

Hebrews 8:1-10:31

8:1-10:31, Overview

We continue in the major section of the book (4:14-10:25), which describes our Lord as our merciful High Priest (Figure 1, chart). As we observed before (Figure 2), within an inclusio exhorting us to hold fast and draw near to the Lord, we have first some observations on our Lord's *similarities* to other priests (5:1-10), then a warning against spiritual stagnation (5:11-6:12) preparing for a discussion of how our Lord's priesthood *differs* from the Levitical. That section on differences in turn has two parts, marked by the keywords "order" (referring to the internal structure of the priesthood) and "covenant" (reminding us of the divine charter on which it rests) (Figure 3). The exposition is thus nested like a set of Russian matryoshka dolls.

4:14-10:25, A **Merciful** High Priest
 4:14-16, Opening: Hold Fast & Draw Near
 5:1-10, *Similarities* to other Priests
 5:11-6:12, **Warning**: Stagnation
 6:13-10:18, *Differences* from other Priests
 6:13-7:28, A different Order
 8:1-10:18, A different Covenant
 10:19-25, Closing: Draw Near & Hold Fast

Figure 2: Structure of 4:14-10:25

We come now to the discussion of the different covenant. It is developed as an alternation (Figure 4, chart). It begins by summarizing two requirements of a priest: a sanctuary in which to minister, and a sacrifice to offer, and then gives an extensive quotation from Jeremiah 31 promising to replace the covenant of Sinai (which established the Levitical priesthood) with a new covenant. Then the writer goes into considerable detail on the differences between the sanctuaries and sacrifices of the two covenants, before returning to quote Jeremiah 31 once more as he concludes.

Epistle to the Hebrews
 1:1-10:25, The Person and Work of **the Son**
 1:1-4, Introduction
 1:5-2:18, His Person: the Son & the Angels
 1:1-14, **Higher** than the Angels
 2:1-4, **Warning**: Neglect
 2:5-18, **Lower** than the Angels
 3:1-10:25, His Work: the Son & the Priests
 3:1-6 A **Faithful** High Priest
 3:7-4:13 **Warning**: Unbelief
 4:14-10:25, A **Merciful** High Priest
 10:26-13:19, The Life of **the Sons**
 13:20-25, Epistolary Close

Figure 1: Overall Structure of Hebrews

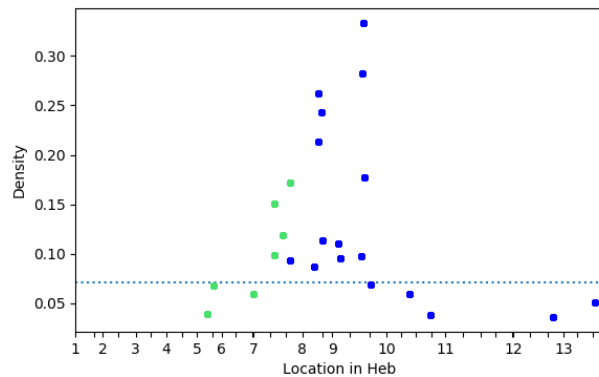


Figure 3: The **Order** and **Covenant** of our Lord's Priesthood

8:1-10:18, A Different Covenant
 8:1-5, Summary of Priestly **Requirements**
 Sanctuary, Sacrifice, Sanctuary
 8:6-13, **Jeremiah 31**, New Covenant
 9:1-10:14, Contrasting Priestly **Requirements**
 9:1-15, Different Sanctuaries
 9:15-10:14, Different Sacrifices
 10:15-18, **Jeremiah 31**, New Covenant

Figure 4: Structure of Hebrews 8-10

8:1-13, Summary of Requirements and Covenant

The first two elements of the alternation are not distinguished grammatically, but flow together. The basic logic in this summary is:

1. We have the very high priest we need (from 7:26).

2. His current location is in heaven.
3. That must therefore be the sanctuary in which he ministers.
4. But, as noted in 5:1, a priest needs a sacrifice as well as a sanctuary.
5. His ministry must be distinct from that of the existing priests.
6. This distinction is supported by the new covenant predicted by Jeremiah.

8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken *this is the sum*:—Here is the big point of the entire discussion.

We have such an high priest,—Our Lord is a priest, according to Ps 110:4. “Such an high priest” picks up 7:26, which describes the kind of priest we need (“such a high priest was fitting to us”), and in fact we have exactly that kind of priest.

who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;—Ever since 1:3, the writer has repeatedly reminded us of Psalm 110:1, declaring that the Messiah would sit at the Father’s right hand. The first four chapters conclude that this has been achieved:

Heb 4:14 we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens,

The combination of our Lord’s location in heaven and his priestly office leads the writer to the following line of thought: You expect to find a priest in a sanctuary. Our priest is interceding for us in heaven. Therefore heaven is a sanctuary.

We’ve been prepared for this idea. The exhortation in ch. 3-4, from Psalm 95, held out the promise of entering into “God’s rest,” which is a reference to his heavenly sanctuary, and told us that our Savior, having completed his labors, has entered into that sanctuary (4:10) and is now “within the veil” (6:19-20). But the time has come to develop this theme in more detail.

2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.—So heaven is a sanctuary. But God gave Israel an earthly sanctuary (the tabernacle, later the temple in Jerusalem). What is the relation between the two? To ask the question is to answer it. The heavenly one must be the principal sanctuary, the true one, and the earthly sanctuary secondary. David realized this when he was fleeing from Saul (chart):

Psa 11:4 The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

And at the close of Isaiah, the Lord exhorts his people,

Isa 66:1 Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?

Once one thinks of our Lord as a priest in a sanctuary, other things naturally come to mind.

3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices:—At the beginning of ch. 5, the writer was enumerating the similarities between our Lord and other priests: they have the same mission to deliver people from sin by sacrifice, the same need to share infirmity with their people, and the same divine authority. This verse recalls the first statement there:

5:1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:¹

¹ ὁμοῦ τε καὶ θυσίας appears in the Greek Bible only in these two verses and 9:9.

wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.—Since our Savior is a priest, we need to think not only about his sanctuary, but also about his sacrifice.

4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:—Now he returns to the theme of the sanctuary. The function of offering sacrifices on earth is already satisfied, by the Levitical priests. (This verse is one of the indications that the temple was still standing when Hebrews was written.)

5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things,—But this is no obstacle once we realize, as v. 2 suggests, that the “true tabernacle” is heavenly, of which earthly structures are only pictures. Since there are two sanctuaries, even if the earthly one is fully staffed, he alone has access to the heavenly one.

as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.—The writer finds substantiation for his interpretation in God’s instructions to Moses concerning the tabernacle:

Ex. 25:40 And look that thou make them after **their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.**²

God showed Moses something when he gave Moses instructions about building the tabernacle. Our writer understands the “pattern” or “vision” that Moses saw to be a glimpse of the heavenly sanctuary. In this case, the relation between the two is not just a logical deduction. Moses was actually charged to construct a model of God’s heavenly resting place.

8:5 introduces terms like “example,” “shadow,” and “pattern” to describe the relation between the two covenants. This vocabulary marks the three contrasts that expound this theme (see note on Terms for the Relation of the OT to the NT).

8:3 has already recalled the requirement of 5:1 that a priest have sacrifices to offer for sin. But another major point in 5:1-10 is that

5:4 no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

Psalms 110:4 has provided the authorization for Messiah to serve as a priest. But now we are considering his sanctuary and his sacrifices, of which Psalm 110 says nothing. Is there divine authorization for these details of his ministry?

The writer finds the answer in the new covenant that the Lord revealed through Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Isaiah wrote his prophecy in the middle of the seventh century BC, after the fall of the northern kingdom but before the fall of Jerusalem. Jeremiah wrote from Jerusalem around the time of Nebuchadnezzar’s conquests, and this prophecy is probably written shortly after the second conquest of 597 BC.³ Ezekiel was taken captive in this second wave, and probably writes his account of the new covenant after the final fall of Jerusalem in 586.⁴ Thus the new covenant was God’s reassurance to Israel before, during, and after the events of 606-586 in which Nebuchadnezzar subdued and eventually destroyed Jerusalem. Israel went into captivity because they had broken God’s covenant at Sinai. Now the Lord offers a new, unbreakable covenant.

2 The same reference to the heavenly vision (תבנית in Ex 25:40) is also found in Ex 26:30 משפט, Ex 27:8, and Num 8:4 מראה.

3 Based on the description of that captivity in ch. 29.

4 Based on the account of the messenger from Jerusalem in 33:21.

What does the writer bring up this covenant? His focus is on the sacrifice that our heavenly high priest has offered. When our Lord instituted the ceremonial meal that commemorates that sacrifice, he described the cup as “my blood of the new covenant.” Recalling the words of institution, the author builds his exposition around Jeremiah’s description of that covenant.

6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry,—In the OT, this word family (λειτουργεω and cognates) refers specifically to priestly ministry.⁵

by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant,—Three words require our attention: covenant, mediator, and better.

1. Our Lord’s priestly ministry is linked to a *covenant*. The work of the Levitical priests is defined by the book of Leviticus, which is a component of the covenant of Sinai. Our Lord’s ministry is founded on a “better covenant,” the one promised by the prophets.
2. He is described as *mediator* of the covenant. The word appears elsewhere in the NT only in Gal 3:19, 20, of Moses, and 1 Tim 2:5, of our Lord.

Gal. 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a **mediator**. 20 Now a **mediator** is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

1Tim. 2:5 For there is one God, and one **mediator** between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

The nature of a covenant is to bind two parties together—in this case, God and his people. In the case of the covenant at Sinai, the people could not deal with God directly, but asked Moses to be their go-between:

Exo 20:18 And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. 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 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. 21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

As before (3:2-6), our Lord is compared with Moses, the one who goes between people and God to bring the covenant into effect.

3. The covenant that our Lord mediates is *better* than the covenant of Sinai. We’ll see why in just a moment. For now, we should note that the writer calls our Lord the mediator of the covenant three times, with three different adjectives.
 - Here, he is the mediator of a *better* covenant, one that is superior to the covenant of Sinai, as he will show.
 - In 9:15, he is the mediator of the *new καινος* G2537 covenant, emphasizing a covenant that is fresh and not worn out.
 - In 12:24, he is the mediator of the *new νεος* G3501 covenant, emphasizing a covenant that is new in time

When we get to the later passages, we’ll pay attention to the adjectives he uses there. For now, why does he call this covenant “better”?

⁵ See Trench for useful contrast with λατρεύω and cognates, which more generally mean “to serve.”

Isa 59:21	Jer 31:31-34	Eze 36:25-27
<p>As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.</p>	<p>31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: ... 33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.</p>	<p>25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. ... 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.</p>

Table 1: The New Covenant in the Prophets

which was established upon better promises.—The new covenant is better than the old because it rests on better promises. The New Covenant passages in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel embody five promises.⁶ Two are common to all three passages, while each pair of prophets shares another promise (Table 1, chart).

1. All three emphasize the importance of God’s **revelation**: his words (Isaiah), law (Jeremiah), statutes and judgments (Ezekiel).
2. They also share the promise that God’s people will **obey** that revelation.
3. Isaiah and Jeremiah call the promise a **covenant**.
4. Isaiah and Ezekiel promise that God’s **Spirit** will lead the people into obedience.
5. Jeremiah and Ezekiel promise that God will **forgive** their past sins.

These promises—forgiveness of sin, indwelling Spirit of God, ability to keep God’s commandments—go far beyond what Sinai could deliver. They are “better promises” than those offered by Sinai, and so the covenant that offers them is a “better covenant.”

In particular, as we will see in the quotation of Jeremiah in vv. 8-12, the old covenant was breakable by people’s sin. Under the new covenant, the Spirit causes people to obey God, so they cannot break the covenant.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.—Now he will amplify the point about the unbreakable covenant.

This point resembles the argument for the priesthood in 7:11-19. If the first priesthood had been adequate, there would be no need for David, after 400 years, to insist on a different priesthood. But there is a difference. As we have seen, the Melchizedekian priesthood of Messiah does not eliminate the eternal covenant that God has made with the Levites, though it does institute a new order of ministry. Here, the first covenant is shown to be flawed, so that the new one replaces it.

8 For finding fault with them,—“Them” is the people who broke the covenant at Sinai.

⁶ These multiple promises within the New Covenant explain the plural, and make unnecessary Ellingworth’s search for additional references such as Ps 110:4 or Ex 24:8.

he saith,—Now he quotes Jer 31:31-34, which recounts the failure of the people and the Lord’s resolve to replace the broken covenant.

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: 9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant,—Heb “which covenant of mine they broke”

and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.—Israel could not satisfy its obligations under the covenant of Sinai.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.—Note the emphasis on God’s internal law and “all shall know me.” Ez 36:27 says, “I will ... cause you to walk in my statutes.” This is what makes the new covenant unbreakable.

The author draws three lessons from the new covenant.

1. He has already pointed out the superiority of its promises. In particular, it is unbreakable.
2. In the next verse he remarks on the reference to a *new* covenant.
3. In 10:15-18 he will focus on the promise of forgiveness of sin, which stands in contrast with the atonement (covering of sin) offered throughout the OT.

13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old.—This word for “new” is the one that means “not worn out,” not “new in time.” The new covenant was revealed 600 years before our Lord. But the old was obsolete the moment God said through Jeremiah, “a new covenant.” Though it continued to be the basis for Israel’s worship for another 600 years, it was marked as something whose days were limited.

It is not coincidental that the OT prophecies of the coming Messiah become more concentrated from the time of the Exile on, which is when the New Covenant is announced. The covenant and the Messiah go together. The announcement of the replacement of the covenant, like Daniel’s prophecy of 70 sabbatical years, was intended to stir God’s people to anticipate the new era, just as our Lord’s promises and the current signs of the times encourage us to look forward to the Lord’s return. In coupling the New Covenant promises with the Messiah of Psalm 110, the writer to Hebrews is not innovating, but capturing the point of the OT prophets.

Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.—With the coming of the Messiah, all is in place to phase out the first covenant, as Jeremiah had anticipated. Unlike God’s covenants with Abraham and Levi, this covenant really is going away.

9:1-10:14, Contrasts between the New and the Old

Having told us in 8:2-5 that a priest needs both a sanctuary and a sacrifice, he shows how each of these requirements differs between the first covenant and the new. He begins by contrasting the sanctuaries, then moves on to the offerings (including both the bloody sacrifices and the non-bloody gifts) (Figure 5, chart).

Each contrast (sanctuaries, blood offering, body offering) shares two features.

First, it echoes the “daily—once” contrast of 7:27.⁷

Second, it denotes the old as a figure or shadow of the new (9:9; 23-24; 10:1, see note on “terms for the Relation of the OT to the NT”).

Notice how he uses the details of the Levitical system.⁸ Many expositions of the tabernacle and the OT sacrifices highlight their similarities to Lord’s work, and there are many such similarities. But for the writer to the Hebrews, the main point lies not in their similarities to our Lord, but in the contrasts they offer.

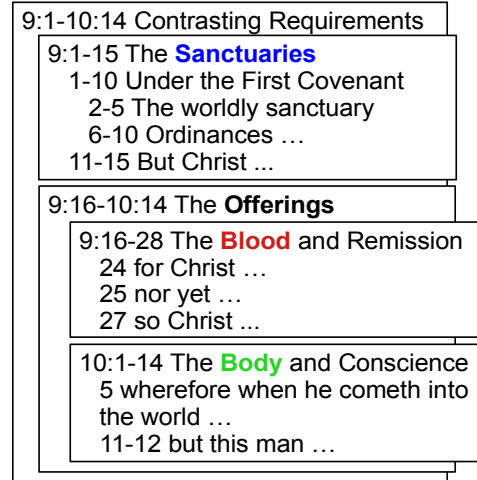


Figure 5: The Contrasts of 9:1-10:14

9:1-15, The Sanctuaries

The grammar⁹ marks a contrast between the worldly sanctuary of the first covenant in vv. 1-10, and the heavenly sanctuary of the new one in 11-15. The focus is on the Day of Atonement offering, which drew attention to the structure of the tabernacle, with its outer holy place and the inner holy of holies.

1-10, Under the First Covenant

He begins with a summary of the two features of the sanctuary under the old covenant.

9:1 Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.—He will discuss the salient ordinances, or ceremonies, that centered around the physical structure, and the structure itself. He develops these in inverse order, each part introduced by the verb κατασκευάζω G2680, translated “made” in 9:2 and “ordained” in 9:6.

“Divine service” is interpretive. The Greek word simply means “service.” We noted in 8:6 the distinction elsewhere in Hebrews and throughout the LXX between derivatives of λατρεύω G3000 (meaning “to serve” generally) and λειτουργέω G3008 (referring specifically to priestly service). Here and twice more in this section (9:6, 9) he uses the general term, not the specific, priestly one, to deprecate the Levitical ministry.¹⁰ Yes, they are serving God, but it doesn’t rise to the level of true priestly ministry, which is reserved for our Lord.

9:2-5, The Twofold Structure

The main point he makes about the structure of the sanctuary is its twofold division.

2 For there was a tabernacle made κατασκευάζω; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.—Literally, “the holy places” or “holy things,” plural, ἅγια. This term is used throughout, perhaps to remind us of the two compartments of the sanctuary.

⁷ Thus this section grows out of 7:27, as ch. 3-10 grows out of 2:17, about the merciful and faithful high priest.

⁸ This point was stimulated by a question from Anita Parunak.

⁹ Verse 1 “verily” is μέν, “on the one hand.” The matching δέ is in v. 11, “Christ, on the other hand ...”

¹⁰ The use of the term with reference to the priests is specific to this section. 10:11 returns to the expected term.

3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;—Literally, “the holy places of the holy places,” ἁγία ἁγίων. This is described as a second tabernacle, rather than a second section in a single tabernacle.

4 Which had the golden censer,—The reference is probably not to a hand-held censer, but to the altar of incense, which otherwise would be unmentioned, and was (unlike censers) a prominent piece of the furniture described in Exodus.¹¹

It is strange at first glance that this should be assigned to the holy of holies, when in fact it stood outside the veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies (Figure 6, chart):

Ex 40:26 And he put the golden altar in the tent of the congregation **before the veil**: 27 And he burnt sweet incense thereon; as the LORD commanded Moses.

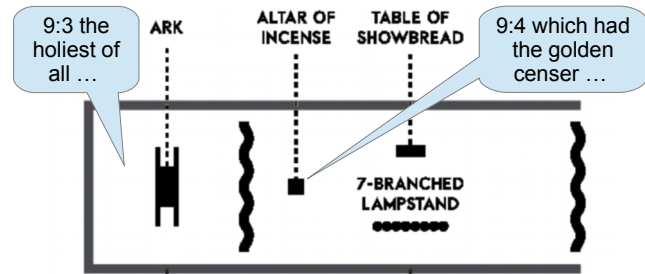


Figure 6: Layout of the tabernacle

(<https://www.cleanpng.com/png-tabernacle-book-of-exodus-diagram-drawing-medyna-t-2301759>)

But while our author says of the first compartment that the various pieces of furniture were “in it,” he only says here that the holy of holies “has” the altar of incense. Throughout the OT, the altar of incense is regularly associated with the ark.¹² Even the instructions in Exodus relate it to the ark rather than the veil:

Ex 40:5 And thou shalt set the altar of gold for the incense **before the ark of the testimony** And in the heavenly temple, the altar of incense is said to be “before the throne,” which is what the ark represented (as we will see in Heb 9:5):

Rev 8:3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon **the golden altar which was before the throne**. 4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.

The incense offered at the golden altar represented the prayers of the saints. That altar was the portal to the holy of holies, the one way that Israel could approach the Lord on a daily basis. The message for us is that while our physical entrance into God’s resting place is yet to come, we can approach now through prayer, “coming boldly unto the throne of grace” (4:16; cf. 10:19 “boldness to enter into the holiest”). Our prayers are the anchor chain connecting us “within the veil,” where our High Priest has already gone.

and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein¹³ was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;—The three memorials remind the people of God’s loving provision for them in the wilderness, the authority that he established for their government, and the law on which that authority ultimately rested.

¹¹ While the word θυμιατήριον (appearing only here in the NT) is used in the LXX only of a handheld censer (accounting for the AV’s translation), Philo, Josephus, and other Hellenistic writers commonly use it of the incense altar. The word used elsewhere in the NT for “censer” (Rev 8:3, 5) is λιβανωτός, lit. “frankincense,” which is the word’s meaning in its only canonical LXX instance, 1 Chr 9:29.

¹² 1 Ki 6:22 even says, literally, that the oracle “has” the golden altar, which some commentators take to mean that it had been moved into the holy of holies. But the same difficulties urged against that location in Heb 9:4 make it unlikely that this is the meaning of 1 Ki 6:22.

¹³ The OT locates only the tables in the ark (cf. 2 Ch 5:10), but the rabbis said the other items were there too (Lane).

5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.—Fourteen times in the OT, the Lord is described as “dwelling” or “sitting” between the cherubim הכרובים. The ark of the covenant was conceived as the Lord’s throne, or rather, as his footstool. Compare Ezekiel 1, where the cherubim bear the ark of God to visit his exiled people in Babylon. The very center of the Tabernacle, in the Holy of Holies, was the throne of God, his resting place.

6-10, The Ordinances of Service

6 Now when these things were thus ordained [κατασκευάζω, as in v. 2],—By picking up the verb from v. 2, the author marks his transition from the “worldly sanctuary” of v. 1 to “divine service,” what the priests did in the structure. Here is where we learn of the “daily” engagement of the priests with the sanctuary in their offerings.

the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. 7 But into the second—He describes the two compartments, not as the holy place and the holy of holies, but as two different tabernacles.

The priests had to enter the first tabernacle daily, to replenish the oil in the lampstand:

Ex 27:20 And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always. 21 In the tabernacle of the congregation without the vail, which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the LORD:

In addition, each week they had to replace the showbread:

Le 24:5 And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. 6 And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the LORD. 7 And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the LORD. 8 Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant.

Again, “the service” that they offer is described with the generic word, not the one elsewhere reserved for divine service.

7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:—The second tabernacle, the holy of holies, differed in three ways from the first:

1. Who could enter? not “the priests,” but “the high priest alone.”
2. How often? Not “always,” every day and every week, but “once every year.”
3. What did he bring? Not oil or loaves of bread, but the blood of the sin offering.

The occasion was the Day of Atonement, described in Leviticus 16, at the very heart of the book of Leviticus (Table 2, chart, see notes). The surrounding chapters chiastically

The Symbols of Atonement	1-7, Offerings	23-27, Feasts, Vows
The Agents of Atonement (Priests)	8-10	21-22
The Need for Atonement	11-15, Ceremonial Defilement	17-20, Moral Defilement
The Day of Atonement	16	

Table 2: Structure of Leviticus

describe the symbols by which atonement was represented, the agents who executed it, and the defilement that makes it necessary.

8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:—“Holiest of all” is simply “the holy places,” as in v. 12. Even the first tabernacle was restricted: though any priest could enter it, lay people could not. The limited access to the holy of holies differed in degree, but not in kind.

9 Which was a figure παραβολή for the time then present,—This contrast, like the other two is marked with language relating figure and reality (see note). The limited access to the holy places under the old covenant was a message to its contemporaries. Just as the promise of the new covenant showed the people that the old covenant was limited, long before it was actually replaced, so the tabernacle ritual made clear the need for something better that would replace it.

in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;—“Do the service” λατρεύω is the word that describes general, not priestly, service. The word here probably includes the lay people who brought the gifts and sacrifices to the tabernacle for the priests to offer. Recall from 7:11, 19 that the purpose of a priesthood is to make these worshippers “perfect.”

Heb. 7:11 If therefore **perfection** were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? ... 19 For the law made nothing **perfect**, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

But in fact it could not.

Figure 7 (chart) shows the development of the theme of perfection through the book. There are four peaks in the distribution of the term.

- In ch. 5-6, he intends to lead his readers to perfection, which is why he must press them beyond their milk diet to tell them about Melchizedek.
- In ch. 7, the Melchizedekian priesthood shows that the Levitical order could not perfect the worshippers.
- Now, in ch. 9-10, our Lord’s ministry, in a better sanctuary and with a better sacrifice, yields perfection—not just ceremonial, but perfection of the *conscience*.
- Finally, the last section of the book describes our achievement of perfection.

9:9 says that bringing gifts and sacrifices to the tabernacle could not make

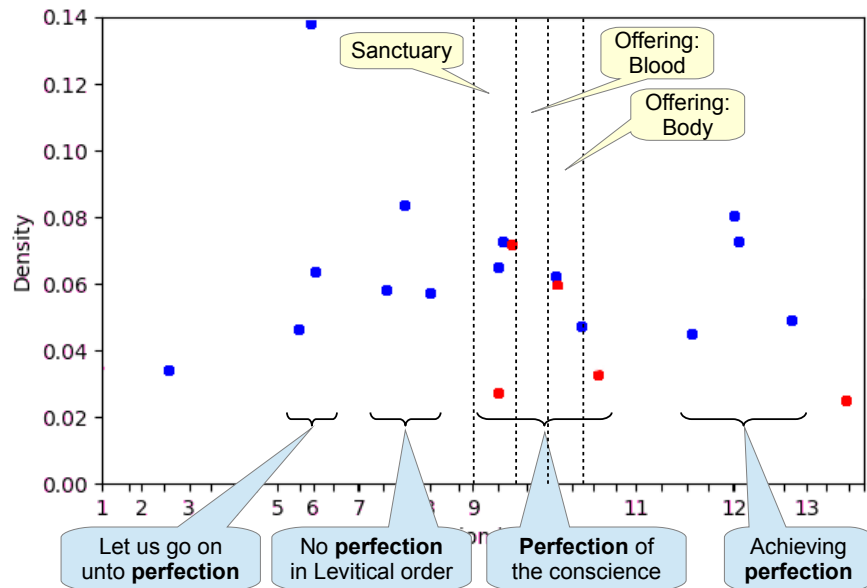


Figure 7: **Perfection** of the **Conscience** (superimposed plots)

the people perfect, at least with respect to the conscience. The precise meaning becomes clear in ch. 10:

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**. 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more **conscience** of sins.

As long as we know the burden of our sin, we have not achieved perfection.

10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances,— The inability of the Levitical ceremonies to affect one’s inner person is not surprising, because they concerned only outward things, “carnal ordinances,” ordinances that concerned the flesh.

imposed on them until the time of reformation.—The “time of reformation” καιρός διορθώσεως recalls the language of Isaiah in the LXX (chart):

Is. 62:6 I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, 7 And give him no rest, till he **establish διορθώω**, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

The OT itself looks forward to the coming Messianic age, and the writer of Hebrews claims that the Levitical ceremonies were temporary, caring for the people until that time arrived.

11-15, Under the New Covenant

11 But Christ—This is the first instance of our Lord’s title (as opposed to his name Jesus) since “the principles of the doctrine of Christ” in 6:1 (Figure 8, chart).

Since then, he has twice been called “Jesus,” both times in connection with his Melchizedekian order:

Heb. 6:20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even **Jesus**, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Heb. 7:22 By so much was **Jesus** made a surety of a better testament.

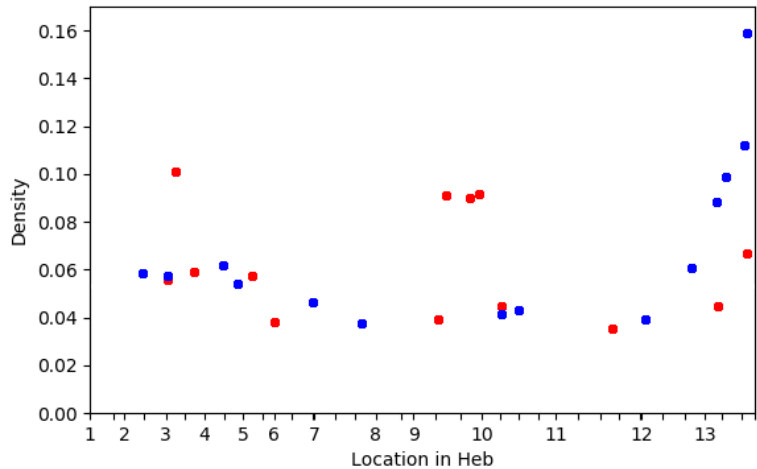


Figure 8: *Jesus* and *Christ* (superimposed plots)

The title “Christ” will appear exclusively until we get to 10:10, where the names are combined:¹⁴

Heb 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of **Jesus Christ** once *for all*.

The shift appears deliberate. In ch. 7, an emphasis on his humanity makes it even more amazing that, unlike the human levites who died, he is a priest for ever. Now the emphasis shifts to his office as an anointed priest under the new covenant. Yes, the Levites were also anointed, with an

¹⁴ There are three other join instances: 3:1; 13:8, 21 (the last two instances of χριστός).

ointment that could not be applied to anyone else, under pain of premature death:¹⁵

Ex 30:30 And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office. 31 And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, This shall be an holy anointing oil unto me throughout your generations. 32 Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured, neither shall ye make any other like it, after the composition of it: it is holy, and it shall be holy unto you. 33 Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, shall even be **cut off** from his people.

That ointment was reserved exclusively for the priests and the tabernacle. But One with a different, and superior anointing can overcome the weaknesses of the Levitical priests.

Correct understanding of these two verses requires recognizing their grammatical structure. The core sentence is "Christ ... entered in." Everything else modifies this core. The modifiers include adverbial modifiers of time ("once") and place ("into the holies"), two aorist participles ("being come" and "having obtained") and three prepositional phrases in *διὰ* with the genitive ("by a greater ...," "neither by ...," and "by his own blood ...") (Figure 9, chart).

Consider first the core clause with its adverbial modifiers of time and place.

12 he entered in—The reference is to our Savior's exaltation to the Father's right hand, the focal point of the book since 1:3. "Enter in" comes from Ps 95:11, quoted in 3:11. 4:10 tells us that one has in fact entered into the rest, one who is identified in ch. 6,

Heb. 6:20 Whither the forerunner is for us **entered**, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

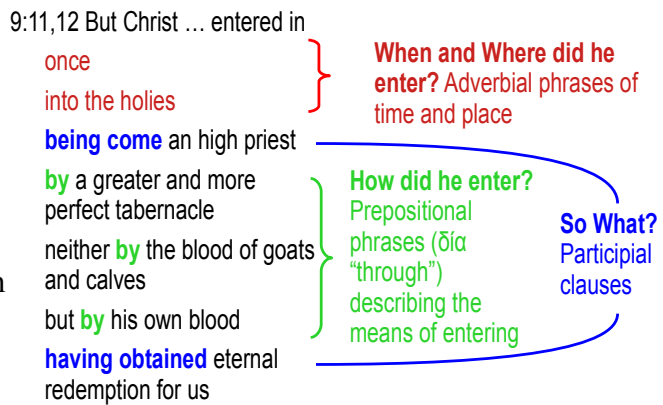


Figure 9: Grammar of 9:11-12

The sitting in Ps 110:1 has two facets. In his role as king, the Lord Jesus has sat down at the Father's right hand. In his role as priest, he has entered into the heavenly sanctuary.

once—*ἐφάπαξ* (G2178, once for all, introduced in 7:27) stands in contrast with 9:6 "always" and 9:7 "once every year." Here is the second part of the amplification of 7:27, begun in vv. 1-10. The OT priests were involved in daily sacrifice, but our Lord offered once.

Heb. 7:27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did **once**, when he offered up himself.

into the holy place,—The Father's presence is described as "the holy places." There is no longer any distinction between the holy place and the holy of holies. The noun is simply the plural, used in v. 2 of the holy place. The distinction between the two compartments has been done away.

Next consider the participles. One introduces the sequence, the other concludes it, and the sequence is suggestive. First he has come as a high priest. Then we have details of his entering in, and finally we are told of what he has achieved.

¹⁵ That this is the meaning of *כרת* in this idiom seems clear from Ex 31:14; Lev 20:2-6.

11 being come an high priest of good things to come,—The “good things to come”¹⁶ recalls “the time of reformation” in v. 10. When our Savior began his ministry, his message was, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Our Lord’s priesthood inaugurates that messianic age.

12 having obtained eternal redemption for us.—The section closes with what the whole process has achieved. His “once for all” sacrifice and his ministry in the Father’s sanctuary have obtained “eternal” redemption.

Our Lord’s entering in is modified by three prepositional phrases introduced by *διὰ*, describing the two means¹⁷ by which a priest enters the presence of God.

The first means required to approach God is a tabernacle. Our Priest’s tabernacle is contrasted with that of the Levites.

by a greater and more perfect tabernacle,—The tabernacle, which is in focus in 9:1-15, is viewed as the instrument by means of which the priests can approach God. They had “a worldly sanctuary” (9:1). But our priest has a superior one.

In light of the emphasis on “better” *κρείττονος* things throughout the book (13x), we might have expected to learn of a “better” tabernacle. But he chooses is “greater,” previously applied to characterize God’s superiority in 6:13 (see notes). In addition, it is “more perfect,” a comparative appearing only here in the book (and in fact in the entire Greek Bible). Elsewhere “perfect” is an ultimate goal, not a scale. It is curious to combine it with a comparative, as a child might say, “that’s the bestest birthday I ever had.”

not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;—Recall 8:2, 5, which taught that the true tabernacle was the heavenly one, of which the earthly tabernacle only a shadow.

The second means required to approach God is blood. Recall 9:7, “not without blood.” Sinful people cannot come into the presence of a holy God without a blood offering:

Lev. 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves,—Just as “not made with hands” contrasts “the greater and more perfect tabernacle” with that of the Levites, the second *διὰ* phrase recalls the Levitical sacrifices, to contrast them with what our Lord offers. “Calves” is the standard LXX term in Leviticus for bullocks, one of the three kinds of animal (bullock, ram, goat) used in the day of atonement ritual.

but by his own blood—Our Savior’s sacrifice, to be considered in more detail in 9:16-10:14, is far superior to animal blood. It is his own blood.

These *διὰ* phrases as describing the means necessary for the priest to do his work. Why should the sinless Son of God should require blood to enter the presence of his Father? Through all eternity, he enjoyed the Father’s fellowship without need for such a sacrifice.

But with his incarnation, he took on more than a human body. He assumed the burden of our sin, as John the Baptist pointed out when he introduce him,

¹⁶ The variation between MT’s present participle “coming” and the perfect participle “that have come” may reflect the “already—not yet” dichotomy that pervades the NT teaching on the kingdom of God.

¹⁷ *διὰ* with genitive can have a spatial sense, “through,” and some argue that the first phrase describes preliminary compartments in heaven through which he approaches the Father. It is simpler to understand all three phrases as means.

John 1:29 The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

“Taketh away” means to carry, and it is in the present tense. At least from the time of his baptism, our Lord was carrying the sin of the world. He came from the presence of the Father to assume a burden that would forever exclude him from that blessed presence, unless he dealt with it. And the scripturally ordained way for him to deal with it was to shed his blood. Having come from heaven to be our Savior, he could only return there by means of blood—his own blood.

Now he makes a striking point about the OT sacrifices in general. The structure of the book of Leviticus highlights the difference between two kinds of sins (Table 2). Before the description of the day of atonement, in ch. 11-15, he describes ceremonial defilement, such as that resulting from bodily emissions, or childbirth, or eating unclean animals. After ch. 16, chapters 17-20 discuss what we would consider true moral failings. Ch. 17 deals with slaying sacrifices somewhere other than the sanctuary, and eating blood, and is a precaution against worshipping other gods (17:7). The remaining chapters deal with incest and fornication, worshipping false gods, and (in ch. 19) violations of the ten commandments in general.

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats,—This recalls the day of atonement offerings, using a more general term for bulls. One would expect the day of atonement to deal with all sins, ethical as well as ceremonial.

and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean,—Now he goes beyond the day of atonement to describe the ceremony of the red heifer from Numbers 19. This sacrifice dealt only with purification from ceremonial defilement, contracted by touching a dead body. It was never used for ethical defilement.

sanctifieth ἁγιάζω G37 to the purifying καθάρτης G2514 of the flesh:—In spite of our presumption that the day of atonement dealt with all sin, the writer classes its sacrifices, together with the red heifer, as effective only for ceremonial purification. The day of atonement was no more effective than the red heifer at dealing with the moral guilt entailed by violations of ch. 17-20. Perhaps this is why those laws follow ch. 16: because they lie beyond its ability to purge.

14 How much more shall the blood of the Christ,—A highly unusual expression. Elsewhere in Hebrews, our Lord’s blood is always associated with his human name “Jesus”:¹⁸

Heb. 10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by **the blood of Jesus,**

Heb. 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.

Heb. 13:12 Wherefore **Jesus** also, that he might sanctify the people with **his own blood,** suffered without the gate.

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,

What does “the blood of the anointed one” mean?¹⁹ The OT knows nothing of anointing a blood sacrifice. The grain offering was anointed with oil (Lev 2:4; 7:12; Num 6:15), but never an

¹⁸ 10:10 speaks of “the body of Jesus Christ,” using both names, in the only instance of “body of...” in Hebrews.

¹⁹ See note on names “Jesus” and “Christ” for the use of the article.

animal sacrifice that could yield blood. This is the blood, not just of a third party, but of the ordained priest himself. The next clause emphasizes this point.

who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God,—Note each phrase. “Offered himself” reminds us that it is “the blood of the anointed one,” the priest who offers himself.

This offering is said to be “through the eternal Spirit.” Through Isaiah, the Lord revealed that the power of the promised Servant of the Lord would be due to the Holy Spirit.²⁰ (chart)

Is 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; **I have put my spirit upon him**: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

Is 61:1 **The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me**; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD,

Remember that the work of the Servant of the Lord includes his sacrifice as “an offering for sin” (Isa 53:10). The work of the Spirit in the believer is to enable obedience to the Lord, and he who had the Spirit without measure would surely be enabled by that Spirit in his sacrifice.

“Without spot” is the standard term in Leviticus requiring a sacrificial animal to be unmarred and perfect. Peter also applies this term to our Lord’s sacrifice:

1Pet. 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and **without spot**:

But interestingly, the most common use of this sacrificial term in the NT is of believers:

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,

Eph. 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, **that we should be holy and without blame** before him in love:

Eph. 5:27 That he might **present it to himself** a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and **without blemish**.

Col. 1:22 In the body of his flesh through death, **to present you holy and unblameable** and unproveable in his sight:

Rev. 14:5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for **they are without fault** before the throne of God.

The Lord, having offered himself as our redeeming sacrifice, now brings us as offerings to the Father, an action in which we are urged to participate:²¹

Rom. 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

20 See Emmerich, BBR 12.1 (2002) 17-32, for various views and documentation for this one (though he opts for a slightly different solution based on non-canonical sources).

21 In this connection, it is interesting that the Hebrew words for “without spot,” all derivatives of נָתַן, correspond semantically to the NT vocabulary for perfection or maturity that designates the end goal of the believer’s spiritual growth.

purge καθαρίζω your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?—The contrast is with v. 13. The OT sacrifices could purge only the flesh. Our Savior’s sacrifice can cleanse the conscience as well—our internal awareness of our state before God. If we hurt our bodies, we feel physical pain. The conscience is where we feel pain when we sin against God. The Scriptures know of three possible states of the conscience.

- It can be *convicted* (John 8:9), guilty, aware of its sin.
- It can be *seared* (1 Tim 4:2), numb and insensitive because it has been convicted so often that it no longer responds (just as our flesh can become scarred if we injure it too often).
- It can be *pure* (here, 1 Tim 3:9; “good conscience” often), the result of knowing that our past sins are forgiven and following the Spirit’s leadership. Cf. Matt 5:8, “pure in heart.”

15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new καινός testament,—In 8:6, he was called the mediator of “a better covenant.” Now he picks up the language of Jer 31:31. That better covenant is in fact the fresh, unspoiled covenant that God promised through Jeremiah.²² (“Testament” represents the same word διαθήκη G1242 usually rendered “covenant.” The translators are preparing to shift to this translation in the next section, as we will discuss there.)

His role as mediator of this covenant, taking the place of Moses in the first covenant (see discussion on 8:6), is connected logically in two directions.

1. Its *cause* (“for this cause”) is v. 14. What is new or fresh about the covenant is that it purges the conscience. This is the focus of Jeremiah’s promise: God’s law written in our hearts, and all of us knowing the Lord.
2. Its *purpose* is outlined in the clause at the end of the verse:

they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.—Recall from ch. 1 the promise that we will be joint heirs with the Messiah:

Heb 1:1 God, ... 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, ... 14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for **them who shall be heirs of salvation?**

This is a continuing theme:

Heb. 6:12 That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience **inherit** the promises. ... 17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto **the heirs of promise** the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

That inheritance is only made possible because of our Lord’s priestly ministry. He calls this out with the first modifying phrase:

by means of death—That is, through his offering of himself.

The next modifying phrase answers a question that a Jewish reader would naturally ask.

for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament,—A thoughtful reader would say, “This is all very well and good. Our Lord’s death has ratified the New Covenant promised by Jeremiah, so now our inheritance is secured. But what about the OT saints, those implied in 6:12? They lived under the first covenant, which you have argued is incapable of bringing them to perfection. What about them?”

²² In 12:24, we will read a third time of his mediatorship, in terms of the new νεος covenant.

The death of Christ dealt with those sins as well. We might view the OT sacrifices as credit card charges, which do not actually pay for the goods, but promise future payment. When our Lord died, he gathered up all those credit card charges and paid them off.

Paul makes the same point in Romans 3,

Rom 3:25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness **for the remission of sins that are past**, through the forbearance of God;

“Remission” is not the usual word used in the NT for the forgiveness of sin (ἄφεσις, G0859, coming in v. 22), but a word that appears nowhere else in the Greek Bible, πάρεσις. Both words are made up of a preposition plus a verbal form ἦμι²³ that means “release, let go,” and mean, “move in the direction indicated by the preposition.” The common word means “move away, remove,” but the word in Rom 3:25 means “move to the side.” The OT sins were not finally settled until the death of our Lord,

Heb. 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

9:16-10:14, The Offerings

As the writer returns from the structure of the tabernacle to the sacrifices, he moves from a single contrast to multiple contrasts. Two of these appear to correspond with the two categories of offerings mentioned repeatedly, “gifts and sacrifices” δῶρά G1435 τε καὶ θυσίας G2378 (5:1; 8:3; 9:9). The sacrifices fall into two broad categories, those that involve the shedding of blood and those (like the meal offering) that do not, and two of the contrasts involve our Lord’s blood and his obedience, respectively. So it makes sense to understand this section as describing first his sacrifice, then his gift.²⁴ Each of these sections, like the previous one (9:12), emphasizes the “daily-once” contrast that runs throughout 9:1-10:14.

9:16-28, Contrasting Sacrifices: The Blood and Remission of Sin

First he considers the blood sacrifices. He presents the general principle that blood is needed to establish a covenant, then its use in the first covenant, and finally the contrast in Christ.

16-17, The Principle

This section frequently uses the English word “testament,” as in “last will and testament” (vv. 16, 17, 20) (Figure 10, chart).²⁵ This is the same Greek word διαθήκη G1242 that is elsewhere translated “covenant.” Our translators have

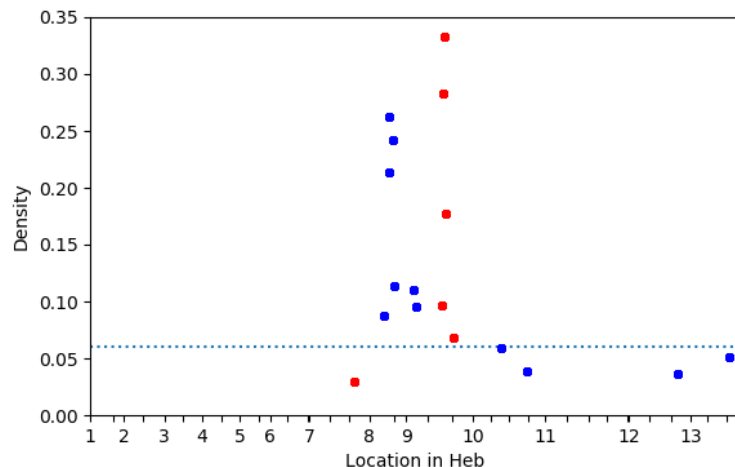


Figure 10: Translations of διαθήκη G1242: *Covenant* vs. *Testament* (single plot)

²³ This form in isolation appears nowhere in the Greek Bible, but is common in Homer and other classical sources

²⁴ See notes for discussion of LXX-MT correspondences. The Greek words themselves are ambiguous. We recognize, however, that in 10:1-14, he never refers to our Lord’s body as a gift, but does use “sacrifice.”

made this choice also in the first instance of the Greek word in 7:22, and in the two instances in 9:15, leading into this paragraph.

The reason for this choice appears to be the first verse of this section, which connects a covenant with the death of the one making the covenant. The Greek word refers to a solemn agreement, and can describe wills as well as covenants. In the western world, we don't usually think of covenants as involving a death, so the translators have shifted to "testament." But wills and testaments are unknown in the Old Testament, and διαθήκη is nowhere else used in this sense, either in the LXX (345x) or in the NT (where it occurs 16x in addition to the 17 in Hebrews). Can we retain the sense "covenant" here? Let's look more closely at v. 16.

16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be [brought] the death of the testator.—The verb translated "be" φέρω G5342 is literally "be brought, carried." This is a rather oblique way to say that the testator must be dead. But it does describe a feature of covenants in the ancient near east. We see it reflected in Jeremiah 34, and it lies behind the use of the Hebrew word "cut" to describe the making of a covenant. In making a covenant, the parties would cut up an animal, and walk between the pieces.

Jeremiah 34 records how King Zedekiah had made a covenant with the people of Jerusalem as they saw Nebuchadnezzar approaching. They recognized his invasion as God's chastisement for their sins, one of which was that they enslaved fellow Israelites, contrary to the law. So Zedekiah entered into a covenant with them to free their servants. But later, they backed out of their agreement and brought their servants back into bondage (Jer 34:8-11). Through Jeremiah, the Lord rebukes them for breaking their covenant (chart):

Jer 34:18 And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, **when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof**, 19 The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, **which passed between the parts of the calf**; 20 I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth. 21 And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you.

He recounts the covenant ceremony: they cut a calf in two, then walked between the pieces. The meaning of their action is reflected in a secular covenant of the eighth century BC between King Barga'ya and his vassal Matti'el, near Aleppo, Syria. Along with cutting up a calf, wax was melted, and weapons were broken. The covenant continues,

As this wax is consumed by fire, thus M[atti'el] shall be consumed [by fi]re.
As this bow and these arrows are broken, thus *Inurta (Ninurta)* and Hadad shall break [the bow of Matti'el] and the bow of his nobles. ...
[As] this calf is cut up, thus Matti'el and his nobles shall be cut up.²⁶

The death of the calf was symbolic of what would happen to the parties in the covenant if they didn't keep their promises. It presented, or "brought forward," the death of those who were

25 Note the two peaks, corresponding to the citation of Jeremiah in ch. 8 and the emphasis of this section (though the term appears in all three contrasts).

26 Pritchard, J. B. (Ed.). (1969). *The Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (3rd ed. with Supplement, p. 660). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

making the covenant. Similarly, when the people in Jeremiah's day passed between the parts of the calf, they invited death if they broke their promise, and God predicts that since they have broken the covenant, they will suffer that death.²⁷

The custom was so ubiquitous that the term "cut" came to be the standard verb for making a covenant. When we read in the OT that someone "made a covenant," the Hebrew actually says, "cut a covenant," that is, slew a covenant sacrifice as a symbol of the consequences of deviating from the covenant. In this context, v. 16 means that a covenant in general must be accompanied with the (symbolic) death of the parties—that is, with the slaying of a covenant sacrifice.

17 For a testament is of force after men are dead:—This is a paraphrase. Literally, "a covenant is established upon dead bodies," that is, the bodies of the covenant sacrifices.

otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.—We should understand this statement in terms of the symbol. Until the one entering into the testament has died symbolically in the covenant sacrifice, until he has walked between the pieces of the slain animal, the covenant has no strength.

This interpretation of the language, that it refers to the symbolic death of a covenant sacrifice rather than the actual death of someone who makes a will, is confirmed by the specific example that the writer gives—not of a will, but of the old covenant.

18-22, Blood in the First Covenant

18 Whereupon [for this reason] neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. 19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop,²⁸ and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, 20 Saying (Ex 24:8), This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.—As evidence of this principle ("whereupon" ὅθεν G3606 "therefore, for this reason"), he cites the ceremony in Exodus 24 at which the elders of Israel appeared before the Lord and offered sacrifices.

The expression "blood of the testament" is the basis for our Lord's words at the Last Supper, "This cup is my blood of the new testament," Matt 26:28. Conversely, the writer's decision to introduce Exodus 24 here may be motivated by recalling those words. He knows, from the regularly repeated celebration of the Lord's Table, that our Savior viewed his blood as establishing a new covenant, the covenant promised through Jeremiah. That leads him to recall that both Moses, and our Lord, the "prophet like unto" Moses (Deut 18:15), draw the attention of God's people to "the blood of the covenant."

21 Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.—This did not happen when the covenant was ratified in ch 24, but after the tabernacle was built. His point is that the tabernacle was included in the covenant. The entire sanctuary was sanctified with blood, which is here connected with "the blood of the testament."²⁹

27 The same custom lies behind the division of the animals in God's covenant with Abram in Genesis 15.

Remarkably, only God walks between the pieces of the animals, indicating the unilateral nature of the covenant.

28 These details are not in Exodus, which does not describe the implements of the sprinkling, but are mentioned in other blood sprinkling ceremonies in Leviticus 14 and Numbers 19.

29 The OT does not record this sprinkling, but Josephus does, and it is not inconsistent with the sanctification of the tabernacle in Exodus 40, where only oil is mentioned. Or he could be referring, not to the dedication of the tabernacle, but to other occasions (e.g., the day of atonement) (Delitzsch II p. 116f).

22 And almost all things are by the law purged καθαρίζω G2511 with blood; and without shedding of blood³⁰ is no remission ἄφεσις G859.³¹—To understand the contrast in this verse, we need to consider the two effects that it ascribes to blood in the sacrificial system. Consider their use in Hebrews, then Leviticus, and finally our Lord’s teaching in Matthew (chart).

καθαρίζω G2511 is a generic word for cleansing. It and its cognates are used throughout Hebrews, to describe both the OT sacrifices, and what our Lord has done.

Heb. 1:3 Who ... when he had by himself **purged our sins**, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

Heb. 9:23 *It was* therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be **purified** with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

Heb. 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the **purifying** of the flesh: 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?

It describes something as being clean, without defilement, for example,

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.

ἄφεσις G859 is from the verb ἀφίημι G863 meaning “to lay aside, forsake, remove.” It can be used to describe removing anything. Most recently, our writer used the verb in 6:1,

Heb. 6:1 Therefore **leaving** the principles of the doctrine of Christ,

Now he introduces the noun, “remission,” with reference to sin, and we will see it once more in that sense at the end of this section, describing the effect of the New Covenant:

Heb 10:17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18 Now where **remission** of these *is, there is* no more offering for sin.

So “remission” is the state in which God remembers sin no more. Purging means that you can no longer *see* the dirt, but remission means that the dirt is *gone*.

The book of Leviticus illustrates the difference between the verb “purge” and the noun “remission.”³² Remarkably, the description of the day of atonement mentions only purging, not the removal of sin. Recall 9:13,

Heb 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the **purifying** of the flesh:

In that verse the writer puts the offerings of the day of atonement, the very pinnacle of Israel’s offerings for sin, in equivalence with the offering of the red heifer, which was used for ceremonial cleansing. Neither one can deal with the ultimate problem of moral offense.

30 The verb behind this *hapax* (ἐκχεω) is both dominant and dedicated in the LXX for שָׁפַךְ, the standard cultic verb for pouring out the blood of the sacrifices in Exodus and Leviticus (but Jeremiah and Ezekiel use it extensively to describe human bloodshed).

31 ἀφίημι throughout Leviticus is always used of an animal sacrifice, therefore bloody, with two exceptions. In 16:10 it describes the sending away of the scapegoat into the wilderness, while in 5:13 it is the result of the poor person’s offering of fine flour as a sin offering.

32 It does use the noun and verb to describe removal of the scapegoat, but these translate a different Hebrew verb. See notes for details.

Note “by the law.” Under the law, even the Day of Atonement could bring only purging.

Heb 10:4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away ἀφαιρέω sins.

True removal of sin requires “shedding of blood.” And that act provides “remission.” The noun “remission” does appear in Leviticus, but not with respect to sin.³³ It appears repeatedly in ch. 25 and 27 to describe the Jubilee, the celebration at the end of every fifty years when all debts were canceled. The OT provided for this complete “release” of obligations among people, but made no provision for the “release” of the debt we incur by our sin against God.

Both terms appear in the gospels. In Matthew, for example, *cleansing* refers mostly to the cleansing of lepers, a ceremony prescribed in Leviticus 13-14. It also appears in the expression “pure in heart,” Matt 5:8, anticipating Heb 9:14 “purge your conscience.”

What about *remission*? When our Savior came announcing that “the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” he taught his disciples to pray,³⁴

Mat 6:12 And **forgive ἀφίημι G863** us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

The verb here is the root of “remission” in Heb 9:22. The Lord probably has in mind the manner in which the Jews were to forgive their debtors, as the law commands in the year of Jubilee.³⁵ Never before could guilty sinners imagine that such a release from divine debt was possible. It is—but only with the shedding of blood.

The final clause also recalls the gospels. The word “shedding of blood” appears here for the first time in Greek literature, but is made up of the words for “blood” and a noun from the verb ἐκχύνω G1632 “to shed.” Just what blood is involved, our Savior clarifies at the last supper, in the first instance of “remission” ἄφεσις G859 in the NT, where he also uses the verb “to shed”:

Mat. 26:28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is **shed** for many for the **remission** of sins.

Ex 24:8 announced “the blood of the testament” at Sinai. Now our Lord announces “my blood of the new testament.” The original “blood of the covenant” could only achieve ceremonial cleansing, as Heb 9:13 makes clear. But the “shedding” of the “blood of the new covenant” inaugurates God’s Jubilee, in which he forgets all debts that we incur against him by our sin.

23-27, Blood in the New Covenant

23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices θυσία G2378 than these.—As in the introduction in 8:5 and the first contrast in 9:9, the writer uses the language of imagery to remind us of the relation between the first and the new covenants (see note).

Heb. 8:5 Who serve unto the example ὑπόδειγμα G5262 and shadow σκιά G4639 of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that* thou make all things according to the pattern τύπος G5179 shewed to thee in the mount.

33 The verb is used in this sense, in ch. 4-5, but Hebrews does not use the verb of removing sin.

34 The verb “forgive” is ἀφίημι.

35 Thus Thirtle, *The Lord's Prayer: An Interpretation Critical and Expository* (London: Morgan and Scott, 1915).

Heb. 9:9 Which *was* a figure παραβολή G3850 for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

“Pattern” is the same word as “example” in 8:5. Elsewhere it means a pattern to follow, but here it describes the secondary, earthly copy of the underlying “heavenly things,” which 8:5 described with a different word for “pattern.” The word here is parallel in 8:5 to “shadow,” the insubstantial echo of the underlying reality. The next verse uses yet another term, “figure,” literally “antitype.”

He sets forth three reasons for the superiority of our Lord’s offering:

24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures ἀντίτυπος G499 of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:—First, it is related to a better sanctuary—not the earthly copy, but the heavenly reality.

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world [κόσμος G2889 the created order]: but now once in the end of the world [αἰών G165 age] hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.—

Second, it is a once-for-all offering. This claim appears in each of the three contrasts, but with slightly different emphasis (chart). We saw it for the first time in the contrast of the sanctuaries:

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 ἐφάπαξ into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.

There, repetition was necessary because of the earthly nature of the implements: the worldly sanctuary, and the goats and calves. With a heavenly sanctuary and human blood, the sacrifice need happen only once. Here, the point is that he offered the blood of others (whatever they might be). The love and commitment of a priest who offers himself is superior to that of a priest who merely brokers the blood of others. We will see a third instance in 10:11-14.

The third difference concerns the outcome of his offering. Now that we have moved from the blood of animals to the blood of the priest, we must consider the difference between the death of the priest and the death of other people.

27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:—With ordinary men, death leads to judgment. They are still accountable for their sins. The fact that they die does nothing to remove their guilt.

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.—The death of the Anointed One is different. The purpose of his death was to bear sin—the sin of others. By bearing it, he has removed it. He has made possible the Jubilee between sinful people and their holy God.

10:1-14, Contrasting Gifts: The Body and Conscience of Sin

The objective of a priesthood is to bring the worshippers to perfection, maturity, completeness (7:11, 19). Heb 9:9, in contrasting the sanctuaries of the first and new covenants, explained that priestly goal in terms of the conscience (Figure 7, chart). Now he opens the contrast about gifts with this pair (10:1-2), and closes it in 10:14 with “perfected” (with “conscience” following in the close to the entire section in 10:22).

Priests offer “gifts” (non-bloody offerings) and “sacrifices” (bloody offerings). 9:16-28 contrasted the two covenants with respect to the bloody offerings. Here, he contrasts them with respect to the non-bloody offerings, and gives two arguments for the superiority of Christ’s offering of his body. As in the other two contrasts, one of these deals with frequency, a recurring theme since 7:27.

It is remarkable that the section about our Lord’s blood offering (9:16-28) says nothing about perfection or the conscience. His blood does indeed purge our conscience (9:14), but perfection, maturity, reflects our conduct, not just our guilt before God, and it’s in this section about our Lord’s obedience that the writer returns to the theme of “perfection.”

1-4, Gifts in the First Covenant

10:1 For the law having a shadow σκιά G4639 of good things to come, and not the very image εἰκόν G1504 of the things,—Each of the three contrasts is marked with language relating copies to reality.³⁶ This third contrast returns to the “shadow” of 8:5.

Previous contrast have been binary, between the reality on the one hand, and the shadow, picture, figure, or parable from the first covenant on the other. But now there are three levels (chart).

- The reality is “good things to come” (cf. 9:11), “the time of reformation” of 9:10. The Melchizedekian high priest of Ps 110:4 has come, but his return as king to subdue his enemies as promised in 110:1 is still future.
- The law and its ceremonies was “a shadow,” insubstantial, approximate.
- It is not as accurate as an “image,” a word used elsewhere to refer to the statues of idols (Rom 1:23), or the face of Tiberius Caesar on the denarius (Matt 22:20). The image is concrete and tangible, yet it is still not “the good things to come.”

Our author doesn’t identify “the very image,” which differs both from the shadow and from the things themselves, but his whole discussion strongly recalls the Last Supper. Acts 2:42 tells us that “breaking of bread” was one of the four basic activities of the early church, and we should not be surprised to find allusions to it in a book so heavily focused on our Lord’s sacrifice.

- The incorporation of Exodus 24 in his discussion in 9:18-22 may be due to the parallel between Moses’ words “this is the blood of the covenant,” and our Lord’s explanation of the cup as “the blood of the new covenant.”
- Heb 9:22 also echoes the words of institution in speaking of “shedding of blood” for “remission.”
- The writer’s organization of the offerings into two categories, corresponding to the blood and the body of our Lord (Figure 5), recalls the elements of the remembrance. As “remembrance” implies, this activity does look back to the past events of Calvary. But it also looks forward, to the time when the Lord will dine with us:

Mat 26:29 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

1Co 11:26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

³⁶ See note on “Terms for the Relation of the OT to the NT.”

Our purpose at the Lord's Table is to express our worship and praise to our crucified and risen Lord. This is what we will be doing in heaven (Rev 5), and this is the sense in which the remembrance looks forward as well as back. In this exercise, all believers are priests (1 Pet 2:5; Rev 1:6), and it is a usurpation of our Savior's place as our high priest to describe religious leaders with this term, a usage utterly alien to the NT.³⁷

The Old Testament saints had a shadow, based on the promise of the Messianic king and priest. We have a substantial image, based on the finished work of our *priest*. But the reality awaits our Lord's return as *king*.

can never with those sacrifices θυσία which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.—Once again, we are reminded of the purpose of a priesthood: it is to make the worshippers perfect, complete, mature. This keyword frames this section, which ends,

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

2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.—As in 9:9, 14, the perfection that is in view includes a conscience that is neither burdened with guilt nor seared through neglect, but clean, because it is trusting in the finished work of the Messiah. The repetition of the OT sacrifices is evidence that they could not in themselves forgive sin.

At this point, an objection may arise. For some Old Testament saints *did* have an assurance that their sin was gone.³⁸ The clearest example is David, after his sin with Bathsheba (chart):

Psa. 32:1 Blessed *is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered*. 2 Blessed *is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile*. ... 5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

Our writer is not denying this testimony. He is simply saying that the *Levitical sacrifices* were unable to bring it, and David agrees. In his Psalm of confession, which precedes Psalm 32 in time, he states,

Psa. 51:16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. 18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. 19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

He seeks remedy for his sin, not in sacrifices, but in repentance toward God, looking forward to the Messianic age. We saw in 9:15 that the offering of Christ included “the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament.” The Old Testament saints knew that the Lord was coming in the person of his Messiah, and found their peace in him. Yet they continued the Levitical rituals, in obedience to the law. These rituals could not perfect the conscience, but they were pictures, shadows, figures, and parables of the Messianic reality to come.

3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance ἀνάμνησις G364 again made of sins every year.—The word “remembrance” appears only four times in the NT. The other three times (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24, 25) are in the institution of the Lord's Table, “in remembrance of me.” When

³⁷ Throughout the NT, leaders of local assemblies are called elders, pastors, overseers/bishops, or preeminent ones, but never priests. That distinguished position belongs to our Lord alone.

³⁸ I am grateful to Anita to raising this point.

the Levitical sacrifices were offered, the effective offering was still in the future, and the only thing they could remember was their sin. When we gather at the Lord's Table, our memory is filled with the great, finished sacrifice that removed our sin forever, even as we look forward to his return ("till he come," 1 Cor 11:26) (chart).

David, assured of forgiveness apart from the Levitical sacrifices, still saw a role for them in the worship of God's justified people (Ps 51:19). Isaiah (60:6, 7) and Ezekiel (47:1 "altar") anticipate such sacrifices during the Millennium. They will serve a role similar to that of the Lord's Table today. With the offering on Calvary completed, they too will remember, no longer sin, but the sin-bearer and his finished work.

4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.—Once more, he returns to the signature offerings of the day of atonement. Even those offerings, on the one day above all others that should have dealt with sin, could not remove it.

5-14, Gifts in the New Covenant

Once again, we have multiple arguments for the superiority of the New Covenant institution. The first argument is the relation of sacrifice to obedience, reflected in the attitude of the Messiah.

5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith—One way in which our Lord Jesus is distinct from other men is that he had a conscious existence before he took on flesh. The writer here takes us back to something our Lord said to the Father at the time of the incarnation. We might render, "As he comes into the world, he says."

We saw in chapter 1 the other side of the conversation. At the point where the Lord comes again to rule, the Father speaks:

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

These two statements teach us much concerning the relation between the Father and the Son. The Son's first advent, to suffer and die, was not forced upon him. He undertook it voluntarily, out of love for his Father. When he returns, the Father sees to it that he receives the very highest glory, sharing the angelic worship that belongs to God alone. The Son's love for the Father is shown in his devotion to achieving the Father's will. The Father's love for the Son is shown in the exaltation he offers him.³⁹

Now comes the Messiah's declaration of his purpose, from Ps 40:6-8. Recall the overall structure of this Psalm.⁴⁰ David thanks God for deliverance from past oppression by Saul (1-2a, 4-5), and describes his devoted service as he took the throne to rule (2b-3, 6-10), then calls on God for deliverance from Absalom (11-17). The quotation comes from vv. 6-8, which describe David's ascent to the throne. In the portion quoted here, he refers twice to earlier Scripture.

He begins with a little chiasm. The statement begins and ends with a claim that sacrifices are not what God wants. The piece in the center contrasts something else ("a body" in the LXX) with those sacrifices. We'll consider the pieces separately.

Sacrifice θυσία and offering προσφορά thou wouldest not, ... 6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.—These expressions are rooted in the history of

³⁹ May God grant us families in which the will of parents is worthy of such dedication by the children, and in which the obedience of the children and the appreciation of the parents follow the divine example.

⁴⁰ Details at https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/psalms/notes/Ps_34thru41.pdf

Saul, who lost the kingdom because of two instances of disobedience to the Lord. Both of these instances prioritized the formality of sacrifice over the substance of obedience to the Lord.

The first instance begins when Samuel anoints Saul as king. Samuel commands him (chart),

1Sa 10:8 And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal; and, behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.

Chapter 13 records that Saul does go to Gilgal to offer sacrifice,⁴¹ but in the face of a growing Philistine threat, becomes impatient and offers the sacrifice himself, in violation of the strict separation between priest and king.

1Sa 13:8 And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. 9 And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt offering to me, and peace offerings. And he offered the burnt offering. 10 And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him. 11 And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash; 12 Therefore said I, The Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering. 13 And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. 14 But **now thy kingdom shall not continue:**

On another occasion, God commands Saul to destroy Agag and his kingdom utterly (chart):

1Sa 15:1 Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee *to be* king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. 2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember *that* which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid *wait* for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. 3 Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

But Saul saves the king and the best of the flocks, ostensibly to offer them to the Lord:

1Sa 15:21 But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal.

Samuel responds,

1Sa 15:22 Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry.

41 The temporal relation between the two incidents is not clear, since 13:1 appears to put the events of ch. 13 much later than eight days after ch. 10. K&D understand the command in 10:8 to be a general one, applicable whenever Saul goes to offer sacrifice at Gilgal. Gilgal was where Israel first encamped in the land. Though the tabernacle was at Shiloh, Gilgal was an important cultic center, where Saul was crowned (1 Sam 11:15). So if Saul chose to sacrifice there, rather than at Shiloh where priests were available, he should notify Samuel and give him a week's notice. Alternatively (Bergen), we should read 13:1 as a corruption of a general summary of Saul's reign, so that the rest of ch. 13 can indeed follow directly on ch. 10.

Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, **he hath also rejected thee from being king.**

In both cases, Saul views sacrifice as a magical sacrament, something with power in itself, and prefers it over obedience. In both cases, Samuel declares that this attitude disqualifies him from being king. David, when he comes to the throne, remembers Saul's experience, and confesses that what matters before God first of all is not sacrifice, but obedience.

but a body hast thou prepared me:—At this point the LXX translator paraphrases the Hebrew text. David wrote, "Mine ears hast thou opened." God opened ears in his head so that he could hear God's instructions, and he is now responding to those instructions. The LXX interprets this expression as a figure of speech known as "part for the whole," in which a part of something represents the whole. We often describe a person by the most prominent part of the body. For example, a father might say, "I have six mouths to feed," when he is really concerned with six people; or we might ask for the "head count" at a meeting when we are really interested in whole people. David described the ear as the part of the body most directly related to obedience, but the LXX translator recognizes that the whole body is involved in carrying out what the ear hears, and renders accordingly.

The LXX's interpretation of the figure of speech is particularly convenient to the writer, who is preoccupied throughout this section with the meaning of the Lord's Table, since it gives him the "body" to go with the "blood" of 9:16-28.

7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.—Here is David's second allusion to earlier portions of the OT. It was the duty of every king, upon his coronation, to prepare a personal copy of the law of God, so that he would know what it taught (chart):

Deut. 17:18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of *that which is* before the priests the Levites: 19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: 20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left: to the end that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

In the Psalm, David announces that in taking the throne, he comes with⁴² the book of the law that Moses commanded him to write concerning the duties of the king. He is not just dealing with one specific command, such as those that Saul violated (wait for Samuel at Gilgal; completely destroy the Amalekites). He is resolved to carry out all of what God has written about the responsibility of the king.

From the perspective of the writer to the Hebrews, David's descendant comes to carry out the requirements of a much larger book, the entire OT revelation, as he has been at pains to explain to us throughout the epistle.

So the Messiah, at the point of his incarnation, enters the world with a determination to carry out all that the OT scriptures decreed concerning him.

42 A legitimate translation of the Hebrew preposition כִּי, leading to the parsing, "with the volume of the book written about me." LXX ἐν is the most common translation of כִּי, though it does not admit the sense "with." The OT not only describes the king's duties, but also has much to say about the Messiah.

8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; 9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.—Historically, these verses reflected David’s awareness of Saul’s failure as king, characterized by his preoccupation with sacrifice over obedience, and his own resolution to start with obedience. But the writer to the Hebrews hears these words on the lips of the Messiah, “when he cometh into the world” (v. 5).

He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.—“The first” is sacrifice. “The second” is doing God’s will. “He,” the one who “cometh into the world” (v. 5), has replaced Levitical sacrifice for sin with his own obedience.

10 By in the which will we are [have been] sanctified—Our Lord came to do the will of God. But just what was that will? The writer tells us that the contents of that will. God’s plan was to sanctify us, that is, set us apart for himself.

Heb. 2:10 For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

The verb “sanctified” in 10:10 is in the perfect tense, meaning that it is a completed process. This may seem strange to us, especially since in 2:11 we are being sanctified (present tense), a point repeated in 10:14. Understanding the introductory preposition helps resolve the riddle. The writer is not saying that *by means of* God’s will we have been sanctified, but rather, that *in his will*, in his eternal purpose, we stand sanctified. That is, he has decreed our sanctification. In his plan it is accomplished. But that plan is still being carried out.

through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.— That will was accomplished through our Savior’s offering. “Jesus Christ” brings together the title that has dominated throughout ch. 9-10, and the personal name that characterized our Lord as the Melchizedekian high priest (6:20; 7:22). v. 10, which concludes this argument, offers an intriguing parallel to John 3:16 (Table 3, chart). What great joy should be ours, that both God’s will and his love—his purpose and his passion—are devoted to our blessing.

Table 3: Parallel between 10:10 and John 3:16

	Heb 10:10	John 3:16
Driver	In the which will	God so loved the world
Outcome	We have been sanctified	That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life
Means	Through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all	that he gave his onlybegotten son

The second argument for the superiority of our priest’s sacrifice, 9:11-12 and 25-26, expands 7:27. Our Lord has to offer only a single sacrifice, in contrast to the repeated sacrifices of the Levitical priests. The writer arranges the verses chiasmatically⁴³ to emphasize the contrasts (Table 4, chart).

Table 4: Parallelism in 10:11-12

11 Every Priest:	12 But this man:
standeth	sat down ...
daily ministering, offering oftentimes	offered one ... for ever
the same sacrifices	sacrifice
which can never take away sins	for sins

43 Vanhoye p. 167

11 And every priest ... 12 But this man—The first contrast is between the many priests of the first covenant and this one solitary priest of the new covenant.

Heb 7:23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

standeth ... sat down on the right hand of God; 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.—Note the differences in priestly posture (standeth, sat down) and verb tense. The present tense of “standeth” is strong evidence that the temple still exists and its ceremonies are still underway at the time Hebrews is written. The Savior’s seated posture, already achieved (aorist), reflects one who “has entered into his rest” (4:10).

daily ministering⁴⁴ and offering oftentimes ... after he had offered one ... for sins for ever,—Here is the contrast we have seen repeatedly since 7:27, between the repeated OT sacrifices and the one final sacrifice offered by our Lord.

the same sacrifices θυσία, ... sacrifice—The plural OT sacrifices contrast with the single offering on Calvary.

which can never take away περιαιρέω G4014⁴⁵ sins: ... for sins—Instead of the impotence of the earlier offerings, our Lord’s sacrifice was “for sins.” This latter expression appears in the NT only in Hebrews (here and 5:1, 3). In the canonical LXX, 8 out of 9 instances are in Ezekiel 40-46, always translating תשובה H2403 “sin offering,” which earlier books simply translate ἁμαρτία “sin.” These chapters describe the temple that God instructed Israel to build after the captivity.⁴⁶ It’s clear from the historical record that the Jews fell far short of this instruction, but perhaps our writer wants to call our attention to the Lord’s sacrifice as accomplishing what Ezekiel outlined.

14 For—We ought not to skip over this conjunction. V. 14 explains how our High Priest, after only one sacrifice, can sit down. It is because that sacrifice has achieved all that it needed to.

by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.—The tenses are very interesting: he hath perfected (perfect) them that are being sanctified (present) (Table 5, chart).⁴⁷ How can he say that they are already perfected, if they are still being sanctified? Compare Paul’s denial of this in his own life (chart):

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever	Perfect Tense → A complete, finished work	Position	Justification
them that are [being] sanctified.	Present Tense → An ongoing process	Practice	Sanctification

Table 5: The Paradox of 10:14

Phil. 3:12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already **perfect** *Perfect indicative*: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Yet Hebrews also knows of final perfection as something yet future: The OT saints could not achieve perfection without us:

44 This is the only place that Hebrews applies λειτουργ* to the Levitical priests.

45 Only here of sin. Common in Leviticus for taking away the fat from off the offering, etc.

46 Thus Payne, Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy pp 354-355, citing Ezek 43:10-11.

47 In v. 10 “sanctified” is perfect. See note on the combination of perfect indicative with present participle in Hebrews.

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

Only in heaven are they described as having attained that state:

Heb. 12:23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men **made perfect**,

This aligns with Paul's earlier words to the Philippians,

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:

But remember the initial conjunction. The focus is on our Priest, not on us. The writer is explaining why our priest can sit down. His work is complete. He has done all that is needed.⁴⁸ The present participle emphasizes that this finished work of Christ leads to an ongoing work in us—a work about which he will have much to say in his last three chapters.

10:15-18, Return to the New Covenant

15 Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us:—The previous section claims that the blood of Christ provides the remission that the blood of the first covenant could not bring (9:22), and that his body, unlike the OT sacrifices, could not perfect the worshippers with respect to the conscience (10:1-2). The writer has developed his argument on logical grounds, notably, the contrast between the repetition of the OT ritual and the once-for-all nature of our Lord's sacrifice. Now he brings in a witness to confirm what he has said: the Holy Spirit.

How does the Spirit bear his witness? In this case, it is through the OT Scriptures, which he inspired (chart).

2Pet. 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

Sometimes the Spirit moves us directly:

Rom. 8:16 The **Spirit itself beareth witness** with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

Sometimes he speaks directly from heaven, as at the baptism or the mount of transfiguration. The mention of his witness in 1 John 5 is probably in reference to the Lord's baptism:

1John 5:5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? 6 This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is **the Spirit that beareth witness**, because the Spirit is truth. 7 For there are three that **bear record**, 8 **the Spirit**, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one εἰς τὸ ἓν εἶσιν.

Here, he speaks through the Scriptures, in particular, Jeremiah 31, which he now goes on to quote. Note how his reasoning proceeds (chart). First he offers an observation: the OT sacrifices were repeated, while the Lord died only once. Then comes a logical induction from that data: the OT sacrifices did not bring either a clean conscience or remission, but the Lord's death does. But

⁴⁸ Delitzsch: "His work is accomplished, and needs nothing more to complete it, nor any repetition. Τετελειώκεν, it is perfect, requiring no addition; but, at the same time, it is not as to its effect a past work, but one perpetually realized in those who accept it, and as thereby being sanctified (τοῦς ἁγιαζομένους, pres. part.)."

all this is just logic and theology, which he will now support with the testimony of the Spirit through Scripture. 10:15 is the hinge that joins the two parts of the argument.

We see this pattern of moving from logic to Scripture elsewhere (chart). Here are two examples.

In the first part of 1 Corinthians 9, Paul argues logically that as an apostle, he has a right to receive support for his work.

1 Cor 9:4 Have we not power to eat and to drink? ... 7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?

Next is the hinge:

1 Cor. 9:8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also?

Then he confirms these considerations with Scripture:

1 Cor 9:9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn.

Similarly, at the end of Romans 3, he argues logically that salvation must be by faith, not works.

Rom 3:27 Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. ...

Again, a hinge follows:

Rom 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Then he confirms this argument by citing an example from the law:

... 4:2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God. 3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Our writer, along with Paul, gives us a valuable example for confronting issues of doctrine and practice. It's not a question of reason or Scripture. A truly satisfying answer must satisfy both. There are, indeed, some things revealed in Scripture that are beyond rational understanding, but in most cases we will find value and insight in the interaction of reason and revelation.

Now let's consider the witness of the Spirit in Scripture to the two great promises in 9:16-10:15, the cleansing of the conscience and the remission of sin.

for after that he had said before,—This introduction expects something like, “Then he says.” Somewhere in vv. 16-17 he shifts from the setting to the statement. The most explicit shift is with the words, “saith the Lord.”⁴⁹ In Jeremiah, they mark the previous words as an introductory summary.⁵⁰ But our author uses them to introduce the main point he draws from the quotation.⁵¹

49 Thus Delitzsch, deSilva, and earlier commentators. Most recent writers (Alford, O'Brien, Barmby, Lane), and a minority MSS tradition dating from the 10th century, see the break at the start of v. 17. The earlier division is confirmed by the alignment between the two claims of 9:16-10:14 and vv. 16-17 (Figure 11).

50 H. V. D. Parunak. Some Discourse Functions of Prophetic Quotation Formulas in Jeremiah. In R. D. Bergen, Ed., *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics*, pp 489-519. Summer Institute of Linguistics, Dallas, TX, 1994.

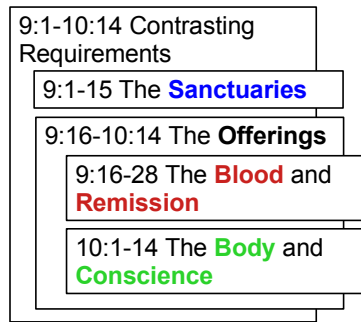
51 Parunak 1994, 508-509 documents eight different interpretations of this common formula in Jeremiah. Many of them, like our author, understand it as introducing a section of text.

16 This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days,—He reminds us where this whole section started: in 8:6-13 he cited the New Covenant as promised in Jeremiah. All of ch. 9-10 so far has contrasted the sanctuary and offerings under the first covenant, and their realization in our Savior in the new covenant.

[then] saith the Lord,—This promise of the new covenant, introduced in 8:10-12, confirms what he has said about the efficacy of the Lord’s priesthood and sacrifice. He claims two results from Messiah’s priestly work.

1. He perfects his people with respect to their conscience (10:14; contrast 10:1-2).
2. He provides remission of sin before God (contrast 9:22).

Now he shows that Jeremiah promises both effects (Figure 11, chart). First, Jeremiah promised that God would work in the hearts and minds of his people, corresponding to the perfection of the conscience that our Lord achieved.



10:15 for after that he had said before,
 16 “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days,”
 [then] saith the Lord,
 “I will put my laws **into their hearts, and in their minds** will I write them;
 17 And their **sins and iniquities will I remember no more.**”

Figure 11: Alignment of 10:16-17 with 9:16-10:15

I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;—The essence of maturity is to have God’s law

internalized, guiding our conduct constantly. God has always expected his people to have his law in their hearts:

Deut 6:6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: ... 11:18 Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.

There were, indeed, some OT saints who hid God’s word in their hearts.

Psa. 119:11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

David here declares himself to be one of them, and Solomon urged his son to do this with his spirit-inspired words:

Prov 4:20 My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. 21 Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

But by and large, Israel contented themselves with binding God’s word on their hands and foreheads (Deut 6:8). Like other forms of obedience to God’s word, complete realization of this duty required the work of the Spirit, a facet of the New Covenant that Ezekiel makes explicit:⁵²

Ezek 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Our Savior’s ministry not only purges our inner thought life, but enables the complete remission of our sin, which Jeremiah goes on to promise:

⁵² O’Brien, p. 359: “This points to an obedience from the heart that was expected under the old covenant, but which now will be accomplished by God.”

17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.—Contrast 10:3,

Heb 10:3 But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year.

How can our omniscient God not remember something?

This promise in Jeremiah goes back to David’s prayer in Psalm 25. This is the central Psalm of Book 1, the book of confrontation. The Psalm consists of three cycles of request for God’s instruction, followed by a plea for forgiveness (Figure 12, chart). The plea for forgiveness in the first of these is grounded in the vocabulary of Ex 34:6, where God said to Moses,

Ex. 34:6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, **merciful** רחום and gracious חנון, longsuffering, and abundant in **goodness** חסד and truth, 7 Keeping **mercy** חסד for thousands, **forgiving** iniquity עון and **transgression** פשע and **sin** חטאה,

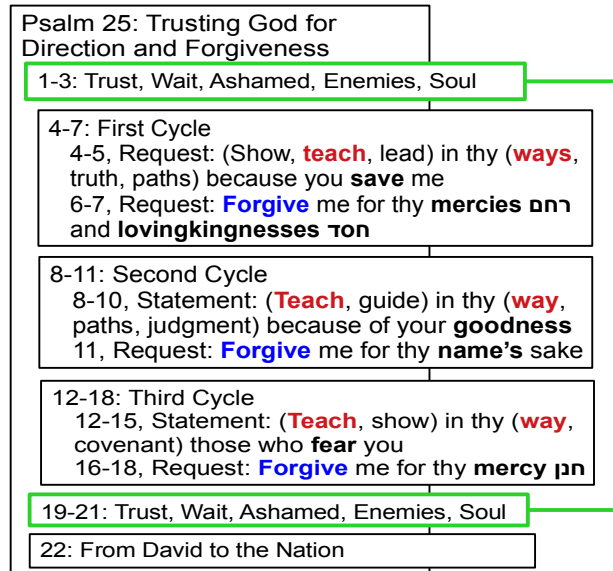


Figure 12: Structure of Psalm 25

On this basis, David prays,

Psa 25:6 **Remember**, O LORD, thy **tender mercies** רחמים and thy **lovingkindnesses** חסדיך; for they *have been* ever of old. 7 **Remember not** the **sins** חטאה of my youth, nor my **transgressions** פשע: according to thy **mercy** חסד remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

David has been confronted with the claims of God’s kingdom. He realizes that he is a sinner, but prays that God will remember the promise of Exodus 34 and thus not remember his sins.

Later, through Isaiah, the Lord affirms that he will grant David’s request, but the people must ask him to do this. Again, God remembers his promise in order to forget.

Is 43:25 I, *even I, am* he that blotteth out thy **transgressions** פשע for mine own sake, and will not **remember** thy **sins** חטאה. 26 **Put me in remembrance**: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.

How can this be? The key is in the verb “forgive” נשא H5375 in Ex 34:7. It means “to lift up, to carry away.” God promises that he himself will carry the burden of our sin. Isaiah goes on to explain *how* God will do this—by sending his Servant, the Messiah.

Is. 53:4 Surely he hath **borne** נשא **our griefs**, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ... 12 ... he was numbered with the transgressors; and **he bare** נשא **the sin of many**, ...

God forgives sin by taking it upon himself, visiting its penalty on his own Son. This sin is not simply covered. It is gone, and now he can forget it.

Now Jeremiah reinforces the promise in more detail. The basic character of God revealed in Exodus 34 will ultimately issue in a new covenant by which David’s prayer can be answered, but a covenant must be ratified by blood, and that sacrifice awaited the Messiah.

18 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.—Here is the final conclusion he draws from Jeremiah, confirming what he claimed in 9:22,

Heb. 9:22 And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

By repeating the word “remission,” the writer confirms the point. The sin can be forgotten, because it is not simply covered, as in the Old Covenant. It is gone forever.

10:19-25, Closing Bracket (cf. 4:14-16)

This paragraph closes a major section of the book. We have been considering our Lord’s person and work—his person in 1:5-2:18 by comparison with the angels, and his work as “a merciful and faithful high priest” (2:17) ever since 3:1 (Figure 1, chart). After a brief discussion of his “faithfulness” toward God in 3:1-6 and a warning, the writer devotes most of his attention to the characteristic of “merciful” (ἔλεος G1656, translating ἵππ H2617 and cognates in LXX) (Figure 2). That is, he fulfills God’s covenant toward his brethren, as shown in the focus on Jeremiah 31.

The discussion of the merciful high priest is set off by matching paragraphs, this one and 4:14-16 (Table 6, chart). Both urge us to hold fast to our profession and draw near to the heavenly sanctuary, taking advantage of the access gained by our Lord’s work as a merciful high priest.

The two paragraphs have similar structure. Both contain a series of

exhortations (“let us ...”), motivated by what we have (“having ...”). The possession in the first bracket is echoed in the second, as are two of the three exhortations, but the second bracket adds a possession and an exhortation (highlighted).

- In the first, we have “a great high priest,” with a subordinate note that he has “passed into the heavens.” In the second, we continue to have “a high priest over the house of God,” but in addition, we have “boldness to enter into the holiest,” anticipated in ch. 4 both in his passing into the heavens in 4:14 and in the boldness of 4:16.
- In the first, we are exhorted to hold fast our profession and come boldly unto the throne of grace. These are repeated in the second, but a third is added: we are to consider one another.

The additional possession grows out of what we have learned in ch. 5-10 about our Priest’s ministry for us, while the additional exhortation prepares us for the discussion of the life of the sons of God in ch. 11-13.

	ch. 4	ch. 10
What we Have	14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest , that is passed into the heavens , Jesus the Son of God,	19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us , through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21 And having an high priest over the house of God;
What we should Do	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.	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. 23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) 24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Table 6: The Brackets of Heb 4 and Heb 10—new info highlighted

10:19-21, Our Two Possessions

10:19-20, Having Boldness

Our first possession is boldness to enter into the holiest. This is God’s resting place, withheld from Israel because of their unbelief (Psalm 95, quoted in 3:7-15). Our Savior has entered this rest (4:10), and he is the anchor to which we are tied (6:19-20).

This possession is an addition to ch. 4, but two elements of it were anticipated there. 4:16 exhorted us to come boldly; now, on the basis of what we have learned in ch. 5-10, we have boldness. 4:14 said as a side observation that our high priest has passed into the heavens; that is the foundation for the statement in 10:20 that he has consecrated a way for us to enter in. Again, the certainty of the present possession comes from what we have learned since the first bracket.

19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;—10:19-20 summarize this argument by placing in parallel our entry with his. Table 7 (chart). shows the correspondences. Consider each pair of phrases.

10:19, Our Entry	10:20, His Entry
having therefore, brethren	which he hath consecrated for us
boldness to enter	a new and living way ,
into the holiest	through the veil
by the blood of Jesus	that is to say, his flesh

Table 7: Parallels in 10:19-20

having therefore, brethren ... which he hath consecrated for us—The LXX uses the verb “consecrate” ἐγκαθιζω G1457 and its cognates⁵³ mostly to describe the dedication of a building project, such as the altar of the tabernacle (Numbers 7), a private house (Deut 20:5), Solomon’s temple (1 Ki 8:63; 2 Chr 7:5; Psalm 30 title) and altar (2 Chr 7:9), Nebuchadnezzar’s image (Dan 3:2, 3), the second temple (Ezr 6:16-17), the wall of Jerusalem (Neh 12:27), and the temple and altar after the defilements of Antiochus Epiphanes (1 Maccabees 4). From this last event comes the feast of dedication, celebrated by our Lord (John 10:22). So we should understand “way” here, not abstractly, but as a road that the Lord has provided and dedicated. He did the work. All we have to do is walk on it.

There is an interesting contrast here with the call of the Baptist, based on Isaiah:

Isa 40:3 The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

When the king was coming, it was the task of the people to get their roads in order to ease his approach. John exhorted the people to repent and prepare for the coming of the Messiah. But now that he has come, he has build the road for us, and it is our privilege to walk on it.

How did our Lord dedicate the highway to heaven? He is the first one to use it. Having taken on our sin, he was barred from the Father’s rest until that sin was removed. Now that he has finished that work, he has become the first to enter in, dedicating the way for the rest of us.

boldness to enter ... by a new and living way—The road is characterized as “new and living.” “Living” likely recalls our Lord’s words in the upper room,

Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

⁵³ Translating cognates of הנהג H2596

The way is our Lord himself, not just a path of desert sand leading through the outer and inner veils of the tabernacle, but a living person. It is “new,” never before available to people.⁵⁴

Such a road inspires boldness. We’ve all seen pictures of rickety bridges across remote cascades, and trembled at the thought of crossing them. Yet we do not hesitate to drive a two-ton car over the Ohio River on a modern bridge. We have boldness to enter, because he has dedicated the road. We know it is safe because he already used it, when he “entered into the heavens” (4:14).

into the holiest ... through the veil—The road that he dedicated leads into the holy of holies. Our Lord is there now:

Heb. 6:19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; 20 Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Because he has entered in, we can finally access God’s rest:

Heb. 4:9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

by the blood of Jesus ... that is, his flesh—Finally, we are reminded of the two aspects of his work—his blood that washes away our sin (9:16-28), and his flesh, in which he rendered obedience to the Father that makes his sacrifice acceptable (10:1-14).

10:21, Having a High Priest

21 And having an high priest over the house of God;—This looks like a repetition of 4:14,

Heb 4:14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,

But there is an important difference. 4:14 focused on our High Priest’s heavenly position. 10:21 tells us of his responsibility “over the house of God.” Throughout the OT, this expression refers to the tabernacle (Jud 18:20) or temple (2 Chr 5:14). It appears only two other times in the NT. Both times it refers to the church (chart).

1Pet. 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at **the house of God**: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

1Tim. 3:15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in **the house of God**, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Thus our high priest’s ministry is not just heaven-ward (4:14), but also earth-ward. He is concerned, not just with us as individuals, but with the church, here described with the metaphor of a sanctuary, as in Eph 2:20,

Eph. 2:19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; 20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

⁵⁴ It is tempting to see a word play in the original meaning of πρόσφατος as “newly slain,” contrasting our Lord’s death with the living way it has provided for us. But πρόσφατος throughout the LXX and Hellenistic literature loses its sacrificial meaning and refers simply to something that is new or fresh (see Delitzsch), so the etymological meaning is unlikely to be in our writer’s mind.

His role is to be “over the house of God,” that is, the church. To be “over a house” is to execute authority over it. We have at least three secular examples in the Bible. This was the role of Joseph over Potiphar’s house:

Gen. 39:4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer **over his house**, and all that he had he put into his hand.

Later, it was held by Shebna, and then Eliakim, over the royal household in Judaea.

Isa. 22:15 Thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is **over the house**,

Isa. 36:3 Then came forth unto him Eliakim, Hilkiyah's son, which was **over the house**, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah, Asaph's son, the recorder.

It was the title of the chief steward of the royal palace, engraved on the seal with which he signed important documents (Figure 13).⁵⁵ David appointed comparable officials in the temple:

2 Chr 23:18 the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed **in over the house of the LORD**,

The point is parallel to Paul’s description of the church as a body, with our Lord as its head:

Eph. 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, **which is the head**, even Christ: 16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.



Figure 13: "Property of Gedaliah, who is Over the House."

https://www.hwalibrary.com/media/magazines/GN_05_1976/images/SealOfGedaliah.jpg

The priestly ministry of our Lord includes not only his intercession for us before God’s throne, but also his oversight of the church on earth: the high priest of the living temple, the head of the body, the good, great, and chief shepherd of the sheep. We need to recognize his ministry in this role, and be responsive to his authority and direction.

10:22-25, Our Three Duties

Our two possessions highlighted three things: our Lord’s blood, his flesh, and his role in the church. These align with the three duties (Table 8, chart). The first two duties have clear parallels in 4:14-16. The third has no clear parallel in the opening bracket, but prepares us for the section to follow, 10:26-13:19, which says a great deal about our care for one another in the church.

19, boldness through the blood of Jesus	22, Let us draw near in full assurance
20, his obedience in his flesh	23, Let us hold fast without wavering
21, high priest over the house of God	24-25, our responsibility in the house of God

Table 8: Alignment between Possessions and Duties

⁵⁵ At least two examples of such seals from the Judaeen monarchy have been discovered, one belonging to Adonyahu (J. Laden, *Bible History Daily*, <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-artifacts/artifacts-and-the-bible/first-temple-seal-impression-found-by-western-wall/>) and another to Gedaliah (A. D. Tushingham, *BASOR* 200 [Dec., 1970], pp. 71-78).

10:22, Draw Near

The first duty is parallel to 4:16,

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.

Both 10:22 and 4:16 have a verb of approach modified to indicate confidence, with a double motive (Table 9, chart).

	4:16	10:22
Exhortation to approach	Let us come ... unto the throne of grace	Let us draw near
Confidence	boldly	with a true heart in full assurance of faith
Double Motive	that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.	having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Table 9: Parallels between 4:16 and 10:22

22 Let us draw near—In 4:16, the approach is to God’s throne, that we may find grace. Now, as the context shows, we are entering into the holiest, admitted into God’s rest.

with a true heart—The only other instance of the expression in the Greek Bible is in Hezekiah’s description of himself in his prayer for healing when he was stricken ill:

Is. 38:3 Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, **with a true heart**, and have done that which was pleasing in thy sight.

He did not obey God out of show, but out of a sincere desire to please him. Compare Paul’s exhortation to the Colossians,

Col. 3:22 Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in **singleness of heart**, fearing God:

Some draw near to God to appear pious to others. Consider the old business recommendation of joining the largest church in town for the sake of meeting customers. That’s not what the writer wants. Our approach to God should be motivated by a genuine desire to be close to him.

in full assurance of faith,—4:16 exhorted the readers to “come boldly.” This expression parallels that. Our approach is not to be timid or tentative, doubting whether we shall be received. All that God has done for us in Christ is intended to assure us of our welcome before the throne of God.

This verse is one of three in the NT that describe different facets of our full assurance. This verse tells us its source—it comes from faith in the finished work of Christ. Heb 6:11 draws our attention to its object:

Heb 6:11 And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the **full assurance of hope** unto the end:

Though much of what we long for lies in the future, we are not to doubt that it will come. The third instance⁵⁶ is in Colossians,

Col. 2:2 That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of **the full assurance of understanding**, to the ~~acknowledgement~~ knowledge of the mystery of God, and of the Father, ~~and~~ even [the mystery] of the Christ;

56 1 Thes 1:5 contains the noun without genitive. The verb appears in Luke 1:1; Rom. 4:21; 14:5; 2 Tim. 4:5, 17.

If faith is the source of our assurance and hope the goal of which we are assured, understanding is where it takes effect in us. It leads us to a cognitive state in which we know something—the mystery of God, which he has previously (Col 1:27) defined as the Christ. This knowledge reminds us of Hebrews’ emphasis on Christ as a title for our anointed priest.

So faith gives us assurance to draw near to God. But faith is only as good as the object in which we trust. Faith in a faulty chair will leave us sitting on the ground. So he summarizes,

having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water ὕδωρ καθαρός.—Under the first covenant, only the priests could draw near. Their preparation involved both the sprinkling of blood (at their ordination) and frequent washing with water. In particular, at their consecration, we read,

Ex 29:4 And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt **wash them with water**. ... 21 And thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and **sprinkle** it upon Aaron, ... and upon his sons,

The removal of an evil conscience refers to the repeated emphasis of how our Lord’s sacrifice can make the conscience perfect (9:9, 14; 10:2). The most likely fulfillment of the washing of the body is the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (see note), in fulfillment of the New Covenant promise as framed by Ezekiel, which has to do particularly with our conduct:

Ezek 36:25 Then will I **sprinkle clean water ὕδωρ καθαρός upon you, and ye shall be clean:** from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Our approach to the Father is enabled both by the perfection of our conscience by the blood of the Son, and by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, both of these mechanisms being fulfillments of the promised New Covenant.

10:23, Hold Fast

The second exhortation takes us back to 4:14b-15.

Heb 4:15b 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.

Again, the two exhortations have similar structure. Both begin with an exhortation to hold fast (using the same Greek verb κρατέω G2902), and continue with a motive, in this case a characteristic of our Lord (Table 10, chart). Again, it recalls a facet of our possession (Table 8), the faithful obedience of our Lord.

	4:14b-15	10:23
Exhortation: Hold Fast	let us hold fast our profession.	Let us hold fast the profession of <i>our</i> faith without wavering;
Motive: Characteristic of our Lord	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.	for he <i>is</i> faithful that promised;

Table 10: Parallels between 4:14b-15 and 10:23

23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith—“Profession” ὁμολογία G3671 is from the verb more commonly translated “to confess.” It means “to acknowledge.” We “confess our sins” when we acknowledge them. Here, what we are acknowledging is our relation to the Lord Jesus. The exhortation echoes our Lord’s words:

Luk 12:8 Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall **confess** me before men, him shall the Son of man also **confess** before the angels of God: 9 But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

Our mission is not to be “undercover Christians.” We are to be known as followers of Christ— not only by the character of our lives, but by our verbal commitment to him.

without wavering;—The exhortation of 4:15 is expanded with the word “unwavering” or “unbending,” which suggests steadfastness in the face even of torture (see note). Throughout history, ungodly powers have offered believers the choice between denying Christ (say, by offering to an idol, or walking upon a cross, or confessing faith in Allah) and death. Similar pressures were being applied to the readers of this epistle. They must not waver in their identification with the Lord.

(for he is faithful that promised;)—In 4:15, the basis for our steadfast profession. was the example of our high priest, who understands and shares our weakness and thus can sympathize with us. Now, based on what we have learned in the intervening chapters, we realize that he gives us more than sympathy. He has done what is necessary to guarantee the promise of God.

What is the promise? The first possession and the first exhortation both concern our approach to God, while the second exhortation, and the words of our Lord in Luke 12:8-9 that inspire it, suggest the danger of falling away. These two features recall the warning from the example of Israel in the desert, presented in 3:7-4:13.

Heb. 4:1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a **promise** being left us of entering into his rest [drawing near], any of you should seem to come short of it [falling away].

The promise is access to God’s resting place.

10:24, Consider One Another

The third exhortation has no parallel in 4:14-16, but anticipates the discussion of our life with other believers in the remaining chapters of the book. Like the first two exhortations, it grows out of our possession, this time our Lord’s priesthood over the church, the house of God. Under his rule, we have a responsibility within that house.

24 And let us consider one another—The verb κατανοέω G2657 means “to regard attentively.” It is used to call attention to the point of a parable: “consider the ravens,” Lk 12:24; “consider the lilies,” Lk 12:27. It describes Peter’s attentive analysis of the animals let down from heaven in Acts 11:6, leading him to recognize their unclean nature. The sentiment is that of Paul (chart),

Php 2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

The verb appears once earlier in Hebrews:

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

The writer has guided our steadfast attention to our Lord, who in faithfulness to his Father abandoned his own self-interest for our sakes. His example should lead us to pay careful attention to one another. In particular:

to provoke unto love and to good works:—Our translation suggests that we should seek to provoke each another, but this is probably not the point. The word is actually a noun, the source of our word “paroxysm,” which means a fit or convulsion. In the LXX, this noun is used to describe the fit (of anger) that God feels, leading to his judgment on his people (Dt. 29:28 [LXX 27]; Je. 32[LXX 39]:37). That anger is stimulated by the sin he “considers”:⁵⁷

Psa. 10:13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. 14 Thou hast seen it; for thou **beholdest** **κατανοέω** mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: (LXX 9:34)

God’s paroxysm is stimulated by what he considers. We see this dynamic in Acts 17 with the verb corresponding to “provoke,” but a different verb of seeing:

Acts 17:16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit **was stirred** **παροξύνω** in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

The first result of what he saw was that he himself was provoked, not that he provoked the people of Athens.

This usage suggests that the ones who experience the “paroxysm of love and good works” are the ones doing the considering (as in Acts 17). As we pay careful attention to one another, the result is to be that we are overcome with love for them and the urgent desire to perform good works toward them. This may indeed lead us to exhortation (as the next verse makes clear), but the provocation starts in our own hearts.

“Good works” is *καλὰ ἔργα*, not *ἀγαθὰ ἔργα*. The point is not just that the deeds are intrinsically good, but that they are noble, worthy of emulation.⁵⁸

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.

Our careful consideration of one another should lead us to deeds of love that in turn inspire others to similar acts.

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;--“Forsake” **ἐγκαταλείπω** G1459 is not simply neglecting, but abandoning an obligation:

Matt. 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou **forsaken** me?

2Tim. 4:10 For Demas hath **forsaken** me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

The writer sees their relation to the assembly as a personal obligation. Attendance is not simply checking a box, but part of their caring for one another. And if we do not spend time together, how can we “consider” one another as v. 24 requires?

but exhorting one another:--**παρακαλέω** G3870 is the common verb for comforting or encouraging. Paul and Barnabas give us an example of this activity (chart):

⁵⁷ The verb also describes God’s observation of sin in Ps 94:8-11; Isa 59:16.

⁵⁸ See discussion in Westcott.

Acts 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and **exhorting** them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

So the sequence of events is:

1. We pay diligent attention to one another.
2. This leads us to a strong urge to care for one another.
3. That in turn draws us to spend time with one another,
4. and encourages us to comfort and encourage each other.

and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.--“The day” without qualification is the day of the Lord’s return:

1 Cor 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

Their comfort for one another as the Lord’s advent approaches is needed for two reasons.

First, the Lord’s return will be accompanied by the terrors of the man of sin, 2 Thess 2.

2Th. 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come*, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

When the church is undergoing tribulation, we especially need to encourage one another to remain faithful. This was the motive in Acts 14:22.

Second, the Lord’s return is the point at which we must give account to him.

1John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

We need to help one another be prepared to give a good account to him.

The warning that follows reinforces the need for us to consider and encourage one another.

10:26-31, Warning against Willful Sin

Throughout Hebrews, each warning appears between two sections that are in parallel with each other, and each deals with a distinctive sin (Table 11, chart).

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 and Work of the Son of God	10:32-13:19, The Life of the Sons of God
12:25-29	Refusal to Obey	10:32-12:24, Life in the World	13:1-19, Life in the Church

The nature of each warning is appropriate to the transition that it marks.

- The two halves of the first pair deal with our Lord's dual nature, fully God in ch. 1, yet fully man in ch. 2. Neglect of either aspect of his person makes the "great salvation" that he came to bring impossible.
- Our Lord is both a merciful and a faithful high priest (2:17). Christ's *faithful* priesthood encourages us in avoiding unbelief, while his *merciful* ministry opens a way for us God's rest, which Israel lost through unbelief.
- The change in covenant that leads to our Lord's distinctive priesthood urges us not to stagnate in our spiritual life, but to press on to maturity.
- Warning against willful sin is necessary as we move from the finished work of our Lord to our responsibility in daily life.
- Acknowledging God's authority over us is critical to dealing both with hostile governments in times of oppression, and with preeminent brethren in the assembly.

This passage warns against willful sin, doing what we know is wrong. It follows naturally from 10:24-25, where we are to exhort one another.

26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.--The warning paraphrases Moses (chart):

Num. 15:27 And if any soul sin **through ignorance**, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. ... 30 But the soul that doeth ought **presumptuously**, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be **cut off** from among his people. 31 Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be **cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.**

Though the law as a means of dealing with sin has been superseded by the work of Christ, we can still learn from its principles. Forgiveness in any age is a gift to the penitent, not a license to sin and presume on restoration.

28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:--He recalls the principle he articulated in the first warning:

Heb. 2:2 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;

29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy,--A higher law than Moses' is now in effect. What punishment would be appropriate in this case? Such an offense heaps scorn on our Lord's body and blood (9:16-10:14), by which he has redeemed us, and which we remember at the Lord's table.

who hath trodden under foot the Son of God,--In the OT, one shows scorn for a dead *body* by treading it underfoot. This is how Jehu treated Jezebel (2 Kings 9:33), and is part of Isaiah's mocking song against the king of Babylon:

Is. 14:19 But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; **as a carcase trodden under feet.**

When we sin willfully, presuming upon the forgiveness that our Lord has purchased with his own blood, it is as though we are trampling with utter scorn and disrespect upon his body.

and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing,--The contrast here is between “sanctified” and “unholy.” “Unholy” is κοινός G2839, meaning common, everyday, and is the opposite of “holy,” set apart, special. We claim that the *blood* of our Lord has made us holy, but by treating it as a utility that enables us to sin with impunity, we make it common. “Blood of the covenant” is a reference to the words of institution (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24), and emphasizes the inappropriateness of participating at the Lord’s table while living contrary to God’s word.

and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?--The verb means to treat with mockery. The Spirit seeks to lead us to become more like Christ, rebuking us of sin and strengthening us in righteous conduct, but when we willfully sin, we are mocking his gracious ministrations.

30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. [Deut 32:35] And again, The Lord shall judge his people. [Deut 32:36]--These two statements are drawn from Deuteronomy 32, which is Moses’ *rib* that warns Israel not to depart from the Lord. By appealing to the example of Israel’s apostasy, he is drawing the same kind of parallel that we see in 3:7-4:13.

31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.--The God whom we serve is not passive, inactive, subject to our manipulation. He is living, and will not take lightly our disrespect and scorn.

This section offers a strong contrast with what we have just read of entering boldly into God’s presence (10:19) and drawing near in full assurance (10:22). The contrast is just the contrast between the gospel of John and the first epistle. The gospel tells us how we can *have* eternal life by believing on the name of the Lord Jesus. The key phrase is “that ye might have.”

John 20:30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and **that believing ye might have** life through his name.

The epistle tells us how we can *know* that we have eternal life, by observing the work of his Spirit conforming us to the image of Christ. Now the phrase is “that ye may know.”

1John 2:3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. . . . 5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; **that ye may know** that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

Salvation is by faith alone. Assurance comes from seeing the Spirit’s work. The possessions and duties of 10:19-25 tell us what Christ has accomplished for us, but include the exhortation to “exhort one another” about practical matters, and the warning in 10:26-31 is the writer’s example of such an exhortation. We are not designed to function in a vacuum. Some believers are tempted to be careless about personal holiness, and need other believers to challenge and rebuke them. Others are insecure in their faith, and need loving brethren to help them see the evidence of the Spirit’s work in their lives. Both of these happen in an assembly that is functioning as it ought.

Notes

μεσίτης

Our Lord is three times described as the “mediator” μεσίτης of the new (9:15, 12:24), better (8:6) covenant. The word appears elsewhere in the NT only in Gal 3:19, 20, of Moses, and 1 Tim 2:5, of our Lord.

Gal. 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a **mediator**. 20 Now a **mediator** is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

1Tim. 2:5 For there is one God, and one **mediator** between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

It only appears once in the LXX. The MT reads,

Job 9:33 Neither is there any reprover betwixt us אֵלֵינוּ מוֹכִיחַ אֵל, that might lay his hand upon us both.

LXX reads the prepositional phrase ἐν ἡμῶν as a noun:

Job 9:33 Would that he our **mediator** ὁ μεσίτης ἡμῶν were present, and a reprover, and one who should hear the cause between both.

This rendering understands בֵּין as a noun meaning “intermediary, as in 1 Sam 17:4, 23, and probably Ps 9:1 מוֹת לִבֵּן; see my notes on Psalm 8.

The Structure of Leviticus

Mary Douglas⁵⁹ sees the book as reflecting the structure of the tabernacle, with ch. 25-27 as the Holy of Holies. Moshe Kline⁶⁰ develops a similar analogy, but with ch. 19 as the holy of holies.

I propose⁶¹ a chiasmic structure for Leviticus that puts the day of atonement at the center, corresponding with the emphasis in Hebrews. This approach is based on the observation that 16 is surrounded with descriptions of sins, ceremonial in the preceding chapters but ethical in those following. Following this clue, one can suggest the structure in Table 2.

K&D recognize my divisions, but do not call out their chiasmic structure. The Leviticus poster animation on www.thebibleproject.org (Tim Mackie) recognizes the chiasm, but includes ch. 17 with 16 as part of the day of atonement discussion, drawing on the work of Zenger.⁶²

⁵⁹ *Leviticus as Literature*, Oxford, 2000,

https://monoskop.org/images/2/21/Douglas_Mary_Leviticus_As_Literature_2000.pdf

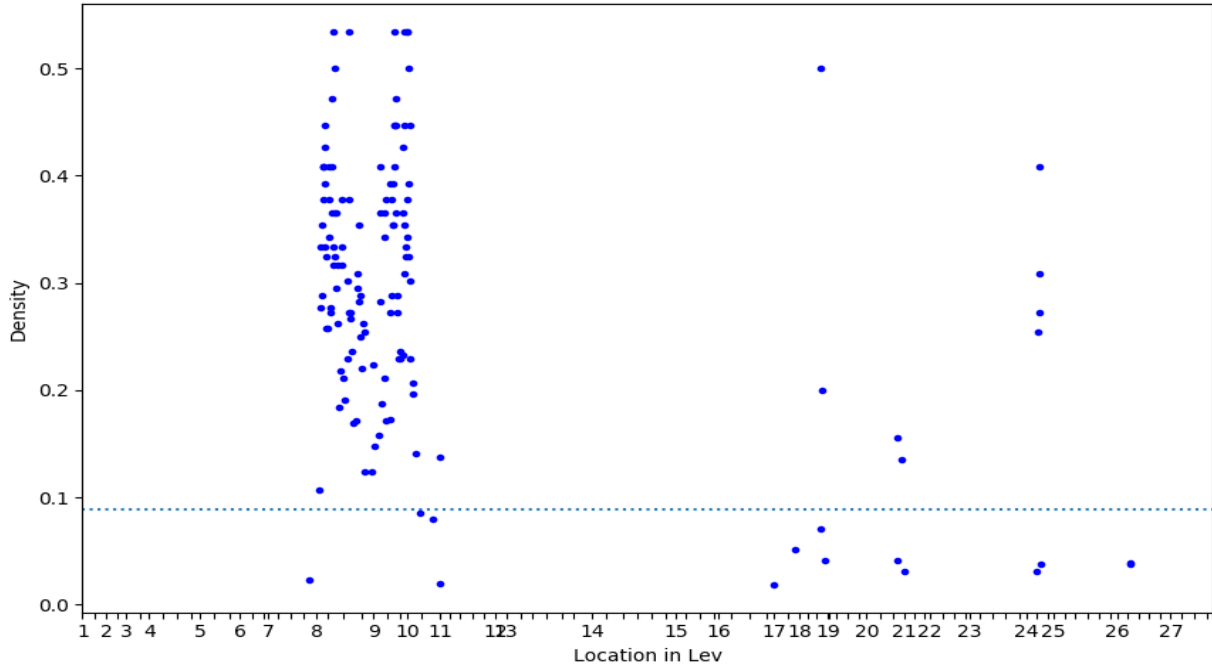
⁶⁰ “Structure Is Theology: The Composition of Leviticus,” in *Current Issues in Priestly and Related Literature: The Legacy of Jacob Milgrom and Beyond* (eds., Roy E. Gane and Ada Taggar-Cohen; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 225-264, <https://chaver.com/Torah/Structure%20is%20Theology%20Published%20Version.pdf>

⁶¹ Presented in the *Scocaster*, weekly newsletter of Scofield Memorial Church, Dallas, TX, for 1 Oct 1972.

⁶² Das Buch Levitikus als Teiltex der Tora/des Pentateuch, in Fabry & Juengling (eds), *Leviticus als Buch*. Bonner Biblische Beitrage 119 (Berlin: Philo, 1999); The Book of Leviticus, *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*, 41:2 (Autumn 2008), 88-93; The Book of Leviticus, 40th International Jewish-Christian Bible Week, 2008, https://www.haus-ohrbeck.de/fileadmin/user_upload/02_Haus-Ohrbeck/Bibelforum/Bibelwoche/2008/englisch/VortragErichZenger-englisch.pdf

A major component of Douglas' analysis is the distinction of the two narratives (ch. 8-10; 24:10-23⁶³) as division markers. This is true, but a bit misleading. Figure 14 shows *waw*-consecutives with prefix verbs other than דבר. Note two things.

First, ch. 8-10 is actually two narratives, separated by a hortatory section from Moses (8:31-9:7). Douglas characterizes 8-10 as a "fire narrative," but the divine fire appears only in ch. 9-10.



Jesus vs. Christ

The two are pretty much in complementary distribution (Figure 8). The joint title appears only four times (in MT): Heb. 3:1; 10:10; 13:8, 21. In 3:1 it introduces the first “Christ” peak, while in 10:10 it wraps up the concentration that starts in 9:11.

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

Does “Jesus” here reflect his role as Apostle to created men, and “Christ” High Priest?

Heb. 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The focus on “body” may urge the writer to return to the human name, as would “blood” in 10:19. But 9:14 speaks of “the blood of Christ,” unusual since “blood” is usually associated with the name “Jesus,” Heb. 10:19; 12:24; 13:12, 20

There are two peaks that surpass the mean (about 0.055). The first, in ch. 3, emphasizes his faithfulness, while the second (in ch. 9) focuses on his priestly ministry (perhaps emphasizing “Christ” as an anointed priest).

Figure 15 shows the three forms of *χριστός* in Hebrews: with *Ἰησοῦς* (red), anarthrous with *δέ* (green), and arthrous. The only anarthrous forms are with *Ἰησοῦς* and *δέ*, and these combinations are never arthrous, so the lack of article with them may not be significant. In fact, *χριστός δέ* is never arthrous anywhere in the NT.

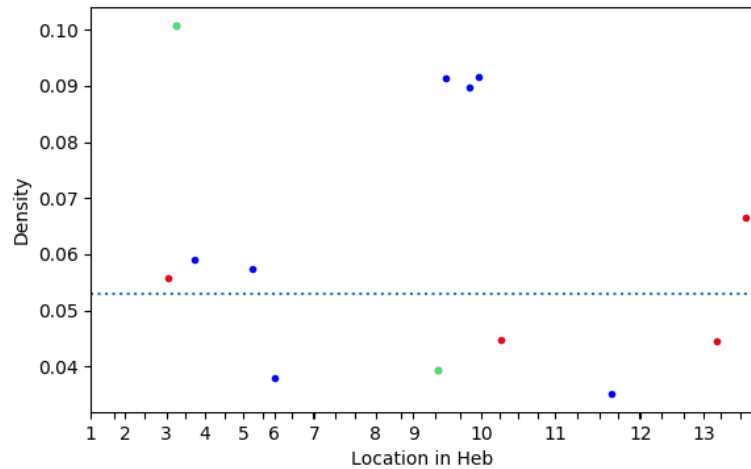


Figure 15: *χριστός* in Hebrews: with *Ἰησοῦς*, with *δέ*, and arthrous

The title “Lord” applied to Jesus (as opposed to the Father, as in “saith the Lord”), appears only six times (Heb 1:10; 2:3; 7:14; 12:14; 13:6, 20), and only in the last is it paired with either of the other titles (Lord Jesus).

Vocabulary for Offerings

מנחה can denote either a grain or a meat offering, particularly in non-legal texts; in the law, it focuses on grain offerings. But the flexibility here may explain its use to translate *θυσία*. *δῶρον* never appears in 10:1-14, which I suggest reflects it, while *θυσία* is used there, and *δῶρον* is used apparently of bloody sacrifices in 5:1 and 11:4. However, Westcott (on 5:1) notes,

	קרבן	מנחה	שחד	זבח
δῶρον	76	28	21	
θυσία		146		134
προσφορά		1		

Table 12: OT Vocabulary for Sacrifice

Δῶρον can be used comprehensively to describe offerings of all kinds, bloody and unbloody: 8:4 (comp. 11:4). The same offering indeed could be called, under different aspects, a ‘gift’ and a ‘sacrifice.’ But when ‘gifts’ and ‘sacrifices’ are distinguished the former mark the ‘meal-offering’ (πῆψη) and the latter the bloody offerings.

And θυσία is broad enough in its OT correlates to be used in 10:1-14 of an unbloody sacrifice.

ἅπαξ vs. ἐφάπαξ

ἅπαξ:

Subject men:

Heb. 6:4 For it is impossible for those who were **once enlightened**, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

Heb. 9:7 But into the second **went** the high priest alone **once** every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

Heb. 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men **once** to **die**, but after this the judgment:

Heb. 10:2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers **once purged** should have had no more conscience of sins.

Subject Christ:

Heb. 9:26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now **once** in the end of the world hath he **appeared** to put away sin by the sacrifice θυσία of himself. *NB: “Once” modifies, not “put away sin,” but “appear.”*

Heb. 9:28 So Christ was **once offered προσφέρω** to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. *Anomalous in light of the use of ἐφάπαξ for our Lord’s offering, but here ἅπαξ is used to achieve the parallel with what happens to men in v. 27.*

Subject God:

Heb. 12:26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet **once** more I **shake** not the earth only, but also heaven.

Heb. 12:27 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.

67x total in the Greek Bible. Other NT instances all have people as subject.

2Cor. 11:25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, **once** was I **stoned**, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

Phil. 4:16 For even in Thessalonica ye **sent once** and again unto my necessity.

1Th. 2:18 Wherefore we would have **come** unto you, even I Paul, **once** and again; but Satan hindered us.

ἐφάπαξ:

All three instances refer to the offering of our Lord.

Heb. 7:27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did **once**, when he **offered up ἀναφέρω** himself.

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.

Heb. 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the **offering προσφορά** of the body of Jesus Christ **once** for all.

The only other instances in the Greek Bible are in the NT, and one of those also refers to the death of our Lord:

Rom. 6:10 For in that he died, he **died** unto sin **once**: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

1Cor. 15:6 After that, he was **seen** of above five hundred brethren at **once**; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

Observations:

ἅπαξ does not necessarily mean “once for all.” Cf. “once and again” in 2 Cor 11:25; 1 Thes 2:18; Heb 9:7 “once every year.”

ἅπαξ occurs 67x in the Greek Bible; ἐφάπαξ only five times. This suggests that ἅπαξ is unmarked, and can be applied either to events that repeat, or to those that are intrinsically once for all. ἐφάπαξ is marked for exclusiveness (though 1 Cor 15:6?), and except for that verse, always describes our Lord's sacrifice.

Christ's Unique Offering in 9:1-10:14

The analysis above shows three contrasts in this section (diagrammed in Figure 5): the sanctuary, the offering of the Lord's blood, and the offering of his body. Each of these includes a contrast between the frequency (daily, often) of the Levitical sacrifices and the once-for-all offering of our Lord. Note the contrasting emphases:

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 ἐφάπαξ into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.

Heb 9:25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; 26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once ἅπαξ in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. *Though only ἅπαξ, the contrast with πολλάκις in 25 makes the point.*

Heb 10:11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

In 9:11-12 (focus on the sanctuary), the suggestion is that the need for repetition in the Levitical system is a consequence of the earthly nature of the implements: the worldly sanctuary, and the

goats and calves. With a heavenly sanctuary and human blood, the sacrifice need happen only once.

9:25-26 (focus on the blood offering) seems at first redundant with 9:12. But the emphasis here is not that the high priest offered the blood of goats and calves, but that he offered the blood of others (whatever they might be). The love and commitment of a priest who offers himself is superior to that of a priest who merely brokers the blood of others.

In 10:11-14 (focus on the offering of his body), the emphasis shifts to the effect of the singular offering: it achieves the perfection that is the ultimate objective of every priesthood (7:11, 19).

Expressions of Superiority

The common expression is κρείτονος ← κρείττων (13x)

Heb. 1:4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a **more excellent** name than they.

Heb. 6:9 But, beloved, we are persuaded **better** things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

Heb. 7:7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the **better**.

Heb. 7:19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a **better** hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

Heb. 7:22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a **better** testament.

Heb. 8:6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent διαφορωτέρας ← διάφορος ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a **better** covenant, which was established upon **better** promises.

Heb. 9:23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with **better** sacrifices than these.

Heb. 10:34 For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a **better** and an enduring substance.

Heb. 11:16 But now they desire a **better** country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Heb. 11:35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a **better** resurrection:

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

Heb. 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.

But two other comparatives appear more than once (4x each):

μείζονας ← μέγας

Heb. 6:13 For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no **greater**, he sware by himself,

Heb. 6:16 For men verily swear by the **greater**: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

Heb. 9:11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a **greater** and more perfect τέλειος → τελειότερος tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

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

πλείονος ← πολὺς

Heb. 3:3 For this man was counted worthy of **more** glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath **more** honour than the house.

Heb. 7:23 And they truly were **many** priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

Heb. 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a **more excellent** sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

9:22 αίμαεκχυσία

The word itself appears here for the first time in Greek, though it occurs later in the patristic writers. The verb on which it is based, ἐκχέω, is the dedicated and dominant translation in the LXX for קָשַׁף, which appears in two senses with respect to blood. In cultic contexts, it describes the final pouring out of the blood at the base of the altar, not the initial slaying of the animal, but in non-cultic contexts it refers to murder. On this basis Lane argues that the reference here is to the application of Christ's blood in heaven, to purge some defilement that he argues has reached the heavenly sanctuary. But Delitzsch argues at length that the reference is to the slaying, based on the Lord's use of the verb in the words of institution (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Lk 22:20).

It is important to note that in the cultic uses of the word, the verb does not refer to the main application of the blood. In each case in Exodus and Leviticus (eight out of 137 instances in LXX where αίμα and ἐκχέω occur together), the blood is applied קָשַׁף to the horns of the altar, and only after that, the remainder is poured out at the base of the altar. Deut 12:27 describes pouring the blood *upon* the altar, but only as a parallel to the pouring of the blood of non-sacral animals on the ground (12:24) so that it will not be available for human consumption.

In non-sacral slayings, the killing of the animal and the pouring of its blood on the ground happen together. In sacral slayings, some of the blood is reserved to anoint the horns of the altar, and so it cannot initially be poured onto the ground, but it is so poured out after the anointing has taken place. But (contrary to Lane's emphasis) the application of the blood does not consist in the pouring out. That is just disposal of what remains of the blood.

It is better, with Delitzsch, to understand the general idiom αίμα ἐκχέω to refer to the overall action of slaying in such a way that the blood is poured out onto the ground. The interruption of this process to reserve blood for ceremonial application is an exception, and the application is not what is described as "pouring out."

καθαρίζω and ἀφίημι (9:22) in LXX

	סלח	נוה	נשא	טהר, טהור, טהרה
καθαρίζω	3			75
καθάρος				15
ἀφίημι	14	18	9	
ἴλεως	18			

Figure 16 (chart) shows how the Greek terms are distributed in Leviticus.

Notice first that the word “purge” is concentrated in ch. 11-15. As we saw in Table 2, these are the chapters that discuss *ceremonial* defilement. The words “remit” and “remission” are absent in these chapters. In fact, in dealing with ceremonial defilement, sometimes simple washing with water was sufficient.⁶⁵

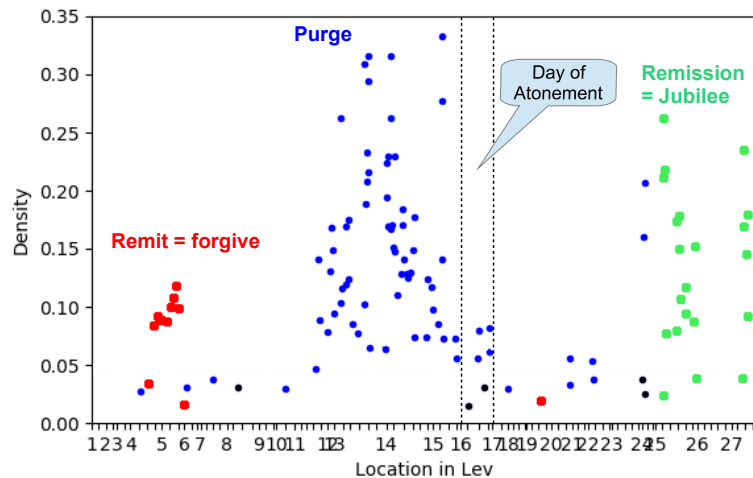


Figure 16: “Purge” and “Remission/Remit” in Leviticus

The Greek word family that includes “remit” and “remission”

appears in two main parts of Leviticus, but representing different Hebrew words. In ch. 4-5, the verb (translating סלח) describes the forgiveness achieved by the sin and trespass offerings. This is where the instruction about the bloodless offering of the poor person appears. In ch. 25 and 27 the noun (translating יובל) refers to the “release” of property in the Jubilee year, when all debts were forgiven.⁶⁶

It is significant that Leviticus distinguishes the noun and the verb in this way—just as in Hebrews, only the noun is used technically, of sin. The antecedent for ἄφεσις in Leviticus is not סלח, but יובל, when obligations are removed entirely. Thirtle’s suggestion in his study on the Lord’s Prayer is suggestive: when we pray that the Lord would forgive us as we forgive our debtors, the reference is to the Jubilee, not the day of atonement.

The area between the dotted lines is ch. 16, describing the day of atonement. It is remarkable that in this section, there is no reference at all to remission of sin. (The two black dots represent the Greek verb and noun, respectively, but refer to the removal of the scapegoat, not to the removal of sin.) But the words describing purging or cleansing do appear, four times. In other words, when Moses describes the day of atonement, the most important day in the Hebrew calendar and the one that is supposed to take care of the nation’s sin, he avoids saying that sin is removed, and

65 The purging of metal objects taken in war by fire (Num 31:22-23) is sometimes cited as another example (Lane), but those items were also treated with מֵי נִדָּה, the water of purification, prepared (Numbers 19) from the red heifer, which was a blood sacrifice.

66 The black dots on the diagram represent places where these two Greek word families, “purge” and “remit,” translate other Hebrew words, usually with different meaning than the instances in focus.

only says that (like ceremonial offenses) it is purged. When we studied 9:13, we saw that our author put the sin offerings of the day of atonement in the same category as the ceremony of the red heifer,

Heb 9:13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

Now we see that he is simply following Moses, who links the effect of the day of atonement with the ceremonial purging required in ch. 11-15, and not with the offenses that require removal of sin.

Bearing Sin: ἄιρω G142 John 1:19 vs. ἀναφέρω G399 Heb 9:28

	אשח	עלח
ἄιρω	175	5
ἀναφέρω	24	82
ἀναβαινω	0	519

Terms for the Relation of the OT to the NT

These terms are structurally significant. Other than 4:11 (which uses ὑπόδειγμα in a different sense than 8:5 and 9:23) and 11:19, they all describe the relation between the first covenant and the new. A dense concentration of them (8:5) opens the discussion. Then, each of the three contrasts is marked with these terms (9:9; 23-24; 10:1).

Data:

Heb. 4:11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example ὑπόδειγμα G5262 of unbelief.

Heb. 8:5 Who serve unto the example ὑπόδειγμα G5262 and shadow σκιά G4639 of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that* thou make all things according to the pattern τύπος G5179 shewed to thee in the mount.

Heb. 9:9 Which *was* a figure παραβολή G3850 for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;

Heb. 9:23 *It was* therefore necessary that the patterns ὑπόδειγμα G5262 of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures ἀντίτυπος G499 of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

Heb. 10:1 For the law having a shadow σκιά G4639 of good things to come, *and* not the very image εικόν G1504 of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

Heb. 11:19 Accounting that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure παραβολή G3850.

ὑπόδειγμα G5262: sometimes an example to follow. Thus in 4:11; first example in the NT is

John 13:15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

But this won't work for 8:5 and 9:23, which refer to the secondary artifacts, not the originals that they imitate. Here, the parallel with σκία in 8:5 is the clue—the word means “likeness, similar thing.”

σκία G4639, εικόν G1504: both are representations. εικόν describes the image of Caesar on his coins (Matt 22:20) or an idol (Rom 1:23). But 10:1 shows that σκία is even more remote, probably because it is insubstantial. By contrast, 8:5 shows that σκία and ὑπόδειγμα are very close together.

τύπος G5179, ἀντίτυπος G499: the pattern and that which is formed according to the pattern. Originally, the relation between a stamp and the image τύπος left by the stamp, thus the use of “type” to describe printing. Note that the terms are reversed from our conventional idiom. We tend to use “type” to describe the OT figure and “antitype” to describe the Messianic reality to which it corresponds, but in Hebrew, the “holy places made with hands” 9:24 are the antitype, and “the pattern showed to thee in the mount” 8:5 is the type! The big idea is a detailed correspondence in form.

παραβολή G3850: a metaphor, something laid alongside something else to point out correspondences, but not with the direct relation of type and antitype.

10:14 Perfect Indicative with Present Participle

This combination is a favorite of our writer:

Heb. 5:12 For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which *be* the first principles of the oracles of God; and **are become *PfI*** such as **have need *PrPt*** of milk, and not of strong meat.

Heb. 10:11 And every priest **standeth *PfI*** daily **ministering *PrPt*** and **offering *PrPt*** oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

Heb. 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he **was tried *PfI***, **offered up *PrPt*** Isaac: *better: Abraham was tried, offering up Isaac*

Heb. 12:26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now **he hath promised *PfI***, **saying *PrPt***, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

In each case, the perfect is almost aoristic, describing the overall situation whose details are worked out through time as described by the participle.

In general, the semantics of τελειόω naturally avoid the present tense. Compare (Table 13) the relative frequency of the

Table 13: Tenses with τελειόω and ἀγιάζω

		Total	Pres	Aor	Pf
NT	τελειόω	24	2	13	9
	ἀγιάζω	29	8	11	10
Hebrews	τελειόω	9		6	3
	ἀγιάζω	7	4	2	1

different tenses for τελειόω and ἀγιάζω. Neither has any instances in the imperfect, future, or pluperfect.

10:17 God Remembers and Forgets

In Jer 31:34, quoted in 10:17, God promises, “I will remember their sin no more.” Collect references to the description of God as remembering or forgetting in the OT.

Other verses that refer specifically to remembering sin:

Psa 25:6 Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they *have been* ever of old. 7 **Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions:** according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

Is 43:25 I, *even* I, *am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not **remember** thy sins. 26 Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.

Requests to Remember or Not Forget

For Favor

Deut. 9:26 I prayed therefore unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 27 **Remember** thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin:

Ps 13:1 How long wilt thou **forget** me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

Ps 77:9 Hath God **forgotten** to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?

1 Sam 1:11 And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and **remember** me, and **not forget** thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. ... 19 And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD **remembered** her.

Job 14:13 O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and **remember** me!

Ne 13:14 **Remember** me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof. (also vv. 22, 29, 31)

Ps 25:6 **Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they *have been* ever of old. 7 **Remember** not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy **remember** thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

Ps 106:4 **Remember** me, O LORD, with the favour *that thou bearest unto thy people:* O visit me with thy salvation;

Ps 132:1 LORD, **remember** David, *and* all his afflictions:

Hab 3:2 O LORD, I have heard thy speech, *and* was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath **remember** mercy.

For Judgment

Ps 137:7 **Remember**, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase *it*, rase *it*, *even* to the foundation thereof.

Promises to Remember or Not Forget

For Favor Lev 26:42

Ge 9:14 And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: 15 And I will **remember** my covenant, which *is* between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. 16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may **remember** the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* upon the earth.

Lev. 26:40 If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; 41 And *that* I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: 42 Then will I **remember** my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

Is. 49:14 But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. 15 Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, **yet will I not forget thee**. 16 Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of *my* hands; thy walls *are* continually before me.

Jer 31:34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will **remember** their sin no more.

Is 43:25 I, *even* I, *am* he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not **remember thy sins. 26 Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.

For Judgment

Am 8:4 Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, 5 Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? 6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; *yea*, and sell the refuse of the wheat? 7 The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never **forget** any of their works.

Threats to Forget

Hos. 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also **forget** thy children.

Statements that God Remembers

People

Ge 8:1 And God **remembered** Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that *was* with him in the ark:

Ge 19:29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God **remembered** Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.

1 Sam 1:19 (see requests, above)

Ps 78:39 For he **remembered** that they *were but* flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.

Ps 103:14 For he knoweth our frame; he **remembereth** that we *are* dust.

Ps 136:23 Who **remembered** us in our low estate: for his mercy *endureth* for ever: 24 And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

His Covenant, Word, Promise

See also promises in Gen 9:14-16; Lev 26:42

Ex 2:24 And God heard their groaning, and God **remembered** his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

Ex 6:5 And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have **remembered** my covenant.

Ps 105:8 He hath **remembered** his covenant for ever, the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations. 9 Which *covenant* he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; 10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, *and* to Israel *for* an everlasting covenant: ... 42 For he **remembered** his holy promise, *and* Abraham his servant.

Ps 106:45 And he **remembered** for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.

Ps 119:49 ZAIN. **Remember** the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

Judgment

Re 16:19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in **remembrance** before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

Re 18:5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath **remembered** her iniquities.

Relation between 4 Macc 6 and Hebrews

10:23 ἀκλινής G186 appears elsewhere in the Greek Bible only in 4 Macc 6:7, describing Eleazar's behavior at his martyrdom by Antiochus Epiphanes. Is the description of his martyrdom in our writer's mind? Maccabees goes on to say of Eleazar, "4Mac. 6:9 But he endured the pains, and despised the cruelty, and persevered through the indignities," where "endured" is the same as 12:2 and "despised" περιφρονέω is an alternative extension of the same root at 12:2 καταφρονέω. As Eleazar is about to expire, he prays, "28 Be merciful to thy people, and be satisfied with the punishment of me on their account. 29 Let my blood be a purification for them, and take my life in recompense for theirs," a sentiment that reflects the role of the faithful Servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53 and anticipates our Savior's substitutionary work.

The account of 4 Maccabees expands 2 Macc 6:18-31, which does not contain these links. According to Wikipedia on 4 Maccabees, "The book is generally dated between 20 and 130 CE, likely in the later half of that range," which would suggest that the author of 4 Maccabees is borrowing from Hebrews, rather than v.v. The 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia article says: "it belongs probably to the period shortly before the fall of Jerusalem. In its present form it contains possibly some Christian interpolations (e.g., vii. 19, xiii. 17, xvi. 25)" (these citations don't align nearly as well as the ones I point out above).

Hearts and Bodies in 10:22

having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water
To what do the sprinkling and washing refer?

The removal of an evil conscience must refer to the repeated emphasis of how our Lord's sacrifice can make the conscience perfect (9:9, 14; 10:2). But this is the only reference to washing in the epistle, and though water is mentioned one other time, in 9:19, it is the water of purification prepared with the ashes of the red heifer, which can hardly be called pure water.

It is very likely (Alford) that both elements are drawn from the ordination of the priests in Exod 29:4 (water), 21 (sprinkling with blood). This fits very well with the exhortation to draw near. We now have the same qualification as the priests of old to enter the sanctuary. But it still does not tell us what the water is.

A very common view (e.g., Delitzsch, Alford, Barmby, Lane, Westcott) is that the water is baptism. One author notes the similar alignment of baptism with conscience by Peter:

1Pe 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

The difficulty here is that Peter expressly says that baptism is *not* a washing.

Calvin (following Ezek 36:25), Gill, O'Brien more probably suggest that the water is the Holy Spirit, in his sanctifying work with us. The link to the new covenant in Ezekiel 36 is particularly appropriate in view of the recent discussion.

Then the point is that our approach to the Father is enabled both by the perfection of our conscience by the blood of the Son, and by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, both of these mechanisms being fulfillments of the promised New Covenant.