

Hebrews 12:18-13:25

Overview

Let's briefly review the landmarks showing where we are in Hebrews.

First, the use of the word "son" shifts dramatically in the second half of the book. Through 10:29, the word refers almost entirely to our Lord, but after that point it always refers to believers (Figure 1, chart), reflecting the top-level division (Figure 2), between the **Son** of God, and the **Sons** of God.

Imperatives mark two divisions in Heb 10:32-13:25 (Figure 3, chart). First, after an initial exhortation in 10:32, none appears until ch. 12-13, where they abound. Second, this cluster of imperatives has two distinct peaks, separated by a low density region that corresponds to the fifth warning. We have seen that the warnings function as hinges, and thus markers of division, between parallel sections at the same level of the discourse. This section has the structure in Figure 4 (chart).

Figure 4 characterizes the two parallel sections differently than we have before. Previously, we described 10-12 as living in the world, and 13 as living in the church, but we have seen that the instructions in 12:12-17 emphasize principles of church life introduced by our Lord in Matthew 18. But each section is marked by a focus on examples: in ch. 11 of past witnesses who triumphed "by faith," and in ch 13 of "them that have the rule over you," pre-eminent believers known personally to the readers.

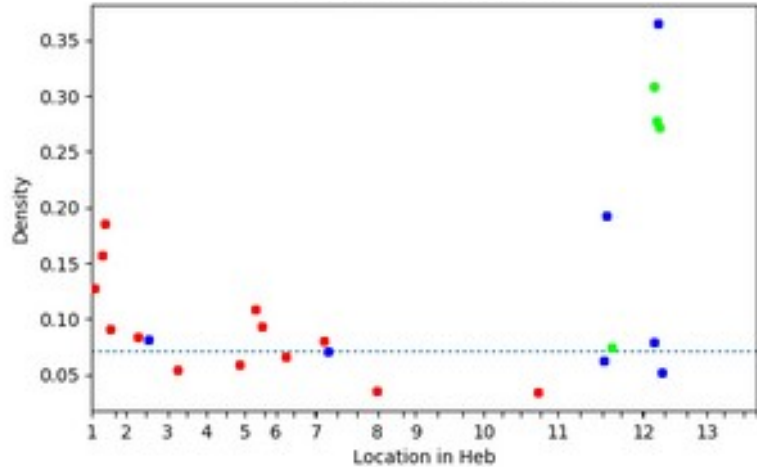


Figure 1: "Son" = *Christ*, believers (*plural, singular*)

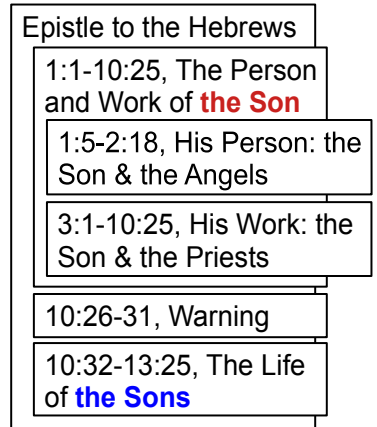


Figure 2: Overview of Hebrews

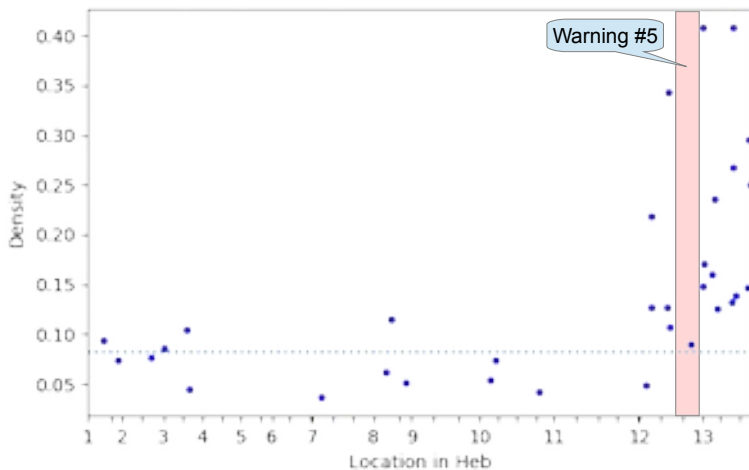


Figure 3: Imperatives and the fifth warning

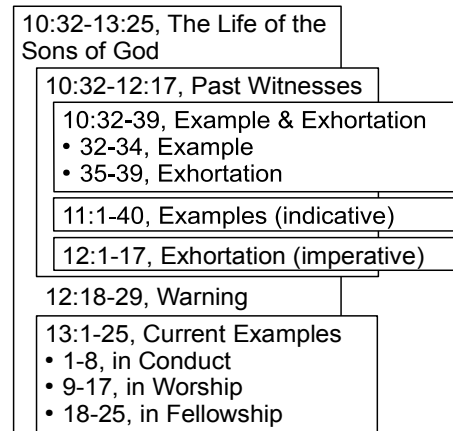


Figure 4: Structure of Hebrews 10:32-13:19

So, having considered the example of past saints, we now hear a warning, before considering the modern examples the Lord has given us.

12:18-29, Warning against Refusing

Hebrews is famous for its five warning passages (Table 1, chart). Each of these warns against a different sin, and provides a transition between two sections at the same level of the discourse.

The current warning begins with a metaphor of the decision that confronts the church in Rome, whether to go back to the anti-Christian synagogues, protected by Roman law, or to

continue in the distinctive assemblies of believers in the Lord Jesus, who had already felt the wrath of Rome against spiritual innovations under the emperor Claudius.

Warning	Sin	Follows	Precedes
2:1-4	Neglect	1:1-14, Christ higher than angels	2:5-18, Christ lower than angels
3:7-4:13	Unbelief	3:1-6, Christ as faithful high priest (faith = belief)	4:14-10:25, Christ as merciful high priest
5:11-6:12	Stagnation	4:14-5:10, Christ is like other priests	6:13-10:25, Christ is unlike other priests
10:26-31	Willful Sin	1:1-10:25, The Person & Work of the Son of God	10:32-13:25, The Life of the Sons of God
12:18-29	Refusal to Obey	10:32-12:17, Past Witnesses	13:1-25, Current Examples

Table 1: The Warning Passages in Hebrews

18-24, Remember the Mountains

The writer contrasts two mountains in the OT, Mount Sinai and Mount Zion. His primary interest is not geography, but a spiritual metaphor. This metaphor closely reflects Galatians 4 (chart), and since Galatians is probably the earliest of Paul’s epistles, this passage may draw on that one.

Recall that Galatians deals with the question of whether Gentiles who receive the Lord Jesus need to be circumcised and follow the Jewish traditions in order to be saved. In Galatians, Paul compares the two mountains to Abraham’s two wives, and relates them to “the two covenants”:

Gal 4:22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. 24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the **mount Sinai**, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. 25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. 26 But **Jerusalem which is above** is free, which is the mother of us all. 27 For it is written [Isa 54:1], Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

So Paul has already used the two mountains to contrast first-century Judaism, which rejected Jesus as the Messiah, with those who have received salvation by grace through the Lord Jesus.

Our writer picks up the same two mountains, in a closely related metaphor. Each description is introduced by the verb “ye are ... come” (προσέρχομαι, G4334, vv. 18, 22), describing the readers’ relation to these mountains. Two features of this verb invite our attention.

First, throughout Hebrews, it is regularly used of our approach to God:

Heb. 4:16 Let us therefore **come boldly unto the throne of grace**,

Heb. 7:25 ... he is able also to save them to the uttermost that **come unto God** by him,

Heb. 10:22 **Let us draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith,

Heb. 11:6 **he that cometh to God** must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder ...

Here also, we are approaching God. He is the one whose presence on Mount Sinai at once attracts the people and forbids them to come too close, and in the description of Mount Zion, one of the parties we find there (v. 23) is “God the judge of all.”

The second feature of this verb in these two instances is that it is in the perfect tense, indicating something already accomplished. The writer is not talking about dying and going to heaven, or the Lord’s future return, but their present condition.

The church in Rome is facing persecution, which they could avoid if they would blend back into the synagogue. The basis of the synagogue is Jewish law and tradition, represented by Mount Sinai. Will they go back to that mountain? Or will they continue to enjoy the spiritual fellowship of Mount Zion, the church?

18-21, Mount Sinai

The synagogue continues to encamp at the foot of Mount Sinai, where God gave the law. The description in 13:18-21 draws mostly from Exodus 19-20, as shown in Table 2 (charts). 12:18-19 follow in fairly close order the events of Exodus 19-20, while 12:20-21 are a commentary that breaks the sequential order and brings in other passages. 12:21 is the only citation that requires special comment.

21 And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

Exodus 19-20 and Deuteronomy 4 do not record these words, but the writer is probably drawing on other passages or Jewish traditions about Moses’ encounters with God at other points in his life to reconstruct his feelings when the nation first came to Sinai. Moses records in Deuteronomy that he was afraid later at Mount Sinai, when he came down with the tables of the law only to find that the people had constructed the golden calf:

Deut 9:19 For **I was afraid** of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the LORD was wroth against you to destroy you.

“Quake” (the adjective *ἐντρομος*, G1790) appears only two other times in the NT, in Acts 7:32 and 16:39.¹ The first of these describes Moses at the burning bush, before he came to Sinai:

Acts 7:32 ... Then Moses **trembled**, and durst not behold.

The corresponding verse in Exodus says simply,

Exod 3:6 And Moses hid [LXX turned aside] his face; for he was afraid to look upon [LXX looked down in the presence of] God.

Stephen and our writer may both simply be making a logical inference from Moses’ unwillingness to look directly at the divine revelation, or there may be a broader Jewish tradition on which they both draw. In any event, our writer’s reasoning is that given Moses’ response to

1 A detail that Delitzsch notes in support for his claim of Lukan authorship of Hebrews. The possible allusion to Acts 7 strengthens Manson’s case that Hebrews is closely connected with a Christian movement among Hellenistic Jews that was rooted in Stephen’s ministry.

Hebrews 12	Exodus 19-20 and Others
18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched ,	19:12 And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: 13 There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live:
and that burned with fire , nor unto blackness , and darkness , and tempest ,	19:16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings , and a thick cloud upon the mount, ... 18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke , because the LORD descended upon it in fire : ... and the whole mount quaked greatly. Deut. 4:11 And ye drew nigh and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire up to heaven: there was darkness, blackness , and tempest .
19 And the sound of a trumpet , and the voice of words ;	19:16 ... and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; ... 19 And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice .
which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:	20:19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.
20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:	19:13 There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live:
21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake .)	[Golden Calf:] Deut 9:19 For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the LORD was wrath against you to destroy you. [Burning Bush:] Acts 7:32 ... Then Moses trembled , and durst not behold.

Table 2: Hebrews 12 as an Echo of Exodus 19-20

the presence of the Lord at the Bush and at the Golden Calf, we can expect that he would have the same attitude in the context of Exodus 19-20.

So Israel of old encamped at the base of this terrifying mountain, and those who would return to the synagogue are choosing to join them there. But the writer reminds his readers that by choosing to follow our Lord, they have abandoned that encampment. Instead, they have arrived at another mountain.

22-24, Mount Zion

The perfect tense suggests that 22-24 describe neither our future heavenly home nor the coming millennial kingdom, but our present association with one another as believers. The writer gives seven characteristics of our new city.² The first and last elements of each list correspond—two mountains, two voices. But the seven elements here are organized, not by following the order of an OT text (as were the elements for Mount Sinai), but around three features of the church, viewed as the new Jerusalem. The writer envisions what we experience as we approach the sanctuary. Two elements describe *where* we gather, one (with two divisions) summarizes *who* is

² Bengel, followed by Delitzsch and others, sees a correspondence with seven in the previous list, 12:17-19.

there, and the last four bring us face to face with God as the Father and the Son, whom we are come to worship (Table 3, chart), each with an example of their effect.

22a, b, Where we Gather

Our place of assembly is described as a mountain, and also as a city. We can see the mountain afar off (Gen 22:4); as we come closer, we observe the city clustered around it.

22 But ye are come 1) unto mount Sion,—

Contrasting with Mount Sinai is Mount Zion. In the prophets, Zion is the point of reunion in the Messianic age. All Israel will gather there (chart). Note Mount Ephraim, in the Northern Kingdom: the breach between North and South is gone.

Jer 31:6 For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount **Ephraim** shall cry, Arise ye, and **let us go up to Zion** unto the LORD our God. ... 8 Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.

The Gentiles are also included. Note the prominence of Zion in Isaiah’s vision, which refers to the people^S (many nations):³

Isa 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the **mountain** of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. 3 And many people^S shall go and say, Come ye, and **let us go up to the mountain of the LORD**, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of **Zion** shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

This assembly in Zion is associated with a new and everlasting covenant:

Jer 50:4 In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the LORD their God. 5 They shall ask the way to **Zion** with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a **perpetual covenant** that shall not be forgotten.

These prophecies anticipate what Hebrews tells us we now enjoy in Christ. The Messiah has come, tasting death for every man (2:9), not just for Israelites, so Gentiles as well as Jews gather to Zion. A major focus of the book is the new covenant that Messiah has established with God’s people (ch. 8-10). The readers “have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come” (6:5). The kingdom of God, promised by the prophets, is at hand, and we have come there. Mount Zion is preeminently the site of the temple, God’s resting place, the objective of the faith journey (4:11). The church is the closest that we come to this divine resting place in our present earthly existence.

Category	Feature
Place	1. Mount Zion 2. City of God, Heavenly Jerusalem
Worshippers	3. Innumerable company: a. General assembly of angels b. Church of the firstborn
Center	4. God the Judge 5. Spirits of just men 6. Jesus the Mediator 7. Blood of sprinkling

Table 3: Organization of 12:22-24

3 Isaiah 60 and Zech 8:20-22, among many other passages, also anticipate Gentiles coming to Jerusalem.

2) and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,⁴—From the exalted temple mount, our attention moves to the city that surrounds it. We are not simply “going to church.” We are joining ourselves to a commonwealth, a society and way of life. The Scriptures distinguish earthly Jerusalem from a heavenly city that descends to earth in the new age (chart).

Gal 4:25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. 26 But **Jerusalem which is above** is free, which is the mother of us all.

Rev 21:2 And I John saw the holy city, **new Jerusalem**, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Rev 21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, **the holy Jerusalem**, descending out of heaven from God,

God still has a purpose for the current Jerusalem: our Lord will reign there during the Millennium. But our ultimate allegiance is to the heavenly city, which will one day descend:

Phi 3:20 For our conversation [πολιτευμα state, commonwealth, citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

When we come to the Lord, we are committing ourselves to that city.

22c, 23a, b, Those who Gather

3) and to an innumerable company μυριας,—Our version understands the “innumerable company” as describing the angels, but this leaves “general assembly” dangling. The ancient Greek commentators associated “general assembly” with the angels, thus: “the general assembly of angels and church of the firstborn.” In Greek this forms a nice chiasm, uniting the angels with the people of God, using two terms for formal meetings. But then what happens to the “innumerable company” μυριάς G3461? It probably refers to both of these assemblies.⁵

Ye have come ... to an innumerable company: the general assembly of angels and church of the firstborn.

The vision of **earthly** and **heavenly** worshippers gathered together goes back to Ethan’s psalm about God’s choice of David as king:

Psa. 89:5 And the **heavens** shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the **congregation** of the saints. 6 For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD? 7 God is greatly to be feared in the **assembly** of the saints, and to be had in reverence of **all them that are about him**.

It’s like a joint session of Congress, uniting the upper and lower house.⁶ When we gather, we may think we are few in number, but we are part of a myriad. Consider now the two components of this great crowd.

23 3a) A general assembly of angels,—The term is most often used in the OT (3x) for מועד

4 Lane sees this as synonymous with Mount Zion, but Delitzsch distinguishes them.

5 Bengel, followed by Delitzsch, the margin of the RV, E.C. Wickham, and Alford, but overlooked by later commentators. See note on use of “innumerable company” in the LXX.

6 This understanding may lie behind the line in the eucharistic liturgy, Catholic, Episcopal, and Methodist, “Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name; evermore praising thee, and saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most High.’” <http://www.oremus.org/liturgy/tcw/hc-oct98/order2.html>

H4150 “appointed time, festal assembly.”⁷ Here it appears to describe the heavenly council.

The NT frequently refers to the close involvement of angels with the church.

Matt 18:10 Take heed that ye despise not one of **these little ones** [babes in Christ]; for I say unto you, That in heaven **their angels** do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. [context: the church chapter]

1Cor. 11:10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head **because of the angels.**

Eph. 3:10 To the intent that now unto the **principalities and powers in heavenly places** might be **known by the church** the manifold wisdom of God,

1Pet. 1:12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; **which things the angels desire to look into.**

Heb 1:13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? 14 Are they not all ministering spirits, **sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?**

When we gather, we are not alone. The heavenly host join in our worship on earth, as they will in heaven (Revelation 4-5). Perhaps this insight was in the mind of Reginald Heber when he echoed the words of the angels, “Holy, holy, holy” (Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8) as a hymn for us to sing on earth.

3b) and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven,—“Church” always describes gatherings of God’s people on earth, and “written” (“enrolled”) suggests that their blessing is promised but not yet realized. So this group is the servants of God on earth at this time, the 7000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Our writer is particularly fond of the word translated “firstborn ones” πρωτοτόκος G4416.⁸ It is one of our Lord’s titles from chapter 1 (chart):

Heb. 1:6 And again, when he bringeth in **the firstbegotten** into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

The focus of the title is not on priority, but on prestige. As Sons of God, we now receive this title of the Son of God. The term’s relation to “birthright” πρωτοτοκία G4415 (12:16, “firstborn privilege”) reminds us not to despise this privilege, as Esau did.

The church is not an informal association: we are “enrolled in heaven.” The verb appears elsewhere in the NT only for the census under Caesar Augustus that brought Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem (Luke 2:1, 3, 5).⁹ Caesar wanted to know how many citizens he had.

Luke 2:1 there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be **taxed (enrolled).**

The verb here is in the perfect tense: we have been enrolled, and that past action now has an enduring effect on us. Our Lord encouraged his disciples,

7 Though καιρος (28x) and εορτη (31x) are much more frequent translations

8 Hebrews has four of the NT’s 10 instances of πρωτοτόκος and the cognate πρωτοτοκία; only one other book (Col.) has more than one. https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/colossians/notes/Col_1_15_20_Firstborn.pdf

9 Another support for Delitzsch’s theory of Lukan authorship. The Son of God was enrolled on earth, allowing the sons of God to be enrolled in heaven.

Luke 10:20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are **written in heaven**.

And when the Lord sits in final judgment on the world, this registry plays a central role:

Rev. 20:15 And whosoever was not found **written in the book of life** was cast into the lake of fire.

23c-24, The Center of our Worship

The place and the congregation are important, but the center, after all, is the deity. As the NT revelation makes clear, he has revealed himself to us as a Father and also as a Son. The writer brings each of them to our attention, adding a detail that reflects his description.

4) and to God the Judge of all,—Some readers of the NT, such as Marcion, distinguished a judgmental OT God with the loving Father of the NT. Our writer insists that God as judge is still active, at the center of our worship, and we must still account to him for how we live (chart).

Rom 14:12 every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

This insight is why we must examine ourselves, as well as hold one another accountable, when we gather at the Lord's table (1 Cor 11:28, 29). In gathering together, we are not hiding from the God of Sinai (as we will see in vv. 25-29), but standing directly before him.

The notion that God is our judge is sobering, but also encouraging, for his purpose is "bringing many sons to glory" (Heb 2:10), so that we will be "conformed to the image of his son" (Rom 8:29). His sovereign purpose for us, expressed in the heavenly enrollment that the writer has just mentioned, is not just achieving heaven, but "good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). Recall God's exhortation to Abram:

Gen. 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect (blameless)
דַּמֵּת אֱמֵמֶטוֹס.

It is because he is judge that he, as a loving Father, is so exercised to discipline us. To remind us of this process, the writer mentions those whom God has guided to the end of their journey:

5) and to the spirits of just men made perfect,—Three words require our attention.

First, these are "spirits," people who are in heaven, awaiting the future resurrection.

Second, they are described as "just men," righteous men, the result of the fatherly correction applied by "God the judge of all." In satisfying the gospel requirement of "repent," we show that we hunger and thirst for righteousness, and as our Savior promises (Matt 5:6), we shall be filled.

Third, they are "made perfect." We have already noted a tension in the use of this vocabulary in Hebrews. On the one hand, we are perfected immediately by our Lord's sacrifice:

Heb. 10:14 For by one offering **he hath perfected** for ever them that are sanctified.

On the other, the saints who have gone on ahead are specifically said not to be perfected:

Heb. 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us **should not be made perfect**.

Salvation has three tenses: when we believed, we were saved from the *penalty* of sin; during our Christian life, God's discipline and the indwelling Spirit are saving us from the *power* of sin, and

when the Lord returns, we shall be saved from the *presence* of sin. Our perfection follows this “already, but not yet” pattern. From the perspective of our Savior’s work, the task is finished, but our experience of it will not be complete until we receive our new bodies at the resurrection.

The use of the term “made perfect” of the spirits in heaven must refer to 10:14 rather than 11:40, and emphasizes that the righteousness they show is not of any merit of their own, but the result of the “one offering” of Christ. So they are “righteous” in practice, and “perfect” through the finished work of Christ.¹⁰

These “spirits” are included in the fellowship to which we have come in the church. They include the witnesses of ch. 11. The metaphor of the athletic arena in 12:1 suggests that they are aware of what we are doing. Thus our gathering includes not only the physical “church of the firstborn” and the festal assembly of angels, but also the saints who have gone before.

So God as Judge is not made obsolete by the new revelation. He is at the center of our worship. But so is his Son.

24 6) And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant,—Our Lord is presented here, not as king, but in his priestly role as mediator, the one who establishes the new covenant that occupies so much of the center of this book (cf. 8:6; 9:15).

The only other mediator named in the NT is Moses (Gal 3:19, 20), who stood between the people and God when they were afraid to encounter God directly. Three times in Hebrews, our Lord is described as mediator of the covenant promised in the major prophets, with particular emphasis on Jeremiah 31. Each time the writer uses a different adjective to characterize the covenant.

- In 8:6, our Lord is the mediator of a *better* covenant, one that is superior to the covenant of Sinai. The bulk of chapters 8-10 is devoted to explaining this superiority.
- In 9:15, he is the mediator of the *new καινος* G2537 covenant, quoting the LXX in Jer 31:31, emphasizing a covenant that is fresh and not worn out.
- In 12:24, he is the mediator of the *new νεος* G3501 covenant. This adjective means that the covenant is new in time, one that has not been active previously.

“New” is appropriate here in the contrast with Mount Sinai. Before the cross and Pentecost, Zion was only a promise, and Sinai was all that God’s people had. But now a new covenant, one never experienced before, is in effect, one available only at Zion, not on Mount Sinai.

What makes this change possible? As the writer has so often emphasized, it is the sacrifice of our Savior, and he now draws our attention to this final element.

7) and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel.¹¹—Through his blood, Abel cried for vengeance against Cain:

Gen 4:10 the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

10 In Paul “righteousness” is usually imputed and “perfect, mature” refers to the result of experience. The usage here appears to be just reversed. The only way that their τελείωσις can be spoken of as accomplished is the finished work of 10:14, while Lane seems correct that “those in this group are δίκαιοι, ‘righteous,’ because their lives reflected the faith of which God approves,” citing 10:38a and 11:4.

11 The masculine article τὸν Ἄβελ strictly makes Abel, not his blood, the speaker; that would require the neuter acc. article τοῦ with indeclinable Ἄβελ construed as genitive. A few MSS, including the third century P46, in fact have this reading. However, the interpretation is much smoother if we follow the AV and take Abel as speaking *through his blood*. Certainly, the point of Gen 4:10 is that it is Abel’s plea that ascends to God through the shed blood, now that Abel himself can no longer offer it.

But our Lord’s blood pleads our cause before God, assuring our citizenship in the heavenly city.

This element is a fitting conclusion to the discussion of the two mountains. Both descriptions began with a mount; both end with a voice—the “voice of words” that the people could not bear (v. 19), and the message of the blood of Messiah, telling us of forgiveness of sin. It also reminds us of the list of heroes in ch. 11, which began with Abel (11:4).¹² In coming to Mount Zion, we are united with the whole company of faithful saints, in the past and in the future.

25-29, Consequences of Refusing

While we assemble at Zion rather than Sinai, we must not forget the character of God as he has revealed himself at Sinai.¹³ We had a glimpse of this continuity when we found “God the judge of all” among those at Zion. Now the writer, in drawing out the moral of his parable of the two mountains, describes the God in language that recalls his description of Sinai (Table 4, chart).

12:25-29, Warning	12:18-21, Sinai
25 ... him that speaketh ... 26 whose voice ...	19 ... the voice of words
25 See that ye refuse παραιτέομαι G3868 not him that speaketh . For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:	19 ... which voice they that heard intreated παραιτέομαι that the word should not be spoken to them any more:
26 Whose voice then shook the earth : but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.	(Exod 19:18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, ... and the whole mount quaked greatly .)
28 ... let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear :	21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake :)
29 For our God is a consuming fire .	18 For ye are not come unto the mount ... that burned with fire

Table 4: *Echos of Sinai in the God of Zion*

25 ... him that speaketh ... 26 whose voice ...—As at Sinai, God is still speaking. The notion of God’s voice is the foundation of the entire book of Hebrews:

Heb 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners **spake** in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days **spoken** unto us by his Son,

Indeed, a central theme of the entire Bible is the centrality of language in God’s dealings with us. Perhaps that is why he has given us, alone of all his creations, the gift of language¹⁴—so that he could communicate with us. How greatly we should treasure the verbal revelation of God!

25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh.—Those encamped at Sinai did not want to hear the voice of God. So the believers in Rome are tempted to refuse what the Lord has spoken. This

12 This observation is due to Anita Parunak.

13 This observation is due to Anita Parunak.

14 Lower animals have various signaling systems, but not an ability to formulate and express complex ideas. The fact that we can teach chimpanzees to speak in sign language does not disprove this distinction, any more than AI advances in natural language processing means that we are not different from computers—it simply shows that just as God can teach his creatures to speak, so we can teach others.

danger is a more intense version of the first of the writer’s five warnings (Table 1, chart). There, they were tempted to *neglect* what was spoken; here, they are considering *refusing* it.

Heb 2:3 How shall we escape, if we **neglect** so great salvation; which at the first began to be **spoken** by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

For if they escaped not who refused him that spake [exhorted, rebuked] on earth,—As Sinai, though the people did not want to hear the Word of God, God gave them the law anyway. Moses received it from God, and then conveyed it to the people, in spite of their reluctance to hear. In the sequel, he held them accountable to it, whether they wanted it or not. For example, he punished them when they worshipped the Golden Calf

After they left Sinai, they continued to shun the word of God, to their own detriment. Hebrews 3 reminded us of their experience at Kadesh Barnea, when the Lord through Caleb and Joshua exhorted the people to go up and enter the land, but they would not. Then, when they wanted to enter the land in their own strength and Moses warned them not to, they neglected his warning, and suffered heavy losses. Recall how the writer characterizes their sin:

Heb 3:15 While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. 16 For some, **when they had heard**, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

The entire experience of Israel, from the Exodus through the captivity, reminds us that our refusal to hear the word of God does not exempt us from its consequences.

much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:—The contrast between “him that spake on earth” and “him that speaketh from heaven” reflects the contrast of 1:1-2 and the two mountains in ch. 12 (Table 5, chart). At Sinai, God “spake ... unto the fathers by the prophets,” the first of whom was Moses (Deut 18:15, 18; 34:10). All of the revelation that God gave by Moses occurred “on earth.” When he died, other earthly prophets picked up the message, but he was silent.

But now “God ... hath ... spoken unto us by his Son,” whom we have just seen in the heavenly Jerusalem at the Father’s right hand. Unlike Moses, he has not fallen silent, but continues to instruct his people from heaven, through his Spirit (John 16:12-14).

Heb 12:25	Mountain	Heb 1:1-2	Helpful References	God's Mouthpiece
him that spake on earth	Sinai	1 God, who ... spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,	Deut. 18:15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me;	Moses, on earth
him that speaketh from heaven	Zion	2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son,	Joh 16:12 I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.	The Lord Jesus by his Spirit, from heaven

Table 5: God's Two Ways of Speaking

Since God held them accountable for the word on earth that they did not want to hear, how much more will he hold us accountable for his heavenly revelation, even if we turn from it.

26 Whose voice then shook the earth:—As recorded in Ex 19:18, though the writer did not mention this detail in his earlier description of Sinai.¹⁵

but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.—The reference is to Haggai (chart):

Hag. 2:6 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

The prophet is describing the culmination of all things, marked by earthquake. The word “earthquake” σεισμός G4578 appears 13x in the NT, six of them in the Revelation, where it marks the end of each of the series of God’s judgments, the seals, the trumpets, and the bowls:

Rev. 6:12 And I beheld when he had opened **the sixth seal**, and, lo, there was **a great earthquake**; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; *The seventh seal opens into the trumpets, 8:1*

Rev. 11:15 And **the seventh angel** sounded; ... 19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and **an earthquake**, and great hail.

Rev. 16:17 And **the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air**; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. 18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was **a great earthquake**, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

In our study of the Revelation, we suggested that these three events are one, and that the seals, trumpets, and bowls all end at the same time, to be marked with numerous signs, among them “a great earthquake.” Believers must live in the expectation of this coming judgment.

27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.—There have been many earthquakes down through the earth’s history. The earth shook at Sinai (Exod 19). Elijah felt an earthquake when he fled to Sinai to escape Jezebel (1 Ki 19:11). Amos prophesied two years before a notable earthquake in the reign of Uzziah (1:1; cf. Zech 14:5). One earthquake opened the graves of the saints when our Lord died (Matt 27:51-54), and another three days later opened his grave (Matt 28:2), and he told his disciples to expect many earthquakes (Matt 24:7).

Haggai sees beyond these to the great final earthquake. “Once more” implies that there will not be any further shaking.

Thus far, the writer has recalled the terrors of Sinai to warn his readers of the negative consequences of rejecting God’s revelation in his Son. But Haggai’s prophecy leads him to offer a carrot as well as a stick:

28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved,—After the judgments of the seals, and the trumpets, and the bowls are ended, our Lord returns to set up a kingdom that cannot be shaken. We are not merely the citizens of this kingdom, but rulers in it. To “receive a

¹⁵ The Hebrew text mentions this detail, but the LXX describes the fear of the people rather than movement of the earth. The writer here may have in mind other references to the shaking of the earth at Sinai that the LXX does preserve, such as Judg 5:4, 5; Ps 68:8; 114:1-4.

kingdom” is a standard expression in the later books of the LXX (Daniel and Maccabees) for taking the throne (see note), and our writer probably has in mind the angel’s promise to Daniel, that after the end of the four great kingdoms,

Dan. 7:18 the saints of the most High shall **take the kingdom**, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

The promise that the saints will reign with the Lord in the coming kingdom was often repeated in the early church, “a faithful saying” (compare Rev 3:21; 5:9; 20:4).

2Tim. 2:11 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: 12 If we suffer, **we shall also reign with him**:

let us have grace,—The expression is an idiom meaning “give thanks.” We use the word “grace” in this sense when we “say grace” before a meal. Rather than rejecting the blessings of Zion to return to Sinai, let us give thanks for what God has prepared for us.

whereby we may serve [λατρεύω G3000] God acceptably—The verb speaks of sacred service in the sanctuary, the work that Israel’s priests and levites did. It appears frequently in this sense throughout the book, but now all of us are responsible for it. The causal chain is:

- We have a promise of the coming kingdom.
- Therefore let us give thanks for that.
- In doing so, we fulfill our duty as priests in offering worship to the Lord.

We will see this idea again at the end of the next chapter, where thanksgiving is one of the three sacrifices we offer to God in our priestly role:

Heb 13:15 By him therefore let us offer the **sacrifice** of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips **giving thanks**¹⁶ to his name. 16 But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Between “receiving a kingdom” and “serving God,” we are “a royal priesthood” (1 Pet 2:9).

Rev 1:5 Jesus Christ ... 6 hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father

with reverence and godly fear:—This echo of Sinai is a contrast as well as a parallel. Moses was terrified before God, at the burning bush and at the golden calf. Our awareness of God’s presence among us should also stimulate distinctive feelings, but not of terror. This phrase warns us against the tendency to speak of God as though he were certainly a good buddy.

The word rendered “reverence” is used in 1 Tim 2:9 to describe the modesty of godly women. We should approach God with the attitude of a godly wife, who is at once secure in her husband’s love, and fully respectful of him as her head.

“Godly fear” εὐλάβεια G2124 is a respect for God that makes us fastidious in our devotion to him.¹⁷ This word family describes our Lord in 5:7,

Heb. 5:7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he **feared**;

16 Though the vocabulary is different here, using the verb ὁμολογέω rather than the periphrasis ἔχω χάρις

17 Thus Delitzsch on 5:7, “that religious fear of God and anxiety not to offend Him which manifests itself in voluntary and humble submission to His will”

Our Lord was not terrified in the face of death, but as his prayer in Gethsemane shows, he was respectful to the Father and fully submissive to his will. The term also describes Noah:

Heb. 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with **fear**, prepared an ark to the saving of his house;

Again, the issue is not blind terror, but diligence to do all that the Lord instructed him to do.

So the writer urges his readers to modest, fastidious service of God—not denying the Messiah by returning to the synagogue, but fully recognizing him in their thankful worship.

29 For our God is a consuming fire.—At Sinai, Moses simply noticed that “the mount . . . burned with fire,” without explaining this apparition. But in his reminiscences after the 40 years of wandering, he uttered the statement that our writer quotes here:

Deut. 4:24 For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. (cf. 9:3)

For those who repent of their sin, our God is a purging, cleansing fire, forging us into the image of his son. But for those who reject him, he is a fearful, terrifying prospect.

13:1-25, Following Current Examples

Our examples for godly living are not limited to the spirits of just men made perfect from ch. 11. There are those among us today who can provide an example of the life God expects us to live. Three times this section mentions “them which have the rule over you” (7, 17, 24). Each of these concludes a paragraph, the first concerned with examples of godly living, the second with church order, and the third with greetings appropriate to the end of the epistle (Figure 4, chart).

The expression “have the rule over” does not imply authoritarian rule. We might translate “your leaders,” those who are examples and who care for the flock, as the descriptions in this chapter will show (see notes for further discussion). It’s worth noting that in the middle east, shepherds do not drive their sheep from behind, but lead them out (Figure 5). Recall our Lord’s description of himself as the Good Shepherd:

John 10:2 But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and **leadeth** them out. 4 And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he **goeth before** them, and the sheep **follow** him: for they know his voice.

Compare Peter’s exhortation to those whom he calls elders, pastors, and overseers to be examples:

1 Pet 5:3 Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being



Figure 5: A shepherd leading his sheep in the wilderness of Judaea (Van and Anita Parunak, 1974-1975)

ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

As we consider these present examples of faith, we should keep our eyes open for the three functions elsewhere assigned to church leaders in the NT: godly experience (reflected in the title “elder”), feeding the flock from God’s word (the title “pastor-teacher”), and paying careful attention to the needs of the flock (the title “overseer” or “bishop”).¹⁸ We will see all three of these functions in the church leaders in Rome.

1-8, Examples of Godly Living

The first paragraph presents five exhortations to obey our Lord’s command to love one another. All of these explore different facets of love. The first three show the extension of love more and more widely in the body of Christ, from the local assembly to believers who visit us, and then on to those who are far from us. The last two warn against inappropriate love. Each of the last four is accompanied by a motive (Table 6, chart), suggesting that the first is an overall summary.

13:1 Let brotherly love continue.—The predominant relation of believers to one another is that of brethren. “Brethren” was a common term used by Jews to address one another: so Stephen addressed the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:2), and Paul the Jews in the synagogue in Antioch (Acts 13:26) and elsewhere (Acts 22:1; 23:1; 28:17). In their case, the title is justified by common descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Note the chiasm in Paul’s address in Antioch (chart):

Exhortation	Motive
1 Let brotherly love continue	
2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers	for thereby some have entertained angels unawares
3 Remember them that are in bonds, ... and them which suffer adversity	as bound with them; ... as being yourselves also in the body
4 Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled:	but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge
5 Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have:	for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

Table 6: 13:1-9, Love One Another

Act 13:26 **Men** and **brethren, children of the stock of Abraham**, and **whosoever among you feareth God**, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

He distinguishes between “men,” who were Gentiles who “feared God,” and “brethren,” Jews with whom he shared Abraham as a father. Brethren are people who have the same father.

The writer has emphasized that the new covenant is open to all: Christ has “tasted death for every man,” 2:9, and the description of the church in terms of the prophets’ vision of Mount Zion leads us to expect a mixed body of believers. In NT times, even synagogues had a mixed character: in Antioch (Acts 13:26, 42) and Corinth (Acts 18:4 “the Greeks”) many Gentiles attended the synagogue and participated to some degree in its life. What does brotherhood mean

¹⁸ Etymologically, it is tempting to focus on this last meaning in connection with ἡγέομαι, which often has the sense of “take care for, pay attention to,” as also does Paul’s word προϊστήμι. Compare the writer’s other uses of this verb in 10:29 “counted,” 11:11 “judged,” 11:26 “esteeming.”

in a church made up of both Jews and Gentiles? Paul had to distinguish the two in Antioch, but our Lord taught his disciples,

Mat 23:8 But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are **brethren**. 9 And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your **Father**, which is in heaven.

Our Lord's revelation of God as our Father makes all believers brethren, regardless of our racial or cultural background. That relation imposes on us the responsibility to love and care for one another as brethren.

2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers:—Our love is to go beyond our immediate fellowship. Traveling believers received hospitality with others who shared their faith, and Rome, the hub of the empire, would have afforded them many such opportunities. Paul repeatedly exhorts his readers to hospitality (chart):

Rom. 12:13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; **given to hospitality**.

1Tim. 3:2 A bishop then must be ... **given to hospitality**, ...

Titus 1:7 For a bishop must be ... 8 ... a **lover of hospitality**, ...

John commends Gaius for his hospitality to traveling evangelists:

3Jn 1:5 Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; 6 Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: ... 8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers to the truth.¹⁹

for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.—The motive is drawn from OT examples of people who, in receiving strangers, actually entertained angels. Three examples come to mind. In each case, the angels brought them blessing.

1. Abraham, encamped in the plains of Mamre, receives and entertains “three men” (Gen 18:2). One of these, who is later revealed as an appearance of the Lord, promises that Sarah will have a son; the other two proceed down to Sodom, where they are identified as “angels” (19:2 “and the two angels came to Sodom ...”).
2. In Genesis 19, these two angels enter Sodom, where Lot entertains them. They end up leading him and his family out of the doomed city before God's judgment falls on it.
3. Judges 13 records the appearance of the angel of the Lord to Manoah and his wife. They entertain him, and he promises them a longed-for son, Samson.

The promise of reward recalls our Lord's teaching in the sermon on the mount (chart),²⁰

Luke 6:38 Give, and **it shall be given unto you**; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

Paul offers similar encouragement to the Corinthians in exhorting them to contribute to the collection for the poor believers in Judaea,

2Cor. 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which

19 But in 2Jn 1:10, he warns the elect lady against entertaining those who carry false teaching.

20 See my notes on Matthew 5-7 for the case that Luke and Matthew are different accounts of the same sermon.

soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. 8 And **God is able to make all grace abound toward you**; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

We cannot out-give the Lord. If we minister to his people, he will provide for our needs.

3 Remember them that are in bonds, ... and them which suffer adversity,—Now the circle of love spreads out even further, like ripples from a stone in a pond. It starts with our love for one another within the local assembly, is shared with those who come to visit us, but then reaches out to brothers and sisters of whose difficulties we learn. The exhortation is rooted in our Lord's commands at the Olivet Discourse, which also shows that this duty is focused on brethren.

Matt 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: **I was in prison, and ye came unto me.** ... 40 ... Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these **my brethren**, ye have done it unto me.

The little church in Rome already had experience in this area. During the earlier period of persecution that they had endured (probably under the emperor Claudius sometime in AD 41-53), the writer himself had been imprisoned, and they had cared for him:²¹

Heb. 10:32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; ... 34 **For ye had compassion of me in my bonds,**

And Paul, imprisoned in Rome, wrote Philippians to thank that church for their gift:

Phil. 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. 14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did **communicate with my affliction.** ... 18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, **having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you**, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

The motive for this exhortation to reach out to afflicted brethren is not the hope of reward, but godly sympathy based on the recognition of our shared condition with them.

as bound with them;—When the writer was imprisoned, they also suffered oppression:

Heb 10:34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, **and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods,**

as being yourselves also in the body.—The article, “the body,” may give us the impression that the author is referring to the body of Christ. But in fact the Greek text does not have the article:²² the motive is actually that you yourselves are “in body,” that is, still subject to the constraints of the flesh, not yet among “the spirits of just men made perfect” (12:23).

21 The reading “my bonds” is both majority and ancient (Sinaiticus), but modern critics see it as an adaptation to Pauline authorship, and prefer “those in bonds.” But the likely dating under Claudius is too early for Paul, who had not yet entered his first imprisonment when Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome (Acts 18:2).

22 Cf. 2 Cor 12:2,3

The next statement has no verb, but the context and the phrase “the bed undefiled”²³ suggest that it is another exhortation—in fact, two.

4 Marriage is [to be] honourable in all,—The first exhortation is that marriage is to be considered honorable in every respect.²⁴ The NT repeatedly bears witness to the inclination of unsaved people to assign celibacy a superior status to marriage, and warns against that tendency. The tendency itself is clear in the Roman tradition of the Vestal virgins, women who as children took a 30-year vow of chastity in order to tend the sacred fire of the goddess Vesta, from which all Rome kindled their hearths.²⁵ This institution dates to 700 BC. Such a widespread sensitivity perhaps led to the suggestion by the Corinthians to Paul that they as believers should abandon physical relations, even in marriage, a suggestion that Paul tactfully rebuts (chart).

1Cor. 7:1 Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. 2 **Nevertheless**, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.

“Let” is a third-person imperative, a command. Paul is saying, “Everybody should be married.” Later in the chapter, he allows singleness as a special condition, but in general, people should be married. And he requires marriage as a condition of church leadership (1 Tim. 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6, “husband of one wife”).

Perhaps a decade later, the notion of the superiority of celibacy has become so common that Paul finds it necessary to issue a more direct warning:

1Tim. 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; 3 **Forbidding to marry**, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

Our writer shares Paul’s concern. The church is not to look down on marriage, but honor it in every regard.

and the bed undefiled:—The second exhortation about marriage is that it must be kept pure.

but whoremongers [fornicators] and adulterers God will judge.—The first word is not limited to a pimp, but refers to anyone who engages in fornication. The motive for these exhortations is that God will judge those who commit fornication (any form of sexual impurity), and especially adulterers (those who violate the marriage bond). The seventh commandment is still incumbent on believers. As in 12:23, God as judge is still active in the church.²⁶

5 Let your conversation be without covetousness;—Love can be misdirected. “Covetousness” here²⁷ is not a reference to the tenth commandment,²⁸ but refers to the desire for wealth. In 1 Tim 3:3, the word is rendered, “not greedy of filthy lucre.” Recall the three facets of the world that

23 So Alford based on anarthrous ἀμίαντος.

24 πᾶσιν is neuter, and so does not refer to people, either those married, or those holding opinions of marriage.

25 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vestal_Virgin . One might also cite the frequent references in the Ugaritic literature to *btlt* /nt, but her sexual escapades suggest that *btlt* simply describes a nubile female. See A. Rahmouni, *Divine Epithets in the Ugaritic Alphabetic Texts*, 2008, 132-140.

26 The connection to 12:23 was noted by Anita Parunak.

27 ἀφιλάργυρος G866

28 This Greek word does not appear in the canonical LXX, which uses ἐπιθυμέω G1937 in both Ex 20:17 and Dt 5:21. See notes.

we are to avoid (Deut 6:5; 1 John 2:16).²⁹ The previous exhortation warns against the lust of the flesh; this warns against the lust of the eyes. If your life is driven by a desire to increase your wealth, you will not optimize your service to the Lord.

and be content with such things as ye have:—The cure for the lust of the eyes is contentment. This exhortation recalls Paul’s closing words to Timothy, warning of the danger of the wealth-driven life as he describes a corrupt teacher from whom people should withdraw (chart):

1Tim. 6:5 ... men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. 6 But **godliness with contentment** is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. 9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the **love of money**³⁰ is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Again, the exhortation is followed by a motive—or two motives, one positive and one negative.

for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.—The first motive is the assurance of God’s constant presence with his people. The quotation is from the LXX in Deuteronomy, where the speaker is not God himself, but Moses, describing the Lord’s faithfulness:

Deut. 31:6 Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; **he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.**

The difference shows how the NT writers view the OT. For them, it is the word of God. What Moses says about God, is a word from God, and legitimately attributed to him.

The writer’s quotation says what God will not do, but the original promise includes the positive side, “he it is that doth go with thee,” anticipating our Lord’s words to his disciples:

Matt. 28:20 lo, **I am with you alway**, even unto the end of the world.

The Lord is always with us. He will never abandon us. In particular, he will not abandon us to want, but will provide our needs day by day.

6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.—The second motive is also based in Scripture, the LXX of Ps 118:6. The English, following the Hebrew more closely, says,

Psa. 118:6 The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?

But the LXX translators expand the notion of God being “on my side” to a description of him as the Psalmist’s help, adapting the Hebrew word “helper” that lies at the root of names like Azariah or Eliezer. In addition to the expression in Psalm 118,³¹ the LXX speaks of “my helper”³² 11 times, nine of them in Psalms, and always with reference to God’s defense against enemies. In the context here, one motive for being greedy of gain might be the fear of oppression. The Lord assures us not only that he will be with us, but that he will defend us from those who oppose us.

29 <https://www.cyber-chapel.org/DoctrinalStudies/ThreeChoices/ThreeChoices.pdf>

30 φιλαργυρία G5365, the non-negated noun related to “without covetousness”

31 ἐμοὶ βοηθός

32 A slightly different phrasing from our text and Ps 118, βοηθός μου

7 Remember them which have the rule over you,—Now we come to the first of the three references to the church leaders. Recall (Figure 5, chart) that these are leaders, not lords. They are presented as examples to follow.

The first command concerning our leaders is to “remember them.” The next verse suggests why.

who have spoken unto you the word of God:—The aorist tense of “spoken” suggests they are now among the “spirits of just men made perfect.” One title for church leaders is “elders.” The older men of the assembly will be the first to pass on, providing younger saints with an example of persevering to the end.

They are also pastor-teachers, teaching the Scriptures in the assembly. In keeping with 13:1-6, they would have taught our Lord’s “new commandment,” that we love one another (chart):

Joh 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye **love** one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

In fact, our Lord summarizes all of the law in terms of love:

Matt 22:35 Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, 36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law? 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt **love** the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. [Deut 6:5]. 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt **love** thy neighbour as thyself [Lev 19:18]. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

whose faith follow,—This statement brings us back to ch. 11, in two ways.

1. Like the heroes of ch. 11, they are marked by faith.
2. As in ch. 11, their faith provides an example for us to follow.

considering the end of their conversation.—“End” here ἐκβασις G1545 has the sense of “result,” “how things turn out.” The real quality of a person’s life, and their value as an example to others, is greatly enhanced when we can see how their life turned out. Many start well but make shipwreck. Recall Paul’s words in his first epistle,

Gal 5:7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

and in his last,

2Tim. 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have **finished** my course, I have **kept** the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

The writer has already reminded us that what matters is persevering unto the end:

Heb 3:6 But Christ [was faithful] as a son over his own house; whose house are we, **if we hold fast** the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope **firm unto the end.**

8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.—The last phrase, “and for ever,” is separated from the previous two: “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today, [is also the same] forever.” The same Lord whom your leaders followed and of whom they taught, the same Lord who promised never to leave or forsake them, continues to care for you today, and will care for you to future generations.

9-17, Examples of Church Order

Next, the writer discusses details of church practice. He first warns against negative restrictions that are creeping in, then describes their true worship, and highlights another role of their leaders.

9, Warning against False Teaching

9 Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.—In contrast with the bedrock teaching of love for one another by the leaders in v. 7, the church in Rome was threatened by teachings with two distinctive characteristics: “diverse” and “strange”.³³

First, they are “divers” ποικίλος G4164 (see note), literally “many-colored” (chart). In the LXX the term describes fabrics that are embroidered or woven of different colors—not simple and straightforward, but complicated and intricate. Sisera’s mother envisioned her son bringing home such beautiful garments as spoil:

Judg. 5:30 Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two; to Sisera a prey of divers colours,³⁴ a prey of divers colours³⁵ of needlework, of **divers colours** of needlework on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?

The term suggests complicated theological schemes, which assume (contrary to Deut 29:29) that we should be able to answer every question we can ask by deductions and extrapolations from Scripture. There are many examples of such complexity: the patristic scholasticism of Rome, the carefully elaborated creeds of the reformation, or the detailed eschatological schemes of modern dispensationalism. In our context, the term refers to elaborate dietary restrictions derived from the Old Testament. An example is the modern rabbinic prohibition of consuming meat and dairy at the same meal, derived from the biblical injunction,

Ex 23:19 Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother’s milk. (also 34:26; Deut 14:21)

or the prohibition of healing (e.g., John 5, Mark 3), or plucking grain (Luke 6) on the Sabbath , from the commandment,

Ex. 20:10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work,

or the avoidance of the biblical principle

Ex. 20:12 Honour thy father and thy mother:

by the legal fiction of Corban (Mark 7:1), dedicating one’s property to the temple.

By warning against complex doctrinal schemes, the writer doesn’t mean that the Bible is intrinsically simple or obvious (Eph 3:10 God’s wisdom is πολυποίκιλος). Our Lord commends the scribe “which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old” (Matt. 13:52). Hebrews is a good example of new insight from ancient Scripture. But at the end of the day, we can point to a verse, in context, that supports everything we have read. And we do not impose every detail of our understanding on others, but “let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Rom 14:5). Watch out for embroidered creeds, complex schemes that go beyond the words of Scripture, presume to answer every question, and need a lawyer to understand.

33 Ellingworth notes that διδαχή and cognates are generally pejorative in Hebrews, something to be left behind (5:12; 8:11). The writer tends to prefer words like λαλέω (2:2f.; 13:7) and εὐαγγελίζομαι (4:2, 6).

34 In Greek, a different term from the following two; in Hebrew, all three are **גָּזַן** H6648 “dyed”

35 ποικιλία, a noun cognate to our adjective

“Diverse” in the OT also describes animals without their usual coloring (such as the animals that Jacob took for his hire from Laban) (chart):

Gen. 30:32 ... all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled³⁶ among the goats: and of such shall be my hire. ... 39 And the flocks conceived before the rods, and brought forth cattle ringstraked, **speckled**, and spotted.

Laban liked the deal because these animals stood out. This sense of the word leads to the second characteristic of dangerous teachings: they are “strange,” things not seen commonly. Novelty is not a virtue in the study of the Bible. Isaiah set the standard for the Jews of his day:

Is. 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Jude urges his readers to respect the continuity of God’s revelation:

Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for **the faith which was once delivered unto the saints**.

“Once” ἄπαξ G530 is a favorite word of Hebrews (8/15 NT instances). It describes the frequency of our salvation (“once enlightened,” 6:4), of our death and of the offering of Christ (9:27-28), the final purging of our sin (10:2) and shaking of the earth (12:26-27). None of these will be repeated. God delivered our faith once, to the apostles. While historical events may bring one or another aspect of it into focus, we need nothing new, nothing we cannot find within the NT itself.

The continuity of the truth is what allowed the Bereans to test Paul’s teaching about the Messiah against their OT scrolls:

Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

If “diverse” warns us against demanding adherence to the complex details of a theological system, “strange” warns us against running off after new revelations, whether these be gnosticism toward the end of the first century, Islam in AD 600, or Mormonism in the 1800s. As Matt 13:52 reminds us, the Lord may lead us into new understandings of the texts he has given us, but every period of new revelation in the Bible is predicted in the previous period, and the next epoch of revelation we are to expect is that surrounding the return of our Lord.³⁷

The consequence of “diverse and strange doctrines” is that people may be “carried about” παραφέρω G3911. This word appears only four times in the NT, and two of these are in the description of our Lord in Gethsemane in Mark and Luke, where he asks the Father to “take away” the cup from him. The danger in view here is not just wandering around, but being divided from the rest of the assembly. One of the adversary’s favorite tactics is to split apart God’s people, as Paul warned the Ephesians (chart):

Acts 20:30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, **to draw away** disciples after them.

The previous exhortations focused on the love that should bind the believers together; these warn against the doctrines of the Judaizers, who sought to divide and separate them.

36 ῥάντος, a different root, though the Hebrew is the same in both verses

37 For development of this insight, see <https://www.cyber-chapel.org/Canon1972.pdf>.

For it is a good thing that the heart be established—Rather than being carried away, we need to have our hearts established, a reference to the process of “perfection” that has been so prominent throughout the epistle. The objective for the Christian life is to grow into the likeness of Christ, to be built up in him. But what is the right way to achieve this? They face a choice:

with grace;—In spite of the emphasis of this book on our works, he agrees with Paul that salvation is due to God’s grace, his unmerited favor. It is “by the grace of God” that our Lord “taste[d] death for every man” (2:9). The influence that draws us to him is “the Spirit of grace” (10:29), and our resource in time of trouble is “the throne of grace” (4:16). The same free gift of God that brings us to salvation is the one that sustains us:

Gal 3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

But as in Galatians, the synagogue offers an alternative route: not the free gift of God through his grace, but our merit based on our careful obedience to particular laws.

not with meats,—The reference is probably to the preoccupation with dietary laws that was such a source of tension in the early church. The synagogue extended the dietary restrictions of Leviticus 11 to a wide range of guidelines, reflected in modern Jewish traditions of Kosher, and adherence to these principles was a source of tension between Jewish and Gentile believers from the church’s earliest days. We see an early sign of it in Romans 14:

Rom 14:1 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. 2 For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

In Colossians, Paul has to reassure the Gentile believers in the face of Jewish dietary challenges:

Col 2:16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:

And by the time he writes 1 Timothy, commands about restricted foods are one of the hallmarks of a growing spiritual challenge:

1Tim. 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; ... 3 **Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats,**

The writer has already addressed the other element of this error, a disparaging view of marriage, in 13:4.

The Jewish dietary restrictions are in tension with the exhortations of 13:1-3 to brotherly love. We see an example early in church history in Antioch, as Paul records in Galatians 1.

Gal. 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

Fellowship with Gentiles puts an observant Jew in a compromising situation. God had to give Peter a special vision in Acts 10 before he would enter the house of the Gentile Cornelius. After that lesson, he was willing to eat with Gentiles in Antioch, but when members of the Jewish party came from Jerusalem, he was apprehensive and withdrew, fearing the disapproval of the other apostles. Paul goes on to rebuke him for this breach of fellowship with his Gentile brethren.

which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.—In contrast to grace, which establishes the heart, these Jewish restrictions do not bring spiritual benefit. The example of Peter in Antioch shows how preoccupation with means can lead to schism and interfere with brotherly love. But an emphasis on God’s free grace reminds me that both I and my brother are unworthy sinners, and we should encourage one another in serving the one who loved us and gave himself for us. Meats puts the focus on me. Grace puts it on our Father and his Son.

The whole argument here is nicely summarized in Paul’s discussion in Romans 14,

Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

10-16, The Christian’s Worship

The Jewish dietary rules were a touchstone for fellowship with the synagogue. The synagogue would ostracize Jews who, having received the Messiah, mingled freely with Gentile believers.

This separation from the synagogue has a serious consequence. At the time Hebrews was written, the synagogue “had an altar” at the temple in Jerusalem. As we see in Acts 2, observant Jews from across the empire would come to Jerusalem at the high feasts to offer their sacrifices. If the readers of the epistle continue to distinguish themselves from the synagogue and traditional Judaism, they run the risk of being excluded from the worship commanded by Moses. The argument in this section encourages them to maintain their testimony for the Lord, even if it means rejection by the world.

Let’s trace the argument in this paragraph (Figure 6, chart). Vv. 10-12 set forth a claim for our belief, while 13-16 give two exhortations for our obedience, based on this argument.

The contrast (v. 10) is between us as believers in the Lord Jesus and unbelieving Jews. We have access to a special altar, of which they have no part. The writer derives this contrast (“for”) from a comparison of the OT sacrificial practice (v. 11) with our Lord’s passion (v. 12).

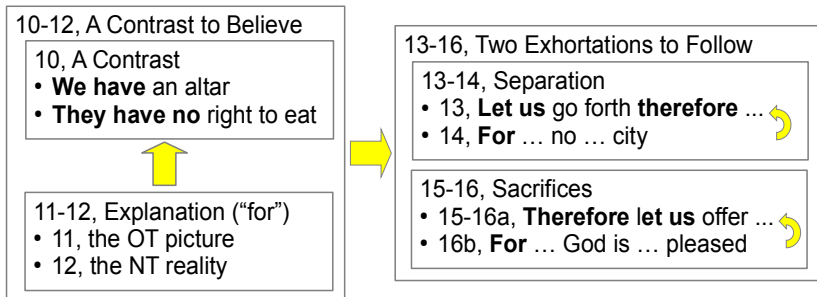


Figure 6: The argument of 13:10-16

Based on this contrast (“therefore” in 13, 15), the writer gives his readers two exhortations (vv. 13-16). The first is to separate from the apostate Jewish community (v. 13), because (“for”) we, like our Savior, belong not to Jerusalem, but to a city to come (v. 14). The second is to worship God with spiritual sacrifices (vv. 15-16a), because (“for”) that is what he really desires.

Why should we as Gentiles care about this dilemma? We were never part of the unbelieving synagogue. Jerusalem and its worship pose no attraction to us. But we were part of the world, and it will do all it can to compromise our devotion to our Lord and mute our testimony. The specific contrast in vv. 10-12 is most directly applicable to people with a Jewish background, but the reminder of the altar that we enjoy does apply to us, and the exhortations that follow apply equally to all of us. We must all be willing to distinguish ourselves from the world in whatever form it presents itself to us as a competitor for our allegiance to our Lord.

10-12, The Contrast

We begin with the contrast of v. 10. There is an altar to which we enjoy access, but which is closed to those who reject Jesus as the Christ.

10 We have an altar,—To reassure them, the writer reminds them of the extensive parallel he has already developed, in ch. 8-9, between Israel’s sanctuary and sacrifices and those upon which our salvation rests. That section began with something else that we have:

Heb 8:1 We **have such an high priest**, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

The whole section argued that we have a better priest (7:7), who offers better sacrifices (9:23) in a greater and more perfect sanctuary (9:11), based on a better covenant (7:22; 8:6). We no longer need the altar in Jerusalem. We have another Altar. But what is that altar?

An altar is a place to offer sacrifices to God. The tabernacle (Figure 7, chart) had two altars—the altar of burnt offering in the court, and the altar of incense in the holy place. Hebrews mentions both (see notes, and sermon on Heb 8-9a). The altar of incense θυμιαστήριον G2369 is in 9:4, but the writer uses a different word here, θυσιαστήριον G2379, for the altar of burnt offering, where the priest shed the blood of the sacrifice outside the tent. Then he brought it through the holy place into the holy of holies, and sprinkled it on the ark of the covenant.

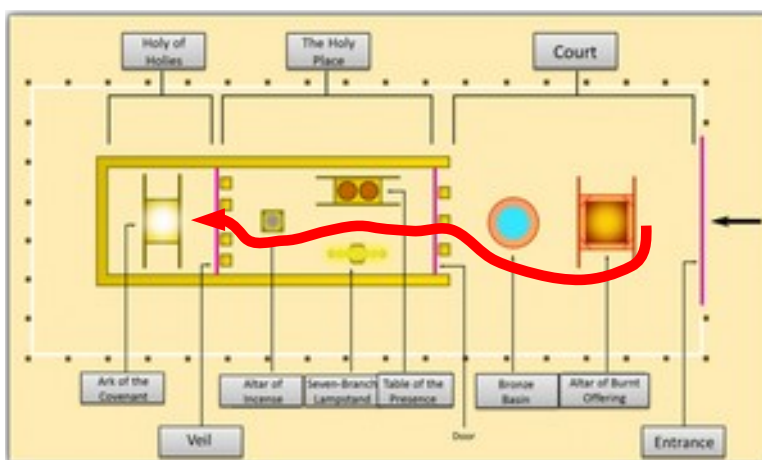


Figure 7: Architecture of the Tabernacle. Red arrow shows movement of the blood from slaying animal into holy of holies (Day of Atonement) (https://toppng.com/free-image/layout-of-the-tabernacle-tabernacle-dimensions-PNG-free-PNG-Images_169688)

Our writer explains that our tabernacle is in heaven, and that Christ, having completed the sacrifice, has entered there:

Heb. 9:11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; 12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but **by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place**, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

But where was his altar? The altar of burnt offering, where the sacrifices were slain,³⁸ is not in the tent, but outside. Our Lord did not shed his blood in the heavenly sanctuary, but on earth—yet not at the altar in the Jerusalem temple, but “without the gate.” By leaving the synagogue, the Jewish Christians in Rome may lose access to the altar in the Jerusalem temple, but they have access to the altar of Calvary, where our once-for-all sacrifice for sin was offered.³⁹

38 The location is given in Lev 4:4 as “the door of the tabernacle,” but this is the location of the altar of burnt offering (4:18).

39 The description of the communion table as an altar is not primitive. See Westcott for an exhaustive historical survey of the term “altar,” showing that the earliest possible reference to the table is in Irenaeus (AD 130-200), and the earlier clear reference is in Cyprian (200-258).

We have access to the altar of Calvary, but it is inaccessible to unbelievers.

whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.—To “eat of the altar” means to participate in the worship conducted at the altar, by eating the sacrifices offered there. This insight lies at the heart of the issue of eating meat offered to idols (chart):

1 Cor. 10:18 Behold Israel after the flesh: **are not they which eat of the sacrifices** partakers of the altar? 19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? 20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.

Under the Old Covenant, some sacrifices could be eaten by people. Peace offerings could be eaten by the person bringing them, and some of the sin offerings were eaten by the priests. But nobody was allowed to drink the blood of any sacrifice.

We can participate in the sacrifice of Calvary. In John 6, the Lord uses the imagery of eating his flesh and drinking his blood to describe our faith in him. But the writer claims that the OT pattern of worship, centered on the tabernacle and temple and at the heart of traditional Jewish worship, actually excludes the adherents of the synagogue from participating in the sacrifice of Christ. The writer outlines the reason by recalling a detail of the OT sacrificial law in 13:11, then reminding the readers of a detail of the Lord’s death.

11 For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.—We mentioned that the priests could eat the flesh of *some*, but not all, of the sin offerings. There were some exceptions (chart):

Lev 6:25 ... This is the law of the **sin offering**: ... 26 The priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it: ... 30 And no sin offering, **whereof any of the blood is brought into the tabernacle of the congregation to reconcile withal in the holy place**, shall be eaten: it shall be burnt in the fire.

There were different sin offerings for different classes of people (Table 7): the priest, the whole congregation, a ruler, or a common citizen. In the first two cases the blood was brought into the tent, and in these cases the sacrifice could not be eaten, but had to be burned entirely. The burning takes place “without the camp”:

Lev. 4:12 Even the whole bullock shall he carry forth **without the camp** unto a clean place, where the ashes are poured out, and burn him on the wood with fire: where the ashes are poured out shall he be burnt. (cf. 4:12; 16:27).

Heb 13:10 explains why the priests cannot not eat some sacrifices: when the blood is brought into the tent, the bodies must be carried “without the camp” and burned.

Offender	Disposition of blood
Lev 4:3 Priest	4:6 veil 4:7 horns of altar of incense 4:7 base of altar of burnt offering
4:13 Whole congregation	4:17 veil 4:18 horns of altar of incense 4:18 base of altar of burnt offering
4:22 Ruler	4:25 horns of altar of burnt offering 4:25 base of altar of burnt offering
4:27 Common people	4:34 horns of altar of burnt offering 4:34 base of altar of burnt offering

Table 7: Disposition of the blood of the sin offering. The veil and altar of incense are in the holy place.

Both of these characteristics are true of our Lord’s sacrifice. We have already read in chapter 9 that our Lord entered the heavenly holy place by his own blood.

Heb. 9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but **by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place**, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

The writer doesn't repeat this detail here, but emphasizes the other OT characteristic of the offerings that were not eaten: they were taken "without the camp."

12 Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.—The gospels record that our Lord died outside the city (chart):

Matt. 27:32 And as **they came out**, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name:

John 19:20 the place where Jesus was crucified was **nigh to the city**:

Indeed, the law of Moses requires that executions take place outside the city:

Lev 24:13 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 14 Bring forth him that hath cursed **without the camp**; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him.

Both the traditional site of the crucifixion (the church of the Holy Sepulchre, based on traditions dating to the 4th century) and Gordon's Calvary (19th century) are outside the walls of the first-century city (Figure 8).

Israel's priests, **according to the law of Moses**, have no access even to the flesh of our Lord's sacrifice. He suffered "without the gate," and then entered into the heavenly tabernacle. But under the new covenant, we have access, not only to his flesh, but also to his blood. By faith we eat the flesh of the sacrifice, and drink its blood, and every week we symbolize that once-for-all offering at the Lord's table.

So far in vv. 10-12, the writer has been arguing logically that the church, but not the synagogue, can participate in the offering that our Lord made. Now he derives two exhortations from this conclusion.

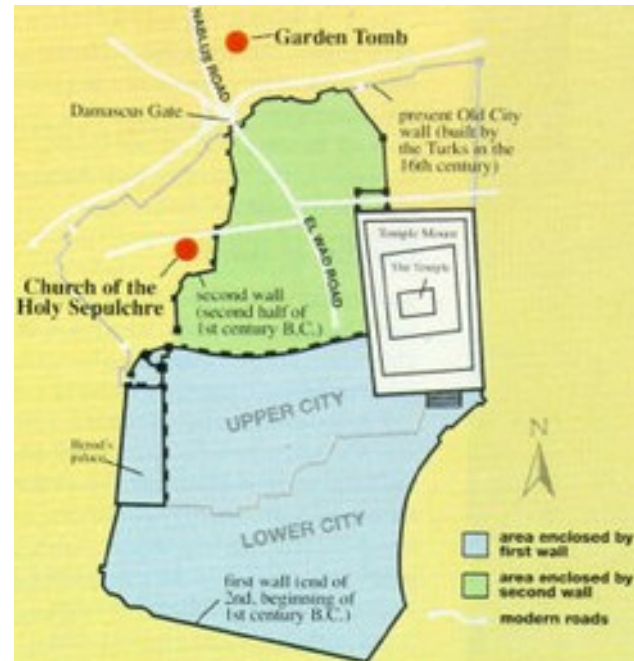


Figure 8: Suggested locations for Calvary (<https://www.gci.org/files/golgotha.jpeg>)

13-16, The Exhortations

Each exhortation is linked to the contrast by an inferential particle, translated "therefore" (τοίνυν in v. 13, οὕτως in 16b), and each is followed by an explanation marked by "for."

13-14, Exhortation to Separation

The first exhortation is that we should separate from the world that has rejected our Savior. In the immediate case of the epistle, the readers should not return to the unbelieving synagogue.

13 Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp,—The first exhortation is that we also "go ... without the camp." Our place is with our Savior. Because the Jerusalem temple hierarchy rejected him, we should not seek its approval. Because it put him out of the city, the readers

should leave the synagogue, with its loyalty to that city. He is “without the camp,” and if we want access to him, we must go “unto him,” and leave the world that has rejected him.

bearing his reproach.—This word bears special attention. Few things are as important to us as being accepted by our peers. Young people feel this pressure particularly acutely, but for us all, reproach is something that we naturally seek to avoid. Yet we cannot avoid it if we would serve the Lord Jesus faithfully.

The word appears three times in Hebrews, each adding to the meaning. The first instance reminds the readers of their former suffering:

Heb. 10:33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by **reproaches** and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

The second recalls that OT saints also faced this rejection. He writes of Moses,

Heb. 11:26 Esteeming the **reproach** of [the] Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

Heb 11:26 associates the reproach that Moses received with the reproach that met our Lord. In our study of that passage, the expression “reproach of [the] Christ” recalled Ethan’s lament over the fate of David’s dynasty in the face of the captivities (chart),

Psa 89:50 Remember, Lord, the **reproach** of thy servants; how I do bear in my bosom the **reproach** of all the mighty people; 51 Wherewith thine enemies have **reproached**, O LORD; wherewith they have **reproached** the footsteps of **thine anointed**.

Indeed, the Psalms, with their emphasis on David’s suffering as a picture of the Messiah, use this term more frequently than any other OT book. The densest Psalm is 69, which also is the Psalm most frequently quoted in the NT in reference to our Lord. There we read,

Psa. 69:7 Because for thy sake I have borne **reproach**; shame hath covered my face. ... 9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the **reproaches** of them that **reproached** thee are fallen upon me.

David recognizes that the rejection he feels is “for thy sake,” because he serves the Lord. The principle fits our Lord because he came to do the work of his Father, whom the world rejects. And now he calls us to bear his rejection:

John 15:18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. 19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

So there is a chain of reproach. The world hates God:

Rom. 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Because it hates him, it hates his son. Because it hates his son, it hates those who serve his son. This third instance of “reproach” reminds us of this principle. We must not try to evade the reproach of Christ by muting our confession:

2Tim. 2:11 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: 12 If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

This verse culminates the argument 11:4-12:3, from Abel to our Lord. God bore witness to their faith, so that we by faith could “run with patience the race that is set before us.”

14 For here have we no continuing city,—The motive for the first exhortation is that we lose little by being rejected by the synagogue, because the earthly Jerusalem, the focus of the synagogue, will be destroyed, as our Lord foretold, and as Titus fulfilled in AD 70:

Mat 24:1 And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

but we seek [the] one to come.—The Greek text includes the article, “the one to come,” reminding us that we have heard of our destination before. It is

- “God’s resting place,” which we are exhorted to pursue in 4:11 (“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest”),
- the city that the patriarchs sought (11:10 For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God) and that God “hath prepared for them” (11:16),
- the “heavenly Jerusalem” to which we have come (12:22), and which will one day come down from heaven to earth (Rev 21:10).

In leaving the city with its temple and ritual, we do not therefore stop worshipping God. Rather, having come to the new Jerusalem, we have sacred worship to perform, as ch. 12 told us:

Heb 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace [give thanks], whereby we may serve God [in worship] acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

Leviticus 1-7 lists the various sacrifices that were offered in the tabernacle and temple: the burnt, grain, peace, sin (purification), and guilt (reparation, trespass) offerings. The Roman Christians will no longer have access to these sacrifices, but the writer now gives them a list of three Christian sacrifices that they should make: continual praise, doing good, and communicating.

15-16, Exhortation to Sacrifice

The second exhortation is that, as ministers at a different altar, we should present different sacrifices, appropriate to what our Lord has achieved at Calvary.

15 By $\delta\iota\alpha$ him therefore let us offer—We should compare the prepositional phrase “by him” with that in v. 13, “unto him.”⁴⁰ If we go “unto” our Lord outside the city, we have access to God “by” or “through” him, as we learned in ch. 7,

Heb. 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God **by $\delta\iota\alpha$ him**, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

The synagogue can offer all the sacrifices it wants, but they will not reach God, because they have forfeited their access to God by rejecting his Son. But through Christ, we can offer sacrifices that will reach the Father. The writer lists three of them.

the sacrifice of praise to God continually,—The description of the first sacrifice draws on two expressions from the OT, “sacrifice of praise” and “continually” (see notes). To appreciate what

40 See note on prepositions

Name	Instructions for People	Instructions for Priests	Bloody?	Atoning?	Sweet Savor?	Eaten?
Whole burnt offering	1:1-17 Total: 17vv	6:8-13 Total: 6vv	Yes	Yes (1:4)	1:9, 13, 17	No
Meal ("Meat") offering a. People b. Priest	2:1-16 Total: 16vv	6:14-24 Total: 11vv a. 14-18 b. 19-22	No	No	2:2, 9 6:15, 21	Priests, 6:16, 18 (but not b, 23)
Peace offering: a. Thank b. Vow c. Voluntary	3:1-17 Total: 17vv	7:11-36 Total: 26vv a. 12-15 b, c. 16-18	Yes	No	3:5, 16	People a. 7:15, same day b, c. 7:16, same and next day
Purification ("Sin") offering a. Priest b. Congregation c. Ruler d. Individual	4:1-5:13 Total: 48vv	6:25-30 Total: 6vv	Most (5:11-13)	Yes (4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13)	4:31	Priests, 6:26, 29 (but not a, b, 30)
Reparation ("Trespass") offering	5:14-6:7 Total: 13vv	7:1-10 Total: 10vv	Yes	Yes (5:16, 18; 6:7)	No	Priests, 7:6

Table 8: The Levitical Sacrifices (references are to Leviticus 1-7). Second number in "Instructions ..." is total verses (see Figure 9)

he says, we need to review the OT scheme of sacrifices (Table 8, chart). The second number in the "instructions" columns is cumulative verses, plotted in Figure 9.

Three of the sacrifices "make atonement": the burnt, purification, and reparation sacrifices.⁴¹ These deal with different consequences of sin (see notes). Only one sacrifice never makes atonement: the peace offering, with its three subtypes: thanksgiving for an unanticipated blessing, fulfillment of a vow, or voluntary praise to the Lord. Most of the emphasis (Figure 9, chart) is on the purification offering, which is also where the references to "atonement" are clustered (Figure 10), showing the need to deal with sin. In particular, the purification offering is the offering most often associated with the expression "and he [the priest] shall make atonement for him/them ..., and he/they shall be forgiven" (see notes).⁴²

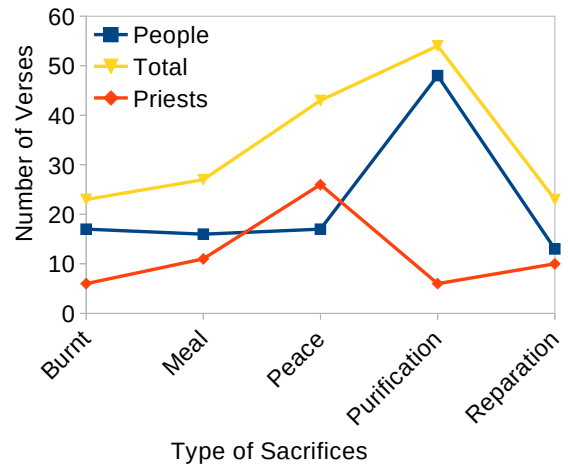


Figure 9: Number of verses for each type of sacrifice

41 The use of grain for atonement in 5:11-13 is remarkable, since "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (17:11), and is not a true meal offering. Most commentators skirt the issue; Milgrom faces it outright but his response simply draws on other ANE cultures. I do not have an explanation, other than the mercy of God in providing for those too poor to afford a blood offering, but see notes.

The sacrifices that we are to offer are very different from these.

“Sacrifice of praise” θυσία G2602 αινέσεως (αἴνεσις) G133 appears only here in the NT, but in the LXX (Lev 7:13, 15; cf. Ps 50:14, 23; 107:22; 116:17) it is the name for one kind of peace offering, the thank offering. In light of all the blessings described in the book, the readers should want to offer thanks to God. The exhortation thus picks up the end of ch. 12,

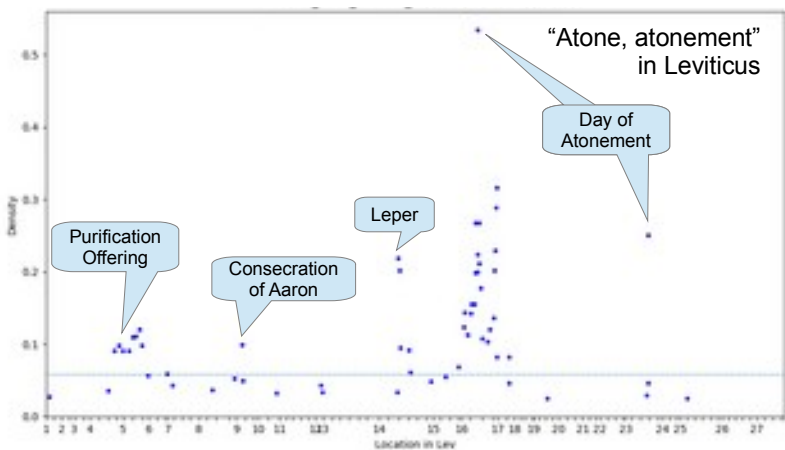


Figure 10: "Atone", "Atonement" in Leviticus

Heb. 12:28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us **have grace** [give thanks], whereby we may **serve God** [in worship] acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

From our survey of the Levitical sacrifices, this is the only sacrifice that never deals with sin.

The other OT expression is “continually” διὰ παντός, which is the dominant translation of the Hebrew word תָּמִיד H8548 (chart). In a sacrificial context, this word describes the twice-daily offering of a lamb that Moses commanded when the altar was dedicated:

Ex 29:38 Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day **continually**. 39 The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even: ... 42 This shall be a **continual burnt offering** throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. (≈Num 28:3-8)

This continual offering in the OT is a burnt offering, which *is* an atoning sacrifice. The morning and evening burnt offering is like Israel’s toothbrush, providing regular atonement for the sins that have happened in the society during the day. In fact, Hezekiah’s motive for purging the temple is that the lack of the burnt offering makes the nation vulnerable to God’s wrath:

2Ch 29:5 ... ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. 6 For our fathers have trespassed, ... 7 ... and **have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings** in the holy place unto the God of Israel. 8 **Wherefore the wrath of the LORD** was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes.

This contrast between an atoning sacrifice and a non-atoning sacrifice is the first of two ways in which our continual offering differs from that of Israel. Before the sacrifice of the Messiah, Israel needed a constant atoning sacrifice to divert God’s wrath. Now, our Savior has offered one sacrifice for sin for ever, and there is no more need for any sacrifice to deal with sin:

42 Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13. The others are with reference to the reparation offering (15:16, 18; 6:7; 19:22), and a general discussion of sins of ignorance (Num. 15:25, 28). The expression appears nowhere else in the OT.

Heb 10:12 But this man, after he had offered **one sacrifice for sins for ever**, sat down on the right hand of God; ... 18 Now where remission of these is, there is **no more offering for sin**.

But God still desires sacrifice. He has replaced the burnt offering, which looked *forward* to the yet-unrealized death of Christ, with the thank offering, which looks *back* to our Lord's finished work. Under the old covenant, the thank offering was an occasional offering. Now, it takes the place of Israel's continual burnt offering.

The continual burnt offering was Israel's toothbrush, dealing with the inevitable background of sin in human life. Now that it has been replaced with the Lord's once-for-all redeeming sacrifice and a non-atoning sacrifice of praise, what about our daily sin? How do we brush our teeth spiritually? The answer lies in 1 John 1:9,

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Our Lord's finished sacrifice means that dealing with our sin no longer requires *any* sacrifice for sin—just a confession that we have broken God's law. But we must recognize the one sacrifice that *did* deal with sin, and so it is appropriate that our confession is not haphazard, but stimulated by the self-examination that is our duty when we gather to remember our Lord's great work:

1Cor. 11:27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man **examine himself**, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not **discerning** the Lord's body.

that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.—The second difference between our continual offering and Israel's is that, unlike the burnt offering, our thanksgiving does not involve an animal, but consists of words. The idea that our words themselves could constitute a sacrifice to God is rooted in the OT. David, at the end of his great Psalm of lament, the Psalm most often applied in the NT to our Lord, rejoices in God's promised deliverance (chart):

Psa 69:29 But I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high. 30 I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving $\alpha\upsilon\upsilon\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ G133. 31 This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs.⁴³

Note the context of David's promise. He is asking for God's salvation, and promises thanksgiving (LXX $\alpha\upsilon\upsilon\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ G133, as in our verse) in return. One who fears God's judgment should bring a burnt offering is appropriate for one who is fearful of God's judgment, but one who has received his salvation should offer thanksgiving.

Perhaps Hosea had this Psalm in mind three hundred years later when he urged the North,

Hos. 14:1 O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. 2 Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render **the calves of our lips**.

43 Compare 1 Sam 15:22, "to obey is better than sacrifice." Both cases deal with our response to the Lord (his commands in 1 Sam 15, his salvation in Ps 69). In both cases the best response comes not from flocks and herds, but from the heart. Perhaps the possible allusion to Psalm 69 here is related to that in v. 13 (re. Ps 69:9).

This verse again anticipates the OT/NT contrast between atonement and thanksgiving. After the Lord “take[s] away all iniquity and receive[s] us graciously,” there is no more need for the burnt offering, and words (of thanksgiving) are the appropriate sacrifice.

Israel had more than one sacrifice—burnt, meal, peace, purification, and reparation. So we have, in addition to the sacrifice of thanksgiving, two more, closely related to one another.

16 But to do good—Again, we have a word that appears only here in the Greek Bible. But our Lord uses a closely related expression to describe taking care of the poor (chart):

Mk 14:7 For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may **do them good**: but me ye have not always.

The expression in Mark 14 appears frequently in the OT, almost always of God’s gracious care for his people.⁴⁴ When it does describe the kindness of one person to another,⁴⁵ it is in response to God’s kindness to the giver. Consider Moses’ words to Hobab his brother-in-law:

Num. 10:32 And it shall come to pass if thou wilt go with us, it shall even come to pass that in whatsoever things the Lord shall do us good, we will also **do thee good**.

Just as the thanksgiving we offer to God issues from his salvation to us, so his goodness in caring for us should result in our kind acts toward others, particularly those who are in need.

and to communicate—This noun κοινωνία G2842, often translated “fellowship,” is one of the four facets of church activity described in Acts 2:42. It often refers to material gifts, for example,

Rom. 15:26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain **contribution** for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

Like Numbers 32, Romans connects these gifts to what the givers have received from the Lord. But material gifts are only one example of what we have in common as followers of the Lord:

1John 1:3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Here the writer encourages us not only to give to the poor, but to cultivate our sharing in all things with our brothers and sisters. And again, it results from “that which we have seen and heard.” Our fellowship with one another issues from God’s gifts to us. We are to love one another, as our Savior has loved us, John 13:34.

We see an illustration of the two sacrifices described in 13:16 in the celebration of the Jews after the defeat of Haman:

Est 9:22 As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending **portions one to another, and gifts to the poor**.

Our fellowship includes not only caring for those in physical need, but also cultivating loving and supporting relationships with each other. Such actions, issuing from our awareness of God’s blessing to us, join with our continual sacrifice of praise as the heart of our worship.

44 10x: Gen. 32:9, 12; Ex. 1:20; Num. 10:29, 32; Deut. 8:16; 28:63; 30:5; Josh. 24:20; Ezek. 36:11.

45 6x: Num. 10:29, 32; Job 24:21; Prov. 3:27–28; Jer. 13:23

forget not:—Such worship does not come naturally. The flesh would lead us away from it, and we need to be reminded constantly. Recall 13:2-3, “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, ... remember them that are in bonds.”

for with such sacrifices—Both our good works toward the poor and our fellowship with one another are described as sacrifices to the Lord. It is a commonplace that the Lord counts *gifts to the poor* as offerings to himself (chart):

Pr 19:17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

Mt 25:40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

We are not as accustomed to think of our *fellowship with one another* as a sacrifice to him, but it is. God is pleased when his people take time to interact with one another:

Mal. 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.

The time we spend learning of one another’s difficulties and encouraging one another is not just “social time.” It is an offering to the Lord. But this means that we need to cultivate and encourage it, not just indulge in random chitchat. We should seek to have a word of Scriptural encouragement for our brothers and sisters, to be aware of their needs and follow up intelligently on them. Like any other sacrifice, real fellowship requires an investment. Recall David’s words,

2Sa 24:24 And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing.

God is well pleased.—Again he takes us back to the faithful saints of ch. 11. That chapter contains the only other instance of this word in the NT:

Heb. 11:5 By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that **he pleased God**. 6 But without faith it is impossible **to please him**: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

In the early chapters of Genesis, the refrain describes not only Enoch (5:22, 24), but also Noah (6:9), Abraham (17:1), and Isaac (24:40). If we would run our race as the witnesses did, we must not forget to offer the sacrifices that God desires from his people.

17, Obey your Leaders

This paragraph, like 13:1-8, ends with a reference to “your leaders.” There, we were to remember their example as we pursue brotherly love. Now, these leaders have another role in maintaining an orderly assembly that avoids Judaizing teaching (13:9), resists the lure of the unbelieving synagogue (13:13-14), and faithfully offers the sacrifices that truly please God (13:15-16).

To the joint duty of mutual love, v. 17 joins two reciprocal responsibilities, of the leaders and the people. This same threefold pattern appears elsewhere in the NT. Recall 1 Pet 5:1-3, where the older believers are enjoined to be leaders and not lords (chart):

1Pet. 5:3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

That same passage has instruction for the younger believers as well:

1Pet. 5:5a Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder.

These *reciprocal* duties are part of a scheme of *mutual* submission:

1 Pet 5:5b Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul makes the same three points, but in reverse order. Note how the two vocatives, "brethren," divide three sections of the exhortation. He begins with the mutual responsibility of all saints to care for one another:

1Th. 5:11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

Then he exhorts the believers to know and respect their leaders,

1Th 5:12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

and finally turns to the leaders to encourage them in their duty,

1Th 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

This passage also presents not just the individual duties of flock and shepherd, but their mutual responsibility in 13:1, "Let brotherly love continue."

Order in the assembly is not imposed top-down, but emerges bottom-up as godly elders *lead* and as younger saints *follow* in a spirit of *mutual love and submission*.

17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves:—Our writer, like 1 Thessalonians, starting with mutual love (13:1-8), followed obedience. The NT assembly has identifiable leaders. These are neither democratically elected nor the result of political power grabs, but in general appointed by the evangelists who found the church (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) from among the older men of the assembly. Even without such appointment, the older men are exhorted (1 Peter 5) to feed (pastor, teach) the flock and provide oversight. The church is to recognize the ministry of these individuals and follow their lead.

for they watch for your souls,—The submission of the church to the elders is balanced by the care of the elders for the church. The verb ἀγρυπνέω G69 literally means, "to stay awake." This expression implies two things about the activities of church leaders.

First, they are alert to what is going on. They have their eyes open, looking out for individuals who are having problems, or for threats that challenge the assembly. This term reflects Paul's description of the elders as "overseers" (or "bishops").

Second, it suggests how they address problems that they discern. The other three times this verb appears in the NT, it is always associated with prayer (chart):

Mark 13:33 Take ye heed, **watch** and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

Luke 21:36 **Watch** ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Eph. 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and **watching** thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

It reflects a deep concern that leads one to sacrifice sleep in order to come before God without distraction. We are reminded of the occasions when our Lord spent the night engaged in prayer with his Father, Before he chose the Twelve, we read,

Luk 6:12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued **all night in prayer** to God.

He also retired in the evening to pray after feeding the 5000 (Matt 14:23), and notably, after the Last Supper, at an hour when the disciples were fatigued and could not stay awake (John 17; Matthew 26). Since this was the example given by our great Shepherd, surely those who seek to guide God’s people in the church should be exercised in prayer.

There is a reason that the older believers should be concerned about the well-being of the younger ones. God will hold them accountable.

as they that must give account,—God expects the older believers to give an account for the younger ones under their charge.

that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.—The younger believers should make it easy for the older ones to discharge their responsibility.

18-25, Fellowship: Closing Benediction and Salutation

The writer calls his work a “letter” (13:22), and these final verses resemble the ends of Paul’s letters, with requests for prayer, benedictions, and greetings. Two features suggest that they are more than that.

First, other letters also have an opening. We have a model for the Greek letter in Acts 23, with the letter of the chief captain of the Roman garrison at Jerusalem to the governor Felix in Caesarea (Table 9, chart). Hebrews has no salutation. Since the writer has not framed his message as an epistle, it would be an oversimplification to dismiss the last few verses as simply the formal closing.

Second, the repetition of the reference to “them that have the rule over you” (13:24, cf. 7, 17), and its place at the end of the previous two sections of ch. 13, suggests that this last paragraph should be understood as a third, parallel section of exhortation.

In fact, the exhortations in this section grow naturally from the third sacrifice that the writer exhorts us to offer to God in 13:17, the sacrifice of fellowship.

Table 9: Form of a Greek letter (Acts 23:26-30)

Salutation:	Acts 23:26
• Sender	Claudius Lysias
• Recipient	unto the most excellent governor Felix
• Greeting	sendeth greeting.
Body	27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. 28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: 29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. 30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him.
Closing	Farewell.

Together with the prayer of the leaders (“watching,” 13:17), the first two paragraphs of this section form a chain of prayer (Figure 11, chart) that binds the church together.



18-19, Request for Prayer

18 Pray for us:—The connection of this verse with the previous context depends on the reference of the pronoun “us.” The plural must go beyond the writer, for in speaking of

himself alone in v. 19 he shifts to the singular. The authority with which he writes suggests that while he was among them, he was one of the leaders, and given the emphasis on the leaders throughout this section, it seems likely that he is enjoining the readers to pray for their leaders. This is only fitting, for we saw that “watch” in 13:17 has the implication of praying. Just as the elders pray for the flock, the writer now asks the flock to pray for the elders, reflecting the reciprocal responsibility and mutual submission that we have seen.

for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.—As motivation for this request, he declares the leaders’ good intentions. If the leaders were corrupt, it would be the duty of the people to leave them:

1 Tim 6:3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; 4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: **from such withdraw thyself.**

The writer is not claiming that he and the other leaders are perfect, but they are walking in submission to the Lord as they understand his will, a prerequisite to seeking his blessing:

Psa 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

19 But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.—He desires their prayer not just for their leaders in general, but specifically for himself. He has been separated from them for some reason, perhaps associated with the Claudian persecution:

Heb 10:32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; 33 Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. 34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods,

It appears that during this persecution, he as one of the leaders was a particular target, being cast into prison while the others suffered lesser tribulations. The threat may have forced him to leave Rome, but he longs to return there, and asks them to join in prayer for such a restoration.

20-21, A Final Prayer

In 13:17, he described the leaders as “watch[ing],” which implies prayer for the flock. In 13:18, he asks that they reciprocate by praying for “us,” probably referring to these leaders. Now he adds a link to the chain of prayer that joins them, offering his own prayer for them in 13:20-21.

17 your leaders ... **watch** for your souls 18-19 **pray** for us 20-21 Now the God of peace ... make you perfect ...

Figure 11: Chain of Prayer in 13:17-21.

<http://www.cler.com/cliparts/4/v/z/k/s/G/chain-link-outline-hi.png>

This is a complex prayer (chart). The central petition is, “May God make you perfect,” or perhaps better, “equip you.” This is one of three verbs with God as the subject. A second one, “brought again,” describes the God who is to make us perfect, while a third, “working,” describes the process that he uses to make us perfect. This process involves our risen Lord, and so the writer closes by presenting the exaltation of Christ as the objective of the whole process.

Almost half of the prayer (27/58 words in the AV) focuses on the subject, “God.” The power of a prayer rests in the one to whom it is addressed. Our God is able to deliver us.

20 Now the God of peace,—First, he describes God as the God of peace.⁴⁶ The implication of this title is suggested by related titles elsewhere (chart), which often suggest a context of difficulty from which the readers need deliverance:

2Th 3:11 For we hear that there are some which walk among you **disorderly**, working not at all, but are busybodies. ... 16 Now the **Lord of peace** himself **give you peace** always by all means.

Rom. 16:20 And the **God of peace** shall **bruise Satan** under your feet shortly.

1Th. 5:23 And the very **God of peace** sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be **preserved** blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

If the Lord is indeed in control of peace, he can bring peace to his people, who are facing the threat of political persecution stirred up by the synagogue.

God’s ability to subdue our adversaries and bring peace to us is exemplified in the resurrection of our Lord. The writer adapts a verse from Isaiah that recalls the victories of the Exodus,

Is. 63:11 Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd[s] of his flock? where is he that put his holy Spirit within him?

In Hebrew, “shepherd” is plural, referring to Moses and Aaron, and the object of “brought up” is the people. The author follows the LXX adapts the verse by making “shepherd” singular and the object of the verb, but uses a different verb to make the reference to the Exodus even stronger.⁴⁷

that brought again from the dead—This phrase is a remarkable way to describe our Lord’s resurrection. The usual verb for resurrection is ἐγείρω G1453, which our writer himself uses in 11:19 of what Abraham expected God to do with Isaac. Only here and in one other place⁴⁸ is the event is described with ἀνάγω G321, “to go on, lead up.” This verb appears often (about 60x) in the LXX to describe how God “brought Israel up from Egypt” ἀνάγω ἐξ Αἰγύπτου, for example,

Lev. 11:45 For I am the Lord who **brought you up out of the land of Egypt** to be your God; and ye shall be holy, for I the Lord am holy.

Our writer compares our Lord’s resurrection to the Exodus.⁴⁹ In ch. 3-4, the writer expounded Psalm 95, describing Israel’s rebellion in the wilderness during the Exodus. Their leader Joshua, whose name in Greek is “Jesus,” was unable to bring them into God’s rest (4:8). He urged his readers to put themselves in Israel’s place, and closed with the exhortation,

46 See notes for other similar constructions

47 The LXX (other than the original hand of B) also reads γη instead of θαλασσα, probably echoing Heb 13:20.

48 Rom 10:7, comparing the grave with the sea (cf. Deut 30:12), another allusion to the Exodus.

49 The reference is due to Cockerill.

Heb 4:11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

We follow another Joshua whom God “brought up,” this time not from Egypt and the Red Sea, but from the dead. He has entered into God’s rest (4:10), and is our forerunner “within the veil” (6:20), assuring us that we will not fall in the wilderness, but follow him there.

our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep,—He describes our Lord with two titles (chart).

First, he is “our Lord Jesus.” The writer has several times used “Lord,” the OT title of deity, to refer to our Lord (most strikingly in 1:10; cf. also 2:3, 7:14), but he also uses it of the Father (12:14; 13:6). The rest of the NT uses the title “Lord Jesus” frequently, but this is the only instance in Hebrews. The ascription of the title to our Lord in ch. 1 clearly refers to his exaltation to the Father’s right hand, and it is appropriate now, in considering his deliverance from death, to give him the unambiguous title “Lord Jesus.”

Second, as we will see in v. 21, this risen Lord plays a critical role in answering this prayer. In a chapter preoccupied with “your leaders,” he is the leader *par excellence*, and the writer emphasizes this by calling him the “great shepherd.”

This description may be inspired by two passages in the Psalms. The association of “Lord” and “shepherd” recalls Ps 23:1, “the Lord is my Shepherd,”⁵⁰ while “great” is a title applied to God in Ps 48:1, “Great is the Lord.”

through *ἐν* the blood of the everlasting covenant,—The preposition indicates the means by which our Lord was raised from the dead. His death resulted from our sin. But our sin merited eternal separation from God. How could the one who took our place be raised from the dead? This dilemma lies at the root of our Savior’s prayer of agony in Gethsemane. Would God’s justice allow the cup to pass from him, or would he be required to remain forever separated from his Father in order to redeem us?

The sacrifices under the old covenant had no power to forgive sin, only to cover it. Those animals died forever, and new ones had to be slain repeatedly. But we are now under a new covenant (chart).

Heb 8:6 he is the mediator of **a better covenant**, ... 13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

It is everlasting, never to be replaced. This covenant provides that our sin is no longer simply covered, but removed completely:

Jer 31:34 for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Once that covenant was ratified by the shedding of Messiah’s blood, the power of sin was broken, and our Lord’s resurrection proves that our sin is gone. Thus Paul writes,

Rom. 4:25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

In the first clause, “for” *διὰ* has the sense “because of,” and most naturally has this sense in the second as well. The death of Christ simply proves that our sin can kill; the resurrection of Christ

50 Recall Scofield’s note on John 10:7, linking these two, and also the suffering “good shepherd” (John 10:10) with Psalm 22 and the “chief shepherd” who is coming again (1 Pet 5:4) with Psalm 24.

proves that our sin is gone. Or as our writer says, “God ... brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus ... through the blood of the everlasting covenant.”

Now let’s consider what our God, the one who has demonstrated his ability to bring us peace by raising our Lord from the dead, is going to do with us.

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will,—The heart of the request is that “God ... make you perfect.” The writer has spoken often of “perfection” using cognates of τέλος G5056, but here he uses καταρτίζω G2675, the preparation of someone for a mission, making sure that he has everything he needs, that he is well trained and any defects are remedied.⁵¹ The writer hused this verb earlier to describe our Lord’s incarnation, quoting Ps 40:6-8 (chart),

Heb 10:5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou **prepared** me: 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. 7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) **to do thy will, O God.**

That verse described how God prepared his Son to send him into the world to do his will. Now the writer is praying that God will prepare his many sons to serve him.

The verb has three modifiers: “in every good work,” “to do his will,” and then the participial clause “working in you” The allusion to Psalm 40 accounts for “to do his will.” The reference to “every good work” also deserves attention.

Make you perfect καταρτίζω in every good work—“Every good work” (see note) appears 9x in the NT, and expresses the broadest range of behavior that is pleasing to God. The expression “good work” or “good works” never describes “the works of the law,” which the NT rejects as a basis for salvation (Gal 2:16). “Good works” are always viewed positively as something we should pursue, the purpose for which God has saved us:

Eph. 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto **good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

This prayer is particularly appropriate in the context of church leadership, agreeing with what Paul writes, probably about the same time:⁵²

2Ti 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be **perfect** ἄρτιος G2316, thoroughly furnished unto ~~all good works~~ **every good work**.

“Perfect” in 2 Tim 3:17 is from the same root as “make you perfect” in 13:21, referring not to maturity, but to being equipped for a mission. The writer, as a leader of the church, prays that God will equip them, which is why church leaders should emphasize teaching the Word of God.

The third modifier is an extended participial clause.

working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight,—The phrase “that which is wellpleasing in his sight” expands on God’s purpose, that we would do his will. “Wellpleasing”

51 See Trench, Article xxii, “ὀλόκληρος, τέλειος, ἄρτιος.” The first word describes intrinsic completeness, the second the attainment of maturity through time, the third everything needed to achieve a purpose.

52 2 Timothy is Paul’s last epistle, anticipating his execution, which traditionally happened under Nero, the emperor who followed Claudius. It is likely that Claudius led the persecution mentioned in Heb 10:32-34. In fact, the persecution anticipated by the writer, for which he seeks to prepare the church in Rome, may well be the same persecution by Nero that led to Paul’s martyrdom.

and cognates (εὐαρεστ* G2100, G2101, G2102) are used more often in Hebrews than in any other NT book (5/13, 11:5–6; 12:28; 13:16, 21). They describe the sacrifices that God desires of us (13:16), and characterize Enoch (11:5) and the other patriarchs.

Having outlined the *nature* of God’s work (equipping us for every good work) and its *purpose* (to do his will), he now focuses on the *means*. In 2 Timothy, the written Word of God is the tool that God uses in preparing us. In Hebrews, the writer’s intensive use of the OT Scriptures certainly shows his belief in the importance of that resource in preparing God’s people, but here he focuses on the incarnate Word of God as the active force in our preparation:

through Jesus Christ;—See note on this expression throughout the NT. Does the phrase modify “working” or “wellpleasing” (chart)? Both are true, and perhaps the ambiguity is intentional.

First, the *working* of godliness in us is only possible through our Lord Jesus:

Phil. 1:11 Being filled with **the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ**, unto the glory and praise of God.

As Paul says later in that epistle,

Phil. 2:12 work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Second, the results of that work are only *wellpleasing* to God through our Savior

1Pet. 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, **acceptable to God by Jesus Christ**.

There may be a picture of our Lord’s role in our service to God in the relation of the meal offering to the other sacrifices. Frequently in Numbers we read of the burnt offering or the peace offering “with his meal offering,”⁵³ and the daily burnt offerings in the temple were always accompanied with a meal offering:

Num. 28:3 And thou shalt say unto them, This is the offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the LORD; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt offering.. 4 The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even; 5 And a tenth part of an ephah of flour **for a meat meal offering**, mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil.

We have considered our Savior as the fulfillment of the meal offering, and he must accompany the offerings that we bring for them to be acceptable to God.

to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.—The ultimate object of our perfection is to exalt our Savior. Remarkably, Jesus receives the glory that is God’s unique prerogative (see notes).

22-25, Final Greetings

22 And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.—This verse describes the literary *form* of the book, and expresses the author’s *gentleness* toward his audience.

The *form* is both a “word of exhortation” and a “letter.” We recognize a letter, a written message from someone who is absent. “Word of exhortation” is less familiar. It is the name for the homily in the synagogue service: recall Paul and Barnabas in Pisidian Antioch (chart).

53 Num. 6:17; 8:8; 15:24; 28:31

Acts 13:15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any **word of exhortation** for the people, say on.

This insight explains the detailed logical structure and extended argumentation of the book.

“Exhortation” implies that his purpose is not just to inform them, but to motivate their behavior. As a former leader in the church, it would certainly be appropriate for him to encourage their behavior, but as we have seen, NT leaders are to be in front of the flock as examples, not over them as commanders, and the author is careful to express his *gentleness*, in three ways:

- “I beseech you, brethren.” He does not assume that they must pay attention to him, but asks them as brothers to do him the favor of hearing what he has to say.
- “Suffer.” He recognizes that reading his letter and following his reasoning is not easy, that it requires their endurance, and is almost apologizing for imposing on them.

- “Few words.” In fact, this is a rather long letter, compared with others in the NT (Figure 12), but if it is indeed written to the Romans as we have suggested, it is nearly a third shorter than Romans, and perhaps he is encouraging them that they have managed an even longer letter in the past.

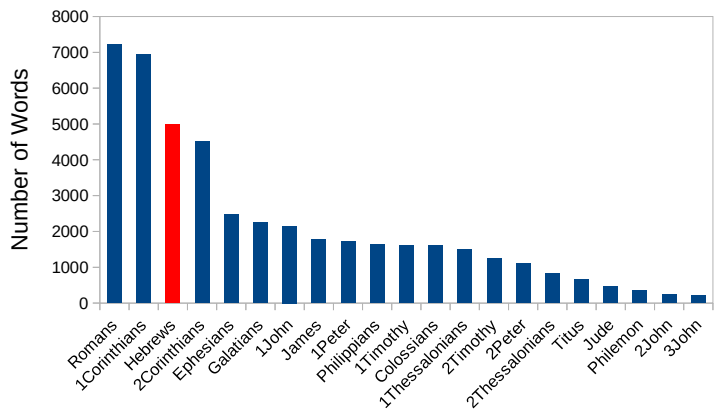


Figure 12: Lengths of NT epistles (words in Robinson-Pierpont Byzantine text)

23 Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty;—He

writes as though they know Timothy, who appears here for the last time in the NT (chart). By reconstructing his life, we can find two possible occasions when he might have been in Rome, and formed a relation with the church there.

Timothy came from Lystra in Asia Minor, a city that Paul and Barnabas visited on the first missionary journey.⁵⁴ When Paul returned there with Silas on the second journey, he invited Timothy to join them as their helper, and is associated with them throughout Paul’s life.

Three prison epistles, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, are “from ... Timothy,” indicating that he was with Paul during his first imprisonment in Rome. This would be when the Roman church would have come to know him. But Paul writes to the Philippians,

Phil 2:19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

Paul was constrained to Rome, but Timothy could travel on his behalf, and probably did, for when Paul writes 1 Timothy, also during his first imprisonment, Timothy is not with him.

We know little about the period between the first and second imprisonments. When Paul writes him the second time in 2 Timothy, Paul is again in Rome, but this time expects to be martyred:

2Tim. 4:6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

⁵⁴ ISBE has an excellent summary of his life.

This time he asks Timothy to come visit him, and if Timothy was able to come, he would have renewed his fellowship with the saints in Rome.

2 Tim 4:9 Do thy diligence to **come** shortly unto me: 10 For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me.⁵⁵ Take Mark, and **bring** him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry. 12 And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus. 13 The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou **comest**, **bring** with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments.

The next reference we have to Timothy is Heb 13:23. Apparently, Timothy was subsequently imprisoned, perhaps because of his association with Paul. This imprisonment would not have been in Rome, otherwise the church there would learn of his release before the absent writer does. But Paul was held in bonds at other places as well—Philippi, Jerusalem, Caesarea—and Timothy’s bold testimony may well have led to such experiences for him.

The note about Timothy teaches us several lessons.

1. *The power of discipleship.* We think of Paul for his direct ministries, and most notably for the letters he wrote. But even after he was no longer free, Timothy, the young convert from the first missionary journey, carried on his work for him. Paul was only imitating his Lord, who left disciples to carry on his work—and who was in turn the disciple of John the Baptist. We ought to give special priority to investing in younger believers.
2. *The ubiquity of persecution.* At the end of the first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas told the new churches, “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). What Timothy heard in his youth, he now experiences as a mature servant of the Lord.
3. *The persistence of faith.* This persecution does not bring an end to Timothy’s service to the Lord, for when it ends the writer fully expects him to join him in continued ministry.

with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.—Note the importance the writer attaches to personal engagement. Just as Paul was not content to correspond with Timothy but wanted him to come, the writer is not content to correspond with the church, but longs to visit them.

24 Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints.—For the third time he mentions their leaders. This time they are presented, not as examples to be imitated (13:7), nor as leaders to be obeyed (13:17), but as peers, members of the assembly of saints.

They of Italy salute you.—On our reconstruction of the book, these are members of the Roman assembly who were with the writer in his exile, perhaps having accompanied him when he fled Rome.

25 Grace be with you all. Amen.—All of Paul’s epistles end with a prayer for God’s grace upon the readers, but so does Revelation (22:21), and 2 John begins this way (v. 3).⁵⁶

Grace (χάρις G5485, translating ἡ H2580) refers to undeserved favor. It appears frequently in the OT in the expression “find favor in the eyes of someone,” indicating the kindness of someone

55 This reference to Luke is suggestive. He was also with Paul during the first imprisonment (Col 4:14). Eusebius records that Clement of Alexandria (died 220) said that Paul wrote Hebrews in Hebrew, and Luke translated it into Greek, which would account for the many instances of Lucan language throughout the book.

56 John includes a verb in the future, and omits the ἀμήν of the other examples, suggesting his use of the phrase is a promise rather than a prayer.

in power toward an underling, like Jacob seeking to appease the wrath of Esau (Gen 33:8-10) or Joseph in the eyes of the keeper of the prison (Gen 39:21). Grace is what sinful people desperately need from a holy and all-powerful God, and it is what the Lord Jesus has procured for us by his priestly ministry (chart):

Heb. 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of **grace**, that we may obtain mercy, and **find grace** to help in time of need.

Note the corresponding reference to mercy (ἔλεος G1656, from חסד H2617), God's covenant love, which is what provided our Lord's sacrifice, is the foundation for this unmerited favor. But just because it is unmerited doesn't mean we can presume upon it. It is possible to miss out on the blessing of God's grace:

Heb. 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of **the grace of God**;

This sort of warning is not unique to Hebrews. Paul and Barnabas, preaching in Pisidian Antioch, urged those who received their message favorably to "continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43), and we find descriptions of what it means to continue throughout the NT:

- make our calling and election sure (2 Pet 1:10),
- hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end (Heb 3:6)
- "work out [our] ... salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12)

So it is not surprising for Christian teachers to pray for those whom they instruct, "May God's grace be with you all."

Notes

προσέρχομαι 12:18, 22

The verb is denser in Hebrews than any other NT book other than Matthew, and is mostly used in Hebrews of coming to God:

Heb. 4:16 Let us therefore **come boldly unto the throne of grace**, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Heb. 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that **come unto God** by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Heb. 10:22 **Let us draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Heb. 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for **he that cometh to God** must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

The one possible exception refers to the OT sacrificial system, but even that was a means of approach to God

Heb. 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make **the comers** thereunto perfect.

Table 10 shows the relation of προσέρχομαι and other Greek verbs of coming or approaching to the OT. קרב is much more common in Leviticus and the temple portions of Ezekiel than נגש, suggesting it is the dominant term for priestly approach to God. But Girdlestone on Korban notes the parallelism of the terms in Jer 30:21. They are also parallel in Lev 2:8; 21:21; Mal 1:8.

	קרב	נגש	בוא	Total
προσέρχομαι	33	20	4	111
προσάγω	89	30	7	172
ἐγγίζω	34	35	0	148
ἄγω	0	0	255	255
ἔρχομαι	0	0	700	978
Total	280	125	2577	

Table 10: Greek and Hebrew Verbs for Coming

If we consider the close semantic relation of ἄγω and ἔρχομαι, both describing movement but in one case away from and in the other toward the speaker, perhaps we should group them together, which clearly shows a preference for the more cultic term קרב. But unlike προσέρχομαι, which is quite common (90x) in the NT, προσάγω appears only 4x (three of them in Luke-Acts). TWOT (L.J. Coppes) notes of נגש, “Unlike its near synonym, *qārab*, it does not usually signify actual contact.”

The verb in 12:18 probably reflects

Deut. 4:11 And ye **drew nigh προσέρχομαι קרב** and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire up to heaven: there was darkness, blackness, and tempest.

μυριάς in 12:22

The question of the connection of this term should consider its likely OT linkages. Two seem particularly important.

The first is at the beginning of Moses' blessing on the tribes.

Deut. 33:2 And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with **ten thousands** of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.

There are two main explanations.

The traditional reference, as in the LXX and followed by the KJV, sees the term as describing his entourage. KJV "with," following LXX σύν, suggests that they accompany him, but the Hebrew preposition ׀ would indicate rather the heavenly court from which he issues (thus Alexander, Pulpit Commentary). (But Rashi takes the ׀ as partitive, "some of the myriads of angels"). This interpretation probably lies behind the NT statement that the law was given by angels: Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2, and perhaps informs Ps 68:17.

A variant, inspired by the parallel in v. 3, would see the myriads as the children of Israel.

Christensen (Word commentary) suggests that we read the Hebrew, "He marched / from Ribboth-kodesh." See also discussion in Merrill. This would be consistent with the motif of a travel itinerary.

Given the NT references to angels at the giving of the law, including that in Heb 2:2, it is likely that our writer would understand the term in Deut 33:2 as referring to angels.

The second instance is in the Son of Man vision in Daniel.

Dan. 7:10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times **ten thousand** stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

The Seer of Patmos appears to understand this term to describe the union of angels and humans:

Rev. 5:11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was **ten thousand** times **ten thousand**, and thousands of thousands;

Daniel's reference to judgment strongly suggests that those being judged should be included in the gathering. Then the 10⁶ who minister to him (שׂמֵשׁ) would be the angels, while the 10⁸ who stand before him would be the objects of the judgment.

Elsewhere in the OT (total of 44 LXX instances), the word refers to a large company of people.

Gen 17:1

Gen. 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect ׀תִּמְךָ ἄμμεπτος.

How might this verse illustrate the relation between "God the judge of all" and "the spirits of just men made perfect"?

“Perfect” here is ἄμεμπτος in the LXX, not a cognate of τέλος (consistent with most other instances of תמים). τέλος is usually מכס (tribute), קצק, or (especially in Psalm titles) נצח (consistent with the liturgical sense we have noted). To walk before God the judge requires actual, practical righteousness, and that is the first description of these successful saints.

Receiving a Kingdom 12:28

Both λαμβάνω G2983 and παραλαμβάνω G3880 can take “kingdom” as an object: OT from Breton’s translation, extended where necessary to match Rahlfs.

παραλαμβάνω: 86x in Greek Bible

Dan. 5:31 And Darius the Mede **succeeded to the kingdom**, being sixty-two years old.

Dan. 6:28 And Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and Cyrus the Persian **received his kingdom**.

Dan. 7:18 which shall be taken away; and the saints of the Most High shall **take the kingdom**, and possess it for ever and ever.

2Mac. 4:7 But after the death of Seleucus, when Antiochus, called Epiphanes, **took the kingdom**, Jason the brother of Onias laboured underhand to be high priest,

2Mac. 10:11 So when he was **come to the crown**, he set one Lysias over the affairs of his realm, and appointed him chief governor of Celosyria and Phenice.

λαμβάνω: 1537x in Greek Bible

Luke 19:12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to **receive** for himself **a kingdom**, and to return.

Luke 19:15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having **received the kingdom**, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

Rev. 17:12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have **received no kingdom** as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

The relative infrequency of παραλαμβάνω suggests that it may be more specialized, emphasizing the role of the preposition. Certainly the use of the word in Hebrews reflects the LXX usage (and deviates from Luke, contrary to Delitzsch’s suggestion).

ἡγεμών and ἡγούμενος in the Bible

Table 11 shows leadership vocabulary in the LXX. Titles such as ἡγεμών and ἄρχων correspond more clearly to titles of superiority such as ראש, אלוף, or שר. The dominant OT counterpart for ἡγούμενος is נגיד. But this term itself is a common one for royalty—TDOT

	ראש	נשיא	אלוף	לפני	שר	נגיד	Total
ἡγεμών	0	0	56	0	13	0	84
ἡγούμενος	8	5	0	3	11	23	130
ἄρχων	103	95	0	0	241	9	624
Total	600	130	60	1103	425	43	

Table 11: Leadership vocabulary in the LXX

compares it to “highness.” It is commonly used of Saul and particularly David, and of military and cultic leaders.

Consider some other examples of people in the NT whom ἡγούμενος describes. It can describe a prince or governor:

Matt. 2:6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a **Governor**, that shall rule my people Israel.

Acts 7:10 And [God] delivered [Joseph] out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him **governor** over Egypt and all his house.

But it can also describe someone who is prominent in a group by virtue of what he does. Our Lord emphasized the priority of function over position:

Luke 22:26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is **chief**, as he that doth serve.

Note the description of Paul in the mission to Asia Minor:

Acts 14:12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the **chief** speaker [lit. the leader of the word].

His position in the little team was functional, not based on office. In fact, Barnabas was “officially” the leader of the team. So at the end of the Jerusalem conference, we read,

Acts 15:22 Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, **chief** men among the brethren:

We know nothing more of Judas and Silas. They were not officers of the church—when Paul mentions visiting Jerusalem in Galatians 1, he mentions Peter and James, but says nothing of these men. But they were prominent among the believers.

Any group of believers will naturally have those who are prominent among them. Paul describes this group, using a different word:⁵⁷

1Th 5:12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are **over you** in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

This word describes the *function* of the elders in 1 Tim 5:17, “the elders that **rule well**,” in contrast to their office. And consider Peter’s description of the three roles, emphasizing the contrast between giving orders and being examples:

1Pe 5:1 The **elders** which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 **Feed** the flock of God which is among you, taking the **oversight** thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 **Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.**

57 Delitzsch notes that ἡγούμενος in the sense of “leader” is particularly Lukan, in support of Lukan authorship. Paul uses the term only in Phil 2:3, in a verbal sense “esteem,” not to denote a leader.

So there were leaders in the little church in Rome, as there will be in any group. We know nothing of the group’s organization, but the description of these men here shows that they are distinguished by their experience and godly example.

Vocabulary for Covetousness (13:5)

“Covet” translates several terms in the NT: πλεονεξία, πλεονέκτης, (ἀ)φιλαργυρ*, ἐπιθυμ*—the term used in Exod 20:17 and Deut 5:21, ζηλόω, ὀρέγω. Here are the OT parallels:

	דמח (Ex 20, Dt 5)	גצב√	חכס N	הוא√	פחפ√	קג√	Total	Notes
πλεονε(κξ)*		7					11	Idolatry, acc. to Eph 5:5; Col 3:5
(ἀ)φιλαργυρ*							3	all Macc, no Heb
ἐπιθυμ*	16	0	2	30			163	Dt 5, Ex 20
ζηλ*						70	107	
ὀρέγω								All apoc, no Heb
Total	27	39	4	37	124	83		
Notes					βουλεω, θελω			

Disposition of OT Sacrifices

I compiled this list by searching Leviticus for “eat*” and “burn*”.

Class of Sacrifice	Eaten—by whom?	Burned outside—part or whole?
Sin		4:12, 21 whole 16:27 whole
Grain	6:16-18 priests (but not at their anointing, v. 23)	
Sin	6:26, 29 priests 6:30, except those whose blood is brought into the tabernacle	
Trespass	7:6 priests	
Peace	7:11-36 those who offer them	

Hebrew Equivalents of ποικίλος

The most common associations are with carefully embroidered garments (רקמה) and animals whose coats are not of uniform color (נקד, ברד). The latter usage is most common in the story of Jacob and

	ποικίλος	ῥαντός (not NT)	Total
רקמה embroidered	6		12
נקד speckled	5	4	11
פס long-sleeved	3		6
ברד grisled (horses)	2		4
Total	26	7	

Laban in Gen 30-31. Jacob proposes to Laban to take as his pay all the mottled animals. These would be rarer and uncommon, and perhaps might be viewed as less desirable, certainly for the use of their wool.

Names for our Lord in Hebrews (13:8)

The combination Jesus Christ occurs only four other times in Hebrews, and never “Christ Jesus” (the title of humiliation; 3:1 is a minority reading). Always the order of exaltation. (Cyril Hocking).

χριστος is arthrous except when verse initial (3:6; 9:11) or in the title IX.

Chap	Verse	Text	Jesus	Christ	Lord
1	10	And, Thou, Lord , in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands			X
2	3	How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord , and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;			X
2	9	But we see Jesus , who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.	X		
3	1	Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus Christ ;	X	X	
3	6	But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.		X	
3	14	For we are made partakers of the Christ , if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;		X	
4	14	Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God , let us hold fast our profession.	X		
5	5	So also the Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.		X	
6	1	Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of the Christ , let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,		X	
6	20	Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus , made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.	X		
7	14	For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.			X
7	22	By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.	X		
9	11	But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;		X	
9	14	How much more shall the blood of the Christ , who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?		X	

Chap	Verse	Text	Jesus	Christ	Lord
9	24	For the Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us		X	
9	28	So the Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.		X	
10	10	By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.	X	X	
10	19	Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,	X		
11	26	Esteeming the reproach of the Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.		X	
12	2	Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.	X		
12	14	Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord			X
12	24	And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.	X		
13	6	So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.			X
13	8	Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.	X	X	
13	12	Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.	X		
13	20	Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,	X		X
13	21	Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.	X	X	
		Totals	13	13	6

Thoughts on the four instances:

3:1, The God-Man

Heb 3:1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, **Christ Jesus Christ;**

This verse summarizes ch. 1-2:

- Ch 1: the promised Christ (though the term is not used), the fulfillment of Psalm 2 “sit thou at my right hand.” Cf. title “Lord” used of him in 1:10; 2:3.
- Ch 2: shows us “Jesus,” after quoting Psalm 8, 2:9.

It also joins ch. 1-2 (our Lord as Apostle, the exalted, eternal Son of God, sent into the world as a man to deal with men) and 3-10 (our Lord as High Priest, accomplishing in reality what the Levitical order could only anticipate in shadow).

10:10, The Priest-Sacrifice

Heb. 10:8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; 9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. 10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of **Jesus Christ** once for all. Most references to our Lord as priest either include or are exclusively ο χριστος, emphasis on the predicted role. Exceptions:

9:11 (χριστος anarthrous because verse-initial);

4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, **Jesus** the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. (but “the Son of God” recalls ch. 1)

6:20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even **Jesus**, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. (but “made” γινωμα emphasizes what the man Jesus became, not who the predicted Christ was)

13:8, The Continuing Intercessor

Heb 13:8 **Jesus Christ** the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Ch. 3-8 show that our Lord’s advent does away with the Levitical order, replacing the human priest and animal sacrifice with the God-Man who is both priest and sacrifice. Unlike the old order, this new order will never change. His ministry for us continues forever.

13:20-21, Concluding Benediction

Heb. 13:20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead **our Lord Jesus**, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through **Jesus Christ**; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Joined here with the only instance of “Lord Jesus” in the epistle. Brings together his past and present work for us, and invites us to praise him.

13:10, Words for Altar

Clearly, θυσ. is the generic term, used of both kinds of altar throughout; θυμ. is highly specialized, used only twice in the canonical OT, both times translated by the KJV “censer.”

	מזבח	מקטרת	Total
θυμιασθηριον	0	2	3
θυσιασθηριον	358	0	424
Total	403	2	

13:15 continually διὰ παντός

The dominant and dedicated OT translation of תמיד, the daily offering of Ex 29:38-42 and Num 28:3-6:

	תמיד	Other	Total
διὰ παντός	82		120
ἐνδελχ*	11	2x Daniel,	33

		mostly Sirach	
Other	Various: καθ' ἡμέραν, δι' ὄλου, ἀεὶ, διὰ τέλους, 3x θυσία (Daniel)		
Total		104	

Prepositions with a pronoun referring to our Lord

Heb. 5:5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said **unto προς him**, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

Heb. 7:21 (For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said **unto προς him**, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec:)

Heb. 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God **by δια him**, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Heb. 12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners **against εις himself**, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Heb. 13:13 Let us go forth therefore **unto προς him** without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Heb. 13:15 **By δια him** therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

The Atoning Sacrifices of Leviticus

Milgrom has argued persuasively that the sin offering is really a purification offering (the doubling of the ν shows that we should relate it to the Piel “to purify” rather than the Qal “to sin”), and that the trespass חַטָּאת offering is meant to offer reparation (cf. the use of the word in Num 5:8; BDB “This offering seems to have been confined to offences against God or man that could be estimated and so covered by compensation”).

Milgrom insists that the object of purification in the purification offering is the sanctuary, not the worshipper, because that is where the blood is applied. But observe the distribution of the phrase $\text{וְנָסַח לּוֹ ... וְנִכְפַּר עָלָיו}$, “and he shall make atonement for him, and he shall be forgiven.” This phrase, which clearly focuses on purification of the worshipper, appears 25x in the OT, overwhelmingly of the purification offering (Table 12). More likely, the application of the blood has the objective, not of purifying the objects to which it is applied, but of bring the evidence of the sacrifice before the Lord so that he will forgive the offender.

Table 8 shows that three of the sacrifices are described as making atonement for the offerer: the burnt, purification, and reparation offerings. The meal offering is exceptional. When used as a substitute for the sin offering for an impoverished person, the preparation was different. Ordinarily, it required oil and frankincense, to provide a sweet savour:

Lev 2:1 And when any will offer a meat offering unto the LORD, his offering shall be of fine flour; and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon:

But when used as a sin offering, these were omitted:

Lev 5:11 But if he be not able to bring two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, then he that sinned shall bring for his offering the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering; he shall put no oil upon it, neither shall he put any frankincense thereon: for it is a sin offering.

Section	Total Verses	Instances of the Phrase	Density
Lev 4:1-5:13, Purification Offering	48	20	0.42
Lev 5:14-6:7, 19:21-11 Reparation Offering	15	3	0.20
Num 15:22-31, Sins of Ignorance and Presumption	10	2	0.20

Table 12: Density of "He shall make atonement for him/them ... and he/they shall be forgiven" in the OT

The reference to the meal offering as achieving atonement is only in Lev 5:11-13, in the expression in v.

13, כַּמִּנְחָה, which might be translated “like the meal offering,” and it possible that the reference is only to the priest’s participation in the flour that could be offered in lieu of animals, rather than to the flour “as a meal offering.” So focus on the burnt, purification and reparation offerings. As offerings for sin, all are superseded by the work of our Savior, so they teach us more precisely what he has done for us. Sin causes damage toward God, toward us, and toward the society to which we belong. These three appear to address these three dimensions.

The burnt offering turns away the wrath of God from us.⁵⁸ Examples:

Gen 8:20 (first instance): And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. 21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

In 2 Sam 24:25 And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

2Ch 29:5 And [Hezekiah] said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. 6 For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs. 7 Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel. 8 Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes.

The technical name for an offering that turns away the wrath of God is propitiation. Our Lord provides this for us:

1Jn 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

⁵⁸ Following the analysis of Wenham, who includes Job 1:5, which however makes no explicit reference to turning away the wrath of God.

The purification offering removes our guilt. It is characterized by the expression, “the priest shall make an atonement for him/they, and it shall be forgiven him/they,” Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:10, 13. Example: for the sin of the congregation,

Lev 4:20 And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock for a sin offering, so shall he do with this: and the priest shall make an atonement for them, and it shall be forgiven them.

The technical point here is justification. The burnt offering achieves a change in God; the purification offering achieves a change in us. Our Lord provides this for us as well:

Heb 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

The distinguishing characteristic of the reparation offering is repayment of misappropriated property.

Lev. 5:15 If a soul commit a trespass, and sin through ignorance, in the holy things of the LORD; then he shall bring for his trespass unto the LORD a ram without blemish out of the flocks, with thy estimation by shekels of silver, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass offering: 16 And he shall make amends for the harm that he hath done in the holy thing, and shall add the fifth part thereto, and give it unto the priest: and the priest shall make an atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering, and it shall be forgiven him.

The word “estimation” is critical. It is used in Leviticus only for this sacrifice, and in ch. 27, defining vows to the Lord, where someone promises to bring something to the Lord. If one later defaults on this promise, they must pay damages, and the ethical implications are covered by the reparation offering.

Isaiah knew that the Messiah would offer a reparation sacrifice:

Is. 53:10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin חַטָּאת H817, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

We owed God a debt of obedience, and defaulted on that obligation. We had no way to repay. Our Lord’s perfect righteousness satisfies the law that we could not satisfy:

Rom 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Eph 1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

“God of X” in the NT

“God of peace” as in 13:20 is the most common such construction in the NT, appearing also in Rom 15:33; 16:20, Phil 4:9; 1 Thes 5:23. 2 Cor 13:11 has “God of love and peace.” Compare God of Glory (Acts 7:2), God of the Fathers (Acts 3:13; 5:30; 7:32; 22:14); God of patience and consolation (Rom 15:5); God of hope (Rom 15:13), God of our LJX (Eph 1:17); God of heaven (Rev 11:13; 16:11), God of the spirits of the prophets (Rev 22:6). Other than κυριος θεος Ισραηλ and other references to God of the fathers, the construction is rare in the canonical LXX: Ps

24:10 “king of glory,” Dan 2:37; 4:17 “God of heaven.” It does appear in the later, non-canonical books: Tobit 13:7 “lord of righteousness”, 7:17; 10:13 “Lord of heaven”; Wisd 9:1 “lord of mercy.”

13:21 ἔργον ἀγαθόν

How does this differ from ἔργον καλός? The two appear together:

1Tim. 5:10 Well reported of for good καλός works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good ἀγαθός work.

Consider instances of both in the NT.

ἀγαθός 15x

None in the gospels; note frequency of πάς (9/15x), always singular (2 Tim 3:17 is a translation plural; all texts agree on the singular). Most of the passages speaking of God’s purpose for our lives use ἀγαθός, but there are exceptions (Tit 2;14; 3:8). Order is εα except Acts 9:36; Rom 13:3

Acts 9:36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of **good works** and almsdeeds which she did.

Rom. 2:7 To them who by patient continuance in **well doing** seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

Rom. 13:3 For rulers are not a terror to **good works**, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:

2Cor. 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every **good work**:

Eph. 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto **good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (But Titus 3:8, the parallel, uses καλός)

Phil. 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a **good work** in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Col. 1:10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every **good work**, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

2Th. 2:17 Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every **good word and work**.

Heb. 13:21 Make you perfect in every **good work** to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1Tim. 2:10 But (which becometh women professing godliness) with **good works**.

1Tim. 5:10 Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every **good work**.

2Tim. 2:21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every **good work**.

2Tim. 3:17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all **good works** [MT **πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθόν**].

Titus 1:16 They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every **good work** reprobate.

Titus 3:1 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every **good work**,

καλός 14x

All κε except for 1 Tim 5:10; 6:18 ἐν ἔργοις καλοῖς. None of these use πάς.

Matt. 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good works**, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Mark 14:6 And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a **good work** on me.

John 10:32 Jesus answered them, Many **good works** have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?

John 10:33 The Jews answered him, saying, For a **good work** we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

1Pet. 2:12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your **good works**, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Heb. 10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to **good works**:

1Tim. 3:1 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a **good work**.

1Tim. 5:10 Well reported of for **good works**; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

1Tim. 5:25 Likewise also the **good works** of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

1Tim. 6:18 That they do good, that they be rich in **good works**, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

Titus 2:7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of **good works**: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity,

Titus 2:14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of **good works**.

Titus 3:8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain **good works**. These things are good καλός and profitable unto men. (Compare Eph 2:10 ἀγαθός)

Titus 3:14 And let ours also learn to maintain **good works** for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.

OT Usage

The two terms appear about equally in the NT (ἀγαθός 102x, καλός 101x), but in the OT ἀγ. is 3x as common, suggesting it is the more generic of the two words, and καλός the more specialized. This would fit the tendency to associate ἀγ. more with πᾶς, while καλός more often describes one or more specific deeds.

	טוב	יפה	Total
ἀγαθός	306	0	612
καλός	94	30	221
Total	489	42	

What happens διὰ Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ (13:21)?

Revelation

John 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, but **grace and truth came by Jesus Christ**.

Acts 10:36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, **preaching peace by Jesus Christ**: (he is Lord of all:) *unless dIX goes with peace, adjectivally, as in Gal 1:1; 4:7*

Heb. 2:3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be **spoken by the Lord**, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

God glorified:

1Pet. 4:11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be **glorified through Jesus Christ**, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Rom. 16:27 To God only wise, **be glory through Jesus Christ** for ever. Amen. Written to the Romans from Corinthus, and sent by Phebe servant of the church at Cenchrea.

Thanks offered to God

Rom. 1:8 First, **I thank my God through Jesus Christ** for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

Rom. 7:25 **I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord**. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Apostolic authority

Gal. 1:1 Paul, **an apostle**, (not of men, neither by man, but **by Jesus Christ**, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) *sent by IX*

Rom. 15:30 Now **I beseech you**, brethren, **for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake**, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

2Th. 3:12 Now them that are such **we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ**, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

1Th. 4:2 For ye know what commandments **we gave you by the Lord Jesus**.

Our trust or consolation

2Cor. 1:5 For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so **our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.**

2Cor. 3:4 And such trust **have we through Christ** to God-ward:

Means by which God saved us

Rom. 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we **have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:**

Rom. 5:11 And not only so, but **we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.**

Rom. 5:21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might **grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.**

2Cor. 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath **reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ,** and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

Eph. 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the **adoption of children by Jesus Christ** to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

1Th. 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to **obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,**

Titus 3:6 Which **he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;**

Gal. 4:7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then **an heir of God through Christ.**

Our final victory

1Cor. 15:57 But thanks be to God, **which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

2Cor. 4:14 Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall **raise up us also by Jesus,** and shall present us with you.

Our Godly Lives

Heb. 13:21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, **working in you** that which is wellpleasing in his sight, **through Jesus Christ;** to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. *does dIX modify "working," as Phil 1:11 suggests, or "wellpleasing," cf. 1 Pet 2:5? As the two vv show, our Lord is responsible for both.*

Phil. 1:11 Being filled with **the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ,** unto the glory and praise of God.

1Pet. 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, **acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.**

Possible adjectival instances

(Also listed in appropriate category)

Acts 10:36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching **peace by Jesus Christ**: (he is Lord of all:) *unless **dIX** is adverbial, of God's revelation, as John 1:17*

Gal. 1:1 Paul, **an apostle**, (not of men, neither by man, but **by Jesus Christ**, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;) *sent by IX*

Gal. 4:7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then **an heir of God through Christ**.

Phil. 1:11 Being filled with **the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ**, unto the glory and praise of God.

Others

Rom. 2:16 In the day when God shall **judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ** according to my gospel.

Eph. 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who **created all things by Jesus Christ**:

1Th. 4:14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which **sleep in Jesus** will God bring with him.

Eternal Glory to the Son (13:21)

13:21 closes with the desire that someone receive eternal glory. While it is possible that the antecedent is “the God of peace,” it is far more likely that the reference is to “Jesus Christ” in the immediately preceding clause, and this ascription is a remarkable confirmation of the exaltation of our Lord, bringing us back to the theme of ch. 1.

This expression echoes the conclusion to the Pattern Prayer that the Lord gave his disciples:

Mat 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For **thine is** σοῦ ἐστὶν the **kingdom**, and the **power**, and the **glory, for ever**. Amen.

When we studied Matthew, we saw that this doxology comes from David's prayer when he endows the temple:

1Chr. 29:11 Thine לך סוֹי, O LORD, is the greatness, and the **power**, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the **kingdom**, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. 12 Both riches and **honour** come of thee מלפניך παρὰ σοῦ, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.⁵⁹

David echoes this in Psalm 145, emphasizing its eternal duration:

Psa. 145:10 All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. 11 They shall speak of the **glory** of thy **kingdom**, and talk of thy **power**; 12 To make known to the sons of men his **mighty** acts, and the **glorious** majesty of his **kingdom**. 13 Thy kingdom is an **everlasting** kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

In Isaiah, the Lord makes clear that this is his inalienable possession:

59 The distinction between God as source מלפניך and possessor לך of glory may correspond to the distinction between the genitive of Matt 6:13 and the dative (all the other NT examples).

Is. 42:8 I am the LORD: that is my name: and **my glory will I not give to another**, neither my praise to graven images.

But remarkably, he endows someone else, the Son of Man, with this everlasting glory:⁶⁰

Dan. 7:14 And there was given him dominion, and **glory**, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, **which shall not pass away**, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

In keeping with this development, the NT ascribes eternal glory to the Father in earlier books, but by the end (including our verse), to the Son as well. For the most part, eternal glory is a prerogative of one called “God”: (10x)

Gal. 1:3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: 5 **To whom be glory for ever and ever**. Amen.

Rom. 11:36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: **to whom be glory for ever**. Amen.

Rom. 16:25 (MT 14:26) Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, ... 27 **To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever**. Amen.

Eph. 3:21 Unto him be **glory** in the church by Christ Jesus **throughout all ages**, world without end. Amen.

Phil. 4:20 Now unto God and our Father be **glory for ever and ever**. Amen.

1Tim. 1:17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour τιμή and **glory for ever and ever**. Amen. (compare 6:14 τιμή και κράτος; anarthrous)

2Tim. 4:18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: **to whom be glory for ever and ever**. Amen.

1Pet. 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. 11 **To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever**. Amen.

Jude 24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25 To the only wise God our Saviour, **be glory** and majesty, dominion and power, **both now and ever**. Amen. (anarthrous)

Rev. 7:12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and **glory**, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, **be unto our God for ever and ever**. Amen.

All these ascribe eternal glory to God, as he insists in Isaiah. But our verse appears to ascribe it to the Lord Jesus, and it is not alone.

1Pet. 4:11 that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom **be is praise** and dominion **for ever and ever**. Amen.

2Pet. 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **To him be glory both now and for ever**. Amen.

⁶⁰ Daniel 7 is Aramaic, not Hebrew, and the word is יקר, which is regularly used in the Targumim to translate Hebrew כבוד.

Rev. 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him **be glory** and dominion **for ever and ever**. Amen.

One example in Revelation clearly emphasizes that this is now a joint possession of the Father and the Son:

Rev. 5:13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and **glory**, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb **for ever and ever**.