

Background

The History in Acts

The Book of Hebrews culminates the NT's discussion of a major issue: how should believers in the Messiah relate to the OT revelation and patterns of worship? Before starting the book itself, we'll review the history of Jewish-Christian interaction in Acts, then look at Paul's discussion of the problem in Romans and Colossians.

For this week, please skim over the book of Acts, looking for passages that describe the interactions between the Jews and the Christians. Pay special attention to

- what stimulates these interactions
- what motives are given for Jewish opposition
- indications of disagreement among the Jews themselves
- how the Jews carry out their opposition
- how the believers respond.

The Roman Context

There is some evidence that Hebrews is written to believers in Rome, so we should consider what Paul wrote to them about the relation between Judaism and Christianity.

1. Read over Acts 28 to recall Paul's initial interaction with the Jewish leaders in Rome. How does he characterize their reception of his message?
2. Read Romans 10-11.
 - (a) What link can you discover to the jealousy of unsaved Jews described throughout Acts?
 - (b) How does Paul explain this attitude? (Pay careful attention to the OT passages that he cites toward the end of ch. 10.)
 - (c) What future resolution does Paul expect of the Jewish situation?
3. Read Romans 14.
 - (a) Recall Peter's experience in Acts 10, and Paul's attitude toward Jewish practices in Acts 15, 16, and 21. How does that background explain the nature of the disagreements described in this chapter?
 - (b) How do Paul's instructions in Romans 14 explain his behavior in Acts?
 - (c) Read the story about Peter in Galatians 2. How does Peter's conduct contrast with Paul's example (in Acts) and his instructions (in Romans 14)?

Colossians: The Gentile Perspective

1. To get some idea of the occasion for this epistle, compare 4:3, 18 with Eph. 3:1, 13; 4:1; 6:19, 20; Php 1:12–20; Phm 9, 10, 13; and 1:24–27 with Eph. 3:1–6, 13).
 - (a) Chronologically, when would this place this epistle among the epistles of Paul?
 - (b) Compare the date we discussed for Galatians.
2. To explore the structure of the epistle, recognize the epistolary framework, and personal greetings. Once you see them as units, you can focus your attention on what remains.
3. As is his custom, Paul begins with a prayer.
 - (a) 1:3-4 are a summary of the prayer. Can you align the three verbs in these verses with three following paragraphs?
 - (b) Upon what subject does Paul spend the most time in this prayer?
 - (c) How does 4:2-6 balance this opening prayer?
4. The body also has a summary (21-23) that Paul then develops, though the development is not a simple one-for-one correspondence as in the prayer.
 - (a) What three themes do 1:21-23 set forth? Notice the different emphases in 21-22, 23a, and 23b.
 - (b) Read over the rest of the epistle a few times. See if you can divide it into paragraphs, each of which corresponds to one of these themes.
5. I have suggested that Colossians deals with the same problems as Acts 15 and Romans 14, the question of whether believers should follow Jewish traditional practices.
 - (a) Under which of the three themes you found in question 4 would you expect Paul to discuss such matters?
 - (b) Study the paragraphs you identified on this theme, and collect things that may be references to Jewish practices that the Colossian believers were considering.
 - (c) What is wrong with pursuing these practices, according to 2:17 and the emphasis of the opening prayer?

Overview

The first step in studying a new book should be to read over it several times, looking for clues to its structure. Here are three clues for you to explore.

1. A recurring theme throughout the book is that the NT revelation, centered on the Lord Jesus, is “better than” the OT revelation. The book uses the word “better” (κρείττων¹, Strong 2909) 13 times (Heb. 1:4; 7:7, 19, 22; 6:9; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24); there are only six other instances in the entire NT. Review these and see to what extent they identify distinct sections of the book. What different things is the new revelation “better than”?

1 Including one instance spelled κρείσσων in 6:9

Study Questions on Hebrews

2. Like Colossians, Hebrews goes back and forth between exposition (stating doctrinal truths that we should believe) and exhortation (urging the people to behave in a certain way).
 - (a) Identify the boundaries of each of these sections.
 - (b) Can you detect an overall theme to the expository sections that ties them together?
3. Psalm 110 is quoted frequently in the book: see Ps. 110:1 in 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2 and Ps. 110:4 in 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:3, 11, 15, 17, 21; cf. also possible allusions in 2:17; 3:1; 7:8, 24–25, 28; 10:21. Explore how these support the divisions you may have discovered in the first two questions.

1:1-10:25, The Person and Work of the Son of God

1:1-4, Introduction

1:1-4, God's New Revelation

1. What three contrasts do vv. 1-2a set forth?
2. Diagram vv. 1-4. Here are some hints:
 - (a) What is the main clause in 1-2a?
 - (b) The rest of 2b-4 gives three subordinate clauses, each with a relative pronoun pointing to the same word in the main clause. What are these clauses?
 - (c) Now diagram each of the relative clauses.
 - i. What is the main point of each?
 - ii. What subordinate phrases or clauses modify each of these?
3. See if you can paraphrase these first four verses.
4. Compare them with John 1:1-5.

1:5-2:18, The Son and the Angels

1:5-14, The Son in Heaven

1. Compare these verses (along with vv. 1-4) with Col 1:12-20. How many points of similarity can you find?
2. The author's argument in this chapter consists of collecting OT verses that refer either to angels or (mostly) to the Son. Use the Treasury or center reference in your Bible to collect these references.
3. Look up each reference in the OT.
 - (a) In the OT, who is speaking in each case?
 - (b) Whom does the author here say is speaking?

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4. How do these verses characterize the Son?
5. How do they characterize the angels?
6. How do they support his introduction in v. 4, and his conclusion in the last verse?
7. All but one of the writer's citations come from the Psalms.
 - (a) Where has he already alluded to his first and last citation?
 - (b) Locate the other Psalms he cites in the Psalter.
 - i. In what Books of the Psalter do they come?
 - ii. Where in those books do they fall?
 - iii. Given what you know about the structure of the Psalter, what does the selection of these Psalms show about the writer's theme?

2:1-4, Warning against Neglect, 2:1-4

1. The Greek word translated "let slip" appears in the LXX in Prov 3:21 and Isa 44:4 ("water courses"). What image does the writer have in mind for the risk that his readers face?
2. What is "the word spoken by angels"? See the Treasury (or Hint a).
3. With what is "the word spoken by angels" contrasted in v. 3?
4. How does this warning grow naturally from 1:1-2a and the contrast presented in 1:5-14?
5. Through what three stages did the new revelation come, according to vv. 3-4?
6. What forms of confirmation did God provide for the new revelation? Can you find examples of each one in the NT?
7. Hints:
 - (a) Deut 33:2; Act 7:53; Gal 3:19

2:5-18, The Son on Earth

1. Use the Treasury (or hint a) to identify the OT citations in this section.
2. Where would you divide the section, and why? Can you give a name to each section?
3. What feature of the first OT quotation attracts the writer's attention?
4. How does v. 9 explain the purpose for which our Lord was made "for a little while, lower than the angels"? (Hint: look for a chiasm.)
5. What point is the writer demonstrating by his citations in vv. 12-13?
6. 2:14-15 are drawing on the OT legislation concerning the legal role of the redeemer.
 - (a) Read over Leviticus 25 to learn about this role.
 - (b) What qualified one person to redeem another?
 - (c) What kind of misfortune does the redeemer address in Lev 25:47-49?

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- (d) Use Strong's numbers to compare the Hebrew word for "revenger" in Num 35:19-27 with vocabulary in Lev 25:25, 26. What kind of misfortune does the redeemer address in Numbers 35?
7. How does the OT law of the redeemer help you understand Heb 2:11-15? In particular:
- (a) What qualification must the redeemer satisfy?
 - (b) What wrongs is he responsible to set right?
8. What other OT institution does the writer introduce to explain our Lord's ministry in 2:17-18?
9. What two characteristics of the High Priest does he highlight?
10. Hints:
- (a) Psalm 8; Psalm 22; Isaiah 8

3:1-4:13, Exhortation & Warning against Unbelief

1. Comparing the verbs in 3:1 and 3:12. How do they mark a break in the passage?
2. With which section do vv. 7-11 go?

3:1-6, Positive Exhortation

1. On which characteristic of our Lord as High Priest (2:17) does this section depend?
2. Can you find where the other characteristic is picked up later in the book?
3. How does the first title the writer gives his readers in 3:1 echo 2:11?
4. How does the second title echo 2:14, and what contrast does it make with that verse?
5. Which verse in ch. 2 does our Lord's title in 3:1 reflect?
6. How does John 20:21 illuminate the application of "apostle" to our Lord?
7. Compare 3:1 with 1 Cor 1:1 and Php 2:25 (use Strong's numbers to find "apostle" in this last verse). What different kinds of apostle are there, and how many of each?
8. How are "apostle" and "high priest" complementary titles?
9. How does the exhortation in these verses correspond to 12:1-2?
10. How does the writer know that Moses was "faithful in all his [God's] house," 3:2? Use the Treasury (or Hint a).
11. Why might the writer think of Moses in discussing our Lord as a priest? Read Ps 96.
12. How do 3:3-6 use the image of the house to contrast Moses and our Lord?
13. Note the condition at the end of v. 6. Use the Treasury (or Hint b) to meditate on other such warnings.
14. Hints
 - (a) Numbers 12

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(b) 3:14; Col 1:23; John 8:31

3:7-4:13, Negative Warning

3:7-11, Quotation of the Word

1. What is the source of this quotation?
2. Read the quotation in its context.
 - (a) What is unusual about the setting of this portion?
 - (b) How might you compare that with the relation of 3:6b to the previous verses?
3. Read through 3:12-4:11 and see how many words and phrases from the quotation the author repeats in the process of explaining his text.

3:12-19, Diagnosis of the Problem

1. What does the writer see as the source of the problem?
2. What OT historical episode is being discussed in the Scripture that the writer is explaining? Read over this episode to understand his diagnosis of the problem.
3. By comparing the language in this paragraph with 3:2, can you see the relevance of this discussion at this point? (He is using closely related Greek words that look quite different in translation—look for common meanings.)
4. Find two imperatives in this paragraph that tell how he expects his readers to guard against this problem.
5. Where in the historical account that underlies this passage is the problem identified as “unbelief”?
6. Study the word “confidence” in 3:14.
 - (a) Use Strong’s numbers to compare this word with the same English word in 3:6.
 - (b) Where else does this word (in 3:14) appear in Hebrews? Again, use Strong’s numbers (or Hint a).
 - (c) Can you suggest an alternative translation for the word in 3:14?
7. It is widely agreed that v. 16, like 17 and 18, should be read as a question: “For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?” Compare these three questions with the words of the quotation, and the answers with the words of the historical account.
8. Hints
 - (a) 1:3 “image,” 11:1 “substance”

4:1-11, Promise of Rest

1. Just as the previous passage developed two imperatives (3:12, 13), this one develops two exhortations in the form of first person statements of desire (“Let us ...”).
 - (a) Find them.

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- (b) How do they set the theme for this section?
2. Look up the notion of Israel's "rest" in the OT using your Bible SW or concordance (or consider the examples in Hint a). To what does it refer?
 3. Psa 95:11 (quoted in Heb 3:11) refers to "my [God's] rest." Look up OT references to God's rest (or consider the examples in Hint b). To what does it refer?
 4. 4:8 says that Joshua did not give the people rest. Which of these two rests does the writer have in mind?
 5. The previous section explained part of the quotation in 3:7-11 from one OT passage. This one draws on another OT passage to explain another part of the passage. What is that OT passage?
 6. Explain the reasoning that leads the writer to the conclusion of v. 9.
 - (a) If you explore Strong's numbers, you'll find that "rest" in v. 9 is a different word than in the rest of this section. We'll talk about its distinctive nuance.
 7. What do you think he means by the "rest" in v. 9 that remains for the people of God?
 8. How does he demonstrate that this rest is still available?
 9. Who is it that has "entered into his rest" in v. 10, and how is that meant to motivate us?
 - (a) Compare the grammatical number (singular vs. plural) of the subject of "entered in" with the references to the people in the surrounding verses.
 - (b) Use Strong's numbers (or Hint c) to see who "enters in" throughout the rest of Hebrews.
 - (c) Into which location does this person enter in these verses?
 - (d) How does that align with your answer to questions 2 and 6? Compare 3:6.
 10. What three stages are there to entering into God's rest, and who enters in at each stage?
 11. From the perspective of exhorting the saints, compare the function of this section with that of the previous.
 12. Hints
 - (a) Deut 12:9, 10; 25:19; Jos 1:15; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1
 - (b) 2Ch 6:41 = Psa 132:8; Psa 132:13; Isa 66:1
 - (c) 6:20; 9:12, 24

4:12-13, Power of the Word

1. Where does the writer get his metaphor for the Word of God? (Compare Num 14:3, 43.)
2. In light of this parallel, what specific Word of God does the writer probably have in mind?

4:14-10:25, The Son and the Priesthood

4:14-16, Opening bracket

1. Compare these verses with 10:19-25. How many parallels can you find?
2. Recall the summary of our Lord's priestly ministry in 2:17. How does this paragraph pick up that summary?
3. What three descriptions of our Lord does v. 14 present, and how do they resume 1:1-4?
 - (a) The title "great high priest" is very unusual—in Hebrew, "great priest" means chief priest, which has its own Greek word, but the combination "great high priest" appears elsewhere only in the book of 1 Maccabees, which records the history of faithful Jews in the face of Greek efforts to turn them to idolatry, in the period between Malachi and Matthew. You might enjoy looking up these two references: what two functions are combined in the person thus described? 1Mac. 13:42; 1Mac. 14:27
4. What two exhortations does he give the readers in the light of these descriptions?
5. How does he motivate each of these exhortations?
6. Meditate on the expression "throne of grace," in comparison with the throne as described in 1:8-9 and 12:2 (and other citations of Ps 110:1).
 - (a) How does this description contrast with those?
 - (b) What makes the difference?
7. Read over 5:1-7:28, looking for repeated words.
 - (a) What words from Psalm 110 occur multiple times?
 - (b) What distinction from the Levitical priesthood do these words emphasize?
7. Look ahead to 8:1-10:25.
 - (a) Do you find these words there?
 - (b) What word is emphasized in those later chapters?
8. How are 5:11-6:20 distinct from the surrounding context?

5:1-10, Similarities between Levitical Priests and Messiah

1. What three qualifications for priesthood does 5:1-10 present?
2. Which priests are being described in 5:1-4?
3. How do they meet these qualifications?
4. What priest is in view in 5:5-10?
5. How does he meet these qualifications?

5:11-6:12, Warning about Stagnation

1. The argument has three steps. Trace the language that outlines it.

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- (a) What do 5:12 and 6:1 have in common? (Hint: “first” in 5:12 is the same word as “principles” in 6:1.)
 - (b) What do 6:1 and 6:6 have in common?
 - (c) What are the major logical connecting words that relate these three parts?
2. First consider the condition of the readers as described in 5:11-14.
- (a) Summarize the writer’s concern about them.
 - (b) Why does this concern interrupt his exposition of Melchizedek?
 - (c) What, apparently, would be the remedy for their problem?
3. Now consider the writer’s plan, in 6:1-3.
- (a) What is paradoxical about the “therefore” in 6:1, given what he has just said in 5:12?
 - (b) What are the foundational teachings of their faith, according to 6:1-2?
 - (c) What is the first such teaching, and how is it grounded in the teaching of our Lord and his apostles?
4. How does the writer justify the paradox of 6:1?
- (a) What five descriptions does he give of the readers’ spiritual condition? The fifth verb (“fall away”) appears only here in the NT, but several times in the LXX, and does not necessarily mean denying the faith.
 - (b) 6:6 speaks of renewing someone to “repentance.” What does this mean, in the light of 6:1 and the apparent need of the readers in 5:12?
 - (c) I will suggest that the two final verbs in 6:6, “crucifying” and “shaming,” modify the effort to renew someone to repentance rather than the falling away. Think about how the effort to repeat the steps of v. 4 could be described in this way.
5. Try to paraphrase the argument of 5:11-6:6 to present a coherent statement that solves the paradox.
6. 6:7-8 describe the “burning” of cropland.
- (a) What is it that is actually burned in such a case? Consider Ex 15:7; Is 5:24; 47:14; Jl 2:5; Ob 18; Nah 1:10; Mal 4:1
 - (b) What agricultural purpose is served by such burning?
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stubble_burning)
 - (c) How is this paragraph parallel to 1 Cor 3:12-15?
 - (d) Rather than taking a sinning believer back to be saved again, what approach does God take, according to these two verses?
7. 6:9-12 provide a second justification for the writer’s decision not to return to basics.
- (a) How does he mark the distinction between these verses and the previous explanation?
 - (b) How does he judge the readers’ maturity in these verses?
 - (c) Compare how he judged it in 5:11.

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- (d) Look for these two lines of evidence in Paul's description of spiritual and carnal believers in 1 Cor 2:15; 3:1-4.
- (e) Explain why Paul decided to keep feeding the Corinthians milk, while the writer to the Hebrews moves ahead with Melchizedek.

6:13-10:18, Differences between Levitical Priests and Messiah

1. Read over these chapters, looking for repeated words. See if you can find some words that occur mainly in 6:13-7:28, and some that are more characteristic of 8:1-10:18.
2. "Promise" and "hope" often occur close together in Hebrews. How are their meanings related?

6:13-7:28, The Order of Priesthood

6:13-20, God's Promise to Abraham

1. How does 6:11-12 serve as a transition to 6:13-20?
2. Trace the history of God's promise to Abraham. When was it first made? What were its elements? Where is the specific instance cited in 6:14? You might find this study helpful: <https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/special/christmas/notes/Christmas11ThePromise.pdf>. Or consult Hint a.
3. What is puzzling about 6:15?
 - (a) Contrast 11:13, 39.
 - (b) How might 7:6 help explain the writer's meaning here?
4. What are the "two immutable things" in v. 18?
5. Hints
 - (a) God's promise to Abraham appears in Genesis 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 22

7:1-28, Melchizedek

1. Read the brief story of Melchizedek in Gen 14:18-20.
2. In Heb 7:1-10, the writer first reviews this history, then shows how it makes Melchizedek superior to Abraham.
 - (a) See if you can trace each statement in 7:1-3 to the history in Genesis.
 - (b) Look up the word "tithes" (Gen 14:20) in your concordance or Bible software. Where does this instance fall in the overall usage of the word in the OT?
 - (c) What might have justified the writer's observation in v. 3? (Keep in mind what is said about Melchizedek elsewhere in the OT.)
 - (d) How many words in 7:1-3 are paralleled in the interpretation in vv. 4-10? Show how they form a chiasm.
 - (e) What is the main point that the writer draws from the interaction of Abraham and Melchizedek, and how does he justify it?

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3. Heb 7:11-19 amplifies 7:10 to show that Melchizedek is superior to Levi.
 - (a) Find two quotations of Ps 110:4 in 7:11-19.
 - (b) What word forms an inclusio around 7:11-19?
 - (c) What evaluation does this word place on the order of Aaron?
 - (d) See if you can extend this inclusio into an ABC-CBA chiasm. What similarities mark the B items? The C items?
 - (e) What two differences between the order of Melchizedek and the order of Aaron does the writer identify in vv. 13-14 and 12 with 15-17?
 - (f) What special meaning does the clause “draw near to God” (v. 19) have in the OT (cf. Ex 19:22; Lev 10:3).
 - (g) How does v. 19 take us back to 6:18-20?
4. Heb 7:20-28 finally shows that our Lord’s priesthood is superior to that of Levi.
 - (a) As in 7:1-10 and 11-19, the section is organized as a chiasm. Can you find the three levels?
 - (b) How does the quotation of Ps 110:4 in this paragraph differ from the quotation we have seen thus far (Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20–7:1; 7:10–11, 15, 17)?
 - (c) How many differences between our Lord’s priesthood and that of the Levitical priests does the writer articulate in this paragraph?
 - (d) How do these differences qualify our Lord for his unique ministry in vv. 25-26?
 - (e) Meditate on each of the descriptions of our Lord in v. 26
 - (f) The word “consecrated” in v. 28 is “perfected,” the same root as in 7:11 and 19, and the word used in the LXX to describe the consecration of the priests by filling their hands. How does this term finish off the chapter?
 - (g) How do the references to a change in the law (7:12, 18) and a better testament (7:23) prepare for the next section of the book?

8:1-10:18 The Covenant

1. Read over these chapters a few times. We have noted that the term “covenant” (Strong 1242, also translated “testament”) characterizes them. Note where it appears in these chapters.
2. What OT passage is in focus in discussing the covenant?
3. Where in Hebrews 8-10 is it quoted?
4. How is the material between these quotations organized?
5. What other word is also concentrated in these chapters?

8:1-13, Introduction to Jeremiah’s New Covenant

1. To what does “such an high priest” in 8:1 refer?
2. Where is he located, and what does that say about the location of his sanctuary?

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3. 8:3 goes back to 5:1, which began the description of similarities common to priests. What does our High Priest need besides a sanctuary?
4. What two arguments do vv. 4 and 5 give for the existence of a heavenly sanctuary?
5. How do vv. 6-7 justify the differences between his ministry and that of the Levites?
6. What passage, quoted in 8:8-12, forms the basis of his argument?
7. The argument about the old and new covenants in 8:7 and 13 superficially resembles that concerning the priestly order in 7:11, and raises the same questions with respect to Gal 3:16-17. As we have discussed, we need to pay close attention to the differences between the cases. How does 8:7 differ from 7:11 and Gal 3:16-17?

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

1. This section is organized as a series of contrasts between the old and the new covenants. See how many of them you can identify.
2. How do they line up with the contrasts the writer identified in 8:1-6?
3. How does the writer bring the theme of the New Covenant to bear on each of these contrasts? (Look for references to “covenant” throughout this section.)

9:1-15, Different Sanctuaries

1. How does the theme of contrast help you divide this passage into two parts?

9:1-10, Under the First Covenant

1. Identify the two paragraphs in the first part, guided by the summary in v. 1.

9:1-5, A Worldly Sanctuary

1. What is the structure of the first sanctuary, according to vv. 2-5?
2. What furniture is in each part of the sanctuary? The altar of burnt incense appears to be missing, but is probably what the author means by “the golden censer.”
3. Compare the description here with Exodus 40. How does the location of the altar of incense appear to differ?
4. Note the difference in language between v. 2 (“in which ...”) and v. 4 (“which had ...”). In what sense might the altar of incense “belong to” the holy of holies, though located outside of it? Compare Rev 8:4.
5. How does this encourage us in our pilgrimage toward God’s rest? Recall 4:16; 10:19.
6. The contents of the ark (9:4) reflect three aspects of God’s dealing with his people. Meditate on these.

9:6-10, Ordinances of Service

1. What characteristic of OT priestly service is in focus in vv. 6-10? Compare 7:27.
2. How does v. 9 further specify the objective of “perfection” beyond what we have seen previously in Hebrews?
3. What is “the time of reformation,” v. 10? (The related verb appears in Isa 62:7 “establish.”)

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9:11-15, Under the New Covenant

1. Note the identifier used for our Lord in 9:11.
 - (a) When was the last time he was called this in Hebrews?
 - (b) How has he been identified since then?
 - (c) How long will it be until the identifier from question (b) returns?
 - (d) Why might the writer have chosen this identifier for this section? Compare Ex 30:30-33.
2. Enumerate the specific contrasts called out in vv. 11-15.
 - (a) What contrasts are there between vv. 11-12 and 6-10?
 - (b) What contrasts are emphasized between vv. 13 and 14?
3. v. 15a says that our Lord's superior sacrifice makes him the mediator of a "new" (fresh, not worn out) covenant. Meditate on this expression, and its relation to 8:6 (where he is called the mediator of a "better" covenant).
4. What is the relevance of our Lord's sacrifice to OT saints, according to v. 15? Compare Rom 3:25.

9:16-10:14, Different Offerings

1. This section presents several contrasts between the Old and New covenants with respect to their offerings.
 - (a) What two kinds of offerings were there, according to Heb 5:1; 8:3; and 9:9?
 - (b) Can you identify separate contrasts in this section that correspond to each of these?

9:16-28, Contrasting Blood Sacrifices

1. What word particularly characterizes vv. 16-22?
2. What part of OT covenant ceremonies illuminates 9:16? Compare Gen 15:9-18; Psa 50:5; Jer 34:18-20.
3. How was this part of the ceremony incorporated in the establishment of the Old Covenant? Consult the passage quoted in 9:20.
4. What is the difference in 9:22 between "purged" and "remission"?
5. Can you find any of the exceptions mentioned in 9:22a, where purging was accomplished without blood?
6. How is the second half of 9:22 related to the Last Supper?
7. What reasons does the writer give in 9:24-27 that Christ's sacrifice is better (v. 23) than the Levitical sacrifices?
8. Note the similarity of 9:25-26 to 9:11-12. Can you find a difference in emphasis between the two?
9. How is the death of the Anointed One different from the deaths of ordinary people (9:27-28)?

Study Questions on Hebrews

10:1-14, Contrasting Gifts

1. What objective of priestly ministry forms an inclusio around this section?
2. What evidence does the writer give in 10:1-4 that the Levitical sacrifices did not take away sin?
3. How can you reconcile 10:1-2 with David's confidence that the Lord had forgiven his sin with Bathsheba (Ps 32:1, 2, 5)?
 - (a) Read Psalm 51, in which he confesses his sin. What role does he see for sacrifice in approaching the Lord?
 - (b) If the OT sacrifices could not bring forgiveness, why did God institute them? Compare 10:3 with Lk 22:19.
4. To what OT holy day does v. 4 refer?
5. What two contrasts to the OT practice are presented in 10:5-10 and 11-14?
6. What OT Scripture is the basis for 10:5-10?
7. This OT text probably expresses David's attitude as he assumes the throne.
 - (a) In 10:5, "a body hast thou prepared" is the reading of the LXX. The Hebrew reads "you have dug out my ears."
 - i. Can you explain how the LXX might be viewed as a paraphrase of the Hebrew?
 - ii. If the writer had quoted the Hebrew, would that change his argument? Compare Isa 50:4-5.
 - iii. How does the LXX's use of "body" rather than "ears" fit the writer's pattern elsewhere in this section?
 - (b) What contrast does David draw in 10:5?
 - (c) How was this contrast inspired by the experience of the previous king? Compare 1 Samuel 13 (cf. 1 Sam 10:8); 1 Samuel 15.
 - (d) What book does David have in mind in 10:7? Compare Deuteronomy 17.
8. What are "the first" and "the second" in 10:9?
9. How is this part of the Psalm a reflection of 1 Sam 15:22?
10. Why in 10:10 does the writer combine the names "Jesus" and "Christ," when he had been using only "Christ" throughout this section? Compare his earlier use of "sanctify" in 2:11.
11. 10:11-14 is the third place in 9:1-10:14 that the writer emphasizes the difference between the repeated Levitical offerings and our Lord's once-for-all offering. The others are in 9:11-12, 25-26.
 - (a) How many specific contrasts can you find between v. 11 and v. 12?
 - (b) How are these aligned with the various contrasts in this section?
 - (c) How is this instance distinct from the previous two?

Study Questions on Hebrews

12. Note the verb tenses in v. 14: “he hath perfected” (perfect tense, a completed action in the past) and “are sanctified” (actually “that are being sanctified,” present participle, an ongoing activity).

- (a) What is unusual about the combination of these two statements?
- (b) Can you think of other NT passages that show the same tension?
- (c) How would you explain how our Lord’s work in us can be complete and yet in process?

10:15-18, Final Quotation from Jeremiah

1. v. 15 describes the Holy Spirit as a witness.
 - (a) To what is he a witness?
 - (b) What form does his witness take?
 - (c) Can you think of other passages in the NT where he is described as a witness? (Bible SW, or Hint a)
2. Notice the form of his argument throughout this section: logical (based on the repeated OT sacrifices) in 10:1-14, followed by a scripture citation in 10:16-17.
 - (a) Compare this with Paul’s approach in 1 Cor 9:8 (cf. 1 Cor 9:1-7, 9) and Rom 3:31 (cf. Rom 3:27-30; 4:1-3).
 - (b) What principle can we learn from this for our own Bible study and teaching?
3. In v. 16, the expression “after that he had said before” anticipates another statement such as, “then he said.” Where can you find this in the text?
4. Jeremiah promises that one result of the New covenant will be that people have God’s law in their heart.
 - (a) Did people in the OT ever have God’s law in their heart? Compare Deut 6:6; 11:18; Ps 40:8; 119:11?
 - (b) How could this happen when the New Covenant was not yet in place?
5. v. 17 promises that God will “remember no more” their sins.
 - (a) Can you find other instances where the Bible talks about God forgetting something?
 - (b) How can an omniscient God not remember something?
 - (c) How does God’s forgetting contrast with 10:3?
 - (d) Read the rest of Jer 31:34, which our writer omits. With what does God’s forgetting contrast there?
6. Hints:
 - (a) Rom 8:16; 1 John 5:6

10:19-25 Closing Bracket

1. This section has many parallels to 4:14-16, which introduced the discussion of our Lord's priestly ministry. How many parallels can you find?
2. What two things do we have in 10:19-21?
3. What three things are we expected to do in 10:22-24?
4. What is the relation between the two possessions of 10:19-20 and the three duties of 10:22-23?

10:19-21, Our Possessions

1. 4:14-16 lists only one possession ("having ..."), but 10:19-25 lists two.
 - (a) Which one is new?
 - (b) What phrases in 4:14-16 does this new possession pick up and amplify?
 - (c) How does the preceding discussion of Christ as our merciful high priest encourage the writer to develop the discussion of our new possession?
2. How many parallels can you find between v. 19 and v. 20?
3. Recall the two offerings of our Lord in 9:16-28 and 10:1-14. How are these reflected here?
4. Who is entering into the holiest in v. 19?
5. What enables us to enter in, and how does it do so?
6. Who enters in v. 20?
7. What enables him to enter in?
8. Study the phrase "way which he hath consecrated" in v. 20.
 - (a) What is a more contemporary translation of "way" (compare Gen 3:24; 48:7; etc.)
 - (b) How is the verb "consecrated" used in the LXX? It appears in Numbers 7:10, 11, 84, 88; Deut 20:5; 1 Ki 8:63; 2 Chr 7:5, 9; Psalm 30 title; Dan 3:2, 3; Ezr 6:16-17; Neh 12:27.
 - (c) Can you think of a modern parallel to the idea of "consecrating" a "way"?
9. How are these two entries related to our second possession in v. 21?
10. Use your Bible software (or hint a) to see what "house of God") refers to.
11. What does it mean for our Lord to be "over the house of God"?
12. How does this phrase shift the emphasis of our Lord's high priesthood, compared with 4:14?
13. Hints:
 - (a) 1 Pet 4:17; 1 Tim 3:15

10:22-25, Our Duties

1. Which of these duties have parallels in 4:14-16?
2. Compare each of the two repeated duties with its parallel in 4:14-16.
 - (a) How are they the same?
 - (b) If there are differences, can you explain these in the light of what we have read in ch. 5-10?
3. Why does the writer introduce a new duty? (Hint: look ahead at the chapters to come.)
4. Can you suggest a correspondence between the three duties and the three things we saw in vv. 19-21 (the two elements of entering in, in vv. 19-20, and the high priest, in v. 21)?
5. What enables us to “draw near” in v. 22?
6. What enables us to “hold fast” in v. 23?
7. How does this enabler differ from that presented in 4:15?
8. What promise might the writer have in mind in v. 23?
9. Use Strong’s numbers (or hint a) to find other passages that use the word “consider” (10:24).
 - (a) What kind of action does this verb describe?
 - (b) How does the use here compare with the only other instance of the word in Hebrews?
10. The word translated “provoke” in 10:24 is actually a noun (“provocation”), and its only uses in the LXX are at Deut 29:28 (“indignation”) and Jer 32:37 (“wrath”). (You could find these with Strong’s numbers in the ABP+ dataset for e-Sword, which includes the LXX.)
 - (a) Do these instances describe what God does to people, or something he feels himself?
 - (b) Compare the use of the verb at Acts 17:16.
 - (c) Based on these examples, who should be “provoke[d] unto love and good works” in Heb 10:24?
11. Use Strong’s numbers (or hint b) to find other instances of the verb translated “exhort.” What kind of exhortation does the writer have particularly in mind?
12. What “day” does the writer have in mind in 10:25?
13. Why should this kind of exhortation be appropriate in view of the approaching day? Compare Acts 14:22; 1 John 2:28.
14. Hints
 - (a) Lk 12:24, 27; Acts 11:6; Heb 3:1
 - (b) 2Co 1:4, 2Co 2:7, 2Co 13:11, Eph 6:22, Col 4:8, 1Th 3:2, 1Th 4:18, 1Th 5:11, 2Th 2:17

10:26-31, Warning against Willful Sin

1. Why is this section a natural sequel to 10:24-25?
2. How does Num 15:27-31 illuminate vv. 26-27?
3. How does the next episode in Numbers (vv. 32-36) illustrate Heb 10:28?
4. Meditate on the three descriptions of willful sin in Heb 10:29. What insight does each of them give into the seriousness of such conduct?
5. What is the source of the quotations in 10:30? Use the Treasury or hint a.
6. By using this quotation, with whom is the writer comparing wayward believers?
7. How does this recall his warning in 3:7-4:13?
8. Hints
 - (a) Deut 32:35-38

10:32-13:19, The Life of the Sons of God

1. Skim over instances of the word “son” in Hebrews, using your Bible software (or hint a). How does the reference of this term differ between the first half of the book and the second half?
2. Read over 10:32-13:19. Can you find three separate words in 10:32-39 that are repeated in 11:1-12:24, but rare after that?
3. Recall how the writer has used warnings previously in the book. What does the position of 12:25-29 suggest about the relation of 10:32-12:24 and 13:1ff?
4. Hints
 - (a) Heb. 1:2, 5, 8; 2:6, 10; 3:6; 4:14; 5:5, 8; 6:6; 7:3, 5, 28; 10:29; 11:21–22, 24; 12:5–8

10:32-12:17, Past Witnesses to Faith

1. Read over 10:32-12:24, looking at instances of “promise,” “faith” or “believe” (both from the same Greek root), and “patience,” “endure,” or “endurance” (all three from the same Greek root).
2. Consider also the distribution of imperative verbs (commands) throughout this section.
3. What organization of the section does the distribution of these features suggest to you?

10:32-39, Summary: Example and Exhortation

1. Compare these eight verses with ch. 11 and ch. 12.
 - (a) Which part of 10:32-39 anticipates ch. 11?
 - (b) Which part anticipates ch. 12?
2. In 10:32-34, who is offered as an example of successfully enduring persecution?

Study Questions on Hebrews

3. In what two ways did they show this endurance?
4. Which of the three key words noted above appear in this section?
5. Consult the OT passages that the writer quotes in 10:35-39 (use the Treasury, your center references, or hint a). How does each of them support the encouragement that this paragraph offers? Note the rendering of the LXX in the hint.
6. How does this second paragraph (10:35-39) explain the source of the endurance that the readers experienced in the first (10:32-34)?
7. Hints
 - (a) Isa 26:20 (LXX: “Go, my people, enter into thy closets, shut thy door, hide thyself for a little season, until the anger of the Lord have passed by”); Hab 2:4

11:1-40, Examples of Faith

1. Read over the chapter.
 - (a) What sets 11:1-3 off from what follows? (What regular grammatical pattern begins with 11:4?)
 - (b) How do 11:4-31 differ from 11:32-40?
 - (c) What expression punctuates this section?
 - (d) How many instances of this expression does he use for each person, and what does this tell you about where he wants you to focus your attention?
 - (e) As you consider each example of faith in 11:4-31, ask yourself three questions.
 - i. What evidence does the writer cite that the individual has faith? (The examples appear to be organized by four distinct kinds of evidence.)
 - ii. How does their faith illustrate the principle of James 2:17-20?
 - iii. How does the Scriptural testimony in each case show the fulfillment of their faith?

1-3, Definition and Introduction

1. What is paradoxical about the relation between faith and the tangible world proposed in 11:1?
2. Who are “the elders” in 11:2?
3. v. 2 says that the elders “received a good report.”
 - (a) How is this verb (μαρτυρέω, G3140) used elsewhere in Hebrews? (Use your Bible software, or Hint a.)
 - (b) Is this report given *to* the elders, or to others *concerning* them?
 - (c) “Witnesses” in 12:1 is a noun from the same root as this verb. How do the elders function as witnesses?
 - (d) In view of these observations, whose faith is in view in 11:1?

Study Questions on Hebrews

4. How does 11:3 give a precedent for the paradox of 11:1?
5. Hints
 - (a) Heb. 3:5; 7:8, 17; 10:15; 11:2, 4-5, 39

4-6, Faith Revealed by God's Response to People

1. The key to this section is 11:6. What two reasons does the writer give for asserting that faith is necessary to please God?
2. How do we know that Abel pleased God, based on the history in Gen 4:3-10?
3. How did his faith conform to James 2:17-20?
4. In view of question 3 under 11:1-3 above, how did Abel "obtain witness that he was righteous"?
5. How do we know that Enoch pleased God, based on Gen 5:21-24?
6. How did his faith conform to James 2?

7-19, Faith Revealed by People's Response to God

1. How do we know that the next two examples (Noah and Abraham) had faith in God?
2. How does this level of faith differ from that ascribed to Abel and Enoch in 11:6?

7, Noah

Diagram the verse, paying attention to these features.

1. What are the main verbs?
2. How are they related to faith? (Note "by faith" at the start of the verse, and "by which," i.e., faith, at the middle.)
3. What emotion showed Noah's faith in the first half of the verse?
4. What two subsequent effects did his faith have?

8-19, Abraham and Sarah

1. This section is much longer than those we have seen so far. Does Gen 15:6 suggest why? (Look for instances of "believe" earlier in Genesis than 15:6.)
2. What key word, introduced at the end of chapter 6, characterizes this section?
3. You might enjoy reviewing an earlier study on The Promise (<https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/special/christmas/notes/Christmas11ThePromise.pdf>) to learn why this word is associated with Abraham and not with other OT examples in this chapter.
4. Read over the section several times, and try to identify its parts. Pay special attention to
 - (a) changes in the subjects of the verbs,
 - (b) the logical conjunctions "for" and "therefore,"
 - (c) the theme of each part, and
 - (d) patterns of repetition of the theme.

Study Questions on Hebrews

5. Consider the first paragraph, about Abraham himself (vv. 8-10).
 - (a) Which feature of the promise from Genesis 12 is in focus here?
 - (b) How do vv. 8-9 emphasize the unfulfilled nature of God's promise to Abraham?
 - (c) When later in Hebrews 11 do we see the fulfillment of this feature of the promise?
 - (d) How might the exposition of Psalm 95 in Hebrews 3-4 help clarify 11:10?
6. Now consider the paragraph about Sarah (vv. 11-12).
 - (a) What feature of the promise is in focus here?
 - (b) Reread the history in Genesis 18 and Genesis 21.
 - i. What was Sarah's initial response to God's promise of a son?
 - ii. How does the writer of Hebrews conclude that her attitude changed?
 - iii. How does this example show the importance of our fellowship together in developing our individual faith?
 - (c) Compare 11:12 with Deut 1:10. To what extent was this aspect of the promise fulfilled within the time period covered by the events of Hebrews 11?
7. Now consider 11:13-16, the third paragraph.
 - (a) How does this paragraph emphasize the "unseen" nature of the theme of the first paragraph (vv. 8-10)?
 - (b) How does Genesis 24 illustrate v. 15?
 - (c) Compare vv. 14-16 with v. 10. How do 12:22 and 13:13-14 further illuminate this feature of the promise?
8. Finally, consider the fourth paragraph, vv. 17-19.
 - (a) How does this paragraph emphasize the contrast between faith and sight regarding the theme of the second paragraph (vv. 11-12)?
 - (b) What basis can you find in Genesis 22 for 11:19?
 - (c) Think of other places where obedience to God appears to require people to abandon promises he has made to them. Here are two that I thought of—maybe you can find others: Gen 46:2-4; Jer 38:17-18. In each case,
 - i. To what previous promise might the person involved want to cling?
 - ii. How does God's instruction appear to go against that promise?
 - iii. How was God's promise fulfilled in the long run?
 - (d) Based on the last question, what tension can arise between loving the Lord's gifts and loving the Lord the Giver?

20-22, Faith Revealed by what People Say to Others

Read over the promise to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3), and each of the episodes mentioned in this section (Gen 27:27-40, 47:29-48:15; 50:24-25).

Study Questions on Hebrews

1. How does Isaac's blessing on Jacob echo Genesis 12?
2. Can you find any echoes of Genesis 12 in Isaac's blessing on Esau? What is the significance of this?
3. How does the blessing to Esau describe "things to come"? (Esau's descendants were the Edomites. What role do they play in later biblical history?)
4. Can you find the origin in Genesis of the last clause of v. 21, "Jacob ... worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff"? (Hint: the word the LXX translates "staff" in Gen 47:31 is translated "bed" in the KJV.)
5. Why would Jacob "worship" over the top of his staff? Compare Gen 32:10.
6. To how many facets of the promise to Abraham does Jacob allude in his last words?
7. What facet of the promise does Joseph have in mind in his last words?

23-31, Faith Revealed by Courageous Separation

1. See if you can match the seven events described here as "by faith" or "through faith" (same Greek expression) with historical events in Exodus and Joshua. (Some of these are easier than others.) What overall pattern of organization does the writer follow?
2. The first three events have parallel structure, marked in each case by a concluding explanation.
 - (a) What do these three explanations have in common?
 - (b) What does the person with faith see in each of the explanations?
 - (c) Can you correlate the first two of these with the first three steps on the ladder?

23-27, Separation of Moses Personally

1. In 11:23, "proper" is an unusual word, from the LXX of Ex 2:2, used elsewhere in the NT only by Stephen in Acts 7:20 ("fair").
 - (a) Use the marginal notes in your Bible (or consult Hint a) to find the literal translation of the adverb "exceeding" in Acts 7:20.
 - (b) If you read this expression literally, what additional insight does it give into the decision of Moses' parents?
2. 11:24-26 use three successive clauses ("refused, choosing, esteeming") to describe Moses' decision. Recall the three choices that God requires of his people in Deut 6:5, and their alignment with the characteristics of the world in 1 John 2:16. Can you align these three clauses with the three choices? You might want to review the frequent repetition of this triple throughout the Bible, documented in <https://www.cyber-chapel.org/DoctrinalStudies/ThreeChoices/ThreeChoices.pdf>.
3. 11:27 requires special attention.
 - (a) Based on your answer to question 1a, why does this probably refer to Ex 2:14-15 rather than the Exodus?

Study Questions on Hebrews

- (b) What problem arises when you compare Moses' attitude as reported here with that in Ex 2:14-15?
- (c) Compare our observations about Sarah's faith in Heb 11:11-12, compared with the account in Gen 18. How might the same principle apply here?

4. Hints:

- (a) "Exceeding" in Acts 7:20 is literally "to God."

28-31, Separation of the Nation

1. Recall what God asks his people to do in each of the next three events (11:28-30). What kind of rejection did God's people face in acting by faith in each case?
2. According to the account in Exodus 12, why did God ask the people to mark the doors of their houses with blood?
3. Review the previous nine plagues in Exodus 7-10.
 - (a) Did God spare the Israelites in any of these?
 - (b) Did they have to do something to mark themselves as distinct from the Egyptians?
 - (c) Were any Egyptians spared in any of these plagues?
4. Based on the previous question,
 - (a) Did God need the blood marking to know which houses were Israelite?
 - (b) Can you think of any other reasons he might have required the marking?
 - (c) What might the marking have to do with Ex 12:38?
5. Based on Exodus 13-14, why might the Israelites (and the Egyptians) have questioned the Lord's instructions to move toward the Red Sea?
6. Heb 11:29 says that the Israelites cross the Red Sea by faith.
 - (a) What is surprising about this conclusion, in the light of Exod 14:10-12?
 - (b) How is their faith in this case similar to Sarah's faith in Heb 11:11, or Moses' lack of fear in Heb 11:27?
7. Read Num 21:21-35, which occurred before Israel crossed the Jordan and attacked Jericho. Why did it take faith for them to attack Jericho the way they did (Heb 11:30)?
8. Can you suggest why God directed them to do what they did? Study the word "trumpet" in the Bible, using Strong's numbers (or see hints).
 - (a) What different Hebrew words are used? (Hint a)
 - (b) In what setting is each to be used? (Hint b)
 - (c) What is the signification of the use of the ram's horn trumpets at Jericho?
9. How does 11:31 demonstrate faith that accepts rejection?
10. How do the last four events (11:28-31) justify the faith of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph?

Study Questions on Hebrews

11. Hints:

- (a) *Shofar*, H7782, the trumpet of ram's horn, and *chatsotsrah*, H2689, a metal trumpet
- (b) The metal trumpet is specified in Numbers 10. The ram's horn is used in Lev 25:9.

32-38, Generalization

1. How does the list in v. 32 extend the time horizon covered by vv. 4-31?
2. The names in v. 32 form three groups, according to the Greek conjunctions used, though the KJV just joins them at the same level. These are a) Gideon, Barak, and Samson, b) Jephthah, David, and Samuel, and c) the prophets. You can find the first four in the book of Judges. Acquaint yourself with each of these groups. What do the members of each group have in common? (This may become clearer after you work through the next question.)
3. Read over verses 33-38 a few times.
 - (a) Can you suggest a division into two parts, based on the results of faith that they describe?
 - (b) Which verse forms a transition between the two parts?
 - (c) Each of the two parts has three sections.
 - i. This division is clearest in vv. 33-34. Note how the grammatical complexity of the descriptions increases from the first three statements to the next three, and then to the third three.
 - ii. In 36-38, see if you can find three groupings, based on a shift in what each group endures.
 - iii. The three groups in 33-34 reflect three different domains of success. Can you match these three domains with
 - A. the three groups in 36-38?
 - B. the three groups of characters in v. 32?
4. How many of the events described in 11:33-38 can you match up with OT events? (Some of these events are not in the OT; they are drawn from other Jewish literature with which the writer and his readers would be familiar. I'll explain these in the exposition.)
 - (a) How does the history of Zechariah in 2 Chr 24 illustrate 11:37?
 - (b) Recall our Lord's words in Matt 23:35. According to him, what institution was often responsible for the deprivations suffered in Hebrews 11?
 - (c) How does Jeremiah 26 illustrate both 11:34b and 37d?
 - (d) Review 1 Samuel 23-24 to see who may be in view in 11:38.

39-40, Chapter Summary

1. How do these two verses recall the opening in 11:1-3?

Study Questions on Hebrews

2. What examples are there in the earlier part of ch. 11 of faithful saints who “received not the promise”?
3. This is the last instance of “the promise” (singular) in Hebrews. (The last instance of “promises” was 11:33.) What is “the promise,” as opposed to “the promises”? (Look up the two terms in Hebrews, or see hints a and b, and cf. <https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/special/christmas/notes/Christmas11ThePromise.pdf>.)
4. 11:13, 39 present an interesting contrast with 6:15. When faced with an apparent contradiction in Scripture, pay special attention to differences among the alternatives.
 - (a) Using Strong’s numbers, compare the verbs in these three verses. Are they the same?
 - (b) Compare the subjects of the verbs, and the objects.
 - (c) The same verb and object as 11:39 occurs in 10:36, where the writer goes on (10:37) to quote Isa 26:20. What event does 11:39 anticipate?
 - (d) What event did 6:15 describe? (Recall our discussion at https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/hebrews/notes/Heb_4bthru7.pdf.)
 - (e) Based on all you have observed (and the answer to question 3), to what does 11:13 refer?
5. Use your Bible software or concordance (or hint c) to learn more about the “better thing” that God has planned for us (v. 40).
6. Given what you have learned about “receiv[ing] the promise” (11:39), how does the last clause in v. 40 (“that they without us should not be made perfect”) summarize Peter’s teaching in Acts 3:19 (where “when” should be translated “in order that”), 2 Pet 3:9, and 2 Pet 3:12 (where “hasting unto” should be translated “hastening”)?
7. Meditate on what it means in Hebrews to “be made perfect,” using your concordance or hint d. How does your understanding of 11:39-40 enhance your understanding of those references?
8. Hints
 - (a) Promise singular in Hebrews: Heb. 4:1; 6:15, 17; 9:15; 10:36; 11:9, 39
 - (b) Promise plural in Hebrews: Heb. 6:12; 7:6; 8:6; 11:13, 17, 33
 - (c) “Better” in Hebrews: Heb. 1:4; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24
 - (d) Verses about “perfection” in Hebrews: Heb. 2:10; 5:9, 14–6:1; 7:11, 19, 28; 9:9, 11; 10:1, 14; 11:22, 40; 12:2, 23

12:1-17, Encouragement to Patience

1. Read the chapter over several times, paying careful attention to the commands and exhortations it contains.
 - (a) Note where they are concentrated in the chapter.
 - (b) How are the exhortations in 12:1-3 similar to those in 12:12-15 and 12:25?

Study Questions on Hebrews

- (c) How are they different? (Think about where our attention is directed in each case.)
- (d) What two words or word-families mark the internal coherence of 12:1-15? (Hint: “patience” and “endure, endurance” are the same Greek root.)

12:1-11, Consider the Lord Jesus

1. Who are the “witnesses” in 12:1a? (The word is cognate to “report” and “testimony” in 11:1-5, 39).
2. Based on how these words are used in ch. 11, are the witnesses watching us, or are we watching them?
3. With what is the Christian life compared in 12:1b-2?
4. Use the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge (or Hint a) to find other instances of this metaphor in the NT.
 - (a) What elements of the metaphor are used to illustrate the Christian life?
 - (b) To what do they correspond in the Christian life?
 - (c) Compare and contrast the “weights” and the “sins.”
5. The description of our Lord in 12:2 echoes those in 2:9-10 and 5:8-9.
 - (a) Use Strong’s numbers (or Hint b) to find the word here rendered “author.” The word “finisher” is related to “made perfect” in 2:10, as well as “perfect” in 5:9 and 11:40.
 - (b) Note that the word “our” in 12:2 is in italics, indicating that it is added by the translators, and recall how “faith” is used throughout ch. 11.
 - i. How is our Lord’s life of faith distinct from that of the saints in ch. 11?
 - ii. How does 12:2b exemplify what it means for him to be the “author and finisher of faith”?
6. What is the “joy that was set before” the Lord Jesus (v. 2)? Consider Isa 53:10, 11; Ps 16:2-3 (and keep in mind the translation offered in https://www.cyber-chapel.org/sermons/psalms/notes/Ps_3thru14.pdf).
7. What is the relation between this “joy” and the last clause of 12:2, in terms of the metaphor of the race?
8. How does the writer broaden our attention in moving from 12:3 to 12:5?
9. What OT passage is he quoting in 12:5-6? (Use the Treasury, or Hint c.)
10. What might justify this shift of attention? (Compare 5:7-9)
11. See if you can line up 12:7, 12:8, and 12:9-10 with specific words or phrases in 12:5-6.
12. What two kinds of fathers are contrasted in v. 9?
13. What is our relation to each of these?
14. 12:10 explains (“for”) this contrast more specifically by presenting two characteristics of the chastening from a father of flesh, and two for the chastening of the Father of spirits.

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Meditate on these four characteristics. Can you associate each of the two in v. 10a with one of the two in 10b?

15. What is the “fruit of righteousness” in 12:11? Use the Treasury, or Hint d. Compare the use of “of” in this expression with that in Rom 4:11 “sign of circumcision” or 1 Sam 15:23 “sin of witchcraft.”

16. How does v. 11 reinforce the last clause in v. 10?

17. Hints

(a) 1 Cor 9:24-27; Php 2:16; 3:13-14; Ac 20:24. Ga 2:2; 5:7; 2 Ti 2:5; 4:7, 8

(b) “Author” is ἀρχηγός G747, translated “captain” in 2:10.

(c) Prov 3:11-12

(d) Hos. 10:12; James 3:18; Php. 1:11; Eph 5:9

12:12-17, Consider One Another

1. Examine the inner structure of these verses.

(a) The three imperatives of 12:12-14 introduce the section (recall 12:3). How would you group them? (Note instances of the word “lest.”)

(b) Note the instances of the explanatory word “for” in this section (12:17, 18, 20). Can you identify the portion of text for which each introduces an explanation?

12-13, Exhortations to Strengthen One Another

1. Use the Treasury (or Hint a) to identify the passages that the writer quotes here.

2. How does the first passage show the relevance of this section on life with one another in the church?

3. Read the context in OT source of the first passage.

(a) Why were people’s hands hanging down and knees feeble?

(b) How does this fit the context in which the writer cites the verse here?

(c) What in the OT passage emphasizes the responsibility of saints to care for one another?

4. How do v. 12 and v. 13 present complementary approaches to helping people deal with suffering? Can you imagine an example that illustrates their interaction?

5. What is the motive for these two commands?

6. Hints

(a) Isa 35:3, 4; Prov 4:26

14-17, Exhortations to Live in Peace

1. How are vv. 14-17 relevant to life in the church?

2. Note the word translated “looking diligently” in v. 15.

(a) Use Strong’s numbers (or Hint a) to see where this word is used elsewhere in the NT.

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- (b) What group in particular is the writer exhorting in these verses?
3. Compare and contrast the motives that the writer gives for carrying out the instructions in 14 and 15a. How are they related? Can you trace a progression among them?
4. The “root of bitterness” in 12:15 comes from the LXX of Deut 29:18, where the repeated instances of “lest” may inspire the structure of our section. Read over Deut 29:18-20 and see if you can align it with the three warnings in Heb 12:15-17.
 - (a) Are these warnings independent, or do they build on one another? (Is the writer thinking of multiple cases, or of different characteristics of a single case?)
 - (b) What makes such cases urgent in the assembly?
 - (c) How does Deuteronomy 29 help you understand the inaccessibility of forgiveness in 12:17?
5. Hints
 - (a) 1 Pet 5:2 “taking the oversight”

12:18-29, Warning against Refusing

1. I originally treated 12:18-24 as an explanation supporting vv. 12-17, but there is a repetition between vv. 18-24 and 25-29 that suggests they should go together. Can you find it?

12:18-24, A Choice of Two Mountains

1. Compare this section with Gal 4:22-27.
 - (a) How were the situations of the readers in the two cases similar?
 - (b) How were they distinct?
2. The verbs “ye are come” in 12:18 and 22 are in the perfect tense, indicating something that has already occurred. In addition, this Greek verb (προσέρχομαι, G4334) is regularly used in Hebrews to describe our approach to one particular destination (cf. 4:16; 7:25; 10:22; 11:6).
 - (a) How would you characterize this common destination that previous uses of the verb have in mind?
 - (b) How is this verb appropriate for the two destinations in view in 12:18 and 22?
3. In view of this observation, what do the two mountains represent for the readers?
 - (a) What passage does the writer mainly have in mind in vv. 18-21? Use the Treasury (or Hint a).
 - (b) What order of life for his people was God instituting in that passage?
 - (c) What institution in the readers’ context was the heir of that tradition?
 - (d) What contrasting institution does the author describe in vv. 22-24?
4. Consider further the details of Mount Sinai.

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- (a) What was the attitude of the people toward the revelation of God on Mount Sinai?
 - (b) When did Moses say that he was afraid?
 - (c) When did he tremble? (cf. Acts 7)
5. Meditate further on the details of Mount Zion.
- (a) First, consider the title “Mount Zion.”
 - i. How does this title reflect the promises of the prophets concerning the Messianic age? Compare Isa 2:3; Jer 31:6-8; 50:4-5; Zech 8:20-22.
 - ii. What features in these promises have already been fulfilled, according to earlier chapters in Hebrews? Compare Heb 2:9; 6:5; ch. 8-10.
 - (b) The next title is “the heavenly Jerusalem.”
 - i. What does the adjective emphasize? Compare Gal 4:25-26; Rev 21:2, 10.
 - ii. What is our relation to the heavenly Jerusalem, according to Php 3:20?
 - (c) The third element can be read: “an innumerable company: the general assembly of angels and the church of the firstborn.”
 - i. What do the angels have to do with the church? Meditate on Matt 18:10 ; 1Cor. 11:10; Eph. 3:10; 1Pet. 1:12; Heb 1:13, 14. Can you find any others?
 - ii. Use the Treasury or Hint b to explore what it means for the church to be “written in heaven.”
 - (d) What is the relation between “the church of the firstborn” and “the spirits of just men made perfect.”
 - i. What does “written in heaven” suggest about the current condition of “the church of the firstborn”?
 - ii. Where are “the spirits of just men” now?
 - iii. Why does the writer mention “God the judge of all” between these two groups?
 - iv. Compare the reference to the spirits of just men with 12:1. What do these verses suggest about the awareness of departed saints concerning our activities here?
 - (e) What “blood of sprinkling” (v. 24) does the writer have in mind? Compare 10:19-22.
 - (f) What did Abel’s blood say (Gen 4:10)?
 - (g) What does the blood of our Lord say?
 - (h) How does the reference to Abel mark a fitting conclusion to ch. 11-12?
6. What choice facing the readers do these two descriptions summarize?
7. Hints
- (a) Exodus 19; cf. also Deut 9:19
 - (b) Luk 10:20, Php 4:3, Rev 13:8, Rev 20:15

12:25-29, Consequences of Refusing

1. Though we gather at Zion and not Sinai, we still deal with the same “God the judge of all.” How many parallels can you find between the warning of 12:25-29 and the description of Sinai (both in Heb 12:18-21 and in Exodus 19)?
2. When did Israel “refuse him that speaketh” (12:25)?
3. Study the word “speak” λαλέω G2980 in Hebrews, using your Bible software (or hint a for some examples).
 - (a) How has God spoken to us?
 - (b) What are we refusing if we follow Israel’s example?
4. Israel did not escape when they refused God’s revelation.
 - (a) In what sense did they not escape when God spoke at Sinai?
 - (b) What other example have we already studied, in ch. 3, when Israel refused God’s revelation?
5. How does the warning that we shall not escape echo the first warning of Hebrews, in ch. 2?
6. Where do we learn that God’s voice at Sinai “shook the earth” (v. 26)?
7. Use your center references, the Treasury, or hint b to find where God promises to shake the heaven as well.
8. “Yet once more” 12:27 implies that the prophet is speaking of the final shaking, which cannot then be repeated. What does this imply about the kingdom God has prepared for us?
9. How does our attitude toward God in 12:28 recall the events of Sinai?
10. How does v. 29 once more recall the God of Sinai?
11. Hints:
 - (a) Heb. 1:1–2; 2:2–3; 5:5; 12:24
 - (b) Hag 2:6

13:1-25, Present Examples of Faith

1. Read over this chapter a few times, looking for repeated phrases or expressions. What category of people does the writer repeatedly call to our attention?
2. The expression (in vv. 7, 17, 24) is a participle. The verb (G2233) also appears in 10:29 “counted,” 11:11 “judged,” 11:26 “esteeming.” What does this suggest about the activities and responsibilities of this group?
3. Who are some examples of people described with this participle in the NT? Consider Matt 2:6; Lk 22:26; Acts 7:10; 15:22.
4. Elsewhere in the NT (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet 5:1-3), prominent men in the assembly are responsible for three functions: providing mature experience, feeding the flock with

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teaching, and overseeing the affairs of the church. Can you find these functions in the people mentioned in this chapter?

1-8, Examples of Godly Living

1. Compare this list of exhortations with other lists, such as the ten commandments (Exod 20:1-17) or the three great requirements of the Shema (Deut 6:5; cf. 1 John 2:16). While they do not line up exactly, the exercise shows us the consistency in God's expectations of his people.
2. Meditate on each of the examples of godliness to which we are exhorted in this section.
 - (a) What kind of brotherhood did Stephen (Acts 7:2) and Paul (Acts 13:26; 22:1; 23:1; 28:17) have in mind when addressing unsaved Jewish groups?
 - (b) What is the justification for using this term among believers (Matt 23:8-9)
 - (c) What OT examples does the writer have in mind in v. 2? Use the Treasury (or Hint a)
 - (d) Use the Treasury (or Hint b) to find the basis for the exhortation in v. 3, and some examples of it in the NT.
 - (e) How does 1 Cor 12:26 help explain v. 3?
 - (f) Against what error does the first part of v. 4 warn? Compare 1 Cor 7:1-2; 1 Tim 4:1-3
 - (g) What is the difference between "whoremongers" and "adulterers"? Use the Strong numbers to see how these words are used elsewhere.
 - (h) How does the exhortation of v. 4 correlate with the reference to God in 12:23?
 - (i) How does it support the insight of 1 Cor 7:2?
 - (j) Meditate on the exhortation against covetousness (13:5).
 - i. Use your Bible software (or hint c) to see what the NT says about it.
 - ii. How many of these references relate it to other sins?
 - iii. What special role does Paul assign it in Romans 7?
 - iv. How do these associations reflect its place in the Ten Commandments?
 - v. Why do you think the writer places it last here?
 - vi. How is this exhortation related to the two explanations in 5b-6?
3. Now consider the examples that motivate these exhortations.
 - (a) 13:7 offers two commands, each with an associated description of the people in question. What two categories of virtue do they exhibit, and how do these complement each other?
 - (b) How is v. 8 connected logically with what precedes it?
4. Hints
 - (a) Gen 18; Judg 13
 - (b) Mat 25:36; Php 1:7, 13, 14, 16; 4:14-19; Col 4:18; Phm 1:10; Heb 10:34; 2Ti 1:16-18

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- (c) Mark 7:22; Luke 12:15; 16:14; Acts 20:33; Rom. 1:29; 7:7; 13:9; 1 Cor. 5:10–11; 6:10; 12:31; 14:39; 2 Cor. 9:5; Eph. 5:3, 5; Col. 3:5; 1 Th. 2:5; 1 Tim. 3:3; 6:10; 2 Tim. 3:2; Heb. 13:5; 2 Pet. 2:3, 14

9-17, Examples of Church Order

1. In what ways were people in the first century sometimes distracted with teachings about “meats” (food)? Consult the Treasury (or Hint a).
2. To what does the altar of 13:10 refer? Compare v. 12, and something else that “we have” in 8:1, 2.
3. How does one “eat” of that altar? John 6:40, 54
4. 13:11 describes the disposition of OT sacrifices that have two characteristics.
 - (a) What are these two characteristics?
 - (b) Read over the law of the sin offering in Lev 6:24-30. Which ones could the priests eat, and which ones could they not eat?
 - (c) Read over the description of the sin offering in Lev 4:1-5:13.
 - i. What different types are there?
 - ii. How do they differ in the disposition of their blood?
 - iii. How do they differ in the disposition of the body of the animal?
5. To which type of sin offering does the writer compare the Lord Jesus, and why?
6. How does this observation support the claim of 13:10b that “they ... which serve the tabernacle ... have no right to eat” of our altar?
7. What conclusion does the writer draw in 13:13 about the decision facing the believers in Rome?
8. What should their relation to the earthly Jerusalem be (13:14)?
9. What makes up the worship that believers should offer to the Lord, according to 13:15-16? (You might enjoy comparing these sacrifices with the discussion of OT sacrifices in Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Service*. This classic is available for free download in e-Sword and I suspect other free Bible SW programs as well.)
10. The expression “the sacrifice of praise to God continually” alludes to two OT expressions.
 - (a) “praise” G133 appears only here in the NT, but the LXX uses it as well in Lev 7:12, 13, and 15. (You can find this if you install the ABP+ version in e-Sword, which has Strong’s numbers for the LXX as well as the NT. ABP is the Apostolic Bible Polyglot, www.apostolicbible.com.)
 - i. What kind of sacrifice is in view in this section (Lev 7:11-21)?
 - ii. What are the three subtypes of this sacrifice (cf. Lev 7:12, 16).
 - iii. What distinguishes this particular subtype of the sacrifice from the others?

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- iv. Compare this sacrifice with our discussion of Heb 12:28. How does that verse anticipate the instruction of Heb 13:15?
- (b) “continually” is a Greek expression used by the LXX translators to describe one ongoing sacrifice in the tabernacle, described in Ex 29:38-42 and elsewhere². How does our “continual ... sacrifice of praise” differ from the OT sacrifices that inspire it?
11. How does the OT anticipate the idea that speech can be a sacrifice? Compare Ps 69:30-31; Hos 14:1-2.
- (a) Recall that the writer has already cited Psalm 69 in 13:13, and that Psalm 69 is the Psalm most often quoted in the NT to describe our Lord’s suffering.
- (b) How does Ps 69:30-31 recall 1 Sam 15:22?
12. The Lord uses an expression closely related to “do good” in Mark 14:7. What kind of activity does this sacrifice envision?
13. “Communicate” is actually a noun, G2842 often translated “fellowship” elsewhere. Use your Bible SW (or Hint b) to review the use of this word throughout the NT. What nuances of meaning does it suggest?
14. The verb “be well pleased” G2100 appears only three times in the NT, all in Hebrews, and all of God (the other two are in 11:5, 6). What do these verses teach us about how to offer sacrifices that please God?
15. If the believers are no longer under the synagogue, how are they to be organized, according to 13:17?
- (a) What responsibility do the leaders have?
- (b) What responsibility do the people have?
- (c) How are these respective responsibilities reflected in 1 Pet 5:3-5, and 1 Thes 5:12-14? In each of these passages identify the exhortations intended for the leaders, and those intended for the people.
- (d) The verb “watch” literally means, “to stay awake.”
- i. Consider the other three places where this verb appears in the NT (Mk 13:33; Lk 21:36; Eph 6:18). What other activity does it always accompany?
- ii. How does our Lord’s example encourage us in this exhortation? Lk 6:12; Matt 14:23.
- (e) To which of the three names used elsewhere for church leaders (elder, pastor-teachers, overseers) does the description here most closely correspond?
16. Hints:
- (a) Rom 14:2-3, 17; 1 Cor 8:8; Col 2:16-22; 1 Tim 4:3
- (b) Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3, 6-7; Rom. 15:26; 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:16; 2 Cor. 6:14; 8:4; 9:13; 13:14; Gal. 2:9; Phil. 1:5; 2:1; 3:10; Philem. 1:6

18-25, Examples of Fellowship

18-19, Request for Prayer

1. How does the initial request in 13:18 balance the statement in 13:17 that the leaders “watch for your souls”?
2. What is the logical connection between the request “pray for us” and the rest of v. 18?
3. Why should the writer’s good conscience encourage their prayer? Compare Ps 66:18.
4. What is the specific content of the prayer he wants them to pray?

20-21, Benediction

20, The God who is Able to Answer Prayer

1. What is the logical connection between 13:18-19 and 13:20-21?
2. In 13:20, why would the writer choose to emphasize peace as a characteristic of God, rather than some other characteristic (compare Rom 15:5, 13; Acts 7:2; 2 Cor 13:11)?
3. The use of the expression “brought again from the dead” to describe the resurrection is unparalleled; the usual verb is “raised up” G1453 (as in 11:19). However, the verb used in v. 20, “bring up” (G321) with the preposition “from” is used about 60 times in the LXX to describe the Exodus (cf. Lev 11:45). In the light of his previous exhortations earlier in the book, why might the writer want to draw a parallel between the resurrection and the Exodus? (Recall Heb 3, 4.)
4. How does the description of the Lord Jesus as the “great shepherd” reinforce the examples presented in this chapter?
5. Compare the title “great shepherd” with “good shepherd” (John 10:7) and “chief shepherd” (1 Pet 5:4).
 - (a) What aspect of our Lord’s life and work does each title emphasize, according to its context?
 - (b) C.I. Scofield suggested that these three titles might align with Psalms 22-24. Can you suggest which title goes with which Psalm?
6. How does “the blood of the everlasting covenant” (13:20) tie this benediction to the previous discussion?
7. What does that blood have to do with the resurrection?

21 The Prayer

1. The verb “make you perfect” in 13:21 does not belong to the family of words translated “perfect, perfection” throughout the book, but is a different word (G2675) that appears in 10:5 (“prepared”). How do that reference and its context enhance your understanding of the author’s prayer in 13:21?
2. What tool does God use to make his people “perfect . . . unto every good work”? See 2 Tim 3:16-17 (where the last phrase, though plural in the KJV, is singular in Greek, as it is in Heb 13:21).

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3. The writer uses the word family that includes “wellpleasing” more often than any other NT book (11:5–6; 12:28; 13:16, 21). How do these other references enhance your understanding of this prayer?
4. According to the end of 13:21, what is the source of our perfection, and what is its final objective?

22-25, Closing Greetings

1. The writer calls his epistle a “word of exhortation.” Can you summarize the objective of his exhortation?
2. How does the request “suffer” reflect the nature of the relation between church leaders and the people?
3. What spiritual lessons can you draw from the reference to Timothy in 13:23?
4. Compare and contrast the relation between leaders and flock in 13:24 with that we have seen in 13:7, 17. How does the focus here reflect the theme of this third section of ch. 13?
5. Where else in the NT do we find the expression “Grace be with you”? Use your Bible software (or Hint a).
6. Consider the writer’s use of the word “grace” (χάρις G5485) throughout the book (Bible SW or Hint b). Based on these earlier references, what does he expect grace to produce in their lives?
7. Hints:
 - (a) Look at the ends of Paul’s epistles.
 - (b) Heb. 2:9; 4:16; 10:29; 12:15, 28; 13:9, 25

Final Summary

1. Review the five warning passages that we have studied (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:20; 10:26-31; 12:18-29).
 - (a) Each of them warns against a different possible sin into which people might fall. Can you identify the sin in each one?
 - (b) We have suggested that each warning separates two sections that are parallel in the overall organization of the book.
 - i. Try to identify the two sections in each case.
 - ii. Can you find a relation between the theme of each warning and the topics of the two sections that it joins?
2. Hebrews is characterized by its extensive citation of the OT. Each warning and each section makes one or more explicit citations of the OT, often accompanied with detailed discussion.
 - (a) How many references can you identify?

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- (b) In each section, can you find one passage to which the writer gives particular attention?
 - (c) What principles can you gather from how the writer uses Scripture to guide his thought?
3. Can you summarize the message of the book of Hebrews in a single sentence?