The Epistle [of Paul] to the HEBREWS

The supremacy of the Son

1 [1]God, having spoken to the fathers through the prophets in many parts and in various ways, in the past, [2]has at last in these days spoken to us by **Son**,[1] whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the ages;[2] [3]who being the projection of His glory and the very image of His essence, and sustaining all things by the expression of His[S][3] own power,[4] when He had by Himself[5] provided purification for our[6] sins[7] He sat down on the highest Majesty's right,[8] [4]having become so much superior to the angels as He has inherited a more excellent name than they have.

He is superior to the angels

[5]For to which of the angels did He[F] ever say, "You are my Son, today I begot you,"[9] and again, "I will be 'Father' to Him, and He will be 'Son' to me?"[10] [6]Again, when He introduces the Firstborn[11] into the inhabited earth[12] He says, "Let all God's angels worship Him[S]."[13]

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[1] I take it that 'Son' is being used like a proper name (there is no definite article with it). The Son is the ultimate revelation to us of who God is and what He is like.

[2] That is what the Text says, although most versions render 'worlds', which seems to make better sense, at least at first glance. But let us stop and think a minute—since God is eternal, the concept of 'time' may be part and parcel of this Creation, limited to it and perhaps be a defining characteristic, along with space. But 'ages' is plural, and how does one distinguish one age from another? Presumably by the events of history—in other words, the Son controls the history of this planet.

[3] Here the pronoun refers to the Son; the previous occurrences refer to the Father. Below, whenever the referent changes I will indicate this by [F] or [S], which will be good until the next change.

[4] Why do not molecules, with their opposing electrical charges, burst apart? The Creator holds them together—the Son was not only the primary agent in the Creation, He is also the maintainer and redeemer.

[5] Perhaps 6% of the Greek manuscripts omit "by Himself" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[6] Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "our" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[7] Just as the Son paid the price for our salvation "by Himself", for those who reject or make light of that terrible price He will Himself tread 'the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God' (Revelation 19:15). It is not wise to presume upon God's grace.

[8] "He sat down"—evidently He had the right to do this, and no one challenged Him.

[9] See Psalm 2:7.

[10] See 2 Samuel 7:14.

[11] In Hebrew culture the firstborn son usually inherited the lion's share of the father's estate (so as not to splinter the estate) and was thus the boss, so the expression 'firstborn' took on the extended meaning of 'preeminent', which I take to be the intended meaning here. But as the God-man Christ was both only-begotten and firstborn.

[12] I assume that this must have happened at the incarnation of the Son.

[13] See Psalm 97:7.

7Further, about the angels He[F] says, "Who makes His angels winds,[1]
His servants flames of fire";[2] 8while to the Son He says: "Your throne, O
God, is forever and ever;[3] 'Scepter of Uprightness'[4] is the scepter of Your
kingdom. 9You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness, there-
fore, O God,[5] Your God has anointed You with the oil of exultation
beyond Your companions."[6]

10Also: "You, LORD,[7] in the beginning, laid the foundation of the
earth, and the heavens are works of Your hands; 11they will perish but
You continue on—they will all grow old like a garment; 12You will roll
them up like a cloak and they will be changed, while You stay the same
and Your years will never end." 13On the other hand, to which of the
angels did He ever say, "Sit on my right until I place your enemies as a
stool under your feet"?[8] 14Are they not all ministering spirits being sent[9]
to serve those who are going to inherit salvation?

Do not neglect the great salvation

2 1So then, we really must pay the utmost attention to the things we
have heard, so that we not drift away.[10] 2For if the word spoken
through angels became binding, and every violation and disobedience
received a deserved penalty,[11] 3how shall we escape if we are careless
about such a tremendous salvation?—it received its beginning through
the Lord's declaration and was confirmed to us by those who heard
Him[S],[12] 4God adding His[F] attestation by signs, wonders, various

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1 The Greek word here also means 'spirits', but 'winds' fits the Hebrew parallelism better.

2 See Psalm 104:4.

3 The author is saying that the Father declares this to the Son. If the Father declares something, that is the way it is.

4 I take 'Scepter of Uprightness' to be a proper name (like the sword 'Excalibur').

5 The noun phrase here is the same as in verse 8; it is either vocative or nominative. In verse 8 the context calls for the vocative; here it could be either one, but I chose the vocative.

6 See Psalm 45:6-7.

7 The quote is from Psalm 102:25-27, and in that context it is Jehovah who is being addressed, Jehovah the Son. This is one of several passages in the New Testament that contradict the heresy of the 'Jehovah's Witnesses' and Mormons that denies that Jesus Christ is Jehovah. From this passage, and a few others, we may understand that the Son was the primary agent in the creation of our planet.

8 See Psalm 110:1. In Matthew 22:44 Jesus Himself makes use of this verse.

9 This participle being in the present tense, I take it that this is an ongoing activity. So who will 'inherit salvation'? True believers, and if we are among them, then we have angels serving us. I submit that we probably have a lot to learn about how to best take advantage of that service.

10 Drifting is gradual, easy to do.

11 Verse 2 is reminiscent of the closing charge in Stephen's defense: "You who received the Law as 'ordinances of angels' and have not kept it!" (Acts 7:53). I confess that I do not understand where the angels come in to the giving of the Law.

12 There is a contrast between the Law (verse 2) and Jesus' Gospel. It was Jesus who began His Gospel. By expressing himself in this way the author lets us know that he was not one of the Twelve.

miracles, and distributions of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.[1]

Temporarily lower than the angels

5Because it is not to angels that He has subjected the coming inhabited earth,[2] about which we are speaking; **6**rather, there is a place where someone testified[3] saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, or son of man that you care for him? **7**You made him lower than the angels, for a little while;[4] You crowned him with glory and honor,[5] **8**You subjected all things under his feet." It follows that in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not so subjected. However, we do not yet see everything subjected to him, at present.

9But we do see Jesus, who 'was made lower than the angels, for a little while'[6] (in order to suffer death), 'crowned with glory and honor'—this, by the grace of God, so that He[S] might taste death on behalf of everyone.[7]

"Bringing many sons into glory"

10Because it was appropriate to Him[F], for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons into glory,[8] to complete the Author of their salvation through sufferings.[9] **11**For both

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[1] Verses 3 and 4 overtly refer to all three persons of the Godhead. For more on the "distributions" see 1 Corinthians 12:11.

[2] The new earth that follows this one will not be administered by angels, so who will do the administering? I agree with those who hold that this life is a classroom wherein the redeemed are being prepared for their functions in the new earth, and some of those functions will be administrative. That future is part of our "tremendous salvation"!

[3] I find this turn of phrase to be curious; the author knew his Old Testament well, and presumably knew he was citing a Psalm (8:4-6)—why such a roundabout reference?

[4] The human being is superior to the angelic being in essence; we bear God's image and they do not, and once glorified that superiority will be obvious, but only for the redeemed. Those who serve Satan subordinate themselves to him, and thus can never rise above him. If Lucifer's rebellion was provoked, as I suppose, by the creation of a being superior to him, he is doing very well at getting his 'revenge', by depriving the vast majority of humanity of that superiority (and so the next verse does not apply to them).

[5] Some 25% of the Greek manuscripts add, "and set him over the works of your hands", as in TR, AV, NKJV.

[6] Instead of "lower than the angels, for a little while", AV, NKJV and some other versions have 'a little lower than the angels', both here and in Psalm 8:5. The Greek adjective here is ambiguous, it can refer either to duration or to quantity (and so for the Hebrew adjective in Psalm 8). In this context the duration is clearly better, or so I deem.

[7] "Everyone" is not a synonym for 'the elect'. The death of Christ is adequate, sufficient to provide salvation for all human beings, and is there for them; of course, not all actually avail themselves of it (most never even heard about it)—in fact, Sovereign Jesus referred to them as 'few' in His day (Matthew 7:14).

[8] This contrasts with the many more who will never see the glory.

[9] As it says in 5:8 below, "He learned obedience by the things that He suffered." As God, what could He know about suffering and obedience, except in theory? While in human form Jesus literally learned obedience. To be a compassionate High Priest He had to feel it like we feel it.

He[S] who is sanctifying and those who are being sanctified are all from One, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them 'brothers', **12**saying, "I will declare Your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing praise to You." **13**And again, "I will have put my trust in Him[F]";[1] and again, "Here am I and the children whom God has given me."[2]

14Since, then, the children have flesh and blood as their share, He[S] Himself likewise partook of the same, in order that through His death He might abolish the one who had[3] the power of death—that is, the devil—**15**and set free these [the children] who during their whole lifetime were subject to slavery through fear of death.[4] **16**(Now surely He does not identify with angels, but He does identify with Abraham's seed.) **17**This is why He was obliged to become like those 'brothers' in all respects, so that He could be a merciful and faithful high priest, in what concerns God, with a view to making propitiation[5] for the sins of the people. **18**For

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[1] In both Matthew 16:19 and 18:18 the Greek Text has a verb phrase that is a periphrastic future perfect, passive voice: "will have been bound/loosed". However, in both the AV and NKJV, at least, the phrase is rendered as if it were a simple future: "will be bound/loosed", with the result that people have thought that they could tell God what to do. Notice that the Text does not say if you 'try' to bind; it has to actually happen, for Heaven to be involved.

I recently saw an attempt to justify that simple future by an appeal to Hebrews 2:13, where all versions (including my former ones!) have "I will put my trust in Him". His argument was based on the circumstance that "I will put my trust" is a translation of a periphrastic future perfect verb phrase, not a simple future. When I asked myself why I had translated the phrase as a simple future, I concluded that I must have simply copied everyone else. I then asked myself how I could make sense out of 'I will have put my trust'. The answer lies in the circumstance that it is a quote from 2 Samuel 22:3, the beginning of a song that is repeated as Psalm 18.

David was thanking the LORD for having delivered him from all his enemies: "The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; the God of my strength, in whom I will trust". Considering God's faithfulness in the past, David affirms that he will continue to trust Him. So far so good, but the author of Hebrews put those words in the mouth of the Christ [!], and he did not repeat the simple future. So why did he use the periphrastic future perfect? Verses 9 and 10 deal with the incarnation of the Son, which forms the basis for the three quotes from the OT in verses 12 and 13. For the Son to accept the incarnation required a supreme trust in the Father, since as a human baby He would be totally helpless and dependent. For Jehovah the Son to use David's words as applying to His incarnation 1,000 years later, the periphrastic future perfect is precisely appropriate: "I will have put my trust in Him".

[2] See Psalms 22:22, 2 Samuel 22:3 and Isaiah 8:17-18—the author knew his Old Testament.

[3] "Had", not 'has' (as in NIV, etc.)—in Revelation 1:18 the glorified Christ affirms that He now holds the 'keys'. Although the participle of the verb 'to have' is in the present tense, that indicates that it is simultaneous with the time of the finite verb to which it is subordinate, which in this case is 'to partake', which is in the past tense. Here we have one of a few overt statements giving the purpose of the Incarnation—to abolish Satan. See also Romans 14:9, 2 Corinthians 5:15 and Philippians 2:8-11.

[4] The fear of death is a bad master; it drives people to do incredibly stupid things.

[5] 'Propitiation' is a theological term; God's righteous character has been outraged by human sin, and something must be done to 'satisfy'/'pacify' that outraged character.

in that in which He Himself endured suffering, having been tested,[1] He is able to assist those who are being tested.

The Apostle and High Priest of our confession

3 [1]So then, holy brothers, you who share in the celestial calling, do contemplate the Apostle and High Priest of our confession,[2] Jesus Christ![3] [2]who was faithful to the One who appointed Him, as also was Moses in all His[F] house. [3]For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than was Moses, just as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself [4]—every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God—[5]also, Moses was indeed faithful as a servant in all His house, providing evidence of those things that would later be spoken,[4] [6]but Christ is faithful as a Son over His house, whose house are we, if, that is, we hold fast the confidence, even the boast,[5] of the Hope[6] firm to the end.[7]

The Holy Spirit's warning

[7]Therefore—just as the Holy Spirit says:[8] "Today, if you would hear His voice, [8]do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, during the time of the testing[9] in the desert, [9]where your fathers tested me, proved me and saw my works for forty years. [10]In consequence I became very angry with that generation and said, 'Their heart is always being led astray; they have not known my ways.' [11]So I took an oath in my wrath, 'As if they will ever enter my rest!'"[10]—[12]take care, brothers, that there not be a malignant heart of unbelief in any of you, so as to go away from[11] the living God; [13]rather, exhort yourselves every day, while it is called 'today', so that none of you be hardened through sin's deceitfulness. [14]For we have become associates of the Christ, if, that is, we hold fast the

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Christ's sacrifice propitiated God, satisfied/pacified His outraged character. The resurrection is the proof that the Father accepted the sacrifice, that He declared Himself to be satisfied.

1 The Greek word here covers both 'to test' and 'to tempt' (to tempt is to test one's moral fiber), the choice in English being guided by the context. Jesus was not tested only in the area of morals; He was tested physically as well. We too are tested in a variety of ways. (James 1:13 states that God cannot be tempted by evil, and He tempts no one.)

2 To 'confess' is much more than to 'profess', it involves commitment.

3 Here we have the first indication as to the addressees; the missive is addressed to Christians. Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "Christ" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

4 A curious statement—he provided evidence before it was called for, as it were. Of course Moses is referred to many times in the Scriptures written after his day.

5 I suppose that a sincere boasting is an exaggerated form of confidence.

6 I take it that the Hope has to do with eternal life. To still be part of the "house" at the end, one must never give up "the confidence".

7 Less than 1% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "firm to the end" (as in NIV, LB, TEV, etc.).

8 The author is affirming that Psalm 95 was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

9 In the context the people were testing God, not vice-versa.

10 See Psalm 95:7-11.

11 Notice the direction. The term 'malignant' implies Satanic influence.

beginning of the Endeavor[1] firm to the end, **15**while it is *still* being said, "Today,[2] if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." **16**So who were they who, upon hearing, rebelled? Really now, was it not all those who came out of Egypt by Moses?[3] **17**And with whom was He[F] angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the desert? **18**Or to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, if not to those who disobeyed? **19**So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.[4]

4 **1**Therefore we <u>should</u> fear, since a promise of entering His rest still stands, lest any one of you should expect to have come short of it.[5]

There is still a promised rest

2Really, because we are continually hearing Good News[6] just like they did, but the word that they heard did not profit them, since they were not intimately united with the faith of those who obeyed. **3**Now we who have believed do enter that rest, just as He has said, "So I took an oath in my wrath, 'As if they will ever enter my rest!'"—His works were certainly finished from the foundation of the world, **4**because somewhere He has spoken about the seventh day like this, "And on the seventh day God rested from all His works,"[7] **5**while again, in this place, "As if they will ever enter my rest!"[8] **6**Therefore since it remains for some to enter into it, and those who formerly had the Good News proclaimed to them did not enter because of disobedience, **7**He again designates a certain day, after such a long time,[9] saying through David: "Today" (as was stated above), "Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your

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1 I take it that the Christian life or walk with God is called "the Endeavor" (much like 'the Way'); people usually start with confidence and enthusiasm, but frequently slow down as the going gets rough.

2 There comes a time when the window of opportunity is closed, and there are no more 'todays'.

3 Strictly speaking, since the Original Text did not use question marks, this verse could be translated as a statement: 'For some, having heard, did rebel, but not all who came out of Egypt by Moses.' However, since those who did not rebel were very few, a minuscule fraction of the people, most versions treat the verse as a question, as I have done.

4 The implication is clear; if we disobey it is because we do not really believe—see 4:6 below.

5 This verse is a continuation of the whole preceding paragraph that emphasizes the need to persevere in faith, so as to enter the rest. If someone decides he has already fallen short, he will likely give up, stop trying.

6 Strictly speaking it should be "we are continually being good-newsed / evangelized", but to try to make a verb out of 'good news' is awkward; on the other hand 'evangelize' has the connotation of preaching the Gospel to an unbeliever, which is not the point here. I take the "Good News" here to be God's Truth, on any and all topics.

7 See Genesis 2:2.

8 Dear me, this is the third citation of the oath! When He took it, God was "very angry" (3:10 above); is the author implying that 1,500 years later God is similarly angry with those who insist on disobeying? Then it will still be true in our day (another 2,000 years later). [The syntax of these verses is rather convoluted—reminds one of Paul.]

9 About 500 years.

hearts." 8Because if Jesus[1] had given them rest, He would not have spoken afterward of another day. 9So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. 10Further, the one having entered into His rest has himself also rested from his own works,[2] just as God did from His.

We must give an account

11Therefore, let us take pains to enter into that rest so that no one may fall through the same pattern of disobedience. 12Because the Word of God is living and efficient, and sharper than any two-edged sword, actually penetrating to the point of separating soul and spirit,[3] joints and marrow; in fact, it is able to evaluate a heart's reflections and intentions.[4] 13Nothing in all creation is hidden from His sight; rather all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.[5]

We have a Great High Priest

14Therefore, since we have a Great High Priest who has passed through the heavens,[6] Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the Confession. 15For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but He was tested in all points, in similar ways, without sin. 16So let us approach the throne of grace[7] with confidence, that we may receive mercy and find grace, for timely help.

Qualifications for high priesthood

5 1Now every high priest taken from among men is appointed *to act* on behalf of men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins, 2being able to deal gently[8] with those who sin in

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1 Beyond question, the Greek Text has 'Jesus', as in the AV, but most modern versions put 'Joshua'. I suppose that 'Jesus' was judged to be an anachronism, and so 'Joshua' was elected to relieve the situation. To be sure, the Septuagint we know (based on inferior Alexandrian manuscripts) uniformly spells 'Joshua' as *Ιησους* (Jesus) [as a linguist I wonder why the translators transliterated '*Iehoshua*' as '*Iesus*'], and perhaps in consequence, in Acts 7:45 Luke refers to Joshua as 'Iesus' [it was not his purpose to correct the LXX]. However, looking carefully at the context in Psalm 95:7-11, Joshua just does not fit. Consider: it is presumably Jehovah the Son who is speaking ("Jehovah our Maker", verse 6), and since the reference is to those who fell in the wilderness during the forty years, Joshua cannot be in view. It was precisely Jesus, Jehovah the Son, who did not allow that generation to enter the 'rest'. For further discussion please see: "'Jesus' or 'Joshua'?" on my website: prunch.org.

2 We enter God's rest through faith in Christ's Work, not through our own works.

3 If soul and spirit can be separated, they obviously cannot be the same thing, just as joints and marrow are not the same thing. So the human being is trichotomous.

4 Meditating on God's Word can be uncomfortable; it is a 'mirror' that tells us the truth about ourselves.

5 We must give an account to a Judge who knows ALL the facts. This knowledge really ought to turn us into serious people, diligent seekers of God, but…

6 "Heavens" is plural, so He passed through at least two of them, so God's throne must be in the third heaven (unless there are still more in between).

7 Now precisely which, or whose, throne might "the throne of grace" be? I imagine it would be the throne that Jesus is presently occupying at the Father's right. Notice that it is up to us to "approach" and ask.

8 A gentle priest is a comfort.

ignorance and go astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. 3Because of this he must offer sacrifices for his own sins as well, just as he does for the people's. 4Also, no one receives this honor on his own, but upon being called by God, just like Aaron.[1]

Christ meets the qualifications

5So also Christ did not exalt Himself to become High Priest, but it was He[F] who said to Him[S], "You are my Son; today I have begotten You."[2] 6Just as He[F] also says in another place, "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."[3] 7He[S], in the days of His flesh, having offered up both prayers and supplications, with a loud cry and tears, to the One who was able to save Him from death, and having been answered because of His godly fear,[4] 8although being SON, He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. 9And having been completed[5] He became the Source of eternal salvation for all those obeying Him,[6] 10having been designated by God as High Priest 'according to the order of Melchizedek'; 11concerning whom we have much to say, but it is hard to explain, since you have become sluggish in hearing.[7]

"Let's move on toward perfection"

12Really, because although by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary principles of God's oracles all over again; you have come to the point[8] of needing milk, not solid food! 13Surely; whoever lives on milk is an infant, and therefore unskilled in the Word of righteousness. 14On the other hand, solid food is for the mature, those who by habitual use have trained their senses to distinguish good from bad.[9]

6 1Therefore, leaving the elementary teaching about Christ, let us be moved on toward perfection,[10] not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and trust in God, 2of teaching about baptisms,

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1 Aaron's descendants receive the honor by virtue of birth, not choice.

2 See Psalm 2:7.

3 See Psalm 110:4.

4 I believe the reference is to Gethsemane. Note that there was a single loud (desperate?) cry (that should have roused the drowsy disciples). His anguish was so severe that Jesus literally passed blood through the pores in His skin—normally fatal (Luke 22:44). I suspect that the fear mentioned here was the fear that He would die prematurely, there in the garden. He came to die, certainly, but it had to be on the cross. So the Father sent angels to strengthen Him, to keep Him from dying prematurely.

5 His qualifications to become High Priest were completed. As God, what could He know about suffering and obedience, except in theory? While in human form Jesus literally **learned** obedience—He had to feel it like we feel it.

6 That is what the Text says; we must obey Him.

7 The 'difficulty' is not so much in the subject matter, but in the spiritual condition of the hearers. This would seem to indicate that the author has a specific audience in view.

8 The implication is that they are going backwards.

9 Expressions like "habitual use" and "trained their senses" indicate directed, conscious effort on our part.

10 The verb is in the passive voice; without the participation of the Holy Spirit none of us would make it.

of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.[1] [3]We will do this, that is, if indeed God should permit it.[2]

No one kills Jesus twice

[4]Because, it is impossible to bring back into repentance those who were once for all enlightened, who have partaken[3] of the heavenly gift and were made sharers in the Holy Spirit,[4] [5]who have experienced God's good event[5] and capabilities of the coming age,[6] [6]and yet have fallen away—they would be crucifying the Son of God all over again, just for themselves, holding Him up to contempt.[7]

[7]Now the ground that drinks in the rain that frequently falls on it and produces a crop useful to those for whom it is really cultivated receives blessing from God; [8]but should it bear thorns and thistles, it is disqualified, almost a curse, whose destiny is a burning.[8]

A word of encouragement

[9]For all that, dear ones, we are confident of the better things concerning you—things that accompany salvation—even though we speak like this. [10]Because God is not unjust so as to ignore your work, even the labor of love you have invested in His name, in that you have ministered to the saints and continue to do so. [11]You see, we really do want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so as to fulfill the hope; [12]so that you not become careless, but rather imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.[9]

Our secure anchor

[13]Now when God made a promise to Abraham, since He had no one greater to swear by, He swore by Himself [14]saying, "Indeed, blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."[10] [15]And so, after he

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[1] Note that the topics mentioned are stated to be "elementary". Note also that "baptisms" is plural.

[2] The author is not at all sure that God will, indeed, permit it!

[3] The verb here—whether 'to taste', 'to partake', 'to obtain' or 'to come to know'—has to do with <u>experience</u>.

[4] It seems clear enough that the reference is to people who have the Holy Spirit.

[5] I take it that "God's good event" refers to regeneration.

[6] Eternal life is a quality of life; it begins down here for those who have been regenerated.

[7] No amount of theological shifting and squirming can nullify the plain meaning of this verse. The only way to crucify Jesus **again** is if you have already done so once before. No one is going to kill Jesus twice; if the first time was not good enough for you, you have had it! Anyone who holds Jesus "up to contempt" can expect wrath. See Romans 6:9, that says that Jesus cannot die again.

[8] This ground was cultivated, not an unplowed weed patch, and planted with good seed; if it <u>still</u> produces thorns and thistles there is something wrong with it. Thistle seeds need to be burned, not plowed under.

[9] We inherit the promises through faith <u>and</u> perseverance—the author keeps insisting: we have to persevere, hang on, stay with it, whatever, until the end of our earthly life.

[10] I did not want to lose the Hebrew idiom; a freer rendering would be, 'Indeed, I will bless you greatly, and I will multiply you greatly'—the "multiply" refers to descendants. See Genesis 22:17.

had been patient,[1] he obtained the promise.

16Because since men swear by the greater, and for them the confirming oath puts an end to every dispute, 17similarly God, being determined to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchanging nature of His purpose, guaranteed it by an oath, 18so that by two unalterable things, in which God cannot lie, we should have a strong encouragement, we who have taken refuge by grasping the hope set before us; 19which hope we have as an anchor for the soul, both certain and secure,[2] actually entering the inner *sanctuary* behind the curtain, 20where Forerunner Jesus has entered on our behalf, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek, priest and king

7 1Now this Melchizedek—king of Salem, priest of God Most High, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 2to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all (first, his name means 'king of righteousness', and then again 'king of Salem', which means 'king of peace'), 3without father, without mother, without genealogy; having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but having been made like the Son of God[3]—remains a priest continually.

Melchizedek greater than Abraham

4Now consider how great this personage was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils:[4] 5You see, those of the sons of Levi who receive the priesthood have a command, according to the Law, to collect a tithe from the people—that is, from their brothers—even though they *too* came out of Abraham's body; 6but he whose descent is not counted among them collected a tithe from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7Now without dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. 8Also, here men who die receive tithes, but there he of whom it is testified that he lives 9—in a word, even Levi, who receives tithes, paid the tithe through Abraham, 10because he was still in the reproductive system of his fore-father when Melchizedek met him.[5]

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[1] Well, his 'patience' was an up and down thing (Ishmael, and all that), but he never gave up altogether.

[2] Oh, praise God! With an "anchor" like that we have every reason to persevere.

[3] One wonders if Melchizedek was not some sort of theophany, perhaps Jehovah the Son, Himself.

[4] Why would Abraham give a tenth of the spoils to a stranger? Something about Melchizedek was very impressive. When Jehovah the Son appeared to Abraham to announce the destruction of Sodom, he knew who He was.

[5] This is instructive. The inspired author affirms that Levi was in Abraham and also paid the tithe to Melchizedek, but when Abraham met Melchizedek not even Isaac had been born yet, much less Jacob and Levi. So the human spirit, the 'image' of the Creator, is transmitted by the male sperm. This agrees with Romans 5:12-21, where we are informed that Adam's sin contaminated all his descendants. When Eve sinned, she sinned alone. When Adam sinned, we did too.

Melchizedek greater than Aaron

11 Now then, if there could be perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people had received the Law), what further need would there be for a different kind of priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, rather than being called according to the order of Aaron? 12 (Because when the priesthood is changed there is also a change of law, of necessity.) 13 For He of whom these things are said belongs to a different tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord arose out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. 15 And it all becomes clearer still if a different kind of priest, in the likeness of Melchizedek, appears, 16 who has come, not on the basis of a law about a physical rule but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.[1] 17 Because He testifies: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

18 You see, there is an annulling of the former rule because of its weakness and uselessness 19 (for the Law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

Our eternal High Priest represents us eternally

20 Further, inasmuch as it was not without the taking of an oath— 21 they indeed had become priests without an oath-taking, but He[S] with an oath by Him[F] who said to Him[S]: "The LORD has sworn and will not change His[F] mind; you are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"[2]—22 by so much Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. 23 Also, there have been many priests because death prevented them from continuing *in office*; 24 while He[S], because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. 25 Therefore He is able to save absolutely[3] those who come to God through Him, since He always lives and can intercede on their behalf.

26 Now such a High Priest was fitting for us—holy, innocent, undefiled, having been set apart from sinners, and having become higher than the heavens—27 who, unlike those high priests, does not need to offer up daily sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people; because He did this once for all when He offered up Himself. 28 The Law appoints as high priest men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, that came after the Law, appointed **Son**, forever perfect.[4]

Priest and Mediator of a better covenant

8 1 Now the main point of the things we are saying is this: We do have such

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1 "An indestructible life"—that is how come He can be "a priest forever".

2 Some 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of objectively inferior quality, omit "according to the order of Melchizedek" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

3 Wonderful! He is always 'there' for us.

4 The Text has, literally, 'having been perfected' (or 'completed', or 'consecrated'); the result of 'having been perfected' is to be perfect, and it is the result that is eternal, not the process.

a High Priest, who sat down[1] at the right of the Majesty's throne in the heavens, **2**Minister of the Holy Places, that is, of the true Tabernacle which the Lord set up, not man. **3**Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices (it follows that it is necessary for this One also to have something He might offer)— **4**if He were on earth He would not be a priest, there already being priests who offer the gifts according to the Law;[2] **5**who serve in a copy and shadow of the heavenly things[3] (that is why Moses was warned by God when he was ready to assemble the Tabernacle: "See to it," He says, "that you make everything according to the pattern shown to you on the mountain")—**6**but <u>now</u> He has obtained a more excellent ministry, just as He is Mediator of a better covenant, which was enacted as law on the basis of better promises.[4]

A new covenant

7Now if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for a second one; **8**but finding fault with them[5] He says: "Listen! Days are coming," says the LORD, "when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah[6]—**9**not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt,[7] because they did not abide by my covenant and so I disregarded them," says the LORD. **10**"Now this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days," says the LORD,[8] "I will put my laws into their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God and they will be my people. **11**Further, not one of them will teach his neighbor and not one his brother saying, 'Get to know the LORD!' because they all will know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. **12**For I will be merciful to their wrongdoings; I will not at all remember their sins and their lawless deeds."[9] **13**By saying 'new' He has made the

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[1] He took His seat; it was His prerogative.

[2] This presumably indicates that this missive was written before the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, when the sacrifices ceased.

[3] The Tabernacle assembled by Moses was but a 'shadow' of the real thing; which probably means that the spiritual realm is more 'real' than the physical one—which is difficult for us to believe, so very few live on that basis.

[4] Wow! How is that for convoluted syntax—verses 3-6 form a single sentence. It almost feels 'Pauline'!

[5] That is right, the people, since they did not live up to the covenant. The following quote is from Jeremiah 31:31-34.

[6] The author equates the second covenant, inaugurated by Christ, with Jeremiah's new covenant, so the reference to 'the house of Israel' and 'the house of Judah' means that there are no 'lost' tribes—God knows who they are and where they are (see Revelation 7:4-8).

[7] "I took them by the hand"—recall that they were led by the column of cloud/fire from the very first.

[8] "The house of Israel" is not the Church! I would say that verses 10 and 11 here will be fulfilled during the Messianic Millennial Kingdom. Notice "they will be my people".

[9] Some 3.5% of the Greek manuscripts omit "and their lawless deeds" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

first one 'old'; and what is obsolete and aging is near the end.

The earthly sanctuary

9 [1]Now that first covenant did indeed have regulations for divine service and the earthly sanctuary. [2]Yes, a tabernacle was set up: the first part, which is called the Holy Place, in which were the lamp stand, the table and the showbread; [3]and behind the second curtain an area called the Holy of Holies, [4]having a golden censer[1] and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold—in it were a golden jar holding the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant; [5]while above it were cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat (this is not the place to go into detail about them).[2]

The service of the sanctuary

[6]Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests continually went into the first part, performing the divine services, [7]but into the second one only the high priest could go, once a year and only with blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins of ignorance;[3] [8]the Holy Spirit was making clear that the way into the Most Holy Place was not yet open to the public while the first tabernacle was still in existence. [9]It was a figure during the time then present, a time when both gifts and sacrifices were being offered that were incapable of clearing the conscience of the worshipper— [10]they were only about foods and drinks and various ceremonial washings and physical regulations, things imposed until the time of restructuring.[4]

Christ serves in the heavenly sanctuary

[11]But Christ entered once for all into the real Holy Places, having obtained eternal redemption—He had come as High Priest of the good things that are about to be, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, [12]and with His own blood, not that of goats and calves. [13]For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who had been ceremonially defiled, restored ceremonial purity to the body, [14]how much more

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[1] The normal meaning of the Greek word here is precisely 'censer', but unfortunately modern versions like NIV, TEV, LB, NASB render 'altar of incense', thus setting up a contradiction with the Old Testament. According to Exodus 30:6 the altar of incense was placed in front of the curtain leading into the Holy of Holies, and so it was in the Holy Place, not the Holy of Holies. The only reference to this particular censer appears to be in Leviticus 16:12, where it was to be used behind the second curtain to hide the Ark with smoke. Since that censer would only be used once a year (on the day of atonement), it may well have been stored just behind a corner of the second curtain (where the high priest could retrieve it without looking in) and thus the author of Hebrews would be correct in saying that the censer was behind the second curtain, whereas the altar was in front of it. In any event, evidently that censer was only used within the Holy of Holies, and so it would be appropriate to say that the area 'had' a golden censer.

[2] Oh, but I wish he had!

[3] There was no sacrifice for deliberate sin.

[4] Or, 'the time of getting it right'.

will the blood of Christ, who through the Holy Spirit[1] offered Himself[2] unblemished to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? **15**For this reason He is mediator of a new covenant, so that those who have been called[3] may receive the promised eternal inheritance—since a death has occurred for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant.[4]

The earthly sanctuary inaugurated with blood

16Now where there is a will, the death of the one who made it must be established; **17**because a will is in force after men are dead, since it never takes effect while the one who made it lives. **18**Therefore, not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood; **19**because when every commandment of the Law had been proclaimed by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the scroll itself[5] and all the people, **20**saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has decreed to you."[6] **21**Then he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the divine service with the blood in the same way. **22**In fact, according to the Law nearly everything is cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.[7]

The heavenly sanctuary inaugurated with Christ's blood

23So then, it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with such, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than those.[8] **24**For Christ did not enter into Holy Places made by hands, mere copies of the true ones,[9] but into Heaven itself, now to appear in God's presence on our behalf; **25**but not in order to offer Himself repeatedly, like the high priest who entered the Most Holy Place year by year with another's blood—**26**otherwise He would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world; but now, once for all at the end of the ages, He has been revealed to nullify sin by the sacrifice of Himself. **27**Also, inasmuch as men are destined to die but

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1 We are accustomed to 'the Eternal Spirit', an attractive reading; I have followed the best line of transmission, albeit supported by only some 30% of the Greek manuscripts, plus the Latin tradition.

2 If Christ "offered Himself", He was both High Priest and Lamb. The Holy Spirit was with Him all the time. Verse 14 overtly mentions all three persons of the Trinity.

3 "Who have been called"—the author alludes to God's sovereignty.

4 All the animals sacrificed under the first covenant could not redeem; their effect was temporary. The salvation of all Old Testament saints depends upon the shed blood of God's Lamb.

5 Some of the Law had already been written down.

6 See Exodus 24:8.

7 "Without shedding of blood there is no remission"—an important statement.

8 Dear me, how could anything in Heaven be in need of cleansing? Well, Satan (Lucifer) had been there, and probably did some contaminating before his open rebellion. In fact, he still appears before God's throne.

9 The 'real' world is the spirit world, not the physical.

once, after which the judgment,[1] 28so the Christ also, having been offered once for all to bear the sins of many—He will appear a second time to those who are eagerly waiting for Him, apart from sin, into salvation.[2]

Animal blood is insufficient

10 1You see, the Law is but a shadow of the good things to come, not their actual matter, so it can never perfect those who approach with the same sacrifices that they offer endlessly, year after year. 2Otherwise would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshippers would have had no more consciousness of sins, having been cleansed once for all? 3However, those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, 4because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.[3]

"I have come to do Your will, O God"

5Therefore, upon coming into the world He[S] says: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but You prepared a body for me;[4] 6with burnt offerings and sin offerings You were not pleased. 7Then I said, 'Yes indeed, I have come to do Your will, O God—thus it is written about me in the scroll of the book.'"[5] 8First He says, "Sacrifices, offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings You did not desire, nor were You pleased with them" (which are offered according to the Law), 9then He says, "Yes indeed, I have come to do Your will, O God."[6] He removes the first in order to establish the second. 10By that will[7] we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.[8]

Christ perfects forever

11Now every priest has stood ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices that can never take away sins; 12but He Himself, having offered for all time <u>one</u> sacrifice for sins, sat down at God's right. 13Since that time He is waiting until His enemies are placed as a foot-

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1 This verse contradicts any notion of 'reincarnation'. We only die once, physically.

2 I suppose this is a reference to the Rapture, but however we receive our glorified bodies, at that point we receive our definitive transferal "into salvation".

3 The author's reasoning here is both interesting and important; they could never stop, because they never felt clean.

4 When Jehovah the Son accepted the 'prepared body' He accepted the whole Plan—the humiliation of being limited to a human body, being born as a helpless baby, living on this sin-cursed planet for 33 years, being rejected, the death on the cross—the works. Would not the humiliation of being confined to a human body be worse than the humiliation on the cross? When I participate in the 'Lord's Supper', since the bread represents His body, I thank Him for accepting that body. As a personal application, I am challenged to accept the 'body' prepared for me—God's plan for my life in its daily outworking, complete with the unpleasant circumstances. Every day I renew my own commitment: "I am here to do Your will, O God".

5 See Psalm 40:6-8. Instead of "body", the Hebrew Text has 'ears'. You cannot have ears without a body, and the purpose of the body was to work out the commands heard by the ears. The Holy Spirit was at perfect liberty to make the point clearer in this quote.

6 Some 15% of the Greek manuscripts omit "O God" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, etc.).

7 God's sovereignty, again.

8 You cannot have blood without a body.

stool for His feet, 14because by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.[1]

15Now the Holy Spirit also testifies to us *about this*, after having foreseen it: 16"'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days,' says the LORD, 'I will put my laws on their hearts and I will write them on their minds, 17and I will not at all remember their sins and lawless deeds.'"[2] 18Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin.[3]

Hold fast the confession of the Hope

19Therefore, brothers, having courage to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20by a new and living way that He inaugurated for us, through the curtain, that is to say, His flesh, 21and having a Great Priest over the house of God, 22let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, our hearts having been sprinkled[4] from an evil conscience and our body having been washed with clean water.[5] 23Let us hold fast the confession of the Hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. 24And let us contemplate one another, for the stirring up of love and good works, 25not forsaking the assembling of ourselves (like some are doing), but exhorting one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

A severe warning

26Because, if we deliberately keep on sinning after having received the real knowledge of the Truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27just a certain fearful anticipation of judgment and fierce fire that is ready to consume the hostiles. 28Anyone who rejected Moses' law died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be deemed worthy who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has regarded as unholy the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified,[6] and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30For we know Him who said, "'Vengeance is up to me,' says the Lord,[7] 'I will repay.'" And again, "The LORD will judge His people."[8] 31It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God!

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[1] Our sanctification is a process, but it is based on, and made possible by, Christ's 'once for all' sacrifice.

[2] See Jeremiah 31:33-34.

[3] Once all sins have been paid for, there is no further need for an offering.

[4] Sprinkling indicates cleansing.

[5] I suppose most people take a bath before going to church, but how about in our daily devotions?

[6] "By which he was sanctified", that is what the Text says. "His people" presumably refers to people who belong to Him. Verse 31 is not talking about the ordinary consequences of ordinary sin—the clear implication is that God is especially unhappy! To "trample the Son of God under foot" refers to a public repudiation in insulting terms; the reference is to a former Christian who is in open rebellion against God.

[7] Some 4% of the Greek manuscripts omit "says the Lord" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

[8] See Deuteronomy 32:35-36.

A word of encouragement

32 However, remember those earlier days in which, having been
enlightened, you endured a great struggle of sufferings: 33 partly being
publicly exposed to both insults and oppression, and partly siding with
those who were so treated. 34 Indeed, you also shared in the suffering of
my chains;[1] you even accepted the plundering of your possessions with
joy, knowing that you have for yourselves a better and enduring
possession in the heavens.

35 So do not throw away your confidence, which has a great
recompense. 36 You need perseverance so that, having done the will of
God, you may receive the promise. 37 For in a very little while: "He who
is coming will come and will not delay. 38 Now the righteous one will live
by faith, yet if he backs away, my soul has no pleasure in him."[2] 39 But
we are not of those who back away into ruin,[3] but of those who believe
to the saving of the soul.

About faith

11 1 Now faith is a realization of things being hoped for, an evidence of
things not seen.[4] 2 By it the ancients were approved. 3 By faith we
understand that the ages[5] were created by a word from God, so that the
things that are seen were made out of things invisible.

Abel, Enoch, Noah

4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than did Cain,
through which he obtained witness that he was righteous,[6] God testi-
fying concerning his gifts; and by means of it he still speaks, even though
being dead. 5 By faith Enoch was transferred so as not to see death, and
could not be found because God had translated him; before his
translation he had obtained witness that he was pleasing to God.[7]

6 Now without faith it is impossible to please Him, because the one
approaching God must believe that He exists and that He becomes a
rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him.[8] 7 By faith Noah, being
divinely warned of things not yet seen,[9] moved with godly fear, prepared

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1 I wonder if Paul is referring to the two years he was a prisoner in Caesarea, since he is evidently writing from Rome (13:24 below). The chief priests doubtless had spies there to make a note of anyone who helped him.

2 See Habakkuk 2:3-4.

3 The emphasis here is on human responsibility. To "back away" from one's commitment to Christ and His Kingdom is to return into the ruin from which he had been delivered.

4 Such faith is a great deal more than mere wishful thinking; it makes things happen.

5 That is what the Text says, "ages"; see the note at 1:2 above.

6 Although Genesis does not mention it, I assume that God had given instruction to Adam about the necessity of blood sacrifice.

7 His contemporaries probably looked down on Enoch as being a little 'odd', altogether too 'religious' or 'spiritual'.

8 When we get serious with God, He answers.

9 It had never rained during the 1600 years since the creation of the world. Noah believed God's word against all human experience up to that time. Don't you know that

an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that is according to faith.[1]

Abraham and Sarah

8By faith Abraham, upon being called to go forth to the place that he would receive as an inheritance, obeyed and went, though not being acquainted with where he was going.[2] **9**By faith he migrated into the land of promise as into a foreign country, dwelling in tents, along with Isaac and Jacob, the fellow heirs of the same promise; **10**for he was waiting expectantly for the city with the real foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

11By faith Sarah herself also received power to conceive seed, and she bore a child[3] when she was past the normal age, since she judged Him faithful who had promised. **12**And so from one man, actually an impotent,[4] were begotten descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky, and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

Seeking a heavenly homeland

13These all died believing—not having received the promises, but having seen and welcomed them from a distance, thus confessing that they were aliens and sojourners on the earth. **14**Now those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. **15**If they were actually remembering that land from which they had departed, they would have had opportunity to return. **16**Instead they are aspiring to a better home—a heavenly one.[5] Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; in fact, He has prepared a city for them.

Patriarchs

17By faith Abraham, upon being tested, offered up Isaac; yes, he who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his only begotten,[6] **18**of whom it had been said, "Through Isaac will your seed be reckoned,"[7] **19**calculating that God was indeed able to raise him from the dead; from

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Noah was the laughingstock of the surrounding society for the 100+ years it took him to build the Ark. (But he got the last laugh.)

1 Note that this was centuries before Abraham.

2 But his obedience was not complete; he took his father, and that cost him 15 years in Haran; and from there he took Lot, the bad consequences of which lasted for centuries (indeed, for as long as there were Moabites and Ammonites).

3 Perhaps 3% of the Greek manuscripts omit "she bore a child" (as in NIV, NASB, LB, TEV, etc.).

4 This statement helps us understand why Sarah urged Abraham to sleep with Hagar; she knew his virility was declining and was desperate for him to produce an heir. For Isaac to be born, God had to work a miracle in Abraham's body, as well as in Sarah's.

5 I think we are obliged to understand that Abraham received a great deal more information from God than is recorded in Genesis—information that was duly passed on to Isaac and Jacob.

6 That is what the Text says, "only begotten". In terms of the promise, that included Sarah, Isaac was his only begotten, although he also had children with Hagar and Keturah.

7 See Genesis 21:12.

whence in fact he did receive him, figuratively speaking.

20By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. **21**By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff.[1] **22**By faith Joseph, near the end, thought of the exodus of the sons of Israel and gave orders concerning his bones.[2]

Moses

23By faith Moses was hidden for three months by his parents, after he was born, because they saw he was a fine child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. **24**By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,[3] **25**choosing rather to be maltreated along with God's people than to have the temporary pleasure of sin, **26**considering the reproach for the Christ[4] to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; because he was looking ahead to the reward. **27**By faith he left Egypt behind, not fearing the king's rage,[5] because he persevered as though seeing Him who is invisible. **28**By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch them. **29**By faith they passed through the Red Sea as on dry ground, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were swallowed up.[6]

30By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, having been encircled for seven days.[7] **31**By faith the prostitute Rahab, having received the spies in peace, did not perish with the disobedient.[8]

Exploits achieved through faith

32And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell about

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[1] It has been alleged that this statement disagrees with Genesis 47:31, that has Jacob leaning on the head of the bed (following the Massoretic Text), rather than the top of his staff. However, Hebrews 11:21 and Genesis 47:31 refer to different occasions, so there is no need to imagine a discrepancy. That said, it may be of interest to note the following. The Hebrew words for 'bed' and 'staff' are spelled with the same three consonants, the difference being in the vowels, that were not written. Thus the Original Hebrew Text was ambiguous here. When the Massoretes added vowel pointing to the Hebrew Text, many centuries after Christ, they chose 'bed'. Long before, the Septuagint had chosen 'staff'.

[2] He was doubtless well aware of the content of Jehovah's conversations with Abraham.

[3] This may explain Exodus 2:15. If Moses had publicly rejected an offer by Pharaoh, based on his adoption, then Pharaoh would be disgruntled and would welcome an excuse to kill Moses.

[4] This statement intrigues me. What did Moses know about the Christ (when he left Egypt), and from whom did he learn it? And how did he know about the reward? I suppose it is possible that he had made a point of finding out who his parents were, and had conversed with them about their history.

[5] This refers to the Exodus, not his flight 40 years earlier.

[6] For a discussion of where this happened, please see: "Where is Mt. Sinai?" on my website: prunch.org.

[7] Those walls were so thick that they contained houses. To get several million Jews to march in silence was also quite a trick!

[8] And she entered the line that produced the Messiah—Matthew 1:5. Amazing!

Gideon, about Barak and Samson and Jephtha, about David and Samuel and the prophets, 33who through faith subdued kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, closed lions' mouths, 34quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became mighty in battle, put to flight foreign armies. 35Women received their dead back by resurrection; while others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance, so that they might obtain a better resurrection.[1] 36Still others were tried by mockings and scourgings, and even by chains and imprisonment. 37They were stoned, they were sawed in two, they were tempted, they were murdered by sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, mistreated—38of whom the world was not worthy—wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.[2]

39Now all these did not receive the promise, though having been approved through faith, 40God having planned something better for us,[3] so that they should not be perfected without us.[4]

"Let us run with endurance"

12 1So then, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, we too must run with endurance the race that is set before us, laying aside every impediment and the sin[5] that so easily ensnares, 2looking unto Jesus, the Founder and Perfecter of the Faith, who for the joy[6] that was set before Him endured a cross, scorning its ignominy, and took His seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

All legitimate children receive discipline

3Do consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, so as not to grow weary, losing courage in your souls. 4In your struggle against sin[7] you have not yet resisted to the point of bloodshed.[8] 5And you have forgotten the exhortation that instructs you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the LORD's discipline, nor lose heart when you are reproved by Him; 6because whom the LORD loves He chastens, yes scourges every son whom He accepts."[9]

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[1] I assume that by "better resurrection" is meant more rewards and honor once resurrected.

[2] We have had it pretty easy, wouldn't you say?

[3] What do we have that is "better"? Well, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit, and we have the complete Bible, for starters.

[4] They are waiting for the Rapture, since only then will they be resurrected and receive their glorified bodies, along with us.

[5] I suppose that each of us has his own 'besetting sin'—what gives me trouble will not necessarily be the same thing that gives you trouble.

[6] I imagine that that "joy" has something to do with His Bride.

[7] In the context this presumably refers to sin in the world, not within.

[8] The Text does not say whose blood.

[9] See Proverbs 3:11-12. When I was a boy my father had a horse, a gentle creature, and a proper horsewhip to go with it. I found myself on the business end of that whip more than once (more often than did the horse), and I can assure the reader that it was not a

7If you are enduring discipline, God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not discipline? 8But if you are without discipline (something everyone undergoes),[1] then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9Furthermore, we have had our human fathers as correctors and respected them. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits[2] and live? 10Now they indeed disciplined us during a short period as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, so that we may partake of His holiness. 11Now no discipline seems to be pleasant at the time, but painful; yet afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been exercised by it.[3]

Watch your step!

12Therefore strengthen the listless hands and weakened knees, 13and make straight paths for your feet, so that the lame not be turned aside but rather be healed.[4]

14Pursue peace with all, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord;[5] 15taking care that no one come short of the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springing up cause trouble and thereby many be defiled, 16that no one be a fornicator, or worldly like Esau, who in exchange for one meal gave up his birthright. 17Because you do indeed know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing he was rejected; he found no place for a change of mind,[6] though he sought it diligently with tears.

Sinai X Zion

18Now you have not come to a touchable mountain burning with fire, to blackness and darkness, to tempest; 19to a trumpet blast and spoken words such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them 20(because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain it must be stoned!"[7] 21and the sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am terrified and trembling!"); 22but you have come to Mount Zion, even to the City of the Living God, Heavenly Jerusalem; to myriads of angels in festal gathering, 23to an assembly of firstborn ones[8] who have been enrolled in heaven; to God,

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pleasant experience. So God's scourgings tend not to be very pleasant; but if we end up partaking of His holiness (verse 10 below), it will be worth it.

1 At that time there was probably no culture dominated by relativistic humanism.

2 "The Father of spirits"—an interesting concept. All created spirits owe their existence to Him.

3 That is the secret—we must be "exercised" by it; that is, we must learn whatever lesson the Lord is trying to teach us.

4 I take the point to be that we should not turn our Christian-walk into a bunch of complicated rules—keep it simple.

5 If we need to "pursue" this holiness, then it is experiential, not positional. God rewards those who "earnestly seek Him" (11:6 above).

6 Neither Isaac nor God changed his mind; Jacob was in and Esau was out.

7 See Exodus 19:12-13. Perhaps 4% of the Greek manuscripts add 'or shot with an arrow' (as in AV and NKJV).

8 I wonder who these "firstborn ones" are.

Judge of all; to the spirits of the perfected righteous; 24to Jesus, Mediator of a new covenant, and to a blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.[1]

Warning: "Our God is a consuming fire"

25See to it that you not refuse Him who speaks. Because if they did not escape who refused Him who gave divine warning on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from Him who warns from Heaven! 26Then His voice shook the earth, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth but also the heaven."[2] 27Now the 'yet once more' clearly indicates the removal of the things being shaken (created things), so that the unshakables may remain.

28Therefore, since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us hold on to the grace by which we serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; 29because our God is indeed a consuming fire.[3]

Practical instructions

13 1Let brotherly love continue. 2Do not forget hospitality to strangers, for in doing so some have entertained angels without knowing it. 3Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, those who are being mistreated as if you yourselves were physically there. 4Marriage is honorable among all and the marriage bed undefiled,[4] but God will judge fornicators and adulterers.[5] 5Your way of life should be free from the love of money, being content with what you have, because He Himself has said: "I absolutely will not desert you; I most certainly will not abandon you."[6] 6So we can say with confidence: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"[7]

7Remember your leaders, those who spoke the Word of God to you, whose faith imitate, considering the outcome of their conduct. 8Jesus

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1 Let me try to list the 'reception committee': 1) the City; 2) angels; 3) firstborn ones (different from angels?); 4) God the Father; 5) the perfected righteous; 6) Jesus; 7) the Blood. An impressive list! What did Abel's blood say?—murder and punishment! What does Jesus' blood say?—redemption and forgiveness! Oh praise God!

2 See Haggai 2:6.

3 One gets the impression that taking God, and our life in Christ, for granted is definitely not a good idea.

4 The rendering of the King James Version—"marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled"—has been seriously misused, here and there. While in Seminary, a 'Christian' psychologist used this text to tell our class that it was ok for a man to have anal sex with his wife: "marriage is honorable in all"! It should be obvious that it is not ok to murder in bed, to tell lies in bed, to steal in bed, to commit adultery in bed, to fornicate in bed. Since the Creator decrees the death penalty to those who engage in anal sex (Leviticus 20:13), doing it in the marriage bed cannot make it right!

5 This is one of several texts that show that 'fornication' and 'adultery' are distinct concepts. 'Fornication' includes pre-marital sex, prostitution, anal sex and animal sex, but not adultery.

6 What a marvelous assurance! See Deuteronomy 31:8.

7 See Psalm 118:6.

Christ is Himself,[1] yesterday and today and into the ages. **9**Do not be carried away by various and strange teachings, because it is good that the heart be established by grace, not foods, by which those who were so occupied were not benefited.

Join Jesus outside the camp

10We have an altar from which those who serve in the Tabernacle have no right to eat.[2] **11**Because the bodies of the animals—whose blood, concerning sin, is brought into the Holies by the high priest—are burned up outside the camp, **12**therefore Jesus also, so that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, suffered outside the city gate. **13**So then, let us go out to Him, outside the camp, bearing His disgrace;[3] **14**because here we do not have a permanent city, but we seek the coming one.

15Through Him therefore, at all times, let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God[4]—the fruit of lips that identify with His name. **16**(But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.)

Concluding remarks

17Obey your leaders and submit, for they keep watch over your souls, as those who must give account, so that they may do it with joy and not sighing (which would be unprofitable for you).

18Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, desiring to live commendably in all things; **19**I especially urge you to do this so that I may be restored to you more quickly.[5]

Benediction

20Now may the God of peace—who through the blood of the eternal covenant[6] brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep—**21**equip you for every good work to do His will,[7] working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ,

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[1] The basic meaning of the emphatic pronoun here is 'self', but it can also mean 'same', especially in a comparison. If Jesus is always Himself, then He is always the same.

[2] I do not understand this. The Tabernacle set up by Moses had been gone for over 1000 years when Paul wrote. Perhaps 'tabernacle' is a metaphor for 'temple'.

[3] Persecuted Christians in China and elsewhere know all about this, but many in North America have had such an easy time of it that they have 'forgotten' this aspect of the Gospel. But their turn is coming—in Canada, if you speak out against homosexuality you go to jail, for instance.

[4] To praise God when everything is fine is no "sacrifice", so I suppose that the reference is to doing so when we are hurting, perplexed, not understanding.

[5] This suggests that the author is in jail, in Italy (verse 24 below), so Paul is a possible candidate.

[6] "The blood of the eternal covenant" can only refer to the blood of God's Lamb, that was 'foreknown before the foundation of the world' (1 Peter 1:19-20). From our point of view, anything that existed before our planet was created, and that will continue to exist after it is destroyed, may properly be called 'eternal'.

[7] In John 5:19 the Lord Jesus said that He only did what He saw the Father doing. All the power, enabling, equipping that the Text says is available to us is there for us to do the Father's will, not our own.

to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Sign off

22Now I appeal to you, brothers, bear with this word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words.[1] **23**Know that brother Timothy has been released, with whom I will see you, if he comes quickly.

24Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.

25The Grace be with you all. Amen.

[1] As the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul's letters to them are liberally sprinkled with commands—he could be quite 'heavy' at times. There he was on his own 'turf'. But the Jews were Peter's turf (Galatians 2:7-8), so in writing to them Paul (as I assume) does not come on as an apostle, and here 'appeals' rather than commands. The reference to Timothy in the next verse also suggests Paul as the author.