

Course Notes for NTG850 HEBREWS



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Lecture Notes on Letter to the Hebrews

I. Introduction to the Letter to the Hebrews

A. Recipients of the Letter

1. Title of the Letter

Present Greek title ΠΡΟΣ ΕΒΡΑΙΟΥΣ known back as far as late 2nd century:

p46, Clem Alex (Eus *HE* 6.14.3-4), Tertullian *On Modesty*

Might be original, but parallelism to structure of Pauline titles suggests that it probably was added when Hebrews began to circulate as part of collection of Pauline epistles.

"Hebrews" in title could be taken 2 different ways:

- (1) To Jews as contrasted with Gentiles
 - (2) To Jews of Hebrew rather than Hellenistic culture
- Given Hellenistic style of letter, (1) more likely.

2. Internal Evidence for Recipients

Agrees with title in picturing Jewish Christian recipients, as book nowhere deals with Gentile converts or controversies

Not a general epistle, but addressed to a specific group with following traits:

- (1) a small group, possibly a house church (5:12, 13:19,13:23),
addressed separately from leaders (13:24) and rest of saints in area (ibid, 10:25?)
- (2) learned of Christ from those who had seen him personally (2:3f)
- (3) since conversion had faced persecution:
 - (a) esp once earlier (10:32ff), involving abuse, loss of property, imprisonment,
but apparently not martyrdom (12:4),
unless former leaders were martyred then (13:7)
 - (b) had shown faith thru service to other Christians (6:10),
caring for persecuted (10:34)
 - (c) now under temptation to apostasize,
probably due to persecution
or disappointment with Xy in face of some Jewish competition
(2:1,3; 3:6, 12ff; 4:1,3,11; 6:6; 10:25,29,39)
- (4) somewhere along the line, their development had stopped,
perhaps sliding backward (5:11ff)

3. Location of Recipients

Very wide range of opinion on this, from Judea to Spain

Most popular suggestions are Alexandria, Jerusalem, Rome

a. Alexandria: Davidson, Cadoux, Brandon

based on alleged Alexandrian nature of letter, its similarities to Wisdom of Solomon,
4 Macc, Philo

Alexandria was "captial" of Hellenistic Judaism, but our knowledge of how widespread
Hellen Judaism was is scanty; there were certainly Hellenists even in Judea
(Acts 6, Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*)

in any case, this argues more for **author** being Alexandrian than for recipients

b. Jerusalem: Ramsay, Spicq, Westcott, Hughes

capital of Judaism, most natural place to find a purely Jewish group of Christians
Spicq and Hughes see evid of Essene-type background as temptation to recipients;

others see growing nationalism c AD 66

problem of language (why Greek?) and use of tabernacle (rather than temple) motif;

also 2:3f sounds too indirect for Judean believers; evid of Philo and Colossians
may point to Essenes outside Judea anyway

c. Rome: Harnack, Manson, Lenski, Bruce

less likely place for purely Jewish group, but notice evidence that recipients not only
Xns in area (13:24)

"they from Italy" (13:24) connects letter with Italy, though it is ambiguous
whether place of writing or of recipients

earliest external evidence of letter's existence comes from Rome (Clement, Hermas),
where also Pauline authorship resisted longest

evidence of "non-conformist" Jewish elements in later Roman church also consistent

4. Conclusions on Recipients

Jewish believers in Jesus, under pressure to apostasize

Location uncertain: Rome best bet, followed by Jerusalem

B. Date of the Letter

Also disputed, but seems more certainty possible

1. External Evidence on Date

Used by Clement of Rome, prob Hermas (see Westcott, lxii f)

1 Clem 36 refs to Heb 1:3-5,7,13; 12:2 (using same OT passages as Heb

to show Jesus as high priest); 1 Cl 17 refs to Heb 3:2; 11:37; 1 Cl 43 to Heb 3:5
(like writer of Heb applying Num 12:7 to Jesus & Moses)
Shep Hermas prob refs to Heb 3:12 (vis II 3:2 & 7:2); to Heb 11:33 (vis II 2:7,
vis IV 2:4, sim IX 13:7)
Possibly used by Polycarp (10): X as high priest
So certainly written in 1st cen

2. Internal Evidence of Date

Teachers of recipients saw Christ (2:3)
Timothy still alive (13:23, if same person as APaul=s@ Timothy)
Present tenses suggest Levitical system still functioning (Hughes, 31-32)
If temple gone, incredible that author would have ignored this in his argument
re/ passing of old covenant (esp 8:13)
Therefore written before AD 70
Recipients not necessarily "second generation" as Bruce and Spicq say (re/ 2:3);
this may be a geographical separation
But have been Xns for some time (5:11ff; 10:32)
and Timothy is in prison (13:23)

3. Conclusions on Date

Given some special circumstances in a particular location, the date could range anywhere
from 40s thru 60s (though if Timothy is Paul's associate, this rules out 40s)
Most likely suggestions for Jerusalem and Rome as destinations are 60s,
with either Jewish nationalism and/or Roman persecution as background
If Rome, have only a narrow window when it is dangerous to be a Xn (late 64 onward)
but safe to be a Jew (before mid-66), so date of Hebrews then 64-66

C. Authorship of the Letter

Most disputed question of all

1. External Evidence on Authorship

Earliest evidence comes from late in 2nd cen, when there were already different views in
East & West

a. East: indirectly written by Paul

Clement of Alex: written by Paul in Hebrew, translated by Luke;
Paul's name left off to avoid Jewish prejudice

(Clem claims this is view of his teacher Pantaeus)

Origin: Paul's thoughts, written up by a student with better Greek style;

says some favor Clement of Rome, some Luke

Eastern mss locate Heb variously among Pauline epistles:

p⁴⁶ (c AD 200) puts Heb between Rom and 1 Cor

κ, A, B, C between 2 Th and Pastorals

B contains evid that an ancestor ms had it betw Gal & Eph

Some Coptic mss betw 2 Cor and Gal

b. West: not by Paul

Muratorian Canon: Heb not listed; speaks of letters of Paul to seven churches

Irenaeus (acc to Eus HE 5.26) acquainted with it, but didn't use it in *Against*

Heresies; app felt it not by Paul (see citation in Westcott, lxiv)

Tertullian (*de Pudic* 20) says Heb more widely read than Hermas;

written by Barnabas; app this is not just his own opinion,

as African Stichometry in Codex Claromontanus (D_p) refers to work as

Epistle of Barnabas

Western mss locate Heb after Pastorals & Philemon (as we do today);

D has it as appendix to Pauline epistles

c. Later Developments

By about AD 325 considered Pauline in East, but still holdouts in Rome

Influence of Jerome and Augustine seems to have been significant

in turning West to acceptance of Pauline authorship

2. Internal Evidence on Authorship

a. Direct Evidence

No indication author trying to conceal identity

Author well-acquainted with recipients (6:9f; 10:34; 13:7,19),

though not a member of congregation

nor currently a prisoner

Timothy a common friend (13:23)

Not an immediate follower of Christ (2:3)

[better than "second-generation" Christian]

Well-versed in OT, using LXX

Has large Greek vocabulary

Very fine rhetorical style:

flowing language, alliteration, euphony, figures of speech,

structural devices

Bruce: a Hellenist with outlook like those in Acts 6:8; 11:19ff

b. Indirect Evidence: compare info above with various suggested candidates:

- (1) Apollos: first suggested by Luther, popular today
Apollos' description in Acts 18:24ff fits info above:
Jew, Alexandrian, eloquent or learned, mighty in Scriptures
Other info: active at Ephesus (ib), Corinth (Ac 19:11, 1 Cor),
elsewhere (1 Cor 16:12), still so in 60s (Tit 3:13)
Have no writings by Apollos to compare style
- (2) Barnabas: view in No Africa c AD 200
No NT material in conflict with above info:
Jew, Levite, Cyprian, son of consolation (Ac 4:36; cp Heb13:22),
in Jerus church (Heb 2:3 might be problem);
helped Paul in Jerus (Ac 9:27);
active in Antioch (Ac 11:22,30; 12:25; 13:1); 1st m.j. (13:2,7 etc);
then separated from Paul (15:36ff); supported self (1 Cor 9:6);
Judaistic controversy (Gal 2); Mark's cousin (Col 4:10)
If Ep of Barnabas is by him, then Heb is not (see Westcott),
but most don't think he wrote Ep Barn
Otherwise no writings to compare style
- (3) Clement of Rome: seen as translator in Alexandria
Striking (but superficial) resemblances in vocabulary and forms,
due mainly to Clem using Heb
Differences in style and esp in depth; not creative
Not compatible with any involvement beyond translator (see Westcott)
- (4) Luke: Alex: as translator; Delitzsch: as author
Nothing in NT forbids:
Gentile, Antioch?, companion of Paul
Remarkable similarity of language,
though no closer than 1 Peter to Paul's epistles
If letter originally in Hebrew, then internal & external evidence strong
for Luke as translator
Otherwise nothing much
- (5) Mark: Loundes
Nothing in NT would forbid:
Jew, Jerusalem, prob little direct contact with Jesus,
companion of Paul, Barnabas, Peter
But style of Gospel drastically different

(6) Paul: "traditional" view

Only problem in NT info is Heb 2:3 vs Gal 1:1,12,16
not insuperable, but unlikely

Great differences in style: vocabulary, eloquence, exactness
(not impetuous like Paul), not easily explained by subject or
circumstances (though perhaps considerations of genre [letter vs
sermon] and audience [Gentile vs Jew] helpful)

Not insuperable, but internal and external evidence against it are very
impressive

(7) Priscilla (& Aquila): Peake, Steinheim (Harnack)

Author speaks in singular frequently (e.g., 11:32; 13:19,22,23)
and applies masculine singular to self once (11:32)

c. Conclusion on Authorship

Paul is probably most likely single candidate, but serious problems with this.

"Not Paul" (without specifying who) seems more likely than "Paul."

Origen's comment apropos: "God only knows who wrote it"

D. Outline of the Letter

Adapted from Hughes / Burdick in NIV Study Bible

I. Prologue: God's revelation climaxes in the Son (1:1-4)

II. The Son Superior (in his Person) to Old Covenant Mediators (1:5-7:28)

A. Superior to the Angels (1:5-2:18)

1. Proof: Scriptures contrasting Son & Angels (1:5-14)

2. Exhortation: Don't ignore God's revelation in His Son (2:1-4)

3. Proof: Right that Jesus be made like his brothers (2:5-18)

B. Superior to Moses (and Joshua) (3:1-4:13)

1. Proof: Builder vs. house, Son vs. servant (3:1-6)

2. Exhortation: Don't miss God's rest in Jesus (3:7-4:13)

C. Superior to High Priests (4:14-7:28)

1. Exhortation: Don't let go of faith in Jesus (4:14-16)

2. Proof: Jesus qualified as priest (5:1-10)

3. Exhortation: Don't fall away from Jesus (5:11-6:12)

4. Proof: God's promise is certain in Jesus (6:13-20)
5. Proof: Jesus superior, being priest like Melchizedek (ch. 7)

III. The Son Superior (in his Work) to Old Covenant Provisions (chs. 8-10)

A. Better Covenant (ch. 8)

1. Introduction (8:1-6)
2. Proof: New covenant predicted (8:7-13)

B. Better Sanctuary (9:1-12)

1. The earthly tabernacle (9:1-10)
2. The heavenly tabernacle (9:11-12)

C. Better Sacrifice (9:13-10:18)

1. Cleanses conscience (9:13-14)
2. Inaugurates the better covenant (9:15-20)
3. Cleanses from sin even in God's presence (9:21-28)
4. Does away with sin once and for all (10:1-18)

D. Exhortations: Don't shrink back, but persevere (10:19-39)

1. Call to persevere (10:19-25)
2. Warning against rejection (10:26-31)
3. Remember your past (10:32-39)

IV. Final Plea for Persevering Faith (chs. 11-12)

A. Faith Working in the Past (ch. 11)

1. What faith is (11:1-3)
2. Examples in the Old Covenant (11:4-38)
3. Sharing in the Promises (11:39-40)

B. Faith Working in the Present (ch. 12)

1. Running with Jesus (12:1-3)
2. The Christian Life as Discipline (12:4-13)
3. Don't refuse the One who speaks (12:14-29)

V. Conclusion (ch. 13)

- A. Practical Rules for Christian Living (13:1-17)
- B. Request for Prayer (13:18-19)
- C. Benediction (13:20-21)
- D. Personal Remarks (13:22-23)
- E. Greetings & Benediction (13:24-25)

[end outline of letter; return to note outline headings]

E. Argument of the Letter (a condensed explanatory paraphrase)

God's message to His people has recently reached its climax in His Son, the World-ruler and Creator. This One is God's glory and perfect image, who holds the world together by His powerful word. Since completing His work of paying for sin, He rules as co-regent with His Father in heaven. (1:1-4)

His exalted status can be seen by contrast with that of the angels, as described in several passages of Scripture. He is the Son (in a sense they are not), the object of worship, the ruler forever, the creator of a new heaven and earth. The angels are His worshipers, His messengers, and His servants to help those being saved. (1:5-14)

So we need to pay close attention to the Good News we have heard. If God's word to our forefathers through angels was sure, and their disobedience earned punishment, how much worse will it be for us if we neglect Jesus' word, confirmed by eyewitnesses and by God Himself through the miracles they worked? (2:1-4)

He is the One predicted in Psalm 8, "made for a while lower than the angels" (to suffer death for us), but now "crowned with glory and honor" (in heaven with the Father), for whom one day God will "put all things in subjection under His feet" (when He comes again). It was fitting for Him to make us His Father's children by taking on flesh and suffering death, in order to deliver us from death and to become our merciful high priest through the experience of His own suffering and temptation. (2:5-18)

So, since we share in God's call, consider Jesus, the One He sent to call us: a messenger like Moses and a high priest like Aaron. Like Moses, He was faithful. Unlike Moses, He was not just a house-servant, He was the house-builder, God Himself, the Father's own Son. We, too, must be faithful if we are to be a part of His house, just as the Spirit warned the people in Psalm 95: "Don't harden your hearts like your fathers did in the wilderness. I was angry with them and swore they would not enter My rest." Don't let this happen to you, but encourage one another daily. For they too saw miracles and received blessings, but were finally unable to enter the land because of unbelief. (3:1-19)

We too must take care lest we fail to enter God's promised rest. Not just the Canaan-rest (after all, this Psalm 95 was spoken centuries after Joshua's time), but God's creation-rest, when we will rest from our labors as God did from His. But to enter we must trust and obey, and not think that somehow we will get in by exception or oversight. God's word of judgment will not miss a thing, and it is to Him that we must give an account. (4:1-13)

But Jesus is not only our messenger (like Moses), He is also our high priest C One who has entered heaven itself C sinless, yet able to sympathize with us. So hold fast, draw near to God, and you will find mercy and grace for help in this time of your need (4:14-16)

Notice what a high priest is and does: a mediator between God and men, he presents their gifts and sin-offerings to God, sympathizes with sinners (being weak himself), asks forgiveness for his own sins as well, and is appointed by God rather than by himself. Compare Jesus: He, too was appointed by God (Ps 110), and made offerings through His prayers, but He learned obedience through suffering, was accepted for his perfect piety, so becoming the source of eternal salvation to those who obey Him. God has designated Him a high priest of the Melchizedek kind. (5:1-10)

We'd like to say more about Melchizedek, but you are too immature, still babies needing someone to give you milk when you ought to be teachers providing meat to others! Well, we can't lay the foundation a second time. Those who've experienced it all and still turn away can't be brought back again; they are like worthless land, only fit to be burned over. So we'll move on, since we think you're in better shape than this (having seen God's love working through you in service to others) and we want you to regain your hope and finally inherit God's promises. (5:11-6:12)

God's promises, after all, are certain. He made promises to Abraham with an oath, and Abraham (patiently waiting) inherited. For just as humans swear an oath by someone greater than themselves to put a question beyond dispute, so did God. He swore by Himself (there being no one greater) to show believers His plans wouldn't change. Thus we have great encouragement both from His mercy (in His promise) and His justice (to keep his oath) that enters into His very nature and presence, where Jesus has gone ahead for us, becoming a high priest forever, like Melchizedek. (6:13-20)

This Melchizedek (Gen 14) pronounced a blessing on Abraham and received his offerings. From his name and title he is "king of righteousness" and "king of peace." With no genealogy, birth or death record, he is made like the Son of God and is always a priest. Look how great he was! He received the tenth from the forefather of those Levites who would collect the tenth, though he himself was no Levite. He was greater than Abraham, pronouncing the blessing rather than receiving it. And Levi, so to speak, even paid him tithes. (7:1-10)

Now if the Levitical priesthood (on which the Law was based) was sufficient, why does Psalm 110 predict another priest like Melchizedek rather than Aaron? Doesn't this imply a change in the Law? Indeed, the One fulfilling this prediction comes from Judah, a non-priestly tribe. And He, too, fits the psalm's prediction of a priest "forever," not by physical descendants but by an indestructible life. So this psalm predicts the former commandments will be replaced by a better hope for coming to God. A better hope and better covenant because it is established by God's oath and rests in the permanent priesthood of Jesus, who can save forever because he lives

forever. (7:11-28)

The point is this: Jesus' ministry is in the true sanctuary in heaven, not the mere copy of it on earth. He has a more excellent ministry as mediator of a better covenant, founded on better promises. If there were nothing wrong with the first covenant, there would have been no place for a second. But God through Jeremiah (31:32-34) finds fault and predicts the replacement: "I'm going to make a new covenant with Israel, not like the old one which they broke and so I abandoned them. Instead I will put my law in their hearts and be their God; all will know Me and I'll forgive their sins." (8:1-13)

Consider the earthly sanctuary and services of the first covenant. The priests regularly entered the outer room; the inner room only the high priest entered, only once a year, only with blood, and only for sins committed in ignorance. By this God shows us that the way to heaven has not been opened while the tabernacle still stands, a symbol which cannot do what the spiritual reality will. (9:1-10)

But when Christ came as high priest of the better covenant, He entered the better tabernacle (not of this creation), offered His own blood (rather than that of animals), entered the holy place only once, and obtained eternal redemption. He is thus the mediator of a new covenant, inaugurated by the sacrifice of Himself, to pay for the sins committed under the old covenant and to provide an eternal inheritance. (9:11-15)

Wherever there is a covenant, it does not come into force until the inaugurating sacrifice has been killed. So at Sinai, Moses sprinkled the blood of calves and goats on the covenant book, the people, the tabernacle and its vessels, saying "This is the blood of the covenant." And by the Law itself, nearly everything is cleansed with blood, and without blood there is no forgiveness. So too in heaven, the originals of which these are the earthly copies were cleansed, but with the better blood of Jesus, who entered into God's very presence, made a single offering of Himself, and will one day appear a second time to those who eagerly await Him. (9:16-28)

The Law, a shadow of the coming good but not the reality, could never by its sacrifices make the worshippers whole; otherwise they would stop coming for forgiveness since their consciences wouldn't bother them. Rather the repeated sacrifices were a repeated reminder of sin, as animal blood cannot really take it away. In fact, God predicted the remedy in Psalm 40 where, when Jesus comes into the world, He says: "You didn't really want animal sacrifices, but you made me a body/slave. I've come, O God, as predicted in Scripture, to do Your will." As the passage notes, God wasn't really satisfied with animal sacrifice (though He commanded it); but by Jesus doing God's will, He takes away the first covenant to establish the second. By one act in offering His body, Jesus makes us holy, while the repeated sacrifices of the earthly priests can never take away sin. And this is what the Holy Spirit says in Jeremiah 31: "This is the covenant I will make with them... their sins I will remember no more." (10:1-18)

Since we have this new and living way to God through Jesus, let us draw near to Him, hold fast the faith we profess, stimulate one another to love and good deeds, keep meeting together, and all the more as you see the end approaching. But if we keep on sinning after accepting the truth, there isn't any other sacrifice for sin, just the terrifying expectation of judgment. If rebellion against the Law of Moses meant death, what do you think a person will deserve who has trampled on God's Son, treated His blood as unclean, and insulted the Holy Spirit? It is a terrible thing to face the righteous vengeance of the living God! (10:19-31)

Instead you should remember your former time of persecution, when you faced reproach, identified with suffering believers, lost property, yet rejoiced in the knowledge that God would provide better and lasting possessions. Don't throw all this away! You need to endure to His coming, not shrink back to destruction. You need to have faith for the preservation of your soul! (10:32-39)

Faith is assurance and conviction regarding the future and the unseen world. Our forefathers were commended for it. That's how we understand that the universe and its history were prepared by God's word from what we cannot see. Consider the examples of Abel and Enoch. To come to God, you must believe He exists and will reward those who really seek Him. Noah, too, had faith to believe what God warned him about; by building the ark, he saved his whole family and condemned the world. (11:1-7)

Abraham, too, had faith. He didn't know where he was going when left Ur for Canaan, but he trusted God's promise. He and his sons lived as aliens in the promised land, looking for a city built by God all the while they lived in tents. Sarah, too, was able to conceive far beyond the normal age, since she trusted God. So from this sterile pair an innumerable multitude were born, as God promised. Yet they all died still trusting, without receiving what was promised, and only Aseeing@ it by the eyes of faith. They welcomed the promises, considered themselves aliens on earth, sought God's better country rather than returning to the old one. And God is not ashamed of them, and indeed He has prepared a city for them. (11:8-16)

Abraham showed his faith by offering up Isaac, trusting God's promises and His ability to raise the dead (from which in symbol he received him back). Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau about the unseen future. Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph, and Joseph predicted the Exodus and asked them to take his bones along. (11:17-22)

Faith caused Moses' parents to hide him in spite of Pharaoh's orders. And faith led Moses to renounce his royal position and cast his lot with God's people, putting the kind of rejection Jesus faced ahead of Egypt's treasures. By faith they sprinkled the blood on their houses to save their firstborn, and passed through the Red Sea which drowned the Egyptians. By faith the walls of Jericho collapsed, but Rahab did not die with its inhabitants, for she too had faith. (11:23-31)

Time would fail me to complete the list. Mighty acts of faith led to mighty victories, but also to defeat. Many were mistreated, tortured, even martyred, not accepting release in order to gain a

better resurrection. The world didn't deserve these faithful people! And they C though approved by God for trusting Him C have not yet received the promises, for God will not bring them to pass until the full roll call of the faithful is complete. (11:32-40)

With such a crowd of spectators watching, let us not get entangled but run our race with endurance, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the starter and finisher, seeing how He ran the race. And don't forget that this life is our childhood in which we are being disciplined by our heavenly Father to prepare us for our coming of age. If we can see the benefit we derived from our earthly fathers' discipline, can't we apply that to this situation? So shape up and watch where you're running, lest you throw something out of joint. (12:1-13)

Chase after peace and holiness, which you have to have to see God. Watch out for bitterness, immorality and even that Anno-nonsense practicality@ of Esau's, who sold his birthright when he was very hungry. He never could get it back, though he tried to with tears. (12:14-17)

We are not those of the first covenant who came to Sinai, with the death penalty for touching the mountain, the blazing fire, the darkness, smoke and whirlwind, the trumpet blast and fearful voice, who begged to hear no more. We have come to Zion, God's city, the heavenly Jerusalem, the multitude of angels, to God, the Judge of all, to the righteous ones now made perfect, to Jesus, the mediator of that better covenant, whose sprinkled blood brings mercy rather than vengeance. (12:18-24)

So see to it that you don't turn back from the One who is speaking to you. If they of Sinai who disobeyed did not escape the One who warned them on earth, how shall we escape the One who warns us from heaven? Yes, His voice shook the earth that day, but one day it will also shake the heavens. And then both heaven and earth will be removed, along with all created things, so that the kingdom which cannot be shaken will be established. Since we are to receive such a kingdom, let's show God our gratitude by serving him with reverence and awe. For God is a consuming fire. (12:25-29)

Continue loving one another; show hospitality even to strangers (some were angels!); remember those in prison for their faith; honor marriage; don't love money (God will supply), nor be afraid of what people can do to you. Don't forget your leaders; remember their example, and imitate their faith. Jesus doesn't change; He'll be with you as He was with them. (13:1-8)

Don't be led astray by false teaching: it's God's grace that gives strength, not special diets. And those who eat the temple sacrifices can't eat the Lord's supper. Just as animals whose blood was offered in the holy place had their bodies burned outside the camp, so Jesus, to sanctify His people, suffered outside the gate. So let us go out there with Him too, being despised as He was. For this is not our lasting city; we seek the one to come. Through Jesus, then, let us always offer up a sacrifice C praise to our God C and first-fruits C the speech of our lips thanking Him. Don't neglect doing good, God is pleased with that kind of sacrifice. Obey your leaders; they're

guarding your souls; let them do it with joy. Pray for us, especially that I may come to you soon. (13:9-19)

Now may God, who raised our Good Shepherd Jesus, through His blood equip you to do His will in everything, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever, Amen. (13:20-21)

Thanks for bearing with this word of exhortation. I hope to see you soon, with Timothy, who has just been released. My greetings to all. All from Italy send their greetings. God's grace be with each of you. (13:22-25)

II. Exegesis of the Letter to the Hebrews

A. Prologue: God's revelation climaxes in the Son (1:1-4)

- possible chiastic structure (Beates/Newman)

A1. Son contrasted with the PROPHETS (1-2)

recently, once

B1. Son as Messianic HEIR (2)

heir of all things

C1. His CREATIVE Work (2)

world made **through** him

D1. MEDIATES God's glory (3)

radiance

E. Exactly REPRESENTS God's Nature (3)

D2. MEDIATES God's power (3)

upholding everything

C2. His REDEMPTIVE Work (3)

made purification for sins

B2. Son as Messianic KING (3)

seated at right hand of God

A2. Son contrasted with the ANGELS (4)

better name

- chiasms typically point to central member, here E

- very powerful picture of who Jesus is!

B. The Son Superior (in his Person) to Old Covenant Mediators (1:5-7:28)

1. Superior to the Angels (1:5-2:18)

a. Proof: Scriptures contrasting Son & Angels (1:5-14)

Argument proceeds from whole passages in context, not just portion cited

Passages selected to give comparison of Messiah and angels

(see chart in Appendix, page 30)

1:5a cites Ps 2:7: Messianic psalm, especially featuring
Messiah's commission; Messiah called "Son"

1:5b cites 2 Sam 7:14 (or parallel in 1 Chr 17:13): Davidic covenant, since Messiah

recognized as Son of David; note esp promise of eternal kingdom; God as Father, Messiah as Son

1:6: note use of subjunctive "leads" and present "says": ref to past event (incarnation) or future (2nd coming)? dependent on syntax of "again"; OT context favors 2nd; closest passage is Deut 32:43 in LXX: God coming in vengeance, but also atoning for His people; Ps 97:7 is also close, where LXX renders □□□□□ by □γγελοι: Lord ruling, looks like 2nd coming

1:7 cites Ps 104:4: poss connection w/ previous in picturing God's rule over earth (most of psalm) and destruction of wicked (v 35); but prob main points are:

- (1) it is no big deal to be an angel (God calls even the winds "angels")
- (2) contrast between angels as servants and Christ as ruler

1:8-9 citing Ps 45:6-7: another Messianic passage: royal wedding (cp marriage of Lamb in Rev 19) king is a man (v 7, fellows), anointed but also called God (vv 6-7) notice context of ruler (throughout) and destruction of enemies (3-5)

1:10-12 citing Ps 102:25-27: psalm app linked to preceding ones by theme of intervention (15-16) to deliver righteous (13-14), destroy wicked (implied in v 8), rule (22); note also a similar passage in Isa 51:6, which is in a specifically Messianic context

[perhaps all passages cited in vv 6-12 are subsumed under heading "when he again brings the firstborn into the world"]

1:13 citing Ps 110:1 clearly Messianic

1:14 summary / transition: angels as servants for benefit of those being saved (more fully explained in chap 2)

Summary: Note how features in introduction (1:1-4) supported by passages cited in 1:5-13

b. Exhortation: Don't ignore God's revelation in His Son (2:1-4)

Pay attention to the Gospel (New Covenant) (1-3a)

B its mediator is superior to angelic mediators of Old Covenant

B see how those who neglected Old Cov were punished

New Covenant confirmed (3b-4)

B spoken by Lord [Jesus]

B confirmed by eyewitnesses

B ratified by God working miracles thru eyewitnesses

c. Proof: Right that Jesus be made like his brothers (2:5-18)

Stated (5): age to come subject to humans not angels

Mankind as Heirs (6-9a)

Ps 8:5-7 cited (2:6-8a)

Ps 8 discussed (8b-9a)

universal subjection of world to mankind (8b)

including angels?

not yet in effect (8c)

but Jesus already made lower and exalted (9a)

[i.e., we see the beginning of fulfillment, an "already," but still a "not yet"]

Jesus, becoming man, is related to believers (9b-18)

Tastes death for all (9b) (all who will inherit?)

Fitting for Christ to suffer for His people (10-18)

same race as believers (sons [10], brothers [11])

B citing (12) Ps 22:22 (brothers) as statement of resurrected Messiah

B citing (13) Isa 8:17-18 (children) from Immanuel section

(note Isa 8:14-15; 9:2,6) [perhaps Isaiah, in acted parable, stands for God, his children for Messiah and Israel]

Summary of Xs redemption: sharing flesh & blood w/ his people to destroy their enemies (14-15)

Contrast w/ angels (16): not selected to have age to come subjected to them, so X doesn't become one (allusion to Isa 41:8-9?)

Necessary for his priesthood (17-18)

To make satisfaction (17)

To help those being tempted (18)

2. Superior to Moses (and Joshua) (3:1-4:13)

a. Proof: Builder vs. house, Son vs. servant (3:1-6a)

Compared (1-2)

Both are apostles from God (1)

Both faithful over household of God's people (2)

Contrasted (3-6)

Jesus	Moses
Creator	Creature
Son	Servant

b. Exhortation: Don't miss God's rest in Jesus (3:6b-4:13)

We are His people if we hold fast (3:6)

Quotation of Ps 95:7-11 (3:7-11)

Ascribed to Holy Spirit

Psalmist uses Israel's wilderness experience (c1450 BC) as basis for exhortation
centuries later (c1000 BC)

Author of Hebrews uses Psalm for similar exhortation in his day (c65 AD) [and so
may we in ours (c2000 AD)]

Beware of unbelief (3:12)

Can still lead to apostasy

Need to exhort one another (3:13)

Antidote to unbelief

Picks up "today" from Psalm, the period when change still possible

What marks off one who actually inherits? (14-19)

(We **have become** partakers **if**)

Perseverance (14-16)

starting not enough (16)

Righteousness, obedience, faith (17-19)

contrast Israelites who died in wilderness

sin, disobedience, unbelief

Beware of Israel's example (4:1-2)

Heard Gospel but didn't enter rest

Problem was lack of faith

[however variants in v 2 translated]

God's rest is still future, and for believers only (4:3-10):

Future

Believers Only

Not for all (3a)

God still working (3b)

God not working on 7th day (4)

[so 7th day already over or not begun]

Shall not enter (5)

Not for all (5)

Excluded for unbelief (6)

After so long, "Today" (7)

If Joshua... (8)

[so 7th day is not already over]

For His people (9)

Summary (9-10): a sabbath for God's people

We will rest from our works as God from His

[not about salvation by faith alone; see v 11]

Exhortation (4:11-13)

Do your best

Beware pattern of disobedience

Must give account to God

[λογος in vv 12a, 13b probably means Accounting@]

- another chiasm? (12-13)

WORD of GOD - judging

LIVING

ACTIVE

NO SWORD SHARPER

PIERCING

SOUL & SPIRIT

JOINTS & MARROW

THOUGHTS & INTENTS

JUDGING

NO CREATURE HIDDEN

NAKED
LAID BARE
WORD of US - judged

3. Superior to High Priests (4:14-7:28)

a. Exhortation: Don't let go of faith in Jesus (4:14-16)

Transition to discussion of Jesus as high priest (4:14-16)

We have great high priest, so hold fast to Him

Able to sympathize, but not a sinner

Let us come w/ confidence to receive mercy & grace when we need it

b. Proof: Jesus qualified as priest (5:1-10)

Characteristics of high priest (5:1-4)

From among men (1)

Acts as mediator between God and mankind (1)

Offers gifts and sacrifices (1)

for sin (including his own) (1, 3)

Deals gently with sinners (2)

as one also subject to weakness

Appointed by God (4)

How does Jesus compare? (5:5-10)

Appointed by God (5-6; cp v 4)

Uses Scripture re/ Messiah seen in chap 1 (first and last, vv 5 & 13)

Hinted to be better than high priest

(developed later) since Jesus is priest forever

From among Men (7; cp v 1)

days of his flesh (though more than just flesh)

Offered prayers & supplications (7; cp v 1)

not needing sacrifice for self (cp v 3)

"without sin" (4:15); "piety" (5:7)

sacrifice for others hinted at, but developed later

God answered his prayers (7b)

Learned Obedience through Suffering (8; cp v 2?)
even though Son of God

Became Source of Deliverance (9)
not just one-time forgiveness (developed later)
for those who obey (follow, are subject to) him

Compared to Melchizedek (10)
mentioned here, developed later

[section functions as survey of items to be covered after
digression on apostasy]

c. Exhortation: Don't fall away from Jesus (5:11-6:12)

Hearers characterized by "laziness of hearing" (5:11)

Have not grown spiritually as they ought (12-13)
[Christians should continually advance in understanding]

How does one become mature? (14)
Training through practice
Discerning of good and evil

Transition (6:1-3)

From rebuke over readers' immaturity
To warning, exhortation (and comfort) passage (ch 6)
Eventually leading to back Melchizedek discussion (chap 7)

The fearful nature of apostasy (6:4-8)

Apostates may share some apparent characteristics of the saved (4-5)
enlightened
tasted heavenly gift
partners (or partakers) of Holy Spirit
tasted good word of God
tasted powers of world to come

But having these yet apostasize (6)
(can a person lose his/her salvation?)

Impossible in this case to renew repentance (6)
 because they crucify Lord again & make public example of Him

Illustration: like two kinds of ground (7-8)

Ground	Gift	Product	Result
Good	rain	usable plants	blessing
Bad	rain	thorns, etc.	cursing

The things that belong to salvation (6:9-12):

Writer believes vv 4-8 not case with readers (9)
 (of course, no guarantee for **all** original readers,
 nor certainly for later readers)

Real characteristics of the saved: (10-12)
 [God not unjust; hint to be developed in vv 13-20]
 good works & love
 in continuing service to saints in His name
 earnestness => full assurance of hope
 faith
 endurance

[These correspond to good plants in illustration, applying
 characteristics (above) to useful vegetation, apostasy to thorns]

d. Proof: God's promise is certain in Jesus (6:13-20)

(picking up on v 12, using Abraham as example)

Abraham's blessing promised by God's oath (13-15)
 as a result, Abraham (enduring) inherits (15)

The Significance of an oath in general (16)

swear by one greater
 who guarantees performance (13b, 16a)
 who is to take vengeance if oath not kept
 confirmation, end of dispute:
 functions like a guarantee, deposit, bond (in legal transactions)
 ends a court proceeding when insufficient witnesses (Ex 22:10-11)

This Oath as used by God (17-18)

More fully to show unchangeableness of His promise

Oath then added to make two unchangeable things:

- (1) promise itself: rests on God's mercy, we don't deserve it,
He could in principle withdraw it
- (2) oath: rests on God's justice (note connection w/ v 10),
since He has now committed Himself
[both, of course, rest on God's truthfulness]

Result: We have an anchor for our souls (18-20)
strong assurance for those who flee, grasp (18)
anchor: secure and permanent (19)
entering into the most holy place (19)
[anchored in the very character of God]

e. Proof: Jesus superior, being priest like Melchizedek (ch. 7)

Melchizedek described (7:1-3)

[referring to Gen 14:17-20 *in light of Ps 110:4*]

His Titles (1-2)

- king of righteousness
- king of Salem (peace)
- priest of God

Blesses Abraham (1)

Receives a tithe from Abraham (2)

No [reference to] Antecedents, Birth or Death (3)

His priesthood compared with Levitical (7:4-10)

Tithe (4-10): lesser pays greater

Blessing (6-7): greater blesses lesser

Life (8): he lives, they die

A new priesthood means a new law (7:11-19)

If Levitical priesthood perfect, why a new priesthood? (11-12)

implies/requires a change in OT law

This AMelchizedek priest@ from a different tribe (13-14): Judah vs Levi

Melchizedek priest lives & serves forever (15-17)
New law makes perfect (18-19)

New law & new covenant better than old (7:20-28)

Priesthood sealed by God's oath (20-22)
An ever-living priest (23-25)
A sinless priest (26-28)

C. The Son Superior (in his Work) to Old Covenant Provisions (chs. 8-10)

1. Better Covenant (ch. 8)

a. Introduction (8:1-6)

Christ high priest of true, heavenly tabernacle (1-3)
Christ not qualified for earthly, Levitical priesthood (4-6)
which is merely copy of heavenly priesthood

b. Proof: New covenant predicted (8:7-13)

Stated (7-8a)
Proved: citation of Jer 31:31-34 (8b-12)
"New" implies old is becoming obsolete (13)

2. Better Sanctuary (9:1-12)

a. The earthly tabernacle (9:1-10)

Description of the Tabernacle (1-5)
Outer sanctuary (2)
Inner Sanctuary (3-5)
Priestly Service in the Tabernacle (6-7)
A Parable of Things to Come (8-10)
[OT liturgy as *enacted parable*]

b. The heavenly tabernacle (9:11-12)

Better Tabernacle (11)
Better Blood (12)

3. Better Sacrifice (9:13-10:18)

a. Cleanses conscience (9:13-14)

Better Cleansing (13-14)

b. Inaugurates the better covenant (9:15-22)

Better Covenant (15)

provides forgiveness for old cov sins

A Covenant is inaugurated with Blood (16-17)

("will" a bad translation here of διαθήκη)

better to translate it as "covenant"

see the various renderings in Appendix, pp 30-32

inauguration of a covenant requires death of attesting sacrifice

Illustrated for first (old) covenant (18-22)

c. Cleanses from sin even in God's presence (9:23-28)

Better sanctuary cleansed w/ **better** sacrifice (23-24)

Better cleansing seen in **single** sacrifice (25-28)

d. Does away with sin once and for all (10:1-18)

Sacrifices of the Old Covenant (1-4)

Shadow not reality

Don't perfect worshipers

Must be repeated

Reminder of sin

Prediction of Christ's Sacrifice (5-10)

Commentary on Ps 40:6-8

Sacrifice & offering not desired (but required!)

Replaced by obedience of one predicted

Takes away first to establish 2nd

First covenant? will? (see v 10)

Contrast with Old Testament Sacrifice (11-14)

Repeated vs once

Can't take away sins vs did

Still sinners vs perfected

Confirmation from Old Testament Itself (15-18) [Jer 31:33-34]

New covenant
Internalized law
Sins forgiven/forgotten

4. Exhortations: Don't shrink back, but persevere (10:19-39)

a. Call to persevere (10:19-25)

Through confidence in Christ's work
Hold fast
Trust God's promises
Stimulate one another

b. Warning against rejection (10:26-31)

No forgiveness for perseverance in sin
Argument from lesser to greater
If true under old covenant, how much more under new?
Trampling Jesus
Despising His blood
Insulting the Spirit
God is a fearful judge!

c. Remember your past (10:32-39)

You responded well then
Endured persecution
Showed sympathy with persecuted
Rejoiced even in being plundered
Remembered God's promised reward

Don't throw it all away!

God is faithful who has promised

Don't shrink back to destruction!

D. Final Plea for Persevering Faith (chs. 11-12)

1. Faith Working in the Past (ch. 11)

a. What faith is (11:1-3)

Assurance of future (1)
Conviction of unseen (1)
Means of acceptance with God (2)
Necessary to understand created world (3)

b. Examples in the Old Covenant (11:4-38)

Faith exemplified (11:4-12)

Abel (4): better sacrifice
Enoch (5-6): walked with God, avoided death
Noah (7): saved his family
Abraham (8-12):
 obeyed call to unknown destination (8)
 lived as stranger to gain heavenly city (9-10)
 became father of promise (11-12)

Summary: a better country (11:13-16)

Still living by faith when they died
Saw promises only at a distance
Recognized they were aliens on earth
Longed for better country instead of returning
God is not ashamed to be called their God!

More examples of faith (11:17-31)

Abraham (17-19):
 offered Isaac as sacrifice
 figuratively received him back from dead
Isaac (20): predictive blessings
Jacob (21): blessed Joseph's sons; wanted burial in promised land
Joseph (22):
 predicted Exodus
 wanted bones in promised land
 [but bones left in Egypt to remind them?]
Moses' parents (23): hid Moses in spite of king
Moses (24-28):
 rejected luxuries of Egyptian royalty for mistreatment with God's people

accepted disgrace for Christ as better than treasures of Egypt
in view of reward
left Egypt in spite of king
kept passover to protect firstborn
Israelites (29-30):
crossed Red Sea
brought down walls of Jericho
[picks 1st and last examples of their obedience?]
Rahab (31): welcomed the spies

Summary: a better company (11:32-40)
More examples could be cited (32)
Powerful feats done through faith (33-34)
Fearful torments endured through faith (35-38)

c. Sharing in the Promises (11:39-40)

None received the promise,
because they are waiting for us (39-40)

2. Faith Working in the Present (ch. 12)

a. Running with Jesus (12:1-3)

Our race before the cloud of witnesses (1)

Looking to Jesus, our forerunner (2-3)
joy in goal
endurance in rejection & shame
now exalted

b. The Christian Life as Discipline (12:4-13)

Follow his example even to death (4)

Don't forget our status as sons (5-10) [Prov 3:11-2]
discipline an evidence of sonship
our heavenly Father's better discipline

Results of Discipline (11)
Shape up and run carefully (12-13)

[completes/returns to running analogy of v 1]

c. Don't refuse the One who speaks (12:14-29)

Pursue these (necessary fruits of salvation)

peace

sanctification

Don't fall short into bitterness

Avoid example of Esau (16-17)

sold birthright for one meal

lost blessing & couldn't get it back

Contrast of Two Covenants (18-24)

Old: earthly, estranged, fearful (18-21)

New: heavenly, reconciled, festive (22-24)

Beware of Apostasy (25-29)

Greater punishment (25-26)

Unshakeable kingdom (26-28)

God a consuming fire (29)

E. Conclusion (ch. 13)

1. Practical Rules for Christian Living (13:1-17)

Miscellaneous exhortations (13:1-8)

Brotherly Love (1)

Hospitality (2)

Concern for Persecuted (3)

Marriage (4)

Contentment (5-6)

Imitate your Leaders (7-8)

Summary exhortation (13:9-17)

Warning against temple-legalism (9-10)

Jesus our sin-offering (11-12)

see Lev 4:1-21
 Let us also go outside, bearing reproach (13-14)
 Through Jesus, our praise and good works
 count as sacrifices and offerings (15-16)
 Obey your leaders (17)

2. Request for Prayer (13:18-19)
 wants to do what is right
 wants to come to them as soon as possible

3. Benediction (13:20-21)
 may God (who raised Jesus)
 equip you to do His will
 working in us what pleases Him

4. Personal Remarks (13:22-23)

Apology (22)
 please put up with this word of exhortation
 Timothy released (23)
 hope to visit you with him

5. Greetings & Benediction (13:24-25)

Greetings (24)
 to leaders and other saints
 from those from Italy

Closing (25)
 grace be with you

Appendix

Use of Old Testament in Hebrews 1

Passage	Son, inherit, etc.	Kingdom, anointed, etc	Destroy enemies	Rescue own people	Coming Time	Intervention	Comments
Ps 2:7	7, 8, 12	2, 6, 8	9	12	5, 12	5, 12	God & Messiah vs nations; Zion (6)

2 Sam 7:14	14	12, 13, 16	9-11?	10-11?	12		Incl Solomon & David line
Dt 32:43 (LXX, DSS)			41-43	36, 39, 43	33, 35, 36	41-42	Song of Moses
Ps 97:7		1, 2, 5, 6	3	8, 10		5, 6	LXX Angels@ for Agods@; Zion (8)
Ps 104:4			35			32	Mostly creation, providence
Ps 45:6-7	6, 7	1-2, 5-7, 11, 15	5				Royal wedding scene
Ps 102:25-27		12, 22	8, 15	13, 20	13, 22	16	Deliverance of Psalmist; Zion (16)
Ps 110:1		1, 2, 4	1, 5, 6	3	3, 5	1, 5, 6	Priesthood seen also; Zion (2)

Hebrews 9:16-17 in Various Translations:

Versions:

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

RSV: For where a *will* is involved, the death of the *one who made it* must be established. // For a *will* takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the *one who made it* is alive.

NEB: For where there is a *testament*, it is necessary for the death of the *testator* to be established. // A *testament* is operative only after a *death*; it cannot possibly have force while the *testator* is alive.

NASB: For where a *covenant* is, there must of necessity be the death of the *one who made it*. // For a *covenant* is valid only when *men are dead*, for it is never in force while the *one who made it* lives.

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

JB: Now whenever a *will* is in question, the death of the *testator* must be established; // indeed, it only becomes valid with that death, since it is not meant to have any effect while the *testator* is still alive.

GNB: In the case of a *will* it is necessary to prove that the *person who made it* has died. // For a *will* means nothing while the *person who made it* is alive; it goes into effect after his death.

NAB: Where there is a *testament*, it is necessary that the death of the *testator* be confirmed. // For a *testament* comes into force only in case of death; it has not force while the *testator* is alive.

Phillips: For, as in the case of a *will*, the agreement is only valid after death. // While the *testator* lives, a *will* has no legal power.

LB: Now, if someone dies and leaves a *will* B a list of things to be given away to certain people when he dies B no one gets anything until it is proved that the *person who wrote the will* is dead. // The *will* goes into effect only after the death of the *person who wrote it*. While he is still alive no one can use it to get any of those things he has promised them.

Berkeley: For where there is a *testament*, the death of the *testator* needs to be announced; // a *will* is effective at death; it is not valid so long as the *testator* lives.

Wuest: testament - testator

Williams: will - he who makes it

Beck: will - one who made it

Moffatt: will - testator

Goodspeed: will - one who made it

ASV: testament - he who made it

Amplified: will & testament - one who made it

Lamsa: will - maker

Centenary: testament - testator

Basic English: testament - man who made it

New Living Translation: will - person who wrote the will
margin: covenant - sacrifice

Schofield Authentic NT: For where there is a covenant there must be provision of a death on the contractor=s part. A covenant is ratified over corpses, otherwish it has no validity while the contractor lives.

Commentaries:

Lenski: testament - testator

Alford: testatment - he who made it

Olshausen/Ebrard: AHe who will enter into a covenant with God must first atone for his sins by a death (by his own or that of a substitutionary sacrifice)@

Stuart: testament - testator

Westcott: AThe Death of Christ ... provided an absolute ratification of the Covenant with which it was connected He who makes the covenant ... is, for the purposes of the covenant, identified with the victim by whose representative death the covenant is ordinarily ratified.... The statement which has been made is supported by an explanation which is borrowed from ancient usage and language. A solemn covenant was made on the basis of a sacrifice. The death of the victim was supposed to give validity to it.@

Samuel H. Turner: AFor the establishment of a covenant requires the death of that which ratifies it, inasmuch as it is otherwise imperfect and invalid.@