

Difficult Passages In Hebrews

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Text:

Introduction:

- I. William Lane: “Hebrews is a delight for the person who enjoys puzzles. Its form is unusual, its setting in life is uncertain, and its argument is unfamiliar. It invites engagement in the task of defining the undefined. Undefined are the identity of the writer, his conceptual background, the character and location of the community addressed, the circumstances and date of composition, the setting in life, the nature of the crisis to which the document is a response, the literary genre, and the purpose and plan of the work. Although these undefined issues continue to be addressed and debated vigorously, no real consensus has been reached...These facts constitute a continual reminder that every statement about Hebrews is a personal synthesis, an interpretive statement. Interpretation calls for humility.” (1:xlvii, via Burns, 588-589)
- II. I’m not sure that I agree with everything in that statement; but I do agree that there are many puzzling things about the book of Hebrews, and I agree that “interpretation calls for humility,” especially when one tries to tackle the “difficult passages” in this challenging book
 - A. It would be presumptuous and foolish for me to think that I will be able to address, much less answer all your questions and solve all the problems that scholars have been wrestling with for centuries
 - B. In fact, I may raise more questions than I answer, but if I do nothing more than alert you to some of the difficulties and prompt you to further study, I trust that there will be benefit in that

Body:

- I. **What are we to make of the writer’s use of the OT? He seems to quote various OT texts in a very haphazard manner with little respect for the original context**
 - A. Exposition: (Heb. 1:4 – 2:13)
 1. In this section, the writer of Hebrews argues that **Jesus is better than the angels** (Heb. 1:4)
 - a. Jesus is better than the angels because **He is God’s Son** (Heb. 1:5)
 - 1) Note: Although the angels as a class are called “sons of God” (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), no individual angel is ever referred to as God’s Son
 - 2) He quotes Psalm 2:7 (Heb. 1:5b)
 - 3) He quotes 2 Samuel 7:14 // 1 Chronicles 17:13 (Heb. 1:5c)
 - b. Jesus is better than the angels because **they owe Him worship** (Heb. 1:6)
 - 1) He quotes Deuteronomy 32:43 LXX (Heb. 1:6b)
 - c. Jesus is better than the angels because while they are ministers or servants, **He is a King and the Creator** (Heb. 1:7-14)
 - 1) He quotes Psalm 104:4 (Heb. 1:7b)
 - 2) He quotes Psalm 45:6-7 (Heb. 1:8-9)
 - 3) He quotes Psalm 102:25-27 (Heb. 1:10-12)

- 4) He quotes Psalm 110:1 (Heb. 1:13)
 - a) The writer has already alluded to this psalm (Heb. 1:3), and he will refer to it again in the course of his argument (cf. Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 8:1; 12:2)
 - b) With these words, the psalmist alludes to the Oriental custom of a victor in battle putting his foot on the neck of his defeated enemy (Josh. 10:24)
- 5) He summarizes his argument by emphasizing that angels are “ministering spirits” who serve the saints (Heb. 1:14)
2. Then the writer of Hebrews interjects an exhortation, warning his readers not to neglect their salvation (Heb. 2:1-4)
3. The writer of Hebrews resumes his argument that Jesus is better than the angels (Heb. 2:5)
 - a. Jesus is better than the angels because **“the world to come” has not been put in subjection to angels** (Heb. 2:5-9)
 - 1) The “world to come” could be understood in various ways:
 - a) The afterlife
 - b) The new order inaugurated by Jesus Christ
 - c) The end of the present age (Guthrie, 15:84)
 - 2) “The expression **world to come** has often been mistakenly thought to refer to heaven, but this is not its meaning. Throughout the Epistle ‘this world’ and ‘the world to come’ stand as opposites. One world, of which the old covenant is a part, is material and temporary, a world of shadows. The other world is spiritual and eternal, to which the new covenant rightly belongs. The Jews often spoke of ‘the world to come,’ meaning ‘the days of the Messiah.’” (Lightfoot, 72)
 - 3) He quotes Psalm 8:4-6 (Heb. 1:6-8a)
 - 4) He explains that while man does not have the kind of dominion the psalmist spoke of, Jesus does (Heb. 1:8b-9)
4. The writer of Hebrews argues that it was fitting or appropriate for Jesus to be perfected through suffering and for the Sanctifier to be like the sanctified (Heb. 2:10-11)
 - a. He quotes Psalm 22:22 (Heb. 2:12)
 - b. He quotes Isaiah 8:17 (Heb. 2:13a)
 - c. He quotes Isaiah 8:18 (Heb. 2:13b)

B. Problems:

1. **There are times when the quotations in Hebrews do not closely resemble the OT text**
 - a. Heb. 1:6 & Dt. 32:43
 - b. Heb. 1:7 & Psa. 104:4

- c. Heb. 2:6-8 & Psa. 8:4-6
 - d. Heb. 10:5-7 & Psa. 40:6-8
2. **There are times when the quotations in Hebrews appear to have little respect for the original context of the OT passages**
- a. Psalm 2: The Coronation of the Lord's Anointed (Heb. 1:5)
 - b. Dt. 32: The Song of Moses (Heb. 1:6)
 - c. Psa. 45: The Wedding of the Lord's Anointed (Heb. 1:8-9)
 - d. Psa. 102: The Lament of the Afflicted (Heb. 1:10-12)
 - e. Psa. 110: The Lord's Anointed King And Priest (Heb. 1:13)
 - f. Psa. 8: The Song of the Astronomer (Heb. 2:6-8a)
 - g. Psa. 22: The Lament of the Forsaken (Heb. 2:12)
 - h. Isa. 8:17-18: The words of Isaiah (Heb. 2:13)
 - i. A. T. Hanson: "When we try to assess the worth of the epistle to the Hebrews as a piece of scriptural exegesis, we must at all costs avoid making the mistake of judging the author by the standard of our methods of scriptural exegesis today. If we were to do so, we would have to say that he did not seriously consider the original text and setting of his citations, altered the text to suit his convenience, and made no attempt to establish original authorship." (300)
 - 1) If Hanson's assessment is correct, what does that do to the doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration?

C. Disclaimer:

1. This subject is worthy of an entire lecture all on its own, perhaps an entire lectureship; therefore, we can do little more than "touch the hem of the garment"
2. The NT writers' use of the OT is a "knotty problem," and I certainly will not be able to answer every question or solve every problem

D. Solutions:

1. **The writer of Hebrews sometimes paraphrases or alludes to an OT passage without specifically quoting it** [See Appendix]
 - a. If we can legitimately do that today, then NT writers could legitimately do that as well
2. **The writer of Hebrews quotes from the LXX**
 - a. This often accounts for those instances when his quotation bears little if any resemblance to the OT text
 - 1) Hebrew 1:6:
 - a) MT: "Rejoice, O nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants; he will take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people. (Dt. 32:43)
 - b) LXX: "Rejoice, O nations, with his people, and **let all the angels worship him**, for he will avenge the blood of his servants (Dt. 32:43)

- 1] “In the Septuagint version of Psalm 97:7 (Ps. 96:7, LXX) we read the exhortation: ‘Worship him[,] all you his angels.’ The translation based on the Hebrew text reads, ‘Worship him, all you gods!’” (Kistemaker, 39)
- 2] “Though not found in the Masoretic Text of Deuteronomy 32:43, this call for the angels to worship God has long been thought to be an inadvertent omission during the course of the Masoretic textual transmission. The Qumran finds have verified this supposition. The Hebrew fragment 4QDt32 contains this extra phrase that had previously been known only from the Greek texts.” (Pickup, 94)
- 2) Hebrew 1:7:
- a) LXX: “Who maketh **his angels winds**, And his ministers a flaming fire.” (Psa. 103:4)
- b) MT: “Who maketh **winds his messengers**; His ministers a flaming fire.” (Psa. 104:4)
- 1] “According to the usual translation of the Hebrew text, the **winds** are God’s messengers and **flames of fire** are His servants. But another rendering of the Hebrew is possible which, instead of making winds His messengers, makes His messengers (or angels) winds.” (Lightfoot, 60)
- 2] “The LXX as well as the Targum Jonathan and the ancient rabbis read Ps. 104:4, ‘He makes his angels winds.’” (Kistemaker, 41, n. 23)
- 3) Hebrews 10:5-7:
- a) LXX: “Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, **But a body didst thou prepare for me**; Whole burnt offering and sacrifice for sin thou didst not desire: Then said I, Lo, I am come (In the roll of the book it is written of me). To do thy will, O my God, I desired, And thy law is within my heart.” (Psa. 39:7-9)
- b) MT: “Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in; **Mine ears hast thou opened**: Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I am come; In the roll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God; Yea, thy law is within my heart.” (Psa. 40:6-8)
- 4) Hebrews 10:37-38:
- a) LXX: “...If the vision delay, wait for it, For it shall surely come, and shall not tarry. **If it shrink back, my soul hath not pleasure in it**. But the righteous one shall live by my faith.”
- b) MT: “...Though (the vision) tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay. **Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him**: but the just shall live by his faith.”
- 5) Hebrews 11:21:
- a) LXX: “...and Israel worshipped upon **the top of his staff**.” (Gen. 47:31)
- b) MT: “And Israel bowed himself upon **the bed’s head**.”

1] “[T]he word for ‘bed’ and the word for ‘staff’ are spelled exactly the same in the Hebrew consonants; only the vowel points (first invented about the eighth century A.D. or a little before) differentiate between the two. But the Septuagint, translated back in the third century B.C., reads *m-t-h* as *mattah* (‘staff’); it was the medieval Jewish Masoretes of the ninth century A.D. who decided it was *mittah* (‘bed’). Hebrews 11:21 follows the earlier vocalization and comes out with the far more likely rendering ‘on the head of the staff’ – like the Septuagint and the Syriac Peshitta.” (Archer, 421)

6) Etc.

b. Note: Accounting for the differences between the MT and the LXX is far beyond my ability and the scope of this lecture. Consult Robert Bratcher’s *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* to see at a glance the differences between the MT and the LXX

3. Sometimes a single term can be legitimately translated more than one way

a. Psalm 2:7a:

1) LXX: “Thou madest him a little lower than **the angels**....”

2) MT: “For thou hast made him but little lower than **God**”

3) The Hebrew term *‘elohim* may be translated “God” (Gen. 1:1) or “gods” (Gen. 31:30) or “angels” (Psa. 8:5)

4) In this passage, *‘elohim* has been translated in various ways:

a) “Angels” [LXX, Vulgate, Targum, Syriac, KJV, NKJV]

b) “God” [Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, ASV, NASB, NRSV]

c) “Heavenly beings” [NIV, ESV]

d) “Godhead” [YLT]

4. The writer of Hebrews quotes OT passages that originally applied to Jehovah and applies them to Jesus

a. He quotes Deuteronomy 32:43 (Heb. 1:6)

1) There is some question about how to translate the introductory formula. There are two possibilities:

a) “**And again**, when God brings his firstborn into the world” [cf. NIV, ESV, NRSV, KJV]

b) “But when God shall **bring again** his firstborn into the world” [cf. YLT, ASV, NASB, NKJV]

1] “[T]he Hebrew writer in 1:5 and twice in 2:13 uses the precise phrase *kai palin* [‘and again,’ ksk] when he wants to introduce additional citations (cf. also Romans 15:10-12). But in 1:6 the *palin* [‘again,’ ksk] is atypically located in the sentence and the *kai* [‘and,’ ksk] is omitted.” (Pickup, 92-93, n. 16)

2] If this is the correct reading, “we might immediately presume that the author has Christ’s Parousia in view. But another possibility

presents itself. The Hebrew writer may be thinking of the resurrection of Christ from the dead as the time when God ‘again brought him into the world.’ It would correspond with the other quotations in the chapter if the time of his resurrection were intended here, rather than a sudden jump time-wise to the end of the world. The other quotations apply to the Son in the position he held as king, which was the office he assumed upon his resurrection.” (Pickup, 93)

- 2) This quotation is the last verse in the “Song of Moses”
- 3) The “Song of Moses” is a lengthy prophecy about God’s future judgment(s) upon Israel because of her sins; but it ends with the promise of Jehovah’s eschatological victory over the nations and the avenging of His people (Dt. 32:40-43)
 - a) Note: Psalm 2, which the writer of Hebrews has just cited, spoke about this judgment being accomplished through the ideal Royal Son (Psa. 2:8-10)
- 4) Since the writer of Hebrews has already described Jesus as “the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person” (Heb. 1:3), it should not be surprising that he would apply a passage originally addressed to Jehovah to Jesus, especially since:
 - a) Jesus is God (Jn. 1:1-3)
 - b) Jesus is one with the Father (Jn. 10:30)
 - c) The Son should receive the same honor as the Father (Jn. 5:22-23)
 - d) The term “Jehovah” is applied to more than one person (cf. Gen. 19:24; Zech. 2:8-9, 10-11, 12 ASV)
 - 1] Jesus claimed to be “I AM” (Jn. 8:24, 58; cf. Ex. 3:14-15)
- 5) “The Jews considered the concluding verses of this hymn to be messianic.” (Kistemaker, 38)
- 6) Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:43 and applies it messianically (Rom. 15:10)
- b. He quotes Psalm 102:25-27 (Heb. 1:10-12)
 - 1) “This is the Hebrew writer’s most startling use of the Old Testament in the entire chapter. The text he cites is a hymn of praise to Yahweh and in its literary context would seem to have nothing at all to do with the Davidic Messiah. Psalm 102 is a lament psalm in which the psalmist pleads with God to take note of his personal distress and the distress of Zion. He praises God for His enduring nature in contrast to the transitoriness of the creation itself, knowing that he can trust God to fulfill His promises.” (Pickup, 110)
 - a) The MT uses the term “God” [E] (Psa. 102:24)
 - b) “The LXX, from which the author is quoting, reads ‘Lord’; this facilitates the application of the quotation to Jesus Christ.” (Lightfoot, 62, n. 17)
 - 2) Since the writer of Hebrews has already described Jesus as the one “through whom also He [God] made the world” (Heb. 1:1-2), it should not be

surprising that he would apply a passage originally addressed to Jehovah to Jesus, especially since:

- a) Jesus is also “Lord” (Mt. 17:4; Acts 4:33; 9:17)
- b) Jesus is also the Creator (Heb. 1:1-2; cf. Jn. 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-17)
 - 1] “The writer believed that the Father created the world through the agency of the Son, so we should not think that in 1:10 the Hebrew writer is saying that Psalm 102:25-27 had *exclusive* reference to the Son. He is not ignoring the fact that those verses, in their literary context, referred to the Father’s creative activity. What he is saying is that the words of Psalm 102:25-27 had application to the Son because he was the one through whom the Father functioned to create all things.” (Pickup, 114-115)
 - 2] Objection: God the Father does things through the agency of angels (cf. Dan. 6:22); would it be legitimate to apply language addressed to Jehovah to them?
 - a] No, but Jesus is greater than the angels. Jesus is “the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person” (Heb. 1:3)

5. **The writer of Hebrews often appeals to OT passages as “types” of the Messiah**

- a. He quotes Psalm 2:7 (Heb. 1:5)
 - 1) The apostles attribute this psalm to David (Acts 4:23-26)
 - 2) “The Jewish people understood Psalm 2 to be messianic, and their use of the psalm in the synagogue reflected that understanding.” (Kistemaker, 36)
 - 3) NT writers interpreted Psalm 2 messianically
 - a) The apostles applied Psalm 2:1-2 to the crucifixion of Jesus (Acts 4:24-28)
 - b) Paul applied Psalm 2:7 to the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 13:32-33)
 - c) The writer of Hebrews applies Psalm 2:7 to the exaltation of Jesus (Heb. 1:5; 5:5)
 - d) John applied Psalm 2:8-9 to the power of Jesus (Rev. 2:26-27; 12:5; 19:15)
 - 4) Why was this psalm messianic? Because the exalted language in it looked for an ultimate fulfillment far beyond anything that the Davidic kings accomplished
 - a) None of the Davidic kings were rejected by “the kings of the earth” as a divinely appointed monarch (Psa. 2:1-3)
 - b) None of the Davidic kings received the nations for an inheritance or the ends of the earth as a possession (Psa. 2:8-9)
- b. He quotes 2 Samuel 7:14 // 1 Chronicles 17:13 (Heb. 1:5c)
 - 1) There is at least some evidence that the Jews interpreted this passage messianically

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- a) “In *4Q Florilegium*, II Sam. 7:14 is quoted and interpreted in a way that calls attention to the Messiah.” (Kistemaker, 38, n. 17)
 - 2) NT writers interpreted 2 Samuel 7 messianically (cf. Lk. 1:32-33; Acts 2:30-32)
 - 3) Why was this promise interpreted messianically? Because the exalted language in it looked for an ultimate fulfillment far beyond anything that the Davidic kings accomplished
 - a) The throne of David was not “established forever” (2 Sam. 7:16) in an unending Davidic dynasty (cf. Jer. 22:24-30)
 - b) The OT prophets looked to a greater “David” (Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-28; Hos. 3:5) and the “Branch of righteousness” from the stem of Jesse (Isa. 11:1-5, 10; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-17; Zech. 12-13) to fulfill God’s covenant with David (Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 33:19-22, 25-26; Amos 9:11-12; Zech. 12:7-10)
 - c) This is essentially the argument that Peter made on Pentecost when he quoted Psalm 16 and then explained its ultimate significance (Acts 2:25-32)
 - 1] David did not fulfill this prophecy, so he must have been talking about the Messiah
 - 2] “The kings and priests of the Old Testament are to him [the writer of Hebrews, ksk] types of something better and greater to come; for in none of them was realized all that kingship and priesthood might mean. Christ is their antitype, for in Him kingship and priesthood find their fullest and truest expression.” (Tasker, 117)
 - c. He quotes Psalm 45:6-7 (Heb. 1:8-9)
 - 1) Psalm 45 is a festal marriage song celebrating a royal wedding
 - a) Introduction (Psa. 45:1)
 - b) The Eulogy of the Groom (Psa. 45:2-9)
 - c) Advice to the Bride (Psa. 45:10-12)
 - d) The Entrance of the Bride (Psa. 45:13-15)
 - e) The Results of the Marriage (Psa. 45:16-17)
 - 2) The exalted language in this psalm looked for an ultimate fulfillment far beyond anything that the Davidic kings accomplished (Psa. 45:6)
 - a) This king is called “God”
 - 1] The translation of Psa. 45:6 has been debated by the scholars, and various translations have been proposed:
 - a] “Your throne of God is forever and ever”
 - b] “God is your throne....”
 - c] “Your throne is God forever and ever”
 - d] “Your throne, O God....” [YLT, KJV, ASV, ESV, ISV, NASB, NIV, NKJV, NRSV]
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- 1} “From a strictly grammatically [sic] standpoint, the vocative rendering of *elohim* is the most natural. In fact, it is hard to believe the vocative rendering would ever have been called into question were it not for the supposed difficulty of the Davidic king being so addressed.” (Pickup, 102-103)
 - 2] Other OT passages address human rulers in this manner (Psa. 82:1, 6-7; Isa. 9:6-7; cf. Jn. 10:34-36)
 - b) His reign is eternal (cf. Dan. 7:14; Lk. 1:33)
 - c) His rule is righteous (cf. Psa. 89:14)
 - d) His authority is universal (cf. Psa. 45:16-17)
 - e) God has anointed Him with “the oil of gladness”
 - 1] For the writer of Hebrews, these “companions” are the angels
 - 3) “The psalm is typological of the Messiah. Only in the advent of the Son of God is the description of the king’s wedding completely fulfilled. The Jewish rabbis understood this psalm as a nuptial hymn composed for the occasion of the marriage of a king of Israel. An Aramaic translation or paraphrase, Targum Jonathan (which dates from the first centuries of the Christian era), gives this rendition of Psalm 45:2: ‘Your beauty, O king Messiah, is greater than that of the sons of men.’” (Kistemaker, 42)
 - d. He quotes Psalm 8:4-6 (Heb. 2:6-8a)
 - 1) When David contemplates the glory and the grandeur of the starry heavens above, he marvels that God has even been mindful of man; but he acknowledges that God has not only noticed man but He has given man dominion over all his creation
 - a) Originally, this psalm was about man
 - 1] “Son of man” is a Semitic idiom for “man” (cf. Job 25:6)
 - 2] The first two lines in the quotation are an example of synonymous parallelism
 - b) God made man a little lower than the angels
 - 1] “The Heb. *‘lohim* (pl.) normally refers to ‘God’ (or ‘gods’) but apparently can also denote heavenly beings (Ps. 82:1; 86:8; cf. Job 1:6; Ps. 89:6; and see on 29:1), hence LXX ‘angels’ (cf. Heb. 2:7).” (*The New Layman’s Bible Commentary*, 605)
 - 2] “**Little**, in Hebrew and Greek, can denote either position or time, and the exact sense here is difficult to discern. Man, as the crown of creation, was made a little lower than the angels; but perhaps the reference is temporal as in the RSV and in the NEB: ‘Thou didst make him for a short while lower than the angels.’ In verse 9, when the line is directly applied to Christ, the temporal significance better suits the sense of the argument.” (Lightfoot, 73)
 - c) God crowned man with glory and honor
 - d) God has given man dominion over the works of His hands

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- e) God has put all things under his feet
 - 2) The writer observes that we do not now see this kind of dominion on the part of mankind, but we see Jesus (Heb. 2:8b-9)
 - a) Made a little lower than the angels
 - b) Crowned with glory and honor
 - 3) The writer's argument can be summarized as follows:
 - a) At creation God gave man glory and honor and dominion over the rest of creation (Gen. 1:26-28)
 - b) We don't see man with that kind of dominion now (because he lost it in the Fall)
 - 1] Women would bear their children in pain (Gen. 3:16)
 - 2] Wives would be subject to their husbands (Gen. 3:16)
 - 3] The ground was cursed (Gen. 3:17-18)
 - 4] Man would earn his bread by the sweat of his brow (Gen. 3:19)
 - 5] Man would die physically (Gen. 3:19)
 - 6] Man was driven out of Eden away from the tree of life (Gen. 3:22-24)
 - 7] After the Flood, the animals began to fear man (Gen. 9:2)
 - 8] Etc.
 - c) But we see Jesus with that kind of dominion
 - 1] Jesus, as the ideal or representative man, has this kind of dominion, and through Him man can have the dominion that God originally intended for all mankind
 - 2] *Paradise Lost* in the first Adam becomes *Paradise Regained* in the second Adam (Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:20-22, 45)
 - e. He quotes Psalm 22:22 (Heb. 2:12)
 - 1) Psalm 22 is clearly viewed as Messianic in the NT
 - a) Jesus quotes Psalm 22:1 from the cross (Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34)
 - b) Jesus' enemies, perhaps unwittingly, quote Psalm 22:8 as they mock Him on the cross (Mt. 27:41-43)
 - c) John quotes Psalm 22:18 as fulfilled in the dividing of Jesus' garments (Jn. 19:23-25)
 - d) Then there are too many correlations between the language of Psalm 22 and the events of Calvary to explain by mere coincidence
 - 1] The reproach of men (Psa. 22:6; cf. Mt. 27:15-26)
 - 2] Mockery (Psa. 22:7-8; Mt. 27:27-31, 39-44;)
 - 3] Bones out of joint (Psa. 22:14)
 - 4] Tongue clings to jaw (Psa. 22:15; cf. Jn. 19:28)
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- 5] Hands and feet pierced (Psa. 22:16; cf. Jn. 20:25-28)
 - 6] Count all my bones (Psa. 22:17)
 - 7] Look and stare (Psa. 22:17; cf. Mt. 27:36)
 - 2) Why was this psalm interpreted messianically? Because the exalted language in it looked for an ultimate fulfillment far beyond anything that David literally experienced
 - a) Jesus was the “greater David”
 - b) God foretold the future, not just by what David said but by what David experienced
 - c) David’s sufferings foreshadowed Jesus’ sufferings
 - f. He quotes Isaiah 8:17b (Heb. 2:13a)
 - g. He quotes Isaiah 8:18a (Heb. 2:13b)
 - 1) Isaiah uttered these words originally concerning himself and his two sons Shearjashub and Mahershalalhashbaz
 - a) “Distressed and rejected by a disobedient people, the prophet affirmed his faith in God and looked to his children as witnesses to the salvation that God would bring.” (Lightfoot, 77)
 - 2) But the context (Isa. 7-9) is decidedly messianic
 - a) The virgin-born Immanuel (Isa. 7:14-15; cf. Mt. 1:22-23)
 - b) The stone of stumbling and rock of offense (Isa. 8:14; cf. Lk. 2:34; Rom. 9:32-33; 1 Pet. 2:6-8)
 - c) The Child born and the Son given (Isa. 9:6-7)
 - 3) The writer of Hebrews applies these words to the Messiah to indicate:
 - a) His complete trust in God
 - b) His willing association with God’s children
 - h. He quotes Psalm 40:6-8 (Heb. 10:5-7)
 - 1) The writer of Hebrews quotes words originally written by David (Psa. 40:1) and attributes them to Christ
 - a) Note the writer’s emphasis on the fact that Christ speaks (Heb. 10:5, 7, 8, 9)
 - 1] “The psalm is conceived of as being a kind of conversation between the eternal Son and God the Father, with the Son as the speaker.” (Lightfoot, 185)
 - b) This should not be surprising, since he views the OT Scriptures as inspired of God [See below]
 - c) “When He came into the world” is a Semitic way of saying “when Christ was born” (cf. Jn. 1:9; 6:14; 12:46; 16:28; 18:37) (Kistemaker, 274)
 - 2) But attributing these words to the Messiah presents some difficulties that must be addressed
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- a) The writer/speaker describes himself as a sinner (Psa. 40:12)
- 1] Although it is true that Jesus committed no sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:21-22), He died as though he were a sinner (Isa. 53:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:21) for all sinners (Jn. 1:29; 4:42; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:14)
- b) The writer/speaker utters words of imprecation on his enemies (Psa. 40:14-15)
- 1] “[S]uch imprecations are as proper in the mouth of the Messiah as of David; but particularly, it may be said also, that they are *not* improper in the mouth of either. Both David and the Messiah *did*, in fact, utter denunciations against the enemies of piety and of God.” (Barnes, 224)
- 3) In this quotation, there is a contrast between the OT sacrifices and the body prepared for Christ
- a) “In the Old Testament quotation four words are used for the Levitical offerings: *sacrifices (thysia)*, *offerings (prospora)*, *burnt offerings (holokautomata)* and *sin offerings (peri hamartias)*. The first pair are general, the second representative. Together they fairly sum up the whole Levitical system.” (Guthrie, 15:204)
- 4) The significant difference between the MT and the LXX is another difficulty that must be addressed
- a) LXX: “Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, **But a body didst thou prepare for me**; Whole burnt offering and sacrifice for sin thou didst not desire: Then said I, Lo, I am come (In the roll of the book it is written of me). To do thy will, O my God, I desired, And thy law is within my heart.” (Psa. 39:7-9)
- b) MT: “Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in; **Mine ears hast thou opened**: Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I am come; In the roll of the book it is written of me: I delight to do thy will, O my God; Yea, thy law is within my heart.” (Psa. 40:6-8)
- 1] Note: Some MSS of the LXX read “ears,” instead of “body” (Morris, 12:98)
- 5) How are we to explain the writer’s use of this OT quotation?
- a) Some argue that the MT reading is correct and the LXX reading arose from a copyist error in the transmission of the text
- b) Others argue that the LXX reading is correct and the MT reading arose from a copyist error in the transmission of the text
- c) Others argue that the LXX gives an interpretative translation, rather than a literal one
- 1] “They [the LXX translators] may wish to express the view that the body is the instrument through which the divine command, received by the ear, is carried out....Or, taking the part for the whole, they may be reasoning that ‘the “digging” or hollowing out
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of the ears is part of the total work of fashioning a human body'" (Morris, 12:98)

- 2] "The Septuagint translators dealt freely with the text by substituting the whole ('body') for the part ('ears'), resulting in the meaning that instead of God's equipping man with ears, he made or prepared for man a body. With either text the author's argument is not essentially different, for his main point is that there is an inner relation between Jesus' sacrifice and God's will." (Lightfoot, 185)
- 3] This explanation seems contrived to me, and I do not find it very persuasive
- 4] Kaiser argues that the difference between the MT and the LXX is not that significant since the writer of Hebrews does not really build his argument on the words: "But a body You have prepared for Me" (Heb. 10:5b) (Kaiser, 140)
 - a] "Instead of the contrast in Hebrews 10 between the Levitical system (10:1-4) and the free surrender of the body of Christ (10:5-10), it is a contrast between the death of an animal, which has no way of entering into the meaning of what is happening (10:1-4), and the perfect obedience of Jesus for which act He specifically came into this world (10:5-10): 'I have come to do thy will.'" (Kaiser, 140)
 - b] I disagree with Kaiser, because it is the perfect obedience of Jesus in offering his body as a sacrifice for sin that the writer of Hebrews emphasizes (Heb. 10:10)
- d) I'm not satisfied with any of these explanations, but I don't have a better one
- 6) What does the writer mean when he says "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offering, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (Heb. 10:8)?
 - a) He cannot mean that the OT sacrifices were unimportant
 - 1] God had commanded those sacrifices
 - b) He does not mean that obedience is more important to God than offering animal sacrifices
 - 1] Although this is certainly true (1 Sam. 15:22-23; Psa. 51:16-17; Hos. 6:6), this is not the writer's point in this context
 - c) He means that God did not ultimately desire the animal sacrifices, because they could not take away man's sins (Heb. 10:4)
 - 1] Therefore, "the first" [i.e. the animal sacrifices of the old covenant] were taken away so that "the second" [i.e. the sacrifice of Christ under the new covenant] might be established (Heb. 10:9)
 - 2] As a result, we are "sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10)

6. **The writer of Hebrews quotes at least one OT passage that is directly Messianic**

- a. He quotes Psalm 110:1 (Heb. 1:13)
 - 1) The NT repeatedly interprets Psalm 110 messianically
 - a) Jesus quotes it (Mt. 22:41-46 // Mk. 12:35-37 // Lk. 20:41-44)
 - b) Peter quoted it on Pentecost (Acts 2:34-35)
 - c) The writer of Hebrews quotes it (Heb. 1:13)
 - 1] There are also many allusions to Psalm 110 (cf. Mt. 26:64; Mk. 14:62; 16:19; Lk. 22:69; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12)
 - 2) “During the first century, Ps. 110:1 was understood messianically in the ancient synagogue.” (Kistemaker, 48, n. 37)
 - 3) Why was this psalm messianic? Because only the Messiah could fulfill it
 - a) The psalm could not have found fulfillment in David, the greatest of Israel’s kings, because:
 - 1] It was written about someone else
 - a] “The Lord [Jehovah] said to my [David’s] Lord [????]....” (Psa. 110:1)
 - 2] David could not have fulfilled it
 - a] On Pentecost, Peter argued that Psalm 110:1 could not have been fulfilled by David since David did not ascend into heaven. Therefore, it must be fulfilled by another “Lord” who will sit at God’s right hand (Acts 2:32-34)
 - b] David and his descendants were not priests “according to the order of Melchizedek”
 - 1} Note: Uzziah was punished when he presumptuously assumed the role of an Aaronic priest (2 Chr. 26:16-21)
 - b) The writer’s argument that the change of the priesthood [from Levi to Melchizedek] demanded a change of the law [from old covenant to new covenant] (Heb. 7:11-14) is another indication that Psalm 110 was directly Messianic
 - 1] If the Davidic kings had in any sense been priests “according to the order of Melchizedek,” then “the Mosaic Law would have been abrogated at the time the Davidic throne was first established” (Pickup, 134)

E. **The Hebrew writer borrows the words of an OT passage, because they applied in principle to his readers**

1. God’s promise to ancient Israel that He would never leave or forsake them (Dt. 31:6) applies in principle to spiritual Israel today (Heb. 13:5)
2. The psalmist’s words of confident dependence upon Jehovah in the long ago (Psa. 118:6), can and should be the words of every Christian today (Heb. 13:6)

3. Perhaps the writer of Hebrews was merely borrowing the words of Isaiah (Isa. 8:17-18), because they so fittingly applied to the Messiah's relationship with His children (Heb. 2:13)

F. The Hebrew writer quotes the OT as the inspired word of God

1. He views these OT quotations as the words of:
 - a. God
 - 1) "He" or "Him" is clearly a reference to God, the Father (Heb. 1:5, 6, 7, 8, 13; 4:3, 4, 7; 5:5, 6; 6:14; 7:21; 8:5, 8; 10:30; 12:26; 13:5)
 - b. The Messiah or Christ
 - 1) "He" is clearly a reference to Christ (Heb. 2:11-13; 10:5)
 - c. The Holy Spirit (Heb. 3:7; 10:15; cf. 9:8)
2. The writer of Hebrews even cites as God's word prayers in the OT originally addressed to God
 - a. Psa. 104:4 (Heb. 1:7)
 - b. Psa. 102:25-27 (Heb. 1:10-12) (Pickup, 34)
3. If these OT quotations were originally inspired of God, then in a very real sense, they were God's words, although they were spoken or written by human agents
4. If these OT quotations are ultimately from God and the writer of Hebrews is also inspired of God, then we must accept his use and application of these OT passages whether we fully understand his methods or not

II. What is the "rest" that remains for the people of God (Heb. 4:9)?

A. Exposition:

1. Note: The writer's discussion of "**the rest**" in this passage grows out of his exhortation to faithfulness in chapter 3 (Heb. 3:5-6)
 - a. He quotes Psalm 95:7-11 which highlights the unfaithfulness of the Israelites who died in the wilderness and therefore did not inherit Canaan's rest (Heb. 3:7-11)
 - b. He warns his brethren to beware lest they depart from God in unbelief (Heb. 3:12)
 - c. He urges his brethren to exhort one another to faithfulness (Heb. 3:13-15)
 - d. He highlights the failure of the wilderness wanderers (Heb. 3:16-19)
 - e. He makes an application in chapter 4
2. The promise of entering His rest remains (Heb. 4:1)
 - a. This promise was made to the ancient Israelites, and it continues for NT Christians
 - b. And NT Christians should be afraid lest they "come short" of the promise
 - 1) The Hebrew writer uses the **perfect tense** which suggests a permanent condition. It is not a past defeat or a present momentary failure but a continuing failure. (Morris, 12:43, n. 1)

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3. The “gospel” was preached to “us” [i.e. NT Christians] and the Israelites, but it did not profit them, because it was not mixed with faith (Heb. 4:2)
 - a. The “gospel” means “good news”
 - 1) For the Israelites, this was the good news about their rest in Canaan
 - 2) For Christians, their good news is about a rest that remains
 - b. “The figure here is taken from the physical body and the digestive system. The Greek word translated **mixed** was used both of the digestion of food in the stomach and the assimilation of nutrients throughout the body. Regardless of the beauty, taste or value of food, it is of no use to the body unless it is properly digested and assimilated.” (Fudge, 45)
 - c. The last clause in this verse, because of variants in the Greek MSS, has been translated in two different ways:
 - 1) “Because it [the word] was not united by faith in those who heard” [cf. KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, MLB, RSV]
 - a) This translation is by far the more prevalent, because it fits the context and is readily understood
 - 2) “Because they did not share the faith of those who listened” [cf. RV, NEB, JB, NAB, GNB] (Kistemaker, 106)
 - a) The MSS evidence favors this translation
 - 3) “A difficult problem remains at the end of the verse, where the reason for this is given. While there are several textual variants in the MSS, they boil down to two--whether we take the participle of the verb ‘to combine’ or ‘unite’ as singular, in which case it agrees with ‘word’ (in ‘word of hearing’) or as plural, in which case it goes with ‘them.’ Only a few MSS have the singular reading, some of them very old, but many scholars favor it on grammatical grounds. If adopted, it gives this sense: ‘It [the word] was not mixed with faith in them that heard.’ On the other hand, if we take the plural, the meaning is, ‘They were not united by faith with them that heard’ (i.e., real believers, men like Caleb and Joshua). The resolution of the question is difficult and may be impossible with the information at our disposal.” (Morris, 12:40)
 - d. Regardless of how the last clause should be translated, the emphasis is on the wilderness wanderers lack of faith
 - 1) “Having heard the good news, the Israelites did not trust God enough to believe that He would go with them and conquer a land for them (Num. 13:1-33). As in the Parable of the Sower, the trouble was not in the message but in the hearers.” (Lightfoot, 95)
 4. Christians who have believed enter that rest (Heb. 4:3)
 - a. “Enter” (*eiserchomai*) in the present tense is interpreted differently by commentators
 - 1) Some argue that it indicates a process of entering
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- a) “In this case the idea would be that the believer now has spiritual rest in Jesus Christ (Mt. 11:28), that this rest continues throughout life and meets its full fruition in the heavenly rest.” (Lightfoot, 96)
 - b) “When he says, *we who have believed* (past tense) *enter* (present) *that rest*, he is stressing that the rest he is thinking of is an experience already in process of being fulfilled. It is not something simply to be hoped for in the future. It is an essential part of the present reality for Christians.” (Guthrie, 112)
- 2) Others argue that the Christian’s rest is a future state
- a) A future state that they might fail to reach (Heb. 4:1) and therefore something that they must make every effort to enter (Heb. 4:11)
 - b) “So understood, the present tense would then be rendered ‘do enter’ (emphatic) or ‘will enter’ (futuristic present).” (Lightfoot, 96)
- 3) Either view is defensible and probably much depends on our idea of the “rest”
- a) If it lies beyond death, then obviously the “rest” must be understood in terms of the hereafter
 - b) If it is a present reality, then believers are entering it now (Morris, 12:40)
5. The writer confirms what he has just asserted by appealing to the OT. He argues that:
- a. The Israelites who wandered in the wilderness did not enter God’s rest
 - 1) He quotes Psalm 95:11, written by David 500 years after the wilderness wandering, (Heb. 4:3, 7)
 - a) Note: Psalm 95:11 appears to be an allusion to the oath that God made at Kadesh-Barnea (cf. Num. 13:26; 14:20-23, 28-35; 32:10-13; Dt. 1:34-35)
 - 2) This statement implies that:
 - a) God had a rest Himself
 - b) God had planned from the beginning for man to share in it
 - b. God’s rest was available from the very beginning
 - 1) “The works were finished from the foundation of the world”
 - 2) God entered his rest on the 7th day of creation week
 - a) He quotes Genesis 2:2
 - 1] Note: God resting on the seventh day does not mean that He stopped working (cf. Jn. 5:17), but that He ended His creative activity
 - 2] Some argue that the 7th day of creation has continued down to the present
 - a] This seems to be an unwarranted conclusion. It is not the day that has continued but the rest

- b] God's description of the first seventh day in the Decalogue seems to indicate that it ended just like the first six days (Ex. 20:8-11; cf. 31:12-17)
- b) "The writer is saying that God's rest was available from the time Creation was completed. The 'rest' was thus the rest he himself enjoyed. The earthly rest in Canaan was no more than a type or symbol of this." (Morris, 12:40)
- c) "What believers can now enter is none other than the same kind of rest which the Creator enjoyed when he had completed his works, which means that the rest idea is of completion and not of inactivity...." (Guthrie, 113)
- c. David's reference to "Today" (Psa. 95:7-8) indicates that God's rest was available to the Israelites of his generation (Heb. 4:6-7)
- 1) Since some must enter God's rest and the wilderness generation did not, the offer was made to David's generation
- a) "Psalm 95 was written long after that generation had failed to use its opportunity and had perished. Its use of the term 'Today' shows that the promise had never been claimed and was still open. The voice of God still called. There is still a day of opportunity, even though the fate of the wilderness generation stands as an impressive witness to the possibility of spiritual disaster." (Morris, 12:41)
- 2) Note: David was not identified as the author of Psalm 95 in the MT but he is in the LXX
- d. If the promise had been fulfilled in Joshua's generation, then God would not have spoken of another day (Heb. 4:8)
- 1) "The form of the Greek sentence indicates a contrary-to-fact condition: 'If Joshua had given them rest [as he did not], God would not have spoken later about another day [as he did].'" (Morris, 12:42)
- 2) Note: "Jesus" (*Iesious*) [KJV] is the Greek form of the Hebrew name "Joshua" (*Y'hosua* or *Yeshua*)
- e. "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9)
- 1) "Rest" (*sabbatismos*) [KJV, NKJV] is literally "Sabbath-rest" [NIV, ESV, ASV, NASB, NRSV] -- "a keeping of a Sabbath" (Wiersbe, 2:287)
- 2) Christians have a foretaste of this rest now in the remission of our sins (Mt. 11:28-30), but this rest is yet future
6. Those who have entered this rest have ceased from their works (Heb. 4:10)
7. We must be diligent to enter this rest (Heb. 4:11)

B. Discussion:

1. The Hebrew writer mentions **three different rests**
- a. Israel's rest in Canaan (Heb. 3:11, 18; 4:5; cf. Dt. 3:20; 12:9-11; Josh. 1:13-15; 21:43-45; 22:4)
- b. God's rest on the first seventh day (Heb. 4:4; cf. Gen. 2:2)

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- c. The Christian's rest (Heb. 4:1, 3, 8-11)
 2. The rest under consideration in this passage cannot be:
 - a. The **weekly Sabbath** (as Sabbatarians would have us believe)
 - 1) God's oath at Kadesh-Barnea concerning "My rest" (Num. 13:26; 14:20-23, 27-35; 32:10-13; Dt. 1:34-35) could not be referring to the Sabbath, since the Israelites began to enjoy that rest shortly before their encampment at Sinai (Ex. 16:23-26, 29; 20:8-11; 31:12-17) before God ever uttered these words
 - 2) The Sabbath was followed by six days of labor, but those who enter the rest that remains have ceased from their labors (Heb. 4:10)
 - 3) The Sabbath was a command to obey, not, as the rest that remains, a promise to receive
 - b. **Israel's rest in Canaan**
 - 1) When Joshua brought the Israelites into the Promised Land and they enjoyed rest (cf. Dt. 3:20; 12:9-11; Josh. 1:13-15; 21:43-45; 22:4), he did not give them this rest, because long after his time, God spoke of another day of rest (Heb. 4:8)
 3. The rest under consideration in this passage must be a **future rest**
 - a. This rest still remains for the people of God to enter (Heb. 4:1, 3, 6, 9)
 - b. The one who enters this rest has ceased from his works (Heb. 4:10)
 - 1) This life is the time for work (cf. Jn. 9:4)
 - 2) Rest comes for the faithful after this life is over (Rev. 14:13)
 - c. This rest is one that Christians must be diligent to enter (Heb. 4:11)
 - 1) The verb "be diligent" (*spoudazo*) means "to haste," "to be zealous," "to exert oneself," "to make every effort" (Lightfoot, 98)
 - d. While the writer does not explicitly identify this "Sabbath-rest" in this context, later in the book he points our eyes to heaven as the ultimate reward for the faithful (cf. Heb. 11:13-16; 12:22-23)

III. **Could Jesus have yielded to temptation to sin (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16)?**

A. Exposition:

1. The writer argues that Jesus had to be made like "His brethren" in all things so that he could be a "merciful and faithful High Priest" (Heb. 2:17)
 - a. Because Jesus suffered in temptation or testing, He is able to aid us when we are tempted (Heb. 2:18)
2. The writer urges his readers to hold fast their confession and come boldly to the throne of grace because of the kind of High Priest that they have (Heb. 4:14-16)
 - a. He is **great**
 - 1) Jesus is greater than Aaron and all the Levitical priests
 - b. He has **passed through the heavens**

- 1) Unlike the high priests under the old covenant who once a year on the Day of Atonement passed through the veil into the Holy of Holies in the earthly tabernacle, Jesus has passed into heaven itself to abide in the very presence of God (Heb. 9:24)
- c. He is **Jesus the Son of God**
- 1) Our High Priest is fully human and fully divine
 - 2) “As Son of God He is strong and dependable and on intimate terms with the Father; as son of man He has behind Him a distinct human history which enables Him to understand men.” (Lightfoot, 100-101)
- d. He can **sympathize with our weaknesses**
- 1) “The Greek term is *sumpathesai*, literally, ‘to suffer with.’ The Greek word suggests an intensity that is lost in the English word ‘sympathy.’ It sees the suffering of another not from the outside, but rather it is, as Wescott says (p. 108), ‘the feeling of one who enters into the suffering and makes it his own.’” (Lightfoot, 101, n. 10)
 - 2) “By **weaknesses** he means both physical and moral limitations, the frailties that are characteristic of men. With these Jesus is able to sympathize. He has gone over the broad course of temptations just as others have. In fact, He has felt the full force of temptation that men do not experience; for having never given in to sin, He knows its incalculable intensity and power. He was tempted **in every respect** – from all sides the darts of the tempter were cast at His soul.” (Lightfoot, 101)
- e. He was **tempted like we are yet without sin** (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 Jn. 3:5; Jn. 8:29, 46; 10:32)
- 1) Did Jesus experience every possible temptation? I think not. How could He have experienced personally the specific temptations peculiar to women, married people, or the elderly?
 - 2) “Yet at the root of the different temptations encountered by men and women throughout the wide range of human experience there are a number of basic trials or tests, and Jesus certainly knew what it was to meet these and emerge victoriously from the struggle. He knew those temptations which, if unconquered, lead on to doubt, despair, disobedience towards God, lovelessness towards others and a selfish preoccupation with our own desires.” (Brown, 95-96)
 - 3) In other words, Jesus was tempted in all the same general areas and in the same basic ways that we are tempted

B. Discussion:

1. If Jesus had to be made like His brethren in all things, and we are capable of yielding to temptation, then so was He
 - a. “He would not have been made like His fellow men if He had not been capable of yielding to the temptation – any more than a hippopotamus can be said to be tempted to fly through the air.” (Archer, 418)
2. If Jesus was truly tempted, the temptation had to have some appeal

- a. “There can, we conceive, be no real temptation where there is no liability to the sin suggested by temptation, still less where there is no possibility of sinning.” (Barmby, 114)
- b. If Jesus had not been hungry after His forty-day fast in the wilderness, how would Satan’s suggestion that He turn the stones to bread have been a temptation (Mt. 4:1-4)
3. It is not a sin to be tempted. It is a sin to yield to temptation
4. The writer’s point is that Jesus is able to sympathize with our weaknesses, precisely because He experienced what we experience, except yielding to sin
5. How could Jesus have been tempted in all points as we are and yet not sin?

IV. **What does the writer mean when he says that “it is impossible...to renew them again to repentance” (Heb. 6:4-8)?**

A. Exposition:

1. The Hebrew writer urges his readers to leave the elementary principles of Christ and press on to perfection (Heb. 6:1-3)
 - a. These “elementary principles” were the ABC’s of Christianity that these Christians had already been taught
 - b. The Hebrew writer encourages them to leave these principles, not in the sense of rejecting their truthfulness, but just as:
 - 1) A baby leaves its mother’s milk for solid food
 - 2) A student moves on from addition and subtraction to multiplication and division
 - c. These “**elementary principles**” include such things as:
 - 1) **Repentance from dead works**
 - a) Repentance was the clarion call of John the Baptist (Mt. 3:1-2), Jesus (Mt. 4:17), and the apostles (Acts 3:19; 17:30-31)
 - b) “Repentance is the basis of right, religious conduct. It is more than a change of mind. It is much more than sorrow for sin. It is a ‘turning’ or ‘returning’ to God. ‘It represents a reorientation of one’s whole life and personality, which includes the adoption of a new ethical line of conduct, a forsaking of sin and a turning to righteousness.’” (Lightfoot, 121)
 - c) These “dead works” may possibly refer to the ineffective sacrifices of the Jewish law which could never secure salvation (cf. Heb. 10:1-4; Gal. 2:16); but they more probably refer to one’s sinful practices (cf. Heb. 9:14)
 - 2) **Faith toward God**
 - a) For the writer of Hebrews, faith toward God implicitly involves faith in the Son through whom God speaks in the last days (Heb. 1:2) who is the “author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2)
 - b) For the Hebrew writer, faith involves:
 - 1] Conviction that God is (Heb. 11:6)

- 2] Confidence that He will reward (Heb. 11:6)
- 3] Compliance with His will (Heb. 11:4, 5, 7, 8-9, 17, 24, 27-30)
- 4] Commitment to His cause (Heb. 11:32-40)

c) There is nothing more basic and fundamental than faith in God

3) The doctrine of baptisms

a) This has been variously interpreted:

- 1] These baptisms would include Christian baptism, the baptism of John, the baptism of Jewish proselytes, and the ceremonial washings of the Jews
 - a] The usual word for Christian baptism is *baptisma*
 - b] The word “baptisms” (*baptismon*) used here refers elsewhere in the NT to Jewish ceremonial washings (Mk. 7:4; Heb. 9:10)
 - c] RSV: “instruction about ablutions”
 - d] NEB: “instruction about cleansing rites”
 - e] Objection: Why would these various baptisms be referred to as “the elementary principles of Christ” (Heb. 6:1)
- 2] The plural “baptism” is used for the singular (“baptism”)
 - a] Objection: Why would the Hebrew writer use the plural when he could so easily have used the singular?
- 3] The several acts of baptism
 - a] Objection: The Hebrew writer is talking about “the elementary principles of Christ,” not individual acts of baptism
- 4] A threefold baptism in the name of the Godhead (*Didache* 7, 1-3)
 - a] Objection: The practice of triune-immersion is post-apostolic and has no sanction whatever in the NT
- 5] The repetition of baptism practiced by heretics
- 6] The plurality of those baptized
- 7] Outward and inner purification
- 8] Water baptism (Acts 8:36, 38; 10:47), Holy Spirit baptism, the baptism of fire, (Mt. 3:11-12), the baptism of suffering (Mt. 20:22-23)
 - a] Objection: If this is what is under consideration, why didn’t the Hebrew writer use *baptisma*, the word normally used for Christian baptism, instead of *baptismos*, a word used elsewhere for the ceremonial washings of the Jews (Mk. 7:4, 8; Heb. 9:10)?
 - 1} Both *baptisma* and *baptismos* are derivatives from *baptizo*, and each signifies a dipping or immersion

2} Josephus uses *baptismos* in speaking of John's baptism
(Ant. 18:5:2)

9] Etc.

b) This probably "denotes instruction on the difference between Jewish (and pagan?) 'washings' (including John's baptism?) and Christian baptism" (Oepke, TDNT 1:545, via Lightfoot, 121-122)

1] "Many ritual washings were, of course, practiced by the various sects of pagans and Jews. There were undoubtedly many disputes in ancient times about the efficacy of such rites (cf. Jn. 3:25). All of these practices would have to be carefully distinguished from Christian baptism, and this would naturally constitute part of the **instruction** directed to the penitent." (Lightfoot, 122)

4) **Laying on of hands**

a) This generally indicated some endowment of the Holy Spirit or divine blessing (Acts 6:6; 8:17; 19:5-6)

b) The laying on of hands was performed to:

1] Impart spiritual gifts (Acts 8:17-19; 2 Tim. 1:6)

2] Heal the sick (Acts 28:8)

3] Ordain men to the work of ministry (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 14:23; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22)

5) **The resurrection of the dead**

a) The resurrection of the dead was denied by the Sadducees (Mt. 22:23) and the heathen philosophers (Acts 17:32)

b) But the resurrection of Jesus was the "heart and soul" of apostolic preaching (cf. Acts 2:31-32; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:33; 17:30-32)

c) There was also the promise that all, both the righteous and the wicked, would be raised like Him (Jn. 5:28-29; Acts 4:2; 1 Cor. 15:12-23)

6) **Eternal judgment**

a) The resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment were clearly linked in the teaching of Jesus and the apostles (Jn. 5:26-29; Acts 17:31)

2. Then he explains why this must be done. If it is not done, it will be impossible to renew those who fall away to repentance (Heb. 6:4-6)

a. "The author now makes clear to his readers why they should press on beyond the elementary principles of their religion. To fail to advance would mean to fall back, and to fall back would be fatal." (Lightfoot, 128)

b. The Hebrew writer's description clearly identifies these apostates as formerly faithful Christians

1) They were "**once enlightened**"

a) It is those who follow Christ, the light of the world, who "have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12)

- b) It is those who have been truly converted to Christ who have been delivered from the power of darkness (Col. 1:12-13; 1 Pet. 2:9), enlightened (cf. Eph. 5:8; Heb. 10:32) and made “sons of light” (1 Th. 5:5)
- c) The term “enlightened” (*photizo*) is translated “illuminated” in Heb. 10:32, and it refers to those who “believe to the saving of the soul” in contrast to those who shrink back and are destroyed (Heb. 10:39)
- d) “In the post-apostolic writings, ‘enlightenment’ came to be a technical term for baptism.” (Fudge, 62)
 - 1] “The first to identify enlightenment with baptism was Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 61.12-13; 65.1. In place of the verb *enlightened*, the Syriac Peshitta has ‘who have once descended to the baptismal pool.’” (Kistemaker, 158, n. 21)

2) They have **“tasted the heavenly gift”**

- a) The word “tasted” (*geusamenous*) means to experience, to partake of (cf. Mt. 16:28; Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:3; Psa. 34:8)
- b) What is the “heavenly gift”? Various answers have been given:
 - 1] Christ (cf. Jn. 4:10; Rom. 5:15, 2 Cor. 9:15)
 - 2] The Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 8:19-20; 10:45; 11:17)
 - 3] Righteousness (Rom. 5:17)
 - 4] Grace (Eph. 3:7)
 - 5] The remission of sins
 - 6] Salvation
 - 7] The Lord’s Supper
 - 8] The new life in Christ (Jn. 6:33)

3) They have become **“partakers of the Holy Spirit”**

- a) The gift of the Holy Spirit is given to Christians (cf. Jn. 7:37-39; Acts 2:38; 5:32; Rom. 8:9-11; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:13-14)
- b) It is Christians who are partakers of:
 - 1] The heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1)
 - a] These “partakers” are described as “holy brethren”
 - 2] Christ (Heb. 3:14)
 - 3] The Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:4)
- c) “The idea of sharing the Holy Spirit is remarkable. This at once distinguishes the person from one who has no more than a nodding acquaintance with Christianity.” (Guthrie, 142)

4) They have **“tasted the good word of God”**

- a) The psalmist declares that the word of God is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb (Psa. 19:7-10; 119:103)

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- b) The Hebrew writer speaks of those who had personally experienced this goodness
 - 5) They have tasted **“the powers of the age to come”**
 - a) NT writers use the expression “the age to come” to refer to:
 - 1] The Messianic age (Mt. 12:32; Heb. 2:5)
 - 2] The hereafter (Mk. 10:29-30; Lk. 18:29-30; Eph. 1:21; 2:7; Heb. 6:5)
 - 6) They have **already exhibited repentance**, since it is impossible to renew them again to repentance (Heb. 6:6)
 - c. The way the Hebrew writer uses the word “impossible” (*adynaton*) suggests that his statements are all absolutes. He speaks about:
 - 1) The impossibility of repentance (Heb. 6:4-6)
 - 2) The impossibility for God to lie (Heb. 6:18)
 - 3) The impossibility that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin (Heb. 10:4)
 - 4) The impossibility of pleasing God without faith (Heb. 11:6)
 - d. The proper translation of the participle “fall away” (*parapesontas*) has been much discussed and debated among scholars
 - 1) “The idea of apostasy is expressed by a verb which occurs here only in the New Testament. Its root meaning is falling aside, *i.e.* a falling away from an accepted standard or path.” (Guthrie, 15:143)
 - 2) The English versions vary in the way they translate this participle:
 - a) **“If”** [KJV, NKJV, RSV, NIV]
 - b) **“And then”** [RV, ASV, NASB, Moffatt, GNB, NAB]
 - c) **“And yet in spite of this”** [JB]
 - d) **“And after all this”** [NEB]
 - 3) “All along the author has expressed himself (in the Greek original) by the use of participles – **have been enlightened...have tasted...have become partakers...have tasted**. Since all these are translated with past tenses, it is maintained that the next participle in the series (*parapesontas*) should also be translated in the past. And this is what the British and American revisions of 1881-1901 did, translating it ‘and *then* fell away.’ On the other hand, it is unquestionably permissible to translate *parapesontas* as a conditional participle, the **if** idea being included in the participle.” (Lightfoot, 125)
 - 3. Then he offers an illustration of what happens to productive land and land that is unproductive (Heb. 6:7-8)
 - a. The productive land receives a blessing from God
 - b. The unproductive land is ultimately cursed and burned
 - c. The apostate is like the thorn-bearing field, destined for burning (cf. Isa. 5:1-7; Mt. 13:30; Jn. 15:6)
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B. Discussion:

1. This passage presents an “ungetoverable” problem for Calvinists who believe the doctrine of “Once saved always saved,” but they try to explain it away in several different ways
 - a. **The writer of Hebrews is merely presenting a hypothetical case (that could not actually occur)**
 - 1) Albert Barnes: “It is not an affirmation that any *had* actually fallen away, or that in fact they *would* do it; but the statement is, that *on the supposition that they had fallen away*, it would be impossible to renew them again.” (131)
 - 2) Albert Barnes: “The passage *proves* that if true believers should apostatize, it would be impossible to renew and save them. If then it should be asked whether I believe that any true Christian ever did or ever will fall from grace, and wholly lose his religion, I would answer unhesitatingly *No.*” (133)
 - a) Robert Milligan responds: “Why, then, all this earnest warning about a matter which never did occur, and which from the very nature of the case never can occur?!” (Milligan, 225)
 - 3) Dr. A. C. Kendrick: “The text describes a condition subjectively possible, and therefore needing to be held up in earnest warning to the believer, while objectively and in the absolute purpose of God, it never occurs.” (Via Shank, 165)
 - a) Shank responds by asking: “How can something be subjectively *possible* for the person who knows it to be objectively *impossible*?” (Shank, 165)
 - 4) In their minds, it’s as if the Hebrew writer were saying “If such believers ever opposed Christ it would be impossible to renew them to repentance, but then such a thing could not possibly happen” (Brown, 113)
 - 5) Some appeal to Hebrew 6:9 in an effort to show that apostasy cannot actually occur
 - a) But they ignore the contrast that the writer makes between “**those, they, & them**” [3rd person] (Heb. 6:4-6) to “**you**” [2nd person] (Heb. 6:9)
 - b) “The writer is ‘persuaded better things of *you*,’ but not of ‘*them*.’ While he is persuaded that ‘you’ have not as yet apostatized, he declares that ‘they’ indeed have done so. Instead of assuming that the apostasy which engulfed ‘them’ cannot overtake ‘you,’ the writer holds ‘them’ up before ‘you’ as a tragic example for their solemn warning and proceeds earnestly to exhort his readers....(vv. 11, 12).” (Shank, 178)
 - 6) “The main problem with this interpretation is that the situation envisioned in this passage is clearly real and not simply imaginary.” (Stein, 350)
 - 7) “But unless the writer is speaking of something that could really happen, it is not a warning about anything. Granted, he does not say that anyone has apostatized in this way, nevertheless, he surely means that someone could, and he does not want his readers to do so.” (Morris, 12:56)
 - 8) Furthermore, this warning does not stand alone; there are similar warnings in the book of Hebrews (cf. Heb. 3:12-19; 10:26-31; 12:25-29)

- b. **The Hebrew writer is really talking about hypocritical pretenders who were never truly born again into the family of God**
- 1) John MacArthur Jr.: “The individuals addressed here had five great advantages **because of their association with the church**: They had been enlightened, had tasted Christ’s heavenly gift, had partaken of the Holy Spirit, had tasted the Word of God, and had tasted the miraculous powers of the age to come (vv. 4-5). **There is no reference at all to salvation. In fact, no term used here is ever used elsewhere in the New Testament for salvation, and none should be taken to refer to it in this passage.**” (*Saved Without A Doubt*, 29, via Corner, 311)
 - 2) The *Scofield Reference Bible* asserts that “Hebrews 6:4-8 presents the case of Jewish professed believers who halt short of faith in Christ after advancing to the very threshold of salvation” and “it is not said that they had faith” (Via Shank, 228)
 - 3) Abraham Kuyper: “It is true the apostle declares that the men guilty of this sin ‘were once enlightened,’ and ‘have tasted of the heavenly gift,’ and ‘were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,’ and ‘have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come;’ but they are never said to have had a *broken and a contrite heart.*” (*The Work of the Holy Spirit*, 610, via Shank, 228)
 - 4) Yes it is true that these things are not said about the apostates in this passage, but this passage also does not say that:
 - a) They ever asked: “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30)
 - b) They believed in their hearts (Rom. 10:9-10)
 - c) They confessed with their mouths (Rom. 10:9-10)
 - d) They called upon the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:13)
 - e) They were baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38)
 - 5) What the writer does say about these people can only be said about saved people [See above]
 - 6) Throughout the book of Hebrews, the writer assumes that his readers are true believers
 - a) They are repeatedly called “brethren” (Heb. 3:1, 12, 10:19; 13:22)
 - b) They have fully accepted and still firmly retain the saving gospel (Heb. 2:1-4)
 - c) They are “partakers of the heavenly calling” (Heb. 3:1)
 - d) They are Christ’s “own house” (Heb. 3:6)
 - e) Their peril is not the possibility of failing to establish a proper relationship with God through Christ, but of departing from their present relationship with God because of unbelief (Heb. 3:6-19)
 - f) To keep from losing the promised rest (Heb. 3:16-4:13), they must only “keep on holding fast” [present subjunctive, durative] their present confession of faith and to “keep on coming” [present subjunctive] to the throne of grace in confident faith (Heb. 4:14-16).

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- g) The writer is persuaded “better things” of his readers -- “things accompanying salvation,” rather than things involving apostasy (Heb. 6:9-12)
 - h) They are among those who “have fled for refuge” and whose hope in Jesus, their forerunner now within the veil, is for them “an anchor of the soul” (Heb. 6:18-20)
 - i) As “brethren,” they are exhorted to “keep on drawing near” [present subjunctive, durative] and to “keep on holding fast” [present subjunctive] their confession of hope (Heb. 10:19-23)
 - j) They have already endured great persecution for their faith and testimony (Heb. 10:32-39)
 - k) They are urged to run the race with endurance (Heb. 12:1-2)
 - l) They have an altar that they must “keep on going forth” [present subjunctive] to (Heb. 13:10-14)
- 7) In this context, the Hebrew writer has already spoken of the apostasy of the wilderness wanderers (Heb. 3:12, 18; 4:6, 11) even though they had:
- a) Put the blood on the doorpost in Egypt
 - b) Eaten the Passover lamb
 - c) Left Egypt
 - d) Consecrated their firstborn males to the Lord
 - e) Crossed the Red Sea
 - f) Followed the pillar of cloud and fire
 - g) Tasted the waters of Marah and Elim
 - h) Eaten the manna provided by God
 - i) Heard the voice of God from Mount Sinai (Ex. 12-20)
- 8) “The constant, repetitive, and heartfelt warnings of the author prove conclusively that apostasy can occur (3:12-13; 4:1, 11; 12:15).” (Kistemaker, 160)
- 9) In light of all this evidence, how can an honest, unbiased reading of the text draw the conclusion that the writer is talking about hypocritical pretenders?
- c. **The falling away does not result in the loss of salvation**
- 1) Charles Stanley: “The writer of Hebrews offers a serious warning. It is a dangerous thing for a believer to turn his back on Christ. To do so is to run the risk of drifting beyond the point of return – **not a return to salvation, but a return to fellowship with the Savior.**” (*Eternal Security: Can You Be Sure?*, 169, via Corner, 317)
 - 2) The context clearly indicates that the writer is talking about salvation
 - a) The writer contrasts two groups: (1) those who fell away and cannot be renewed to repentance and (2) the “beloved” (Heb. 6:9) who enjoy those things that “accompany salvation”
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- 3) The Christian's reward is salvation in heaven (Col. 3:24; Heb. 11:26, 13-16; 1 Pet. 1:3-5)
 - 4) Hebrews 10:26-27 shows by contrast that Hebrews 6:4-6 is talking about losing one's salvation, not losing one's reward
- d. **If this passage teaches that a Christian can lose his salvation, then he could never get it back again**
- 1) Warren Wiersbe: "Those who teach that we can lose our salvation also teach that such a person can be restored. But this passage (Heb. 6:4-6) teaches just the opposite! If you omit the intervening clauses, the statement reads: 'for it is impossible...to renew them again to repentance.' In other words, *if* this refers to apostasy, once a saved person turns his back on Christ, he *cannot* be restored to salvation. He is lost forever." (2:296)
 - 2) This passage, like all passages, must be interpreted in light of God's total revelation (Psa. 119:160)
 - 3) If this passage really teaches that once a Christian loses his salvation he can never get it back:
 - a) Why are fallen Christians instructed to do certain things to be restored?
 - 1] Repent and pray (Acts 8:22-24)
 - 2] Confess sins (1 Jn. 1:9; 2:1-2)
 - b) Why does the NT tell us about fallen Christians who were obviously restored to salvation? [See below]
 - 4) The passage explains why it is impossible to renew some to repentance [See below]
2. What does the writer mean when he says that "it is impossible...to renew them again to repentance" (Heb. 6:6)?
- a. **A Christian who sins can never be forgiven** (cf. Tertullian, *On Modesty* 20; The Shepherd of Hermas, *Similitude*, 8:6:4)
 - 1) This cannot be correct, because the NT clearly offers forgiveness for Christians who have sinned (Acts 8:18-24; 1 Jn. 1:8-9)
 - a) The Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:24, 32)
 - b) The apostles (Mt. 26:31, 56)
 - c) Peter (Lk. 22:31-32; Gal. 2:11-14)
 - d) Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:18-24)
 - e) John Mark (Acts 12:25; 13:13; 15:36-39; 2 Tim. 4:11)
 - f) The natural branches [i.e. the Jews] (Rom. 11:19-24)
 - g) The immoral Corinthian (1 Cor. 5:1, 4-5)
 - h) NT Christians (1 Jn. 1:8-9)
 - i) The wanderer from the truth (Jas. 5:19-20)
 - j) The Laodiceans (Rev. 3:14-22)
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- 2) “The door of hope is not closed against those who, having become ‘not my people’ because of their wickedness and unfaithfulness, may yet cry, ‘Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up’ (Hos. 6:1). But let none presume upon time, for life and opportunity are uncertain, and the day of grace must come to an end.” (Shank, 327)
- b. **It is impossible for human agencies to bring apostates to repentance, but it is not impossible for God** (Shank, 317-318)
- 1) In other words, ministers of the gospel can do only so much in reclaiming the lost and the rest must be left to God
- 2) Objections:
- a) How else does God act in conviction and conversion but through His human agents who proclaim the gospel, the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16-17; 10:14-15)?
- b) If God acts directly to soften the hardened heart of one, but not another, doesn’t that make God a “respector of persons” (Rom. 2:11; 1 Pet. 1:17)?
- c. **Apostates cannot be brought to repentance as long as they continue to renounce Christ**
- 1) ASV: ⁴For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, ⁶and *then* fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing [ASV margin: “**the while**”] they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.
- a) “The marginal reading ‘while they are crucifying the Son of God’ is attractive, but in the end it really amounts to a truism and scarcely seems adequate. The tense, however, does convey the idea of a continuing attitude.” (Morris, 12:55)
- 2) The Hebrew writer uses the “present tense” which connotes ongoing action
- a) “Such people ‘keep on crucifying’ (present tense) for themselves the Son of God, and ‘keep on putting him to open shame’ (present tense again). If such people are resolutely determined to respond in this way to the message of Christ’s love and forgiveness, then certainly it is ‘impossible to keep on repeatedly leading them (present tense) afresh into repentance’.” (Brown, 114)
- b) “In the verb...(*anastauroo*) the prefix...(*ana*) is usually taken in the sense of ‘up,’ ‘to lift up on a cross.’ In other compounds *ana* sometimes signifies ‘again,’ and this is why some take the verb here to mean recrucify. But as this sense is not attested elsewhere, it seems better to take it as ‘crucify.’” (Morris, 12:56-57, n. 6)
- 3) Since Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and no man can come to the Father but by Him (Jn. 14:6), if a man rejects Christ and His sacrifice, there is no hope for him as long as that rejection continues

- 4) “The apostasy in view in Hebrews 6 takes its character, not merely from a past act of defection, but also from a present deliberate hostility toward Christ. The impossibility of renewal to repentance and salvation rests, not on the mere fact of a past act, but on the fact of a present condition of opposition.” (Shank, 318)
- d. **It is impossible to keep on renewing Christians to repentance again and again without them going outside the bound of hope**
- 1) The infinitive, “to renew” (*anakainizein*), is in the present tense, which denotes continuous action
 - 2) “It is especially helpful to keep in mind that the author, as he speaks of renewal, switches from a series of past tenses to the present tense. In so doing he says forcefully that for the enlightened man the process of falling away and of being restored again cannot continue interminably, that there is a line drawn beyond which, if the individual crosses over, he cannot be retrieved. Why can he not be? Because he has traveled the road of falling and renewal so much that for him the whole matter is a trifle. His heart has turned cold, his life listless, and his condition is such that he can no longer turn from sin. It is **impossible** for him to be saved because he is *incapable* of turning to God. He is void of conscience. He has lost his repenting-apparatus.” (Lightfoot, 126)
 - 3) F. F. Bruce: “God has pledged Himself to pardon all who truly repent, but Scripture and experience alike suggest that it is possible for human beings to arrive at a state of heart and life where they can no longer repent.” (via Brown, 110)
 - 4) Those who persist in sin will eventually pass the point of no return
 - a) Their conscience will become seared (1 Tim. 4:1-2)
 - b) They will not be able to “cease from sin” (2 Pet. 2:14; cf. Jer. 13:23)
- e. “It remains to be emphasized that the author’s main subject is *apostasy*. He is not speaking of mere backsliding, of the ordinary shortcomings and failures that go with human weakness. Falling short is not the same as falling away. It is one thing to yield to sin contrary to the new life in Christ, it is another thing to abandon that new life altogether.” (Lightfoot, 126)
- 1) Falling away is the equivalent of “departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). It is the same as persisting in sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth (Heb. 10:26)

V. Who was Melchizedek (Heb. 7:1-3)?

A. Exposition:

1. The writer of Hebrews first explains that Christ is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek in chapter 5 (Heb. 5:5-11)
 - a. To substantiate that point, he quotes from Psalm 110:4 (Heb. 5:6)
2. The writer reviews what the OT reveals about Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20) here to emphasize two things about his priesthood:
 - a. It was a perpetual priesthood (Heb. 7:3, 8)

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- b. It was a greater priesthood than the Levitical priesthood (Heb. 7:4-10)
 - 1) Melchizedek was a king as well as a priest (Heb. 7:1-2)
 - 2) Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham (Heb. 7:2)
 - a) “Melchizedek possessed such dignity that even the illustrious Abraham, the head of the Hebrew nation and the greatest of great men, gave him a tenth part of the spoils.” (Lightfoot, 139)
 - 3) Melchizedek, unlike the Levitical priests, had no genealogical pedigree (Heb. 7:3)
 - 4) Melchizedek blessed Abraham (Heb. 7:6-7)
 - a) “God had promised to Abraham that all the world would be blessed through him (Gen. 12:3); yet Abraham, from whom so many blessings were passed down, was himself blessed by Melchizedek. Melchizedek, then, was indeed in the honored position....” (Lightfoot, 140)
 - 5) Melchizedek’s priesthood takes precedence over the Levitical priesthood because death has no hold over it (Heb. 7:8)
 - a) “Melchizedek as a historical person doubtless died, but the sacred record does not register his death. As far as the record goes, he had no ‘end of life.’ From the standpoint of what is actually said in Scripture, Melchizedek lives.” (Lightfoot, 140)
 - 6) Melchizedek is greater because Levi paid tithes to him (Heb. 7:9-10)
 - a) “Levi was Abraham’s great-grandson and was yet unborn when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. Nevertheless, Levi was, so to speak, in Abraham’s loins and thus even Levi gave a tithe to Melchizedek.” (Lightfoot, 140-141)
 - 1] The thought is that an ancestor contains within himself all his descendants (cf. Gen. 25:23)
 - b) Under the law of Moses, tithes were paid:
 - 1] By the people to the Levites (Num. 18:21, 24)
 - 2] By the Levites to the priests (Num. 18:26)
 3. The Hebrew writer emphasizes these two points about the priesthood of Melchizedek to highlight these same two points about the priesthood of Christ
 - a. It is a perpetual priesthood (Heb. 7:16-17, 21, 24-25, 28)
 - b. It is a greater priesthood than the Levitical priesthood (Heb. 7:11, 22-28)

B. Discussion:

1. “Melchizedek” means “king of righteousness” (See D. Stuart, “Proper Names,” ISBE, 3:486)
2. Melchizedek, as a priest-king of righteousness and peace, typifies the qualities and characteristics of the Messianic kingdom (cf. Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5-6; Zech. 6:12-13; Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:14-15, 17)
3. There have been many conjectures about the identity of Melchizedek. He has been identified as:

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- a. **Shem** [Jewish Rabbis, Jerome, Luther, Melanchthon]
 - b. **Ham**
 - c. **A descendant of Japheth**
 - d. **Job**
 - e. **Enoch** [Hulsius, Calmet]
 - f. **An angel** [Origen, Didymus]
 - g. (A pre-incarnate) **Christ** [Ambrose, Hottinger]
 - 1) The fact that “Melchizedek” was “made like the Son of God” (Heb. 7:3) makes it highly unlikely, if not impossible, that he was the Son of God
 - h. **The Holy Spirit** [Hieracas, Epiphanius]
 - i. **A heavenly being** [The Melchizedekian sect] (cf. Heb. 7:3, 8)
 - j. **The archangel Michael**
 - k. **An extraordinary emanation**
 - l. **An historical person** (Milligan, 245-246)
 - 1) Josephus speaks of Melchizedek as an historical figure who was nothing more than a human being (*Antiquities* 1:10:2; *Wars* 6:10:1)
 - 2) Philo speaks of him in the same way (*Allegorical Interpretation* 3:25:79)
4. It is argued by many that Melchizedek must have been some kind of a supernatural being, because:
- a. He was “without father, without mother” (Heb. 7:3)
 - b. He was “without genealogy”
 - c. He had “neither beginning of days nor end of life”
 - d. He was “made like the Son of God”
 - e. He “remains a priest continually”
 - f. He is one “of whom it is witnessed that he lives” (Heb. 7:8)
5. While those expressions certainly could apply to a supernatural being, they could also apply to an historical figure who was nothing more than a human being
- a. The ancients used the expressions “without father” and “without mother” to refer to those without a genealogical pedigree
 - 1) “The terms ‘without father’ and ‘without mother’ (*apator, ameter*) are used in Greek for waifs of unknown parentage, for illegitimate children, for people who came from unimportant families, and sometimes for deities who were supposed to take their origin from one sex only.” (Morris, 12:63)
 - a) Livy says of Servius Tullius that “he was born of no father” (Lib. 4:3, via Milligan, 249)
 - 2) The Jews used this terminology to refer to those whose parents were not given in the Scriptures or their genealogies
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- a) Philo says of Sarah, “She is said not to have had a mother, having received the inheritance of relationship from her father only” (De Ebriet, Section 14, via Milligan, 249)
 - b. The term “without genealogy” [*agenealogetos*] (Heb. 7:3) is found nowhere else in the NT or in any contemporary extra-biblical literature (Pickup, 148)
 - 1) But it is nothing more than an explanation of what the writer has just said: “without father, without mother”
 - c. The expression “having neither beginning of days nor end of life” is a further explanation of what he has just said
 - 1) Whatever this expression means, it is conjoined to the preceding expressions “without father, without mother, without genealogy”
 - 2) If those expressions should be understood within the context of genealogical record-keeping, then so should this one
 - 3) The point is that there is no genealogical record of Melchizedek’s birth or his death
 - d. The Hebrew writer does not say that Christ was made like Melchizedek. He says that Melchizedek was made like the Son of God (Heb. 7:3)
 - e. The expression “remains a priest continually” does not demand the idea of a supernatural being exercising an eternally perpetual priesthood
 - 1) If it did, then we would have to conclude that Melchizedek is still functioning as priest even after Christ has assumed his priesthood
 - 2) The word “forever” [*olam*] (Psa. 110:4) does not always denote the idea of unending chronological duration. It may simply speak of “futuraity” in an indefinite manner (Pickup, 159)
 - a) During one’s lifetime (Ex. 21:6; Dt. 15:17)
 - 3) The NT clearly indicates that some “forever things” cease
 - a) Circumcision (Gen. 17:11-14; cf. Gal. 5:1-6; 6:15)
 - b) The Passover (Ex. 12:14; cf. Col. 2:16-17)
 - c) The Aaronic priesthood (Ex. 29:9; 40:15; Num. 25:13; cf. Heb. 7:11-17)
 - d) The Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29, 31, 34; 23:31; cf. Heb. 9:23-28; 10:1-12, 18)
 - e) The Sabbath (Ex. 31:16-17; Col. 2:16-17)
 - f) Etc.
 - 4) “Just as the Old Testament designated the Levitical priesthood to be ‘forever’ (in the sense of indefinite futurity), Psalm 110 said the same thing about the Messiah’s priesthood and the Hebrew writer says the same thing about Melchizedek’s priesthood. All three priesthoods could be described appropriately by this language. But the difference between the Levitical priesthood and the other two priesthoods was this: with the Levitical priesthood, it was the *priestly succession* that was promised to be forever. Aaron himself was never promised perpetual priesthood, nor was any one
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Levitical priest. But the Messiah and Melchizedek were themselves designated priests forever. The point the Hebrew writer is making when he says that Melchizedek abides a priest forever is that Melchizedek personally fulfilled the full duration of that priestly service. He himself was a priest forever, not he and a priestly succession. This fact precisely foreshadowed the priesthood of the Messiah. The Messiah would personally function as a priest forever, for the full duration of his required service, and never pass on that office to a successor.” (Pickup, 160)

- a) “The priesthood of Melchizedek was his, and his alone, forever, i.e., as long as he lived, and the Messiah’s priesthood likewise is his, and his alone, forever.” (Pickup, 161)
- f. The expression “of whom it is witnessed that he lives” once again refers to the absence of any genealogical information about Melchizedek?
 - 1) “The Hebrew writer is referring to the legal requirements of Levitical priesthood as contrasted with that of Melchizedek. He is not saying that the ancient priest-king of Salem never died, but that Scripture never presents Melchizedek as dying and passing on his office to a successor. His priesthood was not of that type. Scripture’s portrayal of Melchizedek only as alive, with no account of his death, highlights the fact that his office was not one that required successors; it was carried out solely by this one man himself. So it is, the Hebrew writer argues, with the priesthood of Christ. He will be succeeded by no one, for he himself will fulfill his high priestly role till the end of time [Heb. 7:23-25].” (Pickup, 158)
6. Thus, Melchizedek was “without father and mother,” not because he was an angel or some other supernatural being, but because there was no genealogical record of his birth or his death (cf. Heb. 7:6)
 - a. This was unlike Aaron, the prototype of the Levitical priests (cf. Ex. 6:20; Num. 26:57-61; Num. 20:22-29)
 - b. Under the old covenant, a genealogical pedigree was absolutely essential because:
 - 1) Only the Levites could do service at the sanctuary (Num. 1:47-53; 3:5-13)
 - 2) Only Aaron and his descendants could serve as priests (Ex. 27:21; 28:1; 29:9)
 - c. Under the old covenant, if one could not establish his genealogy from the tribe of Levi, he was disqualified for service in the priesthood (cf. Ezra 2:59-63; Neh. 7:61-65)
 - 1) “A prerequisite for holding the office of priest, therefore, was a proven genealogy. This genealogy was of the greatest importance. For example, the Jewish historian Josephus assures his readers that he was born into a priestly family, that he can prove his descent, and that he has found his genealogy recorded in ‘public registers.’” (Kistemaker, 185)

VI. There are inconsistencies between the OT’s description of the tabernacle, and the description of the tabernacle in Hebrews (Heb. 9:1-5). How are these apparent contradictions to be explained?

A. Exposition:

1. The Hebrew writer describes the tabernacle (Heb. 9:1-5)
 - a. The contents of the Holy Place (Heb. 9:2)
 - 1) The lampstand (Ex. 25:31-40; Lev. 24:1-4)
 - 2) The table of showbread (Ex. 25:23-30; Lev. 24:6)
 - 3) The showbread [lit. “loaves of the presentation” or “bread of the presence”] (Ex. 25:30; Lev. 24:5-9)
 - b. The contents of the Holy of Holies (Heb. 9:3-5)
 - 1) The “second veil” [in contrast to the linen curtain that separated the sanctuary from the outer court (Ex. 26:36-37; 36:37-38)] (Ex. 26:31-33)
 - 2) The altar of incense (Ex. 30:1-9)
 - 3) The ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:10-15)
 - a) The golden pot of manna (Ex. 16:32-34)
 - 1] Note: While the MT does not indicate that this pot was “golden,” the LXX does
 - b) Aaron’s rod that budded (Num. 17:1-11)
 - c) The tablets of the covenant (Ex. 32:19; 34:1-4, 28-29)
 - 4) The cherubim of glory (Ex. 25:17-22; 37:6-9)
 - 5) The mercy seat (Ex. 25:17)

B. Discussion:

1. The OT places the altar of incense in the Holy Place, but the writer of Hebrews places it in the Holy of Holies with the ark of the covenant (Heb. 9:3-4)
 - a. God instructed Moses to put the altar of incense “before the veil that is before the ark of the Testimony,” (Ex. 30:6), and that is exactly what Moses did (Ex. 40:26)
 - 1) Note: The altar of incense could not have been inside the Most Holy Place, because it was in daily use (Ex. 30:7-8), and only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies and then only once a year on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-2, 29-34)
 - b. Some suggest that the writer of Hebrews must have made a mistake, or he was unfamiliar with the OT’s description of the tabernacle’s interior
 - 1) But this explanation is hardly plausible, since the writer of Hebrews exhibits a detailed knowledge of the OT throughout this book
 - c. Some suggest that the Greek word used here (*thumiaterion*) refers, not to the altar of incense, but to the high priest’s censer (Lev. 16:12)
 - 1) There is some justification for this interpretation
 - a) The word commonly used in the LXX for the altar of incense is *thusiasterion*, not *thumiaterion*. The word *thumiaterion* is only used twice in the LXX for a censer (2 Chr. 26:19; Ezek. 8:11) (Milligan, 312)
 - b) The word is translated “censer” by the KJV and the ERV, following the LXX, the Latin Vulgate and the Syriac Peshitta (Lightfoot, 178)

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- c) Those who offer this interpretation explain that the high priest used the censer for burning incense once a year on the Day of Atonement and he left that censer permanently in the Most Holy Place (Kistemaker, 238)
- 2) But on the whole, this interpretation is most probably incorrect
- a) “Nowhere in the Old Testament is a censer mentioned as part of the furniture of the Holy of Holies. Further, it is not likely that the reference is to Aaron’s cense which was used on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:12-13). This censer was of no special importance; and even if it had been, it could not have been kept in the Holy of Holies, for the high priest had to use it to carry coals from the altar as he entered the Holy of Holies. The author, then, appears to be referring to the ‘altar of incense.’” (Lightfoot, 178)
- b) While the word *thumiaterion* primarily means “censer,” Philo and Josephus used the term to refer to the “altar of incense” (Guthrie, 15:180)
- c) The word is translated “altar of incense” by most recent English versions [ASV, ESV, NASB, NRSV]
- d) It is inconceivable that the Hebrew writer would mention a “censer” along with all the other furniture in the tabernacle and fail to mention something as important as the altar of incense
- d. Some suggest that the participle “having” (*echousa*) is intended in the sense of “belonging to” rather than “standing within” (Guthrie, 15:180)
- 1) “This is supported by the fact that the altar was so placed that the smoke from the burning incense was supposed to penetrate the curtain and rise to God before the ark of the covenant. Nevertheless, since the same participle does service as well for the ark, which was quite definitely inside the holy of holies, the preceding explanation is not without some difficulty.” (Guthrie, 15:180)
- 2) In the OT, the altar of incense was so closely associated with the ark of the covenant (Ex. 30:6; 40:5) that it “belonged to the oracle” (1 Ki. 6:22, ASV)
- 3) This seems to be the best explanation to me
2. The Hebrew writer says that the ark of the covenant contained the golden pot of manna, Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant (Heb. 9:4), but the OT says that when the ark was placed in the temple of Solomon, it contained only “the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb” (1 Ki. 8:9; 2 Chr. 5:10)
- a. The OT reveals that:
- 1) The “golden pot of manna” was to be kept “before the Lord” (Ex. 16:33)
- 2) Aaron’s rod that budded was to be kept “before the Testimony” (Num. 17:8-10)
- 3) The “tables of the covenant” were the tablets of stone upon which the Ten Commandments were inscribed, and they were placed inside the ark of the covenant (cf. Ex. 25:16, 21; 31:18; 40:20; Dt. 10:1-5)
- b. From the first, these sacred memorial objects were associated with the ark, and evidently, at some point, they were placed inside the ark for safe keeping
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- 1) Placing these items inside the ark of the covenant would certainly have been “before the Lord” and “before the Testimony”
- c. Evidently, the golden pot of manna and Aaron’s rod were removed (perhaps lost or destroyed) before the ark was placed in Solomon’s temple
 - 1) Perhaps this occurred when the ark was in the hands of the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:1-11)

VII. What does the Hebrew writer mean when he speaks of “the present time” when both gifts and sacrifices are offered (Heb. 9:9)?

A. Discussion:

1. In this context, the “present time” might mean “the time then present” -- the Mosaic dispensation which prepared the way for the coming of Christ (Gal. 3:23-25)
 - a. If from the writer’s perspective, the “world to come” and the “age to come” (Heb. 2:5; 6:5) refer to the Christian dispensation, then it would appear that “the present age” refers to the Mosaic dispensation (Lightfoot, 167)
 - b. The “present age” is contrasted with “the time of reformation” (Heb. 9:10) which is a reference to the Christian dispensation
 - c. When the Hebrew writer says “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come...” (Heb. 9:11-12), he contrasts the coming of Christ with the “present time” [i.e. the Mosaic dispensation] that he had just been talking about
2. The “present time” might mean “the time now present” – the new covenant era
 - a. If so, the writer may be saying that the real meaning of the tabernacle can only be understood in the light of the work of Christ (Morris, 12:84)
 - b. I wonder if the writer might be referring to the apostolic period before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70
 - 1) Even though the old covenant was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:13-15), the Levitical priests were still offering the sacrifices prescribed by the law of Moses
 - 2) It was the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70 that brought an end to:
 - a) The temple
 - b) The Levitical priesthood
 - c) The sacrificial system

VIII. There are inconsistencies between the OT’s account of the ratification of the covenant and the consecration of the tabernacle and the account in Hebrews (Heb. 9:19-21). How are these apparent contradictions to be explained?

A. Exposition:

1. The Hebrew writer reminds his readers that the first covenant was dedicated with blood (Heb. 9:18)
 - a. Moses sprinkled the book of the covenant and the people with the blood of calves and goats (Heb. 9:19-20; cf. Ex. 24:3-8)

- b. Moses sprinkled the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with blood (Heb. 9:21; cf. Ex. 40:9-11)
 - 1) Note: This had to be on a different occasion, since the tabernacle had not been constructed when the covenant was ratified
2. The Hebrew writer declares that according to the law almost everything was purged with blood (Heb. 9:22)

B. Discussion:

1. The ratification of the covenant:
 - a. The account in Exodus does not mention:
 - 1) The use of goats' blood
 - a) The sacrifices on this occasion were described in Exodus as burnt offerings and peace offerings, and nowhere in the law were goats prescribed for either of these offerings, although they were for the sin offerings (Lev. 1:10)
 - 2) The use of water, scarlet wool or hyssop in the sprinkling
 - 3) The sprinkling of the book of the covenant
 - b. The writer of Hebrews does not mention:
 - 1) The altar and the 12 pillars (Ex. 24:4)
 - 2) The sacrifice of burnt offerings and peace offerings (Ex. 24:5)
 - c. The words of Moses are different in the two accounts
 - 1) In Exodus, Moses says: "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words" (Ex. 24:8, NASB)
 - 2) In Hebrews, Moses says: "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you" (Heb. 9:20)
 - d. Several plausible explanations can be offered to account for these differences
 - 1) The expression "calves and goats" could be a term for sacrifices of all kinds [Delitzsch]
 - 2) Some Greek MSS do not contain the words "and goats" (*kai tragon*)
 - a) "The blood of calves and goats' is read by the KJV, ASV, and RSV. The NEB, however, simply reads 'the blood of calves.' It is questionable whether 'and goats' (Greek *kai tragon*) belongs in the text. P⁴⁶, followed by Aleph^c, K, L, and others, omits the words, which results in precise agreement with Exodus 24:5. Zuntz argues that the addition of the words is due to the influence of verse 12, which mentions both 'goats and calves.'" (Lightfoot, 181)
 - 3) The Hebrew writer could have been given information by inspiration that simply was not mentioned in the book of Exodus
 - a) An incomplete account is not necessarily an inaccurate account

- 1] The book of Exodus does not tell us that blood was sprinkled on Aaron and his sons when they were consecrated, yet it was (Lev. 8:30)
 - 2] The Gospels do not record Jesus' words "It is more blessed to give than to receive," yet Paul attributed these words to Jesus (Acts 20:35)
 - 4) The change of wording from "Behold the blood of the covenant...." to "This is the blood of the covenant...." may be a simple paraphrase, or an echo of Jesus' words when He instituted the Lord's Supper (Mt. 26:28) (Fudge, 98-99)
 - 5) The mixing of water with blood for sprinkling and sprinkling by means of wool wrapped around hyssop could be inferred from:
 - a) The Passover ritual (Ex. 12:22)
 - b) The purification ritual for a cleansed leper (Lev. 14:4-7, 49-53)
 - c) The purification ritual for an unclean person (Num. 19:17-19)
 - 6) "[I]f Moses sprinkled the people and read to them out of 'the book of the covenant' (Ex. 24:7), it is natural that he would sprinkle the book as well, especially since according to the law almost everything is cleansed by blood (v. 22)." (Lightfoot, 174)
2. The consecration of the tabernacle:
- a. The OT account reveals that the tabernacle and its furnishings were sprinkled with oil (Ex. 40:9-11; Lev. 8:10-11; Num. 7:1) and the altar with blood (Lev. 8:15)
 - 1) "In the Pentateuch no mention is made of the anointing of the tabernacle and its furniture with blood, but only an anointing with oil. But in the consecration of Aaron and his sons, both oil and blood were used (Lev. 8:30), a fact which makes it not unlikely that both were used at the erection of the tabernacle." (Lightfoot, 174)
 - 2) Furthermore, the Jewish historian Josephus says that the tabernacle was sprinkled with both blood and oil (*Antiquities* 3:8:6)
 - b. Evidently the Hebrew writer obtained this information from oral tradition or divine inspiration that simply was not mentioned in the book of Exodus

IX. **What does "forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" mean? (Heb. 10:24-25)**

A. Exposition:

1. After mentioning the boldness that Christians have to enter the Holiest by the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:19-21), the Hebrew writer exhorts his readers to do three things:
 - a. Draw near in full assurance of faith (Heb. 10:22)
 - b. Hold fast the confession of hope (Heb. 10:23)
 - c. Consider one another to stir up love and good works (Heb. 10:24-25)

B. Discussion:

1. **Complete apostasy from the faith**

- a. The participle “forsaking” (*enkataleipontes*) ordinarily means “to leave behind,” “leave in the lurch,” “abandon”
 - 1) Some interpret this to mean that some “were breaking ranks from the group, that they were not just ‘neglecting’ but were ‘abandoning’ or ‘deserting’ the worship meetings of the saints. They were *apostatizing*.” (Lightfoot, 191)
 - b. I believe there are good reasons to reject this interpretation
 - 1) If the Hebrew writer were talking about apostasy, how could he say “as is the manner of some”?
 - 2) Why would the Hebrew writer use the present tense, which denotes continuous action, if he were talking about apostasy?
2. **Neglect of public worship**
- a. A repeated forsaking rather than a once-for-all forsaking is indicated by:
 - 1) The present tense form of the term *enkataleipo*, “forsaking”
 - a) The aorist tense is used of:
 - 1] God forsaking Jesus on the cross (Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34)
 - 2] Christ’s soul not being left in Hades (Acts 2:31)
 - 3] God’s promise never to forsake His people (Heb. 13:5)
 - 4] Paul’s companions abandoning him at his first defense (2 Tim. 4:16)
 - 5] Demas forsaking Paul (2 Tim. 4:10)
 - 2) The term *ethos*, “manner” [KJV, NKJV], “custom” [YLT, ASV], “habit” [NASB, NIV, NRSV, ESV, ISV]
 - b. This exhortation was needed, because the book of Hebrews was written to Christians who were:
 - 1) Being persecuted (Heb. 10:32-34; 12:4)
 - 2) Tempted to go back under the yoke of Judaism

X. **What is “the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:25)?**

A. Discussion:

1. **The day of death**
2. **The day of complete apostasy**
 - a. Throughout the book the writer of Hebrews repeatedly warns his readers about the danger of neglect and apathy (cf. Heb. 2:1-4; 3:5-6, 12-14; 4:1-2, 11, 14-16; 6:1-8; 10:19-25, 35-39; 12:1-4, 12-17, 25)
 - b. It is at least a possibility that the day approaching would be the day of complete and total apostasy
3. **The day of worship** [i.e. the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2) or the “Lord’s day” (Rev. 1:10)]
 - a. NT writers do not use the term “day,” without further qualification (e.g. “first day of the week” or “Lord’s day”) to refer to Sunday

b. In this passage the Hebrew writer is urging exhortation in the assembly, not exhortation to the assembly (Lightfoot, 192)

1) Although the writer has urged his readers to “exhort one another daily” (Heb. 3:13)

4. The Day of Judgment

a. The expression the “day of the Lord” without question refers to the Second Coming in certain contexts (1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; 1 Th. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10)

1) This is also true of the expression “the Day” (1 Cor. 3:13; 1 Th. 5:4)

b. The word “approaching” (*engizo*) is used with reference to the Second Coming (Rom. 13:12)

c. “When spoken of in this absolute manner, ‘the Day’ can mean only the last day, that ultimate eschatological day, which is the day of reckoning and judgment, known as the Day of the Lord.” (Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 416, via Kistemaker, 291)

d. But the Hebrew writer appears to be referring to a day that both he and his brethren were looking for – a day that was very near at hand (cf. Heb. 10:37)

1) YLT: “for yet a very very little, He who is coming will come, and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:37)

a) This speaks of an imminent coming of the Lord, but Paul did not believe that the Lord’s Second Coming was imminent (2 Th. 2:1-3)

2) “If it is asked how they could **see** the Day of Christ approaching, the answer lies in such passages as [Heb.] 2:9. If through faith the readers could see (Greek verb, *blepo*) Jesus crowned with glory and honor, they also through faith could see (*blepo*) the approach of His coming and His Day.” (Lightfoot, 193)

5. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70

a. The expression the “day of the Lord” or similar expressions are also used to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2:20; Lk. 17:22, 26)

b. The word “approaching” (*engizo*) is used with reference to the destruction of Jerusalem (Mt. 24:33; Mk. 13:28-29; Lk. 21:20, 28, 30-31; cf. Jas. 5:8; 1 Pet. 4:7)

c. When Jesus prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem in His Olivet Discourse (Mt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21), He mentioned various signs that would point to its imminent overthrow

d. These were signs that could be seen by discerning people highlighting the approach of that day

e. But if the book of Hebrews was written to Christians outside of Palestine, how could they see the coming signs of Jerusalem’s destruction?

1) Note: The writer’s statement, “Those from Italy greet you” (Heb. 13:24) indicates that the letter either originated or was destined for Rome

XI. What does the Hebrew writer mean when he says “if we sin willfully...there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins” (Heb. 10:26-31)?

A. Exposition:

1. Willful sin will bring certain judgment (Heb. 10:26-27)
 - a. When the writer says “we,” he includes himself in his warning against apostasy
 - b. The apostate and Christ-rejecter can only look forward to judgment and fiery indignation
 - 1) God’s judgment on the wicked is often pictured as coming in fire (cf. Dt. 9:3; Isa. 30:27; 66:15-16; Zeph. 1:18; 2 Th. 1:7-10)
 - 2) “The words **fury of fire**, if literally translated, would be ‘jealousy [zeal] of fire,’ suggesting that the divine anger in fiery judgment is like the flaming heart of a jealous lover.” (Lightfoot, 194)
2. Those who rejected Moses’ law died (Heb. 10:28; cf. Dt. 17:2-7)
3. A worse punishment awaits those who reject Christ (Heb. 10:29)
 - a. The writer argues from the lesser to the greater (cf. Heb. 2:1-4; 12:25)
 - 1) This punishment is worse, because Jesus is greater than Moses (Heb. 3:1-6) and the new covenant is far better than the old (Heb. 8:6-10:18)
 - b. **Trample the Son of God underfoot**
 - 1) “‘To trample under foot’ is a strong expression for disdain. It implies not only rejecting Christ but also despising him -- him who is no less than ‘the Son of God.’” (Morris, 12:107)
 - c. **Count the blood of the covenant a common thing**
 - 1) The “blood of the covenant” is the blood of Jesus (Heb. 9:15-22; 13:20)
 - 2) “The author regards it as a dreadful thing to take lightly the shedding of the blood of one who is so high and holy and whose blood moreover is the means of establishing the new covenant that alone can bring men near to God.” (Morris, 12:107)
 - a) Blood was used to ratify both the old covenant (Ex. 24:8; cf. Heb 9:20) and the new covenant (Mt. 26:28; Mk. 14:24; Lk. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25)
 - 3) “The word rendered *unholy* (*koinon*) means (a) what is common; and (b) what is unholy or impure. Its secondary meaning is to be preferred here as being more in harmony with the context. The apostate treats this blood, by means of which he was himself once sanctified, as an unholy and impure thing.” (Milligan, 368)
 - d. **Insult the Spirit of grace**
 - 1) “His word for ‘insulted’ is *enybrizo*, from *hybris*, which Westcott sees as ‘that insolent self-assertion which disregards what is due to others. It combines arrogance with wanton injury’ (in loc.)” (Morris, 12:107-108)
 - 2) “This word was used by the ancient Greeks for the most presumptuous arrogance and haughtiness, and was regarded as the worst possible sin. The idea is seen in various forms of the word translated ‘entreat spitefully’ (Luke 18:32; Matthew 22:6), ‘use despitefully’ (Acts 14:5), ‘reproach’ (II Corinthians 12:10) or ‘shamefully entreat’ (I Thessalonians 2:2).” (Fudge, 115)

4. The nature of this judgment necessarily follows from the character of the Judge (Heb. 10:30-31)
 - a. The Hebrew writer quotes from the Song of Moses (Dt. 32:35-36; cf. Psa. 135:14)
 - 1) “The quotation corresponds exactly with neither the LXX nor the Hebrew text (MT), although in part it is like both. The MT reads, ‘Vengeance is mine and recompense’; the LXX, ‘In the day of vengeance I will recompense.’ It appears that the author, and Paul (cf. Rom. 12:19), either were quoting the Deuteronomic statement as popularly known or were dependent on a form of the text whose precise wording is not extant today.” (Lightfoot, 195, n. 13)

B. Discussion:

1. **What is “willful sin”?**

- a. The Hebrew writer cannot be speaking here of mere human weakness or inclination to sin
 - 1) He knows that men are beset with weaknesses, and he repeatedly assures his readers that Jesus is a High Priest who can help them in their temptations and bear gently with them even when they go astray (Heb. 2:18; 4:15-16)
- b. The Hebrew writer cannot be merely speaking of committing a sin all the while knowing that it is sinful
 - 1) If this were the case, could there be any hope for anyone?
 - 2) Surely David must have know when he committed adultery and murder that he was sinning (2 Sam. 11); yet he was able to obtain God’s forgiveness (2 Sam. 12:13)
- c. The Hebrew writer contemplates sinning with a “high hand”
 - 1) The OT sacrifices made provision only for sins committed in ignorance or weakness – not for presumptuous or willful sins (Num. 15:22-31; cf. Lev. 4:2, 22, 27; 5:15, 18)
 - 2) “What the author has in mind is a deliberate rejection of truth after truth has once been received, an extinguishing of light that has already shone in the heart, a conscious preference for the dark. He speaks not so much of an act of sin but of a state of sin, for the force of the verb is repeated action – ‘if we go on sinning,’ ‘if we continue to sin,’ ‘if we persist in sin’ (cf. TEV, NEB). That is, if enlightened men persist in ‘departing from the living God’ (3:12), if they willfully abandon Christ and repudiate His covenant (v. 29), there is for them no way of forgiveness. The Mosaic religion cannot be resorted to, for the author has proved that no sacrifice there is of any value. If the one sacrifice of Christ is rejected, what then?” (Lightfoot, 193-194)
 - 3) “To **sin willfully** is not to commit a single sinful act of weakness or ignorance, but, as the Greek verb form indicates, to continue in a constant practice of sin. Nor is **sin** here just any kind of sin, but specifically the sin of disbelief which shows itself in forsaking Christ altogether. While such apostasy may occur gradually (see the warnings of 2:1-3; 6:11-12), it ultimately comes about through an act of the will which rejects Christ and His offering for sin.” (Fudge, 114)

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2. **What does the writer mean when he says “there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins”?**
- a. “Apostasy from Christ is dreadfully severe because there is **no more sacrifice for sins**. His offering, once for all, is man’s last chance and only hope. The person who rejects that – especially the man who has known it personally and then rejected it – is hopelessly lost, for he has set his will against the only basis of forgiveness and the only sacrifice God will accept.” (Fudge, 114)
 - b. “The verb *axiothesetai* is future passive indicative. It is declared by the writer to the Hebrews that one who proves himself to be a willful, persistent apostate ‘shall be judged worthy’ [10:29] of infinite punishment. Final condemnation may yet be averted, while life and opportunity continue.” (Shank, 320)
3. **Does this passage teach that a Christian can fall from grace?**
- a. It most certainly does, and this presents an “ungetoverable” problem for the Calvinist
 - 1) It contemplates a Christian
 - a) He has “**received the knowledge of the truth**” (Heb. 10:26)
 - 1] “The word rendered *knowledge* (*epignosis*) means more than a mere objective knowledge (*gnosis*) of the truth. It rather denotes a full experimental knowledge, such as we gain by the active application of our minds to the study of the truth.” (Milligan, 365)
 - b) He has been “**sanctified**” (Heb. 10:29; cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11)
 - 2) It contemplates a Christian who sins grievously
 - a) He **sins willfully** (Heb. 10:26)
 - b) He “**tramples the Son of God underfoot**” (Heb. 10:29)
 - c) He “**counts the blood of the covenant...a common thing**” (Heb. 10:29)
 - d) He **insults the Spirit of grace** (Heb. 10:29)
 - 3) It contemplates a disastrous result
 - a) There no longer remains a sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:26)
 - 1] “The idea of the Apostle is not simply that those who presumptuously reject the sacrifice of Christ can obtain salvation through no other; but further, he means to say that in the case of such high-handed transgressors, even the sacrifice of Christ is no longer available. The man who was once a Christian, a true child of God, and who as such was made a partaker of the Holy Spirit, and yet falls away as an apostate from Christ, can obtain no more forgiveness in any way.” (Milligan, 365-366)
 - 2] Note: God promises salvation for all who will turn from sin (Ezek. 18:21-23)
 - b) There is only a certain fearful expectation of judgment (Heb. 10:27)
 - c) There remains a worse punishment than the capital punishment under the Mosaic law (Heb. 10:28-29)
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d) It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31)

XII. **What is the Hebrew writer referring to when he quotes Habakkuk 2:3-4 which says “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:36-39)?**

A. Exposition:

1. The Hebrew writer declares that his readers need endurance that they might receive the promise (Heb. 10:36)
2. He quotes Habakkuk 2:3-4 to confirm his declaration (Heb. 10:37-38)
 - a. “The words ‘*any man*’ are not in the original; and their introduction into the English version is unfortunate. It is not ‘any man,’ but the ‘just man,’ of whom God speaks. It is of the man who was once justified by his faith, and who lived by his faith, that the affirmation is made. The just man shall live by his faith; but if he [the just man] draw back [then] my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” (Milligan, 378)
3. He expresses his confidence that his readers will “believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. 10:39)

B. Discussion:

1. This refers to **the Second Coming** (Heb. 9:28)
2. This refers to **Jesus’ coming in judgment on Jerusalem in AD 70**
 - a. Judgment is described as a “coming” of the Lord (Isa. 19:1)
 - b. The judgment on Jerusalem is described as a “coming of the Lord” (Mt. 24:27, 30)
 - c. The fact that He “will not tarry” suggests a coming that was imminent when the book of Hebrews was written
 - d. Furthermore, the Hebrew writer is encouraging his brethren to persevere on the ground that the coming of Christ was near. How could he do this if he was referring to the Second Coming?
 - e. Moreover, the quotation from Habakkuk 2:3-4 referred to a coming of the Lord in judgment in time, not the final coming

XIII. **What does the Hebrew writer mean when he says “for he found no place of repentance though he sought it diligently with tears” (Heb. 12:12-17)?**

A. Exposition:

1. Encourage the fainthearted (Heb. 12:12-13)
 - a. The Hebrew writer quotes Isaiah 35:3 and Proverbs 4:26a (LXX)
 - b. “*Drooping hands* and *weak knees* are typical of low spirits. They portray persons who have become incapable of action through sheer exhaustion.” (Guthrie, 15:180)
 - c. This exhortation could be understood in two different ways:
 - 1) The fainthearted are to lift their own hands and strengthen their own knees (RSV)
 - 2) Others are to encourage and help strengthen the fainthearted
2. Pursue peace and holiness (Heb. 12:14; cf. Rom. 12:18)

3. Be diligent:
 - a. Lest anyone fall short of God's grace (Heb. 12:15a)
 - b. Lest bitterness cause trouble and bring defilement (Heb. 12:15b)
 - 1) The Hebrew writer borrows the language of Deuteronomy 29:18
 - c. Lest immorality and godlessness bring sorrow (Heb. 12:16-17)
 - 1) Esau sold his birthright for a meal (Gen. 25:29-34)
 - 2) Esau found no place for repentance with respect to the blessing (Gen. 27:30-40)

B. Discussion:

1. **Esau found no place for repentance in himself** [i.e. he was unable to repent]
 - a. While a sinner can pass the point of no return and therefore be unable to repent (Heb. 6:4-6; 2 Pet. 2:14), this was not the case with Esau
 - b. Although Esau wanted to kill Jacob after Isaac gave him the blessing (Gen. 27:41), his attitude toward Jacob is very different twenty years later (Gen. 31:41) when Jacob returns home (Gen. 33:1-11)
 - c. Furthermore, if this refers to Esau's repentance, it is a repentance with respect to his temporal blessing as the firstborn, not his salvation with God
 - 1) Note: While the writer presents this episode in Esau's life as an object lesson to warn his readers not to trifle with their heavenly birthright, as Esau trifled with his earthly inheritance, that does not change the truthfulness of this point
2. **Esau found no place for repentance in his father Isaac** (i.e. Isaac could not change his mind after giving the blessing to Jacob)
 - a. ASV: "For ye know that even when he afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found **no place for a change of mind in his father**, though he sought is diligently with tears."
 - b. It was a change of mind in his father that Esau sought with tears (Gen. 27:34-40)

Conclusion:

- I. I'm sure that this study has not done justice to the difficult passages in Hebrews, but I hope that it will prove helpful to you as you attempt to "plumb the depths" of this marvelous book and as you continue to look to Jesus (Heb. 12:1-2)

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OT Quotations In Hebrews

Passages In Hebrews	I. OT Passages
1:3 [A] (cf. Mt. 22:44)	Psa. 110:1
1:5a (Heb. 5:5; cf. Acts 13:33)	Psa. 2:7
1:5b (cf. 2 Cor. 6:18)	2 Sam. 7:14
1:6	Dt. 32:43 [LXX, no equivalent in MT] [cf. Psa. 96:7 LXX = Psa. 97:7 MT]
1:7	Psa. 103:4 [LXX] = Psa. 104:4 [MT]
1:8-9	Psa. 45:6-7
1:10-12	Psa. 101:26-28 [LXX] = Psa. 102:25-27 [MT]
1:13 (cf. Mt. 22:44)	Psa. 109:1 [LXX] = Psa. 110:1 [MT]
2:6-8	Psa. 8:4-6
2:12	Psa. 22:22
2:13a	Isa. 8:17 [LXX] (cf. 2 Sam. 22:3)
2:13b	Isa. 8:18 [LXX]
2:16 [A]	Isa. 41:8-9
3:2, 5 [A]	Num. 12:7
3:7-11	Psa. 94:7-11 [LXX] = Psa 95:7-11 [MT]
3:15 (cf. 3:7-8a)	Psa. 94:7-8 [LXX]
3:18 [A] (cf. 3:11)	Psa. 94:11 [LXX] = Psa. 95:11 [MT]
4:3 (cf. 3:11)	Psa. 94:11 [LXX] = Psa. 95:11 [MT]
4:4	Gen. 2:2 [LXX]
4:5 (cf. 3:11)	Psa. 94:11b [LXX] = Psa. 95:11b [MT]
4:7 (cf. 3:7-8)	Psa. 94:7-8 [LXX] = Psa. 95:7-8 [MT]
4:10 [A] (cf. 4:4-5)	Psa. 95:11 & Gen. 2:2 [LXX]
5:5 (cf. 1:5)	Psa. 2:7
5:6	Psa. 110:4
6:8 [A]	Gen. 3:17-18
6:13-14	Gen. 22:16-17
6:19 [A]	Lev. 16:12; (cf. 16:2)
7:1-2 [P]	Gen. 14:17-20
7:17 (cf. 5:6)	Psa. 110:4
7:21 (cf. 5:6)	Psa. 110:4)
8:1 [A] (cf. 1:13)	Psa. 110:1
8:5	Ex. 25:40 [LXX]
8:8-12	Jer. 38:31-34 [LXX] = Jer. 31:31-34 [MT]
9:20	Ex. 24:8
9:28 [A]	Isa. 53:12
10:5-7 (cf. 10:8-10)	Psa. 39:7-9 [LXX] = Psa. 40:6-8 [MT]
10:12-13 (cf. 1:13)	Psa. 110:1
10:16-17 (cf. 8:10, 12)	Jer. 38:33-34 [LXX] = Jer. 31:33-34 [MT]
10:27 [A]	Isa. 26:11 [LXX]
10:28 [A]	Dt. 17:6
10:30a (cf. Rom. 12:19)	Dt. 32:35
10:30b	Dt. 32:36 (cf. Psa. 135:14)
10:37-38	Isa. 26:20 & Hab. 2:3-4 [LXX]

Passages In Hebrews	I. OT Passages
11:5 [P]	Gen. 5:24 [LXX]
11:12 [A]	Gen. 22:17 (cf. 15:5)
11:18	Gen. 21:12
11:21	Gen. 47:31 [LXX]
12:2 [A] (cf. 1:13)	Psa. 110:1
12:5-6	Pr. 3:11-12 [LXX]
12:12-13 [A]	Isa. 35:3 & Pr. 4:26 [LXX]
12:15 [A]	Dt. 29:18 [LXX]
12:20 [P]	Ex. 19:12-13
12:21	Dt. 9:19
12:26	Hag. 2:6 [LXX]
12:29 [A]	Dt. 4:24
13:5	Dt. 31:6 [LXX] (cf. 31:8; Josh. 1:5)
13:6	Psa. 117:6 [LXX] = Psa. 118:6 [MT]
13:11 [A]	Lev. 16:27

[A] = An obvious allusion
 [P] = An obvious paraphrase
 [LXX] = The Septuagint
 [MT] = The Masoretic text

Adapted from *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament*. Ed. Robert G. Bratcher. United Bible Societies. 1967

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