faith.”

general consideration of faith as demonstrated by noteworthy scriptural models of faith for them to imitate.

With regard to the third macrochiastic level, at this point the audience have heard the central and pivotal A'ac unit (10:31-39) with its proclamation that it is fearful to fall into the hands of the living God (10:31). The audience in this A'ab' unit (11:1-7) hear that the elders were "testified" in faith (11:2), that through faith Abel was "testified" to be just—God "testifying" on the basis of his sacrificial gifts (11:4), and that by faith Enoch was "testified" to have pleased God (11:5). They thus experience a progression of chiastic parallels from the declaration in the A'ab unit (10:15-30) that the Holy Spirit also "testifies" to us in the scriptural promise about a new covenant (10:15). And when the audience hear that it is necessary that the one "approaching" God in worship believe that God exists (11:6), they experience a chiastic progression that reinforces the exhortation for us to "approach" God in worship with a true heart in assurance of faith (10:22).

The assertion that through faith Abel, although having died, is still speaking to us in the scriptural account about him (11:4b) stands as the central, unparalleled element of this chiastic unit (11:1-7). After the audience hear it, they experience a pivot of chiastic parallels from the declaration that by faith Abel offered to "God" a greater sacrifice beyond Cain, through which he was testified to be just, God testifying on the basis of his sacrificial gifts (11:4a), to declarations about the faith of Enoch and of the audience in relation to God. By faith Enoch was changed so that he did not see death, and he was not found because God changed him, for before the change he was testified to have pleased "God" (11:5). And then the audience are informed that without such faith it is impossible to please God in worship, for it is necessary that the one approaching "God" in worship believe that he exists and that for those seeking him he becomes a rewarder (11:6).

The audience are then presented with a final set of progressions via the chiastic parallels involving the "noticing" of divine, heavenly realities through faith. They first hear a description of the faith in which the elders were testified (11:2) as the reality of things being hoped for, the demonstration of things not being "noticed" (11:1). By this faith we understand the ages to have been provided by the pronouncement of God, so that from things not apparent the divine, heavenly reality that is being "noticed" came to be (11:3). This progresses to a focus on the faith of Noah as a model for the kind of faith the audience need to worship God properly. By

faith Noah, warned about divine realities not yet being “noticed,” becoming reverent as a disposition for worship, furnished an ark for the salvation of his house as an act associated with worship. Through this faith he condemned the world of a failure to worship God by faith, and of righteousness according to faith he became an heir (11:7).

## Hebrews 11:8-19

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- A<sup>11:8</sup> By faith *Abraham*, being *called*, obeyed to go out to a place which he was about to receive as an inheritance, and he went out not knowing where he was going. <sup>9</sup> By faith he sojourned in the land of the promise as (land) of another, having dwelt in tents with *Isaac* and Jacob, the fellow heirs of the same promise.
- B<sup>10</sup> For he was waiting for the *city* having foundations, whose architect and builder is God. <sup>11</sup> By faith, even though Sarah herself was barren, he received power for the founding of descendants, though beyond the *time* of maturity, since he considered faithful the one who promised. <sup>12</sup> And *therefore* from one man there were begotten, and these of one who had become dead, “just as the stars of *heaven* in multitude and as the innumerable sand beyond the shore of the sea” (Gen 22:17). <sup>13a</sup> In accord with faith these all died, not receiving the promises but from afar seeing them and greeting and confessing
- C<sup>13b</sup> *that* they are strangers and sojourners on the earth.
- D<sup>14a</sup> For those saying such things manifest
- C<sup>14b</sup> *that* they are seeking a fatherland.
- B<sup>15</sup> And if they were remembering that from which they came out, they would have had *time* to return. <sup>16</sup> But now they long for a better one, that is a *heavenly one*. *Therefore*, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has made ready for them a *city*.
- A<sup>17</sup> By faith *Abraham*, being tested, offered *Isaac*, and the one who accepted the promises was ready to offer his only begotten, <sup>18</sup> to whom it was spoken, “In *Isaac* descendants will be *called* for you” (Gen 21:12), <sup>19</sup> reasoning that God is able to raise even from the dead, whence him, indeed in a parable, he acquired.



## A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 11:8-19

At the conclusion of the preceding A'D unit (11:1-7) is the statement that of righteousness according to faith Noah became an “heir” (11:7). The term “heir” (κληρονόμος) provides the transitional catch word connecting this unit to the following A'E unit (11:8-19), which begins by stating that Abraham obeyed to go out to a place which he was about to receive as an “inheritance (κληρονομίαν)” (11:8). The transition thus keeps a focus on the theme of “inheriting” in the progression from the exemplary faith of Noah to that of Abraham.

The only occurrences in this unit of the terms “Abraham,” “call,” and “Isaac” establish the chiasmic parallels for the A (11:8-9) and A' (11:17-19) elements. “By faith Abraham (Ἀβραάμ)” occurs in 11:8 and 11:17. “Being called (καλούμενος)” occurs in 11:8 and “descendants will be called (κληθήσεται)” in 11:18. “In tents with Isaac (Ἰσαάκ)” occurs in 11:9 and “offered Isaac (Ἰσαάκ)” in 11:17 as well as “in Isaac (Ἰσαάκ)” in 11:18. The parallels for the B (11:10-13a) and B' (11:15-16) elements are determined by the only occurrences in this unit of the terms “city,” “time,” “therefore,” and “heaven.” “The city (πόλιν) having foundations” occurs in 11:10 and God “has made ready for them a city (πόλιν)” in 11:16. “Beyond the time (καιρόν) of maturity” occurs in 11:11 and “they would have had time (καιρόν) to return” in 11:15. “Therefore (διό) from one man” occurs in 11:12 and “therefore (διό) God is not ashamed to be called their God” in 11:16. And “just as the stars of heaven (οὐρανοῦ)” occurs in 11:12 and “a heavenly one (ἐπουρανίου)” in 11:16.

The only occurrences in this unit of the subordinating conjunction “that” followed by a plural verb indicate the parallels for the C (11:13b) and C' (11:14b) elements—“that (ὅτι) they are strangers” in 11:13b and “that (ὅτι) they are seeking a fatherland” in 11:14b. The statement, “for those saying such things manifest (ἐμφανίζουσιν),” which contains the only occurrence in Hebrews of the verb “manifest” in the active voice, serves as the central and unparalleled D (11:14a) element.

Within the third macrochiastic level of the letter to the Hebrews, this A'aa' unit (11:8-19) exhibits a parallel relationship with the A'aa unit (10:1-14). The parallelism is indicated by the only occurrences in Hebrews of the verb “waiting”—“henceforth waiting (ἐκδεχόμενος) until his enemies are placed as a footstool for his feet” in 10:13 and “he was waiting (ἐξεδέχετο) for the city having foundations” in 11:10.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 11:8-19

1. *Heb 11:8-9 (A): Abraham Called To Go Out and Dwelt in Tents with Isaac*

The focus moves from the exemplary faith of Noah (11:7) to that of Abraham (Gen 12:22; Sir 44:19-22; cf. Heb 2:16; 6:13; 7:1-9): “By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed to go out to a place which he was about to receive as an inheritance, and he went out not knowing where he was going. By faith he sojourned in the land of the promise as (land) of another, having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the fellow heirs of the same promise” (11:8-9).

That by faith Abraham, being “called” (καλούμενος) by God, as Aaron was “called” (καλούμενος) by God to be a high priest (5:4), “obeyed” (ὑπήκουσεν) to go out to a place which he was about to “receive” (λαμβάνειν) as an “inheritance” (κληρονομίαν), not knowing where he was going (11:8), facilitates the audience’s identification with him as a model for their faith. As those who have been “called” (κεκλημένοι) by God that they might “receive” (λάβωσιν) the promise of the eternal “inheritance (κληρονομίας)” (9:15), the audience are to “obey” (ὑπακούουσιν) Jesus as a source of eternal salvation (5:9), who himself learned from the things he suffered “obedience (ὑπακοήν)” (5:8).

That the earthly high priest enters into “the holy things” each year with sacrificial blood “not his own” but of “another” (ἄλλοτρίῳ), namely of animals, underscores the divine significance of the very own blood of the heavenly high priest Jesus which he offers as a sacrificial gift to God (9:25). Similarly, that by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of the promise as land “not his own” but of “another (ἄλλοτρίαν)” (11:9a) underscores the divine significance of this land, which is to become Abraham’s very own, as an inheritance promised by God. The uncertainty of Abraham’s not knowing where he was “going” (ἔρχεται) contrasts with the certainty promised to the audience that Jesus, the one who is to “come” (ἐρχόμενος), will come and he will not delay (10:37).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 349-50: “In setting out, ‘not knowing where he was going,’ Abraham exemplified the faith that invests events not seen with the substantial reality of a demonstration or proof (v 1b).”

By faith Abraham sojourned in the land of the “promise” (ἐπαγγελίας), having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob,<sup>2</sup> the “fellow heirs” (συγκληρονόμων) of the same “promise (ἐπαγγελίας)” (11:9). This associates these three patriarchs with Noah, an “heir” (κληρονόμος) of God’s righteousness according to faith (11:7), as well as with Jesus, the divine Son whom God placed as “heir” (κληρονόμον) of all things (1:2). This enhances the significance of these figures as models for the communal faith of the audience, who are “heirs” (κληρονόμοις) of the “promise (ἐπαγγελίας)” (6:17), the “promise” of an eternal “inheritance (κληρονομία)” (9:15), and who are to be imitators of those who through faith and patience are “inheriting” (κληρονομούντων) the “promises (ἐπαγγελίας)” (6:12). Especially the example of Abraham, who through patience obtained the “promise (ἐπαγγελίας)” (6:15), reinforces the exhortation for the audience to have endurance so that, doing the will of God, they may acquire the “promise (ἐπαγγελίαν)” (10:36), since the “promise” (ἐπαγγελίας) to enter into the heavenly rest of God still remains for them (4:1).

*2. Heb 11:10-13a (B): Abraham Was Waiting for the City Having Foundations*

The elaboration of Abraham’s exemplary faith continues: “For he was waiting for the city having foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith, even though Sarah herself was barren, he received power for the founding of descendants, though beyond the time of maturity, since he considered faithful the one who promised. And therefore from one man there were begotten, and these of one who had become dead, ‘just as the stars of heaven in multitude and as the innumerable sand beyond the shore of the sea’ (Gen 22:17). In accord with faith these all died, not receiving the promises but from afar seeing them and greeting and confessing” (11:10-13a).

Just as the heavenly enthroned high priest Jesus is “waiting” (ἐκδεχόμενος) for God to place his enemies as a footstool for his feet (10:13), as part of God’s final salvific activity, so Abraham was “waiting” (ἐξεδέχeto) for God’s final salvation that includes a divinely constructed heavenly city,

<sup>2</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 485: “The word ‘tents’ suggests the temporary nature of their situation.” Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 236: “The mention of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob together is common in the biblical tradition.”

whose architect and builder is God himself (11:10).<sup>3</sup> That Abraham was waiting for the city having divine “foundations” (θεμελίους) reminds the audience of the initial divine “foundation” of their faith—a “foundation” (θεμέλιον) of repentance from dead works and of faith in God (6:1).

According to the divine “power” (δύναμιν) of an indestructible life Jesus became an eternal high priest (7:16). By the pronouncement of the “power” (δυνάμεως) of God the divine Son is bearing up all things (1:3). Resonating with this, even though his wife Sarah herself was barren,<sup>4</sup> Abraham, by faith, received divine “power” (δύναμιν) for the divinely initiated “founding” (καταβολήν) of descendants (11:11a), reminiscent of the divinely initiated “founding” (καταβολῆς) of the world (4:3; 9:26). That Abraham received power from God for the founding of “descendants,” literally “seed” (σπέρματος), enhances his significance as a patriarchal model of faith for the audience, who are among the “descendants” or “seed” (σπέρματος) of Abraham (2:16), as children of God and brothers of Jesus (2:11-17).

That God acted beyond the humanly opportune “time” (καιρόν) of maturity (11:11b) in giving Abraham the power for the founding of descendants resonates with God’s bringing about the “time” (καιροῦ) of correction (9:10), the “time” (καιρόν) that has now arrived to make perfect, according to conscience, the one offering worship (9:9). As a model for the audience, warned against “considering” (ἡγησάμενος) unclean the blood of the new covenant, the blood of the Son of God (10:29), Abraham “considered” (ἡγήσατο) faithful the one who promised (11:11c). That Abraham considered “faithful” (πιστόν) the God who “promised” (ἐπαγγειλάμενον) bolsters the exhortation for the audience to hold to the confession of the hope unwaveringly, for “faithful” (πιστός) is the God who “promised” (ἐπαγγειλάμενος) (10:23), indeed, the God who “promised” (ἐπαγγειλάμενος) to Abraham (6:13).

Therefore, by faith, from this one man, Abraham, as he considered faithful the God who promised (11:11), there were “begotten” (ἐγεννήθησαν)

<sup>3</sup> Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 236: “Confirmation of this city’s location comes in the identification of its architect, τεχνίτης, and builder, δημιουργός, as God. The LXX uses τεχνίτης in relation to God only at Wis 13:1. Philo uses both terms synonymously in the same order of God.”

<sup>4</sup> J. Harold Greenlee, “Hebrews 11:11—Sarah’s Faith or Abraham’s?” *Notes* 4 (1990): 37–42; idem, “Hebrews 11:11—‘By Faith Sarah Received Ability,” *AsTJ* 54 (1999): 67–72; Pieter Willem van der Horst, “Sarah’s Seminal Emission: Hebrews 11:11 in the Light of Ancient Embryology,” in *Greeks, Romans, and Christians: Essays in Honor of Abraham J. Malherbe* (eds. David L. Balch, et al.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 287–302; idem, “Did Sarah Have a Seminal Emission?” *BRev* 1 (1992): 34–39.

descendants by the power of God (11:12a), reminiscent of the power pronounced by God in begetting his divine Son in accord with the scriptural quotation of Ps 2:7: “Son of mine are you, I today have begotten (γεγέννηκά) you” (1:5; 5:5). Since Abraham was beyond the time of maturity (11:11), beyond the time for begetting new human life, these descendants were begotten of one who had become as good as dead (11:12b). In accord with the scriptural promise of God in Gen 22:17b these descendants were so numerous that they were “just as the stars of heaven in multitude and as the innumerable sand beyond the shore of the sea” (11:12c). The descendants were as numerous as the stars of “heaven” (οὐρανοῦ), the very “heaven” (οὐρανόν) itself into which Christ entered as high priest on our behalf (9:24). This quotation of Gen 22:17b thus complements the quotation of Gen 22:17a, when God promised to Abraham a multitude of descendants among whom are the audience (2:16): “Indeed, blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you” (6:14).

Through faith Abel, although having “died” (ἀποθανών), still speaks to the audience (11:4). Similarly, in accord with faith, these patriarchs (11:8-9) all “died” (ἀπέθανον), not receiving the fulfillment of the promises but from afar seeing them and greeting and confessing (11:13a), which contains a message of encouragement for the audience. Although these patriarchs did not receive the fulfillment of the “promises” (ἐπαγγελίας), including the land of the “promise” (ἐπαγγελίας) Abraham was to receive as an inheritance, along with Isaac and Jacob as fellow heirs of the same “promise (ἐπαγγελίας)” (11:9), they were seeing the fulfillment of these promises from afar and greeting them and confessing as models for the audience. That these models of faith and hope were “confessing” (ὁμολογήσαντες) assists the audience to hold to their own “confession” (ὁμολογίαν) of the hope unwaveringly (10:23), to hold fast the “confession” (ὁμολογίας) of Jesus as our heavenly high priest (4:14), and to turn attention to the apostle and high priest of our “confession” (ὁμολογίας), Jesus (3:1).

### *3. Heb 11:13b (C): That They Are Strangers and Sojourners on the Earth*

The patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (11:8-9), who died without receiving the fulfillment of the promises but from afar seeing them, were confessing (11:13a) “that they are strangers and sojourners on the earth” (11:13b). That these patriarchs were confessing that they are strangers “on the earth” (ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) accords with the statement that by faith Abraham

sojourned in the “land” (γῆν) of the promise as (land) of another, having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob (11:9). It implies that the true and lasting home of them as well as of the audience is heaven, as it resonates with the notice that if Jesus would be “on earth” (ἐπὶ γῆς), he would not be a priest (8:4), indeed, the high priest, who sat at the right of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens (8:1).

#### *4. Heb 11:14a (D): For Those Saying Such Things Manifest*

The significance of what the patriarchs were confessing (11:13b) is elaborated: “For those saying such things manifest” (11:14a). What the patriarchs “manifest” (ἐμφανίζουσιν) on earth by confessing that they are merely strangers and sojourners on the earth associates them with the heavenly “manifestation” of Jesus, as it reminds the audience that Christ did not enter into earthly “holy things” made by hands, a copy of the true ones, but into heaven itself, now to be “manifested” (ἐμφανισθῆναι) in the presence of God on behalf of us (9:24).

#### *5. Heb 11:14b (C'): That They Are Seeking a Fatherland*

What the patriarchs, by confessing to be strangers and sojourners on the earth (11:13b), manifest to the audience (11:14a) is then indicated: “that they are seeking a fatherland” (11:14b). At this point, after the central and unparalleled D element, “for those saying such things manifest” (11:14a), the audience experience a pivot in parallels from the C (11:13b) to the C' (11:14b) elements of this chiastic unit. “That (ὅτι) they are strangers and sojourners on the earth” progresses to “that (ὅτι) they are seeking a fatherland.”

In contrast to a temporary homeland on earth (11:13b), the patriarchs were seeking a lasting “fatherland (πατρίδα)” (11:14b), the heavenly home of God the Father, the God whose scriptural voice in 2 Sam 7:14 declared about Jesus, “I will be to him as a Father (πατέρα), and he will be to me as a Son” (1:5). That the patriarchs manifest that they are “seeking for” (ἐπιζητοῦσιν) a heavenly fatherland models for the audience the kind of faith needed to please God as they approach him in worship. They must believe that God exists and that for those “seeking him out” (ἐκζητοῦσιν) he becomes a rewarder (11:6).

6. *Heb 11:15-16 (B'): God Has Made Ready for Them a Heavenly City*

The fatherland for which the sojourning patriarchs manifested that they were seeking (11:13-14) is further delineated: “And if they were remembering that from which they came out, they would have had time to return. But now they long for a better one, that is a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has made ready for them a city” (11:15-16).<sup>5</sup> At this point the audience are presented with a series of progressions, via the chiasmic parallels, from the B (11:10-13a) to the B' (11:15-16) elements. There are progressions from Abraham’s “waiting for the city (πόλιν) having foundations” (11:10) to God “has made ready for them a city (πόλιν)” (11:16). Abraham being “beyond the time (καιρόν) of maturity” (11:11) progresses to “they would have had time (καιρόν) to return” (11:15). “Therefore (διό) from one man there were begotten” (11:12) progresses to “therefore (διό), God is not ashamed to be called their God” (11:16). And “just as the stars of heaven (οὐρανοῦ)” (11:12) progresses to “they long for a better one (fatherland), that is a heavenly one (ἐπουρανίου)” (11:16).

Abraham received divine power for the founding of descendants, even though he was beyond the opportune “time” (καιρόν) of maturity (11:11). In contrast, by their human capability, if the patriarchs were remembering that earthly land from which they came out in seeking a fatherland (11:14), they would have had the opportune “time” (καιρόν) to return (11:15).

Instead, the patriarchs were longing for a “better” (κρείττονος) fatherland, indeed, a “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίου) one (11:16a). This assimilates them with the audience, who accepted the confiscation of their earthly possessions with joy, knowing that they have a “better” (κρείττονα) heavenly possession that remains (10:34). It recalls the association of “better” with “heavenly” in that “heavenly things” (ἐπουράνια), the “heavenly things” (ἐπουρανίων) serving as the pattern for worship (8:5), need to be cleansed with “better” (κρείττοσιν) sacrifices (9:23). This “better” fatherland adds to the series of “better” things presented for the benefit of the audience (1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6). The patriarchs’ longing for a fatherland that is “heavenly” thus further associates them with the audience, who have already tasted of the “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίου) gift (6:4) and are partners of a “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίου) calling (3:1).

<sup>5</sup> J. Harold Greenlee, “A Question of Tenses: Hebrews 11:15,” *Notes* 3 (1997): 52–56.

Just as “therefore” (διό), by the power of God, from the one man Abraham there were begotten numerous descendants (11:12), so “therefore” (διό), God is “not ashamed” (οὐκ ἐπαισχύνεται) to be “called” (ἐπικαλεῖσθαι) the God of the patriarchs (11:16b). This further links the patriarchs to the audience, as among those whom Jesus, the divine Son, is “not ashamed” (οὐκ ἐπαισχύνεται) to “call” (καλεῖν) brothers (2:11). In regard to the faith of Abraham, who was waiting for the “city” (πόλιν) having foundations, whose architect and builder is God (11:10), God has made ready for the patriarchs a “city” (πόλιν), indeed, a heavenly one (11:16c).

*7. Heb 11:17-19 (A'): Abraham Offered Isaac in Whom Descendants Will Be Called*

From the faith of the three patriarchs (11:13-16) the focus returns to that of the preeminent patriarch, Abraham: “By faith Abraham, being tested, offered Isaac, and the one who accepted the promises was ready to offer his only begotten, to whom it was spoken, ‘In Isaac descendants will be called for you’ (Gen 21:12), reasoning that God is able to raise even from the dead, whence him, indeed in a parable, he acquired” (11:17-19). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the A (11:8-9) to the A' (11:17-19) elements of this chiasmic unit. “Abraham (Ἀβραάμ), being called (καλούμενος)” (11:8), and “having dwelt in tents with Isaac (Ἰσαάκ)” (11:9), progresses to “Abraham (Ἀβραάμ), being tested, offered Isaac (Ἰσαάκ)” (11:17) and “in Isaac (Ἰσαάκ) descendants will be called (κληθήσεται) for you” (11:18).

Recalling that by faith Abel “offered” (προσήνεγκεν) to God a greater sacrifice beyond Cain (11:4), by faith Abraham, being tested, “offered” (προσενήνοχεν) Isaac, and the one who accepted the promises was ready to “offer” (προσέφερεν) his only begotten (11:17). That Abraham was “tested” (πειραζόμενος) likens him to Jesus as a model of faith for the audience. In Jesus we have a high priest who has been “tested” (πεπειρασμένον) in all things in likeness to us, yet without sin (4:15). And in what Jesus himself suffered in being “tested” (πειρασθείς), those who are being “tested” (πειραζόμενοι) he is able to help (2:18).

As the one who accepted “the promises” (τὰς ἐπαγγελίας) from God, “the promises” (τὰς ἐπαγγελίας) of which the patriarchs, having died, did not receive the fulfillment (11:13), Abraham was ready to offer his only



begotten son, Isaac (11:17), a fellow heir with Abraham of the same “promise” (ἐπαγγελίας) of an inheritance (11:9). This further associates the audience, exhorted to be imitators of those who through faith and patience are inheriting “the promises (τὰς ἐπαγγελίας)” (6:12), with Abraham, the one having “the promises (τὰς ἐπαγγελίας)” (7:6).

Abraham was ready to offer his only begotten son, Isaac, even though to Abraham it was spoken by the scriptural voice of God in Gen 21:12 that “in Isaac descendants will be called for you” (11:18). God’s promise to Abraham that in Isaac descendants will be “called” (κληθήσεται) for him adds to God’s promise of a place Abraham was being “called” (καλούμενος) to receive as an inheritance (11:8). God’s promise to Abraham that in Isaac “descendants” (σπέρμα) will be called for him accords with the notice that by faith Abraham received divine power for the founding of “descendants (σπέρματος)” (11:11). This further enhances the significance of Abraham as a paternal model of faith for the audience, who are numbered among Abraham’s “descendants” (σπέρματος) as those taken hold of by Jesus (2:16).

Abraham’s reasoning that God is able to raise even from the “dead (νεκρῶν)” (11:19a) further associates him with the audience, who have already been taught about God’s resurrection of the “dead (νεκρῶν)” (6:2). That God is “able” or has the “power” (δυνατός) to raise from the dead accords with the divine “power” (δύναμιν) the believing but aged Abraham, as one who had become as good as “dead (νενεκρωμένου)” (11:12), received for the founding of descendants (11:11).

The first, earthly tabernacle, in which the way to the heavenly “holy things” had not appeared (9:8), is a “parable” (παραβολή), that is, a comparison or analogy, for the present time of the audience that has now arrived (9:9), the time when the way to the heavenly “holy things” has appeared with the heavenly exaltation of the high priest Jesus. Similarly, Abraham, by faith reasoning that God is able to raise even from the dead, acquired Isaac, without his dying and being raised, in a “parable (παραβολῇ)” (11:19)—a comparison or analogy for God’s resurrection of the dead.<sup>6</sup> That by faith

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews*, 295: “Abraham received Isaac ‘back’ literally, when God stopped the sacrifice and Isaac was able to accompany his father home. . . . But this return is ‘figuratively’ a resurrection from the dead, since, like Sarah and Abraham at the time of the child’s birth, Isaac himself was ‘as good as dead’ with the knife to his throat. As in the use of the same phrase in 9:9, however, the author may also imply another symbolic dimension, namely the resurrection from the dead that occurred in Christ and is anticipated by

Abraham “acquired” (ἐκομίσατο) Isaac, the beginning of God’s promise of descendants, reinforces the exhortation for the audience to have endurance so that, doing the will of God, “you may acquire” (κομίσηθε) the promise (10:36).<sup>7</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 11:8-19

At the beginning of the A'E unit (11:8-19) the audience are told that Abraham obeyed to go out to a place which he was about to receive as an “inheritance” (11:8). This provides the catch word for the connection with the preceding A'D unit (11:1-7), which concludes with the statement that of righteousness according to faith Noah became an “heir” (11:7). The transition from the exemplary faith of Noah to that of Abraham is provided for the audience through the theme of “inheriting.”

With regard to the third macrochiastic level, at this point the audience are presented with a progression from the A'aa unit (10:1-14) to this A'aa' unit (11:8-19), via the chiastic parallels determined by the only occurrences in Hebrews of the verb “waiting.” The object of the “waiting” in both instances is God’s final salvific activity. That the heavenly exalted Jesus is “waiting” until his enemies are placed as a footstool for his feet (10:13) progresses to Abraham “waiting” for the city having foundations (11:10).

After the unparalleled statement at the center of this chiastic unit, “for those (the patriarchs) saying such things manifest” (11:14a), the audience experience a pivot of parallels. The pivot moves from all the patriarchs who died not receiving the promises but from afar seeing them and greeting and confessing (11:13a) “that” they are strangers and sojourners on the earth (11:13b) to their manifesting “that” they are seeking a fatherland (11:14b).

The audience are then presented with a series of progressions via the chiastic parallels. By faith, even though Sarah herself was barren, Abraham received divine power for the founding of descendants, even though he was beyond the “time” of maturity, since he considered faithful the God who promised (11:11). This progresses to the notice that if the patriarchs were remembering that country from which they came out, they would have

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believers. The rescue of Isaac, at the very least, points forward to a full realization of God’s power to bring life from death.”

<sup>7</sup> Markus N. A. Bockmuehl, “Abraham’s Faith in Hebrews 11,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard J. Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 364–73.

had “time” to return (11:15). That “therefore” from the one man Abraham there were begotten, and these of one who had become dead, “just as the stars of *heaven* in multitude and as the innumerable sand beyond the shore of the sea (Gen 22:17b)” (11:12) progresses to the patriarchs longing for a better fatherland, that is a “*heavenly one*,” so that “therefore,” God is not ashamed to be called their God (11:16a). And that Abraham was waiting for the “city” having foundations, whose architect and builder is God (11:10), progresses to God has made ready for the patriarchs a “city” (11:16b).

Finally, by faith “Abraham,” being “*called*” by God, obeyed to go out to a place which he was about to receive as an inheritance, and he went out not knowing where he was going (11:8). And by faith he sojourned in the land of the promise as (land) of another, having dwelt in tents with “*Isaac*” and Jacob, the fellow heirs of the same promise (11:9). These statements progress to the declaration that by faith “Abraham,” being tested, offered “*Isaac*,” and the one who accepted the promises was ready to offer his only begotten (11:17), to whom it was spoken by God, “In *Isaac* descendants will be *called* for you (Gen 21:12)” (11:18), reasoning that God is able to raise even from the dead, whence him, indeed in a parable, he acquired (11:19). And that by faith Abraham “acquired” Isaac, the beginning of God’s promise of descendants, reinforces the exhortation for the audience, by faith, to have endurance so that, doing the will of God, they may “acquire” God’s promise of final salvation (10:36).

## Hebrews 11:20-31

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- A<sup>20</sup> By faith even concerning things to come Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau. <sup>21</sup> By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshiped *on* the top of his *staff* (Gen 47:31). <sup>22</sup> By faith Joseph, coming to an end, reminded the sons of Israel concerning the exodus and concerning his bones commanded (Gen 50:24-25).
- B<sup>23</sup> By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw the child was beautiful and were not *afraid* of the edict of *the king*.
- C<sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, having become great, refused to be said to be a son of the daughter of Pharaoh, <sup>25</sup> choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to have a temporary enjoyment of sin, <sup>26a</sup> having considered greater wealth than the treasures of *Egypt*
- D<sup>26b</sup> the reproach of the Christ, for he was looking away to the recompense.
- C'<sup>27a</sup> By faith he left *Egypt*,
- B'<sup>27b</sup> not *afraid* of the fury of *the king*, for as if seeing the one who is invisible he persevered. <sup>28</sup> By faith he kept the Passover and the applying of the blood, so that the one who was to destroy the firstborn might not touch them (Exod 12:7, 13).
- A'<sup>29</sup> By faith they went through the Red Sea as through dry land, in which, taking an attempt, the Egyptians were drowned. <sup>30</sup> By faith the walls of Jericho fell, having been encircled *on* seven days. <sup>31</sup> By faith *Rahab* the harlot did not perish together with those who disobeyed, having welcomed the spies with peace (Josh 6:1-17).

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 11:20-31

Toward the conclusion of the A'E unit (11:8-19) is a reference to "Isaac" in the quotation from Gen 21:12—"In Isaac (Ἰσαάκ) descendants will be

called for you” (11:18). The reference to “Isaac” provides the transitional catch word connecting this unit to the following A’F unit (11:20-31), which begins with the statement that by faith even concerning things to come “Isaac” (Ἰσαάκ) blessed Jacob and Esau (11:20). The transition thus moves the focus from the faith of Abraham in the promise of Isaac to the faith of Isaac himself.

The only occurrences in this unit of the preposition “on” as well as the alliteration in Greek between the terms “staff” and “Rahab” establish the parallels for the A (11:20-22) and A’ (11:29-31) elements. Jacob “worshiped on (ἐπὶ) the top of his staff (ῥάβδου)” occurs in 11:21 and “by faith the walls of Jericho fell, having been encircled on (ἐπὶ) seven days” in 11:30, as well as “by faith Rahab (Ῥάαβ) the harlot did not perish” in 11:31. The parallels for the B (11:23) and B’ (11:27b-28) elements are determined by the only occurrences in this unit of the verb “be afraid” and the noun “the king”—“they were not afraid (ἐφοβήθησαν) of the edict of the king (τοῦ βασιλέως)” in 11:23 and “not afraid (φοβηθεὶς) of the fury of the king (τοῦ βασιλέως) in 11:27b. The only occurrences in this unit of the term “Egypt” form the parallels for the C (11:24-26a) and C’ (11:27a) elements—“the treasures of Egypt (Αἰγύπτου) in 11:26a and “by faith he left Egypt (Αἴγυπτον) in 11:27a. Finally, the terminology unique to this unit, especially the only reference in it to “the Christ,” highlights the central and unparalleled D (11:26b) element—“the reproach of the Christ, for he was looking away to the recompense.”

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, this A’F unit (11:20-31) is the third and final central and unparalleled unit, each of which refers to Moses in relation to the Christ. The AF unit (3:1-6) presents Jesus Christ as the Son of God who is faithful beyond Moses in the house of God. The BF unit (8:1-6) presents Jesus as a high priest in the heavenly tabernacle shown to Moses. And this A’F unit presents Moses as a model of faith who endured the reproach of the Christ.

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 11:20-31

### 1. Heb 11:20-22 (A): Jacob Worshiped on the Top of His Staff

The focus moves to the faith modeled by the patriarchs Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph: “By faith even concerning things to come Isaac blessed Jacob and

Esau. By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshiped on the top of his staff (Gen 47:31). By faith Joseph, coming to an end, reminded the sons of Israel concerning the exodus and concerning his bones commanded (Gen 50:24-25) (11:20-22).

By faith even concerning “things to come” (μελλόντων), that is, concerning the promised good “things to come” (μελλόντων) regarding the heavenly worship of which the law concerning earthly worship has only a shadow (10:1), Isaac blessed both of his sons, Jacob and Esau (11:20).<sup>1</sup> That Isaac “blessed” (εὐλόγησεν) Jacob and Esau continues the actualization of God’s promise to Abraham, the father of Isaac, from Gen 22:17a: “Indeed, blessing I will bless (εὐλογῶν εὐλογήσω) you” (6:14). Melchizedek, priest of the God Most High, began to actualize this divine promise, having “blessed” (εὐλόγησας) Abraham (7:1). Exemplifying how an inferior is “blessed” (εὐλογεῖται) by a superior (7:7), Melchizedek “blessed” (εὐλόγηκεν) Abraham as the one having the promises (7:6). Although Isaac blessed both Jacob and Esau, only Jacob was a fellow heir with Isaac of the promise Abraham received (11:9).

By faith Jacob, as he was “dying” (ἀποθνήσκων), recalling that he was among the patriarchs all of whom in accord with faith “died” (ἀπέθανον), did not receive the fulfillment of the promises, but from afar was seeing them and greeting and confessing that they are strangers and sojourners on the earth (11:13). And recalling that Abel, although having “died” (ἀποθανών) is still speaking to the audience (11:4), Jacob, as he was “dying,” blessed each of the sons of Joseph (11:21a). That he “blessed” (εὐλόγησεν) each of the sons of his son Joseph continues the actualization of the divine promise he received when Isaac “blessed” (εὐλόγησεν) Jacob and Esau (11:20). The blessing of “each” (ἕκαστον) of the sons of Joseph as inheritors of the divine promise reinforces the exhortation for “each” (ἕκαστον) member of the audience to demonstrate the same eagerness for the assurance of the hope until the end (6:11). This is so that they may not become sluggish, but rather imitators of those who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises (6:12), including these patriarchal models of faith.

By faith, while he was dying and thus leaving this earth where he was merely a stranger and sojourner (11:9, 13), Jacob “worshiped”

<sup>1</sup> Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 364: “The formulation of v 20 accentuates Isaac’s unqualified adherence to whatever God had planned καὶ περὶ μελλόντων, ‘even with respect to the future.’ The force of καὶ, ‘even,’ is intensive; it functions to place the phrase περὶ μελλόντων in high relief.” On the inclusion of a blessing for Esau here, see Koester, *Hebrews*, 492.

(προσεκύνησεν) on the top of his staff (11:21), a direct allusion to Gen 47:31 (LXX).<sup>2</sup> This last act of earthly worship by the dying Jacob anticipates his participation in the heavenly worship of the exalted Son of God, as it resonates with the scriptural proclamation that when God leads the firstborn into the heavenly world, he says, “And let all the angels of God worship (προσκυνησάτωσαν) him (Deut 32:43; Ps 96:7)” (1:6). As an anticipation of participation in the heavenly worship, Jacob worshiped on the top of his “staff” (ῥάβδου), recalling the “staff” (ῥάβδος) of the priest Aaron that is associated with worship in the earthly tabernacle (9:4), as well as the “staff” (ῥάβδος) of uprightness that is a “staff” (ῥάβδος) of the heavenly kingdom of the enthroned divine Son of God (1:8). The dying Jacob thus provides the audience with a model of faith that includes the hope of participating in the heavenly worship of the heavenly fatherland.

The faith of Joseph as he was “coming to an end (τελευτών)” (11:22a) likewise serves as a model for the audience, who have been exhorted to demonstrate the same eagerness for the assurance of the hope until the “end (τέλους)” (6:11), and, as partners of the Christ, to hold the beginning of the reality firm until the “end (τέλους)” (3:14). The patriarchs did not “remember” (ἐμνημόνευον) the land from which they “came out (ἐξέβησαν)” (11:15). In contrast, Joseph “reminded” (ἐμνημόνευσεν) the sons of Israel, resonating with the house of Israel as the recipients of God’s promise of a new covenant (8:8, 10), concerning the “exodus (ἐξόδου)” (11:22b) to a land anticipating the heavenly fatherland the patriarchs were seeking (11:15).<sup>3</sup>

This “exodus” or “way out” (ἐξόδου) of an earthly land (11:22b) thus anticipates the fresh and living “way” (ὁδόν) into the heavenly holy things that Jesus inaugurated for us (9:8; 10:20). That Joseph “commanded” (ἐνετείλατο) the sons of Israel concerning his bones (11:22c), which they were to bring with them out of their exodus and into a new land (Gen 50:24-25), anticipates the divine commandment of a new covenant in accord with the proclamation of Moses in Exod 24:8: “This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded (ἐνετείλατο) to you” (9:20). According to this

<sup>2</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 365: “Jacob’s final act of worship, leaning upon the top of his staff, was characteristic for one who lived his life as a stranger and a sojourner.”

<sup>3</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews*, 296: “[A]lthough the actual exodus will be in the future, Joseph’s faith is demonstrated by his remembering and trusting—and acting in light of—the promise of God’s visitation to the people that was stated to Abraham in Gen 15:13-15. His act of memory is therefore also an act of faith that God could accomplish what he had promised.”

new covenant commanded by God, the blood of the Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, will cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14), so that we may participate in the worship of the heavenly fatherland that was anticipated by the faith of these patriarchs.

2. *Heb 11:23 (B): The Parents of Moses Were Not Afraid of the Edict of the King*

The focus moves to the faith exhibited by the parents of Moses: “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw the child was beautiful and were not afraid of the edict of the king” (11:23).<sup>4</sup> When Moses, one of the multitude “begotten” (ἐγεννήθησαν) from the one man Abraham in accord with God’s promise (11:12), was “born” (γεννηθείς), by faith his parents hid him for three months (Exod 2:2), in view of the edict of the king of Egypt that every Hebrew male child be killed (Exod 1:15-22). Their seeing that the “child” (παιδίον) was beautiful as a child from God associates Moses with the audience, as the “children” (παιδιά) with whom Jesus shared in blood and flesh (2:14), the “children” (παιδιά) whom God gave to him (2:13).<sup>5</sup> That they were not “afraid” (ἐφοβήθησαν) of the edict of the “king” (βασιλέως), who stands in contrast to Melchizedek as God’s “king” (βασιλεύς) of righteousness and of peace (7:1-2), provides the audience with a model for heeding the exhortation for us to be “afraid” (φοβηθῶμεν), lest, while the promise to enter into God’s heavenly rest is left, anyone of us seem to have been lacking (4:1).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> There are references to Moses in 3:2, 3, 5, 16; 7:14; 8:5; 9:19; 10:28. See Mary R. D’Angelo, *Moses in the Letter to the Hebrews* (SBLDS 42; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979).

<sup>5</sup> On Moses as a “beautiful” (ἄσπεῖον) child, Lane (*Hebrews 9-13*, 370) refers to “a well-established tradition of interpretation that found in the word ἄσπεῖος an indication that the infant possessed a visible sign of God’s elective favor. According to v 23, Moses’ parents found in the extraordinary appearance of their son a basis for faith in the as yet unseen purposes of God; his unusual attractiveness was to them a visible sign that he enjoyed God’s favor and protection.”

<sup>6</sup> This “edict” (διάταγμα) of the king for the slaying of infants appears in Wis 11:7, as noted by Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 610. Koester, *Hebrews*, 501: “Fearing God is appropriate, whereas fearing a king who opposes God is not.”



3. *Heb 11:24-26a (C): Moses Considered a Wealth Greater than the Treasures of Egypt*

We move from the faith of the parents of Moses (11:23) to the faith of Moses himself: “By faith Moses, having become great, refused to be said to be a son of the daughter of Pharaoh, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to have a temporary enjoyment of sin, having considered greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt” (11:24-26a). The reference to Moses as “having become (γενόμενος) great (μέγας)” (11:24a) by God (divine passive), associates him with Jesus as a “great” (μέγαν) high priest (4:14; 10:21). Jesus “became” (γενόμενος) higher than the heavens (7:26), “having become” (γενόμενος) a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (6:20), and “having become” (γενόμενος) so far better than the angels to the degree that more excellent beyond them he has inherited a name (1:4). As one of the “sons” (υἱῶν) of Israel (11:22), Moses refused to be said to be a “son” (υἱός) of the daughter of Pharaoh (11:24b).

That by faith Moses chose rather to be mistreated with “the people of God” (τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ) than to have a temporary enjoyment of sin (11:25) further commends him as a model of faith for the audience, as among “the people of God” (τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ) for whom the heavenly sabbath rest of God still remains (4:9). His refusal of a temporary enjoyment of “sin” (ἁμαρτίας) aligns him with Jesus as one who is without “sin (ἁμαρτίας)” (4:15; 9:28). In contrast to one who “considers” (ἡγησάμενος) unclean the blood of the covenant (10:29), and in line with Abraham, who “considered” (ἡγήσατο) faithful the God who promised (11:11), Moses “considered” (ἡγησάμενος) what was of greater wealth than the treasures of “Egypt (Αἰγύπτου)” (11:26a). This recalls that God led his people out of the land of “Egypt” (Αἰγύπτου) through Moses (3:16; 8:9).

4. *Heb 11:26b (D): The Reproach of the Christ for Moses Looking to the recompense*

What Moses, by faith (11:24-25), considered to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt (11:26a) is highlighted: “the reproach of the Christ, for he was looking away to the recompense” (11:26b). That Moses considered the “reproach” (ὀνειδισμόν) of the Christ to be of greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt further associates him with the audience, who not

only have been publicly exposed to “reproaches” (ὀνειδισμοῖς) and afflictions, but became partners of those so treated (10:33).<sup>7</sup>

Moses’ endurance of the reproach of “the Christ” (τοῦ Χριστοῦ), for he was looking away to the recompense (11:26b), strengthens the assurance that the blood of “the Christ” (τοῦ Χριστοῦ) will cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14). It also bolsters the exhortations for the audience to depart from the word at the beginning about “the Christ” (τοῦ Χριστοῦ) in order to bear forward toward the perfection (6:1), and to become partners of “the Christ” (τοῦ Χριστοῦ) by holding the beginning of the reality firm until the end (3:14). That by faith Moses endured the reproach of the Christ, for he was looking away to the “recompense” (μισθαποδοσίαν) from God, reinforces the exhortation for the audience not to throw away their boldness, which has great “recompense” (μισθαποδοσίαν) from God (10:35). Indeed, God becomes a “rewarder” (μισθαποδοτής) for those seeking him (11:6), and is the giver of a just “recompense (μισθαποδοσίαν)” (2:2).

#### 5. *Heb 11:27a (C'): By Faith Moses Left Egypt*

The description of the faith of Moses continues: “by faith Moses left Egypt” (11:27a). At this point, after the central and unparalleled D element, “the reproach of the Christ, for he was looking away to the recompense” (11:26b), the audience experience a pivot of parallels from the C (11:24-26a) to the C' (11:27a) elements of this chiastic unit. Moses’ consideration of the reproach of the Christ as a greater wealth than the treasures of “Egypt (Αἰγύπτου)” (11:26a) progresses to his actual departure from “Egypt” (Αἴγυπτον). That by faith Moses “left” (κατέλιπεν) Egypt in view of a recompense from God serves as a model of the faith associated with the promise God has “left” for the audience. They have been exhorted to be afraid lest, while the promise to enter into God’s heavenly rest is still “left”

<sup>7</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 341: “Moses could have been understood to be aware of the ultimate perfecter of the faith, the one who would bring God’s promises to reality. Sustained by that awareness, he accepted the reproach that accompanied his association with Christ and Christ’s people. . . . Although our author probably assumes some sort of prophetic consciousness on the part of Moses, he is not concerned to make clear precisely how the lawgiver accepts the reproach ‘of Christ.’” The phrase “the reproach of the Christ” (τὸν ὀνειδισμόν τοῦ Χριστοῦ) may be inspired by Ps 88:51-52. On this, see Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 373; Johnson, *Hebrews*, 301.

(καταλειπομένης) for them, anyone of them seem to have been lacking in faith (4:1).

6. *Heb 11:27b-28 (B'): Moses Was Not Afraid of the Fury of the King*

The faith modeled by Moses continues to be elaborated. By faith Moses left Egypt (11:27a), “not afraid of the fury of the king, for as if seeing the one who is invisible he persevered. By faith he kept the Passover and the applying of the blood, so that the one who was to destroy the firstborn might not touch them (Exod 12:7, 13)” (11:27b-28).

At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the B to the B' elements of this chiasmic unit. That the parents of Moses “were not afraid of the edict of the king (οὐκ ἐφοβήθησαν τὸ διάταγμα τοῦ βασιλέως)” (11:23) progresses to Moses himself “not having been afraid of the fury of the king (μὴ φοβηθεὶς τὸν θυμὸν τοῦ βασιλέως)” (11:27b). This intensification from both parents together not fearing the “edict” of the king to Moses as an individual not fearing the actual “fury” of the king further reinforces, with particular poignancy, the exhortation for the Godly fear of the audience concerning every individual among them: “Let us be afraid (φοβηθῶμεν) then, lest, while the promise to enter into his rest is left, anyone of you seem to have been lacking” (4:1).

That Moses did not fear the fury of the king because of the insight of his faith—“for” (γάρ) as if “seeing” (ὁρῶν) the God who is invisible he persevered (11:27)—complements how he endured the reproach of the Christ because of the foresight of his faith—“for” (γάρ) he was “looking away” (ἀπέβλεπεν) to the recompense from God (11:26).<sup>8</sup> The faith of Moses thus exemplifies for the audience how faith is the reality of things being hoped for and the demonstration of things not yet being “noticed (βλεπομένων)” (11:1). It serves as a model for the insight and foresight of the faith of the audience—we who are “taking note” (βλέπομεν) of Jesus (2:9), even though we do not now “see” (ὁρῶμεν) all things subjected to him (2:8).

In keeping the Passover and the “applying” or “pouring” (πρόσχυσιν) of the “blood” (αἷματος), Moses demonstrated his faith in the future salvific effectiveness regarding the sacrificial blood of the Passover lamb, so that

<sup>8</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 504: “This implies that Moses did not actually see God. It is difficult to identify this passage with God’s revelation in the burning bush, in the pillar of cloud and fire, or in visions. Instead, the text underscores the nature of faith itself.”

the one who was to destroy (Exod 12:23) the firstborn might not even touch them (11:28)—the firstborn sons of Israel (11:22). This serves as a model for the faith of the audience in the future salvific effectiveness regarding the sacrificial blood of the Christ, namely, that the “blood” (αἷμα) of the Christ, who through the eternal Spirit “offered” (προσήνεγκεν) himself unblemished to God, *will* cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14). Moses’ faith in God regarding the firstborn sons of Israel—that God would not allow the one who was to destroy the “firstborn” (πρωτότοκα) so much as touch them—bolsters the faith of the audience regarding the firstborn divine Son. God leads the “firstborn” (πρωτότοκον) into the heavenly world to be worshiped by God’s angels (1:6) along with the audience assisted by these angelic spirits (1:14).<sup>9</sup>

7. *Heb 11:29-31 (A'): Encircled on Seven Days and Rahab Welcomed with Peace*

Following upon the faith modeled by Moses (11:23-28), more examples of faith are presented: “By faith they went through the Red Sea as through dry land, in which, taking an attempt, the Egyptians were drowned. By faith the walls of Jericho fell, having been encircled on seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish together with those who disobeyed, having welcomed the spies with peace (Josh 6:1-17)” (11:29-31). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from the A (11:20-22) to the A' (11:29-31) elements of this chiastic unit. That Jacob “worshiped on (ἐπὶ) the top of his staff (ῥάβδου)” (11:21) progresses to “the walls of Jericho fell, having been encircled on (ἐπὶ) seven days” (11:30), and “Rahab (Ῥαάβ) the harlot did not perish” (11:31).

That by faith in the promises of God the sons of Israel, led by Moses (3:16), went through the Red “Sea” (θάλασσαν) “as” (ὥς) if they were going through dry land (11:29a; cf. Exod 14:21-22) resonates with another comparison involving the sea in God’s promise that Abraham’s descendants would be “as” (ὥς) the innumerable sand beyond the shore of the “sea (θαλάσσης)” (11:12). In contrast to the faith of the patriarchs, who died without “receiving” or “taking” (λαμβάντες) hold of the promises (11:13), by their lack of faith, the Egyptians were drowned, “taking” (λαμβάντες)

<sup>9</sup> Nathan MacDonald, “By Faith Moses,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard J. Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 374–82.

an attempt to go through that same Red Sea (11:29b). Those who did go through the Red Sea thus underscore for the audience the life-giving dimension of faith.

Just as “the corpses fell” (τὰ κῶλα ἔπεσεν) in the wilderness of those who had sinned (3:17), in accord with God’s promise that they would not enter into his rest (3:11, 18; 4:5), so by faith “the walls of Jericho fell” (τὰ τεῖχη Ἰεριχὼ ἔπεσαν), having been encircled on seven days (11:30), in accord with God’s promise that they would do so (Josh 6:1-17). This serves as a model of faith for the audience, for whom God’s promise to enter into his heavenly rest still remains (4:1), to strive to enter into that rest, so that not anyone of them may “fall” (πέσῃ) in the same pattern of disobedience (4:11).

That by faith Jacob worshiped “on” (ἐπὶ) the top of his “staff (ῥάβδου)” (11:21) anticipates the heavenly worship promised by God (1:6, 14). Similarly, that by faith the walls of Jericho were encircled “on” (ἐπὶ) seven days anticipates their fall, as promised by God (11:30; cf. Josh 6:15-17). And that by faith “Rahab” (Ῥαάβ) the harlot welcomed the Israelite spies with peace anticipates her not perishing together with those who disobeyed (11:31; cf. Josh 2:1-21; 6:22-25), as sworn to her by God (Josh 2:12).<sup>10</sup>

The faith of Rahab that resulted in her not perishing with “those who disobeyed (τοῖς ἀπειθήσασιν)” (11:31a) serves as a model for the life-giving faith of the audience so that they do not perish (3:17) with “those who disobeyed” (τοῖς ἀπειθήσασιν) and did not enter into God’s rest (3:18). Rather, the audience are to enter into God’s own heavenly rest as those who believed (4:3). In view of those who did not enter into God’s rest because of “disobedience (ἀπειθειαν)” (4:6), Rahab’s faith further reinforces the exhortation for the audience to strive to enter into that rest, so that not anyone of them may fall in the same pattern of “disobedience (ἀπειθείας)” (4:11). And that by faith Rahab welcomed the spies with “peace (εἰρήνης)” (11:31b) adds to her appeal as a model of faith for the audience, as it associates her with the venerable Melchizedek, king of “peace (εἰρήνης)” (7:2).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 379: “The traditional description of Rahab as ἡ πόρνη, ‘the prostitute,’ has its source in Scripture (Josh 2:1; 6:17, 22, 25). She was, nevertheless, a recognized member of her family group (Josh 2:12-13, 18; 6:23), and this was a status not normally enjoyed by a prostitute.”

<sup>11</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 505-6: “Peace characterizes God (Heb 13:20-21) and Melchizedek, who foreshadows Christ (7:2).” See also K.-P. Lehmann, “Die messianischen Leiden des Propheten Mose: Exegetische Anmerkungen zu Hebräer 11,23-31,” *T&K* 22 (1999): 95-114; Carl Mosser, “Rahab Outside the Camp,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and*

## C. Summary on Hebrews 11:20-31

At the beginning of the A'F unit (11:20-31) the audience hear that by faith even concerning things to come “Isaac” blessed Jacob and Esau (11:20). This provides the catch word for the connection to the preceding A'E unit (11:8-19), which concludes with a reference to “Isaac” in the quotation from Gen 21:12—“In Isaac descendants will be called for you” (11:18). The transition thus moves the focus of the audience from the model of Abraham’s faith in God’s promise of Isaac to the faith modeled by Isaac himself.

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, with this A'F unit (11:20-31) the audience have heard the third and final central and unparalleled unit, each of which refers to Moses in relation to the Christ. In the AF unit (3:1-6) the audience, as God’s “house,” are to appreciate that Christ is over them as the Son of God faithful beyond Moses. In the BF unit (8:1-6) the audience are to appreciate that in Jesus they have a high priest in the heavenly tabernacle shown to Moses. And in this A'F unit the audience are to imitate Moses as a model of faith who endured the reproach of the Christ.

After the unparalleled statement at the center of this chiastic unit, “the reproach of the Christ, for he (Moses) was looking away to the recompense” (11:26b), the audience experience a pivot of parallels. The pivot moves from Moses having considered greater wealth than the treasures of “Egypt” (11:26a) to Moses, by faith, actually left “Egypt” (11:27a), where Moses, by faith, having become great, refused to be said to be a son of the daughter of Pharaoh, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to have a temporary enjoyment of sin (11:24-25).

The audience are then presented with a series of progressions via the chiastic parallels. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child of God and were not “afraid of the edict of the king” (11:23). This progresses to Moses himself not being “afraid of the fury of the king,” for as if seeing the God who is invisible he persevered (11:27b) as a model of faith for the audience. That by faith Moses kept the Passover and the applying of the sacrificial blood, so that the one who was to destroy the firstborn might not even touch them (11:28; cf. Exod 12:7, 13), provides the audience with a model of faith in the effectiveness of the sacrificial blood of the Christ,

the heavenly firstborn Son of God (1:6), to cleanse their conscience to offer worship to the living God (9:14).

Finally, by faith even concerning things to come Jacob, blessed together with Esau by Isaac (11:20), himself, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and worshiped “on” the top of his “staff (ῥάβδου)” (11:21; cf. Gen 47:31), anticipating the heavenly worship promised by God (1:6, 14). By faith Joseph, coming to an end, reminded the sons of Israel concerning the exodus promised by God and concerning his bones commanded (Gen 50:24-25), anticipating the divine commandment of a new covenant with a new way for the audience to worship God (11:22). This progresses to the faith in God’s promise by which the sons of Israel went through the Red Sea as through dry land, in which, taking an attempt, the faithless Egyptians were drowned (11:29). By faith the walls of Jericho fell, having been encircled “on” seven days, as promised by God (11:30). And that by faith “Rahab (Ῥαάβ)” the harlot welcomed the spies with peace (Josh 6:1-17) anticipates her not perishing together with those who disobeyed (11:31; cf. Josh 2:1-21; 6:22-25), as sworn to her by God (Josh 2:12). She serves as a model for the faith of the audience so that they do not perish with those who disobeyed and did not enter into God’s own rest (3:17-18).

## Hebrews 11:32-40

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- A<sup>32a</sup> And *what* still may I say?
- B<sup>32b</sup> For the time will fail me giving an account *concerning* Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, as well as Samuel and the prophets,
- C<sup>33a</sup> who *through faith* conquered kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained *promises*,
- D<sup>33b</sup> shut the mouths of lions, <sup>34</sup> quenched the power of fire, fled the mouths of the *sword*, they were empowered from weakness, they became strong *in* battle, they laid low the camps of others.
- E<sup>35a</sup> Women *received*
- F<sup>35b</sup> their dead from *resurrection*.
- G<sup>35c</sup> But some were tortured, not accepting deliverance,
- F<sup>35d</sup> that they might obtain a better *resurrection*.
- E<sup>36</sup> But others *received* a trial of scorns and scourgings, and even of chains and imprisonment.
- D<sup>37</sup> They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died *in* murder by a *sword*; they went about *in* sheepskins, *in* goatskins, being in need, being afflicted, being maltreated. <sup>38</sup> The world was not worthy of them; they were wandering over deserts and mountains and caves and the crevices of the earth.
- C<sup>39</sup> And these all, testified *through the faith*, did not acquire the *promise*.
- B<sup>40a</sup> God *concerning* us,
- A<sup>40b</sup> providing *something* better, that they would not be made perfect without us.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 11:32-40

At the conclusion of the A'F unit (11:20-31) is a reference to “faith”—“by faith (πίστει) Rahab the harlot did not perish together with those who disobeyed, having welcomed the spies with peace” (11:31). The reference



to “faith” provides the transitional catch word connecting this unit to the following A'E' unit (11:32-40), which begins with a reference to the “faith” (πίστεως) through which noteworthy individuals accomplished remarkable deeds (11:33). The transition thus moves the focus from the faith modeled by Rahab to the faith modeled by a group of significant individuals.

The only occurrences in this unit of the singular neuter accusative interrogative or indefinite pronoun, “what” or “something,” establish the parallels for the A (11:32a) and A' (11:40b) elements of this chiasmic unit—“what (τί) still may I say?” in 11:32a and “providing something (τι) better” in 11:40b. The only occurrences in this unit of the preposition “concerning” determine the parallels for the B (11:32b) and B' (11:40a) elements—“an account concerning (περί) Gideon” in 11:32b and “God concerning (περί) us” in 11:40a. And the only occurrences in this unit of the phrase “through faith” and of the noun “promise” form the parallels for the C (11:33a) and C' (11:39) elements. “Who through faith (διὰ πίστεως) conquered kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises (ἐπαγγελιών)” occurs in 11:33a and “these all, testified through the faith (διὰ τῆς πίστεως), did not acquire the promise (ἐπαγγελίαν)” in 11:39.

The only occurrences in this unit of the noun “sword” and the preposition “in” establish the parallels for the D (11:33b-34) and D' (11:37-38) elements—“fled the mouths of the sword (μαχαίρης)” and “they became strong in (ἐν) battle” in 11:34, as well as “they died in (ἐν) murder by a sword (μαχαίρης); they went about in (ἐν) sheepskins, in (ἐν) goatskins” in 11:37. The only occurrences in Hebrews of the third person plural aorist indicative active verb “received” determine the parallels for the E (11:35a) and E' (11:36) elements—“women received (ἔλαβον)” in 11:35a and “but others received (ἔλαβον)” in 11:36. The only occurrences in this unit of the noun “resurrection” form the parallels for the F (11:35b) and F' (11:35d) elements—“their dead from resurrection (ἀναστάσεως)” in 11:35b and “that they might obtain a better resurrection (ἀναστάσεως)” in 11:35d. Finally, the central and unparalleled G (11:35c) element contains the only occurrence of the verb “torture” in Hebrews—“but some were tortured (ἐτυμπανίσθησαν), not accepting deliverance.”

With regard to the second macrochiasmic level, after the central and pivotal A'F chiasmic unit (11:20-31) the audience experience a chiasmic relationship between the A'E' (11:32-40) and the A'E (11:8-19) units provided by the terms “promise,” “better,” “dead,” and “acquire.” “By faith he (Abraham) sojourned in the land of the promise (ἐπαγγελίας) as (land) of another,

having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the fellow heirs of the same promise (ἐπαγγελίας)” (11:9) . . . not receiving the promises (ἐπαγγελίας)” (11:13) . . . and the one who accepted the promises (ἐπαγγελίας)” (11:17) in the A'E unit. They “obtained promises (ἐπαγγελιών)” (11:33) and they “did not acquire the promise (ἐπαγγελίαν)” (11:39) in the A'E' unit.

“But now they long for a better (κρείττονος) one (fatherland)” (11:16) in the A'E unit. And “that they might obtain a better (κρείττονος) resurrection” (11:35) and “providing something better (κρείττον)” (11:40) in the A'E' unit. Abraham “reasoning that God is able to raise even from the dead (νεκρῶν), whence him, indeed in a parable, he acquired (ἐκομίσαστο)” (11:19) in the A'E unit. And “women received their dead (νεκρούς) from resurrection” (11:35), as well as “they did not acquire (ἐκομίσαντο) the promise” (11:39) in the A'E' unit.

In addition, at the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the AE (2:10-18) and A'E' (11:32-40) units provided by the expression “made perfect.” In the AE unit is the statement, “to make the initiator of their salvation, through suffering, perfect (τελειῶσαι)” (2:10). And in the A'E' unit is the statement that “they would not be made perfect (τελειωθῶσιν) without us” (11:40).

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 11:32-40

### 1. *Heb 11:32a (A): And What Still May I Say?*

After all of the preceding models of faith, the author poses a rhetorical question to the audience: “and what still may I say?” (11:32a). This question functions in an ambivalent manner. On the one hand, it asks what the author can “still say” (ἔτι λέγω) in view of all that has been said by the preceding models of faith, epitomized by Abel, who, even though having died, is “still speaking” (ἔτι λαλεῖ) as a model of faith (11:4). But, on the other hand, it alerts the audience to what the author still has to say regarding further demonstrations of faith.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The ambivalence of the question is facilitated by the fact that the verbal form λέγω can be taken as either in the subjunctive (“what may/can I say”) or indicative (“what may/shall I say”) mood. Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 382: “This is a common homiletical and literary idiom for indicating that time and space are limited. . . . The rhetorical flourish commonly announces an intention of abbreviating the matter under discussion.”

2. *Heb 11:32b (B): An Account Concerning More Models of Faith*

More models of faith are then mentioned: “For the time will fail me giving an account concerning Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, as well as Samuel and the prophets” (11:32b).<sup>2</sup> The audience have had a long amount of “time” (χρόνον) in which to become teachers (5:12). After so long a “time” (χρόνον) “David” (Δαβίδ) said in Ps 94:7-8, “Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts” (4:7). But the “time” (χρόνος) will fail the author to give a full account concerning additional models of faith, including “David” (Δαβίδ), as well as Samuel and the “prophets” (προφητῶν), recalling God’s having spoken much time ago to the fathers in the “prophets (προφήταις)” (1:1).

3. *Heb 11:33a (C): Through Faith They Obtained Promises*

The remarkable accomplishments of these additional models of faith are noted: “who through faith conquered kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises” (11:33a). That “through faith” (διὰ πίστεως) they “obtained” (ἐπέτυχον) “promises” (ἐπαγγελιῶν), associating them with Abraham, who “obtained” (ἐπέτυχεν) the “promise (ἐπαγγελίας)” (6:15), reinforces the exhortation for the audience to become imitators of those who “through faith” (διὰ πίστεως) and patience are inheriting the “promises (ἐπαγγελίας)” (6:12). That they conquered earthly “kingdoms” (βασιλείας) associates them with Jesus, as it resonates with his heavenly “kingdom” (βασιλείας) as the enthroned divine Son of God (1:8). And that they worked “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνην) further commends them as models of faith. It associates them with Noah, who became an heir of “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνης) according to faith (11:7), with Melchizedek, king of “righteousness (δικαιοσύνης)” (7:2), with the audience, who are to be experienced in the word of “righteousness (δικαιοσύνης)” (5:13), and with Jesus, who loved “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνην) and hated lawlessness (1:9).

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews*, 306: “The author does not say why he selects these names, or why he arranges them in this sequence. The biblical order would be Barak (Judg 4-5), Gideon (Judg 6-8), Jephthah (Judg 11-12), Samson (Judg 13-16), Samuel (1 Sam 1), and David (1 Sam 16). No single aspect of their stories is singled out, because they are meant to stand as representative of the faith that moved and directed all those who spoke and acted for God and through whom God spoke and acted.”

4. *Heb 11:33b-34 (D): They Fled the Sword and Became Strong in Battle*

The accomplishments of these models of faith continue to be described: “shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, fled the mouths of the sword, they were empowered from weakness, they became strong in battle, they laid low the camps of others” (11:33b-34). That they quenched the “power” (δύναμιν) of “fire (πυρός)” (11:34a) indicates to the audience the divine strength they gained through faith, as both “power” and “fire” have been closely associated with God. By faith Abraham received divine “power” (δύναμιν) for the founding of descendants (11:11). Jesus arose as a different priest (7:15) according to the divine “power” (δύναμιν) of an indestructible life (7:16). And, as the Son of God, Jesus bears up all things by the pronouncement of the “power” (δυνάμεως) of God (1:3). A zeal of “fire” (πυρός) about to devour the adversaries is part of divine judgment (10:27). And the angelic ministers of God have been described as a flame of “fire (πυρός)” (1:7).

Through faith in God these exemplary figures not only shut the “mouths” (στόματα) of lions able to devour humans (11:33b), but fled the “mouths” (στόματα) of the sword wielded by humans against humans (11:34). They gained the divine strength to do this since, as the audience recall, living is the word of the God in whom they believe and effective and sharper than every “two-edged” sword, that is, a sword with a deadly “double mouth (δίστομον)” (4:12).

In contrast to the Levitical high priests, who themselves have and are surrounded by human “weakness (ἀσθένειαν)” (5:2; 7:28), these exemplary figures, through faith, were empowered by God (divine passive) from their human “weakness (ἀσθενείας)” (11:34). That they were divinely “empowered” (ἐδυναμώθησαν) from their human weakness further associates them with Jesus. It deepens the audience’s appreciation in Jesus as the divine and heavenly high priest “able” or “having the power” (δυνάμενον) to sympathize with our human “weaknesses (ἀσθενείας)” (4:15).

Further associated with Jesus, who in the days of his flesh offered both prayers and supplications with “strong” (ἰσχυρᾶς) outcrying and tears to the God “able” (δυνάμενον) to save him from death (5:7), these models of faith became by the power of God (divine passive) “strong” (ἰσχυροί) in battle (11:34). This reinforces the exhortation for the audience to have a “strong” (ἰσχυράν) encouragement to hold fast to the hope, represented by Jesus as the heavenly high priest (6:19-20), lying ahead for them (6:18).

That these models of faith laid low the camps of “others” (ἄλλοτρίων) on earth (11:34) deepens the audience’s appreciation for what lies ahead for them in heaven. It resonates with Abraham merely sojourning on earth as on land of “another (ἄλλοτρίαν)” (11:9), and with the blood that is not of “another” (ἄλλοτρίῳ) but of the high priest Jesus himself by which he entered into the heavenly holy things (9:25) on behalf of us (9:24).

*5. Heb 11:35a (E): Women Received*

The recounting of these models of faith continues, as the audience are alerted to what “women received” (11:35a). In an alliterative continuity to the men who, through faith, “laid low the camps” (παρεμβολὰς ἔκλιναν) of others on earth by the power of God (11:34), women, through faith, “received” (ἔλαβον) by the power of God.

*6. Heb 11:35b (F): Their Dead from Resurrection*

Through faith women received (11:35a) by the power of God “their dead from resurrection” (11:35b). That women received their “dead” (νεκρούς) men resuscitated to life from “resurrection” (ἀναστάσεως) by God reminds the audience of their own foundation of repentance from “dead” (νεκρῶν) works and of faith in God (6:1), a faith that includes belief in God’s power of “resurrection” (ἀναστάσεως) of the “dead (νεκρῶν)” (6:2).

*7. Heb 11:35c (G): But Some Were Tortured Not Accepting Deliverance*

Through faith women received some of their dead men back alive from God’s resurrection of them, “but some were tortured, not accepting deliverance” (11:35c). That some of these models of faith were tortured, not “accepting” (προσδεξάμενοι) deliverance, further associates them with the audience, “you who accepted (προσεδέξασθε) the confiscation of your possessions with joy, knowing that you have a better possession that remains” (10:34). And that they did not accept “deliverance” (ἀπολύτρωσιν) on earth from death resonates with this, as it recalls that the death of Jesus occurred for “deliverance” (ἀπολύτρωσιν) on earth from transgressions under the first covenant, so that those who have been called, among whom are the

audience, might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance in heaven (9:15).

#### 8. *Heb 11:35d (F'): That They Might Obtain a Better Resurrection*

Through faith these exemplary figures were willing to undergo torture rather than accepting deliverance from death on earth “that they might obtain a better resurrection” (11:35d). At this point, after the central and unparalleled G element, “but some were tortured, not accepting deliverance” (11:35c), the audience experience a pivot of parallels from the F to the F' elements of this chiastic unit. “Their dead from resurrection (ἀναστάσεως)” (11:35b) progresses to “that they might obtain a better resurrection (ἀναστάσεως)” (11:35d).

These models of faith were tortured rather than accepting deliverance from death on earth that they might obtain a “better” (κρείττονος) resurrection (11:35d), that is, not a resurrection that is a resuscitation to earthly life (11:35b), but a resurrection to eternal life in heaven.<sup>3</sup> They have in view a heavenly resurrection, just as the patriarchs long for a “better” (κρείττονος) fatherland, that is, a heavenly one (11:16). This further commends them as models of faith for the audience, who accepted the confiscation of their earthly possessions with joy, knowing that they have a “better” (κρείττονα) possession that remains in heaven (10:34). The audience know that these noteworthy figures may hope that through faith they might “obtain” (τύχουσιν) a better, heavenly resurrection, since Jesus has “obtained” (τέτυχεν) a more excellent, heavenly ministry of worship, to the degree that he is guarantor of a “better” (κρείττονος) covenant, which on the basis of “better” (κρείττοσιν) promises was given law (8:6). The hope for a “better” resurrection to eternal life in heaven thus takes its place in the series of “better” things previously presented to the audience (1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 9:23).

#### 9. *Heb 11:36 (E'): But Others Received a Trial of Scorns and Scourgings*

Some of these venerable models of faith were tortured, not accepting deliverance (11:35), “but others received a trial of scorns and scourgings,

<sup>3</sup> Gareth Lee Cockerill, “The Better Resurrection (Heb 11:35): A Key to the Structure and Rhetorical Purpose of Hebrews 11,” *TynBul* 51 (2000): 215–34.

and even of chains and imprisonment” (11:36). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the E to the E' elements. “Women received (ἐλαβον)” (11:35a) progresses to “but others received (ἐλαβον)” (11:36).

In contrast to the women who through faith “received” their dead from resurrection (11:35), these other models of faith “received” a trial of scorns and scourgings (11:36a). Whereas the faithless Egyptians drowned, rashly “taking an attempt” (πειραν λαβόντες) to go through the Red Sea as if on dry ground (11:29), these other models of faith patiently “received a trial” (πειραν ἐλαβον) of scorns and scourgings. That they received a trial even of “chains” (δεσμῶν) and imprisonment (11:36b) further commends them as models for the audience, who even suffered with the “prisoners (δεσμίους)” (10:34).

10. *Heb 11:37-38 (D'): They Died in Murder by a Sword*

These models of faith continue to be described: “They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they died in murder by a sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being in need, being afflicted, being maltreated. The world was not worthy of them; they were wandering over deserts and mountains and caves and the crevices of the earth” (11:37-38). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the D (11:33b-34) to the D' (11:37-38) elements. They “fled the mouths of the sword (μαχαίρης)” and “they became strong in (ἐν) battle” (11:34) progresses to “they died in (ἐν) murder by a sword (μαχαίρης); they went about in (ἐν) sheepskins, in (ἐν) goatskins” (11:37).

Whereas some of these models of faith were able to flee the mouths of the “sword” (11:34), others were not only stoned and sawed in two, but died in murder by a “sword” (11:37). Whereas some became strong “in” battle (11:34), others not only died “in” murder by a sword, but went about “in” sheepskins and “in” goatskins (11:37). That they “died” (ἀπέθανον) in murder by a sword associates them with the patriarchs, who in accord with faith all “died” (ἀπέθανον), not receiving the promises but from afar seeing them and greeting and confessing that they are strangers and sojourners on the earth (11:13). That through faith they were not only being afflicted and maltreated but “being in need (ὕστερούμενοι)” (11:37) ironically but poignantly reinforces the warning for the audience to make sure none of them seem to “have been lacking” (ὕστερηκέναι) in faith (4:1). Those who

through faith experienced suffering and humiliation (11:37) thus complement those who through faith experienced power and strength (11:33b-34).

The “world” (κόσμος) was not worthy of these models of faith (11:38a), recalling that by faith Noah condemned the faithless “world” (κόσμον) of his day (11:7). In contrast to those who are ignorant and “wandering” (πλανωμένοις) in sinfulness (5:2), and to the faithless ancestors who were always “wandering” (πλανῶνται) in heart, not knowing God’s ways (3:10), these exemplary figures, through faith, were “wandering” (πλανώμενοι) over deserts and mountains and caves and the crevices of the earth (11:38b). That they were wandering over the crevices of “the earth” (τῆς γῆς) further associates them, as models of faith for the audience, with the faithful patriarchs who, as strangers and sojourners on “the earth (τῆς γῆς)” (11:13), are seeking a fatherland in heaven (11:14-16).

*11. Heb 11:39 (C'): Testified through the Faith But They Did Not Acquire the Promise*

The significance of all of these models of faith (11:2-38) is then summarized: “And these all, testified through the faith, did not acquire the promise” (11:39). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the C to the C' elements. The statement about those “who through faith (διὰ πίστεως) conquered kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises (ἐπαγγελιών)” (11:33a) progresses to the notice that “these all, testified through the faith (διὰ τῆς πίστεως), did not acquire the promise (ἐπαγγελίαν)” (11:39).

That “these all” (οὗτοι πάντες), testified through the faith, did not acquire the “promise (ἐπαγγελίαν)” (11:39) was epitomized by the patriarchs: In accord with faith “these all” (οὗτοι πάντες) died, not receiving the “promises (ἐπαγγελίας)” (11:13). That these all were “testified” (μαρτυρηθέντες) through the faith likens them to Enoch, who was “testified” (μεμαρτύρηται) to have pleased God (11:5), and to Abel, who was “testified” (ἐμαρτυρήθη) to be just, God “testifying” (μαρτυροῦντος) on the basis of his sacrificial gifts (11:4). As among the elders who were “testified” (ἐμαρτυρήθησαν) in faith (11:2), they are commended as models for the audience.

With a noteworthy progression from the more general “through faith” (διὰ πίστεως), by which “promises” (ἐπαγγελιών) in general were obtained (11:33), to the more particular “through *the* faith” (διὰ τῆς πίστεως), all



these figures did not acquire “*the* promise” (τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν), the fulfillment of the more particular promise of final salvation in heaven (11:39). As prefigured by Abraham, who “acquired” (ἐκομίσατο) Isaac in accord with God’s promise (11:19), these did not yet “acquire the promise” (ἐκομίσαντο τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν). This reinforces the exhortation for the audience to have endurance so that, doing the will of God, “you may acquire the promise (κομίσησθε τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν)” (10:36), “the promise” (τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν) of an eternal inheritance (9:15) in heaven.<sup>4</sup>

## 12. Heb 11:40a (B'): God Concerning Us

How all these ancient and venerable models of faith are related to the audience begins to be indicated: “God concerning us” (11:40a). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from the B to the B' elements. “An account concerning (περί) Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, as well as Samuel and the prophets” (11:32b) progresses to “God concerning (περί) us” (11:40a). The audience are thus poised to hear what God has in store for them as imitators of these exemplary figures of faith.

## 13. Heb 11:40b (A'): Providing Something Better

What God has in store for the audience in relation to these past models of faith is then indicated: “providing something better, that they would not be made perfect without us” (11:40b). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from the A to the A' elements. “And what (τί) still may I say?” (11:32a) progresses to God “providing something (τι) better” (11:40b).

The something “better” (κρείττον) that God has provided for us (11:40b) includes the “better” (κρείττονος) resurrection to eternal life in heaven that those who were tortured, not accepting deliverance from death on earth, might obtain (11:35), as well as the “better” (κρείττονος), heavenly fatherland for which the patriarchs of old longed (11:16). It accords with the “better” (κρείττονα) possession that the audience know they have remain-

<sup>4</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 352: “The plural is customary in connection with figures from the Old Testament, while the singular is common for the ultimate promise realized in Christ.”

ing eternally in heaven for them, so that they accepted the confiscation of their earthly possessions with joy (10:34). That God has “provided” or “foreseen” (προβλεψαμένου) something better for us resonates with the opening description of faith as a demonstration of divine things not being “noticed” or “seen (βλεπομένων)” (11:1). By faith we understand that from divine things not apparent what is being “noticed” or “seen” (βλεπόμενον) came to be (11:3).<sup>5</sup>

That these venerable models of faith would not be made “perfect” (τελειωθῶσιν) without us (11:40b) means that they would not be made worthy or fit for participation in the heavenly worship without us who have the benefit of the self-sacrifice of Jesus as our heavenly high priest. This is confirmed by the theme of “making perfect,” first with regard to Jesus and then with regard to the audience, that has developed throughout the letter.

With regard to Jesus, it was fitting for God, in leading many sons into heavenly glory, to make the initiator of their salvation, Jesus, through sufferings, “perfect” (τελειῶσαι) for his role in heavenly worship (2:10). Having been made “perfect” (τελειωθείς), Jesus became for all those who obey him a source of eternal salvation (5:9), having been designated by God high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (5:10). Although the law made nothing “perfect (ἐτελείωσεν)” (7:19), Jesus, as the Son of God, has been made “perfect” (τετελειωμένον) forever (7:28).

With regard to the audience, the gifts and sacrifices being offered in the earthly tabernacle are not able according to conscience to make “perfect” (τελειῶσαι) the one offering worship (9:9). Indeed, the law never is able to make “perfect” (τελειῶσαι) those who approach for the worship of God (10:1). But, by one offering of himself, Jesus, the heavenly high priest, has made “perfect” (τετελείωκεν) for all time those who are being made holy (10:14), so that they may worthily participate in the heavenly worship. Thus, the audience are to appreciate that God has provided something better in heaven for us, so that we may participate in heavenly worship along with these venerable models of faith, as those who would be made “perfect” (τελειωθῶσιν) together with us (11:40b). It is all the more incum-

<sup>5</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 516: “The verb προβλέπειν means both ‘foresee’ and ‘make provision.’ Through faith (11:1) one can confess that God makes provision for things that transcend human vision.”

bent, then, for the audience to imitate these past exemplary heroes of faith whom they will join in the heavenly liturgy.<sup>6</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 11:32-40

When the audience are told toward the beginning of this A'E' unit (11:32-40) of the “faith” through which noteworthy individuals accomplished remarkable deeds (11:33), they hear the catch word that indicates the transition from the preceding A'F unit (11:20-31). At the conclusion of that unit the audience hear of the “faith” by which Rahab the harlot did not perish together with those who disobeyed, having welcomed the Israelite spies with peace (11:31). The transition shifts the attention of the audience from the faith modeled by Rahab to the faith modeled by a group of significant individuals.

In addition, at this point the audience experience a macrochiastic progression of parallels, involving the terms “promise,” “better,” “dead,” and “acquire,” from the A'E unit (11:8-19) to this A'E' unit (11:32-40). In the A'E unit the audience hear that Abraham by faith sojourned in the land of the “promise” as land of another, having dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the fellow heirs of the same “promise” (11:9), that these patriarchs died without receiving the “promises” (11:13), and that Abraham, the one who accepted the “promises,” was ready to offer his only begotten son Isaac (11:17). In the A'E' unit the audience are to appreciate that although exemplary figures of faith obtained “promises” (11:33), they did not acquire the fulfillment of “the promise” (11:39).

After identifying in the A'E unit with the patriarchs who long for a “better,” heavenly fatherland (11:16), and in the A'E' unit with those who might obtain a “better” resurrection (11:35), the audience are to appreciate that God has provided something “better” for us (11:40). In the A'E unit

<sup>6</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 394: “The privileged status of Christians as those who have shared in the fulfillment of God’s promise should motivate them to be more willing and equipped to endure the testing of faith than were their predecessors, all of whom received attestation from God through their faith.” Steve Motyer, “‘Not Apart from Us’ (Hebrews 11:40): Physical Community in the Letter to the Hebrews,” *EvQ* 77 (2005): 235-47; Loveday C. A. Alexander, “Prophets and Martyrs and Exemplars of Faith,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (eds. Richard J. Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 405-21.

the audience are to share the faith of Abraham who reasoned that God is able to raise even from the “dead,” so that he “acquired” Isaac as promised by God (11:19). And in the A'E' unit the audience are to appreciate that although women received their “dead” from resurrection (11:35), the exemplary ancestors of the faith did not “acquire” *the* promise (11:39).

In addition, at the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the AE (2:10-18) and A'E' (11:32-40) units provided by the expression “made perfect.” The affirmation that the ancient models of faith would not be “made perfect” without us (11:40) resonates with the declaration that it was fitting for God to make the initiator of our salvation, through suffering, “perfect” (2:10).

The central and unparalleled declaration in this chiastic unit is that “some were tortured, not accepting deliverance” (11:35c) from death on earth. The audience then experience a pivot of parallels from the statement that women received their dead from “resurrection” (11:35b) to the hope that those who were tortured might obtain a better “resurrection” (11:35d) to eternal life in heaven.

The audience are then presented with a series of progressions via the chiastic parallels. Whereas women “received” (11:35a) their dead from resurrection, others “received” a trial of scorns and scourgings, and even of chains and imprisonment (11:36). The author is able to give only a brief account “concerning” Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, as well as Samuel and the prophets (11:32b). They “through faith” conquered kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained “promises,” shut the mouths of lions (11:33), quenched the power of fire, fled the mouths of the “sword,” were empowered from weakness, became strong “in” battle, and laid low the camps of others (11:34). This progresses to his recounting how, in contrast to those who triumphed, other past heroes of the faith were stoned, were sawed in two, died “in” murder by a “sword,” went about “in” sheepskins, “in” goatskins, being in need, being afflicted, being maltreated (11:37). The world was not worthy of them, as they wandered over deserts and mountains and caves and the crevices of the earth (11:38). But all of these past exemplary figures, although testified “through *the* faith,” did not acquire *the* “promise” (11:39).

The account “concerning” Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, as well as Samuel and the prophets (11:32b) thus progresses to what God has provided “concerning” us (11:40a). The author’s introductory rhetorical question about “what” still may I say (11:32a) progresses to “something”

better that God has provided or foreseen for us, namely, that these past models of faith would not be made perfect for participation in the heavenly worship without us (11:40b). The audience have thus been prompted all the more to imitate these past exemplary heroes of faith whom they will be privileged to join in the heavenly liturgy.

## Hebrews 12:1-11

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- A<sup>12:1</sup> Consequently, we also, having such a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, taking off every burden and easily ensnaring sin, through endurance let us traverse the struggle lying ahead for us, <sup>2</sup> fixing our eyes on the initiator and perfecter of the faith, Jesus, who, for the sake of the *joy* lying ahead of him, endured the cross, despising its shame, and took his seat on the right of the throne of God (Ps 109:1). <sup>3</sup> For reflect on the one who has endured such disputing against himself from sinners, that you may not become fatigued, growing weary in your souls. <sup>4</sup> You have not yet resisted to the point of blood, struggling *with* sin.
- B<sup>5</sup> And you have forgotten the encouragement, which is addressed *to you as sons*, “My *son*, do not disdain the discipline of the Lord and do not grow weary, being reproved by him, <sup>6</sup>for *whom* the Lord loves he disciplines, and scourges every *son whom* he accepts” (Prov 3:11-12).
- C<sup>7a</sup> For discipline endure;
- B'<sup>7b</sup> God is being offered *to you as sons*. For what *son* is there *whom* a father does not discipline? <sup>8</sup>If you are without discipline, in which all have become partners, then you are illegitimate ones and not *sons*. <sup>9</sup>Furthermore, we had our fathers of flesh as disciplinarians and we respected them. Shall we not much more then be subjected to the Father of spirits and live?
- A'<sup>10</sup> For they disciplined *for* a few days according to what seemed fit to them, but he on the basis of what is beneficial in order that we may share his holiness. <sup>11</sup> All discipline, *when* it is present, does not seem to be of *joy* but of sorrow, but later it gives back the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained through it.

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 12:1-11

Toward the conclusion of the A'E' unit (11:32-40) is a reference to all of these past models of faith who were “testified” (μαρτυρηθέντες) through

the faith (11:39). At the beginning of the following A'D' unit (12:1-11) is a reference to this same group as a cloud of “witnesses” (μαρτύρων) surrounding us (12:1). These occurrences of expressions for “testify/witness” thus serve as the transitional catch words connecting these units as they retain a focus on the exemplary figures of faith from the past.

The only occurrences in this unit of the term “joy” and the preposition “with/for/when” establish the parallels for the A (12:1-4) and A' (12:10-11) elements of this chiasmic unit. “For the sake of the joy (χαράς) lying ahead of him” occurs in 12:2 and “does not seem to be of joy (χαράς) but of sorrow” in 12:11. “Struggling with (πρός) sin” occurs in 12:4 and “they disciplined for (πρός) a few days” in 12:10 as well as “when (πρός) it is present” in 12:11. The only occurrences in Hebrews of the phrase “to you as sons” as well as in this unit of the term “son” and of the masculine accusative singular relative pronoun “whom” determine the parallels for the B (12:5-6) and B' (12:7b-9) elements. “Addressed to you as sons (ὕμιν ὡς υἱοῖς)” occurs in 12:5 and “offered to you as sons (ὡς υἱοῖς ὑμῖν)” in 12:7b. “My son (υἱέ)” occurs in 12:5 and “every son (υἱόν)” in 12:6, while “what son (υἱός)” occurs in 12:7b and “not sons (υἱοί)” in 12:8. “Whom (ὃν) the Lord loves” as well as “whom (ὃν) he accepts” occurs in 12:6 and “whom (ὃν) a father does not discipline” in 12:7b. Finally, the only occurrence in this unit of the verb “endure” in the second person plural indicates the central and unparalleled C element—“for discipline endure (ὑπομένετε)” in 12:7a.

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the A'D (11:1-7) and A'D' (12:1-11) units provided by the term “righteousness.” The A'D unit declares that Noah became an heir of “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνης) according to faith (11:7). And the A'D' unit asserts that all discipline later gives back the peaceful fruit of “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνης) to those who have been trained through it (12:11).

In addition, at the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the AD (2:5-9) and A'D' (12:1-11) units provided by the only occurrences in Hebrews of the verb “to subject.” In the AD unit are the statements, “not to angels did he subject (ὑπέταξεν) the heavenly world” (2:5), “all things you subjected (ὑπέταξας) under his feet” (2:8), “in subjecting (ὑποτάξαι) to him all things he left nothing to him unsubjected” (2:8), and “we do not see all things subjected (ὑποτεταγμένα) to him” (2:8). And in the A'D' unit is the question, “shall we not much

more than be subjected (ὑποταγησόμεθα) to the Father of spirits and live?" (12:9).

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 12:1-11

### 1. Heb 12:1-4 (A): For the Sake of the Joy Lying Ahead of Him

The audience hear the A element (12:1-4) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) Consequently, we also, having such a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, taking off every burden and easily ensnaring *sin*, through endurance let us traverse the *struggle* lying ahead for us, fixing our eyes on the initiator and perfecter of the faith, Jesus, who, for the sake of the joy lying ahead of him (12:1-2c),
- b) *endured* the cross, despising its shame, and took his seat on the right of the throne of God (Ps 109:1) (12:2d).
- b') For reflect on the one who has *endured* such disputing against himself from sinners, that you may not become fatigued, growing weary in your souls (12:3).
- a') You have not yet resisted to the point of blood, *struggling* with *sin* (12:4).

When the audience are told to reflect on the one who has “endured” (ὑπομεμενηκότα) such disputing against himself from sinners (12:3) in the “b” sub-element of this chiastic sub-unit, they hear the pivot of parallels from the “b” sub-element, which states that Jesus “endured” (ὑπέμεινεν) the cross (12:2d). They are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels involving the terms “sin” and “struggle,” from the “a” to the “a” sub-elements. The exhortation, “taking off every burden and easily ensnaring sin (ἁμαρτίαν), through endurance let us traverse the struggle (ἄγωνα)” (12:1), progresses to the reference to “struggling (ἀνταγωνιζόμενοι) with sin (ἁμαρτίαν)” (12:4).

The author’s application of the significance of all of these past models of faith for the audience, “consequently, we also, having (ἔχοντες) such a cloud of witnesses surrounding us” (12:1a), introduces another strong exhortation for the audience, as it resonates with introductions to previous exhortations. As those “having” (ἔχοντες) a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, the audience were exhorted to hold fast to the confession (4:14). As those “having” (ἔχοντες)



a need of “milk” and not “solid food,” the audience were exhorted to allow the author to teach them again the elements of the beginning of the sayings of God (5:12). The audience, as those “having” (ἔχοντες) boldness for entrance into the heavenly holy things in the blood of Jesus (10:19), were exhorted to approach God for worship with a true heart in assurance of faith (10:22). And now, “having” such a cloud of witnesses, the audience are exhorted, “through endurance let us traverse the struggle lying ahead for us” (12:1b).

In contrast to every high priest being “surrounded” (περίκειται) by weakness (5:2), the audience are “surrounded” (περικείμενον) by a cloud of strong witnesses (12:1a). This cloud of “witnesses” (μαρτύρων) refers to all of the exemplary figures of the past who were “testified” (μαρτυρηθέντες) through the faith (11:39). As witnesses to a faith that includes a strong belief in an eternal life in heaven, they stand in contrast to the “witnesses” (μάρτυσιν) whose testimony leads to death (10:28). Moses, a preeminent figure among this cloud of surrounding witnesses, chose rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to have a temporary enjoyment of “sin (ἁμαρτίας)” (11:25). He thus provides a stellar model for the audience, who are to be taking off every burden and easily ensnaring “sin (ἁμαρτίαν)” (12:1a).

The audience then hear the remainder of the “a” sub-element (12:1-2c) as well as the “b” sub-element (12:2d) of this chiasitic sub-unit (12:1-4) as yet another chiasitic pattern in itself:

- a) through *endurance* let us traverse (12:1b)
- b) the struggle *lying ahead* for us (12:1c),
  - c) fixing our eyes on the *initiator* (12:2a)
  - c') and *perfecter* of the faith, Jesus (12:2b),
  - b') who, for the sake of the joy *lying ahead* of him (12:2c),
- a') *endured* the cross, despising its shame, and took his seat on the right of the throne of God (Ps 109:1) (12:2d).

When the audience hear Jesus described as the “perfecter” of the faith (12:2b) in the “c” sub-element, they experience the pivot of parallels from the “c” sub-element at the center of this chiasitic sub-unit, in which Jesus as the “perfecter” (τελειωτήν) complements him as the “initiator” (ἀρχηγόν) of the faith (12:2a).<sup>1</sup> They are then presented with a progression, via the

<sup>1</sup> According to Attridge (*Hebrews*, 356), the juxtaposition of ἀρχηγός with τελειωτής, “with its obvious play on ἀρχ- and τελ- stems, suggests that ἀρχηγός also carries connotations of ‘founder’ or ‘initiator.’”

chiastic parallels involving the expression “lying ahead,” from the “b” to the “b” sub-elements—from “the struggle lying ahead (προκειμένον) for us” (12:1c) to “who, for the sake of the joy lying ahead (προκειμένης) of him” (12:2c). Finally, they are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels involving expressions for “enduring,” from the “a” to the “a” sub-elements—from “through endurance (ὑπομονῆς) let us traverse” (12:1b) to “he endured (ὑπέμεινεν) the cross” (12:2d).

That the audience, through “endurance” (ὑπομονῆς), are to traverse (12:1b) the struggle lying ahead for us (12:1c) reinforces the exhortation for them to have the “endurance” (ὑπομονῆς) they need to do the will of God and acquire the promise (10:36), the promise of the eternal inheritance in heaven (9:15). The audience are to be encouraged to traverse the struggle “lying ahead” (προκειμένον) for us, because of the hope “lying ahead” (προκειμένης) for us in heaven (6:18).<sup>2</sup>

Through endurance the audience are to traverse the struggle lying ahead for them (12:1) by keeping their eyes fixed on the “initiator” (ἀρχηγόν) and “perfecter” (τελειωτήν) of the faith, Jesus (12:2).<sup>3</sup> They are enabled to do this because it was fitting for God, in leading many sons into heavenly glory, to make Jesus, as the “initiator” (ἀρχηγόν) of their salvation, through sufferings, “perfect (τελειῶσαι)” (2:10). Jesus, who for the sake of the “joy” (χαρᾶς) “lying ahead” (προκειμένης) of him (12:2c), as the embodiment of the hope “lying ahead” (προκειμένης) for us in heaven (6:18), “endured” (ὑπέμεινεν) the cross, despising its shame (12:2d). This is what is to empower the audience, through “endurance” (ὑπομονῆς), to traverse the struggle “lying ahead” (προκειμένον) for us (12:1). And this is what makes Jesus so relevant for the audience, as “you” who “endured (ὑπεμείνατε) much conflict of sufferings” (10:32), and “accepted the confiscation of your possessions with joy (χαρᾶς)” (10:34).

The audience have heard a series of allusions to Ps 109:1 as an expression of the heavenly enthronement of Jesus as the divine Son of God. Hav-

<sup>2</sup> For the suggestion that the “struggle” lying ahead for the audience to “traverse” in 12:1 is better understood as portraying a pilgrimage rather than an athletic race to the presence of God, see C. Sims, “Rethinking Hebrews 12:1,” *IBS* 27 (2008): 54–88. While the pilgrimage theme seems to be primary, it is presented with athletic connotations. Luke Timothy Johnson, “The Scriptural World of Hebrews,” *Int* 73 (2003): 241: “The image of the race is drawn from the Greek culture of competitive games. But because of this marvelous intertwining of textual allusion, the hearers know that this race is one of pilgrimage begun by Abraham as he looked for a lasting city (Heb 11:13–16).”

<sup>3</sup> N. Clayton Croy, “A Note on Hebrews 12:2,” *JBL* 114 (1995): 117–19.

ing made a cleansing for sins, Jesus “sat at the right of the Majesty in the heights” (1:3). To Jesus, in contrast to the angels, God issued the privilege, “Sit at my right, until I place your enemies as a footstool for your feet” (1:13). The audience have been assured that in Jesus we have a high priest who “sat at the right of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (8:1). Jesus, having offered himself for all time on behalf of sins, “sat at the right of God, henceforth waiting until his enemies are placed as a footstool for his feet (10:12-13). Jesus, after enduring the cross, “took his seat on the right of the throne of God” (12:2), thus completing the course of the pilgrimage to heaven as “forerunner” on behalf of us (6:20). This provides the audience with an inspiring goal to keep before them in their struggle to endure the grueling course lying ahead of them before they complete their pilgrimage to the heavenly city promised by God.<sup>4</sup>

That Jesus, who “endured” (ὑπέμεινεν) the cross (12:2), provides the audience with an empowering model to follow in taking off every burden and easily ensnaring “sin” (ἁμαρτίαν), in order, through “endurance” (ὑπομονῆς), to traverse the “struggle” (ἀγῶνα) lying ahead for them (12:1) is then confirmed. They are invited to reflect upon Jesus, the high priest who is separated from “sinners (ἁμαρτωλῶν)” (7:26), as the one who has “endured” (ὑπομεμενηκότα) such disputing against himself from “sinners (ἁμαρτωλῶν)” (12:3a). Such reflection will enable the audience not to become fatigued, growing weary in their souls (12:3). For, as the audience are pointedly reminded, in their “struggling” (ἀνταγωνιζόμενοι) with “sin” (ἁμαρτίαν), they have not yet resisted to the point of “blood (αἷματος)” (12:4).<sup>5</sup> This deepens their appreciation for Jesus, who did resist to the point of blood, so that through his own “blood” (αἷματος) he entered once for all into the heavenly holy things as high priest, finding eternal redemption (9:12). Jesus thus provides the inspiring model that can motivate the audience to resist opposition to sinfulness, even to the point of shedding their own blood, if necessary.

<sup>4</sup> Estella B. Horning, “Chiasmus, Creedal Structure and Christology in Hebrews 12:1–2,” *BR* 23 (1978): 37–48; B. J. Littleton, “Exposition of Hebrews 12:2,” *Faith & Mission* 16 (1999): 22–29; A. Neamtu, “An Exegesis on the Greek Text of Hebrews 12:2,” *Faith & Mission* 16 (1999): 30–38.

<sup>5</sup> The close connection between the expressions, “you have not yet resisted to the point of blood (αἷματος ἀντικατέστητε)” and “struggling with sin (ἁμαρτίαν ἀνταγωνιζόμενοι),” is underscored by the rhythm of their artful alliteration.

## 2. Heb 12:5-6 (B): The Lord Disciplines Every Son Whom He Accepts

The audience hear the B element (12:5-6) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) And you have forgotten the encouragement, which is addressed to you as *sons*,  
“My son (12:5a),
- b) do not disdain the *discipline* of the *Lord* (12:5b)
- c) and do not grow weary, being reproved by him (12:5c),
- b') for whom the *Lord* loves he *disciplines* (12:6a),
- a') and scourges every *son* whom he accepts (Prov 3:11-12)” (12:6b).

After the central and unparalleled “c” sub-element, which contains the only instance in this sub-unit of the verb “grow weary” and in Hebrews of the verb “reproved”—“and do not grow weary (ἐκλύου), being reprovéd (ἐλεγχόμενος) by him” (12:5c), the audience experience a pivot of parallels, involving the terms “discipline” and “Lord,” from the “b” to the “b'” sub-elements. The command, “do not disdain the discipline (παιδείας) of the Lord (κυρίου)” (12:5b), progresses to the notice, “for whom the Lord (κύριος) loves he disciplines (παιδεύει)” (12:6a). The audience are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels involving the term “son,” from the “a” to the “a'” sub-elements—from “the encouragement, which is addressed to you as sons (υἱοῖς), ‘My son (υἱέ),’” (12:5a) to “every son (υἱόν) whom he accepts” (12:6b).

Not only have the audience not resisted to the point of blood in their struggling with sin (12:4), but, having been exhorted to have a strong “encouragement” (παράκλησιν) to hold fast to the hope lying ahead (6:18), they have forgotten the “encouragement” (παρακλήσεως) addressed to them as sons (12:5a). The forgotten encouragement addressed to the audience as “sons” (υἱοῖς), recalling that they are among the many “sons” (υἱούς) God is leading into heavenly glory through Jesus (2:10), is that given by a father to his son in Prov 3:11-12.

The opening address of this scriptural encouragement, “my son (υἱέ μου)” (12:5a), resonates with the scriptural voice of God from the combination of Ps 2:7 and 2 Sam 7:14 that has addressed Jesus as “son of mine (υἱός μου) are you, I today have begotten you” (1:5; 5:5) and “I will be to him as a Father, and he will be to me (μοι) as a son (υἱόν)” (1:5). This invites the audience, as “sons” of God, to consider Jesus, whose scriptural voice from Ps 21:23 declared to God the Father, “I will proclaim your name to my

brothers (ἀδελφοίς μου)” (2:12), as the model for the scriptural encouragement that a father addresses to “my son” (12:5a).

The audience, having forgotten the encouragement addressed to them as sons, are not to disdain the discipline of the Lord God and not to grow “weary” (ἐκλύου)—alliteratively linked to “you have forgotten” (ἐκλέλησθε), being reproved by him (12:5). They are not to disdain the “discipline” (παιδείας) of the “Lord” (κυρίου), because the son whom the “Lord” (κύριος) loves he “disciplines (παιδεύει)” (12:6a).<sup>6</sup> The Lord disciplines the one whom he “loves” (ἀγαπᾷ) and scourges every “son” (υἱόν) whom he accepts (12:6). This applies to the audience as “sons” (υἱούς) of God, who have been addressed as “beloved (ἀγαπητοί)” (6:9) and as “my son (υἱέ)” (12:5a). It also applies to Jesus as the divine Son of God, to whom the scriptural voice of God acknowledged, “You loved (ἠγάπησας) righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your partners (Ps 44:8)” (1:9). Jesus thus presents the audience with a model of how a “son” whom God loves, in turn loves the righteousness of God and thus God himself.

### 3. Heb 12:7a (C): For Discipline Endure

Having been alerted, according to Prov 3:11-12, of the Lord God’s discipline for his sons (12:5-6), the audience are exhorted, “For discipline endure” (12:7a). That the audience are to endure for the sake of God’s “discipline” (παιδείαν) reinforces the exhortation for them as “sons” not to disdain the “discipline” (παιδείας) of the Lord God (12:5). The audience, previously acknowledged as “you who endured (ὑπεμείνατε) much conflict of sufferings” (10:32), are now to “endure” (ὑπομένετε) for the sake of divine discipline, inspired by the example of Jesus, who has “endured” (ὑπομεμενηκότα) such disputing against himself from sinners (12:3), who indeed “endured” (ὑπέμεινεν) the cross, despising its shame (12:2).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 420: “The biblical concept of discipline (παιδεία) combines the nuances of training, instruction, and firm guidance with those of reproof, correction, and punishment. The notion of God as disciplinarian was derived from the parent-child relationship: ‘As a man disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you’ (Deut 8:5).” See also Allen, *Deuteronomy*, 79-82.

<sup>7</sup> Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); Jerome H. Neyrey, “Despising the Shame of the Cross,” *Semeia* 68 (1994): 113-37; David A. DeSilva, “Despising Shame: A Cultural-Anthropological Investigation of the Epistle to the Hebrews,” *JBL* 113 (1994): 439-61;

4. Heb 12:7b-9 (B'): What Son Is There Whom a Father Does Not Discipline?

The audience hear the B' element (12:7b-9) of this unit as a chiasmic pattern in itself:

- a) God is being offered to you as sons. For what son is there whom a *father* does not discipline (12:7b)?
- b) If *you are* without discipline (12:8a),
  - c) in which all have become partners (12:8b),
  - b') then *you are* illegitimate ones and not sons (12:8c).
- a') Furthermore, we had our *fathers* of flesh as disciplinarians and we respected them. Shall we not much more then be subjected to the *Father* of spirits and live (12:9)?

The central and unparalleled “c” sub-element contains the only instance in this sub-unit of the term “partners”—“in which all have become partners (μέτοχοι)” (12:8b). The audience then experience a pivot of parallels, involving the expression “you are,” from the “b” to the “b” sub-elements—from “if you are (ἐστέ) without discipline” (12:8a) to “then you are (ἐστέ) illegitimate ones and not sons” (12:8c). They are then presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels involving the term “father,” from the “a” to the “a” sub-elements—from “whom a father (πατήρ) does not discipline” (12:7b) to “we had our fathers (πατέρας) of flesh” and “the Father (πατήρ) of spirits” (12:9).

At this point, after the central and unparalleled C element of this chiasmic unit, “for discipline endure” (12:7a), the audience experience a pivot of parallels from the B (12:5-6) to the B' (12:7b-9) elements of this chiasmic unit. The encouragement addressed “to you as sons (ὕμιν ὡς υἱοῖς)” (12:5) progresses to the statement that God is being offered “to you as sons (ὡς υἱοῖς ὑμῖν)” (12:7b) and to the warning that if you are without discipline, then you are not “sons (υἱοί)” (12:8). And the address to “my son (υἱέ)” (12:5) as well as the declaration that “whom” (ὃν) the Lord loves he disciplines and scourges every “son” (υἱόν) “whom” (ὃν) he accepts (12:6) progress to the question of what “son” (υἱός) is there “whom” (ὃν) a father does not discipline (12:7b)?

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idem, *Despising Shame: Honor Discourse and Community Maintenance in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (SBLDS 152; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

In the scriptural encouragement from Prov 3:11-12, which is addressed to the audience—“to you as sons (ὕμῖν ὡς υἱοῖς)” (12:5), God himself, with his paternal discipline, is being offered “to you as sons (ὡς υἱοῖς ὑμῖν)” (12:7b). The audience, whom the scriptural encouragement addresses as “my son (υἱέ)” (12:5), are to consider what “son” (υἱός) there is “whom” (ὅν) a father does not “discipline (παιδεύει)” (12:7b), which resonates with the scriptural assertion that “whom” (ὅν) the Lord God loves he “disciplines (παιδεύει)” (12:6). Of Jesus it was said that, although being a “son” (υἱός), he learned from the things he suffered obedience (5:8). And Jesus is the divine Son to whom the scriptural voice of God from 2 Sam 7:14 declared, “I will be to him as a Father (πατέρα), and he will be to me as a son (υἱόν)” (1:5). The audience are thus invited to consider not only themselves but Jesus as the “son” whom God as a “father” (πατήρ) disciplines (12:7b). The Jesus who endured suffering as divine discipline, then, serves as an inspiring and empowering model for the audience, who have already endured and are still to endure suffering as divine discipline.

The audience are not to be without “discipline (παιδείας)” (12:8a), the divine “discipline” (παιδείαν) for the sake of which they are to endure (12:7a), the “discipline” (παιδείας) of the Lord they are not to disdain (12:5). The audience, who have become “partners” (μετόχους) of the Holy Spirit (6:4) and “partners” (μέτοχοι) of the Christ (3:14), and who are “partners” (μέτοχοι) of a heavenly calling (3:1), have all also become “partners” (μέτοχοι) in divine discipline (12:8b). If they would be without divine discipline, then they would be illegitimate ones and not true “sons (υἱοί)” (12:8c), the “sons” (υἱοῖς) to whom God the Father is being offered (12:7b), and the “sons” (υἱοῖς) to whom the scriptural encouragement for divine discipline from Prov 3:11-12 is addressed (12:5).<sup>8</sup>

Since the audience respected their physical fathers, their “fathers” (πατέρας) of flesh, as disciplinarians (12:9a), with each “father” (πατήρ) disciplining his son (12:7b), they should much more then be subjected to God as the “Father” (πατρί) of spirits and live (12:9b). All the more shall we be “subjected” (ὑποταγησόμεθα) to God as the Father of spirits, since we do not yet see all things “subjected” (ὑποτεταγμένα) to him (2:8b), who “subjected” (ὑπέταξεν) the heavenly world not to angels (2:5) but to Jesus. This is in accord with the scriptural declaration from Ps 8:7 that “all things you subjected (ὑπέταξαι) under his feet.” And in “subjecting” (ὑποτάξαι)

<sup>8</sup> Guthrie, “Hebrews,” 987: “[T]he difficulties that the hearers face are actually a sign that they are true children of the Father.”

to him all things, which includes the audience, God left nothing to him unsubjected (2:8a).

That the audience are to be subjected to God as the Father of “spirits” (πνευμάτων) and live (12:9) contributes to the worship associations of this exhortation. The audience have heard the scriptural proclamation from Ps 103:4 that God makes his angels “spirits” (πνεύματα) and his ministers a flame of fire (1:7). God sent these angelic ministering “spirits” (πνεύματα) to assist the audience as among those who are going to inherit eternal salvation (1:14), and thus participate in the heavenly worship.

That we will “live” (ζήσομεν) by being subjected to God as the Father of spirits (12:9), means that we will live the eternal life provided by the “living” (ζώντος) God into whose hands it is fearful to fall (10:31), the “living” (ζώντος) God from which no one in the audience is to fall away with an evil heart of unfaithfulness (3:12). This resonates with the scriptural declaration from Hab 2:4 that “my just one from faith will live (ζήσεται)” (10:38), that is, will live presently as well as eternally.

With its movement from what is “fleshly” to what is “spiritual,” the exhortation that, since we had our fathers of “flesh” (σαρκός) as disciplinarians and we respected them, we shall “much more” (πολὺ μᾶλλον) be subjected to the Father of “spirits” (πνευμάτων) and “live” (ζήσομεν) further contributes to the worship associations of this exhortation (12:9). It reminds the audience of a similar movement: For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer’s ashes makes holy those defiled for the cleansing of the “flesh” (σαρκός), “how much more” (πόσῳ μᾶλλον) will the blood of the Christ, who through the eternal “Spirit” (πνεύματος) offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the “living” (ζώντι) God (9:13-14). Hence, Christ, as the divinely disciplined Son of God, provides the audience not only with the example but the empowerment to endure their sufferings as the divine discipline that prepares and qualifies them for participation in the heavenly worship of the living God, the God whose eternal life we shall live.

##### *5. Heb 12:10-11 (A'): All Discipline Does Not Seem To Be of Joy But of Sorrow*

The comparison between the disciplining of sons by earthly fathers with that by the heavenly Father continues: “For they disciplined for a few days



according to what seemed fit to them, but he on the basis of what is beneficial in order that we may share his holiness. All discipline, when it is present, does not seem to be of joy but of sorrow, but later it gives back the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained through it" (12:10-11). At this point the audience experience, via the chiasmic parallels, a progression from the A (12:1-4) to the A' (12:10-11) elements of this chiasmic unit. "For the sake of the joy (χαρᾶς) lying ahead of him" (12:2) and "struggling with (πρός) sin" (12:4) progress to "they disciplined for (πρός) a few days according to what seemed fit to them" (12:10) and "all discipline, when (πρός) it is present, does not seem to be of joy (χαρᾶς) but of sorrow" (12:11).

Every father "disciplines" (παιδεύει) a son (12:7), even God the Father, who "disciplines" (παιδεύει) every son he loves (12:6). Their earthly fathers thus "disciplined" (ἐπαίδευσεν) the audience, who are still struggling "with" (πρός) sin (12:4), "for" (πρός) a few days according to what seemed fit to them (12:10a). Whereas they disciplined according "to what seemed fit" (τὸ δοκοῦν) to them, God the Father disciplines on the basis of "what is beneficial" (τὸ συμφέρον) for us in order that we may share his holiness (12:10).<sup>9</sup> Whereas the earth that drinks the rain coming upon it repeatedly and produces useful vegetation for those on account of whom it is cultivated "shares" (μεταλαμβάνει) a blessing from God (6:7), God the Father disciplines the audience in order that they may "share" (μεταλαβείν) his holiness.

That God the Father disciplines in order that the audience may share his "holiness (ἀγιότητος)" (12:10) adds to the worship associations of this exhortation. Jesus "makes holy" (ἀγιάζων) the audience as among those who are being "made holy" (ἀγιαζόμενοι) as his brothers (2:11). We have been "made holy" (ἡγιασμένοι) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (10:10). For by one offering Jesus has made perfect for all time those who are being "made holy" (ἀγιαζομένους)" (10:14). Every member of the audience was "made holy" (ἡγιασθη) in the blood of Jesus, the Son of God (10:29). As the divinely disciplined Son of God, then, Jesus serves as not only the preeminent model but the encouraging empowerment for the audience "made holy" by him to share in the divine "holiness" needed to worship God in the heavenly "holy things" (8:2; 9:3, 8, 12, 24;

<sup>9</sup> Armin Kretzer, "συμφέρω," *EDNT* 3.289: The "NT use of συμφέρω places not human-earthly benefit and personal advantage in the conceptual foreground, but rather the welfare and growth of the Church."

10:19). For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer's ashes "makes holy" (ἀγιάζει) those defiled for the cleansing of the flesh (9:13), how much more will the blood of the Christ cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14).

The exhortations for the audience not to disdain the "discipline" (παιδείας) of the Lord (12:5), for the sake of "discipline" (παιδείαν) to endure (12:7), and not to be without "discipline" (παιδείας) in order to be true sons of God (12:8) are reinforced by further explanation of discipline. All "discipline" (παιδεία), "when" (πρός) it is present, even "for" (πρός) a few days, in contrast to what "seemed" (δοκοῦν) fit to fathers who discipline (12:10), does not "seem" (δοκεῖ) to be of joy but of sorrow (12:11a). That discipline does not presently seem to be of "joy" (χαρᾶς) sharpens the focus of the audience upon the example of the disciplined Jesus, who, for the sake of the future joy (χαρᾶς) lying ahead of him, endured the cross (12:2). That future joy results from discipline is confirmed by the assertion that later it gives back the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained through it (12:11b).

That divine discipline gives back the "peaceful" (εἰρηνικόν) fruit of God's "righteousness" (δικαιοσύνης) to those who are "trained" (γεγυμνασμένοις) through it (12:11) reinforces the exhortation for the audience to be experienced of the word of God's "righteousness (δικαιοσύνης)" (5:13). They are to be those who because of their maturity have faculties "trained" (γεγυμνασμένα) for distinguishing of the beneficent and of the baneful (5:14). It adds to the relevance for the audience of the models presented to them—of those who through faith worked God's "righteousness (δικαιοσύνην)" (11:33), of Rahab who by faith welcomed the spies with "peace (εἰρήνης)" (11:31), of Noah who became an heir of God's "righteousness" (δικαιοσύνης) according to faith (11:7). It deepens the appreciation of the audience for Melchizedek as king of "righteousness" (δικαιοσύνης) and king of "peace (εἰρήνης)" (7:2). Finally, it underscores the significance of the model and motivation provided by Jesus, the divinely disciplined Son of God, who loved God's "righteousness" (δικαιοσύνην), so that God anointed him with the oil of gladness (1:9) as an object of the heavenly worship (1:6) in which he has enabled the audience to participate (9:14; 10:19-22).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> According to Attridge (*Hebrews*, 364), "of righteousness" (δικαιοσύνης) here "recalls common expressions from the Old Testament linking peace and righteousness or referring to the fruit of righteousness. Its position at the end of the verse is emphatic, but

### C. Summary on Hebrews 12:1-11

When the audience are told at the beginning of the A'D' unit (12:1-11) that we have such a cloud of “witnesses” surrounding us (12:1), they hear the catch word that indicates the transition from the preceding A'E' unit (11:32-40). Toward the conclusion of that unit the audience were told that all of these past models of faith were “testified” through the faith (11:39). These occurrences of expressions for “witness/testify” thus keep the focus of the audience on the exemplary figures of faith from the past.

At this point the audience also experience a macrochiastic progression of parallels, involving the term for God’s “righteousness,” from the A'D unit (11:1-7) to this A'D' unit (12:1-11). In the A'D unit the audience were told that Noah became an heir of God’s “righteousness” according to faith (11:7). And in the A'D' unit they hear that divine discipline gives back the peaceful fruit of God’s “righteousness” to those who have been trained through it (12:11).

In addition, at the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the AD (2:5-9) and A'D' (12:1-11) units provided by the only occurrences in Hebrews of the verb “to subject.” That we should be “subjected” to the Father of spirits and live (12:9) accords with the fact that not to angels did God “subject” the heavenly world (2:5), that all things God “subjected” under the feet of his divine Son (2:8), that in “subjecting” to him all things he left nothing to him unsubjected (2:8), and that we do not see all things “subjected” to him” (2:8).

This chiastic unit’s central and unparalleled element exhorts the audience to endure for the sake of God’s discipline (12:7a). The audience then experience a pivot of parallels involving the theme of a father disciplining his son. First, they are told that they have forgotten the encouragement from Prov 3:11-12, which is addressed “to you as sons” (12:5). This scriptural quotation exhorts them, addressed as “my son,” not to disdain the discipline of the Lord God nor to grow weary, being reproved by him, for “whom” the Lord loves he disciplines, and scourges every “son” “whom” he accepts (12:5-6). Then, in accord with the chiastic pivot of parallels,

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like εἰρηνικόν, it functions evocatively. Righteousness has been associated with the exalted Christ and was seen to be a result of faith.” Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 273: “In the LXX the expression ‘fruit of righteousness’ occurs in Amos 6:12 and Prov 11:30.” See also, as more generally relevant to this unit, R. B. Sisson, “Overcoming the Fear of Death: Physical Body and Community in Hebrews,” *Scriptura* 90 (2005): 670–78; Matthew Thiessen, “Hebrews 12.5–13, the Wilderness Period, and Israel’s Discipline,” *NTS* 55 (2009): 366–79.

they are told that God is being offered “to you as sons” (12:7b). They are presented with the rhetorical question of what “son” is there “whom” a father does not discipline (12:7b). If they would be without divine discipline, in which all have become partners, then they would be illegitimate ones and not trues “sons” of God (12:8). They are then exhorted that, if we had our earthly fathers of flesh as disciplinarians and we respected them, shall we not much more then be subjected to God as the Father of spirits and live? (12:9).

Finally, the audience experience a progression via the chiastic parallels concerning the theme of joy. That all discipline, when it is present, does not seem to be of “joy” but of sorrow (12:11a) sharpens the focus of the audience upon Jesus, the initiator and perfecter of the faith, who, for the sake of the future “joy” lying ahead of him, endured the cross, despising its shame, and thus, with another allusion to Ps 109:1, took his seat on the right of the throne of God (12:1-2). The audience, who are to traverse the struggle lying ahead for them, taking off every burden and easily ensnaring sin (12:1), are exhorted to reflect on Jesus who endured such disputing against himself from sinners, that they may not become fatigued, growing weary in their souls. In contrast to Jesus, in their struggling with sin, they have not yet resisted to the point of blood (12:3-4). But they are assured that the divine discipline they are to endure will give back the peaceful fruit of God’s righteousness to those who have been trained through it (12:11b), so that they may share in God’s holiness (12:10), having been made holy in the blood of Jesus (10:29), for entrance into the heavenly holy things to worship the living God (9:13-14; 10:19-22) and live eternally (12:9).

## Hebrews 12:12-29

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A<sup>12</sup> *Therefore* restore the hands that have become weakened and the knees that have become *paralyzed* (Isa 35:3),<sup>13</sup> and make straight paths for your feet (Prov 4:26), that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather may be healed.<sup>14</sup> Peace pursue with all, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord,<sup>15</sup> seeing to it lest anyone be lacking of the *grace* of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up may cause trouble (Deut 29:17) and through it many may become defiled,<sup>16</sup> lest anyone be immoral or profane like Esau, who for a single meal gave back his own rights as firstborn.<sup>17</sup> For you know that also afterwards, wanting to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he did not find a place for repentance, although with tears he sought it.

B<sup>18</sup> For you have not *approached* what is to be felt—a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a whirlwind<sup>19</sup> and a blast of a trumpet and *voice* of pronouncements, which those who heard *refused*, lest a word be added for them,<sup>20</sup> for they could not bear what was ordered, “If even an animal touch the *mountain*, it shall be stoned” (Exod 19:12-13).

C<sup>21a</sup> Indeed, so *fearful* was what was appearing,

D<sup>21b</sup> Moses said,

C'<sup>21c</sup> “I am *terrified* and trembling” (Deut 9:19).

B'<sup>22</sup> Rather you have *approached* Mount Zion, and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and myriads of angels in full festal gathering,<sup>23</sup> and the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven, and God, the judge of all, and the spirits of just ones having been made perfect,<sup>24</sup> and Jesus, guarantor of a new covenant, and the blood of the sprinkling that speaks better beyond Abel.<sup>25</sup> Take note that you do not *refuse* the one who is speaking! For if they, *refusing* the one warning on earth, did not escape, much more we who turn away the one from heaven,<sup>26</sup> whose *voice* shook the earth then, but now he has promised, saying, “Once more I will stir up not only the earth but also the heaven” (Hag 2:6).<sup>27</sup> The “once more” indicates the change of the things being shaken as things that have been made, so that the things not being shaken may remain.

A'<sup>28</sup> *Therefore, acquiring* an unshakable kingdom, let us have *grace*, through which we may offer worship pleasing to God with reverence and awe. <sup>29</sup> For indeed our God is a consuming fire! (Deut 4:24).

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 12:12-29

At the conclusion of the A'D' unit (12:1-11) is a reference to the “peaceful” (εἰρηνικόν) fruit of righteousness (12:11). Near the beginning of the following A'C' unit (12:12-29) is an exhortation to pursue “peace” (εἰρήνην) with all (12:14). These occurrences of expressions regarding “peace” thus serve as the transitional catch words connecting these units as they move the focus from what is peaceful to peace itself.

The only occurrences in this unit of the conjunction “therefore,” of the noun “grace,” and of the alliteration in Greek that links the antithetical verbal pair “paralyzed/acquiring” establish the parallels for the A (12:12-17) and A' (12:28-29) elements of this chiastic unit. “Therefore (διό) restore the hands that have become weakened and the knees that have become paralyzed (παρὰλελυμένα)” occurs in 12:12 and “therefore (διό), acquiring (παραλαμβάνοντες) an unshakable kingdom” in 12:28a. “Seeing to it lest anyone be lacking of the grace (χάριτος) of God” occurs in 12:15 and “let us have grace (χάριν), through which we may offer worship pleasing to God” in 12:28b.

The only occurrences in Hebrews of the verb “refuse” and in this unit of the verb “approach,” the noun “voice,” and the noun “mountain” determine the parallels for the B (12:18-20) and B' (12:22-27) elements. “Which those who heard refused (παρητήσαντο)” occurs in 12:19 and “take note that you do not refuse (παραιτήσηθε) the one who is speaking” as well as “refusing (παραιτησάμενοι) the one warning on earth” in 12:25. “You have not approached (προσεληλύθατε) what is to be felt” occurs in 12:18 and “you have approached (προσεληλύθατε) Mount Zion” in 12:22. “Voice (φωνῇ) of pronouncements” occurs in 12:18 and “whose voice (φωνή) shook the earth” in 12:26. “If even an animal touch the mountain (ὄρους)” occurs in 12:20 and “you have approached Mount (ὄρει) Zion” in 12:22.

The only occurrences in this unit of terms for “fear/terrify” form the parallels for the C (12:21a) and C' (12:21c) elements—“so fearful (φοβερόν) was what was appearing” in 12:21a and “I am terrified (ἐκφοβός) and trembling” in 12:21c. The central and unparalleled D element features the only

occurrence in this unit of the name “Moses”—“Moses (Μωϋσῆς) said” (12:21b).

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the A'C (10:31-39) and A'C' (12:12-29) units provided by the terms “fearful,” “hand,” “remain,” and “living God.” In the A'C unit is the declaration that it is “fearful” (φοβερόν) to fall into the “hands” (χεῖρας) of the “living God (θεοῦ ζώντος)” (10:31) and the notice that the audience have a better possession that “remains (μένουσαν)” (10:34). And in the A'C' unit is the exhortation to restore the “hands” (χεῖρας) that have become weakened (12:12), the declaration that so “fearful” (φοβερόν) was what was appearing (12:21), the reference to the city of the “living God (θεοῦ ζώντος)” (12:22), and the statement that the things not being shaken may “remain (μείνῃ)” (12:27).

In addition, at the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the AC (2:1-4) and A'C' (12:12-29) units provided by the only occurrences in Hebrews of the verb “to escape.” In the AC unit is the question of “how will we escape (ἐκφευξόμεθα), neglecting so great a salvation” (2:3). And in the A'C' unit is the statement that those “refusing the one warning on earth, did not escape (ἐξέφυγον)” (12:25).

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 12:12-29

### 1. *Heb 12:12-17 (A): Lest Anyone Be Lacking of the Grace of God*

The audience hear the A element (12:12-17) of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) Therefore restore the hands that have become weakened and the knees that have become paralyzed (Isa 35:3), and make straight paths for your feet (Prov 4:26), that what is lame may not be *dislocated*, but rather may be healed. Peace pursue *with* all, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord (12:12-14),
- b) seeing to it *lest anyone* be lacking of the grace of God, *lest any* root of bitterness springing up may cause trouble (Deut 29:17) (12:15a)
- c) and through it many may become defiled (12:15b),
- b') *lest anyone* be immoral or profane like Esau, who for a single meal gave back his own rights as firstborn (12:16).
- a') For you know that also afterwards, wanting to inherit the blessing, he was

rejected, for he did not find a place for repentance, although *with* tears he *sought* it (12:17).

After the central and unparalleled “c” sub-element, which contains the only occurrence in Hebrews of the verb “defile”—“and through it many may become defiled (μιανθῶσιν)” (12:15b), the audience experience a pivot of chiasmic parallels, involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the phrase “lest any,” from the “b” to the “b” sub-elements. “Lest anyone (μή τις) be lacking of the grace of God, lest any (μή τις) root of bitterness springing up may cause trouble” (12:15a), progresses to “lest anyone (μή τις) be immoral or profane like Esau” (12:16). They are then presented with a progression of chiasmic parallels, formed by the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the alliteration in Greek of the verbal pair “dislocated/sought” and of the preposition “with,” from the “a” to the “a” sub-elements. “That what is lame may not be dislocated (ἐκτραπή)” (12:13) and “peace pursue with (μετά) all” (12:14) progress to “although with (μετά) tears he sought (ἐκζητήσας) it” (12:17).

Extending the athletic/pilgrimage imagery with an allusion to Isa 35:3 (cf. Sir 25:23), the author continues his exhortation for the audience to be trained through divine discipline (12:11): “Therefore restore the hands that have become weakened and the knees that have become paralyzed” (12:12).<sup>1</sup> Through alliteration and assonance in the Greek, the hands that have become “weakened” (παρειμένas) are closely coupled with the knees that have become “paralyzed” (παραλελυμένα), highlighting the need for the audience to be those who have been “trained” (γεγυμνασμένοιs) through divine discipline. The “hands” (χεῖρας) that have become weakened point, by way of an alliterative wordplay in the Greek, to the need for the divine discipline that does not presently seem to be of “joy” (χαρᾶs), but later gives back the peaceful fruit of God’s righteousness to those who have been trained through it (12:11). Restoring their human hands that have become weakened will thus prepare the audience for the fearful prospect of falling into the divine “hands” (χεῖρας) of the living God (10:31).

With a continuation of alliterative wordplays in the Greek, the audience are not only to “restore” (ἀνορθώσατε) their “hands” (χεῖρας) and knees (12:12), but to make “straight” (ὀρθάς) “paths” (τροχιάs) for their feet (12:13a), alluding to Prov 4:26. This accords with the exhortation that

<sup>1</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews*, 323: The author returns here “to the physical imagery of the race or athletic competition, which stands for their pilgrimage toward God.”



through endurance we are to “traverse” (τρέχωμεν) the struggle lying ahead for us (12:1), “fixing our eyes” (ἀφορῶντες) on the initiator and perfecter of the faith, Jesus, who for the sake of the “joy” (χαρᾶς) lying ahead of him, endured the cross (12:2). The audience are to make straight paths for their feet, that what is lame may not be dislocated, but “rather” (μᾶλλον) may be healed by God (12:13), the Father of spirits to whom we shall all the more or “rather” (μᾶλλον) be subjected and live (12:9).<sup>2</sup>

This very artful collocation of “hands,” “knees,” and “feet” (12:12-13) serves not only the athletic/pilgrimage imagery but also the worshiping context that pervades Hebrews. The audience are exhorted to restore the weakened “hands” (χεῖρας) that are often used in various gestures (praying, blessing, etc.) associated with worship, including the laying on of “hands (χειρῶν)” (6:2).<sup>3</sup> They are to restore the weakened “knees” (γόνατα) that they bow and fall upon in worship.<sup>4</sup> That they are to make straight paths for their “feet” suggests that they avoid deviating from the ways of God, as it accords with the exhortations that they not abandon their own gathering for worship (10:25), nor fall away in unfaithfulness from the living God (3:12).<sup>5</sup> Making such straight paths for their “feet” (ποσίν) will thus prepare the audience to participate in the angelic worship of Jesus (1:6), enthroned at the right of God in heaven, waiting for all things, including his enemies, to be subjected under his “feet (ποδῶν)” (1:13; 2:8; 10:13).

Rahab by faith welcomed the Israelite spies “with peace” (μετ’ εἰρήνης), and thus did not perish with those who disobeyed (11:31). This inspires the audience to pursue “peace” (εἰρήνην) as a divine gift together “with” (μετά) all other members of the community (12:14a), as part of their divine discipline which gives back the “peaceful” (εἰρηνικόν) fruit of God’s righteousness to those trained through it (12:11).<sup>6</sup> As those trained through

<sup>2</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 365: “The ‘lameness’ . . . likely refers to the general situation of lassitude and spiritual ‘flabbiness’ that the author detects in his addressees. . . . The exhortation to faithful endurance built on athletic imagery and the proverbial understanding of suffering as educative discipline thus closes on a positive note.”

<sup>3</sup> Walter Radl, “χεῖρ,” *EDNT* 3.463.

<sup>4</sup> Johannes M. Nützel, “γόνα,” *EDNT* 1.258. Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 658: “Elsewhere in the NT, knees are mentioned only in connection with kneeling in worship.”

<sup>5</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 530-31: “Metaphorically, following a straight path means adhering to the will of God (Prov 3:6; 4:11, 26-27). . . . In Hebrews the danger focused on is turning away from the faith and the community (Heb 3:12; 6:4-8; 10:25).”

<sup>6</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 661: “Εἰρήνην is emphatic by position.” Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 449: “The stress falls on active Christian effort in response to divine gifts. . . . ‘Peace’ denotes the objective basis of the solidarity of the community. It is an expression of the

the divine discipline that enables them to share in God's own "holiness" (ἁγιότητος) (12:10), the audience, as "holy ones" (3:1; 6:10) "made holy" by Christ (2:11; 10:10, 14, 29), are to pursue the "holiness" (ἁγιασμόν) without which no one "will see" (ὄψεται) the Lord (12:14b). This recalls that Christ, the Lord (1:10; 2:3; 7:14), "will be seen" (ὀφθήσεται), by those eagerly awaiting him, for final salvation (9:28).<sup>7</sup>

The audience were previously exhorted to be afraid "lest" (μήποτε), while the promise to enter into God's own heavenly rest is left, "anyone" (τις) of them seem to have been "lacking" (ὑστερηκέναι) (4:1). And now they are similarly exhorted to see to it "lest anyone" (μή τις) of them be "lacking" (ὑστερῶν) of the "grace" (χάριτος) of God (12:15a), the "grace" (χάρτι) by which Christ tasted death on behalf of all (2:9). This resonates with the warning that not anyone of them should insult the Spirit of "grace" (χάριτος) (10:29). And this concern for each member of the community reinforces the exhortation for the entire audience to approach with boldness the throne of "grace" (χάριτος) to receive mercy and find "grace" (χάριν) for timely help (4:16).

With an allusion to Deut 29:17, the audience are exhorted also to see to it "lest any" (μή τις) root of bitterness springing up may cause trouble and through it many may become defiled (12:15b). They are thus to make sure that none of them introduces into the community the "bitterness" of hardening their hearts to the voice of God as in the "rebellion" (παραπικρασμῷ)—alliteratively linked to "bitterness" (πικρίας)—during the day of testing in the wilderness (3:8, 15), when all of those who came out of Egypt through Moses heard but "rebelled" (παρεπύκρναναν) against God (3:16). For many of them to become "defiled" (μιανθῶσιν) would be inappropriate for them as those whose conscience the blood of Christ, the "undefiled" (ἁμίαντος) high priest (7:26), will cleanse from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14).<sup>8</sup>

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reality of Christ's accomplishment. 'Peace' is to be actively pursued because this gift of Christ is given visibility in the solidarity of the community."

<sup>7</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 425, 450: "The rare term ἁγιότητος denotes the holiness that is the essential attribute of God's character, which Christians are to share. The expression came into use only late in hellenistic Judaism; it occurs only here in the NT. In v 10 the stress is placed not on human endeavor (as in v 14) but upon the fact that God bestows as a gift a share in his holiness through divine discipline. . . . The basis for a practical holiness of life is τὸν ἁγιασμόν, 'the holiness,' which is the gift of Christ."

<sup>8</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 454: "This dual aspect of cultic and moral overtones in μιανθῶσιν in 15b is sharpened by the prior reference to ἁγιασμός, 'holiness,' in v 14."

The audience are also to see to it lest anyone be immoral or profane like Esau (12:16a), whom, with his brother Jacob, their father Isaac, by faith concerning things to come, blessed (11:20).<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the undisciplined son Esau, who for a single meal “gave back” (ἀπέδεδωκεν) his own rights as firstborn (12:16b; cf. Gen 25:31-34), the divine discipline the audience, as sons of God, are to endure “gives back” (ἀποδίδωσιν) the peaceful fruit of God’s righteousness for those trained through it (12:11). Whereas by faith Moses demonstrated his deep regard for the firstborn by keeping the Passover and the applying of the blood, so that the one who was to destroy the “firstborn” (πρωτότοκα) might not touch them (11:28), Esau demonstrated his unfaithful disregard for his own rights as “firstborn” (πρωτοτόκια) by giving them back. Esau failed to appreciate his own rights as “firstborn” by giving them back for an emphatically “single meal” (βρώσεως μιάς)—merely one part of the earthly “foods” (βρώμασιν) that foreshadow heavenly worship (9:10).<sup>10</sup> This sharpens the audience’s appreciation for Jesus as the divine Son whom God leads as the “firstborn” (πρωτότοκον) into the heavenly world for them, together with the angels, to worship (1:6).

The reminder that also afterwards, wanting to inherit the blessing, Esau was rejected, for he did not find a place for repentance, although with tears he sought it (12:17; cf. Gen 27:31-38), underlines the relevance of Esau as a negative model for the audience. The audience are to be imitators of those who through faith and patience are “inheriting” (κληρονομούντων) the promises of God (6:12), as those who are going to “inherit” (κληρονομεῖν) salvation (1:14) from the Jesus (9:28) who has “inherited” (κεκληρονόμηκεν) a name beyond the angels (1:4). In contrast, Esau was rejected by God (divine passive) in wanting to “inherit” (κληρονομήσαι) the blessing. That in his desire to inherit the “blessing” (εὐλογίαν) Esau did not find a place for “repentance” (μετανοίας) reinforces the exhortation for the audience to bear forward toward the perfection, not again laying down a foundation of “repentance” (μετανοίας) from dead works and of faith in God (6:1). For

<sup>9</sup> According to Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 665), that Esau was “immoral” (πόρνος) has overtones of his “unfaithfulness to God, which is the author of Hebrews’ ultimate concern.” Koester, *Hebrews*, 532: “The term πόρνος commonly meant sexual immorality. In choosing food over his rights as firstborn Esau was said to have sought immediate physical gratification rather than abiding benefit. His marriage to two Hittite women (Gen 26:34-35) came to be considered immoral. Sexual immorality was associated with idolatry.”

<sup>10</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 532: Hebrews here “implies that a pre-occupation with food binds one to the transient realm.”

it is impossible for those having fallen away again to renew to “repentance (μετάνοιαν)” (6:6) and share a “blessing” (εὐλογίας) from God (6:7).

In contrast to the “place” (τόπος) that was found for a new covenant (8:7), and to Abraham, who by faith obeyed to go out to a “place” (τόπον) which he was about to receive as an inheritance (11:8), the unfaithful Esau did not find a “place” (τόπον) for repentance (12:17). In contrast to Enoch, who by faith was not “found” (ἠύρίσκετο) because God changed him (11:5), and to the high priest Jesus, who “found” (εὐράμενος) eternal redemption (9:12), the unfaithful Esau did not “find” (εὑρεν) a place for repentance. His negative example thus bolsters the exhortation for the audience to approach with boldness the throne of grace to receive mercy that we may “find” (εὑρωμεν) grace for timely help (4:16).

In contrast to Jesus, who in the days of his flesh offered both prayers and supplications with strong outcrying and “tears” (δακρύων) to the God able to save him from death, and he was heard from his reverence (5:7), Esau was rejected by God, although with “tears” (δακρύων) he sought the blessing (12:17).<sup>11</sup> That Esau was rejected by God despite having “sought” (ἐκζητήσας) God’s blessing highlights his lack of faith, as it confirms that without faith it is impossible to please God, for it is necessary that the one approaching God believe that he exists and that for those “seeking” (ἐκζητοῦσιν) him he becomes a rewarder (11:6). That the unfaithful Esau “sought” (ἐκζητήσας) the blessing but was rejected by God illustrates, with the aid of the alliteration in Greek, how one may become “dislocated (ἐκτραπή)” (12:13). That Esau individualistically sought, “with” (μετά) tears, God’s blessing underlines the need for the audience to pursue, “with” (μετά) all in the community, God’s peace (12:14).

## 2. *Heb 12:18-20 (B): Those Who Heard the Voice of God’s Pronouncements Refused*

Another contrast is introduced for the audience: “For you have not approached what is to be felt—a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a whirlwind and a blast of a trumpet and voice of pronouncements, which

<sup>11</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 533: “God responded to Jesus’ ‘reverence’ not to his tears alone.” Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 458: “The identification of the antecedent of αὐτήν, ‘it,’ in v 17c as the independent articular noun τὴν εὐλογίαν, ‘the blessing,’ in v 17a demonstrates that the writer has conformed his statement to the detail of the account in Gen 27:30-40. There, it is the blessing, not repentance, that Esau sought with tears.”

those who heard refused, lest a word be added for them, for they could not bear what was ordered, ‘If even an animal touch the mountain, it shall be stoned (Exod 19:12-13)’” (12:18-20).

The audience have been informed about the necessity of faith for “approaching” God in worship: “Without faith it is impossible to please, for it is necessary that the one approaching (προσερχόμενον) God believe that he exists” (11:6). With the faith that they have, the audience were exhorted: “Let us approach” (προσερχώμεθα) God for worship with a true heart in assurance of faith (10:22). This echoes the exhortation: “Let us approach” (προσερχώμεθα) with boldness the heavenly throne of grace to receive divine assistance (4:16) through the intercession of Jesus as the eternal high priest, who is able to save completely those who “approach” (προσερχομένους) God through him, always living to intercede on behalf of them (7:25). On the other hand, the Mosaic law never is able to make perfect those who “approach” (προσερχομένους) God for worship (10:1). Mindful of this inability, the audience are assured that in their worship of God, “you have not approached (προσεληλύθατε)” a tangible and earthly Mount Sinai where that law was given through Moses (12:18). This reinforces, with the aid of the alliteration in the Greek, the exhortation to the audience to restore the knees that have become “paralyzed” (παραλελυμένα) in “approaching” for worship (12:12).

As a worshipping assembly, the audience have not approached “what is to be felt” (12:18a), that is, Mount Sinai described as foreboding, by means of an allusion to Deut 4:11-12, with all of its dreadful and deadly aspects. That what is to be felt on Mount Sinai includes a blazing “fire” (πυρί) and darkness and “gloom” (ζόφω) and a whirlwind (12:18b) associates it with the death-bringing aura of divine judgment, as it resonates with the fearful expectation of God’s judgment and “zeal of fire” (πυρὸς ζήλος) about to devour the adversaries (10:27). The “blazing” (κεκαυμένω) fire recalls that the end of what is rejected by God is the “burning” (καῦσιν) of divine judgment (6:8).

What is to be felt on Mount Sinai (12:18) included a blast of a trumpet and voice of “pronouncements” (ῥημάτων) that are divine (12:19a). This has been indicated by the “pronouncement” (ῥήματι) of God by which the ages have been provided (11:3), by the beneficent “pronouncement” (ῥήμα) of God that the audience have already tasted (6:5), and by the “pronouncement” (ῥήματι) of the power of God by which the divine Son is bearing up all things (1:3).

That those who “heard” (ἀκούσαντες) the “voice” (φωνῇ) of God’s pronouncements refused it, lest a word be added for them (12:19b), associates them with the unfaithful and disobedient wilderness generation, who failed to heed the divine scriptural proclamation from Ps 94:7-8 that “today if you hear (ἀκούσητε) his voice (φωνῆς), do not harden your hearts” (3:7, 15; 4:7). The word of God for “hearing” (ἀκοῆς) did not benefit them, who were not united in faith with those who “heard (ἀκούσασιν)” (4:2). For all of those who came out of Egypt through Moses “heard” (ἀκούσαντες) but rebelled (3:16). That those who approached Mount Sinai heard the voice of God’s pronouncements but refused it thus serves as a foil to reinforce the warning for the audience all the more to attend to the things that have been “heard (ἀκουσθεῖσιν)” (2:1) regarding the great salvation that was confirmed by those who “heard (ἀκουσάντων)” (2:3).

Those who approached Mount Sinai “heard” (ἀκούσαντες) the voice of God’s pronouncements but refused it, lest a “word” (λόγον) be added for them (12:19), for they could not “bear” (ἔφερον) what was ordered in accord with Exod 19:12-13, “If even an animal touch the mountain, it shall be stoned” (12:20). This serves as a negative example for the warning that the audience have become sluggish in “hearing (ἀκοαῖς)” (5:11) and are inexperienced of the “word” (λόγον) of righteousness (5:13). Therefore, departing from the “word” (λόγον) at the beginning about the Christ, the author exhorted his audience, in contrast to those who approached Mount Sinai, “let us bear (φερώμεθα) forward toward the perfection” (6:1). The faithless inability to bear the divine order regarding a death-bringing “touch”—that if even an animal “touch” (θίγῃ) “the mountain” (τοῦ ὄρους), “the mountain” (τῷ ὄρει) on which Moses was shown the model for the heavenly tabernacle (8:5), it shall be stoned, stands in sharp contrast to the life-giving faith of Moses that triumphed over a death-bringing “touch.” By faith Moses kept the Passover and the applying of the blood, so that the one who was to destroy the firstborn might not “touch” (θίγῃ) them (11:28).

### 3. *Heb 12:21a (C): Indeed So Fearful Was What Was Appearing*

The intimidating experience that took place on Mount Sinai continues to be described: “Indeed, so fearful was what was appearing” (12:21a). The statement that so “fearful” (φοβερόν) was what was “appearing”

(φανταζόμενον) on the mountain, intensified by the alliteration in the Greek, resonates with the declarations about a certain “fearful” (φοβερά) expectation of divine judgment and zeal of fire about to devour the adversaries (10:27), and that it is “fearful” (φοβερόν) to fall into the hands of the living God (10:31).

#### 4. *Heb 12:21b (D): Moses Said*

So fearful was what was appearing (12:21a) on Mount Sinai that it led to a direct quotation by Moses introduced with the words “Moses said” (12:21b). The audience have heard how Moses has been associated with significant “speaking.” Moses was faithful in all God’s house as an attendant for testimony of the things that would be “spoken (λαληθησομένων)” (3:5). Moses “spoke” (ἐλάλησεν) nothing concerning priests about the tribe of Judah from which our Lord sprang up (7:14). After every commandment was “spoken” (λαληθείσης) according to the law to all the people by Moses (9:19), he “said” (λέγων), “This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded to you (Exod 24:8)” (9:20). By faith Moses, having become great, refused to be “said” (λέγεσθαι) to be a son of the daughter of Pharaoh (11:24). And now Moses “said” (εἶπεν), introducing another noteworthy instance of Mosaic speaking.

#### 5. *Heb 12:21c (C'): I Am Terrified and Trembling*

What Moses said is inspired by Deut 9:19: “I am terrified and trembling” (12:21c).<sup>12</sup> At this point, after the central and unparalleled D element, “Moses said” (12:21b), the audience experience a pivot of parallels from the C to the C' elements of this chiasmic unit. The declaration that “so fearful (φοβερόν) was what was appearing” (12:21a) to the assembly that approached Mount Sinai is intensified by the direct quotation of Moses who said “I am terrified (ἐκφοβός) and trembling.” The audience are to appreciate that the encounter with Mount Sinai was fearful and terrifying not only for the people but for Moses himself.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the use of Deut 9:19 here, see Allen, *Deuteronomy*, 62-66.

<sup>13</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews*, 330: “By ascribing to Moses the term ἐκφοβός and by adding to it the term ἔντρομος (‘trembling’; see Ps 17:8; Acts 7:32; 16:29), Hebrews signals that Moses indeed confronts the living God and that he shared the fear of the people.” Lane,

6. Heb 12:22-27 (B'): Do Not Refuse the Voice of the One Who Is Speaking

The audience hear the B' element (12:22-27) of this unit as a chiasmic pattern in itself:

- a) Rather you have approached Mount Zion, and the city of the living God, the *heavenly* Jerusalem, and myriads of angels in full festal gathering, and the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in *heaven*, and God, the judge of all, and the spirits of just ones having been made perfect (12:22-23),
- b) and Jesus, guarantor of a new covenant, and the blood of the sprinkling that *speaks* better beyond Abel. Take note that you do not *refuse* (12:24-25a)
- b') the one who is *speaking*! For if they, *refusing* the one warning on earth, did not escape (12:25b),
- a') much more we who turn away the one from *heaven*, whose voice shook the earth then, but now he has promised, saying, "Once more I will stir up not only the earth but also the *heaven*" (Hag 2:6). The "once more" indicates the change of the things being shaken as things that have been made, so that the things not being shaken may remain (12:25c-27).

At the center of this chiasmic sub-unit the audience experience a pivot of parallels, involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the verbs "speak" and "refuse," from the "b" to the "b'" sub-elements. The reference to the blood of the sprinkling that "speaks" (λαλοῦντι) better beyond Abel (12:24) and the command to take note that you do not "refuse" (παρατήρησθε) (12:15a) progress to the references to the one who is "speaking" (λαλοῦντα) and to those "refusing" (παρατησάμενοι) the one warning on earth (12:25b). The audience are then presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of expressions for "heaven," from the "a" to the "a'" sub-elements. The references to the "heavenly" (ἐπουρανίῳ) Jerusalem (12:22) and to the firstborn enrolled in "heaven" (οὐρανοῖς) (12:23) progress to the references to the one from "heaven" (οὐρανῶν) (12:25c) and to stirring up not only the earth but also the "heaven" (οὐρανόν) (12:26).

The audience hear the "a" sub-element (12:22-23) of this sub-unit (12:22-27) as yet another chiasmic pattern in itself:

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Hebrews 9-13, 464: "The emphasis falls on the sense of immense distance that separates the worshiper from God under the Sinai covenant."



- a) Rather you have approached Mount Zion, and the city of the living God (12:22a),
  - b) the *heavenly* Jerusalem (12:22b),
    - c) and myriads of *angels* in full festal gathering (12:22c),
      - c') and the assembly of the firstborn *enrolled* (12:23a)
    - b') in *heaven* (12:23b),
  - a') and God, the judge of all, and the spirits of just ones having been made perfect (12:23c).

At the center of this chiastic sub-unit the audience experience a pivot of parallels, involving the alliteration in Greek between the terms “angels” and “enrolled,” from the “c” to the “c” sub-elements. “Myriads of angels (ἁγγέλων) in full festal gathering” (12:22c) progresses to “the assembly of the firstborn enrolled (ἀπογεγραμμένων)” (12:23a). The audience are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of expressions for “heaven,” from the “b” to the “b” sub-elements. “The heavenly (ἐπουρανίῳ) Jerusalem” (12:22b) progresses to “in heaven (οὐρανοῖς)” (12:23b). Finally, they are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the term “God,” from the “a” to the “a” sub-elements. “The city of the living God (θεοῦ)” (12:22a) progresses to “God (θεῶ), the judge of all, and the spirits of just ones having been made perfect” (12:23c).

In addition, the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from the B to the B' elements of this chiastic unit (12:12-29). What “you have not approached (προσεληλύθατε)” (12:18) progresses to “rather you have approached (προσεληλύθατε)” (12:22). The “voice” (φωνῇ) of divine pronouncements (12:19) progresses to the “voice” (φωνή) of the one from heaven (12:26). That those who heard “refused (παρητήσαντο)” (12:19) progresses to the warning that you do not “refuse” (παραιτήσησθε) the one who is speaking (12:25), and to the reference to those “refusing” (παραιτησάμενοι) the one warning on earth (12:25). Finally, the reference to the earthly Mount Sinai as “the mountain (ὄρους)” not even an animal may touch (12:20) progresses to the heavenly “Mount” (ὄρει) Zion (12:22).

Told that “you have not approached (προσεληλύθατε)” for worship at the ominous scene as at Mount Sinai (12:18), “the mountain (ὄρους)” not even an animal may touch without dying (12:20), the audience are now made aware that rather “you have approached (προσεληλύθατε)” for worship at “Mount” (ὄρει) Zion, its heavenly counterpart (12:22). The audience are to appreciate that they have been privileged to approach also the “city”

(πόλει) of the living God, the “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίῳ) Jerusalem (12:22), that is, the “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίου) fatherland the patriarchs longed for and the “city” (πόλιν) God has made ready for them (11:16), the “city” (πόλιν) having foundations, whose architect and builder is God (11:10). The audience, who are partners of a “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίου) calling (3:1), and who have tasted of the “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίου) gift (6:4), have now approached for worship at the “heavenly” city.

The audience were warned lest there be in anyone of them an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the “living God (θεοῦ ζώντος)” (3:12). This was reinforced by the declaration that it is fearful to fall into the hands of the “living God” (θεοῦ ζώντος) for judgment (10:31). But that they have now approached for worship at the heavenly city of the “living God (θεοῦ ζώντος)” (12:22) fortifies the assurance that the blood of Christ will cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the “living God (θεῷ ζώντι)” (9:14).

The audience have heard the scriptural voice of God, who leads his first-born divine Son into the heavenly world, proclaim, “And let all the angels (ἄγγελοι) of God worship him” (1:6). And of the “angels” (ἁγγέλους) the divine scriptural voice declares that God makes his “angels” (ἁγγέλους) spirits who are ministers of heavenly worship (1:7), that is, ministering spirits sent to assist (1:14) those participating in heavenly worship. In accord with this, the audience are now informed that they have approached to participate in heavenly worship along with myriads of “angels” (ἁγγέλων) in “full festal gathering (πανηγύρει)” (12:22), that is, “all” (πάντες) of the angels God has invited to worship the divine Son (1:6).<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the heavenly Jerusalem and myriads of angels in full festal gathering for worship (12:22), the audience have approached the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven (12:23), with the alliteration underlining the close association of the “angels” (ἁγγέλων) gathered for worship in heaven with the firstborn “enrolled” (ἀπογεγραμμένων) in heaven. That the audience have approached the “assembly” (ἐκκλησίᾳ) of the firstborn to join them in heavenly worship is underscored by the recall of the scriptural announcement of Jesus from Ps 21:23 regarding an assembly for

<sup>14</sup> “Full festal gathering” (πανήγυρις) is a compound of “all” (πᾶς) and “gathering” (ἄγυρις=ἄγορα); see BDAG, 753-54. Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 467: “The term πανήγυρις, which occurs only here in the NT, has reference to a joyful gathering in order to celebrate a festival.” Mitchell, *Hebrews*, 283: “In contrast to the terrifying sights associated with the Sinai phenomenon, the heavenly Jerusalem will be a place of festivity, filled with angels beyond counting.” See also Ceslas Spicq, “πανήγυρις,” *TLNT* 3.4-8.

worship: “I will proclaim your name to my brothers, in the midst of the assembly (ἐκκλησίας) I will praise you” (2:12). This assembly of the “first-born” (πρωτοτόκων) is associated not only with Jesus, God’s “firstborn” (πρωτότοκον) Son (1:6), as a worshiping assembly of his “brothers,” but also with the “firstborn” (πρωτότοκα) saved from destruction by Moses (11:28). It is an assembly “in heaven” (ἐν οὐρανοῖς), that is, “in the heavens” (ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς) that provide the patterns for worship on earth (9:23), “in the heavens” (ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς) where our high priest Jesus sat at the right of the throne of the divine Majesty (8:1).

The audience have approached for worship not only the city of the living “God (θεοῦ)” (12:22) but “God” (θεῶ) himself, the “judge” (κριτῇ) of all (12:23), the Lord who will “judge” (κρινεῖ) his people (10:30). And they have approached the “spirits” (πνεύμασι) of the just ones having been made perfect (12:23), those who have been subjected to the divine discipline of the heavenly Father of “spirits” (πνευμάτων) in order to live (12:9) the eternal life offered by the living God. These spirits of the “just ones” (δικαίων) include Abel, whom God testified as “just (δικαιος)” (11:4), an example of God’s “just one” (δίκαιός) who from faith will live (10:38).

These just ones having been made “perfect” (τετελειωμένων) for heavenly worship (12:23) include the ancient models of faith, who would not be made “perfect” (τελειωθῶσιν) without us (11:40). They were made perfect by the heavenly high priest Jesus, who by one offering of himself in heaven made “perfect” (τετελείωκεν) for all time those who are being made holy (10:14). Earthly sacrifices were not able to make “perfect” (τελειῶσαι) the one offering worship (9:9; 10:1), for the law made nothing “perfect (ἐτελείωσεν)” (7:19). But Jesus, the divine Son, has been made “perfect” (τετελειωμένον) forever (7:28), since it was fitting for God to make the initiator of our salvation “perfect” (τελειῶσαι) through sufferings (2:10). Having been made “perfect” (τελειωθείς), he became for all those who obey him a source of eternal salvation (5:9).

The audience have also approached for worship Jesus himself, the “guarantor of a new covenant (διαθήκης νέας μεσίτη)” (12:24). This recalls that Jesus “is guarantor of a better covenant (κρείττονός ἐστιν διαθήκης μεσίτης)” (8:6). Indeed, he “is guarantor of a new covenant” (διαθήκης καινῆς μεσίτης ἐστίν), so that those who have been called, among whom are the audience, might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance (9:15).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 681: “[T]he overlap of meaning between νέος and καινός in hellenistic Greek was almost total . . . and there is no discernible difference of meaning

The audience have also approached for worship the “blood” (αἷματι) of the “sprinkling” (ῥαντισμοῦ) associated with the new covenant of which Jesus is the guarantor (12:24). As part of the old covenant, Moses took the “blood” (αἷμα) of animals and “sprinkled” (ἐρράντισεν) both the book of the covenant and all the people (9:19). The tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry for worship he likewise “sprinkled” (ἐρράντισεν) with “blood (αἷματι)” (9:21). But if the “blood” (αἷμα) of goats and bulls and the “sprinkling” (ῥαντίζουσα) of a heifer’s ashes makes holy those defiled for the cleansing of the flesh (9:13), how much more will the “blood” (αἷμα) of the Christ cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14). That they have approached the “blood” of the “sprinkling,” then, reinforces the exhortation for the audience, who have boldness for the entrance into the heavenly holy things in the “blood” (αἷματι) of Jesus (10:19), to approach for worship with a true heart in assurance of faith, “sprinkled” (ῥεραντισμένοι) with regard to the hearts from an evil conscience (10:22).

The blood of the sprinkling that the audience have approached “speaks” (λαλοῦντι) better beyond Abel (12:24), who by faith offered to God a greater sacrifice beyond Cain, through which he was testified to be just, God testifying on the basis of his gifts, and through this, having died, he is still “speaking (λαλεῖ)” (11:4). That Abel is still speaking through faith means that he is still indicating that it is by faith that he “offered” (προσήνεγκεν) to God a greater “sacrifice” (θυσίαν) “beyond” (παρά) Cain. But the sacrificial blood of Jesus speaks “beyond” (παρά) Abel and his faith, because the faithful Jesus (2:17; 3:2, 5-6) offered himself, and the blood of that self-offering speaks better beyond Abel. The scriptural voice of Jesus from Ps 39:7-9 says that “sacrifice” (θυσίαν) of animals God did not want (10:5). But Jesus said, “Behold I have come to do, O God, your will” (10:7, 9). The Jesus who thus “offered” (προσήνεγκεν) himself unblemished to God (9:14), one “sacrifice” (θυσίαν) having “offered” (προσενέγκας) for all time, sat at the right of God (10:12). It is the blood of this self-sacrifice of Jesus that “speaks” better beyond Abel, who did not offer himself as a sacrifice to God.

Those who approached Mount Sinai “refused” (παρητήσαντο) the voice of divine pronouncements they heard (12:19). But the audience, having been exhorted not to abandon their gathering for worship as “you take

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between νέα διαθήκη here and καινή διαθήκη in 9:15.” See also Attridge, *Hebrews*, 376: “[T]he variation is purely stylistic.”

note” (βλέπετε) of the day drawing near (10:25), and that “you take note” (βλέπετε) lest there be in anyone an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the living God (3:12), are to “take note” (βλέπετε) that you do not “refuse” (παραιτήσηθε) the one who is speaking (12:25). The one who is “speaking” (λαλοῦντα) refers to the divine voice “speaking” (λαλοῦντι) through the self-sacrificial blood of Jesus (12:24). This is the divine voice of the Lord through whom our great salvation received a beginning of being “spoken” (λαλεῖσθαι) (2:3), and the divine voice of the God who, having “spoken” (λαλήσας) to the fathers in the prophets (1:1), at the end of these days has “spoken” (ἐλάλησεν) to us in a divine Son (12:2).

What this divine voice is “speaking” includes preeminently the scriptural voice of Jesus that the audience have heard. From Ps 21:23 they have heard Jesus “saying” (λέγων) that he will proclaim God’s name to his brothers, in the midst of the worshiping assembly they will hear him praise God (2:12). From Ps 39:7-9 they have heard the Jesus who is “saying” (λέγει in 10:5; λέγων in 10:8) that God does not want sacrifices of animals (10:5-6, 8). Instead, as Jesus emphatically “said” (εἶπον in 10:7; εἶρηκεν in 10:9), he has come to do God’s will (10:7, 9). By doing the will of God in offering his own God-given body once for all (10:10) and his blood in an unblemished self-sacrifice to God, Jesus has made it possible for the audience to offer worship in heaven to the living God (9:14; 10:19). The audience are thus to take note not to refuse this divine “speaking” they have already heard, as well as that which they are still to hear (12:25).<sup>16</sup>

The warning to take note that “you do not refuse (παραιτήσηθε)” the one who is speaking is reinforced by a comparison with those at the event on Mount Sinai. Those “refusing” (παραιτησάμενοι) the one “warning” (χρηματίζοντα) on earth (12:25) at Mount Sinai recalls that Noah was divinely “warned” (χρηματισθείς) about things not yet being noticed (11:7), and that Moses was divinely “warned” (κεχρημάτισται) regarding the heavenly model for worship (8:5). When those at Mount Sinai “refused” (παρητήσαντο) the voice of the divine pronouncements they heard (12:19), they did not “escape” (ἐξέφυγον) the terrifying threat of death (12:20).

Through the comparison it is all the more certain, then, that we who turn away the one from “heaven” (οὐρανῶν), recalling that the assembly of the firstborn are enrolled in “heaven (οὐρανοῖς)” (12:23), the “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίῳ) Jerusalem (12:22), will likewise not “escape” the ter-

<sup>16</sup> Gene R. Smillie, “‘The One Who Is Speaking’ in Hebrews 12:25,” *TynBul* 55 (2004): 275-94.

rifying threat of death (12:25). This intensifies the warning of how “we will escape” (ἐκφευξόμεθα), if we neglect so great a salvation that began to be spoken through the Lord (2:3). The warning that we not “turn away the one from heaven” (τὸν ἀπ’ οὐρανῶν ἀποστρέφόμενοι) resonates with the warning that there not be in anyone in the audience an evil heart of unfaithfulness in “falling away from the living God (ἀποστῆναι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ζῶντος)” (3:12). The assertion that “much more” (πολὺ μᾶλλον) we who turn away the one from heaven will not escape the threat of death bolsters the exhortation that we “much more” (πολὺ μᾶλλον) be subjected to the heavenly Father of spirits and live (12:9).

The audience hear the remainder of the “a” sub-element (12:25c-27) of this sub-unit (12:22-27) as yet another chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) whose voice *shook* the earth then, but now he has promised, saying (12:26a),
- b) “Once more I will stir up (12:26b)
- c) not only *the earth* (12:26c)
- c') but also *the heaven* (Hag 2:6)” (12:26d).
- b') The “once more” indicates (12:27a)
- a') the change of the things being *shaken* as things that have been made, so that the things not being *shaken* may remain (12:27b).

At the center of this chiastic sub-unit the audience experience a pivot from “the earth” (τὴν γῆν) in the “c” sub-element (12:26c) to its complement “the heaven” (τὸν οὐρανόν) in the “c” sub-element (12:26d) to form a merism referring to the entire universe. They are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels involving the only occurrences in Hebrews of the expression “once more,” from the “b” to the “b” sub-elements. “Once more (ἔτι ἅπαξ) I will stir up” (12:26b) progresses to “the ‘once more’ (ἔτι ἅπαξ) indicates” (12:27a). Finally, the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels involving the only occurrences in Hebrews of the verb “shake,” from the “a” to the “a” sub-elements. “Whose voice shook (ἐσάλευσεν) the earth then” (12:26a) progresses to “the change of the things being shaken (σαλευομένων)” and “the things not being shaken (σαλευόμενα) may remain” (12:27b).

The one warning on “earth” (γῆς), the one from heaven (12:25), is further identified as the one whose “voice” (φωνή) shook the “earth” (γῆν) then, that is, when those at Mount Sinai heard the “voice” (φωνῇ) of divine pronouncements (12:19). The scriptural voice of God from Hag 2:6, the faithful God who once “promised” (ἐπαγγειλάμενος) Abraham (6:13;

10:23; 11:11), has now “promised” (ἐπήγγελλται), saying, “Once more I will stir up not only the earth but also the heaven” (12:26).<sup>17</sup> The divine scriptural voice that has now promised by “saying” (λέγων) further identifies the divine voice of the one who is “speaking” (λαλοῦντα), whom the audience are to take note not to refuse (12:25).

The promise that God once more will stir up not only the “earth (γῆν)” (12:26) refers to his warning on “earth (γῆς)” (12:25) at the terrifying and stirring event on Mount Sinai (12:18-20). But now he will also stir up the “heaven (οὐρανόν)” (12:26), that is, the “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίῳ) Jerusalem (12:22), the “heaven” (οὐρανοῖς) in which the firstborn are enrolled (12:23), and the “heaven” (οὐρανῶν) from which is speaking this divine voice the audience are not to refuse (12:25). The all-embracing divine power over both earth and heaven expressed in this scriptural promise resonates with the scriptural voice of God from Ps 101:26 addressed to the heavenly enthroned divine Son, asserting that “you at the beginnings, Lord, founded the earth (γῆν), and the heavens (οὐρανοί) are the works of your hands” (1:10).

The promise that “once more” (ἔτι ἅπαξ) God will stir up not only the earth but also the heaven (12:26) receives elaboration from the author. The “once more” (ἔτι ἅπαξ) “indicates” (δηλοῖ), resonating with the Holy Spirit “indicating” (δηλοῦντος) that the way to the heavenly holy things had not appeared while the first, earthly tabernacle had standing (9:8), the change of the things being shaken as earthly things that have been made, so that the heavenly things not being shaken may remain (12:27). This divine “change” (μετάθεσιν) from what is earthly to what is heavenly accords with the divine “change” of Enoch from an earthly to a heavenly being. Enoch was “changed” (μετετέθη) so that he did not see death, and he was not found because God “changed” (μετέθηκεν) him, for before the “change” (μεταθέσεως) he was testified to have pleased God (11:5). It also accords with the divine “change” from an earthly to a heavenly priesthood. For the priesthood being “changed” (μετατιθεμένης) by God from that according to Aaron (earthly) to that according to Melchizedek (heavenly), of necessity a divine “change” (μετάθεσις) of law also comes about (7:12).

The “once more” indicates the divine change of things being “shaken” (σαλευομένων), recalling the event on Mount Sinai when the divine voice “shook” (ἐσάλευσεν) the earth (12:26), as things made on earth, so that the things not being “shaken” (σαλευόμενα) may remain in heaven (12:27).

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of the use of Hag 2:6 here, see Guthrie, *Hebrews*, 988-91.



That the things not being shaken may “remain” (μείνῃ) in heaven resonates with the better possession the audience know they have that “remains” (μένουσιν) in heaven (10:34), with the priesthood of Jesus that is permanent, because he “remains” (μένειν) forever in heaven (7:24), and with Melchizedek who “remains” (μένει) a priest for all time in heaven (7:3).

7. *Heb 12:28-29 (A'): Let Us Have Grace To Offer Worship Pleasing to God*

The audience are then presented with a climactic exhortation embellished with a scriptural allusion: “Therefore, acquiring an unshakable kingdom, let us have grace, through which we may offer worship pleasing to God with reverence and awe. For indeed our God is a consuming fire! (Deut 4:24)” (12:28-29). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from the A (12:12-17) to the A' (12:28-29) elements of this chiastic unit. “Therefore (διό) restore the hands that have become weakened and the knees that have become paralyzed (παραλελυμένα)” (12:12) and “lest anyone be lacking of the grace (χάριτος) of God” (12:15) progress to “Therefore (διό), acquiring (παραλαμβάνοντες) an unshakable kingdom, let us have grace (χάριν)” (12:28).

In an alliterative contrast with the exhortation to “therefore” (διό) restore the hands that have become weakened and the knees that have become “paralyzed (παραλελυμένα)” (12:12), the audience are described as those “therefore” (διό) “acquiring” (παραλαμβάνοντες) an “unshakable” (ἀσάλευτον) heavenly kingdom (12:28). This accords with the things “not being shaken” (μὴ σαλευόμενα) that remain in heaven (12:27). In contrast to the heroes of old who through faith conquered earthly “kingdoms (βασιλείας)” (11:33), and in accord with the heavenly “kingdom” (βασιλείας) of the enthroned divine Son (1:8), the audience are acquiring a heavenly “kingdom” (βασιλείαν) that is unshakable.<sup>18</sup>

Having been warned lest anyone be lacking of the “grace” (χάριτος) of God (12:15), and not to insult the Spirit of “grace (χάριτος)” (10:29), the audience, as those acquiring an unshakable heavenly kingdom, are exhorted, “let us have grace (χάριν)” (12:28). This reinforces the exhortation for us to approach then with boldness the throne of “grace” (χάριτος),

<sup>18</sup> Wilfried Eisele, *Ein unerschütterliches Reich: Die mittelplatonische Umformung des Parusiegedankens im Hebräerbrief* (BZNW 116; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003).



so that we may receive mercy and may find “grace” (χάριν) for timely help (4:16) from the Jesus who, by the “grace” (χάρτι) of God, tasted death on behalf of all (2:9). “Let us have” (ἔχωμεν) grace reaffirms the exhortation that we who have taken refuge “may have” (ἔχωμεν) a strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope lying ahead (6:18).

Acquiring an unshakable heavenly kingdom, with divine grace we may “offer worship” (λατρεύωμεν) pleasing “to God” (θεῷ) with reverence and awe (12:28). This bolsters again the assurance that the blood of Christ will cleanse our conscience from dead works to “offer worship” (λατρεύειν) “to God” (θεῷ) who is ever living (9:14). The exhortation for us to offer worship “pleasing” (εὐαρέστως) to God presupposes that we have the faith necessary to “please” (εὐαρεστίσαι) God (11:6), like Enoch, who was testified to have the faith that “pleased God (εὐαρεστηκέναι τῷ θεῷ)” (11:5). That we may offer worship pleasing to God with “reverence” (εὐλαβείας) and awe likens us to Noah, who became “reverent” (εὐλαβηθεῖς) toward God (11:7). It also likens us to the worshiping Jesus, who in the days of his flesh offered both prayers and supplications with strong outcrying and tears to the God able to save him from death, and he was heard from his “reverence (εὐλαβείας)” (5:7).<sup>19</sup>

The exhortation for us to have divine grace through which we may offer worship pleasing to God with reverence and awe (12:28) is emphatically punctuated with an allusion to Deut 4:24: “For indeed our God is a consuming fire!” (12:29). That our God is a “consuming fire” (πῦρ καταναλίσκον) resonates with the “blazing fire” (κεκαυμένῳ πυρὶ) of God’s ominous judgment at the terrifying event on Mount Sinai (12:18; cf. 6:8). It recalls the warning of a certain fearful expectation of divine judgment and “zeal of fire to devour” (πυρὸς ζῆλος ἐσθίειν) the adversaries (10:27), if we deliberately go on sinning (10:26).<sup>20</sup> But the audience have also been reminded that through faith the exemplary heroes of old quenched the power of “fire (πυρός)” (11:34). In addition, the audience have been assured that God made the angels, his spirits who minister in heavenly worship, a flame of

<sup>19</sup> According to Attridge (*Hebrews*, 383), the Greek phrase μετὰ εὐλαβείας καὶ δέους is a hendiadys—“with reverent awe”: “Reverence’ . . . is intensified by the latter term, ‘awe.’”

<sup>20</sup> Allen, *Deuteronomy*, 68 n. 142: “The link with 10:27 is compounded in that ἐσθίω (10:27) and καταναλίσκω (12:29; Deut 4:24) seem somewhat interchangeable.” Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 487: “The reference to fire evokes the theme of the judgment of God which is expressed through the symbol of fire in each of the prior warnings concerning apostasy (6:8; 10:27).” Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 692: “To speak of God as fire is to draw attention to one aspect of his being.”

“fire (πυρός)” (1:7) sent to assist those who are going to inherit eternal salvation in heaven (1:14).<sup>21</sup>

### C. Summary on Hebrews 12:12-29

When the audience hear near the beginning of this A'C' unit (12:12-29) the exhortation to pursue “peace” with all (12:14), they hear the catch word that signals the transition from the preceding A'D' unit (12:1-11). At the conclusion of that unit is a reference to the “peaceful” fruit of righteousness (12:11). The transition thus moves the focus of the audience from what is “peaceful” to “peace” itself.

At this point the audience also experience a macrochiastic progression of parallels from the A'C unit (10:31-39) to this A'C' unit (12:12-29), involving the adjective “fearful,” the noun “hands,” the verb “remain,” and the expression “living God.” According to the A'C unit, it is “fearful” to fall into the “hands” of the “living God” (10:31) and there is a better possession that “remains” (10:34). This progresses to the “hands” that have become weakened (12:12), to so “fearful” was what was appearing on Mount Sinai (12:21), to approaching Mount Zion as the city of the “living God” (12:22), and to the things not being shaken that “remain” (12:27) in the A'C' unit.

In addition, at the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the AC (2:1-4) and A'C' (12:12-29) units provided by the only occurrences in Hebrews of the verb “to escape.” That those refusing the one warning on earth, did not “escape” (12:25) makes even more poignant the question of how will we “escape,” neglecting so great a salvation (2:3).

After the central and unparalleled element of this chiastic unit, namely, “Moses said” (12:21b), the audience experience a pivot of parallels from the statement that so “fearful” was what was appearing on Mount Sinai (12:21a) to the scriptural declaration from Deut 9:19 that Moses was “terrified” and trembling (12:21c).

The audience are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels. It begins with the notice that you have not “approached” for worship what is to be felt on Mount Sinai. This includes a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a whirlwind and a blast of a trumpet and “voice” of divine

<sup>21</sup> Victor Rhee, “Chiasm and the Concept of Faith in Hebrews 12:1-29,” *WTJ* 63 (2001): 269-84.

pronouncements, which those who heard “refused,” lest a word be added for them, for they could not bear what was ordered, “If even an animal touch the *mountain*, it shall be stoned (Exod 19:12-13)” (12:18-20).

It concludes with the assurance that you have rather “approached” for worship at *Mount Zion* and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. The audience have also approached myriads of angels in full festal gathering, and the assembly of the firstborn enrolled in heaven, and God, the judge of all, and the spirits of just ones made perfect, and Jesus, guarantor of a new covenant, and the blood of the sprinkling that speaks better beyond Abel. The audience are thus to take note not to “refuse” the one who is speaking! For if they, “refusing” the one warning on earth, did not escape, much more we who turn away the one from heaven, whose “voice” shook the earth then, but now he has promised, saying, “Once more I will stir up not only the earth but also the heaven” (Hag 2:6). The “once more” indicates the change of the things being shaken as things that have been made on earth, so that the things not being shaken may remain in heaven (12:22-27).

Finally, the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, that begins with the exhortation that “therefore” they are to restore the hands that have become weakened and the knees that have become “paralyzed” (Isa 35:3), and make straight paths for their feet (Prov 4:26), that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather may be healed. Peace they are to pursue with all, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord, seeing to it lest anyone be lacking of the “grace” of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up may cause trouble (Deut 29:17) and through it many may become defiled, lest anyone be immoral or profane like Esau, who for a single meal gave back his own rights as firstborn. For, as they know, afterwards, wanting to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he did not find a place for repentance, although with tears he sought the blessing (12:12-17).

It concludes with the exhortation that “therefore,” “acquiring” an unshakable heavenly kingdom, let us have “grace,” through which we may offer worship pleasing to God with reverence and awe. For indeed our God “is a consuming fire! (Deut 4:24)” (12:28-29). But the threat of this consuming “fire” can be quenched by the faith (11:34) of the audience assisted by the angels God made a flame of “fire” (1:7), his spirits who are ministers in heavenly worship, sent to assist those who are going to inherit eternal salvation in heaven (1:14).

## Hebrews 13:1-16

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- A <sup>13:1</sup> Let the brotherly love remain. <sup>2</sup> Hospitality *do not neglect*, for through it some have unknowingly entertained as strangers angels. <sup>3</sup> Remember the prisoners as fellow-imprisoned, the maltreated as you yourselves are also in the body. <sup>4</sup> Marriage is to be honored among all and the marriage bed undefiled, for *God* will judge the immoral and adulterers. <sup>5</sup> Your manner is to be without the love of money, being content with things present, for he has said, “You never will I leave and you never will I abandon” (Deut 31:6), <sup>6</sup>so that we may have courage to say, “The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid, what will a man do to me” (Ps 117:6)? <sup>7</sup> Remember your leaders, who spoke to you the word of *God*; observing the outcome of their conduct, imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ yesterday and today is the same and for the ages. <sup>9a</sup> Do not be carried away by various and strange teachings.
- B <sup>9b</sup> For it is beneficent for the heart to be confirmed by grace, not by foods in which those conducting themselves have not benefited. <sup>10</sup> *We have* an altar from which those offering worship in the tabernacle do not have a right to eat.
- C <sup>11</sup> For the *blood* of the animals as a sin offering is *borne* into “the *holy things*” through the high priest; their bodies are burned *outside of the camp*.
- D <sup>12a</sup> Therefore also Jesus,
- C' <sup>12b</sup> that he might *make holy* the people through his own *blood*, suffered outside of the gate. <sup>13</sup> Hence let us go out to him *outside of the camp*, bearing his reproach.
- B' <sup>14</sup> For *we have* not here a city that remains, but we are seeking the one that is to come.
- A' <sup>15</sup> Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to *God*, that is, the fruit of lips confessing his name. <sup>16</sup> The doing of good and fellowship *do not neglect*, for with such sacrifices *God* is pleased.

## A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 13:1-16

At the conclusion of the A'C' unit (12:12-29) is a reference to “God” in the warning that “indeed our God (θεός) is a consuming fire” (12:29). Near the beginning of the following A'B' unit (13:1-16) is the next reference to “God” in the warning that “God (θεός) will judge the immoral and adulterers” (13:4). These consecutive occurrences of “God” thus serve as the transitional catch words connecting these units as they retain a focus on divine judgment.

The only occurrences in Hebrews of the command “do not neglect” and in this unit of the term “God” establish the parallels for the A (13:1-9a) and A' (13:15-16) elements of this chiastic unit. “Hospitality do not neglect (μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε)” occurs in 13:2 and “fellowship do not neglect (μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε)” in 13:16. “God (ὁ θεός) will judge the immoral and adulterers” occurs in 13:4 and “the word of God (θεοῦ)” in 13:7, while “let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God (θεῷ)” occurs in 13:15 and “with such sacrifices God (ὁ θεός) is pleased” in 13:16. The only occurrences in this unit of the verbal form “we have” determine the parallels for the B (13:9b-10) and B' (13:14) elements—“we have (ἔχομεν) an altar” in 13:10 and “we have (ἔχομεν) not here a city that remains” in 13:14.

The only occurrences in this unit of the term “blood,” of an expression for “bearing,” of a term for “holy,” and in Hebrews of the phrase “outside of the camp” form the parallels for the C (13:11) and C' (13:12b-13) elements. “The blood (αἷμα) of the animals” occurs in 13:11 and “through his own blood (αἵματος)” in 13:12b. “A sin offering is borne (εἰσφέρεται)” occurs in 13:11 and “bearing (φέροντες) his reproach” in 13:13. “The holy things (ἅγια)” occurs in 13:11 and “that he might make holy (ἀγιάσῃ) the people” in 13:12b. “Their bodies are burned outside of the camp (ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς)” occurs in 13:11 and “let us go out to him outside of the camp (ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς)” in 13:13. Finally, the central and unparallelled D (13:12a) element features the only occurrence in this unit of the coordinating conjunction “therefore”—“therefore (διό) also Jesus.”

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the A'B (10:15-30) and A'B' (13:1-16) units provided by expressions for “heart,” “remember,” “abandon,” “make holy,” and “will judge.” Noteworthy is that these are the only occurrences in Hebrews of the verbal forms for “abandon” and “will judge.”

In the A'B unit are references to “giving my laws upon their hearts (καρδίας)” (10:16) and to approaching “with a true heart (καρδίας) in assurance of faith, sprinkled with regard to the hearts (καρδίας)” (10:22). And in the A'B' unit is a statement that “it is beneficent for the heart (καρδιαν) to be confirmed by grace” (13:9). In the A'B unit is the promise that “their sins and lawless deeds I certainly will remember (μνησθήσομαι) no longer” (10:17). And in the A'B' unit are the commands to “remember (μνησθεσθε) the prisoners” (13:3) and to “remember (μνημονεύετε) your leaders” (13:7). In the A'B unit is a reference to “not abandoning (ἐγκαταλείποντες) our own gathering” (10:25). And in the A'B' unit is God’s promise that “you never will I abandon (ἐγκαταλίπω)” (13:5). In the A'B unit is a reference to “the blood of the covenant in which he was made holy (ἡγιάσθη)” (10:29). And in the A'B' unit is a reference to “the holy things (ἅγια)” (13:11) and the statement that Jesus “might make holy (ἁγιάση)” (13:12). In the A'B unit is the warning that “the Lord will judge (κρινεῖ) his people” (10:30). And in the A'B' unit is the warning that “God will judge (κρινεῖ) the immoral and adulterers” (13:4).

In addition, at the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the AB (1:5-14) and A'B' (13:1-16) units provided by the expression “the same.” In the AB unit is the statement directed to the divine Son that “you are the same (ὁ αὐτός) and your years will not cease” (1:12). And in the A'B' unit is the statement that “Jesus Christ yesterday and today is the same (ὁ αὐτός) and for the ages” (13:8).

With regard to the third macrochiastic level, this A'a'b' unit (13:1-16) exhibits a parallel relationship with the A'a'b unit (12:1-11). The parallels are indicated by the only occurrences in Hebrews of the term “fruit.” After the central and pivotal A'a'c unit (12:12-29) with its assurance that the audience have approached for worship at the heavenly city of the living God, “the peaceful fruit (καρπὸν) of righteousness” (12:11) is paralleled by “the fruit (καρπὸν) of lips confessing his name” (13:15).

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 13:1-16

### 1. *Heb 13:1-9a (A): Hospitality Do Not Neglect*

The audience hear the A (13:1-9a) element of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) Let the brotherly love remain. *Hospitality* do not neglect, for through it some have unknowingly *entertained as strangers* angels (13:1-2).
- b) *Remember* the prisoners as fellow-imprisoned, the maltreated as you yourselves are also in the body. Marriage is to be honored among all and the marriage bed undefiled, for God will judge the immoral and adulterers. Your manner is to be without the love of money, being content with things present, for *he* has *said* (13:3-5a),
- c) “*You never* will I leave (13:5b)
- d) and (13:5c)
- c') *you never* will I abandon (Deut 31:6)” (13:5d),
- b') so that we may have courage to *say*, “The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid, what will a man do to me” (Ps 117:6)? *Remember* your leaders, who spoke to you the word of *God*; observing the outcome of their conduct, imitate their faith. Jesus Christ yesterday and today is the *same* and for the ages (13:6-8).
- a') Do not be carried away by various and *strange* teachings (13:9a).

After the unparalleled “d” sub-element (13:5c), with the only occurrence in this sub-unit of the conjunction οὐδέ (“and”), the audience experience a pivot of parallels, involving the only occurrences in Hebrews of the phrase “you never,” from the “c” to the “c'” sub-elements. God’s scriptural promise that “you never (οὐ μή σε) will I leave” (13:5b) progresses to his promise that “you never (οὐ μή σε) will I abandon” (13:5d). The audience then hear a progression, via the chiasmic parallels involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of expressions for “remember,” of the verb to “say,” and of the third person masculine singular intensive pronoun, from the “b” to the “b'” sub-elements. The command to “remember (μνησθε) the prisoners” (13:3) progresses to the command to “remember (μνημονεύετε) your leaders” (13:7), and “for he (αὐτός) has said (εἶρηκεν)” (13:5a) progresses to “so that we may have the courage to say (λέγειν)” (13:6) and “Jesus Christ yesterday and today is the same (αὐτός)” (13:8).

Finally, the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of expressions having to do with being “strange” or a “stranger,” from the “a” to the “a'” sub-elements. “Hospitality (φιλοξενίας) do not neglect, for through it some have unknowingly entertained as strangers (ξενίσαντες) angels” (13:2) progresses to “do not be carried away by various and strange (ξέναις) teachings” (13:9a).

The audience, who are among those designated as “brothers” of Jesus (2:11-12, 17) and who have been addressed as “brothers” (ἀδελφοί) several

times (3:1, 12; 10:19), are now exhorted to let “brotherly love” (φιλαδελφία) remain (13:1). That they are to let brotherly love “remain” (μέντω) gives it a permanent character of continuing forever. It resonates with the unshakable heavenly things that may “remain” (μείνη) forever (12:27), with the better possession of the audience that “remains” (μένουσιν) forever (10:34), with the permanent priesthood of Jesus who “remains” (μένειν) forever (7:24), and with Melchizedek who “remains” (μένει) a priest for all time (7:3).

“Hospitality,” literally “love of strangers” (φιλοξενίας), alliteratively conjoined to “brotherly love (φιλαδελφία)” (13:1), the audience are not to neglect, for through it some have unknowingly “entertained as strangers” (ξενίσαντες) angels sent as messengers from God (13:2).<sup>1</sup> That they are not to “neglect” (ἐπιλανθάνεσθε) hospitality to strangers strengthens the assurance that God is not unjust so as to “neglect” (ἐπιλαθέσθαι) their work and the love which they demonstrated for his name, having assisted the holy ones, and continuing to assist them (6:10).

In resonance with the God who, according to Ps 8:5, “remembers” (μνησκή) human beings (2:6), and who promises, according to Jer 38:34, that their sins “I will certainly remember (μνησθῶ) no longer” (8:12), indeed their sins and their lawless deeds “I certainly will remember (μνησθήσομαι) no longer” (10:17), the audience are to “remember” (μνησκεισθε) the prisoners as fellow-imprisoned (13:3). That they are to remember with a compassionate concern the “prisoners” (δεσμίων) as those who are “fellow-imprisoned” (συνδεδεμένοι) recalls that they suffered with the “prisoners” (δεσμίοις) and accepted the confiscation of their possessions with joy, knowing that they have a better possession that remains (10:34).

They are also to remember the “maltreated” (κακουχουμένων), those who were “maltreated” (κακουχούμενοι) like the ancient models of faith (11:37), as they themselves are also in the body (13:3). For the audience to

<sup>1</sup> Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 511: “[H]ospitality to strangers (φιλοξενία) is the corollary of brotherly love (φιλαδελφία). The extension of hospitality provided a practical measure for identifying with brothers and sisters, including many who were as yet unknown (6:10).” Koester, *Hebrews*, 558: “Abraham and Sarah provided food, water, and a place to rest for the three strangers who proved to be messengers of God (Gen 18:1-8; cf. 19:1-14; Judg 6:11-18; 13:3-22; Tob 12:1-20). Encountering a divine messenger in disguise was also a Greco-Roman motif.” Johnson, *Hebrews*, 340: “The point for the hearers of this discourse is clear: they must be willing to extend hospitality to all strangers, for they can never know what manner of visitation from God the strangers might bring.” See also Michael Theobald, “‘Vergesst die Gastfreundschaft nicht!’ (Hebr 13,2): Biblische Perspektiven zu einem ekklesiologisch zentralen Thema,” *TQ* 186 (2006): 190-212.



remember with compassionate concern the maltreated who share the same kind of physical “body” (σώματι) is appropriate for them as those washed with regard to the “body” (σῶμα) by clean water (10:22). They also have been made holy through the offering of the “body” (σώματος) of Jesus Christ once for all (10:10), the Jesus Christ whose scriptural voice from Ps 39:7 declared to God that “a body (σῶμα) you provided for me” (10:5). Remembering those maltreated thus presents the audience with an opportunity to use their own physical bodies, likewise provided for them by God, in a self-sacrificial way similar to that of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Marriage is to be honored among “all” (πᾶσιν), as is appropriate for “all” (πᾶσιν) those who obey Jesus as their source of eternal salvation (5:9), and the marriage bed is to be “undefiled (ἁμίαντος)” (13:4a), in accord with Jesus being our “undefiled” (ἁμίαντος) high priest (7:26). For, as the audience are warned, God will judge adulterers and the “immoral (πόρνους)” (13:4b), like the “immoral” (πόρνος) Esau, who for a single meal gave back his own rights as firstborn (12:16). That God himself, with the term “God” in an emphatic position at the end of the sentence, “will judge” (κρινεῖ) the immoral and adulterers intensifies the scriptural warning from Deut 32:36 that the Lord “will judge” (κρινεῖ) his people (10:30).

In alliterative accord but in contrast with their “brotherly love (φιλαδελφία)” (13:1) and “love of strangers (φιλοξενίας)” (13:2), the manner or way of life of the audience is to be “without the love of money (ἀφιλάργυρος)” (13:5). In correlation with the notice that all discipline, when it is “present” (παρόν), does not seem to be of joy but of sorrow, but later it gives back the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained through it (12:11), the audience are to be content with things “present (παροῦσιν)” (13:5).

This exhortation regarding the conduct of the audience (13:1-5), especially their being content with things “present,” is given added motivation by the scriptural voice of God himself in the assuring divine promise from Deut 31:6.<sup>3</sup> For “he” (αὐτός) himself, intensifying the emphasis upon God himself (13:4), has definitively “said” (εἶρηκεν in perfect tense; cf. 1:13; 4:3-4; 10:9) to his people, addressed as a whole in the communal singular with a most definite form of negation, “You never (οὐ μή σε) will I leave

<sup>2</sup> E. Seitz, “Das doppelte ὡς (Zu Hebr 13,3),” *BZ* 45 (2001): 251–55.

<sup>3</sup> For the argument that Deut 31:6 is the most likely source for Heb 13:5, see Allen, *Deuteronomy*, 68–71.

(ἀνῶ).”<sup>4</sup> In other words, God emphatically and decidedly promises never to leave or desert, but to be always appropriately “present” to every individual in the audience as those content with things “present (παροῦσιν)” (13:5). The determined intensification of this divine scriptural promise, “and you never (οὐ μή σε) will I abandon (ἐγκαταλίπω)” (13:5), reinforces the exhortation for the audience not to be “abandoning” (ἐγκαταλείποντες) their own gathering for communal worship (10:25).

In response to the divine scriptural promise that God will never leave nor abandon “you (σε)” in the singular (13:5), the audience as a whole are exhorted to have the courage to pronounce Ps 117:6 with its corresponding communal singular, “The Lord is my (ἐμοί) helper, I will not be afraid, what will a man do to me?” (13:6).<sup>5</sup> This scriptural affirmation that the “Lord” (κύριος) is “my” helper reverberates with the scriptural proclamation by God himself from Deut 32:35-36, “Mine (ἐμοί) is vengeance, I will repay” and again, “The Lord (κύριος) will judge his people” (10:30). That the Lord is my “helper” (βοηθός) reinforces the exhortation for the audience to approach with boldness the throne of grace in worship, so that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely “help (βοήθειαν)” (4:16). It also bolsters the assurance that the Lord Jesus is able to “help” (βοηθῆσαι) those who are being tested (2:18).

The scriptural resolve that “I will not be afraid (φοβηθήσομαι)” (13:6) resonates with the model of faith provided by Moses not being “afraid” (φοβηθείς) of the fury of the king (11:27), just as his parents by faith were not “afraid” (ἐφοβήθησαν) of the edict of the king (11:23). This lack of fear based on the powerful promise of divine presence reinforces the need for fear with regard to God in the exhortation for us to be “afraid” (φοβηθῶμεν) lest, while the promise to enter into God’s own heavenly rest is left, anyone seem to have been lacking (4:1). The scriptural resolve that “I will not be afraid” is completed by the rhetorical query, “what will a man do to me (τί ποιήσει μοι ἄνθρωπος)?” (13:6), underlining the elimination of the fear of what is merely human in light of the overwhelming superiority of the divine promise. This expression of the total transcendence of God above mere human beings thus resonates with the similar rhetorical query

<sup>4</sup> Allen, *Deuteronomy*, 69-70: “[C]oupled with the emphatic αὐτός, the use of the 1st person adds extra significance to an already weighty promise. . . . The completed sense of the perfect εἶρηκεν may also increase the surety of the promise” (n. 154).

<sup>5</sup> Gert Jacobus Steyn, “The Occurrence of Psalm 118(117):6 in Hebrews 13:6: Possible Liturgical Origins?” *Neot* 40 (2006): 119-34.

addressed directly to God from Ps 8:5, “what is man (τί ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος) that you remember him?” (2:6).

Whereas the audience are to “remember” (μυμνήσκεσθε) with compassionate concern the prisoners (13:3), they are to “remember” (μνημονεύετε) the model provided them by their leaders (13:7). They spoke to the audience the word of “the God” (τοῦ θεοῦ), “the God” (ὁ θεός) who will judge the immoral and adulterers (13:4). “The word of God (τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ)” their leaders spoken to them (13:7) is “the word of God” (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ) that is living and effective and sharper than every two-edged sword and penetrating as far as a division of soul and spirit, as well as of joints and marrow, and able to scrutinize deliberations and thoughts of the heart (4:12). Such a “word of God” demands in return a “word” of response from the audience (4:13). By observing the outcome of their conduct, the audience are not only to “remember” (μνημονεύετε) their leaders but to “imitate” (μιμεῖσθε) their faith (13:7), with the close connection between “remembering” and “imitating” enhanced by their alliteration in Greek. The audience are to imitate the “faith” (πίστιν) of their leaders who, together with the stellar OT models of faith (11:1-40), exemplify the scriptural dictum from Hab 2:4 that God’s just one from “faith” (πίστεως) will live (10:38).<sup>6</sup>

The scriptural promise of God’s abiding presence with the audience, emphatically introduced with the intensive pronoun “he” (αὐτός) has said (13:5), is reinforced by the reassuring affirmation that Jesus Christ yesterday and today is the “same” (αὐτός) and for the ages (13:8). That “Jesus Christ” (Ἰησοῦς Χριστός) is the same from the past to the present and for the ages to come reminds the audience that we have been and still are made holy for the worship of God through the past offering of the body of “Jesus Christ” (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) once for all (10:10).<sup>7</sup> That Jesus Christ is the same “for the ages” (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας) strongly restates the eternal character of Jesus Christ, who is the divine Son and our heavenly high priest “forever (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα)” (1:8; 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21, 24, 28), the one through whom God made “the ages (τοὺς αἰῶνας)” (1:2; 11:3).

Already given an initial foundation of “teaching” (διδασκῆς) about baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment (6:2), the audience are not to be carried away by various

<sup>6</sup> David M. Allen, “Constructing ‘Janus-Faced’ Exhortations: The Use of Old Testament Narratives in Heb 13,1-8,” *Bib* 89 (2008): 401-9.

<sup>7</sup> This is the only previous instance in Hebrews of the designation “Jesus Christ.”

and strange “teachings (διδαχαίς)” (13:9a). In contrast to the “various” (ποικίλαις) acts of power and distributions of the Holy Spirit by which God testified to our great salvation (2:4), the audience are not to be carried away by “various” (ποικίλαις) and strange teachings. Whereas the audience are not to neglect hospitality, that is, the “love of strangers” (φιλοξενίας), since through it some have unknowingly “entertained as strangers” (ξενίσαντες) angels (13:2), they are not to be carried away by various and “strange” (ξέναις) teachings. Such “strange” teachings are not in accord with the heavenly calling of those who are “strangers” (ξένοι) and sojourners on earth (11:13).

2. *Heb 13:9b-10 (B): We Have an Altar from Which We Have a Right to Eat*

The audience are further informed about the privileges of their heavenly worship: “For it is beneficent for the heart to be confirmed by grace, not by foods in which those conducting themselves have not benefited. We have an altar from which those offering worship in the tabernacle do not have a right to eat” (13:9b-10).

The audience are those whose faculties have been trained for distinguishing of the “beneficent” (καλοῦ) and of the baneful (5:14), who have tasted the “beneficent” (καλόν) pronouncement of God (6:5), and who have been exhorted to stir up love and “beneficent” (καλῶν) works (10:24). For them it is “beneficent” (καλόν) for the heart to be confirmed by grace, not by foods in which those conducting themselves have not benefited (13:9b). It is beneficent for the heart to be “confirmed” (βεβαιουῖσθαι) by grace, just as our great salvation was “confirmed” (ἐβεβαιώθη) by those who heard (2:3). And it is beneficent for the heart to be confirmed by “grace” (χάρτι). This recalls the “grace” (χάρτι) of God by which Jesus tasted death on behalf of all (2:9), the “grace” (χάριν) we may find for timely help in approaching the throne of “grace (χάριτος)” (4:16), the “grace” (χάριτος) whose Spirit is not to be insulted (10:29), the “grace” (χάριτος) of God that none should be lacking (12:15). It especially recalls the “grace” (χάριν) we are to have, through which we may offer worship pleasing to God with reverence and awe (12:28).

It is beneficent for the heart of the audience to be confirmed by the grace of God rather than by “foods” (βρώμασιν) in which those conducting

themselves have not benefited (13:9b), the “foods” (βρώμασιν) on the basis of which (9:10) gifts and sacrifices are offered in the earthly tabernacle that are not able according to conscience to make perfect the one offering worship (9:9).<sup>8</sup> The word for hearing did not “benefit” (ὠφέλησεν) the disobedient and unfaithful ancestors in the wilderness (4:2). And the former commandment of the law that made nothing perfect (7:19) was removed because of its weakness and “uselessness (ἀνωφελές)” (7:18)—its failure to be of “benefit” for salvation. Similarly, those concerned with these foods have not “benefited” (ὠφελήθησαν) from them.

“We have” (ἔχομεν) an altar from which those offering worship in the tabernacle do not have a right to eat (13:10). This resonates with the assertions that in Jesus “we have” (ἔχομεν) a heavenly high priest able to sympathize with our weaknesses (4:15; cf. 4:14). Indeed, in Jesus “we have” (ἔχομεν) an anchor of the soul, both sure and firm, which enters into the interior of the heavenly veil (6:19). And in Jesus “we have” (ἔχομεν) a high priest who sat at the right of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens (8:1). Although Jesus sprang up from the tribe of Judah from which no one attended to an “altar” (θυσιαστηρίῳ) on earth (7:13), in him as our heavenly high priest we have an “altar” (θυσιαστήριον) in heaven. Whereas those of the sons of Levi who receive the priesthood on earth “have” (ἔχουσιν) a commandment to tithe the people according to the law (7:5), those offering worship in the earthly tabernacle “have” (ἔχουσιν) no right to eat from the heavenly altar that “we have” (ἔχομεν).

Those “offering worship” (λατρεύοντες) in the earthly “tabernacle (σκηνῇ)” (13:10) are those who “offer worship” (λατρεύουσιν) in a pattern and shadow of the heavenly things according to which Moses made the earthly “tabernacle (σκηνήν)” (8:5). While the first, earthly, “tabernacle” (σκηνῆς) had standing (9:8), both gifts and sacrifices were offered that were not able according to conscience to make perfect the one “offering worship (λατρεύοντα)” (9:9; cf. 10:2). But we are privileged not only to have a heavenly altar from which those offering earthly worship have no right to eat, but to “have grace” (cf. 13:8), through which we may “offer wor-

<sup>8</sup> Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 535: “The terms βρώμασιν, ‘[prescribed] foods,’ and ἐν οἷς . . . οἱ περιπατοῦντες, ‘those who walk in them,’ are appropriate to halakhic food regulations and to the connection between v 9 and v 10, with its reference to the possession of an altar and eating. The allusion is to the eating of prescribed foods within a Jewish cultic setting. Those who framed their conduct by such ceremonial meals, then, are Jewish. Such observances have not brought them the eschatological salvation, the writer insists.”

ship” (λατρεύμεν) pleasing to the living God with reverence and awe in the heavenly tabernacle (12:28; cf. 9:14).<sup>9</sup>

### 3. *Heb 13:11 (C): The Bodies of Sacrificial Animals Are Burned Outside of the Camp*

The audience are reminded of another detail regarding sacrificial worship in the earthly tabernacle: “For the blood of the animals as a sin offering is borne into ‘the holy things’ through the high priest; their bodies are burned outside of the camp” (13:11). That the “blood” (αἷμα) of the animals as a “sin offering” (ἁμαρτίας) is borne “into the holy things” (εἰς τὰ ἅγια) on earth through the “high priest” (ἀρχιερέως) recalls that the “high priest” (ἀρχιερεύς) enters “into the holy things” (εἰς τὰ ἅγια) each year with “blood” (αἵματι) not his own (9:25). But it is impossible for the “blood” (αἷμα) of bulls and goats to take away “sins (ἁμαρτίας)” (10:4). However, not through the “blood” (αἵματος) of goats and calves but through his own “blood” (αἷματος) Christ the high priest entered once for all “into the holy things” (εἰς τὰ ἅγια) in heaven, finding eternal redemption (9:12), our great salvation (2:3).

The “bodies” (σώματα) of these sacrificial animals are burned outside of the camp (13:11; cf. Lev 16:27).<sup>10</sup> But we have been made holy through

<sup>9</sup> Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 539: “‘Eating from the altar’ is a figurative expression for participating in the sacrifice. The act of eating from the altar in Jerusalem gave those who participated in the meal a share in what had transpired on the altar. The declaration that the adherents of the old cultus have no right to eat from the altar asserts that they have no share in the sacrifice of Christ on Golgotha and are excluded from its benefits. Participation in the efficacy of Jesus’ sacrifice is limited to those who recognize in the cross-event the source of the grace by which the heart is strengthened.” With regard to a eucharistic allusion here, DeSilva (*Perseverance*, 499-500) remarks: “For hearers accustomed to participating in this ritual [Eucharist], an allusion to it in 13:10 is unavoidable and has the potential to enrich their understanding of that meal and to safeguard them against an overly materialistic interpretation of its power and significance (as the author has laid ample stress on the once-for-all and unrepeatable quality of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross). Nevertheless, it is a resonance that the author will himself neither develop nor exclude.” See also S. Ruager, “‘Wir haben einen Altar’ (Hebr 13,10): Einige Überlegungen zum Thema: Gottesdienst/Abendmahl im Hebräerbrief,” *KD* 36 (1990): 72-77; Marie E. Isaacs, “Hebrews 13,9-16 Revisited,” *NTS* 43 (1997): 268-84.

<sup>10</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 713: “The key phrase ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς is transferred to the end of the sentence for emphasis . . . Παρεμβολή is used here and in v. 13 of the camp of Israel on the march to the promised land.” Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, 540: “In Lev 16:27 it is specified that both animals, whose blood has been brought into the sanctuary for the

the offering of the “body” (σώματος) of Jesus Christ once for all (10:10), the “body” (σῶμα) that God, who did not want sacrifice and offering of animals, provided him (10:5). He offered his own body as a sacrifice on behalf of the audience, who are also in their own “body (σώματι)” (13:3) provided to them by God, and who have been washed with regard to the “body” (σῶμα) by clean water (10:22).

*4. Heb 13:12a (D): Therefore Also Jesus*

The attention of the audience is turned to Jesus for a comparison with earthly worship: “Therefore also Jesus” (13:12a). The audience are now to focus on “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς) as subject. “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς) Christ is the same yesterday and today and for the ages (13:8). “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς) has become the surety of a better covenant (7:22). And “Jesus” (Ἰησοῦς), as forerunner on behalf of us, entered into the interior of the heavenly veil, having become high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (6:20).

*5. Heb 13:12b-13 (C'): Go Out to Jesus Outside of the Camp Bearing His Reproach*

The significance of Jesus’ self-offering is drawn out for the audience: “that he might make holy the people through his own blood, suffered outside of the gate. Hence let us go out to him outside of the camp, bearing his reproach” (13:12b-13). At this point, after the central and unparalleled D element, “therefore also Jesus” (13:12a), the audience experience a pivot of parallels from the C (13:11) to the C' (13:12b-13) elements of this chiasmic unit. “The blood (αἷμα) of the animals” (13:11) progresses to “his own blood (αἵματος)” (13:12b). “A sin offering is borne (εἰσφέρεται)” (13:11) progresses to “bearing (φέροντες) his reproach” (13:13). “Into ‘the holy things (ἅγια)’ through the high priest” (13:11) progresses to “that he might make holy (ἁγιάσῃ) the people” (13:12b). And “their bodies are burned

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atonement ritual (Lev 16:11-19), may not be used as sacrificial food (cf. Lev 6:30); their remains must be taken outside the holy precinct of the camp for disposal in a region of cultic impurity by servants of the tabernacle (cf. Lev 16:28). The carcasses of the young bull and the goat were to be burned to prevent their remains from being eaten (cf. Exod 29:14; Ezek 43:21).”

outside of the camp (ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς) (13:11) progresses to “let us go out to him outside of the camp (ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς)” (13:13).

In contrast to the “blood” (αἷμα) of the animals that is borne as a sin offering “into the holy things” (εἰς τὰ ἅγια) on earth through the high priest (13:11), Jesus, as the heavenly high priest, was to “make holy” (ἀγιάσει) the people “through his own blood (διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος)” (13:12). This fortifies the assurance for the audience that, because not through the “blood” (αἷματος) of goats and calves “but through his own blood” (διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος) Jesus entered once for all “into the holy things” (εἰς τὰ ἅγια) in heaven, finding eternal redemption (9:12). Whereas the “blood” (αἷμα) of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of a heifer’s ashes makes holy those defiled for the cleansing of the flesh (9:13), how much more will the “blood” (αἷμα) of the Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14).

That Jesus might make holy “the people” (τὸν λαόν) through his own “blood” (αἷματος) (13:12), “the people” (τὸν λαόν) of God whom the divine Lord will judge (10:30), underscores his status as a high priest, who not without “blood” (αἷματος) offers on behalf of the inadvertent sins of “the people (τοῦ λαοῦ)” (9:7; cf. 5:3). Jesus, however, is a heavenly high priest who does not have each day a necessity, in contrast to the earthly high priests, first on behalf of his own sins to offer up sacrifices then of “the people” (τοῦ λαοῦ), for this he did once for all having offered up himself (7:27). Indeed, Jesus became a merciful and faithful high priest in things regarding God in order to expiate the sins of “the people” (τοῦ λαοῦ) of God (2:17).

In order that he might make holy the people through his own blood, Jesus “suffered” (ἔπαθεν) outside of the gate of the city of Jerusalem (13:12). This recalls for the audience that it was not necessary for him repeatedly to “suffer” (παθεῖν) from the founding of the world, since he has now appeared at the completion of the ages for the removal of sin through his sacrifice (9:26). It reminds them that although being a son, he learned from the things he “suffered” (ἔπαθεν) obedience (5:8). Indeed, in what he himself “suffered” (πέπονθεν) in being tested, those who are being tested he is able to help (2:18).

In contrast to all of those who “came out” (ἐξελθόντες) of Egypt through Moses, but rebelled against God (3:16), and to the Levitical priests who tithe their own people, although they have “come out” (ἐξεληλυθότας)



from the loins of Abraham (7:5), the audience are now exhorted, “let us go out” (ἐξερχώμεθα) to Jesus outside of the camp, bearing his reproach (13:13). A model for the faith they will need for this has been provided for them by the faith of Abraham who, being called by God, obeyed “to go out” (ἐξελθεῖν) to a place which he was about to receive as an inheritance, and he “went out” (ἐξῆλθεν) not knowing where he was going (11:8). They are to go out “to him” (πρὸς αὐτόν) as the eternal high priest and divine Son of God. This means “to him” (πρὸς αὐτόν) as the Jesus to whom the scriptural voice of God proclaimed, “The Lord has sworn and will not change, ‘You are a priest forever (Ps 109:4)’” (7:21), and “to him” (πρὸς αὐτόν) as the Jesus to whom the scriptural voice of God proclaimed, “Son of mine are you, I today have begotten you (Ps 2:7)” (5:5).

Whereas the bodies of the animals offered in sacrifice are burned “outside of the camp (ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς)” (13:11), Jesus suffered the offering of his own body and blood “outside of the gate (ἔξω τῆς πύλης)” (13:12).<sup>11</sup> The audience, then, are to go out to him “outside of the camp” (ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς), that is, outside of the confines of their own sacred community, bearing his reproach (13:13).<sup>12</sup> A model for the audience to bear his “reproach” (ὀνειδισμόν) has been provided by Moses who considered greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt the “reproach” (ὀνειδισμόν) of the Christ, for he was looking away to the heavenly recompense (11:26). The audience, who have already been publicly exposed to “reproaches” (ὀνειδισμοῖς) and afflictions (10:33), are now exhorted to persevere in bearing the “reproach” of Jesus.

In contrast to those who could not “bear” (ἔφερον) what was ordered by the terrifying divine pronouncement on Mount Sinai (12:20), the audience are to go outside of the camp, “bearing” (φέροντες) the reproach of

<sup>11</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews*, 348-49: “If Jesus had acted out a ritual imitation of the ancient cult, his blood would have been spilled in the temple and his body burned outside the gate. But here it is all one act: his despised rejection and death outside the gate is itself an entering into the heavenly sanctuary (through the veil of his flesh), and an eternal offering for the sanctification of the people.”

<sup>12</sup> Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 542-43: “The repetition of the phrase ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς, ‘outside the camp,’ has the effect of tying v 13 narrowly to v 11 (‘outside the camp’) and to v 12 (‘outside the gate’). It shows that the homiletical comparison in vv 11-12 was drawn in the service of this moving exhortation. The allusion to Lev 16:27 in v 11 serves to clarify the significance of the fact that Jesus suffered death by crucifixion ‘outside the gate’ (v 12) and furnishes the basis for the admonition to follow him ‘outside the camp, bearing the shame he bore.’ . . . The task of the community is to emulate Jesus, leaving behind the security, congeniality, and respectability of the sacred enclosure, risking the reproach that fell upon him.”

Jesus (13:13). They are to “bear” the reproach of the Jesus whose death was “borne” (φέρεισθαι) by himself as the one who covenanted in the establishment of the new covenant (9:16). They are to “bear” this reproach as those exhorted that “we bear” (φέρωμεθα) forward toward the “perfection (τελειότητα)” (6:1) provided by Jesus, who is “bearing” (φέρων) up all things by the pronouncement of the power of God (1:3), the Jesus who, as the “perfecter” (τελειωτήν) of the faith, and for the sake of the joy lying ahead of him, endured the cross, despising its shame (12:2).<sup>13</sup>

#### 6. *Heb 13:14 (B')*: *For We Have Not Here a City That Remains*

Motivation is provided for going out to Jesus outside of the camp, bearing his reproach (13:13): “For we have not here a city that remains, but we are seeking the one that is to come” (13:14). At this point the audience experience a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from the B (13:9b-10) to the B' (13:14) elements of this chiastic unit. The assertion that “we have (ἔχομεν) an altar from which those offering worship in the tabernacle do not have a right to eat” (13:10) progresses to the admission that “we have (ἔχομεν) not here a city that remains” (13:14).

Although in Jesus “we have” (ἔχομεν) a heavenly high priest (4:15; 8:1) and “we have” (ἔχομεν) a heavenly anchor of the soul (6:19), and although “we have” (ἔχομεν) a heavenly altar from which those offering worship in the tabernacle do not have a right to eat (13:10), “we have” (ἔχομεν) not here on earth a city that remains (13:14a). Melchizedek “remains” (μένει) a priest for all time (7:3). Jesus has the priesthood that is permanent because he “remains” (μένειν) forever (7:24). The audience have a better possession that “remains” (μένουσιν) forever in heaven (10:34). The heavenly things not being shaken may “remain” (μείνῃ) forever (12:27). The brotherly love is to “remain” (μενέτω) forever (13:1). But we have not here on earth a city that “remains” (μένουσιν) forever.

That we have not here on earth a “city” (πόλιν) that remains, but we are “seeking” (ἐπιζητοῦμεν) the one that is to come (13:14), likens us to the patriarchs of old. For them, as those “seeking” (ἐπιζητοῦσιν) a fatherland (11:14), a heavenly one, God has made ready a “city” (πόλιν) in heaven (11:16). It also likens us to Abraham who was waiting for the heavenly

<sup>13</sup> Norman H. Young, “Bearing His Reproach’ (Heb 13.9–14),” *NTS* 48 (2002): 243–61.

“city” (πόλιν) having foundations, whose architect and builder is God (11:10). That we are seeking the heavenly “city” that is to come makes even more relevant the bold assertion that the audience, as a worshiping community, have approached Mount Zion, and the “city” (πόλει) of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22).

The close connection between the city that “remains” (μένουσιν) and the city that is “to come” (μέλλουσιν) is underscored for the audience through the alliteration of these terms in Greek (13:14). The city that is “to come” that we are seeking reminds the audience of the future orientation of their faith, as it resonates with the fact that by faith concerning good things “to come” (μελλόντων) Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau (11:20; cf. 10:1). It reminds the audience that they have already been privileged to taste the beneficent pronouncement of God and the powers of the age “to come (μέλλοντος)” (6:4). And it deepens the appreciation of the audience for the fact that it was not to angels but to the divine Son that God subjected the heavenly world, the one that is “coming (μέλλουσιν)” (2:5).

7. *Heb 13:15-16 (A'): The Doing of Good and Fellowship Do Not Neglect*

With allusions to biblical expressions, the audience are then exhorted with regard to their worship: “Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God (cf. Ps 49:14), that is, the fruit of lips (cf. Hos 14:3) confessing his name. The doing of good and fellowship do not neglect, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (13:15-16). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the A (13:1-9a) to the A' (13:15-16) elements of this chiasmic unit. “Hospitality do not neglect (μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε)” (13:2) progresses to “the doing of good and fellowship do not neglect (μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε)” (13:16). “God (ὁ θεός) will judge the immoral and adulterers” (13:4) progresses to “with such sacrifices God (ὁ θεός) is pleased” (13:16). And “the word of God (θεοῦ)” (13:7) progresses to “a sacrifice of praise continually to God (θεῷ)” (13:15).

Recalling that Jesus is able to save completely those who approach God for worship “through him” (δι’ αὐτοῦ), always living to intercede on behalf of them (7:25), the audience are exhorted, “Through him (δι’ αὐτοῦ) then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God” (13:15a). We are to “offer up a sacrifice” (ἀναφέρωμεν θυσίαν) of praise through the Jesus

who does not have each day a necessity, like the earthly high priests, first on behalf of his own sins “to offer up sacrifices” (θυσίας ἀναφέρειν) then of the people, for this he did once for all having “offered up” (ἀνενέγκας) himself (7:27). Through the intercession of the Jesus who offered himself to God, we are enabled to offer up as a “sacrifice of praise” our bearing the reproach of Jesus (13:13) as our ethical worship, our praise to God, with the close connection between “let us offer up” (ἀναφέρωμεν) and “bearing” (φέροντες) enhanced through the alliterative wordplay in Greek. In contrast to the Levitical priests who complete the offerings of worship by going “continually” (διὰ παντός) into the earthly tabernacle (9:6), we, who are “continually” (διὰ παντός) held in slavery by the fear of death (2:15), are to offer up a sacrifice of praise “continually” (διὰ παντός) to the God living in heaven.

That our offering up a “sacrifice of praise” includes our bearing the reproach of Jesus (13:13) as our behavioral worship is confirmed by its explanation as the “fruit” (καρπὸν) of lips confessing his name (13:15). This resonates with the peaceful “fruit” (καρπὸν) of righteousness that all discipline, including especially the discipline involved in bearing the reproach of Jesus, gives back to those who have been trained through it (12:11).<sup>14</sup> In continuity with the patriarchs of old who, in accord with their faith in God, “confessed” (ὁμολογήσαντες) that they are strangers and sojourners on the earth (11:13), our offering up a sacrifice of praise continually to God is the fruit of lips “confessing” (ὁμολογούντων) the name of God. By such a confessing of the name of God we may hold to the “confession” (ὁμολογίαν) of the hope unwaveringly, for faithful is the God who promised (10:23), and we may hold fast to the “confession” (ὁμολογίας) of Jesus as our heavenly high priest and divine Son of God (3:1; 4:14).

The offering up of a sacrifice of praise continually to God, which is the fruit of lips confessing “his name (ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ)” (13:15), further endorses the conduct of the audience as an integral part of their worship of God, indeed the ethical or moral worship that complements their liturgical worship. The audience have already been assured that God is not unjust so as to neglect their work and the love which they demonstrated for “his name” (ὄνομα αὐτοῦ), having assisted the holy ones, and continuing to assist (6:10). Thus, such loving assistance amounts to “confessing

<sup>14</sup> Johnson, *Hebrews*, 350: “Just as the result of training/discipline is a ‘peaceful fruit (καρπός) of righteousness,’ so does the confession of God’s name in the robust sense meant by Hebrews yield the ‘fruit’ (καρπός) that is a sacrifice of praise.”

his name,” worshiping the name of God by their behavior and offering up a sacrifice of praise continually to “God” (θεῷ), as those observing the outcome of the conduct and imitating the faith of their leaders who spoke to them the word of “God (θεοῦ)” (13:7). Such worship enables the audience to emulate the worship of Jesus himself whose scriptural voice from Ps 21:23 declared, “I will proclaim your name (ὄνομά σου) to my brothers, in the midst of the assembly I will praise you” (2:12).

The audience, who are “not to neglect” (μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε) hospitality extended to strangers (13:2), are also “not to neglect” (μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε) the doing of good and fellowship of sharing within their community (13:16a). This reinforces the exhortation for them to turn attention to one another for stirring up love and beneficent works (10:24), “not abandoning their own gathering” (μὴ ἐγκαταλείποντες τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν ἑαυτῶν), a “gathering” that connotes communal worship (10:25). That their doing of good and generous fellowship are designated as such “sacrifices” (θυσίαις) with which “God” (θεός) is pleased (13:16b) further confirms how offering up a “sacrifice” (θυσίαν) of praise continually to “God (θεῷ)” (13:15) includes especially their moral or ethical worship, the worship they render by their communal conduct.<sup>15</sup>

That with such sacrifices as the doing of good and communal fellowship God is “pleased (εὐαρεστεῖται)” (13:16) recalls that by his faith Enoch was testified to have “pleased” (εὐαρεστηκέναι) God (11:5). Without faith it is impossible to “please” (εὐαρεστήσαι), for it is necessary that the one approaching God for worship believe that he exists and that for those seeking him he becomes a rewarder (11:6). It reinforces the exhortation for the audience to have grace, through which they may offer worship “pleasing” (εὐαρέστως) to God with reverence and awe (12:28). The warning that “God” (ὁ θεός) will judge the immoral and adulterers (13:4) is now complemented by the assurance that with such sacrifices which consist of the audience’s upright moral conduct “God” (ὁ θεός) is pleased.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> On not neglecting the “doing of good” (εὐποιᾶς) and “fellowship” (κοινωνίας), Lane (*Hebrews* 9-13, 552) notes: “The term εὐποιᾶ occurs only here in the Greek Bible. Hellenistic parallels show that it denotes ‘acts of kindness’ that give tangible expression to concern for others. This relatively rare term is clarified by the parallel concept κοινωνία, which in this context carries the nuance of ‘generosity.’ Both terms are oriented toward shared life in the community of faith.”

<sup>16</sup> Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 722: “Εὐαρεστέω in the Greek Bible is not, however, used of sacrifices, but almost always of people, who are pleasing, generally to God . . . God, as the subject of the passive verb, is mentioned emphatically at the end of the sentence.”

## C. Summary on Hebrews 13:1-16

Near the beginning of this A'B' unit (13:1-16) the audience are warned that “God” will judge the immoral and adulterers (13:4). This reference to “God” provides the catch word for the connection to the preceding A'C' unit (12:12-29), which concluded with the warning that indeed our “God” is a consuming fire” (12:29). These consecutive occurrences of “God” thus retain the focus of the audience on warnings of divine judgment.

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, a motivation for the commands in the A'B' unit (13:1-16) that the audience “remember” the prisoners (13:3) and “remember” their leaders (13:7) has been supplied by the promise of God in the A'B unit (10:15-30) that their sins and their lawless deeds “I certainly will remember no longer” (10:17). The warning in the A'B' unit that God “will judge” the immoral and adulterers (13:4) reinforces the warning in the A'B unit that the divine Lord “will judge” his people (10:30). The scriptural promise of God from Deut 31:6 in the A'B' unit that “never will I abandon” the audience (13:5) provides motivation for the exhortation in the A'B unit that the audience “not abandon” their own gathering for communal worship (10:25).

The notice in the A'B' unit that it is beneficent for the “heart” of the audience to be confirmed by grace (13:9) was given foundation in the A'B unit by the scriptural promise of God from Jer 38:33 that he will give his laws upon their “hearts” (10:16). And the audience were exhorted to approach God for worship with a true “heart” in assurance of faith, sprinkled with regard to the “hearts” from an evil conscience (10:22). And the statement in the A'B' unit that Jesus might “make holy” the people through his own blood (13:12) reinforces the warning in the A'B unit for the audience not to consider unclean the blood of the new covenant, the blood of Jesus, in which each of them was “made holy” (10:29).

In addition, at the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the AB (1:5-14) and A'B' (13:1-16) units provided by the expression “the same.” That Jesus Christ yesterday and today is “the same” and for the ages (13:8) accords with the scriptural statement from Ps 101:28 directed to Jesus as the divine Son who is “the same” and whose years will not cease (1:12).

With regard to the third macrochiastic level, after the central and pivotal A'a'c unit (12:12-29) with its assurance that the audience have approached for worship at the heavenly city of the living God, the audience are exhorted

in this A'a'b' unit (13:1-16) to offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the “fruit” of lips confessing his name (13:15). Motivation for this was provided in the A'a'b unit (12:1-11) with its assertion that all discipline, when it is present, does not seem to be of joy but of sorrow, but later it gives back the peaceful “fruit” of righteousness to those who have been trained through it (12:11).

After the central and unparalleled element of this chiastic unit with its focus on Jesus—“therefore also Jesus” (13:12a), the audience experience a pivot of parallels resulting in an exhortation for them to participate in their own way in the sacrificial worship of Jesus. The pivot begins with the explanation that the “blood” of the animals as a sin offering is “borne” into “the holy things” through the high priest, while their bodies are burned “outside of the camp” (13:11). And it moves to the comparison that Jesus, that he might “make holy” the people through his own “blood,” suffered outside of the gate (13:12b). It concludes with the exhortation for the audience to go out to him “outside of the camp,” “bearing” his reproach (13:13).

The audience are then presented with a progression via the chiastic parallels. It begins with the affirmation that “we have”—as those for whom it is beneficent for the heart to be confirmed by grace, not by foods in which those conducting themselves have not benefited (13:9b)—an altar in heaven from which those offering worship in the tabernacle on earth do not have a right to eat (13:10). And it concludes with the declaration that “we have” not here a city that remains, but we are seeking the heavenly one that is to come (13:14).

Finally, the audience are presented with another progression via the chiastic parallels. It begins with the exhortation that they, for whom brotherly love is to remain constant (13:1), are “not to neglect” hospitality offered to strangers (13:2). They are warned that “God” will judge the immoral and adulterers (13:4) and they are exhorted to remember their leaders who spoke to them the word of “God” and to imitate their faith by observing the outcome of their conduct (13:7), as Jesus Christ yesterday and today is the same and for the ages (13:8). It concludes with the exhortation that through Jesus they are to offer up, especially by bearing his reproach (13:13), a sacrifice of praise continually to “God,” that is, the fruit of lips confessing his name (13:15). The doing of good and communal fellowship they are “not to neglect,” for with such sacrifices, which amount to their ethical or moral worship, “God” is pleased (13:16).

## Hebrews 13:17-25

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- A<sup>17a</sup> Be confident in *your leaders* and submit to them, for they are keeping watch on behalf of *your* souls,
- B<sup>17b</sup> as giving back a *word*, that with joy they may do this and not be groaning, for this would be unprofitable for *you*.<sup>18</sup> Pray for us, for we are confident that we have a beneficent conscience, among all wanting to be beneficently treated.<sup>19</sup> All the more I *encourage* to do this, that *soon* I may be restored to *you*.
- C<sup>20a</sup> May the God of peace, who led up from the dead the shepherd of the sheep, the one great in the blood of the *eternal* covenant,
- D<sup>20b</sup> our Lord *Jesus*,
- E<sup>21a</sup> provide you with every good thing in order to do the will of *him*,
- E<sup>21b</sup> doing among us what is pleasing before *him*
- D<sup>21c</sup> through *Jesus* Christ,
- C<sup>21d</sup> to whom be glory for the *ages* of the *ages*, amen.
- B<sup>22</sup> I *encourage* you, brothers, hold on to the *word* of the *encouragement*, for indeed through brief things I have written by letter to *you*.<sup>23</sup> Know that our brother Timothy has been released, with him, if he comes *soon*, I will see you.
- A<sup>24</sup> Greet all *your leaders* and all the holy ones. Those from Italy greet you.
- <sup>25</sup> The grace be with all of *you*!

### A. Chiastic Structure of Hebrews 13:17-25

At the conclusion of the A'B' unit (13:1-16) is a reference to the “doing of good” (εὐποΐας) that is not to be neglected (13:16). Toward the beginning of the A'A' unit (13:17-25) is the statement that the leaders may “do” (ποιῶσιν) this (13:17). These occurrences of expressions for “doing” thus



serve as the transitional catch words connecting these units as they move the focus from what the audience are to do to what their leaders may do.

The only occurrences in this unit of the expression “your leaders” and of the second person pronoun in the genitive plural establish the parallels for the A (13:17a) and A' (13:24-25) elements of this chiastic unit. “Be confident in your leaders (ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν) and submit to them, for they are keeping watch on behalf of your (ὑμῶν) souls” occurs in 13:17a and “greet all your leaders (ἡγουμένους ὑμῶν)” in 13:24 as well as “the grace be with all of you (ὑμῶν)” in 13:25. The only occurrences in Hebrews of the adverb “soon” and in this unit of terms for “word” and “encourage,” as well as of the second person pronoun in the dative plural determine the parallels for the B (13:17b-19) and B' (13:22-23) elements. “Giving back a word (λόγον)” occurs in 13:17b and “hold on to the word (λόγου)” in 13:22. “This would be unprofitable for you (ὑμῖν)” occurs in 13:17b as well as “I may be restored to you (ὑμῖν)” in 13:19 and “I have written by letter to you (ὑμῖν)” in 13:22. “All the more I encourage (παρακαλῶ) to do this” occurs in 13:19 and “I encourage (παρακαλῶ) you” as well as “the word of the encouragement (παρακλήσεως)” in 13:22. “That soon (τάχιον) I may be restored to you” occurs in 13:19 and “if he comes soon (τάχιον)” in 13:23.

The only occurrences in this unit of expressions for “eternal/the ages” form the parallels for the C (13:20a) and C' (13:21d) elements—“the blood of the eternal (αἰώνιου) covenant” in 13:20a and “to whom be glory for the ages (αἰῶνας) of the ages (αἰώνων)” in 13:21d. The only occurrences in this unit of the name “Jesus” secure the parallels for the D (13:20b) and D' (13:21c) elements—“our Lord Jesus (Ἰησοῦν)” in 13:20b and “through Jesus (Ἰησοῦ) Christ” in 13:21c. Finally, the only occurrences in this unit of the third person pronoun in the genitive masculine singular establish the parallels for the central and pivotal E (13:21a) and E' (13:21b) elements—“to do the will of him (αὐτοῦ)” in 13:21a and “what is pleasing before him (αὐτοῦ)” in 13:21b.

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the A'A (10:1-14) and A'A' (13:17-25) units provided by expressions for “good,” “provide,” “to do,” “will,” and “Jesus Christ.” In the A'A unit is a reference to “the good (ἀγαθῶν) things to come” (10:1), and in the A'A' unit to “every good (ἀγαθῶ) thing” (13:21). In the A'A unit is a reference to “a body you provided (κατηρτίσω) for me” (10:5) and in the A'A' unit to “provide (καταρτίσαι) you with every good thing” (13:21). In the A'A unit are references to “to do (ποιῆσαι), O God,

your will (θέλημα)” (10:7) as well as to “I have come to do (ποιῆσαι) your will (θέλημα)” (10:9) and in the A'A' unit to “I encourage to do (ποιῆσαι) this” (13:19) as well as to “in order to do (ποιῆσαι) the will (θέλημα) of him” (13:21). Finally, in the A'A' unit is a reference to “the offering of the body of Jesus Christ (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) once for all” (10:10) and in the A'A' unit to “doing among us what is pleasing before him through Jesus Christ (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ)” (13:21).

In addition, at the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the AA (1:1-4) and A'A' (13:17-25) units provided by the expression “the ages.” In the AA unit is a reference to “through whom also he made the ages (τοὺς αἰῶνας)” (1:2), and in the A'A' unit to “whom be glory for the ages (τοὺς αἰῶνας)” (13:21).

With regard to the third macrochiastic level, this A'a'a' unit (13:17-25) exhibits a parallel relationship with the A'a'a' unit (11:32-40). The parallels are indicated by occurrences of the expression “dead.” In the A'a'a' unit is the statement that “women received their dead (νεκρούς) from resurrection” (11:35). And in the A'a'a' unit is the reference to “the God of peace, who led up from the dead (νεκρῶν) the shepherd of the sheep” (13:20).

## B. Audience Response to Hebrews 13:17-25

### 1. *Heb 13:17a (A): Be Confident in Your Leaders on Behalf of Your Souls*

The exhortation to the audience continues: “Be confident in your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch on behalf of your souls” (13:17a). Speaking as one of their leaders, the author has assured the audience that “we are confident (πεπείσμεθα) concerning you, beloved, of better things, indeed those having to do with salvation” (6:9). The audience are now to reciprocate this confidence as they are exhorted, “Be confident (πείθεσθε) in your leaders and submit to them.” Motivation for this has been provided by the confidence Jesus promised to place in God himself through his scriptural voice from Isa 8:17b, “I will be confident (πεποιθώς) in him” (2:13). That the audience are to be confident in “your leaders” (ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν) reinforces the exhortation for them to remember “your leaders” (ἡγουμένων ὑμῶν) as those who spoke to them the word of God; by observing the outcome of their conduct, they are to imitate their faith (13:7). That the leaders of the audience are keeping watch on behalf of

“your souls” (ψυχῶν ὑμῶν) resonates with the author’s concern for the audience not growing weary in “your souls” (ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν) by reflecting on Jesus who has endured such disputing against himself from sinners (12:3).

2. Heb 13:17b-19 (B): I Encourage To Do This That Soon I May Be Restored to You

The audience hear the B (13:17b-19) element of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) as giving back a word, that with joy they may *do this* and not be groaning, for this would be unprofitable for you (13:17b).
- b) Pray for us, for we are confident that we have a *beneficent* conscience (13:18a),
- b') among all wanting to be *beneficently* treated (13:18b).
- a') All the more I encourage to *do this*, that soon I may be restored to you (13:19).

At the center of this chiastic sub-unit the audience experience a pivot of parallels, involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of expressions for “beneficent,” from the “b” to the “b’” sub-elements. “That we have a beneficent (καλήν) conscience” (13:18a) progresses to “wanting to be beneficently (καλῶς) treated” (13:18b). They are then presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the expression “do this” and of the second person pronoun in the dative plural, from the “a” to the “a’” sub-elements. “That with joy they may do this (τοῦτο ποιῶσιν)” (13:17b) progresses to “I encourage to do this (τοῦτο ποιῆσαι)” (13:19). And “this would be unprofitable for you (ὀμίην)” (13:17b) progresses to “that soon I may be restored to you (ὀμίην)” (13:19).<sup>1</sup>

That the leaders are keeping watch on behalf of the souls of the audience, as giving back a “word (λόγον)” (13:17b), complements their speaking to the audience the “word” (λόγον) of God (13:7). It stands in contrast to those on Mount Sinai, who refused the voice of divine pronouncements, lest a “word” (λόγον) be added for them (12:19). And it contributes to the audience’s bearing forward toward the perfection, as they depart from the

<sup>1</sup> Note also the alliterative resonance from “giving back (ἀποδώσοντες) a word” (13:17b) to “I may be restored (ἀποκατασταθῶ) to you” (13:19).

“word” (λόγον) at the beginning about the Christ (6:1). Their giving back a “word” resonates with the accountability connoted in the assertion that no creature is invisible before God, whose “word” (λόγος) is living (4:12), but all things are naked and laid bare to the eyes of him, regarding whom there is upon us the “word (λόγος)” (4:13), which includes the “word” of our response, our accountability, to the living “word” of God. Esau for a single meal “gave back” (ἀπέδετο) his own rights as firstborn (12:16). But in accord with the divine discipline that “gives back” (ἀποδίδωσιν) the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained through it (12:11), the leaders, in keeping watch on behalf of the audience’s souls, are “giving back” (ἀποδῶσοντες) a word as an appropriate response to the word of God.

“With joy” (μετὰ χαρᾶς) the leaders are to be able to do this and not be groaning, for this would be unprofitable for the audience (13:17b). And this may be especially appreciated by the audience as those who accepted the confiscation of their possessions “with joy” (μετὰ χαρᾶς), knowing that they have a better possession that remains forever in heaven (10:34).

The exhortation for the audience to pray “for us” (περὶ ἡμῶν), that is, for the author as one of their leaders (13:18a), has been facilitated by the author’s previous assertion that God has provided something better “concerning us” (περὶ ἡμῶν), that is, the author and his audience (11:40). Having exhorted his audience to “be confident” (πέιθεσθε) in their leaders, one of whom is the author himself, the author provides further motivation for that exhortation as he declares that “we are confident” (πειθόμεθα) that we have a beneficent conscience (13:18a). That we have a “beneficent conscience” (καλὴν συνείδησιν) draws the author more closely to his audience, as it resonates with the exhortation for us—author and audience—to approach God for worship with a true heart in assurance of faith, sprinkled with regard to the hearts from an “evil conscience (συνειδήσεως πονηρᾶς)” (10:22).

Having exhorted the audience that marriage is to be honored “among all” (ἐν πᾶσιν) of them (13:4), the author, as “among all” (ἐν πᾶσιν) in the audience, wants to be beneficently treated (13:18b). In correspondence to his having a “beneficent” (καλήν) conscience (13:18a), the author wants to be “beneficently” (καλῶς) treated among all. In contrast to Esau who, “wanting” (θέλων) to inherit the blessing, was “rejected” (ἀπεδοκιμάσθη) by God (12:17), the author “wants” (θέλοντες) to be beneficently “treated” (ἀναστρέφεσθαι) among all. That the author wants to be beneficently

“treated” among all may be especially appreciated by his audience whom he has acknowledged as having endured much conflict of sufferings (10:32), on the one hand publicly exposed to reproaches and afflictions, on the other hand becoming partners of those so “treated (ἀναστρεφόμενων)” (10:33).

The author included himself in the exhortation that it is necessary for us “all the more” (περισσότερως) to attend to the things that have been heard, lest we drift away (2:1). Now, in a transition in self-reference from the first person plural (13:18) to the first person singular, the author poignantly singles himself out as a leader of the audience in the exhortation that “all the more” (περισσότερως) I encourage to do this, that soon I may be restored to you (13:19). That I “encourage” (παρακαλῶ) to do this reinforces the exhortations for the audience not to be abandoning our own gathering for communal worship, but “encouraging (παρακαλοῦντες)” (10:25) one another to love and beneficent works (10:24), and to “encourage” (παρακαλεῖτε) one another each day, that not anyone of them may become hardened by the deceit of sin (3:13). And that I encourage to “do this” (τοῦτο ποιῆσαι) reinforces the exhortation for the audience to be confident in their leaders, that they may “do this” (τοῦτο ποιῶσιν), that is, keep watch on behalf of their souls (13:17). Whereas it would be unprofitable “for you” (ὕμιν) to cause the leaders to be groaning (13:17), by the audience’s praying for the author (13:18), he may be restored “to you” (ὕμιν).

### 3. *Heb 13:20a (C): The One Great in the Blood of the Eternal Covenant*

Having exhorted the audience to pray for him as one of their leaders (13:18-19), the author now reciprocates in advance by commencing his own prayer for the audience: “May the God of peace, who led up from the dead the shepherd of the sheep, the one great in the blood of the eternal covenant” (13:20a). The prayer invokes the God of “peace” (εἰρήνης), that is, God as the ultimate source and giver of the “peace” (εἰρήνην) the audience are to pursue with all (12:14). God is also the source of the “peaceful” (εἰρηνικόν) fruit of righteousness that divine discipline gives back to those trained through it (12:11), of the “peace” (εἰρήνης) with which Rahab, by her faith in God, welcomed the spies (11:31), and the “peace” (εἰρήνης) of which Melchizedek, priest of the God Most High (7:1), is king (7:2).

God took hold of the hand of the ancestral fathers of Israel to “lead” (ἐξαγαγεῖν) them out of the land of Egypt with its threat of death (8:9).

God is “leading” (ἀγαγόντα) many sons, among whom are the audience, from slavery to the fear of death (2:15) to heavenly glory (2:10). God “leads” (εἰσαγάγει) the firstborn divine Son into the heavenly world (1:6). This same God “led up” (ἀναγαγών) from the dead the divine Son as the shepherd of the sheep (13:20a). That God led up from the “dead” (νεκρῶν) the shepherd of the sheep (cf. Isa 63:11) represents the resurrection that is better than that experienced by the women who received their “dead” (νεκρούς) from resurrection (11:35). It confirms the faith of Abraham, who reasoned that God is able to raise even from the “dead (νεκρῶν)” (11:19). And it forms the basis for the fundamental teaching of the resurrection of the “dead (νεκρῶν)” (6:2).

That “the shepherd of the sheep” is further described as the one “great” (μέγαν) in the blood of the eternal covenant (13:20a) links the metaphor of the “shepherd” to the priesthood of Jesus, who is a “great” (μέγαν) priest over the house of God (10:21). It reinforces the exhortation that, having a “great” (μέγαν) high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to the confession (4:14).<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the “blood” (αἷμα) of the old “covenant (διαθήκης)” (9:20) that is near to disappearing (8:13), the shepherd of the sheep whom God led up from the dead is the one great in the “blood” (αἷματι) of the eternal “covenant” (διαθήκης). That this covenant is “eternal” (αἰωνίου), that is, divine and everlasting, resonates with the divine heavenly inheritance that is “eternal (αἰωνίου)” (9:15), the divine “eternal” (αἰωνίου) Spirit through whom Christ offered himself unblemished to God (9:14), the divine “eternal” (αἰωνίαν) redemption found in heaven by Christ the high priest (9:12). It also resonates with the divine judgment that is “eternal (αἰωνίου)” (6:2), and the “eternal (αἰωνίου)” salvation of which the divine Son and high priest is the source (5:9).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Attridge, *Hebrews*, 406: “The use of the metaphor of the shepherd at this point may in fact best be understood as a substitution for or transformation of the christological image of the priest that dominated most of Hebrews. The effect of the substitution is to emphasize one of the qualities that was traditionally associated with the title of High Priest, Christ’s heavenly intercessory function. The one whom God exalted from the dead is the one who ever remains as guide of God’s flock.” Ellingworth, *Hebrews*, 729: “Τὸν μέγαν is emphatic by position: Christ is the great shepherd, as he is the great (high) priest (4:14; 10:21) by contrast with lesser levitical high priests, and perhaps with subordinate leaders of the Christian community, such as the ἡγουμένοι of vv. 7, 17; also of Moses, mentioned in Is. 63:11, and who is traditionally known as ‘the shepherd of Israel.’ Yet the relationship is one of dependence, not only one of contrast.”

<sup>3</sup> R. L. Mayhue, “Heb 13:20: Covenant of Grace or New Covenant?: An Exegetical Note,” *MSJ* 7 (1996): 251–57.

4. *Heb 13:20b (D): Our Lord Jesus*

The shepherd of the sheep that the God of peace led up from the dead, the one great in the blood of the eternal covenant (13:20a), is explicitly identified as “our Lord Jesus” (13:20b). Although Jesus has been referred to as “our Lord” (κύριος ἡμῶν) in discussing his heavenly priesthood (7:14), this is the first occurrence of the more specific designation “our Lord (κύριον ἡμῶν) Jesus.” That Jesus is referred to as “our” Lord unites the author to the audience as among the “sheep” of the “shepherd” who is the Lord Jesus, the one who is great as the heavenly high priest in the blood of the eternal covenant.

5. *Heb 13:21a (E): Provide You with Every Good Thing To Do the Will of Him*

The audience learn what the author wants the God of peace to do for them: “provide you with every good thing in order to do the will of him” (13:21a). The God by whose pronouncement the ages have been “provided (κατηρτίσθαι)” (11:3) is asked to “provide” (καταρτίσαι) the audience with every “good” (ἀγαθῶ) thing, resonating with the “good” (ἀγαθῶν) things to come of which the law has only a shadow (10:1), and with the “good” (ἀγαθῶν) things that have come to be of which Christ has come as high priest (9:11). The provision of every good thing will enable the audience “to do” (ποιῆσαι) “the will of him” (τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ), the will of God himself.

This request for God to “provide” (καταρτίσαι) the audience with every good thing (13:21a) resonates with the scriptural voice of Jesus from Ps 39:7-9, which declares to God that a body you “provided” (κατηρτίσω) for me (10:5), and, “Behold I have come, as in the scroll of the book it is written concerning me, to do (ποιῆσαι), O God, your will (τὸ θέλημά σου)” (10:7, 9). In the doing of this “will” (θέληματι) of God we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (10:10). This prayer request reinforces the exhortation that the audience have need of endurance so that, “doing the will of God” (τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ ποιήσαντες), they may acquire the promise of the eternal rest of the living God in heaven (10:36).

The prayer for God to provide the audience with every “good” (ἀγαθῶ) thing in order “to do” (ποιῆσαι) his will (13:21a) aims to contribute to the

fulfillment of the exhortation that they not neglect the “doing of good” (εὐποιῶς) and fellowship, for with such sacrifices God is pleased (13:16). Indeed, with such sacrifices the audience may offer up a “sacrifice of praise” as their ethical worship continually to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing his name (13:15).

The author’s prayer here thus functions as a “speech act,” that is, an utterance whose purpose begins to be accomplished in and through its very performance.<sup>4</sup> In praying that God provide the audience with every good thing they need to do the divine will, the author is making the audience aware that in their very hearing of the oral performance of this letter God has already begun to provide them with every good thing they need to do his will in what they have heard about the doing of that will through the self-sacrifice of Jesus. In addition, hearing the prayer assures the audience that God will continue to provide them with every good thing they need in the future to do his will, as a way of worshiping God not only liturgically but by the way they conduct themselves ethically in their doing of good.

#### 6. *Heb 13:21b (E'): Doing among Us What Is Pleasing before Him*

The author’s prayer continues to describe the activity of the God of peace (13:20): “doing among us what is pleasing before him” (13:21b). At this point, the audience experience a pivot of parallels from the E (13:21a) to the E' (13:21b) elements at the center of this chiasitic unit. To do the will of “him” (αὐτοῦ), that is, of God (13:21a), progresses to God doing what is pleasing before “him” (αὐτοῦ), that is, before God himself (13:21b).

The focus of the prayer shifts from the request for God to provide the audience with every good thing for them to “do” (ποιῆσαι) the divine will of “him” (13:21a) to what God himself is “doing” (ποιῶν) among us that is pleasing before “himself” (13:21b). The audience have already heard what God has done and still is doing among “us” (ἡμῖν): God has surrounded “us” (ἡμῖν) with a cloud of witnesses, the past models of faith (11:1-40), that we may traverse the struggle lying ahead for “us (ἡμῖν)” (12:1). In the blood of Jesus a fresh and living way into the heavenly holy things was divinely inaugurated for “us (ἡμῖν)” (10:20). The divine Holy Spirit testifies to “us (ἡμῖν)” regarding the divine promise of a new covenant (10:15). In

<sup>4</sup> On speech-act theory, see John Langshaw Austin, *How To Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).



Jesus God provided a high priest fitting for “us” (ἡμῖν) in every way (7:26). There is upon “us” (ἡμῖν) the word (4:13), the word of God that is ever living (4:12). And God has spoken to “us” (ἡμῖν) in his divine Son (1:2). All of this good that the audience have heard that God has done and is doing among us thus confirms that, in their very hearing of the oral performance of the letter, the audience realize that God has already begun to provide them with every good thing they need to do his will.

That God is “doing” (ποιῶν) among us what is “pleasing” (εὐάρεστον) before himself (13:21b) reaffirms for the audience that God himself indeed is providing every good thing they need “to do” (ποιῆσαι) his divine will (13:21a). God himself is making possible the audience’s “doing of good” (εὐποιῆας) that amounts to a sacrifice, a sacrifice consisting of their ethical worship, with which God is “pleased (εὐαρεστεῖται)” (13:16).<sup>5</sup> This further reinforces the exhortation for the audience to avail themselves of divine grace, through which they may offer worship “pleasing” (εὐαρέστως) to God with reverence and awe (12:28). This also means that God himself gives the faith without which it is impossible to “please” (εὐαρεστήσαι) him (11:6), as exemplified by Enoch, who was testified to have “pleased” (εὐαρεστηκέναι) God by his faith (11:5). That God is doing what is pleasing “before him” (ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ) recalls that no creature is invisible “before him (ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ)” (4:13), as the God of the word that is ever living (4:12). Hence, it is all the more incumbent upon the audience to respond to this word with sacrifices of doing good that are pleasing before God.

#### 7. Heb 13:21c (D'): Through Jesus Christ

God’s doing among us what is pleasing before him (13:21b) is elaborated as being “through Jesus Christ” (13:21c). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the D (13:20b) to the D' (13:21c) elements of this chiasmic unit. The designation “our Lord Jesus (Ἰησοῦν)” (13:20b) progresses to the phrase “through Jesus (Ἰησοῦ) Christ” (13:21c).

This prepositional phrase, “through (διὰ) Jesus Christ” (13:21c), emphasizes that “our Lord Jesus,” the shepherd of the sheep as our great high priest in the blood of the eternal covenant (13:20), is the “Jesus Christ”

<sup>5</sup> Alliteration underscores the close connection between the “doing of good” (εὐποιῆας) and “is pleased” (εὐαρεστεῖται).

who yesterday and today is the same and for the ages (13:8). He is the one “through” (διὰ) whom we may offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God (13:15), that is, the doing of good and communal fellowship as sacrifices pleasing to God (13:16). That God is doing among us what is pleasing before him “through Jesus Christ” (13:21c) recalls that it is “through” (διὰ) the offering of the body of “Jesus Christ” once for all that we have been made holy for the worship of God (10:10). It reminds the audience that, because he is a priest forever, Jesus Christ is able to save completely those who approach God for worship “through” (διὰ) him, always living to intercede on behalf of them (7:25).

#### 8. *Heb 13:21d (C'): To Whom Be Glory for the Ages of the Ages*

A stimulating doxology concludes the author’s prayer for his audience, drawing them into his own worshipful praise: “to whom be glory for the ages of the ages, amen” (13:21d). At this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from the C (13:20a) to the C’ (13:21d) elements of this chiastic unit. The “blood of the eternal (αἰωνίου) covenant” (13:20a) progresses to “glory for the ages (αἰῶνας) of the ages (αἰώνων)” (13:21d).

The prayer’s acknowledgement of the divine “glory” (δόξα) that belongs to Jesus Christ through whom God is doing what is pleasing before him, as he provides the audience with every good thing they need to do the divine will (13:21), reaffirms the divine status of Jesus Christ. He is worthy of the divine heavenly “glory” (δόξης) associated with the cherubim among the holy things in the tabernacle (9:5). And he is worthy of greater “glory” (δόξης) beyond Moses (3:3), the divine heavenly “glory” (δόξαν) to which God is leading his many sons (2:10) by means of his divine Son whom he crowned with heavenly “glory” (δόξη) and honor (2:7, 9), and who is the radiance of the divine “glory (δόξης)” (1:3).

That glory be to Jesus Christ “for the ages” (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας) of “the ages” (τῶν αἰώνων), amen (13:21d), emphatically extends the assertion that Jesus Christ yesterday and today is the same and “for the ages (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας)” (13:8). It bolsters the declaration that now once at the completion of “the ages” (τῶν αἰώνων) Jesus Christ has appeared for the removal of sin through his sacrifice, the sacrifice he offered with his own blood, the blood of the “eternal” (αἰωνίου) covenant (13:20a).

9. Heb 13:22-23 (B'): I Encourage You To Hold On to the Word of the Encouragement

The audience hear the B' (13:22-23) element of this unit as a chiastic pattern in itself:

- a) I encourage you (13:22a),
- b) brothers (13:22b),
- c) hold on to the word of the encouragement, for indeed through brief things I have written by letter to you (13:22c).
- b') Know that our brother Timothy has been released (13:23a),
- a') with him, if he comes soon, I will see you (13:23b).

The unparalleled “c” sub-element at the center of this chiastic sub-unit features the only occurrences in Hebrews of the phrase “the word of the encouragement” (τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως) and of the verb “I have written by letter (ἔπέστειλα)” (13:22c). After hearing it, the audience experience a pivot of parallels, involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the term “brother,” from the “b” to the “b'” sub-elements—from the address to the audience as “brothers (ἀδελφοί)” (13:22b) to the reference to our “brother” (ἀδελφόν) Timothy (13:23a). Finally, the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels involving the only occurrences in this sub-unit of the second person plural pronoun in the accusative, from the “a” to the “a'” sub-elements—from “I encourage you (ὤμᾱς)” (13:22a) to “I will see you (ὤμᾱς)” (13:23b).

In addition, at this point the audience are presented with a progression, via the chiastic parallels, from the B (13:17b-19) to the B' (13:22-23) elements of this chiastic unit. “As giving back a word (λόγον)” (13:17b) progresses to “the word (λόγου) of the encouragement” (13:22). “This would be unprofitable for you (ὀμῖν)” (13:17b) as well as “I may be restored to you (ὀμῖν)” (13:19) progress to “I have written by letter to you (ὤμῖν)” (13:22). “All the more I encourage (παρακαλῶ)” (13:19) progresses to “I encourage (παρακαλῶ) you” (13:22) as well as to “the word of the encouragement (παρακλήσεως)” (13:22). And “that soon (τάχιον) I may be restored to you” (13:19) progresses to “if he comes soon (τάχιον)” (13:23).

In addressing his audience as one of their leaders, the author declared, “all the more I encourage (παρακαλῶ) to do this” (13:19a), that is, to treat him beneficently by praying for him so that he may soon be restored to them (13:18, 19b). Now he addresses them as a fellow brother, declaring, “I

encourage (παρακαλῶ) you, brothers (ἀδελφοί)” (13:22). This recalls that as “brothers” (ἀδελφοί) having boldness for the entrance to the heavenly holy things in the blood of Jesus (10:19), they are to approach God for worship with a true heart in assurance of faith (10:22). It reinforces the exhortation for the audience as “brothers” (ἀδελφοί) to take note lest there be in anyone of them an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the living God (3:12), and to “encourage” (παρακαλεῖτε) one another each day, so that not anyone of them may become hardened by the deceit of sin (3:13; 10:25). And it resonates with the exhortation for them as holy “brothers” (ἀδελφοί), who are partners with one another and with the author of a heavenly calling, to turn attention to the apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus (3:1).

The declaration that “I encourage” (παρακαλῶ) you as brothers to hold on to the word of the “encouragement” (παρακλήσεως) emphatically underscores that what the author has composed in this letter is indeed a homiletic word aimed at encouraging his audience (13:22).<sup>6</sup> That the audience are to “hold on to” (ἀνέχεσθε) the author’s word of the encouragement resonates with and climactically reinforces the exhortations for both author and audience that “we hold to” (κατέχωμεν) the confession of the hope unwaveringly, for faithful is the one who promised (10:23). “We are to hold” (κατάσχωμεν) the beginning of the reality firm until the end (3:14). And “we are to hold to” (κατάσχωμεν) the boldness and to the boast of the hope (3:6).

That the author designates his letter as the “word” (λόγον) of the encouragement (13:22) associates him with the other leaders of the audience, as giving back a “word” (λόγον) for the benefit of the audience (13:17)—his own particular “word” (λόγος) of response (4:13) to the living “word” (λόγος) of God (4:12). The author through brief things has written by letter “to you (ὕμῖν)” (13:22), as he hopes soon to be restored “to you (ὕμῖν)” (13:19), that is, to his audience for whom it would be unprofitable “for you” (ὕμῖν) not to submit to and be confident in “your leaders” (13:17).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> On “the word of the encouragement” (τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως) here, Lane (*Hebrews* 9-13, 568) remarks: “The expression appears to have been an idiomatic designation for the homily or edifying discourse that followed the public reading from the designated portions of Scripture in the hellenistic synagogues.” For an example, see Acts 13:15; and for similar language, see 1 Macc 10:24; 2 Macc 7:24; 15:8-11.

<sup>7</sup> On the phrase “through brief things” (διὰ βραχέων), Ellingworth (*Hebrews*, 733) comments that this “expression of the author’s modesty does not require more detailed explanation, but ‘relatively brief for the greatness of the theme’ may be implied; less

The audience, as “brothers” (ἀδελφοί) who suffered with prisoners and accepted the confiscation of their possessions with joy, “knowing” (γινώσκοντες) that they have a better possession that remains forever in heaven (10:34), are now to “know” (γινώσκετε) that our “brother” (ἀδελφόν) Timothy has been released, by implication, from prison (13:23a; cf. 13:3).<sup>8</sup> The hope that the author “soon” (τάχιον) may be restored to “you (ὕμῖν)” (13:19), the audience as the “you” (ὕμᾱς) he is encouraging with this letter (13:22), is bolstered by his hope that with the released Timothy, if he comes “soon” (τάχιον), I will see “you (ὕμᾱς)” (13:23b). This mutual concern by the author and audience for a fellow individual “brother” bolsters the exhortations for the audience’s concern for each one of their members (3:12; 4:1, 11; 12:15, 16).

10. *Heb 13:24-25 (A'): Greet All Your Leaders and Grace Be with All of You*

The request for and granting of greetings closes this letter as the word of the encouragement (13:22-23): “Greet all your leaders and all the holy ones. Those from Italy greet you. The grace be with all of you!” (13:24-25). At this point the audience are presented with the final progression, via the chiasmic parallels, from the A (13:17a) to the A' (13:24-25) elements of this chiasmic unit. The command to be confident in “your leaders (ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν)” (13:17a) progresses to the request to greet all “your leaders (ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν)” (13:24). And that they are keeping watch on behalf of “your” (ὑμῶν) souls (13:17a) progresses to the wish that the grace be with all of “you (ὕμῶν)” (13:25).

The audience have been persuaded to imitate their ancestral leaders in faith, all of whom died, not receiving the heavenly promises but from afar seeing them and “greeting” (ἀσπασάμενοι) and confessing that they are strangers and sojourners on the earth (11:13). Now they are not only to be confident in and submit to “your leaders” (13:17), whose faith they are to

probably ‘relatively brief, considering the readers’ dangerous situation.’” Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 568: “The reference to brevity, however, is simply a polite literary convention.”

<sup>8</sup> On the implication that it is from prison that Timothy “has been released” (ἀπολελυμένον), Lane (*Hebrews* 9-13, 569) points out: “The assumption that Timothy has been in custody is supported by the common meaning of ἀπολύειν in the NT, especially when it is used absolutely, as here, and by the writer’s concern for those Christians who remain in custody in the near context (13:3).”

imitate (13:7), but also to “greet” (ἀσπάσασθε) all of those who are “your leaders” presently (13:24).

That the audience are to greet all the “holy ones (ἁγίους)” (13:24) reminds them that they are united to their fellow believers as those who have been made holy by Jesus. Indeed, he who “makes holy” (ἁγιάζων) and those who are being “made holy” (ἁγιαζόμενοι) are all from one, for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brothers (2:11). It is through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all that we have been “made holy (ἡγιασμένοι)” (10:10). By this one offering he has made perfect for all time those who are being “made holy (ἁγιαζομένους)” (10:14). It is through the blood of Jesus as the blood of the new covenant that each believer was “made holy (ἡγιασθη)” (10:29). As “holy ones,” we have boldness for entrance into the heavenly “holy things” (ἁγίων) in the blood of Jesus to participate in the worship of God (10:19). For if the blood of animals “makes holy” (ἁγιάζει) those defiled for the cleansing of the flesh (9:13), how much more will the blood of the Christ cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the living God (9:14).

In reciprocation for the author’s request that the audience “greet” (ἀσπάσασθε) all their leaders and all the holy ones, he assures them that those from Italy, those who are their fellow strangers and sojourners on the earth (11:13), “greet” (ἀσπάζονται) you (13:24). That those from Italy greet “you” (ὤμᾱς) bolsters the concern for the audience on the part of the author, who prays that God provide “you” (ὤμᾱς) with every good thing to do his will (13:21), who encourages “you” (ὤμᾱς) to hold on to the word of the encouragement he has written for them (13:22), and who hopes that he will see “you” (ὤμᾱς) soon (13:23).<sup>9</sup>

The author’s final greeting, “the grace (χάρις) be with all of you” (13:25), resonates with and climactically sums up all of the previous exhortations regarding divine “grace” in this word of the encouragement. The audience have been exhorted not to be carried away by various and strange teachings, for it is beneficent for the heart to be confirmed by the “grace” (χάρτι) of God (13:9). They are to take advantage of the “grace” (χάριν) of God available to them, through which they may offer worship pleasing

<sup>9</sup> Koester, *Hebrews*, 581: “[T]he reference to Italy shows that the circle in which Hebrews originated included Christians who lived outside Palestine in the Greco-Roman world.” Lane, *Hebrews* 9-13, 571: “The significance of the greeting lies in the allusion to a larger group of persons who care, as does the writer, about what is happening on the home base.”

to God with reverence and awe (12:28). They are to see to it that none of them be lacking of this “grace” (χάριτος) of God (12:15). They are not to insult the divine Spirit of this “grace” (χάριτος) of God (10:29). They have been exhorted to approach with boldness the heavenly throne of “grace” (χάριτος), so that they may receive mercy and may find divine “grace” (χάριτι) for timely help (4:16). And they are to take note of the Jesus who tasted death on behalf of all by the “grace” (χάριτι) of God (2:9).

The author, as one of the leaders of the audience, has exhorted them to be confident in their leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch on behalf of “your” (ὑμῶν) souls (13:17). And now the author adds his own personal concern for his audience as their preeminent leader with his final greeting that the grace be with all of “you (ὑμῶν)” (13:25). This declaration about grace “with all” (μετὰ πάντων) of you thus reinforces the exhortation for the audience, who are to greet all their fellow “holy ones (ἁγίων)” (13:24), to pursue peace “with all” (μετὰ πάντων), and the “holiness” (ἁγιασμόν) without which no one will see the Lord (12:14).

Noteworthy is that the author’s final and climactic greeting contains no explicit verb. Literally, it is heard as “the grace with all of you!” (13:25). This facilitates its multiple functions as a “speech-act” whose purpose begins to be accomplished in the very hearing of it. First, it can mean “the grace *has been* with all of you,” thus reminding the audience that they have already received the grace of God in the past, in accord with the fact that Jesus tasted death on behalf of all by the grace of God (2:9). Secondly, it can mean “the grace *is now* with all of you,” thus indicating to the audience that the grace of God is now presently being given to them in and through their hearing and heeding of the letter itself as the author’s word of the encouragement (13:22). Finally, it can mean “the grace *will be* with all of you,” thus assuring the audience that the grace of God will continue to be available to them in the future. This accords with the encouraging exhortation, “Let us approach then with boldness the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and may find grace for timely help” (4:16).

### C. Summary on Hebrews 13:17-25

Toward the beginning of this A'A' unit (13:17-25) the audience hear that they are to ensure that their leaders may with joy “do” this, that is, keep watch on behalf of their souls (13:17). This provides the catch word for the

connection with the preceding A'B' unit (13:1-16), which concluded with a reference to the “doing of good” that is not to be neglected by the audience (13:16). These occurrences of expressions for “doing” thus move the focus from what the audience themselves are to do to what they are to make sure that their leaders may do for them.

With regard to the second macrochiastic level, the audience hear a series of progressions, via the chiastic parallels, from the A'A unit (10:1-14) to this A'A' unit (13:17-25). That the law has only a shadow of the “good” things to come (10:1) progresses to the author’s prayer for God to provide his audience with every “good” thing (13:21). The scriptural voice of Jesus from Ps 39:7-9 declaring that God “provided” a body for him (10:5) and that he has come “to do your will” (10:7, 9) progresses to the author’s prayer that God “provide” his audience with every good thing in order “to do the will” of God (13:21). That we have been made holy through the offering of the body of “Jesus Christ” once for all (10:10) progresses to God doing among us what is pleasing before him through “Jesus Christ” (13:21).

In addition, at the second macrochiastic level, the audience experience a chiastic relationship between the AA (1:1-4) and A'A' (13:17-25) units. The declaration that through the divine Son God made “the ages” (1:2) renders even more appropriate the exuberant doxology addressed to Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for “the ages” (13:21).

With regard to the third macrochiastic level, this A'a'a' unit (13:17-25) exhibits a parallel relationship with the A'a'a unit (11:32-40). Whereas in the past some women received their “dead” from resurrection (11:35), the God of peace led up from the “dead” our Lord Jesus as the shepherd of the sheep, the one great as the heavenly high priest in the blood of the eternal covenant (13:20).

At the center of this chiastic unit the audience experience a pivot of parallels from the author’s prayer that God provide his audience with every good thing in order to do the will of “him” (13:21a) to his description of God as doing among us what is pleasing before “him” (13:22). They are then presented with a series of progressions via the chiastic parallels. The author’s prayer that the God of peace, who led up from the dead the shepherd of the sheep, the one great in the blood of the “eternal” covenant (13:20a), our Lord “Jesus” (13:20b), progresses to the notice that God’s doing among us what is pleasing before him is through “Jesus” Christ (13:21c), to whom be glory for the “age” of the “ages,” amen (13:21d).



The leaders of the audience are described as giving back a “word” and the audience are to ensure that they with joy may do this and not be groaning, as this would be unprofitable “for you” (13:17b). The audience are to pray for the author as one of their leaders in whom they are to be confident, as he himself is confident of having a beneficent conscience and wanting to be beneficently treated by all in the audience (13:18). The author urges that all the more “I encourage” to do this, that “soon” I may be restored “to you” (13:19). This progresses to the exhortation that “I encourage” you, brothers, hold on to the “word” of the “encouragement,” for indeed through brief things I have written by letter “to you” (13:22). The audience are to know that our brother Timothy has been released from prison, and that with him, if he comes “soon,” the author will see “you” (13:23).

The audience are exhorted to be confident in “your leaders” and submit to them, for they are keeping watch on behalf of “your” souls (13:17a). This progresses to the final exhortation for the audience to greet all “your leaders” and all the holy ones, as they are greeted by those from Italy (13:24). This letter as the author’s word of the encouragement then concludes on an exuberantly inspiring note with the climactically encouraging assurance that the grace of God has been, is, and will be with all of “you”! (13:25).

## Summary and Conclusion

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The various chiasmic levels, patterns, and parallels intricately at work in the elegant structure of the letter to the Hebrews have been illustrated in all of their complexity as an aid for the modern reader to see them. The ancient audience, of course, did not see them, but rather heard and experienced them as an essential vehicle orchestrating the author's rhetorical presentation. This comprehensive chiasmic arrangement, through its arresting artistry, not only facilitated but enhanced the appreciation of the audience for this homiletic "word of the encouragement" (13:22), as they listened to it in their worshiping assembly. A summary of the chiasmic dynamics at work within each of the thirty-three units comprising the letter can be found at the end of each of the preceding thirty-three chapters. The following is a summary of the broader chiasmic dynamics at work among these thirty-three units through which the audience are to be encouraged by the word they are to hear and heed.

At the center of the first chiasmic series of five units (1:1-2:18) the audience are warned not to neglect the word of so great a salvation, a word heard by them as a worshiping assembly (2:1-4). They then experience a pivot of chiasmic parallels involving them as among those who are "going" to inherit this great salvation with the assistance of the angels God sent as ministering spirits. They are to join these angels in heavenly worship as those invited by God to worship his firstborn divine Son, whom he led into the "heavenly world." With his promise that he will place the enemies of his Son as a "footstool for your feet" (Ps 109:1), God enthroned him above the angels (1:5-14). Although God subjected the "heavenly world," the one "coming" and the one the audience are "going" to inherit, not to angels but to his Son, the audience do not yet see all things subjected "under his feet" (Ps 8:7). But they are to take note of Jesus, who by the grace of God tasted death on behalf of the salvation of all (2:5-9).

In this first chiastic series of five units (1:1-2:18) the audience are then presented with a progression via the chiastic parallels involving the cleansing and expiation of sins. The divine Son in whom God has spoken definitively to us sat at the right of the divine Majesty in the heights of heaven, having made a cleansing for “sins” (1:1-4). Perfected for worship through sufferings, and likened to us as his human brothers, the divine Son became a merciful and faithful high priest in heaven in order to expiate the “sins” of the people, and thus render them worthy for the worship of God. In what he himself suffered in being tested to the point of dying for our salvation, those who are being tested he is able to help (2:10-18).

At the center of the first chiastic series of eleven units (1:1-5:10) the audience are encouraged to hold to the hope of a heavenly salvation as those who represent the “house,” that is, the household of those who are to worship and serve God as the people of God. Over this household, in which Moses was faithful as an attendant for testimony of the things that would be spoken to him by God regarding worship, God has placed Jesus Christ as his divine Son and high priest, who is faithful to God even beyond Moses (3:1-6).

At the center of the second chiastic series of five units (3:7-5:10) the audience are encouraged to strive to enter into God’s own heavenly rest, so that not anyone of them may fall in the same pattern of disobedience as those who hardened their hearts rather than hearing the “word” with faith (4:1-11), the “word” of so great a salvation (2:1-4). They then experience a pivot of parallels involving the “living God” and the “living” word of “God.” They, who are “taking note” of Jesus (2:5-9), are to “take note” lest there be in anyone of them an evil heart of unfaithfulness in falling away from the “living God” (3:12-19). For “living” is the word of “God” that penetrates to our “spirit,” as we are among those assisted for heavenly worship by the angels God sent as ministering “spirits” (1:5-14). It is incumbent upon all, then, to respond to this word, the word of so great a salvation that includes entrance into God’s own heavenly rest (4:12-13).

In this second chiastic series of five units (3:7-5:10) the audience are then presented with a progression via the chiastic parallels involving “testing” and “being tested.” In contrast to the “testing” of Jesus, who in “being tested” in what he suffered is able to help those who are “being tested” (2:10-18), in the rebellion during the day of “testing” in the wilderness the ancestral fathers “tested” God himself. Consequently, God became provoked with that generation as always wandering in the heart, so that they

will never enter into God's own heavenly rest (3:7-11). But the audience are assured that in Jesus the Son of God we have a high priest who has been "tested" like us in all things, yet without "sin." The "God" who "spoke" to us in his "Son," who made a cleansing of "sins" (1:1-4), is the "God" who "spoke" to his "Son" as a priest who sacrifices for "sins," and became for all those who obey him a source of eternal salvation, having been designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (4:14-5:10).

At the center of the third chiastic series of five units (5:11-7:28) the audience are encouraged to see how great is the king and priest Melchizedek who does not have an end of life but goes on living eternally (7:1-10). They then experience a pivot of parallels involving the priestly "order of Melchizedek." As heirs to God's promise of salvation, we may have a strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope lying ahead. This hope, represented by Jesus himself, we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and firm, and which enters into the interior of the heavenly veil, where as forerunner on behalf of us Jesus entered, "according to the order of Melchizedek" (Ps 109:4) having become high priest forever (6:13-20). In contrast to the Levitical priests according to the order of Aaron, our Lord Jesus has arisen according to the divine power of an indestructible life and is testified by God himself to be a priest forever "according to the order of Melchizedek" (7:11-17).

In this third chiastic series of five units (5:11-7:28) the audience are then presented with a progression via the chiastic parallels involving the "word" of divine righteousness and the "word" of God's oath. Made aware that they have become sluggish in hearing the "word," the audience, as those inexperienced in the "word" of righteousness, are invited to depart from the "word" at the beginning about the Christ, and bear forward toward the perfection they need to participate in heavenly worship. In order not to be sluggish, they are to imitate those who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises of salvation (5:11-6:12). For the Mosaic law appoints men having weakness as high priests, but the "word" of God's oath-taking that has arrived subsequent to the law appoints a Son who forever has been made perfect, an eternal high priest who is able to save people completely from sins, always living to intercede on behalf of them (7:18-28).

At the center of the second chiastic series of eleven units (5:11-9:28) the audience are assured that in Jesus we have a minister of the holy things in the heavenly tabernacle, the heavenly things shown by God to Moses as the

pattern in which to offer worship on earth. But Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry in heaven itself as guarantor of a better covenant with better promises (8:1-6).

At the center of the fourth chiastic series of five units (8:7-9:28) the audience are assured that the blood of the Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, one who goes on “living” eternally (7:1-10), will cleanse our conscience from dead works to offer worship to the “living” God (9:11-14). They then experience a pivot of parallels moving from the old to the new “covenant.” The offering of sacrificial worship by the Levitical priests according to the order of “Aaron” (7:11-17) took place in an earthly holy place. Although the contents of this earthly tabernacle included the ark of the old “covenant,” the staff of “Aaron,” and the tablets of the old “covenant,” the gifts and sacrifices offered in it were not able according to conscience to make perfect the one offering worship (9:1-10). But as “heirs” of salvation who are to hold fast to the hope represented by Jesus as a “firm” anchor in heaven (6:13-20), the audience may receive the eternal “inheritance” of a “firm” and new “covenant,” the new “covenant” of which Jesus is the guarantor through his self-sacrificial death (9:15-23).

In this fourth chiastic series of five units (8:7-9:28) the audience are then presented with a progression via the chiastic parallels involving a concern for salvation from “sins.” In accord with the assertion that Jesus is a high priest who is able to save the “people” from their “sins” (7:18-28), God promises that he will remember no longer the “sins” of his “people” (8:7-13). The audience, who are to imitate those inheriting the promises of “salvation” (5:11-6:12), are assured that Christ, who offered himself for the “sins” of many will be seen again without “sin,” and will bring “salvation” to those eagerly awaiting him (9:24-28).

At the center of the fifth chiastic series of five units (10:1-11:19) the audience, assured of being able to offer worship to the ever “living God” (9:11-14), are cautioned that it is fearful to fall into the hands of this “living God.” But by doing the will of God, they may acquire the promise of salvation, in accord with the scriptural exhortation that God’s just one from faith “will live” (Hab 2:4). This encourages the audience, knowing that they have a better possession that remains forever in heaven, not to be of drawing back into destruction but of faith into preservation of the soul (10:31-39).

The audience then experience a pivot of parallels involving divine “testifying” and “approaching” God for worship. In accord with the scriptural

promise that God will remember no longer the sins of his people upon whose hearts he will give his laws (Jer 38:33-34), the Holy Spirit “testifies” for us to “approach” God for worship with a true heart in assurance of faith, sprinkled with regard to the hearts from an evil conscience. The audience are not to abandon their own gathering for worship, for the Lord God surely will judge anyone who considers unclean the blood of the covenant, in which he was made holy, and insults the Spirit of grace (10:15-30). The elders of the past were “testified” in faith as models for the audience. By faith Abel offered a sacrifice to God through which he was “testified” to be just, God “testifying” on the basis of his gifts. By his faith Enoch was “testified” to have pleased God, as without faith it is impossible to please, for it is necessary that the one “approaching” God believe that he exists and that for those seeking him he becomes a rewarder. And by faith Noah furnished an ark for the salvation of his house and thus became an heir of righteousness according to faith (11:1-7).

In this fifth chiastic series of five units (10:1-11:19) the audience are also presented with a progression via the chiastic parallels involving the hopeful “waiting” for final salvation. Upon entering into the world as a human being, the scriptural voice of the divine Son Jesus Christ declared to God that God has provided a body for him to do God’s will (Ps 39:7-9), and thus to bring about the good things to come. Having offered one sacrifice, himself, on behalf of sins for all time, he sat at the right of God, henceforth “waiting” until God places his enemies as a footstool for his feet (Ps 109:1). By this one offering he has made perfect for all time those who are being made holy for the worship of God (10:1-14). As a model for the audience, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of God’s promise with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise. For he was “awaiting” the city having foundations built by God. In accord with faith these patriarchs died, not receiving the promises, but longing for a better, heavenly fatherland. By faith Abraham, who accepted the promises of God, was ready to offer his son Isaac, reasoning that God is able to raise even from the dead, and so he acquired him as if raised from the dead by God (11:8-19).

At the center of the third chiastic series of eleven units (10:1-13:25) the focus of the audience is drawn again, as in the centers of both the first (1:1-5:10) and second (5:11-9:28) chiastic series of eleven units, to the relationship between Moses and Jesus Christ. Faithful even beyond Moses is Jesus Christ, whom God placed as his divine Son over the audience as the household for the worship of God (3:1-6). Jesus is the high priest for the holy things in the tabernacle for heavenly worship shown to Moses as the

pattern for worship on earth (8:1-6). And now, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God than to have a temporary enjoyment of sin, Moses is presented as a model of faith who endured the reproach of the Christ, for he was looking away in hope to the future recompense from God in heaven (11:20-31).

At the center of the sixth chiastic series of five units (11:32-13:25) the audience, having been cautioned that it is “fearful” to fall into the “hands” of the “living God,” but knowing that they have a possession that “remains” forever in heaven (10:31-39), are now encouraged to restore the “hands” that have become weakened. Although what was appearing on Mount Sinai was “fearful” even for Moses, they have approached Mount Zion for worship and the heavenly city of the “living God,” as among the things not being shaken that “remain” forever in heaven. The audience are to take note not to refuse the divine voice speaking from heaven. For if those refusing the one warning on earth did not “escape,” neither will we, if we turn away the one from heaven. This reinforces the warning that we will surely not “escape,” if we neglect so great a salvation (2:1-4).

The audience then experience a pivot of chiastic parallels from the “fruit” that comes from God to the “fruit” that is given to God. The divine discipline through which the audience, who do not yet see all things “subjected” to Jesus (2:5-9), have been trained by “subjecting” themselves to the Father of spirits in order to live eternally, gives them back the peaceful “fruit” of “righteousness” (12:1-11), the divine “righteousness” of which Noah became an heir by faith (11:1-7). Through the divine Son, who is “the same” and whose years will not cease (1:5-14), Jesus Christ, who yesterday and today is “the same” and for the ages, the audience are to offer up a sacrifice of praise continually to God, that is, the “fruit” of lips confessing his name (13:1-16).

In addition, at this point, the audience are presented with a number of chiastic parallels within this third chiastic series of eleven units. The audience have been assured that God will “remember” no longer the sins of his people upon whose “hearts” he will give his laws, so that they are to approach God for worship with a true “heart” in assurance of faith, sprinkled with regard to the “hearts” from an evil conscience. The audience are not to “abandon” their own gathering for worship, for the Lord God surely “will judge” anyone who considers unclean the blood of the covenant, in which he was “made holy,” and insults the Spirit of grace (10:15-30). Consequently, because God “will judge” the immoral but never “abandon” the audience, they are to “remember” the prisoners and to “remember” their

leaders. Since it is beneficent for the “heart” to be confirmed by grace, the grace of God by which Jesus suffered outside the gate that he might “make holy” the people through his own blood, the audience are to go out to him outside of their communal camp, bearing his reproach (13:1-16).

In this sixth series of chiastic units (11:32-13:25) the audience are also presented with a progression via the chiastic parallels involving raising from the “dead.” That women of old, with the faith of Abraham who reasoned that God is able to raise even from the “dead” (11:8-19), received their “dead” from resurrection pointed to a better resurrection through which our ancestors would not be made “perfect” without us (11:32-40), by the Jesus whom God made “perfect” through sufferings (2:10-18). This is the better resurrection God provided when he led up Jesus from the “dead” as the shepherd of the sheep, the one great high priest in the blood of the eternal covenant (13:17-25). God “provided” Jesus, through whom God made “the ages” (1:1-4), a body “to do” God’s “will” and thus bring about the “good” things to come (10:1-14). God may thus “provide” the audience--in and through the prayer of the author for them--with every “good” thing “to do” God’s “will,” as God is doing among us what is pleasing before him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for “the ages” of the ages, amen! (13:17-25).

Finally, and to sum up, in a chiastically concerted way, the audience of the letter to the Hebrews are being encouraged to be faithful in their heart to the divine grace available from the Son and high priest (1:1-5:10). We await in hope the heavenly high priest who offered himself to intercede for us (5:11-9:28), so that by faith with grace in heart we may live eternally by doing the will of the ever living God (10:1-13:25). By doing the will of God, Jesus offered himself, both his body and his blood, in a unique sacrifice as the heavenly high priest, providing us with the divine grace to participate in heavenly worship by likewise doing the will of God. The audience are encouraged to deepen their experience of this heavenly worship by not abandoning their communal gatherings for liturgical worship, where they may gain, through listening to this homiletic letter, a more profound appreciation for the Lord’s supper as the celebration of the sacrificial body and blood of the heavenly high priest. At the same time, the audience are not to neglect the doing of good and their communal fellowship, which includes bearing the reproach of the Christ and the sufferings it entails as their divine discipline. These are the sacrifices of our ethical worship with which God is pleased.



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# Scripture Index

## Old Testament (LXX)

### Genesis

2:2	104, 109, 110, 111, 112, 115
3:17-18	149
4:1-5	304
5:24	306, 307
6:8-9:17	309
6:13	310
7:22-23	310
12-22	316
14:17-20	162
21:12	314, 322, 323, 325, 326, 336
22:17	154, 155, 163, 314, 317, 319, 325, 328
25:31-34	373
27:31-38	373
47:31	326, 328, 329, 337
50:24-25	326, 328, 329, 337
Exodus	
1:15-22	330
2:2	330
3:16-17	107
4:22	39
4:27-31	107
6:1-9	107
12:7	326, 333, 336

12:13	326, 333, 336
12:23	333-34
13:5	39
13:11	39
14:21-22	334
16:35	39
19:12-13	367, 374-75, 376, 389
23:20	39
24:1-11	22
24:8	235, 236, 244, 248, 329, 377
25:23-30	215
25:30	215
25:31-39	215
25:40	192, 196, 197, 200, 214, 244
28:1	133
Leviticus	
6:10	215
6:18	215
6:22	215
7:1	215
7:6	215
10:12	215
10:17	215
14:13	215
16:27	400
Numbers	
12:7	76, 78, 82
12:8	82

14:26-30	107
14:29	100
14:32	100
24:6	194
Deuteronomy	
4:11-12	375
4:24	368, 386, 387, 389
6:10	39
6:23	39
7:1	39
9:19	367, 377, 388
11:29	39
12:9	91
17:6	273, 285, 286, 289
29:17	367, 369, 372, 389
31:6	390, 393, 395, 408
32:35-36	289, 396
32:35	273, 285, 288
32:36	273, 285, 288, 291, 395
32:43	35, 36, 39, 264, 329
32:47	119
Joshua	
2:1-21	335, 337
2:12	335, 337

Joshua ( <i>cont.</i> )		271, 298, 382,	171, 173, 177,
6:1-17	326, 334, 335,	383, 417, 426,	178, 179, 181,
	337	432	183, 189, 190,
6:15-17	335	39:7	277, 304, 395
6:22-25	335, 337	39:8-9	11
21:43	113	39:9	295
22:4	113	44:7-8	35, 37, 40, 44,
			45
2 Samuel		44:7	217
7:14	35, 36, 37, 38,	44:8	82, 277, 359
	39, 69, 320,	49:14	405
	358, 361	94	86, 87, 90,
22:3	64, 69		112
		94:6	88
3 Kingdoms		94:7-11	86, 88, 118,
8:56	91		206, 265, 275
		94:7-10	108
1 Chronicles		94:7-8	94, 98, 99,
23:13	215		104, 112, 113,
			116, 142, 145,
2 Chronicles			305, 341, 376
13:11	215	94:7	88, 107, 112
		94:8	88
1 Maccabees		94:10	209
10:24	422	94:11	101, 104, 108,
			109, 110, 115,
2 Maccabees			154, 183
7:24	422	96:7	35, 36, 39,
15:8-11	422		264, 329
		101:26-28	35, 44, 45
Psalms (LXX numbering)		101:26	37, 41, 109,
2:6	38		175, 292, 385
2:7	35, 36, 37, 38,	101:27	42
	45, 133, 134,	101:28	43, 408
	135, 136, 137,	103:4	35, 36, 362
	319, 358, 403	109:1	9, 26, 32, 35,
2:8	26, 28, 38		45, 46, 59,
8:5-7	58, 59, 60, 62		194, 259, 268,
8:5	68, 131, 394,		269, 270, 272,
	397		275, 286, 352,
8:7	59, 361, 428		354, 355, 356,
21:23	21, 64, 68, 69,		366, 428, 432
	74, 165, 358-	109:4	126, 134, 135,
	59, 380, 383,		137, 140, 142,
	407		151, 158, 170,
39:7-9	259, 263-64,		
			117:6
			131:14
			91
			Proverbs
			3:11-12
			352, 358, 359,
			361, 365
			4:26
			367, 369, 370,
			389
			Job
			7:21
			26, 32
			Wisdom
			7:25-26
			26, 31
			11:7
			330
			Sirach
			25:23
			370
			44:17-18
			309
			44:19-22
			316
			Hosea
			14:3
			405
			Habakkuk
			2:3-4
			290
			2:3
			294, 296, 297,
			299
			2:4
			296, 297, 298,
			299, 305-6,
			308, 311, 362,
			397, 431
			Zephaniah
			1:18
			273, 285, 286,
			289
			Haggai
			2:6
			367, 378, 384,
			389

Isaiah		Luke		I:1-2	21, 27-29, 33, 34, 36, 38, 39, 46, 49, 57, 58, 81, 128
8:17	64, 69, 74, 207, 412	22:19-20	22		
8:18	64, 70, 74, 264	22:20	244, 245	I:2	9, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 44, 45, 46, 49, 52, 58, 59, 60, 66, 68, 82, 83, 86, 88, 123, 127, 133, 136, 138, 204, 223, 253, 254, 283, 304, 305, 311, 317, 383, 397, 412, 419, 426
12:2	69	Acts of the Apostles		I:3-4	32, 33, 34
26:11	273, 285, 286, 289	2:42	23	I:3	26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 40, 45, 46, 50, 51, 58, 59, 62, 66, 73, 75, 79, 81, 97, 98, 114, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 138, 146, 187, 188, 194, 198, 210, 219, 240, 246, 270, 301-2, 304, 318, 342, 356-57, 375, 404, 420
26:20	290, 294, 296, 299	7:30	50		
35:3	367, 369, 370, 389	7:38	50		
53:10-12	22	7:53	50		
53:12	8, 250, 255, 256, 257, 258, 263, 270, 296	13:15	19, 422		
63:11	416	14:1-3	53		
66:1	91	18:24	17		
Jeremiah		19:22	20		
38:31-34	7, 22, 201, 204, 211, 237, 264	I Corinthians			
38:31	201	11:23-26	22		
38:33-34	293, 303, 432	11:24-25	244		
38:33	207, 273, 275, 277, 287, 289, 408	12:4-11	53		
38:34	209, 250, 256, 257, 273, 274, 276, 277, 284, 288, 289, 394	16:8	17, 20		
Ezekiel		16:10	17		
43:12	215	16:12	17		
New Testament		Galatians			
Matthew		3:19	50		
26:26-29	22	I Timothy			
26:28	244, 245	I:3	20		
Mark		2 Timothy			
14:22-25	22	I:18	20		
14:24	244, 245	4:12	20		
		Hebrews			
		I:1-5:10	5, 13, 24, 137- 38, 429, 432, 434		
		I:1-2:18	15, 16, 428, 429		
		I:1-4	13, 15, 26-34, 35, 46, 65, 73, 127, 138, 412, 426, 429, 430, 434		
		I:1	26, 27, 28, 29, 49, 82, 86, 90, 112, 128, 138, 204, 341, 383		
				I:4-7	72
				I:4-5	39, 42
				I:4	26, 33, 35, 36, 39, 41, 46, 58, 65, 69, 75, 79, 150, 182, 187, 198, 239, 246, 294, 321, 331, 344, 373

## Hebrews (cont.)

Hebrews (cont.)			58, 66, 68, 80,		373, 380, 388,
I:5-14	13, 15, 35-47,		83, 130, 135,		389
	48, 49, 52, 53,		136, 163, 184,	2:I-4	13, 15, 48-54,
	56, 63, 118,		194, 217, 329,		55, 56, 105,
	124, 392, 408,		341, 386, 397		369, 388, 428,
	428, 429, 433	I:9	35, 37, 40, 41,		429, 433
I:5-13	44, 57, 58, 68,		44, 77, 79, 82,	2:I-3	21
	69		98, 143, 163,	2:I-2	48, 49-50
I:5-10	36-42, 44, 47,		277, 311, 341,	2:I	48, 49, 50, 52,
	52		359, 364		53, 54, 88,
I:5-6	112	I:10-12	45		90, 92, 93, 97,
I:5	9, 35, 36, 37,	I:10-11	42		106, 107, 113,
	38, 39, 41, 42,	I:10	35, 36, 37, 41,		142, 146, 157,
	44, 45, 46, 57,		42, 43, 44, 45,		376, 415
	58, 66, 68,		47, 52, 109,	2:2-3	119, 120, 145,
	69, 70, 80, 86,		175, 188, 194,		146
	87, 88, 90, 93,		251, 292, 372,	2:2	48, 50, 51, 52,
	110, 133, 136,		385		53, 54, 82, 86,
	207, 208, 319,	I:11-12	43		98, 105, 107,
	320, 358, 361	I:11	35, 36, 42, 43,		115, 157, 238,
I:6-7	36, 41, 46, 57,		44, 47, 210		241, 295, 308,
	59, 130	I:12	35, 36, 42, 43,		332
I:6	35, 36, 37, 39,		44, 45, 47,	2:3-4	48, 51-53, 55,
	40, 44, 46, 53,		392, 408		60, 62
	56, 58, 59, 63,	I:13-14	36, 44-46, 47,	2:3	48, 49, 50, 51,
	67, 68, 69, 77,		57, 130		52, 54, 57, 62,
	80, 83, 86, 87,	I:13	35, 36, 44, 45,		67, 72, 80, 81,
	88, 92, 96, 98,		46, 48, 52, 53,		82, 83, 84, 86,
	110, 120, 124,		56, 59, 60, 62,		87, 88, 92, 93,
	129, 264, 329,		63, 72, 79, 86,		98, 107, 113,
	334, 335, 337,		87, 88, 122,		115, 136, 137,
	364, 371, 373,		129, 130, 270,		142, 150, 175,
	380, 381, 416		286, 357, 371,		205, 239, 241,
I:7	35, 36, 37, 40,		395		257, 270, 369,
	44, 46, 53, 59,	I:14	35, 36, 44, 46,		372, 376, 383,
	78, 80, 86, 87,		50, 51, 53, 56,		384, 388, 398,
	88, 118, 120,		57, 59, 60, 62,		400
	124, 194, 286,		63, 67, 68, 69,	2:4	48, 53, 54, 55,
	342, 362, 380,		72, 78, 80, 83,		57, 80, 82, 87,
	387-88, 389		84, 92, 107,		118, 120, 145,
I:8-12	68		115, 118, 120,		146, 221, 398
I:8-10	37, 41, 42		124, 136, 137,	2:5-9	13, 15, 55-63,
I:8-9	40, 42, 45		146, 150, 194,		64, 74, 95,
I:8	9, 35, 37, 40,		239, 257, 310,		102, 353, 365,
	41, 44, 45, 52,		334, 335, 337,		428, 429, 433



2:5-7	55, 56-59, 61, 62	2:10-15	84, 85	2:14-17	21, 65, 71-73
2:5-6	56, 57	2:10-12	71	2:14-16	77
2:5	41, 55, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63, 72, 82, 146, 262, 353, 361, 365, 405	2:10-11	21, 74, 81	2:14-15	96, 131, 135, 137, 144, 177, 184, 238
2:6-7	63	2:10	9, 64, 65, 66-67, 68, 69, 70, 72, 73, 74, 75, 77, 79, 83, 92, 96, 98, 101, 107, 115, 123, 133, 136, 137, 143, 146, 150, 172, 185, 187, 189, 219, 224, 229, 239, 256, 257, 270, 293, 340, 348, 350, 356, 358, 381, 416, 420	2:14	64, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 83, 120, 122, 135, 174, 224, 229, 231, 279, 308, 330
2:6	55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 66, 68, 82, 83, 86, 87, 88, 110, 131, 209, 394, 397	2:11-17	318	2:15	64, 71, 72, 74, 83, 97, 107, 115, 119, 120-21, 122, 174, 186, 205, 230, 241-42, 286, 297-98, 308, 406, 416
2:7	55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 68, 72, 79, 132, 133, 219, 420	2:11-14	72	2:16-17	71
2:8-9	146	2:11-12	8, 65, 67-69, 70, 72, 73, 165, 393	2:16	64, 72, 154, 162, 205, 316, 318, 319, 323
2:8	55, 56, 59-60, 61, 63, 91, 122, 303, 333, 353, 361, 362, 365, 371	2:11	64, 65, 68, 73, 74, 77, 83, 96, 143, 150, 231, 238, 267, 271, 287, 322, 363, 372, 424	2:17-18	65, 73-74, 77, 91, 92
2:9-15	80	2:12-13	231	2:17	5, 8, 10, 64, 65, 66, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 80, 81, 83, 84, 96, 97, 114, 122, 130, 131, 132, 150, 164, 165, 173, 188, 208, 210, 282, 382, 393, 402
2:9-10	64-65, 129	2:12	21, 64, 65, 69, 70, 73, 74, 75, 81, 82, 83, 86, 87, 88, 92, 93, 96, 150, 358-59, 381, 383, 407	2:18	64, 65, 73, 74, 75, 87, 90, 93, 122, 130, 131, 135, 136, 223, 253, 322, 402
2:9	7, 8, 21, 22, 55, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 72, 74, 78, 79, 91, 93, 95, 101, 102, 113, 131, 132, 133, 136, 144, 158, 184, 219, 238, 256, 267, 287, 293, 303, 304, 308, 333, 372, 387, 398, 420, 425	2:13-15	12	3:1-6	13, 15, 16, 76-85, 86, 87, 92, 96, 327, 336, 396, 429, 432
2:10-18	13, 15, 64-75, 76, 84, 87, 92, 340, 350, 429, 434	2:13-14	72, 73		
		2:13	64, 65, 69-71, 73, 74, 83, 96, 110, 112, 174, 207, 264, 265, 330, 412		
		2:14-18	147, 264-65		

Hebrews (cont.)

3:1-3	80	3:7-8	87-89, 93, 99, 112, 145, 275		122, 123, 124, 146, 157, 165, 177, 186, 206, 233, 242, 278, 279, 281, 283, 292, 297, 303, 362, 371, 380, 383, 384, 394, 422, 423
3:1-2	96	3:7	86, 88, 89, 90, 92, 97, 99, 107, 118, 120, 123, 142, 147, 221, 376		
3:1	10, 76, 77-78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85, 95, 98, 113, 123, 129, 130, 144, 145, 150, 165, 197, 238, 267, 278, 282, 295, 319, 321, 361, 372, 380, 394, 406, 422	3:8-10	108	3:13-15	21
3:2-3	77, 78-79, 81, 85	3:8-9	87	3:13	94, 95, 97, 98, 100, 102, 106, 112, 114, 123, 130, 132, 210, 283, 415, 422
3:2	5, 76, 78, 81, 100, 123, 197, 282, 330, 382	3:8	7, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 92, 94, 97, 100, 112, 120, 121, 122, 123, 130, 138, 206, 281, 283, 372	3:14-15	95, 98-99
3:3	76, 77, 79, 80, 85, 100, 132, 133, 182, 215, 219, 269, 287, 304, 310, 330, 420	3:9-10	87, 89-90, 91, 92, 93, 109	3:14	9, 94, 95, 98, 99, 150, 157, 241, 267, 282, 302, 329, 332, 361, 422
3:4	76, 77, 79-81, 84, 85, 215	3:9	86, 87, 89, 91, 97, 100, 110, 127, 130, 138	3:15-16	112
3:5-6	96, 382	3:10-11	87, 90-92, 95	3:15	7, 94, 95, 99, 102, 107, 118, 120, 121, 122, 123, 142, 206, 281, 372, 376
3:5	5, 76, 77, 81-82, 83, 85, 86, 87, 92, 100, 175, 197, 282, 330, 377	3:10	7, 86, 90, 91, 93, 94, 96, 97, 100, 102, 120, 121, 122-23, 132, 157, 206, 209, 265, 281, 294, 346	3:16-19	111, 120, 146, 157
3:6	8, 9, 76, 82-84, 85, 90, 98, 99, 130, 136, 145, 150, 157, 182, 197, 267, 278, 280, 282, 287, 295, 302, 310, 311, 422	3:11-12	107, 115	3:16-17	113
3:7-5:10	15, 16, 429	3:11	86, 91, 92, 93, 96, 100, 101, 108, 110, 154, 157, 183, 197, 230, 335	3:16	94, 95, 99-100, 102, 107, 142, 197, 205, 330, 331, 334, 372, 376, 402
3:7-11	13, 15, 86-93, 102, 111, 127, 138, 430	3:12-19	13, 15, 94-103, 104, 115, 118, 124, 429	3:17-18	337
		3:12	5, 7, 12, 21, 94, 95-97, 98, 101, 102, 103, 106, 114, 118, 119, 120, 121,	3:17	94, 95, 100- 101, 102, 114, 284, 291, 335
				3:18-19	95, 101-102, 103
				3:18	94, 101, 102, 106, 108, 110, 114, 136, 147,

	154-55, 157, 183, 197, 230, 291, 335	4:6-11	105, 110-115, 279	4:13	117, 121, 122, 123, 129, 142, 229, 397, 399, 414, 419, 422
3:19	5, 94, 95, 101, 102, 106, 108, 112, 114, 115, 157, 223, 230, 303	4:6	104, 105, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 136, 146, 157, 230, 284, 292, 335	4:14-5:10	14, 15, 126- 38, 140, 151, 430
4:1-11	14, 15, 104- 116, 117, 118, 124, 429	4:7	7, 104, 110, 111, 112, 113, 116, 118, 120, 121, 122, 123, 142, 206, 281, 283, 341, 376	4:14-5:3	127, 128-32, 134
4:1-3	105-108, 111		111, 112, 113, 116, 118, 120, 121, 122, 123, 142, 206, 281, 283, 341, 376	4:14-16	21, 128
4:1-2	105, 106	4:8	104, 110, 111, 113, 114, 283, 305	4:14	8, 9, 10, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 132, 136, 137, 147, 157, 188, 194, 251, 267, 278, 279, 282, 319, 331, 354, 406, 416
4:1	104, 105, 106, 107, 109, 110, 111, 112, 114, 115, 116, 151, 154, 167, 198, 230, 239, 286, 317, 330, 332- 33, 335, 345, 372, 396, 423 116	4:9-11	110-111, 113, 121, 122, 283, 292	4:15	10, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 134, 135, 137, 138, 176, 188, 189, 194, 210, 223, 232, 256, 262, 293, 322, 331, 342, 399, 404
4:2-3		4:9	104, 118, 124, 132, 164, 173, 208, 284, 288, 331	4:16	7, 114, 126, 129, 130, 131, 132, 185, 194, 230, 238-39, 262-63, 278, 280, 287, 295, 308, 372, 374, 375, 386-87, 396, 398, 425
4:2	6, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 111, 112, 115, 116, 119, 142, 297, 376, 399 108-110, 115	4:10	104, 111, 114, 116, 117, 118, 119, 124, 229, 233		128
4:3-5	112, 395	4:11	104, 111, 114, 116, 118, 136, 146, 157, 158, 197, 230, 233, 234, 291, 335, 423	5:1-3	10, 22, 126, 127, 128, 129, 131, 132, 134, 135, 137, 138, 158, 188, 189, 195, 210, 221, 223-24, 247, 254, 268, 269, 284, 305
4:3	6, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 112, 114, 115, 147, 154, 157, 158, 183, 197, 230, 233, 253, 297, 318, 335	4:12-13	14, 15, 21, 117-25, 126, 137, 429	5:1	
	104, 105, 108, 109, 110, 112, 113, 114, 233	4:12	7, 12, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 129, 137, 142, 157, 177, 186, 206, 242, 297, 298, 342, 397, 414, 419, 422		
4:5	104, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 147, 157, 197, 230, 335				

Hebrews (cont.)

5:2	126, 127, 129, 131, 132, 134, 135, 138, 189, 223, 342, 346, 355		143, 144, 150, 172, 185, 189, 224, 229, 230, 239, 257, 270, 316, 348, 381, 395, 416		147, 149, 150, 151, 172, 173, 180, 190, 224, 229, 233, 240, 241, 267, 283, 297, 318, 332, 343, 373, 376, 404, 413-14
5:3	126, 127, 128, 132, 134, 135, 137, 138, 164, 173, 188, 208, 210, 221, 265, 402	5:10	10, 126, 128, 134, 137, 158, 168, 234, 348	6:2	23, 139, 144, 224, 230, 232, 241, 255, 292, 323, 343, 371, 397, 416
5:4	126, 127, 128, 132-33, 137, 138, 173, 213, 218, 238, 316	5:11-9:28	5, 13, 14, 24, 430, 432, 434	6:3	139, 144
5:5	9, 10, 126, 127, 128, 133, 134, 136, 137, 138, 142, 189, 228, 252, 267, 319, 358, 403	5:11-7:28	15, 16, 171, 180, 190, 430	6:4-5	146, 149
5:6-10	127, 133-37	5:11-6:12	14, 15, 139- 52, 153, 158, 180, 190, 250, 257, 430, 431	6:4	139, 141, 144- 45, 146, 151, 156, 197, 221, 263, 292, 293, 304, 321, 380, 405
5:6-7	134	5:11-6:1	140, 141-43, 149	6:5	139, 141, 145- 46, 151, 223, 262, 304, 375, 398
5:6	126, 127, 134, 135, 137, 140, 142, 151, 158, 163, 168, 173, 184, 196, 234, 256, 397	5:11-12	141	6:6	9, 139, 140, 146-47, 150, 151, 156, 263, 374
5:7	126, 127, 134, 135, 136, 138, 157, 184, 185, 195, 223, 224, 238, 241, 279, 307, 310, 311, 342, 374, 387	5:11	139, 140, 142, 149, 150, 151, 152, 180, 190, 376	6:7-12	140, 148-51
5:8-10	8	5:12	139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 149-50, 151, 173, 209, 278, 295, 341, 355	6:7-8	148
5:8	9, 126, 127, 128, 134, 136, 137, 138, 189, 253, 316, 361, 402	5:13-14	141	6:7	139-40, 148, 149, 151, 154, 155, 252, 363, 374
5:9-10	134, 138	5:13	139, 141, 142, 143, 145, 163, 180, 190, 311, 341, 364, 376	6:8	140, 148, 149, 150, 210, 375, 387
5:9	126, 134, 137,	5:14-6:1	141, 163	6:9-10	148
		5:14	139, 140, 141, 143, 146, 149, 150, 151-52, 172, 229, 364, 398	6:9	21, 140, 148, 149, 150, 152, 182, 198, 228, 250, 257, 294, 321, 344, 359, 412
		6:1-3	140, 143-44, 146		
		6:1	6, 21, 139, 140, 141-42, 143, 144, 146,		

6:10	140, 148, 150, 282, 372, 394, 406	6:18-19	153, 157		162, 163, 166,
6:11-12	148	6:18	9, 21, 153, 155, 156, 157, 159, 182, 183, 241, 262, 263, 282, 298, 302, 303, 342, 356, 358, 387		167, 168, 169, 177, 184, 186, 196, 262, 269, 275, 294, 386, 394, 404
6:11	9, 140, 148-49, 150, 151, 157, 182, 209, 280, 282, 302, 328, 329	6:19-20	182, 197, 241, 264, 302, 342	7:4	160, 161, 162, 163-64, 166, 167, 168-69, 269
6:12	6, 140, 149, 150-51, 152, 154, 155, 156, 158, 167, 198, 239, 280, 297, 317, 323, 328, 341, 373	6:19	17, 153, 157, 158, 159, 186, 193, 215, 230, 236, 247, 251, 279, 298, 399, 404	7:5	160, 161, 164-65, 166, 167, 168, 169, 172-73, 177, 183, 199, 205, 208, 242, 399, 402-3
6:13-20	14, 15, 153-59, 160, 168, 171, 178, 236, 247, 430, 431	6:20	10, 12, 21, 22, 153, 157-58, 159, 160, 161, 163, 168, 171, 178, 182, 183, 184, 186, 187, 215, 230, 234, 241, 251, 256, 267, 331, 357, 397, 401	7:6-9	161, 166-67
6:13-15	153, 154-55, 157			7:6	160, 161, 165, 166-67, 168, 169, 199, 323, 328
6:13-14	154			7:7	160, 161, 166, 167, 169, 182, 198, 294, 321, 328, 344
6:13	153, 154, 155, 157, 158-59, 162, 163, 183, 228, 282, 316, 318, 384	7:1-10	14, 15, 160-69, 170, 171, 178, 193-94, 228, 234, 430, 431	7:8-9	166
6:14	153, 155, 163, 319, 328			7:8	12, 160, 161, 166, 167, 168, 169, 177, 178, 186, 228, 234, 242, 256, 275, 286, 297, 303, 305
6:15	153, 154, 155, 167, 198, 239, 317, 341	7:1-9	316	7:9	160, 161, 166, 167
6:16	153, 154, 155, 156, 159, 183, 228	7:1-5	161, 162-64	7:10	160, 166, 167-68, 169, 170, 178
6:17-20	282	7:1-3	162	7:11-17	14, 15, 170-78, 179, 190, 213, 225, 430, 431
6:17-18	154, 155-56	7:1-2	330	7:11-12	170, 171-73, 174, 181
6:17	11, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 159, 167, 176, 183, 199, 236, 239, 247, 311, 317	7:1	160, 161-62, 163, 166, 167, 168, 169, 269, 328, 415		
6:18-20	156-58, 284	7:2	160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 166, 167, 311, 335, 341, 364, 415		
		7:3-5	162		
		7:3	9, 160, 161,		

Hebrews (*cont.*)

7:11	170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177-78, 185, 189, 193, 199, 205, 208, 213, 218, 224, 225, 228-29, 242	185, 189, 190, 254, 399	251, 256, 331, 357, 372, 395, 419
7:12	170, 172, 173, 176-77, 178, 184-85, 188, 199, 205, 240, 307, 385	7:19 9, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 185, 187, 189, 190, 198, 199, 205, 224, 228, 246-47, 269, 270, 284, 294, 302, 321, 344, 348, 381, 399	7:27 10, 22, 179, 186, 187, 188, 189, 193, 202, 208, 210, 211, 221, 229, 230, 232, 240, 247, 252, 254, 256, 267, 268, 284, 402, 406
7:13	170, 171, 174, 175, 178, 215, 399	7:20-21 180, 187	7:28-8:6 208
7:14	170, 171, 174-75, 178, 197, 204, 207, 242-43, 330, 372, 377, 417	7:20 179, 181, 182- 83, 184, 189, 190	7:28 10, 179, 180, 187, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 199, 206, 224, 229, 243, 262, 269, 270, 342, 348, 381, 397
7:15-17	170, 171, 175-77	7:21 179, 181, 183, 184, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 195, 196, 397, 403	8:1-6 14, 15, 16, 192-200, 201, 202, 211, 327, 336, 431, 432-33
7:15-16	178, 181	7:22 179, 181, 183, 190, 198, 218, 228, 237, 247, 267, 294, 321, 344, 401	8:1-2 193-94, 198, 200, 222
7:15	170, 175, 176, 177, 178, 196, 199, 243, 342	7:23 179, 180, 184, 190, 238, 307	8:1 10, 11, 192, 193, 194, 195, 197, 199, 221, 246, 251, 270, 320, 357, 383, 399, 404
7:16	170, 176, 177, 179, 185-86, 190, 196, 199, 205, 225, 243, 266, 307, 318, 342	7:24-25 180, 184-86	8:2 192, 193, 194- 95, 197, 198, 200, 215, 221, 229, 251, 280, 363
7:17	170, 171, 176, 177, 178, 184, 196, 256, 275, 303, 307, 397	7:24 10, 179, 180, 184, 185, 188, 190, 191, 251, 294, 308, 386, 394, 397, 404	8:3 10, 192, 193, 195, 196, 200, 221, 223, 232, 247, 254, 268, 305
7:18-28	14, 15, 179- 91, 192, 199, 202, 211, 430, 431	7:25 10, 12, 21, 22, 179, 185, 186, 188, 191, 223, 242, 251-52, 262, 279, 280, 297, 375, 405, 420	8:4 192, 193, 195- 96, 199, 200,
7:18-22	180-83, 187	7:26-28 180, 186-89	
7:18-19	181, 182, 190	7:26-27 186, 187	
7:18	9, 179, 180,	7:26 10, 179, 187, 188, 189, 193, 194, 221, 232,	

	205, 214, 224, 266, 305, 320	8:11-13	202, 208-10		226, 229, 242, 245, 252-53, 254, 402
8:5	192, 196-97, 200, 214, 215, 220, 224, 244, 246, 251, 262, 310, 321, 330, 376, 383, 399	8:11	201, 208, 209, 210, 211, 294	9:8	212, 213, 219, 220, 221, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 233-34, 278, 323, 329, 363, 385, 399
8:6	11, 192, 193, 198-99, 200, 201, 203, 206, 211, 218, 228, 237, 244-45, 247, 294, 321, 344, 381	8:12	201, 202, 208, 209, 210, 211, 250, 256, 257, 277, 293, 394		213, 222-25
8:7-9:28	15, 16, 431	8:13	201, 202, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 214, 216, 218, 222, 223, 225, 226, 237, 238, 267, 416	9:9-10	212, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 228, 231, 233, 247, 254, 255, 262, 263, 270, 281, 305, 318, 323, 348, 381, 399
8:7-13	14, 15, 201- 11, 212, 225, 250, 257, 431	9:1-10	14, 15, 212- 26, 227, 233, 236, 248	9:9	212, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 228, 231, 233, 247, 254, 255, 262, 263, 270, 281, 305, 318, 323, 348, 381, 399
8:7-10	202-6, 209	9:1-5	219	9:10	212, 213, 222, 223, 224, 226, 231, 318, 373, 399
8:7-9	202, 203	9:1-3	217, 218		
8:7	201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 209, 210, 211, 214, 215, 221, 222, 238, 266-67, 374	9:1	212, 213, 214, 220, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 238	9:11-14	14, 15, 227- 34, 235, 236, 241, 247, 431
8:8-12	22	9:2-3	213, 214-15	9:11-12	229
8:8-9	203	9:2	23, 212, 214, 215, 216, 219, 220, 222, 226, 310	9:11	10, 227, 228- 29, 232, 233, 234, 250, 262, 267, 417
8:8	201, 203, 204, 205, 209, 210, 211, 218, 237, 264, 265, 329	9:3	212, 215, 216, 219, 220, 221, 226, 279, 363	9:12	227, 229-30, 231, 232, 234, 237, 239, 242, 243, 245, 250- 51, 264, 267, 308, 357, 363, 374, 400, 402, 416
8:9	201, 202, 203, 203, 204, 205, 207, 209, 211, 218, 264, 292, 331, 415	9:4	212, 213, 215- 18, 225, 226, 236, 248, 310, 329		362, 366
8:10	7, 201, 202, 203, 205, 206, 207-8, 209, 211, 218, 240, 264, 275, 276, 280, 281, 288, 293, 329	9:5-8	213, 218-22	9:13-14	10, 227, 231, 232, 233, 234, 242, 243, 245- 46, 263, 267, 271, 281, 287, 364, 382, 402, 424
		9:5	212, 213, 218, 219, 226, 420	9:13	
		9:6-8	219-20		
		9:6	212, 213, 219, 220, 222, 226, 310, 406		
		9:7-8	219		
		9:7	10, 22, 212, 213, 219, 220, 221, 222, 224,		

Hebrews (*cont.*)

9:14-15	22	9:20	22, 235, 236, 244, 245, 248, 287, 329, 377, 416	10:1-13:25	5, 13, 14, 24, 432, 434
9:14	10, 12, 13, 22, 227, 228, 231-33, 234, 235, 237, 238, 239, 242, 246, 247, 252, 263, 267, 271, 278, 279, 281, 283, 287, 292, 297, 304-5, 330, 332, 334, 337, 364, 372, 380, 382, 383, 387, 400, 402, 416, 424	9:21	235, 236, 244- 45, 248, 281, 382	10:1-11:19	16, 431, 432
				10:1-14	14, 16, 259- 72, 274, 288, 315, 324, 411, 426, 432, 434
		9:22	22, 235, 236, 245-46, 248, 269, 277, 281	10:1-4	260, 261-63
		9:23	235, 236, 246- 47, 248, 249, 250, 251, 254, 257, 281, 294, 321, 344, 381	10:1	259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 266, 269, 270, 271, 272, 280, 302, 328, 348, 375, 381, 405, 411, 417, 426
9:15-23	14, 15, 235- 48, 249, 257, 431	9:24-28	14, 15, 249- 58, 259, 271, 431	10:2	259, 260, 261, 263, 266, 270, 272, 281, 399
		9:24-25	252	10:3-4	272
9:15-18	236-42	9:24	10, 22, 249, 250-52, 254, 256, 258, 264, 267, 278, 280, 319, 320, 343, 363	10:3	259, 261, 263
9:15-17	242			10:4	259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 265, 267, 400
9:15-16	237			10:5-10	309
9:15	11, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240-41, 242, 247, 248, 295, 307, 316, 317, 343-44, 347, 356, 381, 416	9:25	10, 22, 249, 250, 252-53, 254, 256, 257- 58, 262, 264, 268, 278, 316, 343, 400	10:5-7	260, 263-65, 266
9:16	235, 236, 237, 239, 240, 241, 246, 248, 307, 404			10:5-6	266, 383
		9:26	249, 250, 253-55, 255- 56, 257, 258, 259-60, 263, 269, 271, 284, 318, 402	10:5	11, 22, 259, 264, 266, 267, 269, 271, 277, 281, 304, 305, 311, 382, 383, 395, 401, 411, 417, 426
9:17	235, 236, 237, 240, 241, 247, 248, 297			10:6-10	304
9:18-19	243	9:27-28	249, 255-57, 258	10:6	259, 260, 265, 271, 298, 309
9:18	235, 237, 242, 244, 245, 279	9:27	249, 255, 286, 305	10:7	11, 259, 260, 265, 266, 267, 271, 295, 298, 311, 382, 383, 411-12, 417, 426
9:19-21	246	9:28	8, 22, 249, 250, 255, 256, 257, 263, 267, 270, 296, 310, 331, 372, 373	10:8-10	260, 265-67
9:19	235, 236, 242- 43, 244, 245, 248, 265, 281, 286, 288, 330, 377, 382			10:8	259, 260, 266,



	267, 272, 277, 298, 309, 383		275, 276, 277, 280, 281, 285- 86, 287, 288, 293, 392, 408		382-83, 392, 396, 407, 408, 415, 422
IO:9	11, 259, 260, 266, 267, 272, 295, 298, 311, 382, 383, 395, 412, 417, 426	IO:I7-I8	274, 276-77, 284, 289, 408	IO:26	273, 274, 284- 85, 286, 287, 288, 289, 387
IO:IO	11, 22, 259, 260, 266, 267, 269, 270, 271, 272, 277, 287, 295, 363, 372, 383, 395, 397, 412, 417, 420, 424, 426	IO:I7	273, 274, 276, 277, 284, 288, 293, 392, 394	IO:27-30	274, 285-88, 289
	260, 268-71	IO:I8	22, 273, 274, 276, 277, 284	IO:27	273, 285, 286, 288, 290, 291, 299, 342, 375, 377, 387
IO:II-I4	259, 260, 268, 269, 272	IO:I9-22	23, 274, 278- 80, 289, 364, 366	IO:28	273, 274, 285, 286, 287, 305, 330, 355
IO:II	268, 269, 270, 272, 288, 304, 382	IO:I9-21	280	IO:29	8, 9, 22, 23, 273, 274, 285, 286, 287, 291, 318, 331, 363, 366, 372, 386, 392, 398, 408, 424, 425
IO:I2-I4	275, 357	IO:I9-20	13, 279		12, 273, 285, 288, 291, 381, 392, 395, 396, 402, 408
IO:I2-I3	22, 259, 260, 268, 269, 270, 272, 288, 304, 382	IO:I9	273, 278, 279, 287, 295, 355, 363-64, 382, 383, 394, 422, 424	IO:30	14, 16, 23, 290-99, 300, 301, 311, 312, 369, 388, 431, 433
IO:I2	9, 259, 269, 270, 272, 286, 315, 317, 324, 371	IO:20	273, 278, 279, 297, 329, 418	IO:31	12, 290, 291- 92, 296, 297, 298, 299, 312, 362, 369, 370, 377, 380, 388
IO:I3	259, 260, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 277, 287, 348, 363, 372, 381, 424	IO:21	273, 279, 331, 416	IO:32-34	291, 292-93, 295, 299
IO:I4	14, 16, 273- 89, 290, 299, 301, 312, 391, 408, 432, 433	IO:22-25	274, 280-84, 289	IO:32	290, 291, 292, 293, 295, 356, 359, 414-15
IO:I5-30	274, 275-76, 277, 285, 289	IO:22-23	274	IO:33	290, 292-93, 331-32, 403, 415
IO:I5	273, 274, 275, 285, 286, 287, 301, 303, 312, 418	IO:22	7, 273, 274, 280, 281, 282, 297, 301, 309, 312, 355, 375, 382, 392, 395, 401, 408, 414, 419		
IO:I6-I7	22	IO:23	6, 8, 9, 273, 281, 282, 302, 318, 319, 384- 85, 406, 422		
IO:I6	7, 273, 274,	IO:24	273, 282, 283, 398, 407, 415		
		IO:25-26	8		
		IO:25	20, 23, 273, 283, 286, 287, 303, 304, 371,		

Hebrews (*cont.*)

IO:34	290, 291, 292, 293-94, 295, 298, 299, 321, 343, 344, 345, 347-48, 356, 369, 386, 388, 394, 404, 414, 423	II:3	300, 301, 304, 309, 310, 312, 348, 375, 397, 417	II:11	6, 314, 315, 318, 319, 321, 323, 324, 331, 342, 384-85
IO:35-37	291, 294-96, 299	II:4	300, 301, 304- 6, 307, 308, 311, 312, 319, 322, 328, 340, 346, 381, 382	II:12	314, 315, 318- 19, 321, 322, 323, 325, 330, 334
IO:35	290, 295, 308, 332	II:5-6	301, 306-9	II:13-16	322
IO:36	11, 290, 295- 96, 298, 317, 324, 325, 347, 356, 417	II:5	300, 301, 306, 307, 308-9, 311, 312, 374, 385, 387, 407, 419	II:13-14	321
IO:37	290, 291, 295, 296, 297, 316	II:6	6, 300, 301, 306, 308, 309, 312, 320, 332, 374, 375, 387, 407, 419	II:13	314, 315, 319- 20, 322, 324, 328, 334, 340, 345, 346, 349, 398, 406, 423, 424
IO:37-38	298	II:7	300, 301, 309- 11, 313, 315, 316, 317, 324, 341, 346, 353, 364, 365, 383, 387	II:14-16	346
IO:38-39	290, 296-98, 299, 303	II:8-19	14, 16, 314- 25, 326, 339, 349, 432, 434	II:14	314, 315, 320, 321, 324, 404
IO:38	13, 290-91, 296-97, 298, 305, 306, 308, 309, 311, 362, 381, 397	II:8-9	315, 316-17, 319, 322	II:15-16	315, 321-22
IO:39	17, 290, 291, 296, 297, 298, 300, 311	II:8	314, 315, 316, 322, 323, 324, 325, 374	II:15	314, 315, 321, 324-25, 329
II:I-40	397, 418	II:9	8, 314, 315, 316, 317, 319, 320, 322, 323, 325, 328, 339- 40, 343, 349	II:16	314, 315, 321, 322, 325, 340, 344, 347, 349, 380, 404
II:I-7	14, 16, 300- 313, 315, 324, 353, 365, 432, 433	II:10-13	315, 317-19, 321	II:17-19	315, 322-24
II:I-3	301-4, 309	II:10	8, 314, 315, 317-18, 321, 322, 324, 325, 380, 405	II:17	314, 315, 322- 23, 325, 340, 349
II:I	300, 301, 302- 3, 304, 309, 310, 311, 312, 333, 348	II:10	8, 314, 315, 317-18, 321, 322, 324, 325, 380, 405	II:18	314, 315, 322, 323, 325, 326- 27, 336
II:2-38	346	II:10	8, 314, 315, 317-18, 321, 322, 324, 325, 380, 405	II:19	314, 323, 325, 340, 347, 350, 416
II:2	300, 301, 303, 305, 309, 312, 346	II:10	8, 314, 315, 317-18, 321, 322, 324, 325, 380, 405	II:20-31	14, 16, 326- 37, 338, 339, 349, 433
II:3-31	6	II:10	8, 314, 315, 317-18, 321, 322, 324, 325, 380, 405	II:20-22	327-30, 334
		II:10	8, 314, 315, 317-18, 321, 322, 324, 325, 380, 405	II:20	326, 327, 328, 336, 337, 373, 405
		II:10	8, 314, 315, 317-18, 321, 322, 324, 325, 380, 405	II:21	326, 327, 328- 29, 334, 335, 337

II:22	326, 329, 331, 334, 337		347, 349, 350, 412, 416, 426	12:7	352, 353, 359, 360, 361, 363, 364, 365, 366
II:23-28	334	II:36	338, 339, 344- 45, 350	12:8	352, 353, 360, 361, 364, 366
II:23	326, 327, 330, 331, 333, 336, 396	II:37-38	339, 345-46	12:9	13, 352, 353- 54, 360, 361, 362, 365, 366, 371, 381, 384
II:24-26	327, 331, 332	II:37	338, 339, 345- 46, 350, 394	12:10-11	353, 362-64
II:24-25	331, 336	II:38	338, 346, 350	12:10	352, 363, 364, 366, 372
II:24	326, 331, 377	II:39	338, 339, 340, 346-47, 349, 350, 352-53, 355, 365	12:11	352, 353, 363, 364, 365, 366, 368, 370, 371, 373, 388, 392, 395, 406, 409, 414, 415
II:25	326, 331, 355	II:40	338, 339, 340, 347-49, 350, 351, 381, 414	12:12-29	14, 16, 367- 89, 391, 392, 408
II:26	326, 327, 331- 32, 333, 336, 403	12:1-11	14, 16, 352- 66, 368, 388, 392, 409, 433	12:12-17	368, 369-74, 386, 389
II:27-28	327, 333-34	12:1-4	353, 354-57, 363	12:12-14	369
II:27	326, 327, 332- 33, 336, 396	12:1-2	354, 355, 366	12:12-13	371
II:28	326, 334, 336, 373, 376, 381	12:1	352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 365, 366, 371, 418	12:12	367, 368, 369, 370, 375, 386, 388
II:29-31	327, 334-35	12:2	352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 359, 363, 364, 371, 404	12:13	367, 370, 371, 374
II:29	326, 334-35, 337, 345	12:3-4	366	12:14	367, 368, 370, 371, 372, 374, 388, 415, 425
II:30	326, 327, 334, 335, 337	12:3	10, 18, 352, 354, 357, 359, 413	12:15	8, 23, 367, 368, 369, 370, 372, 378, 386, 398, 423, 425
II:31	326, 327, 334, 335, 337, 338, 349, 364, 371, 415	12:4	352, 353, 354, 357, 358, 363	12:16	367, 369, 370, 373, 395, 414, 423
II:32-13:25	16, 433, 434	12:5-6	353, 358-59, 360, 365	12:17	367, 369-70, 373, 374, 414
II:32-40	14, 16, 338- 51, 352, 365, 412, 426, 434	12:5	23, 352, 353, 358, 359, 360, 361, 364, 365	12:18-21	12
II:32	17, 338, 339, 340-41, 347, 350	12:6-11	23	12:18-20	368, 374-76, 385, 389
II:33-34	339, 342-43, 345, 346	12:6	352, 353, 358, 359, 360, 361, 363		
II:33	338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 346, 349, 350, 364, 386	12:7-9	353, 360-62		
II:34	338, 339, 342, 343, 345, 350, 387, 389				
II:35	338, 339, 340, 343-44, 345,				

Hebrews (*cont.*)

		409, 410, 426,	401-2, 403,
12:18	367, 368, 375,	433, 434	409
	379, 387	13:1-9	391, 401-4
12:19	367, 368, 375,	405	13:12
	376, 379, 382,	13:1-5	390, 391, 392,
	383, 384, 413	13:1-2	401, 402, 403,
12:20	367, 368, 376,	13:1	408, 409
	379, 383, 403		13:13
12:21	367, 368-69,	13:2	390, 391, 401,
	376-77, 388		402, 403-4,
12:22-29	23		406, 409
12:22-27	368, 378-86,	13:3-5	13:14
	389	13:3	390, 391, 404-
12:22-23	378		5, 409
12:22	11, 12, 367,		13:15-16
	368, 369, 378,		23, 391, 405-7
	379, 380, 381,		13:15
	383, 385, 388,		390, 391, 392,
	405		405, 406, 407,
12:23	367, 378, 379,	13:4	409, 418, 420
	380, 381, 383,		13:16
	385		390, 391, 405,
12:24-25	378		407, 409, 410,
12:24	11, 22, 367,	13:5	418, 419, 420,
	378, 381, 382,		426
	383		13:17-25
12:25-27	378, 384	13:6-8	14, 16, 410-
12:25	367, 368, 369,	13:6	27, 434
	378, 379, 383-	13:7	13:17-19
	84, 385, 388		411, 413-15,
12:26	367, 368, 378,		421
	379, 384, 385		13:17
12:27	367, 369, 384,		17, 18, 410,
	385, 386, 388,		411, 412-13,
	394, 404		414, 415, 421,
12:28-29	368, 386-88,		422, 423, 425,
	389		427
12:28	8, 23, 368,		13:18-19
	386, 387, 398,		415
	400, 407, 419,		13:18
	424-25		17, 23, 410,
12:29	368, 387, 391,		413, 414, 415,
	408		421, 427
13:1-16	14, 16, 390-		13:19
			17, 410, 411,
			412, 413, 415,
			421, 422, 423,
			427
			13:20
			22, 410, 411,
			412, 415-17,
			418, 419, 420,
			426
			13:21
			12, 410, 411,
			412, 417-20,
			424, 426
			13:22-23
			411, 421-23

I3:22	2, 18 , 19, 21,	I3:23	17, 20, 24,	I3:25	411, 423, 424,
	23, 24, 25, 27,		410, 411, 421,		425, 427
	33, 410, 411,		423, 424, 427		8, 23, 410,
	421-22, 423,	I3:24-25	411, 423-25		411, 423, 424,
	424, 425, 426,	I3:24	18, 20, 410,		425, 427
	427, 428				

---

## Author Index

---

- Adams, Edward, 29  
Aitken, Ellen Bradshaw, 20  
Alexander, Loveday C. A., 349  
Allen, David M., 18, 39, 49, 50, 53, 115,  
119, 145, 149, 240, 359, 377, 387,  
395, 396, 397  
Andriessen, Paul, 22  
Armistead, D. B., 147-48  
Asumang, Annang, 24  
Attridge, Harold W., 17, 18, 19, 20, 28,  
32, 33, 84, 86, 88, 107, 129, 147,  
162, 164, 185, 188, 204, 224, 243,  
244, 246, 255, 271, 276, 283, 291,  
294, 332, 347, 355, 364-65, 371,  
382, 387, 416  
Austin, John Langshaw, 418  
  
Bachmann, Michael, 52  
Backhaus, Knut, 22, 72  
Balz, Horst, 39, 68, 84, 186, 194  
Bateman, Herbert W., 37, 40  
Bauckham, Richard J., 32-33  
Becker, Eve-Marie, 123  
Betz, Otto, 72  
Bénétreau, Samuel, 115  
Black, David Alan, 27  
Blomberg, Craig L., 2, 62  
Bockmuehl, Markus N. A., 324  
Borchert, Gerald L., 21  
Böcher, Otto, 72  
Brawley, Robert Lawson, 303  
Breck, John, 4, 5  
Brewer, David Instone, 37  
  
Brouwer, Wayne, 2, 4  
Bruce, Frederick Fyvie, 17  
Bulley, Alan D., 6  
Bühner, Jan-Adolf, 78  
  
Cahill, Michael, 283  
Caneday, Ardel B., 39  
Carter, Warren, and John Paul Heil, 24  
Charles, J. Daryl, 9  
Childs, Brevard S., 17  
Clivaz, Claire, 135  
Cobb, D., 292  
Cockerill, Gareth Lee, 18, 39, 40, 163, 344  
Compton, R. B., 147  
Cortez, Felix H., 225  
Cosaert, C. P., 158  
Croy, N. Clayton, 356  
Crüsemann, Frank, 22  
  
D'Angelo, Mary R., 330  
Daniels, R., 210  
Davidson, R. M., 158  
Davis, Casey Wayne, 148  
De Kruijf, T. C., 163  
DeSilva, David A., 3, 17, 115, 149, 359-  
60, 400  
DeYoung, K., 74  
Di Giovambattista, F., 216  
Docherty, Susan E., 18-19, 45  
Dognin, Paul Dominique, 26  
Dunnill, John, 11  
  
Eberhart, Christian A., 189

- Ebert, Daniel J., 27  
Eisele, Wilfried, 386  
Ellingworth, Paul, 17, 61, 81, 107, 112,  
130-31, 144, 145, 155, 164, 165,  
167, 168, 173, 188, 195, 198, 204,  
205, 215, 219, 223, 224, 232, 244,  
245, 247, 253, 255, 256, 265, 267,  
276, 292, 295, 309, 310, 330, 371,  
373, 381-82, 387, 400, 407, 416,  
422-23  
Emmrich, Martin, 53, 148, 232  
Enns, Peter E., 87  
  
Farkasfalvy, Denis, 22  
Farrow, Douglas, 135  
Fiedler, Peter, 89  
Finlan, Stephen, 17  
Fitzmyer, Joseph A., 163  
Friedrich, Johannes H., 33  
Fuchs, Albert, 50  
Fuhrmann, Sebastian, 210, 228  
  
Gane, R. E., 158  
Garuti, Paolo, 27, 119, 189-90  
Geiger, S. H., 271  
Gelardini, Gabriella, 1, 19  
Gheorghita, Radu, 18, 31, 39  
Gleason, Randall C., 92, 149, 288  
Gordon, Robert P., 18  
Granerød, Gard, 167  
Gray, Patrick, 10, 12, 72, 84, 106, 121  
Gräbe, Peter, 183  
Greenlee, J. Harold, 318, 321  
Gudorf, Michael E., 72  
Guthrie, George H., 1, 17, 28, 37, 57, 58,  
87, 135, 264, 276, 296, 361, 385  
Guthrie, George H., and R. D. Quinn,  
58  
  
Haber, Susan, 11  
Hagner, Donald A., 19  
Hahn, Scott W., 11, 246  
Hamm, Dennis, 6, 220  
Hartley, Donald E., 308  
Hartman, Lars, 33  
  
Heil, John Paul, 24  
Heininger, Bernhard, 32, 310  
Hengel, Martin, 359  
Hilhorst, A., 142  
Hoerber, R. G., 302  
Hofius, Otfried, 91-92, 113, 158  
Horning, Estella B., 357  
Hurtado, Larry W., 21  
Hübner, Hans, 67  
  
Isaacs, Marie E., 10, 400  
  
Jobes, Karen H., 265  
Johnson, Luke Timothy, 17, 29, 84, 91,  
97, 106, 109, 121, 129, 155, 163,  
165, 174, 182, 183, 207, 215, 221,  
224, 230, 233, 237-38, 240, 243,  
275, 282, 293, 302, 303, 306, 323-  
24, 329, 332, 341, 356, 370, 377,  
394, 403, 406  
Joslin, Barry C., 1, 173-74, 183, 189,  
204, 206  
Just, Arthur A., 22  
  
Karrer, Martin, 18, 39  
Kistemaker, Simon J., 17  
Koester, Craig R., 17, 20, 57, 81, 84, 89,  
91, 97, 107, 119, 129, 130, 136,  
149, 151, 155, 163, 164, 165, 173,  
174, 175, 182, 188, 195, 198, 204,  
205, 206, 207, 215, 217, 218-19,  
224, 240, 243, 251, 252, 253, 265,  
267, 270, 276, 277, 292, 317, 328,  
330, 333, 335, 348, 371, 373, 374,  
394, 424  
Koosed, Jennifer L., and Robert P.  
Seesengood, 17  
Köstenberger, Andreas J., 18  
Kretzer, Armin, 363  
Kurianal, James, 10  
  
Laansma, Jon, 88  
Landgraf, Paul David, 1  
Lane, William L., 17, 27, 32, 164, 174,  
185, 186, 189, 194, 215, 216, 224,

- Lane, William L. (*cont.*)  
 232, 237, 239, 245, 275, 294, 302,  
 303, 304, 306, 308, 311, 316, 328,  
 329, 330, 332, 335, 340, 349, 359,  
 371-72, 374, 377-78, 380, 387,  
 394, 399, 400-401, 403, 407, 422,  
 423, 424
- Laub, F., 230
- Lee, J. A. L., 139
- Lehmann, K.-P., 335
- Leithart, Peter J., 281
- Lincoln, Andrew T., 19
- Lincoln, L., 246
- Lindars, Barnabas, 1, 6
- Lindsay, Dennis R., 6
- Littleton, B. J., 357
- Lohr, Joel N., 306
- Löhr, Hermut, 197
- MacDonald, Nathan, 334
- Mackie, Scott D., 9, 32
- MacLeod, D. J., 190
- Man, Ronald E., 5
- Marohl, Matthew J., 6
- Marshall, I. Howard, 46
- Mason, Eric F., 74, 163
- Mathewson, David, 148
- Matthews, Victor H., 79
- Mayhue, R. L., 416
- McCormick, Bruce L., 135
- McCruden, Kevin B., 67
- McCullough, J. C., 147
- McLay, R Timothy, 39
- Meier, John P., 46
- Mengelle, E., 302
- Metzger, Bruce Manning, 60, 61, 77,  
 107, 204
- Miller, James C., 186
- Mitchell, Alan C., 17, 66, 84, 135, 165,  
 167, 182, 183, 185, 214, 215, 217,  
 218, 224, 252, 276, 283, 298, 302,  
 308, 311, 317, 318, 365, 380
- Moberly, R. Walter L., 306
- Moffitt, David M., 177
- Mosser, Carl., 335-36
- Motyer, Steve, 44, 349
- Muir, Steve, 30
- Murray, Scott R., 240
- Müller, Paul-Gerd, 61
- Nardoni, Enrique, 98
- Neamtu, A., 357
- Nelson, Richard D., 10
- Neyrey, Jerome H., 163, 359
- Nongbri, Brent, 151
- Nützel, Johannes M., 371
- Orlov, A., 10
- Palzkill, Elizabeth, 130
- Peterson, David, 21, 67
- Pilhofer, Peter, 183
- Portatatin, Antonio, 19
- Porter, Stanley E., 20
- Proctor, John, 288
- Radl, Walter, 30, 371
- Rascher, Angela, 18, 39, 44, 58, 86, 197
- Rhee, Victor, 6, 131, 298, 388
- Rice, G. E., 1
- Richardson, Christopher, 136
- Roloff, Jürgen, 219
- Rooke, Deborah W., 10
- Ruager, S., 400
- Rutenfranz, Monika, 69
- Sabourin, Leopold, 147
- Salevao, Iutisone, 17
- Salzmann, Jorg Christian, 21
- Sand, Alexander, 89
- Sänger, Dieter, 198
- Schenck, Kenneth L., 9, 19, 20, 32
- Schmidt, T. E., 72
- Schmitt, Mary, 174
- Schnabel, Eckhard J., 97
- Schneider, Gerhard, 112
- Scholer, John M., 10
- Schröger, Friedrich, 163
- Scott, B. R., 84
- Seitz, E., 395



- Sims, C., 356  
Sisson, R. B., 365  
Smillie, Gene R., 28, 120, 123, 383  
Smith, R. E., 287  
Snyman, Andreas H., 148  
Son, Kiwoong, 12, 91  
Söding, Thomas, 6  
Spicq, Ceslas, 129, 380  
Stanley, Steve, 1, 214  
Steyn, Gert Jacobus, 18, 40, 58, 163, 396  
Still, Todd D., 6  
Stock, Augustine, 5  
Swetnam, James, 1, 10, 22, 68, 74, 78, 82, 84, 119, 136, 215, 292, 298  
Swinson, L. T., 40  
  
Tanner, J. P., 288  
Taut, Konrad, 18  
Theobald, Michael, 294  
Thiessen, Matthew, 39, 88, 365  
Thomas, C. Adrian, 23  
Thomas, Gordon J., 67  
Thompson, James W., 23, 188  
Thomson, Ian H., 3  
Treier, Daniel J., 19  
Trummer, P., 136  
  
van der Bergh, R. H., 265  
van der Horst, Pieter Willem, 318  
van der Minde, Hans-Jürgen, 62  
Vanhoye, Albert, 1, 195  
  
Verbrugge, Verlyn D., 147  
von der Osten-Sacken, Peter, 32  
  
Wahlen, Clinton, 222  
Walker, Peter, 19, 20  
Webster, John, 33  
Wedderburn, Alexander J. M., 19  
Weigandt, Peter, 78, 79  
Weiser, Alfons, 41  
Weiss, H., 114  
Welch, John W., 2  
Wenkel, D. H., 18  
Westcott, Brooke Foss, 32, 61, 84, 215-16, 217, 251, 275  
Westfall, Cynthia Long, 1  
Wevers, John William, 78  
Whitfield, Bryan J., 84  
Whitlark, Jason A., 6  
Wick, Peter, 21  
Wider, David, 28  
Wiid, J. S., 246  
Williamson, Ronald, 22  
Wilson, Mark, 2  
Witherington, Ben, 17  
Worley, D. R., 158  
Wray, Judith H., 19  
Wright, Terry J., 30  
  
Young, Norman H., 158, 404  
  
Zmijewski, Josef, 84







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