

Nathan Smith  
 SPO 1129  
 IBS Hebrews  
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## BOOK SURVEY OF HEBREWS

### A. MATERIALS:

- General: The main focus of this book is that of an ideological standpoint. While it does refer to Jewish culture and history that were known to the target demographic, its primary function is to lay out sound teaching about the supremacy of Jesus Christ as Lord, and how to live accordingly. It is a book of progress, building precept upon precept, each concept being brilliantly expounded upon through further instruction.
- Character: As aforementioned, the primary focus of Hebrews is to offer words of instruction and correction to those of Jewish descent who had recently come to faith in Christ. The overall impression is that the author is not happy with those to whom he is writing. Apparently, the congregation had begun to revert back to its previous customs and practices, even adopting those of pagans. They perhaps had doubted the validity of the gospel, and were consequently still living in mixture.

### B. UNITS / SUB-UNITS:

Doctrine				Discipline
Superior Person		Superior Priesthood		Superior Power
Better Than Angels (1:1-2:18)	Better Than Moses & Joshua (3:1-4:13)	Better Than the Priesthood (4:14-7:28)	Better Than the Old Covenant (8:1-10:39)	Example of the Life of Faith (11:1-13:25)

### C. CHAPTER TITLES:

- |                         |                                 |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Son Above Angels     | 8. Better Covenant              |
| 2. Warning & Exultation | 9. New Sanctuary                |
| 3. Servant & Son        | 10. Final Sacrifice             |
| 4. God's Rest           | 11. True Faith                  |
| 5. Highest Priest       | 12. Exhortation & Warning       |
| 6. Perils & Promises    | 13. Encouragement & Benediction |
| 7. Order of Melchizedek |                                 |

### D. STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIPS & QUESTIONS:

- Recurrence of Causation by Interchange: Throughout the book of Hebrews, there appears to be a loosely alternating A-B-A model of doctrinal teaching/exhortation, usually followed by instruction in the form of a warning. A good example of this would be the beginning of chapter six, in which the author says "Therefore let us go on toward perfection, leaving behind the basic teaching about Christ, and not laying again the foundation..." in reference to the brief scolding given at the end of chapter five, for not being at the appropriate level of spiritual maturity. Though it tapers off somewhat towards the end of the chapter, and the overall pattern would look like this:

Doctrine	Warning	Doctrine	Warning	Doctrine	Warning	Doctrine	Warning	Doctrine
1:1-14	2:1-4	2:5-3:6	3:7-19	4:1-5:14	6:1-6:12	6:13-12:13	12:14-12:29	13:1-25

Questions:

1. Definitional: Did the author specifically design Hebrews to have this alternating pattern? If so, then why do the warnings appear in less frequent intervals, seemingly sprinkled intermittently, towards the end of the chapter? Is this intentional? Is this alternation simply the natural result of a concerned writer who wanted to immediately follow up his exhortations with a word of caution?
  2. Rational: Why didn't the author simply have all his teachings and exhortation in the beginning of the book, and then follow it up with a list of stern warnings? Was he trying to avoid a list that would resemble the Ten Commandments, thus appearing legalistic rather than accentuating the grace of Christ?
  3. Implicational: What are the implications of the existing style, as opposed to any number of possible alternatives?
- Comparison & Contrast: There is an embedded relationship between the person of Christ and those to whom he is being evaluated alongside. The author asks the question "For to which of the angels did God ever say 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you'?" in the beginning of Hebrews (1:5). He is showing that while both are heavenly, only Jesus himself is in fact part of the Godhead. So, the author is not necessarily negatively critiquing the angels as not being adequate for their position, rather, he is accentuating the perfect adequacy of Christ to occupy a position of complete supremacy. Likewise, the author contrasts Jesus with Joshua and Moses (3:1-4:13), showing that while they were great leaders and shepherds of God's chosen people, they were still human and thus flawed, unable to deliver a faultless redemption. Christ is also compared to the lineage and priesthood of Aaron, who also failed in his humanity to live up to the pure Levitical standard (4:14-7:28). Jesus is said to be of the order of Melchizedek, ultimately showing himself to be both the perfect saint and sacrifice. Finally, the new covenant established by Jesus' death and resurrection is examined together with the first covenant (4:14-7:28). Jesus is seen to have been concurrently the abolishment and fulfillment of the first.

Questions:

1. Definitional: What was the author trying to say to his audience by appealing to the superiority of Christ? Was he attempting to coerce them to choose Jesus based upon his claim to supremacy? What was the significance of mentioning Melchizedek, since he apparently had no ancestral ties to them?
2. Rational: Why did the author choose to use these particular examples, as opposed to making a more stark contrast by comparing Jesus to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees? By appealing to the ancestry of the Hebrews, was the author attempting to strike a more personal chord with his audience? What was the relevance of mentioning the angels, since those of Jewish faith would have already known that the Messiah would have been of higher esteem?
3. Implicational: What are the implications of the author's comparative subject selections? Were there any others that could have added to the impact of his statements?

- Instrumentation: The key phrases that are indicative of instrumentation at work “in order that, so that” appear a combined total of 22 times through Hebrews 2:1-13:21 (NRSV). They appear in such statements as “Therefore [Jesus] had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, *so that* he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people,” (2:17); “Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, *so that* we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need,” (4:16); and “For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, *in order that* we may share his holiness,” (12:10). It seems to be used as an explanation of effective application, immediately following an example (cause-effect). The author shows how efforts must be made in order to produce a favorable outcome.

Questions:

1. Definitional: Did the author intend to write with this exacting emphasis on causation? Was this a significant way of communicating a point during the time when Hebrews was written? Are the Jewish people particularly more receptive to *If-Then* statements in their teachings? Is this simply a matter of punishment/reward?
  2. Rational: Why did the author choose to write in this manner? Was this the most effective way to communicate his point? Would any other method have been better?
  3. Implicational: What are the implications of the repetition of these phrases? Is there a deeper meaning to this style of instruction and exhortation?
- Climax: The book appears to build towards chapter 11, in which the author somewhat abruptly changes course, setting aside the comparison/contrast model of Christ and others, and switches to an expository definition of faith. This appears to empower the reader, making it evident that through faith, it is possible to endure and live a memorably effective life in service to God. In chapter 12, the reader is instructed to follow the example of Jesus, remembering the trials he endured in order to set mankind free. Basically, because he saw the people of the world as worth dying for, the reader must now live for him. Chapter 13 further encourages the recipients of the Hebrews letter to continue to live in love, remembering the sufferings of those who instructed them. Ultimately, the climax of the book comes in the form of a benediction in 13:20. Strangely enough, it is followed by an addendum to the letter, almost a P.S. of sorts. It is particularly odd because it mentions the name of Timothy, while the rest of the letter had been anonymous.

Questions:

1. Definitional: Did the author intend for the book to escalate through teaching/warning, plateau at chapter 11 in teaching on faith, and then close with the somewhat minor climax of the chapter 13 benediction? Did he mean to create a literary climax at all? Was the portion which mentions Timothy an afterthought, or specifically placed in order to draw attention to him?
2. Rational: Why did the author add the bit about Timothy, rather than leave the entire book effectively anonymous, as it had been up until that point? Why didn't the author mention the names of those who suffered on behalf of these recipients?
3. Implicational: What are the implications of such an unusual ending of this epistle?

#### E. KEY VERSES / STRATEGIC AREAS:

- I feel that the entire book is full of strategic areas, and because it is such a progressive work, it is difficult to narrow down the list. However, pressed to do so, I would say that the following sub-divisions are particular importance: Better Than Angels (1:1-2:18), Better Than the Old Covenant (8:1-10:39), and Example of the Life of Faith (11:1-13:25). I believe that this offers a brief overview of the superior personage, holiness, and power of Christ. For life application, I believe that one of the most important verses would be “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,” (Hebrews 11:1, KJV). It is one of my favorite verses, and has a particularly powerful wording in the King James Version, because it says that faith is the *substance* of things hoped for and *evidence* of the invisible. It makes faith sound engaging and tangible, inspiring a compelling sense of encouragement.

#### F. HIGHER – CRITICAL DATA:

- The book of Hebrews was written around 64-68 A.D., during a time in which many Jewish believers were tempted to renounce their newfound faith and return to Judaism to escape persecution. The anonymous author appeals to them to pursue maturity based on Christ’s superiority to the rigid legalism of the Jewish religious system. Christ is better than Moses, for it was by him that Moses was created. He is better than the line of Aaron, for his sacrifice has never needed to be repeated. He is better than the Law, for he mediates a better covenant. Clearly, the recipients of this letter had more to gain by suffering for Christ than by reverting to the system he had already fulfilled and abolished.

#### G. OTHER IMPRESSIONS:

- Hebrews is a somewhat unique book, in that the writer is unidentified, yet makes reference to a singular reference to the person of Timothy at the end. It also quotes liberally from the Old Testament, but again, is vague as to where and whom it is making reference. This is no doubt due to the author’s assumption that his Hebrew audience would be well-versed in their working knowledge of the scriptures.
- However, for all the guesswork that’s involved in reading it, the message itself is clear – The Lord Jesus Christ is sovereign above and beyond any system to which we may be adhering. Since he has brought to completion the old covenant, and provided a flawlessly timeless new covenant, we can rest assured in our faith that he has done a sufficient work on the cross, and continues to do so in each one of our lives.



Nathan Smith  
 SPO 1129  
 IBS Hebrews  
 Jan. 12, 2003

**SEGMENT SURVEY OF HEBREWS 3:1-4:16**

**A. PARAGRAPH TITLES:**

- (3:1-6) | Servant & Son
- (3:7-11) | Psalm 95
- (3:12-15) | Danger of Unbelief
- (3:16-19) | 40 Years
- (4:1-7) | Promise of Rest
- (4:8-11) | Joshua Ineffective
- (4:12-13) | Two-Edged Sword
- (4:14-16) | Highest Priest

**B. UNITS / SUB-UNITS:**

Moses a Servant Christ a Son (3:1-6)	Psalm 95's Warning Against Unbelief (3:7-19)			The Rest That God Promised (4:1-13)			Jesus the Great High Priest (4:14-16)
Servant & Son (3:1-6)	Psalm 95 (3:7-11)	Unbelief (3:12-15)	40 Years (3:16-19)	God's Rest (4:1-7)	Joshua (4:8-11)	2-Edged (4:12-13)	Highest Priest (4:14-16)

**C. STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIPS & QUESTIONS:**

- o Intercalation: There is insertion of Psalm 95 throughout this passage, specifically in 3:7-11, 15, 4:3, 7. The author is urging the reader to listen to God, and not to have hardened and rebellious hearts. He is making a reference to the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness following the exodus from Egypt. He does not want those to whom he is writing to repeat the same mistakes of their Hebrew ancestors, whether they are figurative or literal descendants.

Questions:

1. Definitional: Why didn't the author expressly list Psalm 95 as the reference for this passage? Did he assume that the readers were already familiar with the subject matter he was talking about?
  2. Rational: Why did the author use multiple placements of parts of Psalm 95 in his writing? Wouldn't verses 3:7-11 have been sufficient to make his point?
  3. Implicational: What are the implications of the usage of Psalm 95 in this passage?
- o Interchange of Comparison: Throughout 3:1-4:16, there is a loose A-B-A-B pattern of comparison, and implicitly, contrast. The author first talks of how Moses was a faithful servant of God's house Israel, and how Jesus is the Son, master of the house. Secondly he compares, through reference to Psalm 95, the rebellion of ancient Israel with the potential pitfalls of the Hebrew's audience. Thirdly, he compares the redemptive work of Joshua done by leading Israel to that of Jesus, who offers perfect rest. There is a brief, yet graphic, comparison between the word of God and a sword. Finally, the passage comes to completion with the analogy of Jesus as high priest.

Questions:

1. Definitional: Why did the author, who was probably familiar with the Pauline writing style, not make all his assertions about Jewish heritage up front, and then draw his ideals for teaching secondly? Could another method have been as effective?
  2. Rational: Out of all the possibly Jewish ancestors, why did he choose to limit his scope only to that of Moses, Joshua, and the priesthood?
  3. Implicational: What are the implications of whom he selected to discuss?
- Instrumentation: The repetition of the phrase *so that* in verses 3:13, 19, 4:11, 16 indicates that there is possible instrumentation being implemented. In 3:13, the point given is to exhort each other daily, lest they be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. In 3:19, a worst-case scenario is presented, showing that the ancient Israelites were unable to enter into God's rest because of their unbelief. In 4:11, the author urges the reader to strive to enter this very same rest, so that nobody falls into disobedience. Verse 4:16 instructs the reader to approach God's throne boldly, to receive his mercy and grace.

Questions:

1. Definitional: Why does the author use instrumentation of cause-effect statements? Did he intend for them to be inter-related, or is this simply a result of the subject matter all pertaining to the same topic?
  2. Rational: Is the author likening the people of Moses' time to the recipients of Hebrews because he sees them as falling into the same negative patterns, or is this simply a warning of possible things to come?
  3. Implicational: What are the implications of the use of implementation in this segment?
- Interrogation: The apparent problem that is being addressed throughout is that the 1<sup>st</sup> Covenant was ineffective in providing redemption for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and as a result, Israel was never able to fulfill its role of reaching the nations and extending the boundaries of God's kingdom. It is clear that this was not a problem with the covenant itself, and certainly not on the part of God. It was due to man's inherently sinful nature manifesting itself through unfaithfulness, doubt, unbelief, and rebellion. The solution is mentioned throughout as Jesus himself, who was the perfect sacrifice in bringing about the ratification of the 1<sup>st</sup> Covenant and the establishment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Covenant.

Questions:

1. Definitional: Why did the author not mention preaching the gospel to the Gentiles?
  2. Rational: Did the author believe that Israel was capable of fulfilling its priestly role, or did he view deliverance through the Messiah who was to come as the only solution?
  3. Implicational: What are the implications of the inadequacy of the 1<sup>st</sup> Covenant?
- Climax: The passage of 3:1-4:16 seems to climax at 4:14-16, in which the author reassures those to whom he is writing that they have Jesus as High Priest interceding

on their behalf. Yet, his is not imperfect, as the priests of old, for he was the sacrifice, offering up himself as atonement. The reader can also take heart that all the testing one may face has already been tempered and endured by Christ. He knows what each of his own are going through, and will give them his mercy and grace in their time of need.

Questions:

1. Definitional: Why did the author seemingly switch topics at the end, from God's rest to Jesus as High Priest? Was he trying to make a point by varying his scope?
2. Rational: Could the writer have added this climax, rather intending it to be an intro to chapter 5, rather than a close to chapter 4?
3. Implicational: What are the implications of this slight switch in climactic topic?

- Summarization: It is possible that 4:14-16 is being used as a pre-emptive summarization or overview of the upcoming chapter 5. The transition is so smooth as it builds on the previous teaching and opens the way to the next that it is difficult to choose which sub-section to attribute it to. One would think that it could feasibly be included in chapter 5 itself, yet it has been sectioned amongst the other content of chapter 4. Either way, it is an important part of what the author is trying to say, that Jesus is the High Priest who is all sufficient to make supplication to God on our behalf.

Questions:

1. Definitional: By likening Jesus to a high priest, is the author meaning that he continues to offer intercession, reminding God the Father of his sacrifice?
2. Rational: Was this brief sub-section meant as an introductory paragraph to the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter, or simply as a transitional final paragraph in chapter 4?
3. Implicational: What are the implications of these somewhat oddly placed verses?

D. KEY VERSES / STRATEGIC AREAS:

- I believe that the key verses for this passage are 3:3, 4:8, 4:12, 4:15. Verse 3:3 deals with Moses as a servant in the house of God, and Jesus' supremacy over him as Son and master of the house. In 4:8, the author makes mention of Joshua, and while he was faithful in his charge to lead Israel, he was in the end ineffective in providing fully effectual entry into God's promises. Seemingly interjected amongst unrelated context, 4:12 stands out because of its vivid description of the Word of God, describing it as a blade that pierces to the deepest recesses of the heart. Lastly, 4:15 caps off the passage, showing our beloved Lord in his role ordained from the beginning, the High Priest.

E. LITERARY FORMS:

- Much like the overall materials of the book, the literary form of this section is ideological in nature. The author brings to mind the tradition and ancestry of the Hebrew people, and bridges the generations to culminate with Christ's supreme role as priest. The ideology behind the passage is that, while there is a rich history to be remembered, it all pales in comparison to the rich fullness of Jesus. All that came

before were imperfect, and by this were unable to fully satisfy the redemptive qualifications. Only Jesus was effective as both Son of God and Son of Man.

F. OTHER IMPRESSIONS:

- Hebrews is chocked full of references to the teachings of the Old Testament, as is this particular passage. The author no doubt wanted to drive the point home that heritage isn't everything. Though it is uncertain as to whether he was writing to people of Hebrew or Gentile descent, the message is applicable in both cases. Hebrew people could take a look at their mindset, to see whether or not they were relying on their claim to be followers of Moses or Jesus. Gentiles could take heart in the fact that though they were not directly descended from the God's chosen lineage, they fully became his children by adoption. My only concern is that of 4:14-16, as it seems unclear whether or not it belongs in chapter 4 or 5. It seems possible that it could at least be considered as possibly belonging in the segment which includes chapter 5.

Nathan Smith  
 SPO 1129  
 IBS Hebrews  
 Jan. 13, 2003

### INTERPRETATION OF HEBREWS 3:1-19

QUESTION: In light of Psalm 95 and Numbers 14:1-35, how do the words *faithful*, *confidence*, *unbelief*, and *rebellion* support the segmental argument of Hebrews 3:1-19?

EVIDENCE	INFERENCES
<p><u>Preliminary Definitions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ pistoj – h, on faithful, trustworthy, reliable; believing (often believer, Christian; o ek peritomhj pÅ Jewish Christian Ac 10.45); sure, true, unfailing (ta pÅ sure promises or blessings Ac 13.34)</li> <li>○ parrhsia – aj f openness, frankness (parrhsia openly, plainly, freely); boldness, confidence, assurance; before the public (en pÅ einai to be known publicly Jn 7.4; deigmatizw en pÅ make a public example of Col 2.15)</li> <li>○ apistia – aj f unbelief; unfaithfulness</li> <li>○ parapikrasmoj – ou m rebellion (during the time of Israel's wandering in the wilderness)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ It can be assumed from the cotext that the author is using <i>faithful</i> in a traditional sense. We know that Moses wasn't entirely infallible. However, as a servant he was unrivaled amongst his peers, and mentored future generations.</li> <li>○ The author appears to be saying that to hold confidently onto hope means that one is unashamedly professing public faith in Christ. As is shown by the original Greek definition, this was done with openly visible boldness.</li> <li>○ This seems to be a direct translation.</li> <li>○ Each instance of the word rebellion seems to be in exclusive reference to the years wandering in the wilderness.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Context:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The author of Hebrews is writing this epistle to encourage the reader(s) to stay true to the newfound faith in Christ, not returning again to their old ways, steeped in Jewish custom rather than true spiritual vitality. He is quoting Psalm 95:7b-11, reminding them of the mistakes of their ancestors, who wandered for 40 years through the wilderness in unbelief, specifically as is recorded in Numbers 14:1-35. The key message that seems to be preached here is to not return to old ways, when the new move of God is upon you. Just as the ancient Israelites wished to return to Egypt, the potential exists for the same problem in a vain return to Judaism.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ It can be inferred that his usage of <i>faithful</i>, <i>confidence</i>, <i>unbelief</i>, and <i>rebellion</i> are echoes of the heart attitude of the Exodus population, and possible indications of where the recipients of Hebrews were heading if their course was not corrected. Those in Numbers 14:1-35 complained to God, accusing him of leading them to be slaughtered by their enemies. As a result of their unfaithfulness, they died by the sword, when they foolishly forged ahead even though they were forewarned. Ironically, in the times of persecution in which Hebrews was written, dying by the sword would have been victory; a martyr of Christendom.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In broader book context, this passage adds credibility to the author's claim of Jesus' superior personage over that of Moses, after his assertion that Jesus is superior to the angels. Immediately following comes the contrast between Jesus and Joshua, followed by Jesus above the priesthood and the Old Covenant, and ultimately as the perfect example of how to live the life of faith.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ It can be assumed that the parallels and divergences drawn between Moses and Jesus are but a part of the broader intent of the author. He is not simply pointing out differences between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Covenants, or accentuating the disparity between God and man. Rather, it is for the greater purpose of showing Jesus, as God incarnate, giving us undeservingly the gift of salvation.</li> </ul>
<p><u>New Testament Word Usage:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Greek word for faith, <b>pistoj</b> appears in the following NT verses: Matt. 24:45; 25:21, 23; Lk. 12:42; 16:10ff; 19:17; Jn. 20:27; Acts 10:45; 13:34; 16:1, 15; 1 Co. 1:9; 4:2, 17; 7:25; 10:13; 2 Co. 1:18; 6:15; Gal. 3:9; Eph. 1:1; 6:21; Col. 1:2, 7; 4:7, 9; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 Tim. 1:12, 15; 3:1, 11; 4:3, 9, 12; 5:16; 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:2, 11, 13; Tit. 1:6, 9; 3:8; 1 Pet. 1:21; 4:19; 5:12; 1 Jn. 1:9; 3 Jn. 1:5; Rev. 1:5; 2:10, 13; 3:14; 17:14; 19:11; 21:5; 22:6.</li> <li>○ The Greek word for confidence, <b>parrhsia</b> appears in the following NT verses: Mk. 8:32; Jn. 7:4, 13, 26; 10:24; 11:14, 54; 16:25, 29; 18:20; Acts 2:29; 4:13, 29, 31; 28:31; 2 Co. 3:12; 7:4; Eph. 3:12; 6:19; Phil. 1:20; Col. 2:15; 1 Tim. 3:13; Phlm. 1:8; 1 Jn. 2:28; 3:21; 4:17; 5:14.</li> <li>○ The Greek word for unbelief, <b>apistia</b> appears in the following NT verses: Matt. 13:58; Mk. 6:6; 9:24; 16:14; Rom. 3:3; 4:20; 11:20, 23; 1 Tim. 1:13.</li> <li>○ The Greek word for rebellion, <b>parapikrasmoj</b> appears in the following NT verses: Heb. 3:8, 15. While this belongs in context, I found it interesting that these are the only two NT appearances, the other in Psalm 95.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ It can be inferred that due to the multiple occurrences and wide variety of uses to which faith is employed that it is both important as well as a quite diverse in emphasis. This does not however, discredit the word. If anything, it strengthens it. For if faith of a mustard seed can move mountains, and in conjunction with Christ's presence can lead to miraculous healings, then we can reckon it as a solid reality in our own lives. God can move above and beyond what we think.</li> <li>○ We can assume, having seen its usage elsewhere in the New Testament that this author concurs with the others when he says to "hold firm in the confidence." In our own lives, this is to be done openly and publicly, not boastfully, but with humble confidence that God will deliver on his promises.</li> <li>○ It can be inferred by this usage that unbelief is far more and worse than a self-doubt. Rather, it borders on calling the crucifixion of Christ inadequate.</li> <li>○ It can be inferred that this word is almost tailor-fitted to mean rebellion against God, especially in the context of the 40 years of wandering. It can also be inferred that the author makes no mistake in using it specifically.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Inflections:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>pistoj</b> is being used in the accusative case (3:2), indicating that it is the direct object of the sentence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ It can be inferred that the author was expressly describing Moses as having held true to his charge of servant-hood.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ parrhsia is being used in the accusative case (3:6), indicating that it is the direct object of the sentence.</li> <li>○ apistia is being used in the accusative case (3:19), indicating that it is the direct object of the sentence.</li> <li>○ parapikrasmoj is being used in the dative case (3:8), indicating that it is the indirect object of the sentence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The author is using the word confidence itself to be something to which the individual must cling.</li> <li>○ This makes unbelief seem almost tangible, as it cost the Israelites their entry. They were denied as a result.</li> <li>○ Rebellion seems almost to have been a specific event, rather than simply an attitude carried by one or more people.</li> </ul>
<p><u>General Literary Form:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The form of this passage, as is of the rest of the book, is ideological. It contains sound teaching, based on the historical implications of Judaism being fulfilled through the Christ who was, is, and is to come. Step by step, each piece of reflection is followed by an exhortation for practical application.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ It can be inferred that this section is not meant to be taken literally, as is a historical record, but rather that it is a lense through which the readers of the epistle were to analyze their own lives. In light of the results of the mistakes of old Israel, the recipients had a choice to make; change or face the consequences.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Atmosphere:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The atmosphere permeating this passage and book as a whole is that of discipline, and also of exhortation and hope. It can be likened to that of a sports team’s coach offering a word of encouragement to his players. He knows that they are capable of better than what they are exhibiting, and therefore is demanding more from them, while at the same time telling them that they have the power to do it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ It can be assumed that the writer and original readers both had working knowledge of the Old Testament, and they would have received this in its presently understood intonation. They would have seen it as a stern warning, yet not one that was necessarily condemning. The inference can be made that they would have been appreciative, and received the word of correction with a humble thankfulness.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Interpretation of Others:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “The New Testament bears witness, in a number of places, to a primitive and widespread Christian interpretation of the redemptive work of Christ in terms of a new Exodus. In some of its features this interpretation may have originated during the Galilean ministry of Jesus; but after His resurrection it comes to present a reasonably fixed form... This typology was familiar to our author, and quite probably to his readers as well; he uses it, therefore, to warn them against giving up their faith and hope. After this fashion, he bases his argument on a passage from the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ I thought that it was amazingly insightful to liken belief in Christ to a new Exodus. While we always speak of deliverance and the setting free from bondage, it is not as common to think that someone would ever want to return to captivity. Yet, that is what we do as human beings. Rather than venture into the unknown, and allow God to be in charge of where we’re heading, we sometimes in our fallen human nature long to return to what is familiar, even if it means being under the scourge of the whip, so to speak. Yet, as we clearly see here, Jesus is a far better</li> </ul>



<p>Psalter, which he expounds in the light of the historical record.” (New International Commentary on the New Testament, Bruce 62)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “This section does not have the polemical features which might have suggested controversy with Jews who held that among humans Moses was supreme, or with Jewish Christians who might have placed Jesus and Moses on the same level. But for Jewish believers in Jesus, who probably formed a majority of the first readers, the question of the relative status of Jesus and Moses was bound to arise, even apart from the demands of Christian apologetic.” (NIGTC, Ellingworth 194)</li> <li>○ “The text cited is the final portion of Ps 95, a hymn that praises the sovereign power of Yahweh and invites the worshiper to adore God and to hear God’s voice. The appeal is followed by the challenge of these verses to the Israelite community not to be like the desert generation, who had hardened their hearts and not attained the promised land of rest.” (Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, Attridge 114)</li> </ul>	<p>leader than Moses, and offers perfectly clear direction for life. He never leaves us wandering alone. He always shows us the way to go, as he walks it with us.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The author was correct in saying that this passage does not openly pit the reverence for Moses against newfound faith in Christ. While the comparisons were no doubt made, the fact is that there is no contest. This can be said because logically, the two were not at odds. Moses served God in the capacity to which he was charged, yet Jesus came not only to do that, but far exceed it by both fulfilling what Moses had sought to accomplish, and creating a new covenant. He made the sacrifice, rather than depending on that of man.</li> <li>○ While not expressly mentioned in Hebrews 3:7-11, the author does make reference to Psalm 95, which starts out making mention of worship. It can be inferred, that when the original readers brought this Psalm to mind, they no doubt thought of the worship due to the Lord. As such, they were probably receptive to the words of teaching and encouragement, being reminded that they are in the presence of God, and that is not something taken lightly.</li> </ul>
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#### SYNTHESIS & SUMMARY:

The relationship between all the individual exhortations in Hebrews chapter 3 can be summarized in saying: Follow God faithfully as a servant, remaining confident that as you do your part, he will do his. Guard your heart against the two evils of belief, the first of which does not believe in God enough, and the second which believes in one’s own self exceedingly, to the point of rebellion. Be content in your place, and don’t be so presumptuous as to think that you have better ideas than God. Basically, remember where you were before Christ, and in doing so, never long to return to that from which he has set you free. As Christians, we must follow the sound advice of the Hebrews author. While the book may be anonymous, the wisdom of the exhortations is anything but inexplicable. Through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, these teachings can be applied effectively to our lives. As the author himself said in 3:7, it is the Holy Spirit himself that ultimately speaks to us through scripture.



Nathan Smith  
SPO 1129  
IBS Hebrews  
Jan. 15, 2003

### INTERPRETATION & SYNTHESIS OF HEBREWS 4:1-16

The argument set forth in Hebrews 4:1-10 is that of an urgent exhortation. The author has summarized the original follies of the people of the exodus generation in his recount of Psalm 95. He has likened their predicament to the possible consequences that could befall the recipients of the Hebrews epistle. Yet, in verse 4:1, he informs the readers that the opportunity to enter into God's rest has not yet passed. The promise still remains on the table so to speak, and he is pleading with them that they not pass up the opportunity to accept it. He also briefly mentions those who were under Joshua's leadership (4:8).

He groups the readers together with these ancestors, counting them both as having had equal opportunity to embrace the *good news* (4:2). I believe that since those who followed Moses in ancient times had not yet seen Christ incarnate, he is simply referring to the overarching grace of God. The difference between the original readers and their ancestors is that they have not yet squandered their chance to accept this gift by faith, yet the simple fact that that author has mentioned this point implies that they are in danger of making the same mistake. He insists that they not harden their hearts (4:7), lest God would also swear to them in his anger just as in 4:3, "they shall not enter my rest."

The author originally just says *his rest* at the beginning of the chapter, encouraging the reader to enter in while the door is still open. Further on, in verse 4:9 he clearly defines this rest as the Sabbath rest of God, taken by the Lord himself on the seventh day of creation (4:5). This *sabbatismoj* is defined as a state of spiritual rest entered into by a commitment made in faith. Through those in the Old Testament, under the 1<sup>st</sup> Covenant, this would have been to lead a life of faith by living under the law and making atonement through sacrifice. Yet, as he has said, through this Joshua was unable to give them rest.

This rest is still available by sacrifice, though not the same one which their ancestors made. It is through Christ he says, that they are to enter a final Sabbatical. So, as is evident by the gravity attributed to it by the author, this is more than simple relaxation or a temporary break from everyday life, as is often credited to the word rest. It is the state of heavenly peace in which God has resided since the foundation of the world. Implicitly, it is fellowship with God, since it is into his rest that the believer through faith enters, and the Lord himself has made this his dwelling.

In verses 4:1-10, the author characterizes the essential ways to both obtain and forfeit one's privilege of rest. In verse 4:2, he says that those who failed to enter rest "because they were not united by faith," and in 4:3 that "we who have believed entered that rest." In verse 4:11, he also says that disobedience is cause for failure. Thus, it can be deduced that being united in belief in Christ through obedient faith is the way to obtain rest, and to negate any of these factors is to lose entry into rest, or call one's salvation into question.

Verse 4:11 differs slightly from the previous statement made in verse 10 because it implies that by entering rest, someone can be safeguarded against falling into disobedience. Up until this point in chapter 4, the previous context suggested that it was through obedience that one would enter rest, and through disobedience one would fall short of said entry. Yet, verse 11 adds a new dimension to this understanding, that having entered rest, one cannot fall into disobedience such as did the ancient Israelites. It can be argued that the author understood the sanctification process to be ongoing up until the point of entering God's rest, and then it is complete. Just as in the completion of creation, God entered rest, so too the believer has completed his journey when he reaches this very same Sabbath rest. Therefore, just as the author said, every effort must be made to enter this rest, by striving in each step of the way along life's path, running for the final goal that is the prize of salvation. In this way, death is not the end, but a gateway to life.

The rest of chapter 4 is at first glance, seemingly unrelated to the previous 11 verses. Starting with verse 12, the author appears to shift his focus and go off on a different tangent. In verse 12, he likens the word of God to a living sword, which divides all things, even to the soul and spirit. Unlike the rest of the world, physical appearances do not fool the Word, who is able to judge the innermost "thoughts and intentions of the heart." From Jesus, nothing is hidden, for his gaze pierces through to the true nature of every man, and it is to him that all "must render an account" (4:13). Just as the author analogizes the word to a sword, this passage appears to place a cut between two distinctively differing sections.

The next section, which I believe starts at verse 4:14, and extends through chapter 5, relates to Jesus as High Priest above human clergy. However, since the chapter break occurs after 4:16, I will attempt to identify how the exhortations in 4:14-16 are related to the discussions presented in chapters 3 and 4. In the first section of chapter 3:1-6, the author asks the reader to consider Jesus as "the apostle and high priest of our confession," that is our profession of faith in God. He explains that as such, he is worthy of more honor than Moses. Though also a fellow servant of God, and the most humble man of his time, he was still just a man, and not Son of Man and God as Jesus was and still remains.

Verses 3:7-4:11 pertain to the 40 years of rebellion, unfaithfulness, and disobedience of those exiled from Egypt, used in comparison and contrast to the dilemma faced by the original beneficiaries of the Hebrews letter. By addressing two of the first saintly leaders, Moses and Joshua, and the degenerate state of their congregation, the author points out the overall ineffectiveness of human leadership, even of two such highly revered individuals. So, the problem is clearly defined as a structure that people are unable to adhere to, not for a flaw in the method itself, rather in those who attempt to live within it. Clearly, there was and is a need for a higher authority, rather than the humanly inconsistent alternative of a self-governmental system. The author shows us this ideal choice as our decision to follow Christ. He is asking the reader(s) to honestly evaluate their lifestyles in light of the ineffectiveness of the 1<sup>st</sup> Covenant, and perfect substitution made by Jesus at the cross. For he endured all that we have and are yet to face, proven impervious to temptation, and yet ultimately vulnerable on the cross. He now sits upon the throne of his exaltation, giving mercy and grace to those who approach with boldness.

Nathan Smith  
SPO 1129  
IBS Hebrews  
Jan. 19, 2003

## SEGMENT SURVEY OF HEBREWS 5:11-6:20

### A. PARAGRAPH TITLES:

(5:11-14) | Warning Against Falling Away  
(6:1-8) | Perfection vs. Failure  
(6:9-12) | Things To Come  
(6:13-20) | God's Promise

### B. UNITS / SUB-UNITS:

Warning Against Falling Away (5:11-6:8)		Promise of a Better Day (6:9-20)	
Babies & Teachers (5:11-14)	Perfection vs. Failure (6:1-8)	Things To Come (6:9-12)	God's Promise (6:13-20)

### C. STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIPS & QUESTIONS:

- Contrast & Comparison: There is a definite comparison and contrast between where the Hebrews were at, and where the author thought they should be (5:11-14). The author is telling the recipients of the epistle in no uncertain terms that they are not living up to their potential. He likens them to babes who are still relying on milk for nourishment, when they should have been by now ready for a steady diet of solid food. He calls them dull in understanding, scolding them as students for not having progressed to the position of teachers. He also implies that they are not yet mature enough to discern good from evil, a seemingly easy task, even for a group of youngsters.

He also contrasts more implicitly those who have come to faith and fallen away, and those who have held steadfast to their belief in Christ. In verses 6:1-8, he talks about the perils of such mistakes, describing those who make them as being in danger of curses and destruction. He exhorts them to go on to perfection through Christ, and not dwindle in the beginning teachings which they have already covered. To fail to do so would be to make a mockery of what Christ did, effectually crucifying him again. Such are like infertile ground that produces thorns and thistles. In contrast, he assures them in their case that through continuation of faithful service to God, they may be confident that they will inherit his promises (6:9-12). They are likened to fruitful ground that bears much yield to the master planter (6:7).

#### Questions:

1. Definitional: What did the author mean when he implied in verse 5:14 that they could not yet distinguish between good and evil? Was he referring to them listening to false teaching, or was this simply an example of a broader point he was making?

2. Rational: Why did the author send a letter to these people, rather than attend to it himself in person? Was he detained in some way, or did he not see their situation as serious enough to merit a visit?

3. Implicational: What are the implications of the author using near-parabolic literature in his discussions of early Christian concepts?

- Climax: This passage gradually builds from talking generally about human shortcomings to unchanging faithfulness of God. In 6:13-20, the focus shifts to God's promises to Abraham of blessing and multiplication, and how God swore by himself to fulfill this pledge. The author then brings full-circle that which he had mentioned in the beginning of chapter 5, Jesus' priestly role in the order of Melchizedek, calling him a "hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul" (6:19).

Questions:

1. Definitional: What is the significance of the name Melchizedek? Were the readers already familiar with the concept of this order of the high priesthood?

2. Rational: Why did the author emphasize that God swore by himself, when the Lord's implicit nature is that of reliability? Is he simply quoting the Old Testament author which used the same phraseology, or making a special point?

3. Implicational: What are the implications of finishing off the passage with Jesus as high priest of the order of Melchizedek?

- Particularization: As previously mentioned, this passage moves from the general topic of the fallibility of mankind, particularly the Hebrews' readers, to the infallibility of God, and his everlasting commitment to his people. He then gets more specific by shifting focus from God as guarantor of Abraham's genealogy to Jesus the redeemer of the world through opening the curtain. That is to say, Christ tore away the barrier between God and man, offering all believers the saintly right to commune with the Holy of Holies.

Questions:

1. Definitional: What did the author mean he said that Christ is an anchor, and then immediately shifted focus to the shrine behind the curtain? Are these two interrelated, or are they meant to compliment each other as separate expressions of Christ?

2. Rational: Why did the author mention the promise of Abraham's multiplication, when its purpose would have been to reach the nations through Israel, a task at which they failed, meriting the necessary sacrifice of Jesus himself? Is the author trying to say that since Abraham's promise wasn't yet realized, the responsibility was transferred to Jesus and his followers?

3. Implicational: What are the implications of shifting focus from the Abraham covenant to that of the new covenant in Christ?

- Preparation / Realization: The background or setting can be summarized in the Hebrews' apparent lack of progress given the timeframe in which they've professed to be Christian. The author is dissatisfied with where they are, and exhorts them to move on to better things, not dallying in basic teachings, but becoming teachers

themselves. This brief summarization of the current state of affairs prepares the way for his description of Jesus as the high priest of the order of Melchizedek, a sure hope of their and our salvation.

Questions:

1. Definitional: What did the author mean by describing them in terms of maturity? Did he really view them as being immature, or was he using an overly strong metaphor to emphasize the point of his discontent?

2. Rational: Was the author purposely lining out the background of the Hebrews' recipients, or is this just a result of a natural thought progression?

3. Implicational: What are the implications of this preparation-realization approach?

- Instrumentation: In verses 5:11-6:8, the author makes a statement of purpose, and warns about the perils of falling away, being lukewarm so to speak, when by now their faith should have been brought to a boil. He brings to mind the stricter judgment that awaits those who come to Jesus and then turn their backs on him. Rather, he would have the reader be solidified in faith towards Christ, declaring once and for all allegiance to the truth. In verses 6:9 and following, he makes a shift from means to end, describing that how through faith the believer can be assured of greater things to come, holding onto God's promises for he can never be proven to be false.

Questions:

1. Definitional: What did the author mean when he said that the readers were in danger of crucifying Christ again?

2. Rational: Was he using this to mean that they did not genuinely believe in the effectiveness of his sacrifice, or was this more of an analogy to turning away from faith?

3. Implicational: What are the implications of the use of instrumentation in this case?

- Interrogation: Afore stated is the predicament into which the Hebrews people have gotten themselves into. The author states in 6:1-8 that there are serious ramifications implicated in their case. To continue to linger in mediocre Christianity would be to be like infertile ground which does not serve the purpose for which it is prepared. The solution is of course, Jesus himself, acting as the high priest, making supplication through his own sacrifice at the cross, and interceding through the Holy Spirit on the behalf of not only those who currently believed, but those who were yet to be adopted.

Questions:

1. Definitional: Given the immaturity of the believers, and the perfection of Christ, was the author trying to bring about a feeling of humbleness in the readers? If so, why did the author not simply say that they needed to come to repentance?

2. Rational: Was the author attempting to demonstrate that there was a clear problem with the Hebrews congregation, or was he simply warning of things that commonly befall a community of new believers?

3. Implicational: What are the implications of these problem-solution illustrations?

#### D. KEY VERSES / STRATEGIC AREAS:

- I believe that 6:1-3 summarizes the general theme of the 5:11-6:20 passage. The author says that they need to “go on toward perfection, leaving behind the basic teachings... and not laying again the foundation” of elementary principles. For a building to be completed, its foundation cannot be constantly refurbished. In a metaphorical sense, the author is saying that it is time they build upon this foundation, for to knit-pick at details and to waste time in erecting the main structure would be to leave the foundation exposed to the elements unnecessarily, weakening the foundation itself.

#### E. LITERARY FORMS:

- The literary form of this passage is ideological, though one could make the argument that it also includes parabolic literature as well, likening the believers to babies that need to grow up, and their relative unfruitfulness to that of ground that produces thorns and thistles. Conceptually, the two go hand in hand, speaking of perfection in terms of solid food, and genuine hearers and doers of the Word in terms of ground that drinks up the rain and bears an abundant crop. Towards the end of the passage, in verses 6:13-20, the author sets aside metaphoric speaking, and shifts to a more historical viewpoint, calling to remembrance the covenant between God and Abraham. Here, he speaks ideologically of God’s perfect truthfulness and inability to break his promises.

#### F. OTHER IMPRESSIONS:

- I think it’s interesting that the author of Hebrews took the initiative to correct a problem before it occurred, to nip it in the bud. While he uses some pretty strong illustrations to show his uneasiness with the Hebrews people, he makes it clear in 6:9-12 that he still considers them as capable of doing God’s will. This is a trait of an excellent leader, to realize that there is a potential problem, and take necessary steps to remedy the situation, before it becomes a full-blown catastrophe. While the authorship of Hebrews will probably always remain a mystery, one thing that can be said of him is that he had a genuine love for those who he was shepherding, and amazing foresight into their hearts and lives.

Nathan Smith  
SPO 1129  
IBS Hebrews  
Jan. 20, 2003

### INTERPRETATION OF HEBREWS 5:11-6:20

QUESTION: What is the meaning of the exhortation in 6:1-3? How does this description of the readers in 5:11-14 illumine this exhortation, and how does this exhortation flow from this description?

At first glance, the NRSV translation of the word *perfection* in verse 6:1 doesn't seem to directly relate to the exhortation in 5:11-14. However, taking it back to the original *teleiōthta* in the Greek, we see that it was initially meant to be read as "let us go on to *maturity*." Understood this way, it directly relates to the paragraph which precedes it. In verses 5:11-14, the author is telling his readers that their senses have been dulled, and that they are still stuck in their roles as students, when by now they should be instructing others about Christ. He likens them to babies who are still dependent on a mother's milk, and have not yet been weaned to eat solid food. He even goes so far as to say that they are unable to "distinguish good from evil" (5:14).

The exhortation that follows in 6:1-3 urges the readers to move past the fundamental elements of Christianity, which he describes as being "repentance from dead works and faith toward God, instruction about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment." Apparently, these were the issues with which the original recipients were preoccupied. By this time, the author appears to believe that they should have firmly mastered these concepts, and begun to progress past the stage of elementary learning to that of being teachers themselves. He likens them to builders who are obsessed with building a foundation (6:1). It conjures up a mental image of an architect who is too insecure to continue further construction, and so is constantly modifying the foundation, even though it is already concretely built. However, he appreciates the difficulty of the task, as is evident by his acknowledgement that this is possible only if God permits it to be so (6:3).

In *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, E.F. Bruce on page 111 makes the point that "the opening words of this exhortation are surprising." The author has just berated the readers for not being spiritually mature, so one could argue that to go on and talk of perfection would be seemingly contradictory. He may have been expected to say *nevertheless* I am now going to give to you solid food. Yet the author does not take this tone, and instead uses the word *therefore*. It is as if to say, "They have remained immature too long; *therefore* he will give them something calculated to take them out of their immaturity," (Bruce 111). I thought this was a very interesting point of linguistics, and worth mentioning. I hadn't previously given a second thought to the author's use of the word *therefore*, but having been brought to my attention, it does make sense that one would question his word choice. After giving it further thought, it seems that the commentator is correct. The conclusion about the author's motive is logically sound.

QUESTION: What is the meaning of 6:9-12? How does it relate to 5:11-6:8?

In 5:11-6:8, the argument set forth is that spiritual immaturity prevents one from progressing to a point where their knowledge can be a benefit to others (5:12). Not only this, but they are also putting themselves in a position of spiritual paralysis (6:4-6). Just like a body of water, if one is not moving spiritually forward, this person undoubtedly becomes stagnant. Thus the author urges the readers to go on to maturity, and not linger in the basic teachings. Not unlike Christians today, they had both a right and responsibility to become perfected in their faith, that they may become instructors, mentoring future generations of believers. I believe this is what the author means in 5:11-6:8, and this is why he so harshly rebuked those to whom he was writing.

In *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, on page 298, Paul Ellingworth argues the point that the author hesitates to embark on a more difficult teaching not to make a literary point, but because he genuinely doubts that they are ready to fully grasp this teaching. He says that “the author has serious fears that the receptors will go even further backwards, from a childish state to complete apostasy (6:4-6).” While I’m sure the author must have foreseen a possible problem arising, and even some negative behavior on the part of the Hebrews’ recipients, I’m not sure I entirely agree with Ellingworth on this point. Despite his strong words and ostensibly disappointed tone, the author still must have viewed the readers capable of living up to such a commission.

I believe that this is why he nearly apologizes for his sternness when he says in verse 6:9 that “even though we speak in this way, beloved, we are confident of better things in your case, things that belong to salvation.” In 6:10, he is referring to their ministry to the *saints*, presumably to him and his cohorts in the duration when they were present amongst them establishing the early church. He recognizes the diligent works of service which have already been done, and tells them that in his fairness, God will not forget them. He encourages them to continue their industrious labor of love, walking in the footsteps of “those who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (6:12).

QUESTION: Trace the argument of 6:13-20. How does the author reach his conclusion? How is this paragraph related to the preceding?

The argument of 6:13-20 is for the unchanging faithfulness of God, whom by his very nature cannot be proven false to his word. In verse 13, the author says that God swore by himself to Abraham, in saying “I will surely multiply and bless you.” It is interesting that God does not expressly need to say *I swear* to fulfill this promise. I believe that the author is making the point that by his default divine nature, any utterance from God is of ultimate truth and reliability. Thus, it is unnecessary for God to use any higher form of expression, and humans are often prone to do (6:16) because our nature is implicitly undependable. Yet, God, being the ultimate form of reliability, simply swears by himself.

This can be deconstructed to a basic fundamental assumption: humans change and are changeable, whereas God is not. To be changeable is to entail imperfection, for if something was flawless, there would be no reason to meddle with its composure. Such is



the temperament of the Lord. He is unchangeable not because it is beyond his power, but because it is entirely unnecessary for him to change. He was, is, and will always be the definitive definition of perfect. Thus, his promises are believable simply because he makes them, and no additional credibility can be or need be added.

On page 129, Bruce reiterates the promises of fertility made by God to Abraham and Sarah, emphasizing that even in the midst of self-doubt, Abraham believed God, and so was blessed by the Lord. Abraham was then put to another test of faith, again concerning his offspring, when God asked him to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham again passes the test, and the Lord provides a replacement sacrifice. This is an important form of Christological typology, in that Abraham was going to sacrifice his son to God, and yet a substitution was made in his stead. Likewise, God the father offered up his Son, this time *as the* exchange agent of sin atonement for all mankind.

This paragraph of 6:13-20 relates to the previous paragraph of 6:9-12 in that they both pertain to God's promises. In 6:9-12, the author is reminding the readers that they can take heart and bank on the legitimacy of God's remembrance. Their good deeds will not go overlooked or unrewarded. As evidence of this, he reminds them that God dealt honorably with their ancestor Abraham when he promised to bless and multiply his descendants. He ties this together through Christ's absolute redemptive sacrifice that was made as high priest to both fulfill the original assurance, and guarantee deliverance of promise to future generations (6:20).

Nathan Smith  
SPO 1129  
IBS Hebrews  
Jan. 20, 2003

### **APPLICATION & PROCLAMATION OF HEBREWS 5:11-6:20**

On the basis of the previous interpretation, I believe that this passage has direct application to both myself and contemporaries. I should seek to excel in my knowledge of Christian principles not only for self-benefit, but to become competent enough in my understanding that I am able to effectively educate others. This implies full mastery of such concepts as “repentance from dead works and faith toward God, instruction about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.” From this foundation, I should confidently build towards a mature faith through God’s instruction and guidance. By this, I can know that I am in the light, able to discern good from evil, exercising wisdom in all that I say and do.

I should also be wary of becoming complacent in my relationship with God. At no point will I ever be able to validly say that I have arrived at a point of completion in my understanding or walk with Christ. As the Lord himself is unchangingly infinite, so must my pursuit of his truth be unending, striving further with each passing day to love him more. This means being open to correction from the Holy Spirit, as well as my brothers and sisters in faith. Often times, they can see things from a more objective standpoint, and are able to bring areas of shortcoming to my attention quicker than I can realize them myself. Likewise, it means that I must be courageous enough to boldly speak to an area of spiritual inadequacy in the life of a friend or loved one.

Basically, I need to do what God would have me do, whether this pertains to me or others. By this I can know that my faithfulness will not go unappreciated, by either another individual or the Lord himself. He is faithful in his promises, of both blessing and judgment. Therefore, I should go to any lengths necessary to ensure that I am in his will and plan for my life. In this way, I am following in the footsteps of the forefathers of faith, countless generations who have gone before me in diligent labor for the Lord. All I can aspire to be is a servant in joyful seriousness, treating with reverent jubilee the mission which God has placed before me. Then I can count myself as an imitator of “those who through faith and patience inherit the promises,” and also of Jesus Christ himself, laying down my life for the purpose of a higher calling.

Specifically, this means telling others about God’s unchanging love. Just as mentioned in Hebrews 6:13-20, I know that the words of God are automatically and absolutely trustworthy. He promised blessing and multiplication to ancient Israel, and continues to make good on this promise even today. Through adoption, we who believe in Jesus Christ as both our Lord and Savior become members of God’s chosen people, or more aptly put, family. Jesus is completely able to make us wholly holy in his presence. He makes intercession through his Holy Spirit which he has bestowed upon the body of believers that is his church. It is my duty is to proclaim the gospel everyday in every way.

If I were to speak on Hebrews 5:11-6:20, I would use the following proclamation outline:

THESIS: We should take heart in the guarantee that God has made to those who follow him and progress in our faith by sharing with others that we can be certain of his promise.

1. CHRISTIAN MATURITY (5:11-6:8):

A. BABIES & TEACHERS (5:11-14):

The basic teaching of this text is that we are not to linger in elementary principles of Christianity, but move on in our understanding to the point where we can instruct others on how to embrace a newfound faith in Christ. To apply this teaching, one should strive to grow closer in relationship to Jesus, in order to better hear his voice and understand his heart of love for people he died to save. In doing so, we can know that spiritual maturity is being developed in one's life.

B. PERFECTION VS. FAILURE (6:1-8):

In understanding this passage, one realizes that it is futile to continue the repetition of basic concepts and elements of faith, when one should have already moved on towards a more perfect, or complete understanding of God's purpose. To linger is to dwindle in one's spiritual walk, and begin to digress. However, to accept God's correction and properly apply the oracles of Christ to one's life is like bearing a fruitful yield to the pruning of the Master's hand. The practical application of this would be to realize as adequate the sacrifice made by Christ, and allow yourself to be changed, continually molded into that which God intends.

2. PROMISE OF A BETTER DAY (6:9-20):

A. THINGS TO COME (6:9-12):

The promise of this passage is that a better day is on the horizon. Though it may seem that one is laboring in vain, a service unto God is not ignored, and the Lord will reward those who diligently seek him. We must continue to do the work that God has called us to, lest we fall into a state of sluggishness, losing the edge necessary to pierce the darkness of the world with the light of Christ. The realistic way to put such a method into practice is to exercise trust and patience, waiting on the Lord's timetable for the day of reward, and in the meantime humbly continuing the ministry of the saints started by the High Priest himself.

B. CERTAINTY OF GOD (6:13-20):

The validation of the promises we currently expect to see is shown in this passage, where Abraham was promised by God to become an abundant nation, more numerous than the stars. So now we, through our embracing Christ, have become spiritual descendents of the original father of Israel. And in doing so, have become members of the household of Christ, of which he himself is the builder. The everyday significance of this is that we can count on God's unchangingly perfect character to get us through the hard times in our lives. We can run to him in times of weakness, and in that weakness, we are made whole through Jesus.

Nathan Smith  
 SPO 1129  
 IBS Hebrews  
 Jan. 22, 2003

## SEGMENT SURVEY OF HEBREWS 7

### A. PARAGRAPH TITLES:

(7:1-3)	King of Salem
(7:4-10)	Levitical Tithes
(7:11-14)	Change in Priesthood
(7:15-19)	Better Hope
(7:20-22)	Priestly Oath
(7:23-25)	Permanent Savior
(7:26-28)	Perfect Son

### B. UNITS / SUB-UNITS:

Priestly Order of Melchizedek		Another Priest, Like Melchizedek				
King of Salem (7:1-3)	Levitical Tithes (7:4-10)	New Priesthood (7:11-14)	Better Hope (7:15-19)	Priestly Oath (7:20-22)	Permanent Savior (7:23-25)	Perfect Son (7:26-28)

### C. STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIPS & QUESTIONS:

- Recurrence: Throughout chapter 7, there is a recurrence of the priesthood theme. The author calls to mind the occurrences of Genesis 14:17-20, in which Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine, elements of sacrament, and blessed Abraham (7:1-3). Abraham gave to him a tithe, which is one tenth of all that he had. Initially, in Genesis, the king of Sodom told Abraham to keep the rest as his share, but Abraham insisted upon giving it, for he wanted to give unto God the glory for his victory. The author then goes on to talk about how this order of Melchizedek is superior to that of the order of Levi, for the Levitical priests all assumed position without an oath and passed away (7:20-23). However, the High Priest of the order of Melchizedek, that is Jesus, was established through an oath by God himself and will reign forever (v.24).

#### Questions:

1. Definitional: What is the author trying to say by using the term priest of the order of Melchizedek?
  2. Rational: Why did he describe him as King of Salem, rather than King of the Sabbath, to better tie into what he was teaching about the rest of God in chapter 4?
  3. Implicational: What are the implications of using these terms?
- Comparison & Contrast: The author compares and contrasts the holy personage of Jesus with various elements, all throughout the chapter. Initially, Jesus is likened to Melchizedek, as having received tithes from Abraham after his victory over the king of Chedorlaomer and his allies (Gen 14:17). Here he is called King of Salem, meaning king of peace. So, it is as King of Peace that Jesus operates in the order of Melchizedek, making intercession on behalf of believers, that they may know the peace and rest of God, as mentioned previously in Hebrews chapter 4. By being

compared to Melchizedek in this way, Jesus is being contrasted with Abraham. The author made this distinction in 7:7 by saying “It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.” Finally, he contrasts the Levitical priests, as being temporary and ultimately ineffective, with Jesus’ priesthood, which is unending.

Questions:

1. Definitional: What is the author saying by mention of the Melchizedek tithes?
  2. Rational: What is the tithing significant that Abraham presented made to Melchizedek? Is this meant to be seen as validation of tithing in the early church?
  3. Implicational: What are the implications of the Melchizedek tithing in this context?
- Climax & Summarization: The chapter advances at a steady pace from the dealings of Abraham with Melchizedek, through an overview of the Levitical priesthood, and then finishes by offering the assurance that Jesus is once and for all the high priest of the order of Melchizedek, to which all others are subject. The author also seems to summarize the chapter’s teachings in verses 7:23-28, offering final teachings justifying Jesus’ supremacy as high priest. Because he was priest as fully human (and also fully God), yet was without sin, he didn’t need to make atonement for himself, and is free to offer salvation once and for all through his own sacrifice. The author emphasizes this point when he says that the oath of God is above the law, and has established his Son forever (v.28).

Questions:

1. Definitional: What did the author mean by associating Jesus with Melchizedek?
  2. Rational: Is the priesthood of Jesus dependent on the order of Melchizedek, or could the Christology of Jesus stand apart on the merit of Jesus himself?
  3. Implicational: What are the implications of this summarization of associations?
- Instrumentation: The author also uses instrumentation in his description of the method whereby Jesus can be viewed as priest. Again, this is apparent throughout the entirety of chapter 7, as are many of the other noted structural relationships. He first logically lines out how Abraham was under the authority of Melchizedek, king of peace (7:4). He then describes how the priesthood of Levi was necessary for the time in which it lasted, however that it was ultimately unsuccessful in delivering the people from sin (7:11), for the priests themselves were imperfect, and thus had to offer sacrifices of atonement for their own transgressions (7:27). Then the author quotes the oath made by the Lord in Psalm 110:4, establishing Jesus forever as a priest in the order of Melchizedek (v.17, 21). This priesthood, as God has said, is everlasting, and the author deduced further evidence of this by addressing Christ’s pure and sinless stand against temptation, allowing for his human priestly atonement to be made unending when coupled with his Godly infinite power.

Questions:

1. Definitional: What is the author defining as an effective sacrifice of atonement?
2. Rational: Since humans weren’t effective as priests, why were they ever appointed?
3. Implicational: What are the implications of a flawed, mortal system of atonement?

- Interrogation: The underlying problem in this entire passage, while not a problem *with* the passage, is that humans due to their implicitly mortal nature since the fall of Adam are incapable of full atoning for their own sin. Even as God deemed unworthy the covering of fig leaves in the garden, and the death of animals was required for clothing, God had to provide the ultimate blood sacrifice in order to effectively deliver people from their sin. The author identifies this problem in verse 11, after having established the supremacy of Melchizedek in the previous 10 verses. He adds further authentication of Christ's ability to solve the problem in verses 15-16, where he says that "it is even more obvious when another priest arises, resembling Melchizedek, one who has become a priest, not through a legal requirement concerning physical descent, but through the power of an indestructible life." He says that while former priests were many in number, the sum total of their sacrifices does not amount to the sole, perfect sacrifice of Jesus (7:23-25).

Questions:

1. Definitional: What did the author mean when he pointed out that the Levitical priesthood was numerous?
2. Rational: Why didn't the author simply assert Jesus' superiority on the basis of his divinity? Was this definition as high priest meant to be a separate or complimentary viewpoint in regard to his position as God in the flesh?
3. Implicational: What are the implications of viewing Jesus as having been fully human and yet without sin?

D. KEY VERSES / STRATEGIC AREAS:

- I believe that the main points of the chapter can be found in verse 7:3, 7, 11, 23-28. Verse 3 establishes Jesus as Preexistent One, much like the opening of the gospel of John. Because he is without beginning and without end, there never will be a point at which his sacrifice is proven to be insufficient. Verse 7 establishes Jesus through the order of Melchizedek as being indisputably superior to Abraham, and the entire Levitical priesthood. Verse 11 offers the reasoning behind the claim that human atonement (of the line of Aaron) for sin is insufficient, and the need for a greater priest arising from Melchizedek's order. Verses 23-28 summarize the teachings of the entire chapter, and could be presented themselves and would still present a valid point, though not with the greater contextual background. While it does act as a summary, the portion of 23-28 actually contains additional logical argument, and is part of the greater whole of the chapter.

E. LITERARY FORMS:

- The author uses vivid metaphors throughout this chapter to communicate an discursive literary form. He associates Christ with Melchizedek, as superior to Abraham, Levi, and Aaron, and then explains why the sacrifice of Jesus will never need to be repeated or repealed. It was and is once and for all, sworn into effectiveness through the Son by an oath given by the Father. All the illustrative language carries with it meanings on many different levels. There are hugely far-reaching implications of the sacrifice of Jesus, as well as his human priesthood, and incarnation of the Godhead.

F. OTHER IMPRESSIONS:

- This is an amazingly complex teaching which surprisingly comes immediately following chapter 6, in which the author scolds the readers for having become dull in understanding. He presses on however, rather than futilely teaching them through a process that could be likened to “baby steps.” It would seem he was giving them a challenge which they might not yet have been able to live up to. However, in the process of issuing the challenging teaching, I believe the author was hoping the Hebrews congregation would rise to the occasion. It’s as if to say “I know y’all still like the taste baby food, but try and chew on this, and see if you can’t stomach it.”

Nathan Smith  
SPO 1129  
IBS Hebrews  
Jan. 22, 2003

## INTERPRETATION OF HEBREWS 7

QUESTION: What is the meaning of the description of Melchizedek presented here? How does Genesis 14:17-20 illumine this description?

After having consulted several commentaries, I cannot say that I can offer a definite answer as to the personage of Melchizedek. However, the Hebrews author does not seem bothered by the vagueness of his origin, and deems his brief mention in Genesis 14 and Psalm 110 as sufficient basis on which to write. The main meaning of the description of Melchizedek is that he is superior to Abraham and all his descendants. It is interesting to me that he makes his appearance after the violence and bloodshed, and does not assist Abraham in a role consistent with the character of an allied king. Perhaps this is a reason or result of the fact that he is called king of peace. The point to be noted here is that the Levitical priesthood stems from Aaron, who is a descendant of Abraham, who paid homage to Melchizedek, of whose order Jesus is said to belong.

In *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, the commentator Bruce views the identity of Melchizedek as a mysterious priestly king who interceded to God on behalf of Abraham. He says that while his lineage may not be readily revealed, he believes that he did have one, albeit not identifiable. On page 137 he says “Historically Melchizedek appears to have belonged to a dynasty of priest-kings in which he had both predecessors and successors. If this point had been put to our author, he would have agreed at once, no doubt; but this consideration was foreign to his purpose.” Bruce never seems to add substantiation for his claims, though the fact that Melchizedek interacted with Abraham on a human level, providing bread and wine, would lead one to believe that he was actually human. Typically angels weren’t known for interacting with people in their consumption of food, although this isn’t beyond reason. This is also a Christological typology, not addressed by the Hebrews author for whatever reason.

In *Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, commentator Attridge offers a slightly different view of Melchizedek. While not directly attributing the identity of deity to him, Attridge does acknowledge the mysterious nature of this character, and does not align himself with a definite school of thought, as did Bruce. Attridge says on page 187 of his commentary “Although numerous attempts have been made to discover traditional sources for this chapter, the results have been ambiguous at best... Ultimately [the author of Hebrews] is concerned not so much with Melchizedek as with Christ, and what he says of the former is influenced heavily by what he firmly believes of the latter.” Attridge then goes on to argue the point that Melchizedek’s priesthood has no clear beginning or end identified in the Biblical text. It should be noted that Ellingworth in the *NIGTC* also describes the undeniable ambiguity of the identity of Melchizedek, pointing out that though many generations of exegetes have attempted to



conclusively answer this question, nobody yet has. In fact, his seemingly unending position of authority is emphasized by the Bible, in what little it says of him. I tend to agree more with these commentators, because as was previously mentioned, there is simply not enough evidence either way to come to an educated conclusion, which is no doubt why the debate still remains. As with many other unproven theological topics, those who fiercely debate one point or another are in danger of not only wasting their time, but losing their focus. An example can be taken from the author of Hebrews, who treats the mystery of Melchizedek as less important than the issue of Christ's supremacy.

QUESTION: In what ways is Melchizedek contrasted to the sons of Levi? Why this contrast? Implications?

Melchizedek is described as being supreme to Abraham (7:8), for it was to him that Abraham gave a tithe of the spoils of war. Melchizedek then blessed Abraham in the name of the Lord. Thus, the sons of Levi, who are the sons of Aaron, great-grandson of Abraham, are all subject to Melchizedek through the viewpoint of which the author makes his argument. In verse 7:9 he argues "One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him."

The point made here is not that Levi somehow transcended time and made an offering in the past, but rather that he and his offspring are of the same nature of Abraham as subject to Melchizedek. I found the 3 afore mentioned commentaries in agreement about this point. They all affirm in their discussions that the author was making a general statement of ancestral connection and not a literal declaration, as is evident of his use of the phrase "one might even say" in verse 7:9. The reason for this contrast is by showing Jesus as sworn by God's oath as of the order of Melchizedek forever, Jesus has supremacy of the entirety of the Levitical priesthood. Thus, Jesus, while he would not have had a valid claim to his priesthood under the old covenant due to his descent from the line of Judah, now has claim to priesthood by the sovereign authority of God. We see clearly that this is ordained and never to be repealed (7:21), because the Lord will not change his mind.

So, even though every single Levitical priest who ever lived eventually had to give up his position and ordain a successor due to the grasp of physical death, Jesus never relinquishes his priesthood. For even though Christ died a horrific physical death, it is the irrevocable promise of God to glorify his Son that allowed for not only resurrection from death, but exaltation as High Priest of the order of Melchizedek. It is for this reason, the author says in 7:25, "Consequently, he is able for all time to save those who approach God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."

The implications of such a claim are that we today as believers can lay claim to the same promises as did these early Christians. Since Jesus lives forever to make intercession for those who approach God through the Son, we need only have a simple faith in Jesus as our savior. We need not be concerned with genealogy of our families, our ethnic background, or cultural customs (insofar as they do not conflict with Biblical teachings), as were the original recipients of the Hebrews epistle. We can go on toward perfection,

as we grow in closer relationship with Christ, and from there, are able to rightly take our places as those who profess the faith to others.

QUESTION: Trace the logic of 7:11-28. What main points does the author make? How does he support these main points?

The main points of Hebrews 7:11-28 are as follows: The Levitical priesthood was ineffective; Jesus was not a Levite & Jesus is of the order of Melchizedek by God's oath; former priests were mortal and Jesus' priesthood never ends. He supports these main points by offering background information concerning each of them. In verse 11, he poses the hypothetical question asking if the Levitical priesthood was able to bring perfection, when why is there a need for a second priesthood to arise? Obviously, if something is sufficiently handling the task for which it is fashioned one would not replace it needlessly. The author is saying that the mere fact that there is another order mentioned (Psalm 110:4) implies a flaw in the other system. Bruce says on page 143 "If God had intended the Aaronic priesthood to introduce the age of perfection, the time when man would enjoy unfettered access to Him, why should He have conferred on the Messiah a priestly dignity of His own—different from Aaron's and by implication superior to Aaron's?" Bruce describes the Aaronic priesthood as belonging to days of preparation, whereas the appearance of Jesus as the Christ ushers in an age of fulfillment.

The author of Hebrews describes Jesus as having descended from the line of Judah, of which Moses made no mention of priests (7:14). Therefore, for Jesus to assume the role of priest of his own accord would be to do so without authorization under the old covenant. Attridge comments on this on pages 201-2 "Our author no doubt refers to the widely accepted Davidic descent of Jesus. He does not, however, explicitly cite David as the Judahite from whom logical reflections on the basis of a Davidic relationship... By being in the 'order' of Melchizedek, Christ is a priest in the realm of the eternal and unchanging," and is therefore transcendent and superior to the line of Levi. The author adds to this the validation that God has sworn an oath making Jesus of the Melchizedek order, lest anyone would contest his priestly claim.

In verses 26-28, we see the author's final arguments for the inadequacy of the Levitical priesthood, and the solution in the priesthood of Christ. In verse 27, he makes the point that the Levitical priests were ineffective because of the sin they had in their own lives. Ellingworth summarizes the situation on page 394, "The structure of the verse appears clear. (1) The levitical high priests are obliged to offer sacrifices daily, first for their own sins and then for those of the people. (2) Christ is not obliged to do this because he has already done so once and for all, when he offered the sacrifice of himself." Bruce makes another interesting distinction about the nature of Christ's ongoing intercession. On page 155, he quotes H. B. Swete from his work *The Ascended Christ*: "He is not to be thought of 'as an ornate, *standing* ever before the Father with outstretched arms, like the figures in the mosaics of the catacombs, and with strong crying and tears pleading our case in the presence of a reluctant God; but as a *throned* Priest-King, asking what he will from a Father who always hears and grants his request. Our Lord's life in heaven is His prayer.'"

Nathan Smith  
SPO 1129  
IBS Hebrews  
Jan. 23, 2003

## **APPLICATION & PROCLAMATION OF HEBREWS 7**

On the basis of my interpretation of this section, I have learned several important things which I can apply to my life today, as well as share with other contemporaries. The first of these is on the subject of tithing. I can look to the example of Abraham, who glorified God in his victory. Far too often, many churches fit into the 80/20 category, in which 80% of the people do 20% of the overall work and tithing within the church, and it's left to the loyal 20% to pick up the other 80% of the slack. I truly wish that this would not be so, but if it is to be changed at all, I must be willing to be in the 20% and give of my gifts and talents even if it goes unappreciated. I heard a pastor say recently "I'd like to get a bumper sticker that says: *Don't honk if you love Jesus, tithe.*"

Also, the author of Hebrews seems to be telling the readers that heritage and ancestry aren't everything. While the Levitical priesthood was deemed by many and for a long period of time to be the only valid priesthood, Jesus rose not as a Levite, but from Judah. Taking the meaning of Judah as praise, I think it is an important and often-neglected aspect of pleasing God. I think far too often, especially in our society today, people judge others by their occupation and social status, as was the case in old Israel. If you weren't deemed to be of the right upbringing, you could make no claim to being one of God's chosen people. Gentiles were often shunned, much like we shun those we see as being beyond the love of Christ, for whatever reason, be it race, income, or any other number of petty factors. It is clear from the New Testament, especially the gospels and epistles that genealogy isn't everything, especially in the case of Jesus, whose ancestry contained more than a handful of shady characters. So, I should love unconditionally, just as Christ did, looking past demographical differences to see the hearts of people.

I think that another valid point made by the author is that routine is not what sanctifies us. I can go to church each week, partake in the sacrament, be involved in any number of Christian activities, but when it's all said and done, it's only Jesus and his sacrifice that makes a difference. I should be mindful of this, lest I fall into the faulty pattern of thinking that believes heaven is attainable through the list of accomplishments one has accumulated in a lifetime. The counterpoint is also true. Too many Christians have the attitude that affirms once saved by faith, no additional action is necessary. Paul has reminded us that faith without works is dead, even so much as dead works with no faith produce no lasting results. This point is especially important for seminary students.

I think that at first glance the teachings of this chapter could be overlooked or written off as being abstract or overly complicated. However, as is true of the rest of scripture, there is a valuable treasure of revelation available to those with eyes to see and ears to hear what the Spirit is speaking through the word. I hope that I will continue to be open to what God has to speak to me, both through this passage and others in the years to come.

If I were to speak on Hebrews chapter 7, I would use the following proclamation outline:

THESIS: While the teachings contained in Hebrews chapter 7 are somewhat hard to follow, after closer examination we understand that Jesus is seen as a superior high priest, who is entirely sufficient to identify with our struggles and offer supplication for us.

#### 1. CHRIST SUPERIOR TO ABRAHAM:

We can see through the beginning of chapter 7, in verses 1-10, that Abraham, the father of all of Israel, considered Melchizedek to be superior to himself, as is emphasized in verse 7:7. Following the author's thought process; all who would be descendant of Abraham were therefore subject to Melchizedek, including Levi. This leads us into our second point...

#### 2. CHRIST ABOVE THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD:

The author poses the reader the rhetorical question – If the Levitical priesthood was supposedly sufficient to offer atonement for the sins of the people, then why would the Bible make mention of another priest who was to arise, especially out of a separate lineage? In this way we see Christ as likened to the order of Melchizedek, the mysterious character to whom Abraham paid homage. Drawing from our previous evidence, Christ is also superior to Aaron and Levi, and thus the entire order of the Levitical priests.

#### 3. CHRIST IS PRIEST FOREVER:

We see in verse 7:23 that the priests that have gone before were great in number. This however, does not attest to their greatness, rather to their mortality, because none of them could continue to minister indefinitely due to the limitations of the human lifespan. Each successive priest would train another priest to take his place after his death. And so the cycle continued throughout the generations, while the people of Israel looked forward to the day when the Lord would send their deliverer, the warrior and messiah-king who would free them from bondage.

#### 4. CHRIST AS PERFECT SACRIFICE:

This king indeed came, but not as they had suspected. He was not a warrior with sword-in-hand, ready to smite the physical enemies that stood against Israel. Rather, he came as a gentle priest, ministering to those in need, even those detestable to the Jews: gentiles, tax collectors, prostitutes, thieves, etc. He was and is able to relate to even the most horrible people. Even if you feel as though you've somehow separated yourself completely from God, he is able to save you from yourself and the sin that binds you. You need only to call upon him to be your personal Lord and Savior. He is not like any other priest there is. Others used to have to offer sacrifice for their own sins, and then for the people. Jesus offered *himself* as that sacrifice once and for all people who will call on his name.

Nathan Smith  
SPO 1129  
IBS Hebrews  
Jan. 28, 2003

## ORIGINAL STUDY OF HEBREWS 11

For this assignment, I will attempt to present a method-transparent examination of Hebrews 11, based largely upon the methods taught in this class, in addition to the familiar style of application I used when leading a Bible study at Washington State University. I hope to incorporate the Inductive Bible Study method with an approachably relevant lesson to be used in a small group discussion. In fact, my purpose in mind as I design this Bible study is to make it available to friends back home who are still involved in campus ministry and outreach. It is my intent to send this assignment in its entirety to them, that they may put it to use. I am not being so presumptuous as to say that after just a short time here at seminary I am somehow able to dictate to others how to lead a Bible study, rather I simply want to give back to those who so richly blessed me.

To some extent, I feel that I was more effective in reaching others for Christ while in a college setting, as they are now. This isn't to say that the teaching I've received at Asbury hasn't been important; in fact it's been invaluable. However, in a way I feel like I've been quarantined for the time being, because I'm not able to directly apply what I'm learning to those outside the Asbury community. A recent quote from January 6<sup>th</sup> in the devotional *The Daily Walk* helped me to put this into perspective: "It is not enough to want to be a useful tool for God: you must be willing to sit still for the grinding that produces the edge." This was comforting to me, because I know that I will eventually be able to effectively impart what I'm learning here, as I lay down my life in service to others. Having said that, I will now move on to my survey of Hebrews chapter 11...

### A. PARAGRAPH TITLES:

- (11:1-3) Meaning of Faith
- (11:4-7) Examples of Abel, Enoch, and Noah
- (11:8-12) Faith of Abraham
- (11:13-16) Promises Yet To Be Fulfilled
- (11:17-22) Offering of Isaac
- (11:23-28) Faith of Moses
- (11:29-31) Faith of Early Israel
- (11:32-38) Heroes of the Faith
- (11:39-40) Faithful Perfection

### B. MAJOR DIVISIONS / SUB-UNITS:

Faith Defined	Early Genesis	Abraham	Moses	Other Heroes	Conclusion
11:1-3	11:4-7	11:8-22	11:23-28	11:29-38	11:39-40

### C. STRUCTURAL RELATIONSHIPS & QUESTIONS:

- Preparation/Realization: In verses 11:1-3 the author of the Hebrews epistle gives a brief synopsis of the issues that he will address throughout the rest of the chapter. He says that faith is the assurance of unseen or yet unrealized hopes, by which we are made perfect. He says that by faith, the ancestors of the original Hebrews recipients received approval from the God who has made all things, both visible and invisible. The realization of this preparatory statement comes at the end of the chapter in verses 39-40 when we read that God has perfected our ancestors who have gone before, and is still in the process of perfecting those who currently believe and await the eventual completion of their faith.

#### Questions:

1. Definitional: What did the author mean by saying faith can be evidence in itself?
  2. Rational: Why did the author use the plural form of the word *worlds* in verse 11:3?
  3. Implicational: What are the implications of this use of preparation/realization?
- Interrogation: There is a problem implied throughout chapter 11 of unfulfilled promises. God originally made the covenant with Abraham to multiply his descendants that they would be as innumerable as the stars in the sky. Even within Abraham's lifetime, he no doubt began to wonder how this would come about, since his wife Sarah had been barren for so many years. Yet, God stayed true to his word and gave them Isaac, through which he would establish the famous lineage to come (11:11), despite their near unbelief in his timing. The author then goes on to speak of Moses, who by faith followed God, humbly leading the Exodus people of Israel who stemmed from Abraham's line (11:27). The author also mentions at the beginning and the end of the chapter Abel, Enoch, and Noah (11:4-7), as well as other heroes of the faith, such as David and Samuel. Despite the greatness of all the aforementioned, verse 39 tells us that these people did not receive what was promised. The solution to this problem is of course, that God had something better in store for them, that we by sharing with the promise of the original readers may be made perfect with them. The path to this perfection is none other than The Way himself.

#### Questions:

1. Definitional: What did the author mean in saying they didn't receive the promises?
  2. Rational: Why did the author mention Christ in 11:26, when he had not yet come?
  3. Implicational: What are the implications of the problems presented in this chapter?
- Recurrence of Comparison & Contrast: I may be going out on a limb here, but I believe that there are several implicit comparisons and contrasts made between Jesus and those who are mentioned in chapter 11. While many of these connections I will present were not expressly discussed, it could be argued that the original readers were versed well enough in their knowledge of scripture that they could have called to remembrance details of those mentioned here. I feel that this can best be represented in a two-column table format, where the analogies can be represented side by side.

THOSE MENTIONED IN HEBREWS 11

JESUS' SIMILIARITIES / DIFFERENCES

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Abel was murdered because God saw his sacrifice as better than Cain's.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Jesus was killed to be that perfect, everlasting sacrifice for all of mankind.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Enoch was taken up by God, for he walked with the Lord and pleased him.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Jesus ascended to the Father after his death on the cross and resurrection</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Noah was a righteous man in the midst of a sinful society. Through the remnant of his family mankind lived.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Jesus was righteous in the midst of a sinful society. Through him mankind has the opportunity for eternal life.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Abraham left the land of his father, to seek God's promises in a foreign land.</li> <li>○ Abraham offered up his son Isaac as a sacrifice, yet God provided a substitute.</li> <li>○ Sarah laughed with disbelief when the angel told her she would conceive.</li> <li>○ Jacob wrestled with the angel, refusing to give up until he was blessed.</li> <li>○ Joseph was shunned by others for being his father's chosen son, yet became the deliverer of his people in time of need.</li> <li>○ Joseph, at the end of his time on earth, gave instructions about his burial.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Jesus left his Father's side, in order to become a foreigner to fulfill promises.</li> <li>○ God offered up his Son as a sacrifice, to be a substitute for the atonement of all.</li> <li>○ Mary accepted with humble obedience the angel's news she would conceive.</li> <li>○ Jesus wrestled with obedience in the garden, and said <i>not my will but thine</i>.</li> <li>○ Jesus was shunned by others for being his Father's chosen Son, yet became the deliverer of his people in time of need.</li> <li>○ Jesus, at the end of his time on earth, gave instructions about his resurrection.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Moses was hidden by his parents, despite Pharaoh's decree to kill him.</li> <li>○ Moses gave up his adoptive right to be royalty and chose the fate of his people.</li> <li>○ Moses was called to be a deliverer, and saw the face of the invisible God.</li> <li>○ By faith, the people of Israel walked through the Red Sea on dry ground.</li> <li>○ The Israelites smeared the blood of a spotless lamb on their post and lintel in order to be spared during Passover.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Jesus was hidden by his parents, despite King Herod's decree to kill him.</li> <li>○ Jesus gave up his royal sovereignty, in order that his people may be adopted.</li> <li>○ Jesus was called to be <i>the</i> deliverer, and himself is the face of the invisible God.</li> <li>○ By faith, Jesus and Peter walked upon water, just as if it had been dry ground.</li> <li>○ The blood of Jesus was shed at the cross, a type of post-and-lintel construction, that all might be spared, also during Passover.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The walls of the stronghold of Jericho were destroyed by perpetual worship.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The strongholds of sin and death were destroyed by Jesus' lifetime of worship.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rahab the prostitute did not perish because she received the Israelite spies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ God counted this act of faith worthy to include her in the Messianic lineage.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Gideon was a mighty warrior, and received a sign through lamb's fleece. He saw God can save by many or few.</li> <li>○ Barak won a decisive battle for the Lord, though not for his own glory.</li> <li>○ Samson, though he had great bodily strength, lacked moral character and was blinded spiritually and physically.</li> <li>○ Jephthah was rejected, yet later was embraced as a leader. He made a foolish vow, sacrificing his daughter.</li> <li>○ David was a mighty king, a man after God's own heart. From his house was to rise the messiah deliverer of Israel.</li> <li>○ Samuel was a set apart from birth, as his mother swore to the Lord. He was a wise prophet who governed well and was charged with bestowing kingships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Jesus was the lamb that was slain and will return as a mighty warrior king. By him, God saved many through One.</li> <li>○ Jesus won the ultimate battle for the Lord, though not for his own glory.</li> <li>○ Jesus, though having a common appearance, had utmost moral character and saw with perfect spiritual clarity.</li> <li>○ Jesus was embraced as a leader, yet in the end was rejected. He was obedient to be a sacrifice, just as the daughter.</li> <li>○ Jesus was a humble king, a man after God's own heart. From David's house he rose as messiah deliverer of Israel.</li> <li>○ Jesus was set apart from birth, as the Lord instructed Mary by the angel. He was much more than just a prophet, an everlasting priest and King of all kings.</li> </ul>

Questions:

1. Definitional: What was the author's reasoning in using selective representation?
2. Rational: Why did the author omit prominent figures like Elijah and not Jephthah?
3. Implicational: What are the implications of the people that are listed in chapter 11?

- Instrumentation: The author deliberately and methodically lays out his case. He opens with his intent in the beginning of the chapter, and repeatedly offers supporting evidence by naming off the ancestors who by faith have gone before. One of the telltale signs of instrumentation at work in a passage is repeated use of the words *by* or *through*. The phrase *by faith* appears 19 times throughout chapter 11. Each subsequent example of faith that is listed adds further weight to the argument that by faith in Jesus Christ, one can reach perfect completion of God's promises.

Questions:

1. Definitional: What is the author trying to say by changing to a historical style here?
2. Rational: Why did the author seemingly depart from theological argumentation?
3. Implicational: What are the implications of such a switch in stylistic approach?

- Chiasm: Again, I'm going out on a limb here, but there appears to be a chiastic arrangement of people listings from verse 11:4 onward. It appears to form a type of *A-B-B-A* pattern. The author begins by talking about Abel, Enoch, and Noah in 11:4-7, which I saw to be the first *A* component in that he listed multiple people as the focus. He then narrows his focus to Abraham and those immediate generations stemming from him in 11:8-22, which I see as the first *B*. The second *B* comes in 11:23-28 in which he talks primarily about Moses. The final *A* segment consists of verses 11:29-38 when the author again shifts focus to a broader range of people.

Questions:

1. Definitional: What was the intended inference in this possible chiastic structure?
2. Rational: Why did the author shuffle the chronological order of those in 11:29-38?
3. Implicational: What are the implications of such a rearrangement of characters?

- Inclusio: There is the repetition of the general themes of ancestors and faith both at the beginning of chapter 11 and at the end. In verses 1-3, he gives a preliminary definition of faith, and in verses 39-40 he summarizes how by faith believers can receive the promises of God, along with those who have gone before. He strengthens his comparison throughout the chapter, through his somewhat historical breakdown of notable people who also exercised this faith. While not incredibly lengthy or complex, the simple message is presented as a thesis and conclusion: through concrete faith in God, one receives his perfect promises.

Questions:

1. Definitional: What was the author's intent in this chapter's beginning and ending?
2. Rational: Why has he restated this topic, or is it just a result of an ongoing theme?
3. Implicational: What are the implications of seeing the chapter enclosed this way?



- Summarization: As previously mentioned, this summary occurs in 11:39-40. To some extent, this summarization spans from 11:32-40, because the author begins to generally restate his overall intentions, implying that he has already exhausted the point, and that he could go on and on. Although, in his doing so, he also mentions names which he had not previously spoke of in the chapter, which is why I hesitate to call it a true summary. Though, he does himself declare “And what more should I say?” It is understood that the time allotted to write this epistle would simply not permit him to speak of all those who exhibited a concrete faith in God. He simply sums up his main point that there have been countless generations of faithful men and women who have gone before the readers. He finishes in verses 39-40 saying that they had not yet received their promises, that together with all the faithful they may be made perfect.

Questions:

1. Definitional: What did the author mean by saying that he didn't have enough time?
2. Rational: Why didn't the author simply write more when he had the available time?
3. Implicational: What are the implications of a summary which continues teaching?

- Intercalation: Chapter 11 is seemingly unrelated to chapters 10 and 12, in that the name of Jesus is not once mentioned throughout 11, yet appears multiple times in both 10 and 12. Some commentators have even gone so far as to say that it was added at a later date than the others. One such commentator is Paul Ellingworth, of *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*. On page 558, he says “In favor of this suggestion are the following: (a) its unified theme and structure mark it off clearly from the rest of Hebrews; (b) the end of chap. 10 and the beginning of chap. 12 can be connected with a minimum of adjustment to 12:1; (c) there is no certain reference to Jesus in chap. 11 (→ 11:26); contrast 10:29; 12:2; (d) the contrasts between old and new dispensations, especially in the matters of priesthood and sacrifice, are absent from chap. 11; (e) if the content of Hebrews was originally given in oral form, it is antecedently probable that it consisted of more than a single discourse.” He then goes on to say however, that this cannot conclusively be proven one way or the other, and there is no textural evidence for this theory, due to the fact that there are somewhat smooth transitions between the chapters. Despite the origin of this intercalation, the fact remains that it does appear to exist.

Questions:

1. Definitional: What was the author's intent in delving back into historical ancestry?
2. Rational: Why did he place the topic of chapter 11 in between chapters 10 and 12?
3. Implicational: What are the implications of this chapter's location amongst others?

**D. KEY VERSES / STRATEGIC AREAS:**

- To best grasp the main point of this chapter, there are a few key verses to look at which correspond with the major structures observed. For preparation/realization, as well as inclusio, one would look at 11:1-3, 39-40. To recognize the problem behind the claims to interrogation, check 11:13, and for the solution, again refer to 11:39-40 (also for summarization). To better understand the recurrence of comparison and

contrast, simply refer to the chart provided. Instrumentation occurs at the beginning of nearly every paragraph, when a new person is listed as having achieved something *by faith*. The key sections for observation of chiasm are 11:4-7, 11:8-22, 11:23-28, and 11:29-38. Finally, if you don't agree that there's intercalation, you are justified, because the commentator I found that pointed it out didn't seem to stick to his theory.

#### E. LITERARY FORMS:

- The literary form of this passage is discursive. The author attributes aspects of faith to many Biblical heroes, in some cases to stories that aren't explicitly thought of as examples of faith. He makes a logical movement not through argumentation as in the majority of the book, rather he simply makes an extensive listing of faithful followers of God, and lets the recollection of each of their lives speak for themselves. The approach is straightforward and effective, a welcome change in the often complex theological teachings of Hebrews.

#### F. OTHER IMPRESSIONS:

- I thought it was interesting that the author chose to include some of the lesser-known people of the Bible, such as Jephthah, and chose to omit more well-known characters such as Elijah. The fact that he included Moses and not Elijah leads me to believe that the author of Hebrews was not someone who was present at the mount of transfiguration (Matthew 17:2, Mark 9:2). It is also interesting to me that he counted Samson as one of the faithful, when he denied his nazirite vow during his affair with Delilah, and only at the end of his life again called upon the Lord, dying by exacting vengeance but not repentance.

#### G. BRIEF INTERPRETATION & APPLICATION:

- Due to the straightforwardness of this chapter, I did not find it necessary to go into an in-depth interpretation as was the case with more complex teachings, such as those on Melchizedek in chapter 7. I also feel that I have already overstepped the bounds of mere survey into interpretation in my synopsis of the recurrence of comparison and contrast. Application will be revealed further in the actual Bible study, the previous survey having been the necessary background information for effectual teaching on the chapter. However, I did engage several critical commentaries with the subject of interpretation in mind. I looked at what are becoming three of my favorites: *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, *Hermeneia – A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*, and *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*. To summarize what I've gathered, they all seemed to agree for the most part in acknowledgment that Hebrews chapter 11 is simply historical evidence that by true faith in God, believers may receive his perfect promises. I believe that Attridge said it best in *Hermeneia* on page 305-6: "Superficially the chapter might be viewed as an excursus between the remarks on the need for endurance in 10:36 and the explicit summons to endure in 12:1. Yet the connection of the chapter to its context is more intimate. The endurance called for has a very specific foundation, the faith exemplified by the heroes and martyrs of old and perfectly realized in Jesus." So, we as contemporary readers today can apply this chapter to our lives by remembering a simple statement: In the midst of perseverance, our faith is perfected.