

HEBREWS

All quotes and comments by Fred Craddock in the NIB unless otherwise noted.

INTRO

Intricately constructed and written in highly polished Greek -- probably a sermon written like a letter. The KJV attributes Hebrews to Paul, as did Origen and Clement of Alexandria. But probably not by Paul, possibly by Barnabas (Tertulian), or Apollos (Luther --" an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures," Acts 18:24), Silas, or Priscilla and /or Aquila. Probably intended for the Christian Jews living in Italy, after the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, in an attempt to bolster their faith, and before 95 CE because Clement of Rome knew of the letter before that date. (Jerome Murphy-O'Connor puts it between 70 and 75 CE.)

Its intended audience is someone the writer knew, having been with them earlier, and is expecting to return (13:19, 22:23). Its readers are Christian (3:6, 14, and elsewhere), **not to Jews in order to convert them. Rather, a "strong pastoral exhortation to a church in crisis," to second generation believers (2:3-4).** /// The writer immediately reminds the readers that the subject of the Christian faith is God. Jewish converts did not have to be reminded, but others, whose god(s) were not central to their faith, did. Here the writer anticipates discussion of the continuity from Judaism to Christianity.

The bulk of Hebrews is an eloquent attempt to demonstrate through OT references that the doctrine of Jesus is superior to that of Moses. Melchizedek in Gen 14:18 brings bread and wine to Abraham. He was both king and priest, a fact used by pre-Exilic Jews to justify priestly functioning of the king of Judah. After the Exile, the kingship was gone and Psalms 110:4 gained Messianic significance as seen in Isaiah 9:6. Melchizedek seems then to be a representative of the Messiah, thought by some **to be** the Messiah, briefly visiting earth in order to encounter Abraham. See especially 7:3 for basis of this last sentence.

Therefore it follows that if Abraham submitted to Melchizedek, even more so must the Levites. And if the psalmist's reference to "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" is now applied to Jesus, then Jesus' doctrine is superior to that of the Jewish priesthood by reasoning based on the OT itself.

Craddock: "Establishing that Jesus was a priest, even though not a Levite, is the extraordinary theological achievement at the heart of the letter." Yet it was Jesus' *humanity* that equipped him to be the model for believers, the "pioneer and perfecter of the faith pilgrimage..." /// Extensive use of the Psalms. Twice the writer uses words of Jesus but they are both quotes from the psalms. Hebrews is the most extended treatment of the OT in the NT. Yet it is one of the least quoted in the common lectionary. It is one long sustained argument, not easily extracted for devotional or sermonic use. A "shadowy figure," Melchizedek, moves center stage in the explication of christology. Preachers and laymen alike shy away from it's stern imperatives (6:4-6, 10:26-29, 10:31, 12:17).

Craddock: "The old sentimental image of the early church as a huddle of the poor and unlettered at the margins of society is shattered by the artistry and sophistication of Hebrews 1:1-4."1) 1:2 – This assertion that God worked through an intermediary in creating, developed in *Jewish* theology: Prov 8:22-31, Wis 7:22. And entered Christianity early: John 1:3,10; Rom 11:36, 1 Cor 8:6, Coll 1:16-18. The writer clearly wants to demonstrate continuity between Judaism and Christianity, a problem that every NT writer struggled with. He also wants to make clear that God *speaks* -- not to everyone -- but his self-revelation is the cornerstone of both

Judaism and Christianity.

- 2) 1:3 – Probably an excerpt from a hymn woven skillfully into the text (See Phil 2:66-11, Col 1:15-20, 1 Tim 3:1, all accepted as hymns.) /// “Sitting down at the right hand of Majesty” comes from Psalm 110, using vv 1 and 4 to join king and priest in the presentation of Jesus Christ.
- 3) 1:5-13 -- Five quotes from Psalms, one from Deuteronomy, one from 2 Samuel – all from the LXX. Called a *catena*, a chain of related ideas. There are several ways to express Christ’s sonship, the one most recurring in Hebrews is pre-existence: 2:8-13, 7:3, 10:5, 11:26. The reference to 2 Sam 7:14 is strange, because the Lord says that the son he will raise up will be punished for his iniquities, which could not be Jesus. In the context it is probably David’s son Solomon who will be not only punished but raised up. /// The reference to Deut 32:43 is also strange because in Deut it reads “all you gods,” not angels, and says he will “avenge the blood of his children and take vengeance on his adversaries; he will repay those who hate him...” /// Note that God “says,” not “writes,” a much more dramatic way of proclaiming God’s words. /// Psalm 2:7 is also used at Jesus’s baptism and when he is raised from the dead.
- 4) 1:7 -- Angels are as transient as wind and fire, especially compared to Christ. The passage in Psalms reads “all the *gods* bow down...”
- 5) 1:8-9 -- References to the Son as God: John 1:1, 20:28, Rom 9:5, Titus 2:13, 2 Peter 1:1. Psalm 45 is a marriage song calling the bride, a princess from Tyre, to abandon all former loyalties and recognize the superior status of the king/bridegroom. /// The use of the word “righteousness” anticipates the discussion of Melchizedek, the “king of righteousness” in 7:1 ff.
- 6) 1:10-12 – Psalm 102 is a lament of a dying person. The writer presents this description of God as God’s words concerning his Son. The “Lord” here is the Son as God.
- 7) 1:13 – The catena ends as it began: “To which of the angels has God said?” An “inclusio.”
- 8) 2:2 – “If” is not an uncertainty, but a certainty, and could be translated “since.” /// “Message declared through angels” – see Acts 7:53 and Galatians 3:19
- 9) 2:3 -- When was this salvation announced? Perhaps in Acts 10:36-39, or Luke 4:16-21, or Mark 1:14-15.
- 10) 2:5 – If angels will not subject the coming world, do they now have some governance over the world?
- 11) 2:7 – Note that in Psalm 8, “angels” is “God.”
- 12) 2:8b – There seems to be a contradiction here. First the writer says everything is “under their feet,” then says “not yet.”
- 13) 2:10-12 – The only place in the NT where a writer refers to the proper conduct of God. To be so audacious indicates how crucial the point is. /// “Pioneer” here is “leader” in the NAB, “author” in NIV. Could also be “founder.” /// “One origin”: From God, not Adam or Abraham (Purdy). Craddock believes this means they are all of one family.
- 14) 2:12-13 – The quote from Psalm 22:22 is employed by NT writers over twenty times, in portrayal of the crucifixion, but the writer here dips into a latter portion of the psalm. The writer quotes the OT three times, presented as the words of Jesus.
- 15) 2:14 – “Shared” is in the aorist tense, indicating a completed act in the past.
- 16) 2:16 -- The writer makes one last reference to angels, making it clear that they are messengers only, not either agents or beneficiaries of salvation. Nor are they competitors with Christ as they apparently were at Colossae. But there are many references to him being “sent” -- Matt

10:40, Mark 9:37, Luke 10:16, and many others.

17) 2:17-18 – The author introduces four statements of matters for exposition in Chapters 3-10.

1) Jesus is in every respect like his brothers and sisters.

2) Being like us was for the purpose of being a high priest in the service of God.

3) He became a priest in order to make atonement for our sins.

4) His ministry is to help those being tested.

18) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTERS 1 AND 2

Christ is a pioneer going before us. He sets us free from fearing death. As a priest he offers a sacrifice of atonement. He is our representation before God, our advocate.

19) OVERVIEW 3:1 - 5:10

Parallels 1:5 - 2:18 in three ways: 1) Christ and angels – Christ and Moses. 2) Alternate exposition and exhortation. 3) Use of quoted scripture to ground the argument.

20) 3:1 -- The only place in the NT where Christ is spoken of as an apostle. But that he was “sent” of God is attested in all four gospels and in Galatians.

21) 3:2-10 – Moses serves in God’s house (Israel -- A reference to Numbers 12:7), but Jesus is over God’s house. This doesn’t diminish Moses, but clearly makes him inferior to Jesus. Also, in the Psalm, God is angry with the Israelites for 40 years **after** the testing, not as it reads here, that after 40 years God was tested – see 3:17. /// The actual words in Hebrew, in Ps 95:7-11 are “rebellion,” not Meribah, “testing,” not Massah, as in some early mss. /// Note that the writer uses a psalm rather than the actual account in the historical books. /// Note also that it is the Holy Spirit speaking, not God, probably so that the writer and readers (or hearers) will realize that “this is what the Holy Spirit is saying to you here and now.” /// Compare 3:7 - 4:11 with Corinthians 10:1-13.

22) 3:12-19 – The questions in vv 16-19 draw from the language of Psalm 95, the answers from what happened at Kadesh in Numbers 14, when the spies returned from Canaan.

23) 4:1 – “Rest” here and elsewhere meant to the Israelites a place, a land of their own. To the first readers of Hebrews and to us today, it is a condition in which we participate with God and becomes a synonym for salvation.

24) 4:2 – Historically, “those who listened” were Joshua and Caleb, but it is possible that the writer refers to himself and his readers (See 11:40, Numbers 13:30-14:10) The term “faith” is used here for the first time, which later will become one of the key points in this letter – see 11:1. Faith is seen to be tough, tenacious, and generates words like “courage,” “boldness,” “confidence.” It is mentioned in the story of people struggling in the desert.

25) 4:12-13 – No part of human life is beyond the knowing gaze of God. A digest of Psalm 139 and a quote from Rev 1:16.

26) 4:14-16 – “Passed through the heavens” evokes images of Enoch (Genesis 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:11). /// The only place in the NT where it is explicitly stated that Jesus was tested and remained without sin! (JBD: What about his testing in the desert by Satan just before beginning his ministry?) Here is a presentation of Jesus as one who not only shares our lot but has a special relationship with God. Assures us that we will be met with sympathy and understanding. It is not necessary to catalogue all the sins of the world and excuse Jesus of them. Being without sin refers to Jesus’s unmoving firmness in his faithfulness to God.

27) 5:2-4 – “Dealing gently” was not in the list of credentials for Aaronic priests but can be inferred from their duties. The phrase occurs only here in the NT, and implies that the priest behaves with restraint toward the ignorant and wayward. The writer is referring to Lev. 16:6-14, where Aaron is specifically instructed how to make a sin offering (sacrifice) for himself -- on

the Day of Atonement -- before making the sin offering for the people. Aaron was "called of God" in at least three places: Exodus 28:1, Leviticus 8:1-36, Numbers 16-18.

- 28) 5:5 -- When is-was "today?" Pre-existence? Baptism? Resurrection? Exaltation? Fred Craddock: (paraphrase) "It would be unfruitful to try to define it."
- 29) 5:6 -- See Gen 14:18-20 and Intro above.
- 30) 5:7-10 -- The christology is similar to Philipians 2:6-11 -- pre-existence, humiliation, exaltation.
- 31) 5:11-14 -- Same metaphor as in 1 Cor 3:1-3, but does not prove Paul wrote both because it was a common term for referring to levels of educational development. Reflects a real malaise among some if not all members of the church -- a lethargy in a once active church. /// In v 11, if "this" is interpreted to mean "The Word," the passage becomes clearer. /// The NIV says, "slow to learn," a different connotation from "dull understanding." The latter implies that the readers have become unable to hear the Word, a grave indictment indeed..

32) EXCURSIS

Craddock has analyzed the last four verses of the Fifth chapter and the entire Sixth chapter and finds they divide into three distinct sections: 1) 5:11-6:3 -- A call to maturity. 2) 6:4-12 -- A stern warning with hope. 3) 6:13-20 -- The ground for hope.

- 33) 6:1-3 -- Note that in the NIV, "teleio" is translated "maturity." The NRSV translates it "perfection," thus blurring the distinction between Christ's being perfected (by suffering, death, and exaltation) and the believers' becoming mature (through the study of the oracles of God, the Hebrew scriptures). Note that the preacher trusts that his readers (hearers) will understand the deep and complex message he is about to embark upon. He tells them to move up and beyond the six basic elements of Christianity.
- 34) 6:4-8.-- This applies only to absolute and total apostasy, not to any other sins. J. Harry Cotton says: "There comes a time when the patience of God no longer avails, when the sinner has committed the sin against the Holy Spirit. Just where is that point? Never try to find out." Later, "Nothing in this passage should ever lead any man to doubt the complete mercy of God, for then the passage would destroy the gospel." Even the early church bypassed this passage, allowing those who lapsed under persecution to be reinstated. /// "Taste" refers to direct personal experience. The heavenly gift is probably grace, but could be the Eucharist or baptism. (JB -- Why not all three?) /// The verb translated here as "falling away" is found nowhere else in the NT. It occurs in the LXX as "breaking faith," and "dealing treacherously." Vv 7-8 recalls Genesis 3:17-18, Deuteronomy 11:26-28, Isaiah 5:1-15.
- 35) 6:9-12 -- Has in mind what is to be spelled out in 10:32-34.

36) REFLECTIONS ON 6:4-12

The impossibility of restoring a "sinner" to repentance is not considered a stern warning in today's church. Repentance is not considered necessary to receive God's grace; it is given to everybody if they simply "join a church."

- 37) 6:13-20. On the whole, "an argument thoroughly uncongenial to modern modes of thought." (Cotton) A midrash (Jewish commentary on the Bible combining exegesis, parable, haggadic thought) on Gen 22:15-17, Lev 16:2, Ps 110:4, tying up the argument with Heb 4:14 and 5:10: **The argument:** Abraham obtained the promise through patience, the promise sworn by God on **himself**. The promise: the hope of blessing and multiplication of heirs. The hope comes from Jesus entering into the Holy of Holies, not as heir but as a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. /// "We who have taken refuge" -- a reference to the flight from Egypt -- or perhaps to the practice of a person fleeing for his life to grasp the horns of the altar and therefore be safe (1 Kings 1:50-51 and elsewhere). To the readers (or hearers) at

the time, Jesus entering the “Holy of Holies” behind the curtain, would have been very significant: only the high priest entered there, and only once a year on the Day of Atonement. The affirmation that Jesus entered as a forerunner (used only here in the NT) was a new thought because no others, even priests, followed the high priest into the holy of holies. Here, Jesus does prepare the way for others to follow: he enters “on our behalf.” /// In v. 17, “guaranteed” is “intervened” in the NAB and “confirmed” in NIV. The passage in legal language **does** refer to an act of an intermediary, especially when we see Christ acting in that capacity in passages yet to come (8:6, 9:15, 12:24). So perhaps “intervene” is a better choice. /// Note that the writer does not emphasize that this promise to Abram came just after he almost sacrificed Isaac. The writer knows his hearers know this.

38) OVERVIEW OF 7:1 - 10:39

Nowhere in the gospels available to us about Jesus as teacher, preacher, exorcist, is there a basis for considering Jesus a priest – called “high priestly christology.” The writer therefore looks back to Psalm 110:4 for an exegetical foundation. Melchizedek falls in with Enoch, whom God took, Moses’s grave that was never found (prompting the claim by some that he was taken bodily to heaven), Elijah’s ascending in a whirlwind.

39) 7:1-4 – How can Genesis 14:20 be interpreted as it is here? By using an accepted method of rabbinic exegesis. According to Genesis, Melchizedek suddenly appears, performs a priestly function, and disappears. The text’s silence about whence and whither are interpreted as him being motherless, etc etc.

40) 7:4-10 -- The greatness of Melchizedek is shown in four ways: 1) Was paid one-tenth of the spoils of the war, 2) received a tithe from Abraham, 3) Melchizedek blessed Abraham, 4) *Levi* paid a tithe to Melchizedek through Abraham though “still in his loins.” /// Abram knew God as "el Shaddai" -- the "Almighty, God of the fields." The Israelites knew God as "Jehovah." But "El Alyon" as used here to mean "God Most High" is a vaster name, all-inclusive, and will be recognized by the **whole world**.

Some other names of God:

Adon -- “lord” -----Adonai, “My Lord.” -- 439 times in the Bible, mostly in the Torah.
Adonai Yahweh -- “Lord God” -- Each word means “Lord,” so to avoid “Lord Lord” it is translated “Lord God” -- Found 310 times

Ancient of Days -- only once, in Dan 7:9

Ehyeh -- “I am” in Hebrew -- Ex 3:14, Hosea 1:9

El -- “god” or “God”

Elyon -- “God Most High” Elyon means “upper”

El Shaddai – “God of the fields.” Only in Gen 17:1, when God changes Abram’s and Sarai’s names.

Shaddai -- “The Almighty”

Eloah -- rare outside Job -- singular of Elohim

Elohim -- “God” -- Gen 1:1 and 2,600 times elsewhere. With small e, plural for gods.

Eloh_ Yisra’el -- “the God of Israel”

Jehovah -- takes YHWH and mixes with the vowels in Adonai -- appeared first in the late Middle Ages, but not ever by scholars.

Yah -- short form of “Yahu” -- most often in “hallalu’Yah” -- “praise Yah”

Yahu -- perhaps short form of Yahweh -- but also found in names that include the name of a god: “Yeho-natan” -- Jonathan; “Yesha-yahu” -- Isaiah

Yahweh tseva'ot -- "Lord of Hosts" -- 206 times in OT -- short for "Yahweh Eloh_ tseva'ot -
- 36 times

Yaweh Elohim -- "Lord God" (Gen 2:4)

YHWH -- "the LORD" or "the Eternal" -- 6,800 times (note small caps)

- 41) 7:11-12 – The “perfection of the people” derives from the priestly sacrifice of Christ. /// The inability to allow perfection under Aaronic priests was a fault – an incompleteness – of the system, not of the priests.
- 42) 7:13-14 – The writer finally comes to the point: Yes, our Lord is not a priest of the order of Levi, but of an entirely new and different order, that of Melchizedek.
- 43) 7:18-19 – The writer argues that Melchizedek being **historically prior** to Levi is therefore superior, while God’s declaration about the order of Melchizedek is **subsequent** to Levi and therefore superior.
- 44) 7:20-25 -- Two arguments for the superiority of Christ’s priesthood over Aaron’s line: **first:** Christ’s priesthood was confirmed by an oath (Ps 110:4a), taken to be a direct speech of God. (The unexpected conclusion is that a better covenant is coming -- more fully developed in chap. 8.) **Second:** the transient-permanent contrast. /// Wm. Newell lists the times when God **did** repent -- and reversed his judgment on his people: 1 Sam 15:29; Jer 15:6, 18:10, 26:19; Ezek 24:14; Zech 8:14; Ex 32:12, 14; Judges 2:18; 2 Sam 24:16; Ps 90:13, 106:45, 135:14; Joel 2:13,14; Jonah 3:9,10, 4:2. /// The term “intercession” in v 25 refers to Christ in heaven interceding for a human on earth. (JB: Why is Jesus any more alive than the levitical priests [and us Christians and others] who also are [presumably] in Heaven or going there)? Intercessory prayer is referred to in four other places in the NT: Romans 8:26-27, 34; 11:2; 1 Timothy 2:1. (The NIB says that there is a reference in Acts 25:24, but that doesn’t seem right. The NIB also ignores the reference in 1 Timothy.)
- 45) 7:26-28 – The discussion moves from intercession to sacrifice: only in Hebrews is developed the image of a high priest offering *himself* as a sacrifice for sin. /// “Heavens” in v 6 – Many ancients believed in seven heavens. Some believed that God was enthroned above the 7th. Others believed that paradise was in the south side of the third heaven, Hell on the north side. (See Deut 10:14, 1 Kings 8:27, Ps 148:4, Luke 21:26, Ephesians 4:10, Colossians 1:16, 20, 2Peter 3:5,7,10). /// In the 17th Sura of the Koran, it states, “Glory be to who made his servant go by night from the Sacred Temple to the farther Temple.” Muslim tradition (not found in the Koran) is that Mohammed flew at night from the Ka’bah in Mecca to the Temple in Jerusalem on the back of the horse Borak. There he climbed a ladder from heaven to heaven, meeting a major prophet at each level, finally greeting God in the 7th heaven. Some Muslims believe this actually happened; most believe that it was a vision. /// “Weakness” is “death,” “made perfect” is “not subject to death.”

46) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 7

Interesting examples of rabbinic exegesis: 1) Interpretations of silence – Melchizedek being motherless, fatherless, without beginning or end. 2) Melchizedek earlier than Levi, therefore greater; Psalm 110:4 later than the law, therefore superior to it. 3) Power of oath to abrogate the law. 4) Others. /// Paul had a strong sense of worship, encouraging faith and works. But it is the writer of Hebrews who makes the case for God’s presence as being the goal for the Christian. Vv 24-25 deal with the intercession for us by Jesus with God, answering the question: where is Jesus now?

- 47) Overview of Chapters 8-10 – The writer has now established the status of Jesus as Son, King, and High Priest. In these three chapters he will emphasize the latter.

- 48) 8:1-5 – As High Priest, he serves **us**, as intercessor before the throne of God, not **us serving him**. The source of these five verses seems to be Plato, mediated through Philo. The writer of Hebrews has either read Philo or was a product of hellenistic Judaism. /// Craddock: “That the desert tent was a copy of the heavenly one is not altogether a negative appraisal.”
 “God can be the source of...activities...and rituals that are not finally salvific but are quite providential in the forming and sustaining of a people...both law and cultus can be held in high and healthy regard as gifts of God.” /// The writer has made it clear that Jesus was not a priest on earth either by genealogy or by law. Now he makes it clear that Christ’s high priestly work will be performed in heaven. The word “warned” in v. 5 is the same used to warn the magi (Matt 2:12), Simeon (Luke 2:26), and Cornelius (Acts 10:22).
- 49) 8:8 -- Since the promise of a new covenant comes within the old, Jeremiah 31 is a case of the old critiquing itself – *so* the promise is going on within Israel, *not* between Israel and Christianity. /// Note particularly that by quoting Jeremiah 31, the writer is *not* saying that the new covenant offers new content, but a new manner of the laws being presented. But the new covenant does make the old covenant obsolete.
- 50) 9:1 – Begins a long commentary on Jeremiah 31:31-34: Hebrews 9:1-10:18, comparing the desert tabernacle of Moses with the heavenly sanctuary.
- 51) 9:5a – In NIV, “mercy seat” is “atonement cover,” in NAB, “expiation.” 9:5b – The author assumes that the reader knows God’s instructions to Moses (Exodus 25:1 - 3:11), the account of its construction (Exodus 36:2 - 39:43), and the story of Moses pitching the tabernacle (Exodus 40:1-38).
- 52) 9:8-10 – That the Holy of Holies is entered only one time/year, and then only by the high priest, testifies more to its inaccessibility than to its accessibility . /// The “present time” of the writer is also our “present time,” not the “past time” of the writer. Actually the writer uses *kairos* (meaningful time), not *chronos* (measurable time). A bull is sacrificed first, and then a goat, their blood sprinkled on the ark.
- 53) 9:11-12 – “Good things to come”: access to God and perfecting of the conscience. The “tent” is the heavenly sanctuary. The NIV’s “Most Holy Place” is more accurate than the NRSV’s “Holy Place.” “Entering with blood” stems from the belief that blood is the life force. Deuteronomy 12:32 cautions not to eat meat with blood in it. Also a strong admonition to the Muslim.
- 54) 9:13 – “Ashes of the heifer” – reference to Numbers 19 where Moses and Aaron are instructed to take the ashes of a red heifer, add it to running water, and use that to cleanse anyone who has touched a corpse. Why the reference is unclear. Suggested ideas: 1) The blood was sprinkled on the outside of the tabernacle, reminding the reader of the external efficiency of the levitical system. 2) the heifer is a sin offering. 3) the ritual refers only to external cleansing. These rituals have to do only with ceremonial cleansing.
- 55) 9:14 – Here ends the writer's presentation of Christ's priesthood. What follows is further exposition and exhortation. Summary of the presentation:
 a--Jesus fulfills all the requirements:
 --by his human experience: 2:14-18, 4:15ff, 5:1-3
 --by being called of God: 5:4ff
 --by his adequate offering: 2:17, 8:3, 9:12,14,22
 --by bearing this offering into the Holy of Holies: 9:12,10:19-20
 b--He surpasses the qualifications:
 --his priesthood established by God's oath: 7:20-22

- he is sinless: 4:15, 7:26
- he remains a priest forever: 7:23, 24,28
- he is a priest in heaven permanently: 8:1-6, 9:11ff, 24
- his sacrifice is "once, for all": 7:27, 10:2, 11-14
- his sacrifice cleanses the conscience: 9:9-14

This results in the end of the sacrificial system, and the assurance of unhindered access to God.

- 56) 9:15 – Note the play on words: the Greek word used here for “covenant” (diath_k_) means both will and covenant. This will explain why Christ had to die in order for his followers to have salvation: the Levitical cultus was impotent to remove sin. The old system was ineffective in doing anything other than removal of impurities of the **body**. Under the old covenant, God accepted the substitute sacrifice of an animal. Now that the people have broken that covenant, a human sacrifice was necessary.
- 57) 9:22-23 – Dr. Leslie Weatherhead in *The Christian Agnostic* vehemently denies that blood must be shed. “Surely sin is not a debt which someone else can pay for me.” And, “What good does it do to punish an innocent person for what I am doing 2,000 years later?” /// Craddock: Is there impurity in heaven in need of cleansing? No, Christ himself has entered the heavenly sanctuary with a better sacrifice -- himself.
- 58) 10:1-10 -- Another example of the OT criticizing itself, not a Christian critique of the OT: the *psalmist* saw the end of the old sacrificial system. /// The “scroll of the book” could be God’s entries about each of us, or for the Christian a reference to all the references in the OT pointing to Christ.
- 59) 10: 1-4. Cotton, paraphrased: Sin dies a slow death. Vanquished in one area it pops up in another, usually as self-righteousness -- judging another by "a strange unholy mixture composed of the Ten Commandments, a healthy amount of middle-class bourgeois prejudice, and a good many vestiges of pre-Christian morality from our pagan ancestors, slated by a few maxims discreetly drawn from the Bible."
- 60) 10:14 -- The **absolute essence of Christ's sacrifices**: contrast with vs. 11.

61) REFLECTIONS ON 8:1 - 10:18

Why the density of text, the unfamiliar vocabulary, repetition of points already made? Primarily for those who aren’t familiar with the world of ritual: the tabernacle, the furniture in it, the priests, the Holy of Holies, in short, the “cultus” – the formal expression of reverence. Why so much preparatory work by the teacher/writer? Because many people have no significant ritual life, religious, cultural, or political.

- 62) 10:19-21 – The conclusion of the doctrinal part of Hebrews and the beginning of the exhortation. /// The ancient worshiper stood anxiously awaiting the exit of the High Priest from the Holy of Holies. Christ’s High Priestly act of self-giving of his blood does not leave us outside but removes all obstacles to our entrance into the Holy Place with him. Craddock strongly disputes the idea that the body of Jesus stood as an obstacle to God.
- 63) 10:22 -- Not baptism, but symbolic spiritual cleansing -- see 1 Peter 3:21.
- 64) 10:29 – The word translated “spurned” is the same used for salt that has lost its savor (Matt 5:13), pearls before swine (Matt 7:6), and seed scattered on a path (Luke 8:5), a metaphor of great contempt. /// The Greek word *hybris* translated as “insulted” (NIV), and “outrageous” (NRSV), is used in the Hellenistic culture as a “haughty arrogance that belittles others.”
- 65) **Chapter 11** – Some form of the word “faith” appears twenty-four times, a rhetorical literary

device called “anaphora.”

- 66) 11:1 -- KJV: “ Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” But the original Greek word translated here as “assurance” and in the KJV as “substance,” can better be translated as “confidence,” the same word used in 3:14 (where it **is** translated “confidence”). /// If this verse were to be read as a refrain after each episode of faith, it would fit naturally.
- 67) 11:3 – The NIV’s “what was seen was not made out of what was visible,” is preferable to the NRSV’s “what is seen was made from things that are not visible,” because the NIV opens the door to the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* in Hellenistic Judaism (Wisdom of Solomon 11:17 – “...for your all powerful hand, which created the world out of formless matter..”). The assertion here is that the visible came from the invisible and the invisible is the Word of God.
- 68) 11:4 – Genesis 4:4 says that God “had regard” for Abel’s offering but “no regard” for Cain’s. Neither the writer of Genesis or Hebrew explains why, just that Abel’s faith is worthy of emulation.
- 69) 11:5-6 – See Genesis 5:18-25, the only mention of Enoch in the OT. From it came the apocalypses of 1 and 2 Enoch, a model of repentance (Sir 44:16), of purity (Wis 4:10-11), obedience (1 Clement 9:2-3), final judgment (Jude 14-15). /// “That God exists” is a rare expression and may have developed from Judaism’s missionary experience in a Hellenistic culture, a necessary preface to claiming that God is one.
- 70) 11:7 – The NRSV “respected the warning,” is “with holy fear” in the NIV. The condemnation (judgement) may have been indirect in a way that a person of faith is a judgment on unbelieving contemporaries, like John’s gospel presenting Jesus as a judge of the world even though he did not come to judge (3:17-19).
- 71) 11:9-10 – The only place in scripture where it is called “the promised land.” /// In v. 10 the writer departs from the Genesis account and gives a Christian interpretation, that this hope is not for the land but for the future Holy City of God.
- 72) 11:13-16 – The concept of being a stranger on earth comes from the Greco-Roman culture and had been embraced by Hellenistic Judaism. Plato spoke of the human soul as having come from the *noumenal** “real” world into the phenomenal “shadow” world. Philo interpreted Abraham’s pilgrimage as the passing of his soul through this alien world. /// Abraham and his people see the promised land from a distance, an image borrowed from Deuteronomy 32:48, where Moses sees across the Jordan from Mt. Nebo and is told by the Lord that he will not cross over. It was this vision that empowered them to live as “strangers and foreigners” on earth.
- *an object independent or intellectual intuition of it, or of sensuous perception of it
- 73) 11:21 – In Genesis 48:12, Joseph bows to Israel (Jacob), not Israel to the sons of Joseph. Here the “bowing” has the double meaning of weak old age as well as worship.
- 74) 11:23 – The first four episodes of Moses’ faith are in fact the faith of his parents. (See Exodus 2:2 where the Hebrew text LXX mentions only the mother.) And it was the midwives, not the parents, who feared God more than Pharaoh.
- 75) 11: after v 23 -- Some ancient mss add “when he was grownup, he killed the Egyptian because he observed the humiliation of his people.”
- 76) 11:23-27 -- A different picture than the record in Ex 2:11-14, where Moses flees for his life. Perhaps the best solution to the contradiction is to regard Moses’ fearlessness as an overall trait of his life even if his impulse now is to run. /// The writer is not alone in saying that Moses envisioned the coming Christ. Paul applied Psalm 69:7 to Christ. Also, 1 Corinthians

10:4: "...and they (the Israelites) drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ."

- 77) 11:32-38 – Gideon: Judges 6-8, Barak: Judges 4-5, Samson: Judges 13-16, Jephthah: Judges 11-12, David: 1 Samuel 16, Samuel: 1 Samuel 1. The first three clauses refer to the men named. The 4th is Daniel, the 5th Daniel's 3 friends (Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednigo), the 6th to David, Elijah, or Jeremiah. The final 3 could be any of many martial victories (David, Gideon, Deborah, Judith, others) where stronger forces were overcome.
- 78) 11:35a – The widow of Zaraphaph (1 Kings 17:17) and the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:32:37).
- 79) 11:35b-38 – The early readers would know who the writer was referring to. We know one: legend is that Isaiah was sawn in half. There may even have been a written martyrology.
- 80) 11:40 – Craddock: "Our faithful forebears lived the earlier chapter of one continuous story...and the 'something better' has been prepared for them as well as us....God does not want any to perish (2Peter 3:9)."

81) REFLECTIONS ON CHAPTER 11

This chapter "provides the raw material for drawing a profile of faith" using examples of the people of God throughout salvation history: faith profits from the experiences of our forebears, while looking ahead to God's future. Faith is tenacious, enduring, courageous. /// Raises questions re: a community of strangers and foreigners on earth: is this metaphor still appropriate? Does too much separation from local culture distance the church from God's world? Can one be a resident alien and still be a responsible member of the human race? Do "church" and "culture" just refer to the same people in different settings? What is lost by immersion in culture? What is gained by isolation? //// Hebrews 11 offers two portraits of the life of faith – success and failure – both the result of trust in God, the reasons hidden in the purposes of God. /// The faith of our forebears was unfulfilled, but lived the "earlier chapters" of one continuous story that cannot be separated from our faith journey.

- 82) 12:1-3 -- Surprisingly, one of the few instances in the NT where Jesus is presented as an example of conduct. Others: Heb 2 & 5, 13:13. /// The "cloud of witnesses" was a common metaphor for a great crowd of people. Here it refers to all those persons named and unnamed in Chapter 11. /// The word translated "clings" appears only here in the Bible, and can also be translated "surrounds," "besets," "distracts," all of which make sense. /// The word translated here as "for the sake of" was translated before the Protestant revolution as "instead of," indicating that Jesus deliberately chose the cross rather than immediate transference to heaven.
- 83) 12:7-11 – Suffering is God's discipline, his punishment, but it is not evidence of God's rejection but a sign of his embrace. (JB – I don't believe this. All suffering is not punishment for one's sins. Maybe some of it is, but how would we mortals distinguish one from the other? Plus, not all sins are punished.)
- 84) 12:14 – An exhortation to make peace within the congregation, not outside it.
- 85) 12:16 – A clear warning to those in line to inherit salvation: don't relinquish it all for something worthless by comparison.
- 86) 12:18-21 – The "something" in NRSV, and the "mountain" in NIV is Mt. Sinai. Details are from Exodus 19:16-22, 20:18-21; Deuteronomy 4:11-12, 5:22-27, 9:19. In the Greek, this is all in one sentence, making the event even more terrifying. The point is that the conditions under which the old covenant was given were dread, fear, distance, and exclusion (Exodus 19:23).

- 87) 12:22-24 – Mt. Zion, city of the living God, and heavenly Jerusalem are actually a single eschatological reference. The “innumerable angels” are referred to in Deuteronomy 33:2, Psalms 68:17-18, Daniel 97:10, Revelation 5:11. The “firstborn of God” is a strong theme because at that time the first born boys received the inheritance of the family property. “Spirits of the righteous” – the righteous dead have completed their pilgrimage, to be joined by faithful readers who have been given access to God through Christ, who himself perfected us through his suffering. The sprinkled blood is Jesus’s.
- 88) 12:25-27 – Continuing the contrast between the people who rejected the God of Mt. Sinai and those now being tested on Mt. Zion. God speaking through Moses, then through Jesus. /// That “which cannot be shaken” are the only things that were not created, namely, Jesus and the heavenly Jerusalem.
- 89) 12:28 – Introducing Haggai 2:6, where the theophany at Mt. Sinai caused the earth to shake, not described in Exodus 19-20 but in Judges 5:4 and Psalm 68:8 and many other places. Now extended from a local phenomenon to the universe – all creation. All that remains will be what can’t be shaken: God’s son and the city that abides forever.
- 90) **Chapter 13** --This chapter was probably added by another person to simulate one of Paul's letters, in order to give it added credence -- or possibly when it was sent on to other churches. However, Fred Craddock (NIB) does *not* believe it was added by another person. He believes that the writer wrote the first 12 chapters as a sermon, then, unable to deliver it himself, sent it to the churches with an epistle-like ending.
- 91) 13:1-2 – Love of brothers – philadelphia. Love of strangers – philoxenia. The strangers are probably itinerant Christians dependent on the local Christians for room and board. /// The allusion to welcoming strangers unawares is probably Abraham and Sarah welcoming God and two angels and God’s announcement that Sarah would have a son. In Greek, all four words have the same root: love (of brothers and sisters), love (of strangers), hospitality (to strangers), entertained (angels). Abraham, Gen 18; Lot, Gen 19; Gideon, Judges 6; Manoah (Samson's father), Judges 13.
- 92) 13:10-12 -- The altar is probably a metaphorical one, a place where we received and continue to receive the grace of God through the high priesthood of Christ. /// Making the point that since the sin offerings by the priests were never eaten by the priest, but burned outside the camp, so Jesus’s body (Eucharist) should not be considered food.
- 93) 13:13 -- “Going outside the camp to Jesus” could mean leaving all the rituals, etc., of Judaism behind, but also in a larger sense could mean leaving all the certainties and securities of our institutions that take away the risk of discipleship -- cross bearing and losing one’s life as in the gospels. But Craddock interprets it to mean that we must join Abraham and all the company of faith pilgrims who left **a** homeland in search of **the** homeland. By taking on the abuse that goes with the life of a pilgrim, they declared themselves aliens on the earth. /// “Fruit of lips” was an expression in Judaism used to characterize genuine worship of God – unending praise. See Hosea 14:2, Psalm 34:1, Psalm 71:8.
- 94) 13:17 – Reminiscent of Paul’s exhortation to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:28-31), though here in Hebrews it’s directed to the people. /// The NRSV’s “sighing” is not strong enough – “groaning” or “grumbling” or the NIV’s “not a burden” would be better.
- 95) 13:20 – “A concentric movement of thought”: God is announced in Hebrews 1:1, now turns at the end with appeal to God.
- 96) 13:24 – Are the congregations in Italy sending greetings to those away from home, or vice versa? We don’t know. (JB: and does it make a difference?)

