

Preacher Short Course, February 26-28, 2024
Woodmont Hills Church of Christ, Nashville, Tennessee
Hebrews: The Textual-Theological Argument of the Sermon
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The Structure of Hebrews¹

I. The Sonship of Jesus: God's Spoken Word (1:1-4:13)

Didactic Thesis: God has spoken to us through (the) Son (1:1-4).

- A. The Person of the Son (1:5-2:18).
 - 1. The Father speaks to/about the Son *compared* with the angels (1:5-2:4).
 - a. Exposition: The Son is a royal heir; the angels are servants (1:5-18).
 - b. Exhortation: Listen to the Son (2:1).
 - c. Warning: The Son's word is weightier than the word through angels (2:2-4).
 - 2. Exposition: The Son, sharing our humanity, speaks to the Father (2:5-18).
 - a. The Son was made lower than the angels: we see Jesus (2:5-9).
 - b. The Son speaks to the Father in the presence of other sons (2:10-13).
 - c. The Son shares flesh and blood with Abraham's descendants (2:14-18).
- B. The Prophetic Function of the Son (3:1-4:13).
 - 1. Exposition: Jesus, our apostle and high priest, and Moses are *compared* (3:1-6).
 - 2. Warning: The Spirit says, "Hear his voice" (3:7-19).
 - 3. Exhortation: Let us enter the promised rest (4:1-11).

Conclusion: The Living Word of God (4:12-13).

II. The Priesthood of Jesus: Our High Priest (4:14-10:18).

Hortatory Thesis: Jesus, the Son of God, is our Heavenly High Priest (4:14-16).

- A. The Priestly Office (5:1-7:28).
 - 1. Exposition: There are human qualifications for priesthood (5:1-10).
 - 2. Warning: Believers are expected to mature (5:11-6:12).
 - 3. Exhortation: We have this hope (6:13-20).
 - 4. Exposition: The Levitical and Melchizedekian orders are *compared* (7:1-28).
- B. Exposition: The Priestly Function (8:1-10:18).
 - 1. Jesus renews covenant between Israel and God (8:1-13).
 - 2. The blood (death) of Jesus inaugurates a new covenant (9:1-22).
 - 3. The priestly offering of the Levites and Jesus are *compared* (9:23-10:18).

¹ George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis* (Leiden: Brill, 1994) sees an interplay between exposition and exhortation punctuated by opening/closing transition statements (1:1-4; 4:14-16; and 10:19-25). See also Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012); Cynthia Long Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship Between Form and Meaning*, Library of New Testament Studies 297 (London: Bloomsbury, 2006); and James W. Thompson, *Preaching Hebrews and 1 Peter*, Proclamation: Preaching the New Testament (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022).

III. Faithful Participation: Our Response to God's Gift through Jesus (10:19-12:29)

Hortatory Thesis: We enter the holy sanctuary through Jesus (10:19-25).

- A. Follow the Faithful (10:26-12:2).
 - 1. Warning: God's people are called to persevere in faith (10:26-39).
 - 2. Exposition: God's people have modeled faithful perseverance (10:32-11:40).
 - 3. Exhortation: Let us lay aside whatever hinders us and run the race (12:1-2).
- B. Endure the Hardship (12:3-17).
 - 1. Exposition: God disciplines the children (12:3-13).
 - 2. Warning: Don't be like Esau (12:14-17).
- C. Participate in the Eschatological (Heavenly) Reality (12:18-29).
 - 1. Exposition: We have come to Mount Zion (12:18-24).
 - 2. Exhortation: Let us give thanks and serve as priests (12:25-29).

IV. Epistolary Epilogue (13:1-25).

- A. Serving as Priests in the Community of Faith (13:1-6).
- B. Application of the Sermon's Point (13:7-17).
 - 1. We have an altar (13:7-12)
 - 2. Exhortation: Let us draw near and offer sacrifices (13:13-17)
- C. Concluding Epistolary Notes (13:18-25).

The movement of the sermon is illustrated and anticipated by Hebrews 3:1.²

<i>Hebrews 3:1</i>	<i>The Structure of Hebrews</i>
Jesus as Apostle (Sent Messenger)	Listen to the Son's Speech (1:1-4:13)
Jesus as Heavenly High Priest	Embrace Jesus as Our High Priest (4:14-10:18)
Partners in the Heavenly Calling	Live as Participants in the Drama (10:19-12:29)

² The chart is adapted from Cynthia Long Westfall, "A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews," available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhsuwwtXwSk> at the forty-three-minute mark.

This chart illustrates the cyclical nature of the exhortations in Hebrews. Three basic exhortations recycle through sermon.³

Let's Hold On (Don't Give Up)	Let's Go Forward (Keep Moving)	Let's Draw Near (Priestly Service)
2:1 It is necessary for us to pay attention to the things we hear 4:14 Let's hold on to our confession 10:23 Let's hold on to the confession of our hope	4:1 Let's be afraid that one of you may fall short of the rest 4:11 Let's make every effort to enter the rest 6:1 Let's press on to maturity 10:25 Let's consider how to stimulate each other to love and good works 12:1 Let's run the race	4:16 Let's draw near to the throne of grace 10:22 Let's go into the Holy of Holies 12:28 Let's have grace and let's worship/serve God as priests 13:12 Let's go to Jesus outside of the camp

Some structure the sermon based on *synkrsis*, particularly the comparative “better” or “superior” (κρείττων) or “more” (πλείονα).⁴ I see this as a more thematic than structural. The argument is that someone and something is “better” but that is not the rhetorical structure of the sermon.

The texts are: better than angels, 1:4; more honor than Moses, 3:3; better gifts than the present, 6:9; better bless inferiors, 7:7; better hope, 7:19; better covenant, 7:22 and 8:6; better promises, 8:6; better sacrifices, 9:23; better possessions, 10:34; more acceptable sacrifice, 11:4; better country, 11:16; better resurrection, 11:35; provided something better to perfect us, 11:40; better blood than Abel, 12:24.

It is not “better” in contrast to bad, but better in contrast to good. It is temporal vs. eternal (but not material vs. spiritual). The movement from good to better assumes continuity. All good gifts within history anticipated the present gifts at end of the ages (“last days”). This better or more excellent gift is eschatological.

³ The chart is adapted from Cynthia Long Westfall, “A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews,” available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhsuwwtXwSk> at the thirty-nine-minute mark.

⁴ This cyclical move throughout Hebrews is called “amplification.” Cf. James W. Thompson, “The New is Better: A Neglected Aspect of the Hermeneutics of Hebrews,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (July 2011) 547-561 and Thomas H. Olbricht, “Hebrews as Amplification,” in *Rhetoric and the New Testament: Essays from the 1992 Heidelberg Conference* (ed. Stanley E. Porter and Thomas Olbricht; JSNTSup; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 375-389.

First Session: Hebrews 1:1-4:13

I. The Sonship of Jesus: God's Spoken Word (1:1-4:13).

Didactic Thesis: God has spoken to us through (the) Son (1:1-4).

A. The Person of the Son (1:5-2:18).

1. The Father speaks to/about the Son *compared* with the angels (1:5-2:4).
 - a. Exposition: The Son is a royal heir; the angels are servants (1:5-1:18).
 - b. Exhortation: Listen to the Son (2:1).
 - c. Warning: The Son's word is weightier than the word through angels (2:2-4).
2. Exposition: The Son, sharing our humanity, speaks to the Father (2:5-18).
 - a. The Son was made lower than the angels: we see Jesus (2:5-9).
 - b. The Son speaks to the Father in the presence of other sons (2:10-13)
 - c. The Son shares flesh and blood with Abraham's descendants (2:14-18).

B. The Prophetic Function of the Son (3:1-4:13).

1. Exposition: Jesus, our apostle and high priest, and Moses are *compared* (3:1-6).
2. Warning: The Spirit says, "Hear his voice" (3:7-19).
3. Exhortation: Let us enter the promised rest (4:1-11).

Conclusion: The Living Word of God (4:12-13).

The Thesis (1:1-4)

God has spoken through the prophets and has, in these last days, spoken through the Son.

Topic	Past	Present	Relation
Speech	<i>God has spoken</i>	<i>God has spoken</i>	<i>Continuity</i>
Era	In the past	In these last days	Difference
Recipients	To our ancestors	To us	Difference
Agents	Through the prophets	Through one who is son	Difference
Manner	In various ways	Embodied presence	Difference
Times	In various times	At a particular time	Difference
Content	<i>Redemption and Perseverance</i>	<i>Redemption and Perseverance</i>	<i>Continuity</i>

It is not that the God has spoken in the past and no longer speaks through prophets and in various ways. Rather, God has now *also* spoken through a son (there is no article before son, though it is clear the preacher is describing a particular and unique son). There is no "but" in the Greek text of 1:1-4, which the NRSV, ESV, and NIV provide at the beginning of verse 2. A conjunction is perhaps needed (though none appear in KJV, CVS, NET), but it should be something like "and now" (NLT, or "and also"). It is a difference between prophets and son but

not a difference in the fact that God has truly spoken and must be heard (and continue to be heard), whether through the prophets or son.

The content/meaning of the speech is not necessarily different, but the means or mode of speaking is. God *still* speaks through the prophets (quoted in Hebrews), and what the prophets spoke, this son *also* speaks. It is the voice of God, the word of God through both the prophets and this son. The message (the good news) is the same (Hebrews 4:2, 6). The prophetic message and the son's does not stand in contrast but in typological *continuity, fulfillment, and/or eschatological meaning*. The preacher uses the Hebrew Bible to expound, and ground the role of this son. The Hebrew Bible, the product of the prophets, speaks about this son.

Identity as Son ("the Son" in 1:8 and 4:14)

Divine Mode of Existence	Human Mode of Existence
<i>appointed heir of all things</i>	
<i>through whom God created the worlds</i>	
<i>the radiance of God's glory</i>	
<i>the exact imprint of God's very being</i>	
<i>sustains all things by his powerful word</i>	
	<i>having made purification for sins</i>
	<i>sat down at the right hand of [God]</i>
	<i>having become superior to the angels</i>
<i>the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs</i>	

This person participates in both divine and human realities. The description applies to the exalted son, the one who "sat down" at the right hand of God. But some of the characteristics are also appropriate to the son as an eternal person while others are only true in terms of his exaltation as high priest. The point is the preacher describes a son who now sits at the right hand of God, and that one was *both* the agent of creation from the beginning and was made human for the sake of purification. He was appointed heir and seated as heir at the right hand of God. In sitting down, he becomes all that God intended from the beginning. The preacher's description of this son begins and ends with his status as heir, which was the intent from the beginning because the creation, according to Paul in Colossians 1:16, was made "through him and for him." As son, he inherits all things.

The Argument of 1:5-4:11

Theologically,

God speaks through/to the Son just as God has spoken through the law mediated by angels.

The Son's speech is weightier than the Torah because of his dignity and work.

[Warning: Don't drift away.]

The incarnate and exalted Son speaks to God in solidarity with humanity.

The Son became Jesus so that the Son might mediate for humanity and stand with them.

Therefore, the Son is more worthy of glory than Moses.

The Spirit speaks to the community of Jesus-followers through Psalm 95.

The present community shares the wilderness with Israel and hears the good news.

[Warning: Hear God’s voice in the wilderness.]

Exhortations (4:1, 11): let us make every effort to enter the promised rest.

The preacher’s exposition of his Bible explores this path in 1:1-2:4.

the Father speaks to/about the Son compared with the angels (1:5-14)

Because . . . “You are my son, today I have begotten you” (Ps 2:7 in Heb 1:5)

“and again, I will be a father to him and he shall be a son to me (2 Sam 7:14 in Heb 1:5)

“and again . . . let all the angels [sons] of God worship him (Deut 32:43 [LXX] in Heb 1:6)

“who makes his angels winds and his ministers a flame of fire” (Ps 104:4 in Heb 1:7)

“but to the Son, Your throne, O God, is forever . . . (Ps 45:6-7 in Heb 1:8-9)

“and You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundations . . . (Ps 102:25-27 in Heb 1:10-12)

“but not to angels, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies” (Ps 110:1 in Heb 1:13)

[Warning! The Son’s message is weightier than angels (Heb 2:1-4)]

<i>Category</i> ⁵	<i>Theological Point</i>	<i>Hebrews</i>	<i>Hebrew Bible</i>
Name	Named “Son”	1:5	Ps 2:7; 2 Sam 7:14
Dignity	Angels worship the Son	1:6	Ps 97:7 [Dt 32:43, JMH]
Nature	The Son is eternal	1:7-9	Ps 45:6-7
Nature	The Son is unchanging	1:10-12	Ps 102:25-27
Function	The Son reigns; angels serve	1:13-14	Ps 110:1

The flow of the argument in 1:1-2:4

God has spoken through a Son whose name is more excellent than angels.

Because (γὰρ) God has recognized the royal inheritance of this divine Son.

Therefore (διὰ τοῦτο), pay attention to what you have heard.

Because (γὰρ) the Son’s word is weightier than what angels delivered.

The preacher’s exposition of his Bible explores this path in 2:5-18.

And the Son, sharing our humanity, speaks to the Father (2:5-18)

“What is man, that you remember him? . . . (Ps 8:4-6 in Heb. 2:6-8)

“I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters” (Ps 22:22 in Heb. 2:12)

“I will put my trust in him” (Is 8:17 in Heb. 2:13)

“Behold, I and the children whom God has given me” (Is 8:18 in Heb 2:13).

The flow of the argument in 2:5-2:18

For (γὰρ) God did not subject the coming world to angels but humans, quoting Psalm 8.

And now (νῦν δὲ) chaos reigns, *but* (δὲ) we see Jesus made lower than the angels.

Because (γὰρ) the appointed heir became human to lead “sons” into glory.

Therefore (οὖν), it was necessary for this son to become human.

Therefore (ὅθεν), this son became a high priest for us.

⁵ This chart is from William Lane, *Hebrews: Call to Commitment* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1985) 35.

The preacher's exposition of his Bible explores this path in 3:1-4:13.

[My] "servant" [Moses] was faithful in all [God's] house" (Num 12:7 in Heb 3:2)

Liberator Moses	Liberator Jesus
Faithful Servant (ὡς θεράπων)	Faithful Son (ὡς υἱὸς), the Messiah
In (ἐν) the house	Over (ἐπὶ) the house
Glory (of face to face with God)	Worthy of more glory (radiance of God)
Israel as God's House	Divine Builder of God's House

And the Spirit, through living word of God, speaks to the community (3:1-4:13)

"Today if you hear his voice . . ." (Ps 95:7-11 in Heb 3:7-10).

"Today if you hear his voice . . ." (Ps 95:7-8 in Heb 3:15)

"As I swore in my wrath, they shall not enter my rest" (Ps 95:11 in Heb 4:3)

"And God rested on the seventh day from all his works" (Gen 2:2 in Heb 4:4)

"They shall not enter my rest" (Ps 95:11 in Heb 4:5)

"Today if you hear his voice . . ." (Ps 95:7-8 in Heb 4:7).

The flow of the argument in 3:1-4:11

Therefore (ὁθεν), consider Jesus, apostle and high priest, who was faithful to his calling.

Therefore (διό), hear the voice of God in your wilderness journey.

Pay attention, brothers and sisters, and exhort each other daily.

Because (γὰρ) there is a danger of rebellion through unbelief.

Therefore (οὖν), let us, through faith, enter God's rest.

The Conclusion of Hebrews 1:1-4:11 in Hebrews 4:12-13

God's speech (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ; what the Triune God says to us) is . . .

Living (Ζῶν; present participle), and, therefore, . . . (three adjectives follow)

1. *Active* (or effective, working),
2. *Sharp*, like a sword dividing what cannot be divided.
3. *Judge* of the inner thoughts and intentions of the heart.

[Nothing is hidden within the creation from God's sight to whom we must give account (give our ὁ λόγος)].

What "speech" or "word" (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ) is this?

Is it the λόγος of John 1:1-2, 14? Do we identify it with the Son, the Incarnate One?

Is it the written text of his Bible so often quoted in Hebrews 1-4?

Is it the spoken word (λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως in Hebrews 13:22)?

[Particularly, perhaps it is *this exhortation* (sermon) rooted in God's speech.]

Theologically, all the above?⁶

⁶ Jonathan I. Griffiths, *Hebrews and Divine Speech*, Library of New Testament Studies, 507 (New York: T&T Clark, 2014), especially chapter 4. The text of Hebrews as a sermon "communicates that divine word and effects an encounter between his hearers and the God who speaks" (p. 2).

“The Preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God” (2nd Helvetic Confession, 1566).

The Word of God comes in three-fold form (Karl Barth):

- the incarnate God (revelatory acts of God),
- the written witness (Scripture) to God’s revelatory act,
- and the preaching (proclamation) of God’s revelatory act in Scripture.⁷

⁷ *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of the Word of God, Volume I, Part 1*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (New York: T&T Clark, 2004) 111-121.

Second Session: Hebrews 4:14-10:18
John Mark Hicks

II. The Priesthood of Jesus: Our High Priest (4:14-10:18).

Hortatory Thesis: Jesus, the Son of God, is our Heavenly High Priest (4:14-16).

- A. The Priestly Office (5:1-7:28).
1. Exposition: There are human qualifications for priesthood (5:1-10).
 2. Warning: Believers are expected to mature (5:11-6:12).
 3. Exhortation: We have this hope (6:13-20).
 4. Exposition: The orders of the Levites and Melchizedek are *compared* (7:1-28).
- B. Exposition: The Priestly Function (8:1-10:18).
1. Jesus renews covenant between Israel and God (8:1-13).
 2. The blood (death) of Jesus inaugurates a new covenant (9:1-22).
 3. The priestly offering of the Levites and Jesus are *compared* (9:23-10:18).

The Hortatory Theses (4:14-16 and 10:19-23)⁸

<i>Hebrews 4:14-16</i>	<i>Hebrews 10:19-23</i>
Therefore, having a great high priest	Therefore, having . . . a great priest
Who passed through the heavens	Through the curtain
Jesus, the Son of God	By the blood of Jesus
Let us hold fast to the confession	Let us hold fast the confession
Let us draw near . . . with boldness	Let us draw near with a true heart

The First Hortatory Thesis (4:14-16)

Since we have a great high priest, Jesus, the Son of God, who passed through the heavens,
therefore, let us hold fast to our confession.

Because we have an empathetic and flawlessly tested high priest,
therefore, let us draw near to the throne of grace with boldness,
so that we may receive mercy and find grace in time of need.

This thesis is unpacked in 5:1-10, 7:1-10:18.

How can Jesus serve as high priest?

What does it mean to “pass through the heavens?”

What is our confession?

How does the humanity of Jesus shape his priesthood?

What does it mean to “draw near”?

Why are we able to approach God’s throne with boldness?

⁸ This chart comes from Thompson, *Preaching Hebrews and 1 Peter*, 15.

The Argument of 5:1-10:18

A Called, Heavenly, and Eternal Human High Priest (5:1-10, 7:1-28)

5:1-10 and 7:1-28 answer the question: **how can Jesus be a priest and what kind?**

Exposition:

“You are my son, today I have begotten you” (Ps 2:7 in Heb 5:5)

“You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4 in Heb 5:6)

“You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4 in Heb 7:17)

“The Lord has sworn . . . ‘You are a priest forever” (Ps 110: 4 in Heb 7:21)

A priest is a human being called on behalf of other human beings (5:1, 4)

The Messiah, as the incarnate Son, is called by the Father (5:5-6):

Quoting Psalm 2:7—today I have begotten you.

Quoting Psalm 110:4—a priest forever like Melchizedek

Jesus, as Messiah, was made priest because of his obedience (5:7-10)

“In the days of his flesh,” Jesus prayed to the Father.

“Although he was a Son,” he was perfected through obedient suffering.

“Having been designated by God” a Melchizedekian high priest,

“he became the source of eternal salvation for all.”

An eternal Melchizedekian priest is the means of eternal salvation: perfection (7:1-28).

The Melchizedekian order is greater than the Levitical order (7:1-10, cf. v. 7).

The genealogy of Melchizedek is different than that of the Levites.

Eternal perfection comes through the power of indestructible life (7:11-19).

“You are priest forever,” quoting Psalm 110:4

The Messiah is priest through death and resurrection, not genealogy.

The resurrected life of incarnate Son guarantees a better covenant (7:20-25).

“The Lord has sworn,” quoting Psalm 110:4.

This priest remains forever and can save completely,

because “he always lives to make intercession for” us.

Our eternal heavenly high priest offered himself for us (7:26-28)

as the Messianic Son who has been perfected forever through resurrection.

*Digression: Warning and Exhortation (5:11-6:20)***Immaturity and Maturity (5:11-14)**

First Principles of Word	Word of Righteousness
Infants	Mature
Milk	Solid Food
Untaught	Teachers
Unskilled	Skilled
Untrained	Discernment

Moving from Basics to Perfection (6:1-3)

Comprehensively,			
	repentance from dead works	καὶ (and)	faith toward God
Specifically,			
(asyndeton)	teachings about baptisms	τε	laying on of hands
τε	resurrection from the dead	καὶ (and)	eternal judgment

This structure is shaped the use of the conjunction καὶ (and): repentance from dead works καὶ faith toward God, teachings about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection from the dead, καὶ eternal judgment. Repentance and faith are comprehensive descriptions of conversion, but the preacher particularizes those teachings that are important for the experience of conversion: baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection, and judgment. More specifically, baptism and laying on of hands are joined together by the particle τε (usually untranslated but functions as a conjunction) and resurrection and judgment are also joined together by an additional use of τε.

This movement is not a movement beyond Judaism but within the Christian Faith. It moves from immature believer in Christ to a matured believer in Christ (from milk to meat). To understand that movement in its full and profound depth one must understand the theological point that lies behind the declaration of Psalm 110:4 about Melchizedek.

The Preacher offers a dire warning but with hopeful encouragement (6:4-12)

The Warning (6:4-8)

Once one has
 been enlightened,
 tasted the heavenly gift,
 shared in the Holy Spirit,
 tasted the goodness of the word of God,
 tasted the powers of age to come,
 it is impossible, having fallen away, to restore that one because they
 are crucifying the Son of God again and
 holding the Son of God up to contempt.

Blessed or burned? An agricultural metaphor.

Hopeful Encouragement (6:9-12)

The preacher expects blessing rather than burning in this community.

God recognizes their work and love in their service to the saints.

Encouraged to continue in that diligence to realize full assurance in imitation of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Because God has sworn an oath, trust the promise like Abraham did (6:13-20).

Exposition: "I will surely bless you and I will surely multiply you" (Gen 22:17 in 6:14).

God's unchangeable purposes ground God's sworn promises.

God's oath gives our steadfast anchor its weight during the storms of faith.

This anchor is a Melchizedekian heavenly high priest who is our forerunner (6:20).

God Renews Covenant with Israel through the Offering of the Heavenly High Priest (8:1-10:18)

Offering: 8:1-10:18 answers the question: **what did/does Jesus do as a priest?**

Exposition:

"See, that you make all things according to the Pattern . . . (Ex 25:40 in Heb. 8:5).

"Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, . . . (Jer 31:31-34 in Heb 8:8-12).

"This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you" (Ex 24:8 in Heb 9:20).

"Sacrifice and offering you have not desired, but a body . . . (Ps 40:6-8 in Heb 10:5-9).

"This is the covenant that I will make with them. . ." (Jer 31:34 in Heb 10:16-17).

The heavenly sanctuary grounds the earthly sanctuary (8:1-6).

The heavenly tent is the original and "true" sanctuary.

The heavenly priesthood of Jesus is more excellent than the earthly one.

This heavenly minister yields a better covenant with better promises.

The death (blood) of Jesus inaugurates the (re)new(ed) and better covenant (8:7-9:19).

Jeremiah 31 anticipates a new, better covenant: a renewal of Israel.

The new covenant renews covenant with Israel due to the heavenly offering.

The earthly tabernacle and its offerings are insufficient but yet a type.

The Messiah entered the heavenly sanctuary with his own blood.

That is the "blood of the (new) covenant," the slaughtered life.

Jesus, the high priest, offers himself in the heavenly sanctuary (9:20-10:18).

Jesus offers a better sacrifice, his own blood (embodied life).

That blood is offered in the heavenly sanctuary, not upon the earth.

The Messiah, who is the embodied Son, came to do the will of God.

After this offering, the Messiah sat down at God's right hand.

The Messiah awaits the perfecting of his siblings through the new covenant.

The assumed narrative of Jesus, the Son of God, who is the Messianic royal priest:

Incarnation when the Son became a fully embodied human (Jesus)

Ministry when the Lord spoke, and eyewitnesses heard and saw him

Death when slaughtered on the cross

Resurrection when his body was raised in eternal life.

Ascension when the resurrected Messiah passed through the heavens.

Offering the blood (sacrifice) in the heavenly sanctuary (Holy of Holies).

Exaltation/Enthronement to the Right Hand of God as royal priest.

Present Intercession as royal priest to maintain the covenant relationship.

Second Appearance for our full (eternal) salvation.

Third Session: Hebrews 10:19-12:29
John Mark Hicks

III. Faithful Participation: Our Response to God's Gift through Jesus (10:19-12:29)

Hortatory Thesis: Let us enter the holy sanctuary through Jesus (10:19-25).

- A. Follow the Faithful (10:26-12:2).
 - 1. Warning: God's people are called to persevere in faith (10:26-31).
 - 2. Exposition: God's people have modeled faithful perseverance (10:32-11:40).
 - 3. Exhortation: Let us lay aside whatever hinders us and run the race (12:1-2).

- B. Endure the Hardship (12:4-17).
 - 1. Exposition: God disciplines the children (12:3-13).
 - 2. Warning: Don't be like Esau (12:14-17).

- C. Participate in the Eschatological (Heavenly) Reality (12:18-29).
 - 1. Exposition: We have come to Mount Zion (12:18-24).
 - 2. Exhortation: Therefore, let us give thanks and serve as priests (12:25-29).

Hortatory Thesis (10:19-25)

Since we have access to the heavenly sanctuary (19-21)—the ground of assembling, let us draw near to God in faith (22)—entering God's presence, let us hold fast to our profession of hope (23)—eschatological assurance, let us care for one another in love (24)—mutual encouragement, continuing to meet together (25)—perseverance, as the Day of the Lord approaches (25)—anticipation.

The normal word for gathering is *synagogen* (συναγωγὴν) and is used in early Christianity to describe the Christian assembly (cf. Jam 2:2; Ignatius, *Trallians*, 3 and *Polycarp* 4:2). But the term here is *episynagoge* (ἐπισυναγωγὴν)—the combination of *epi* (upon, at a place) and *synagogen* (assembly, synagogue) is important.⁹ First, *epi* denotes a specific location—a gathering in a particular place. To whomever this sermon is addressed, they probably gathered in homes in the city (like Rom 16:5, 23). These gatherings would not have been very large—perhaps 40 to 60 in a wealthy Roman home. Second, the noun and verb forms of *episynagoge* are used to describe “the eschatological ingathering of Israel” (cf. 2 Mac 2:7; 2 Thess 2:1; Matt 27:37; 24:31; Mark 13:27; Luke 13:34). Since the “Day of the Lord” is mentioned and the preacher has already declared that believers participate in the age to come (Heb 6:5), he “understood their gathering to anticipate the final ingathering of God's people. The assembly is the earthly counterpart to the heavenly ‘congregation’ (*ekklesia*) of God's people” (Heb 12:23; cf. 2:12).” Third, the term carries the “social connotations” of “continuity with Israel's heritage.”

⁹ Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews* (New York: Doubleday, 2001) 446.

They are the newly gathered eschatological community that enters the heavenly sanctuary through the blood of Jesus—they are renewed Israel.

The gathering in the *synagogen* (συναγωγὴν) is a participation in the eschatological assembly of the people of God. We have (1) confidence to enter the heavenly sanctuary by the blood/flesh of Jesus and (2) a great high priest over the house of God. Consequently, let us enter God's presence like the high priest on Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16. Theologically we enter as a community of faith, hope, and love. This is the faith that perseveres, the hope that expects an inheritance, and love that encourages each other.

"Draw near" is important language in Hebrews (4:16; 7:25; 10:1, 22; 11:6; 12:18, 22). It is liturgical language, that is, to enter God's presence as if entering the sanctuary or sacred space to serve God as priests. As a priestly nation, all Israel "drew near and stood before the Lord" (Lev. 9:5), then Aaron "drew near to the altar" (Lev 9:7, 8) as representative of all. Priests are those who "draw near" (Lev 21:17, 21, 23; Heb 10:1). To draw near is to enter eschatological space, the heavenly sanctuary, to serve as God's priests because the path has been cleared by our trailblazer or champion through the offering of his own life (blood).

The Argument of 10:26-12:29

The righteous persevere in faith, which trusts in God's promises (10:26-12:2)

Exposition:

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay" (Deut 32:35 in Heb 10:30)

"The Lord will judge his people" (Deut 32:36 in Heb 10:30).

"For yet in a very little while, he who is coming will come" (Hab 2:3-4 in Heb 10:37-38).

"In Isaac your descendants shall be called" (Gen 21:12 in Heb 11:18).

Don't reject the living God's proffer of new covenant blood and the grace of the Spirit.

The righteous live by faith, especially in times of crises, quoting Hab 2:3-4.

Follow the example of believers who persevered through trials (Heb 11).

They confidently trusted the reality of their hope.

They drew near to God through faith.

We belong to their company because they will not be made perfect apart from us.

Surrounded by these witnesses, we look to Jesus who persevered and was exalted (Heb 12:1-2).

The righteous endure hardship and bear fruit in their perseverance (12:3-17).

Exposition:

"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord" (Prov 3:11-12 in Heb 12:5-6).

Consider Jesus who endured hostility, including martyrdom.

Endure trials for the sake of discipline (training, instruction).

This is part of the father-child relationship.

This training is brief but for our own good.

It yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Warning: pursue communal peace and holiness to inherit the blessing (unlike Esau).

Participate in the eschatological reality both now and in the future (12:18-29).

Exposition

“If even a beast touches the mountain, it will be stoned” (Ex 19:12-13 in Heb 12:20).

“I am full of fear” (Deut 9:19 in Heb 12:21).

“Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also. . .” (Hag 2:6 in Heb 12:26).

“God is a consuming fire” (Deut 4:24 in Heb 12:29).

There are two mountains.

Mt. Sinai is characterized by distance and fear. You have not come (draw near) to this.

But (ἀλλὰ)

Mt. Zion is characterized by presence and joy. You have come to (draw near) this:

To Mount Zion

To the city of the living God

To the heavenly Jerusalem, *and*

To innumerable angels in festive gathering (assembly), *and*

To the assembly (ἐκκλησία) of the firstborn ones (pl) enrolled in heaven, *and*

To God the judge of all, *and*

To the spirits of the righteous made perfect, *and*

To Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, *and*

To the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than Abel.

An eschatological shaking of creation yet remains but the kingdom is unshakable.

We are presently receiving this unshakeable kingdom *now* though still *not yet*.

Therefore, “let us give thanks, by which we offer (λατρεύωμεν) to God an acceptable worship (εὐαρέστως) to God with reverence and awe.” This is a priestly service (see the use of “offer” or “serve” in Heb 8:5; 9:9, 14; 10:2; 13:10).

“Because our God is a consuming fire” (cf. 10:27, 31).

IV. Epistolary Epilogue (13:1-25).

A. Serving as Priests in the Community of Faith (13:1-6).

Exposition:

“I will never leave you, nor will I ever forsake you” (Deut 31:6-8 in Heb 13:5).

“The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid . . .” (Ps 118:8 in Heb 13:6).

Mutual love

Hospitality

Caring for the Imprisoned

Sexual Ethics

Contentment

Assurance from Deuteronomy 31:6-8 and Psalm 118:8.

B. Application of the Sermon’s Point (13:7-17).

1. We have an altar (13:7-12)

2. Exhortation: Let us draw near and offer sacrifices (13:13-17)

C. Concluding Epistolary Notes (13:18-25).

1. Pray for us

2. Blessing

a. God of peace

b. Resurrection of the great shepherd, Jesus

c. Whose blood secured an eternal covenant.

d. Restore you fully in service to God’s will.

e. God works among us through Jesus.

f. To whom be glory forever and ever.

3. Greetings

Possible Six-Week Preaching Strategies

Given my understanding the structure of the sermon, I think the theses are significant theological summaries, and they are the focal point of exhortations based on exposition. There are, of course, different ways to configure a brief series with different emphases depending on the context of the congregation. I offer four examples below among many possibilities.

The Theological Work of Hebrews

- Lesson One: God has Spoken (Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:1-4)
- Lesson Two: We see Jesus (Hebrews 2:5-13)
- Lesson Three: Jesus, the Son of God, is our High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16).
- Lesson Four: We have an Eternal Priest who Brings Eternal Redemption (Hebrews 7:20-25)
- Lesson Five: Let us Enter the Heavenly Sanctuary (Hebrews 9:22-28; 10:19-25).
- Lesson Six: Let us Persevere in Faith (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Addressing a Discouraged People

- Lesson One: God has Spoken with Assurance (Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:1-4)
- Lesson Two: Jesus Understands Our Trials (Hebrews 2:5-18, 4:14-16)
- Lesson Three: We, too, are Living in a Wilderness Hebrews 3:7-4:13)
- Lesson Four: Following Jesus into the Heavenly Sanctuary (Hebrews 9:22-28; 10:19-25)
- Lesson Five: Heroes, Hardship, and the Journey (Hebrews 11:1-12:17)
- Lesson Six: Boldness in the Journey (Hebrews 12:18-29).

Encouraging Community

- Lesson One: God has spoken through Jesus (Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:1-4)
- Lesson Two: God shares community with us through Jesus (Hebrews 2:5-18)
- Lesson Three: Encourage each other in the wilderness (Hebrews 3:7-4:16)
- Lesson Four: Let us go on to perfection (Hebrews 5:11-6:12)
- Lesson Five: Encourage each other through assembling together (Hebrews 10:19-25)
- Lesson Six: Together we come to Mt. Zion (Hebrews 12:18-29)

Why We Assemble: On Going to Church or On Assembling Together

- Lesson One: God has spoken by the Son (Hebrews 1:1-4)
- Lesson Two: The Son assembles with us and leads our praise (Hebrews 2:10-13)
- Lesson Three: We encourage each other to hear God's voice (Hebrews 3:12-18)
- Lesson Four: We draw near to the throne of grace with boldness (Hebrews 4:14-16)
- Lesson Five: We assemble in the divine sanctuary (Hebrews 10:19-25)
- Lesson Six: We commune with the saints in God's presence (Hebrews 12:18-24)

Hebrews in the Lectionary Readings

Year A

Christmas Day/Eve	Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12)
First Sunday After Christmas	Hebrews 2:10-18
Monday of Holy Week	Hebrews 9:11-15
Wednesday of Holy Week	Hebrews 12:1-3
Good Friday	Hebrews 10:16-26 or 4:14-16 and 5:7-9

Year B

Christmas Day/Eve	Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12)
First Sunday After Christmas	Hebrews 2:10-18
Monday of Holy Week	Hebrews 9:11-15
Wednesday of Holy Week	Hebrews 12:1-3
Good Friday	Hebrews 10:16-26 or 4:14-16 and 5:7-9
27 th Proper	Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12
28 th Proper	Hebrews 4:12-16
29 th Proper	Hebrews 5:1-10
30 th Proper	Hebrews 7:23-28
31 st Proper	Hebrews 9:11-14
32 nd Proper	Hebrews 9:24-28
33 rd Proper	Hebrews 10:11-14 (15-18), 19-25

Year C

Christmas Day/Eve	Hebrews 1:1-4 (5-12)
First Sunday After Christmas	Hebrews 2:10-18
Monday of Holy Week	Hebrews 9:11-15
Wednesday of Holy Week	Hebrews 12:1-3
Good Friday	Hebrews 10:16-26 or 4:14-16 and 5:7-9
19 th Proper	Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16
20 th Proper	Hebrews 11:29-12:2

Three Possible Teaching Schedules

John Mark Hicks, Woodmont Hills Church of Christ, Spring 2024.

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------------|--|
| 1. Jan 3 – | Introduction | On Reading Hebrews |
| 2. Jan 10 – | Hebrews 1:1-4 | God Has Spoken |
| 3. Jan 17 – | Hebrews 1:5-2:4 | The Son's Word is Authoritative |
| 4. Jan 24 – | Hebrews 2:5-18 | But We See Jesus |
| 5. Jan 31 – | Hebrews 3:1-6 | Jesus is Faithful Over God's House |
| 6. Feb 7 – | Hebrews 3:7-19 | Recognizing Our Wildness Moment |
| 7. Feb 14 – | Hebrews 4:1-13 | Let us Enter the Rest |
| 8. Feb 21 – | Hebrews 4:14-5:10 | We Have a Great High Priest |
| 9. Feb 28 – | Hebrews 5:11-6:3 | You Should be Teachers by Now |
| 10. Mar 6 – | Hebrews 6:4-20 | Let Us Go to Perfection |
| 11. Mar 13 – | Hebrews 7:1-10 | Melchizedek—the Priest-King |
| 12. Mar 20 – | Hebrews 7:11-28 | A Priest Forever in the Order of Melchizedek |
| 13. Mar 27 – | Hebrews 8:1-13 | A New Covenant |
| 14. Apr 3 – | Hebrews 9:1-10 | First Covenant Regulations |
| 15. Apr 10 – | Hebrews 9:11-28 | A New Covenant Sacrifice |
| 16. Apr 17 – | Hebrews 10:1-18 | A New Covenant Confirmed |
| 17. Apr 24 – | Hebrews 10:19-25 | Let us Enter the Heavenly Sanctuary |
| 18. May 1 – | Hebrews 10:26-39 | Persevere in Faith |
| 19. May 8 – | Hebrews 11:1-22 | Faithful Heroes 1 |
| 20. May 15 – | Hebrews 11:23-40 | Faithful Heroes 2 |
| 21. May 22 – | Hebrews 12:1-17 | Let us Run the Race Despite the Hardship |
| 22. May 29 – | Hebrews 12:18-29 | Let us Go to Church |
| 23. June 5 – | Hebrews 13:1-6 | Care for Each Other |
| 24. June 12 – | Hebrews 13:7-17 | We Have an Altar; Let us Offer Sacrifices |
| 25. June 19 – | Hebrews 13:18-25 | A Benediction and Greetings |
| 26. June 26 – | Conclusion | How is this Sermon for Us? |

James Thompson, Curriculum for Sunset Ridge Church of Christ, 2014.

1. A Sermon for Our Time (Introduction to Hebrews)
2. Opening Words (1:1-4)
3. Pay Attention to What You Have Heard (1:5-2:4)
4. The Pioneer who Goes Before Us (2:5-18)
5. Lessons from the Past (3:1-19)
6. Listening to God's Word (4:1-13)
7. Our Great High Priest (4:14-5:10)
8. Moving on to Perfection (5:11-6:12)
9. The Certainty of the Promise (6:13-7:28)
10. Why Go to Church? (8:1-10:25)
11. Heroes of the Faith (10:26-11:40)
12. A Heavenly Worship Service (12:1-29)
13. Going Outside the Camp (13:1-25)

Rubel Shelly and John York, Hebrews Sermon Series (Woodmont, Fall of 2002).¹⁰

1. Introducing Hebrews
2. God Must Really Love Us (Hebrews 1:1-4)
3. Fascinated by Angels (Hebrews 1:5-2:18)
4. In Awe of Moses (Hebrews 3:1-19)
5. Awed by Joshua (Hebrews 4:1-13)
6. Our Compassionate High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-5:10)
7. We are At Risk! (Hebrews 5:11-6:20)
8. Jesus: Eternal High Priest of the Melchizedekian Order (Hebrews 7:1-28)
9. Looking to Jesus: A Better Covenant (Hebrews 8:1-13)
10. Looking to Jesus: Ministry in the Heavenly Tabernacle (Hebrews 9:1-10)
11. Looking to Jesus: The Perfect Sacrifice, Part I (Hebrews 9:11-28)
12. Looking to Jesus: The Perfect Sacrifice, Part II (Hebrews 10:1-18)
13. So? (Hebrews 10:19-39)
14. Take Heart From Others' Stories (Hebrews 11:1-40)
15. Eyes on Jesus! (Hebrews 12:1-13)
16. Why Even Think of Turning Back? (Hebrews 12:14-29)
17. A Final "Word of Exhortation" (Hebrews 13:1-25)

¹⁰ I created the bible class teaching material in connection with their sermons. They determined the pericopes for the homily, and I followed suit in the Bible classes. The Bible class material is available here: <https://johnmarkhicks.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2009/03/hebrews-edited.doc>

Hebrews in the Restoration Movement

Alexander Campbell used the whole canon, both first and second testaments. He told the story of redemption through the lens of Israel's narrative as it is fulfilled in the history of Jesus. At the same time, he had a restricted canon for ecclesial "order" (the "ancient order"): "All worship and forms of worship, ordinances, discipline, and government belonging to the Christian church must be learned exclusively from the New Testament."¹¹

Functionally, his ecclesial canon is Acts and the Epistles: "These laws and usages of the Apostles must be learned from what the Apostles published to the world, after the ascension and coronation of the King, as they are recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. . . Neither are the statues and laws of the Christian kingdom to be sought for in the Jewish scriptures, nor antecedent to the day of Pentecost; except so far as our Lord himself, during his lifetime, propounded the doctrine of his reign." When studying a text in Scripture, "[t]he first question is always: 'To what dispensation did it belong?'"¹²

The letter to the Hebrews was Campbell's "canon within the canon." It was foundational to his ecclesiology because it seemingly divided the two testaments into dispensations, and it employed a Christological typology. Hebrews gave Campbell his central hermeneutical insight for ordering the church. These are the key contributions of his "canon within the canon:" (1) dispensational distinction between old and new covenants; (2) typology, including a patternism (a search for order) analogous to the Tabernacle; (3) synergistic understanding of an active, persevering faith (anti-Calvinist); (4) soteriology as primarily atonement for the forgiveness of sins (the problem of guilt).¹³

Robert Milligan's *Scheme of Redemption* provided, on Campbell's hermeneutical principles, a redemptive-historical frame, a typological exposition of the Hebrew Bible, and a dispensational-shaped ecclesial order.¹⁴ D. R. Dungan's section on dispensationalism in his hermeneutics textbook (50 pages out of 400) shaped generations.¹⁵ Ashley J. Johnson's thirteen sermons on the two covenants entrenched this hermeneutical dispensationalism within the Restoration Movement for generations.¹⁶ C. R. Nichol and Robert L. Whiteside's *Sound Doctrine* includes a chapter on the "covenants." The memory verses for the chapter are Hebrews 9:16-17, and a chart contrasted the "old" and "new" covenants.¹⁷

¹¹ Alexander Campbell, "Letter to Thomas Campbell, of February 26, 1812," quoted in Robert Richardson, *Memoirs of Alexander Campbell* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1956; originally published 1868), I:448. This was also stated in Thomas Campbell's 1809 *Declaration and Address*: "The New Testament is as perfect a constitution for the worship, discipline, and government of the New Testament Church, and as perfect a rule for the particular duties of its members, as the Old Testament was for the worship, discipline, and government of the Old Testament Church, and the particular duties of its members" (from Charles A. Young, *Historical Documents Advocating Christian Union* [Chicago: Christian Century Company, 1904] 109).

¹² Alexander Campbell, *Christianity Restored* (Rosemead, CA: Old Paths Book Club, 1959; originally published 1835) 159-160, 95.

¹³ Eugene Boring, *Disciples and the Bible: A History of Disciples Biblical Interpretation in North America* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1997) 69-79.

¹⁴ Robert Milligan, *An Exposition and Defense of the Scheme of Redemption: As it is Revealed and Taught in the Holy Scriptures* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate, 1997; originally published 1875).

¹⁵ D. R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics: A Text-Book* (2nd ed; Delight, AR: Gospel Light Publishing Co., n.d.; originally published 1888) 106-155.

¹⁶ Ashley J. Johnson, *Johnson's Sermons on the Two Covenants* (Hollywood, CA: Old Paths. Book Club, 1949; originally published 1899).

¹⁷ C. R. Nichol and R. L. Whiteside, *Sound Doctrine: A Series of Bible Studies* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 2001; originally published 1920) 67-79.

The chart or something similar was often reproduced in various literature for Bible classes and on sermon charts.¹⁸

The dominant perspective was that God has *replaced* the old covenant with the new covenant, and, therefore, any participation in Levitical sacrifices is forbidden. Hebrews was read as an attempt to prevent attrition to Judaism by reminding the readers they already have something better and Judaism is not only obsolete but a rejection of the Messiah.

*Restoration Movement Commentaries/Studies on Hebrews in Chronological Order*¹⁹

Robert Milligan, *Epistle to the Hebrews*. Des Moines, Iowa: Eugene S. Smith, 1875 (republished as part of the Gospel Advocate Commentary series in 1950). Available here:

<https://icotb.org/resources/Hebrews-Milligan.pdf>

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Burton Coffman, *Hebrews*, Coffman New Testament Commentaries, 10 (Abilene: ACU Press, 1984).

Jimmy Allen, *Survey of Hebrews* (Searcy, AR: Self-Published, 1984).

Terry Bell, *Reviving Tired Faith: A Guide to Spiritual Rejuvenation from Hebrews* (Nashville, TN: Christian Communications, 1988).

¹⁸ Here is an example of one form of these sermon charts, and it includes this point: "sin to keep both laws." <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph347081/>

¹⁹ Compiled with the help of my friends Bobby Valentine and Johnny Melton.

James R. Girdwood and Peter Verkruyse, *Hebrews*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1997).

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Bob Young, *Hebrews: Helps for Reading and Understanding the Message* (Tulsa, OK: James Kay Publishing, 2017).

James W. Thompson, *Strangers on the Earth: Philosophy and Rhetoric in Hebrews* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020).

Michael Whitworth, *The Son's Supremacy: A Guide to Hebrews* (Start2Finish Books, 2021).

James W. Thompson, *Preaching Hebrews and 1 Peter*, Proclamation: Preaching the New Testament (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022).

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Recent (and a few "Classic") Special Studies

Bateman IV, Herbert W. *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2007. The four views are: Classic Arminian (Osborne), Classical Reformed (Fanning), Wesleyan Arminian (Cockerill), and Moderate Reformed (Gleason).

Bauckham, Richard, Daniel Driver, and Trevor Hart, editors. *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009. A multi-author work that explores Hebrews through the lens of theological themes and emphases of the text.

Blackwell, Ben C., John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston, editors. *Reading Hebrews in Context: The Sermon and Second Temple Judaism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2023. This multi-author work explores various texts in Hebrews through the lens of Second Temple Judaism (Qumran, Philo, etc.).

Compton, Jared. *Psalms 110 and the Logic of Hebrews*. Library of New Testament Studies, 537. New York: T&T Clark, 2015. Argues that Psalm 110 is the "controlling citation" in the sermon and suggests that the readers were struggling with the idea of a suffering Messiah and the meaning of their own suffering.

DeSilva, David A. *The Letter to the Hebrews in Social-Scientific Perspective*. Cascade Companions, 15. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012. Addresses the question what occasioned this homily (letter)? Argues that the preacher seeks to help his audience respond to persecution and social shame, which were drawing believer away from the Christian community.

Docherty, Susan E. *The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews: A Case Study in Early Jewish Bible Interpretation*. Wissenschaftlich Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament, 2/260. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009. Pays close attention to midrashic readings of Scripture in Judaism and the textual pluriformity of the Septuagint, the Bible of the preacher.

Easter, Matthew. *Faith and the Faithfulness of Jesus in Hebrews*. Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series, 160. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Stresses two narrative streams in Hebrews: the default human story of unfaithfulness and the assurance of an active faith in the face of death.

Gabriella, Gelardini, editor. *Hebrews: Contemporary Methods, New Insights*. Leiden: Brill, 2005. This a varied collection of essays exploring cultic language and concepts, sociological and ethics, and intertextuality in Hebrews (including comparisons with Paul).

Gray, Patrick. *Godly Fear: The Epistle to the Hebrews and Greco-Roman Critiques of Superstition*. SBL Academia Biblica, 16. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 2004. As an apologetic, the letter is contextualized by the non-Christian perception of Christianity as a superstition. The

call to boldness (rather than fear) in response to persecution and cultural hostility is grounded in the person and work of Jesus the Messiah.

Griffiths, Jonathan I. *Hebrews and Divine Speech*. Library of New Testament Studies, 507. New York: T&T Clark, 2014. Argues that God's voice is heard as word of God when delivered and made present through the sermonic word (particularly chapter four).

Guthrie, George H. Guthrie. *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-Linguistic Analysis*. Leiden: Brill, 1994. Analyzes the structure of Hebrews through three texts (1:1-4; 4:14-16; 10:19-25).

Hurst, L. D. *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, 65. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Various backgrounds contributed to the world of the preacher, including Middle Platonism (Philo), Qumran, and Jewish Apocalypticism, though Hurst highlights and prefers the apocalyptic setting as the most plausible.

Jamieson, R. B. *Jesus' Death and Heavenly Offering in Hebrews*. Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series, 172. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Addresses two questions: when and where did Jesus offer himself, and what role does Jesus' death play in Hebrews' soteriology? Jesus offers himself in the heavenly tabernacle, and the significance of the death of Jesus is objective as it enacts the covenant curse of death in covenant-making.

Kasemann, Ernst. *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984 (original German edition in 1934). The letter focuses on three themes: wilderness, sonship, and priesthood, and these all speak to the circumstances of the original readers who are called to faithful perseverance. Suggests a Platonic and Gnostic influence that grounds the preacher's theology and use of the Hebrew Bible.

Laansma, John, George H. Guthrie, and Cynthia Long Westfall, editors. *So Great a Salvation: A Dialogue on the Atonement in Hebrews*. Library of New Testament Studies, 516. New York: T&T Clark, 2019. A multi-author work that covers not only the text of Hebrews (and its interactions with the Hebrew Bible) but the history of interpretation of the atonement in Hebrews.

Lindars, Barnabas. *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*. New Testament Theology. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Explores the major theological themes of Hebrews, including the primitive kerygma, perfection, priesthood, sacrifice, and faith.

Martin, Michael Wade and Jason A. Whitlark. *Inventing Hebrews: Design and Purpose in Ancient Rhetoric*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, 171. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018. Explains the rhetorical practice and significance of narration interrupted by exhortation, and the preacher is a conventional rhetorician: the best example

of a first century sermon. The point is to warn readers about a return to paganism (idolatry) rather than Judaism.

Moffitt, David. *Rethinking the Atonement: New Perspectives on Jesus's Death, Resurrection, and Ascension*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2022. Argues "atonement" is more than the death but the exaltation of the resurrected Jesus who offers himself in the heavenly tabernacle.

Peeler, Amy. *You Are My Son: The Family of God in the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Library of New Testament Studies, 486. New York: T&T Clark, 2014. Argues that familial imagery rather than priestly imagery shapes the significance of the argument of the sermon.

Pierce, Madison N. *Divine Discourse in the Epistle to the Hebrews: Recontextualization of Spoken Quotations of Scripture*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph, 178. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. Explains the Trinitarian prosopological interpretation of the preacher. Prosopological exegesis is assigning a face (*prosopon*) to an ambiguous or unidentified character in a text. [For a brief explanation, see Madison N. Pierce, "Precedents for Prosopological Exegesis and Features of Its Use in the Epistle of the Hebrews," in *Practicing Intertextuality: Ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman Exegetical Techniques in the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021) 209-224.]

Thompson, James. *The Beginnings of Christian Philosophy: The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series, 13. Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association, 1982. Stresses the importance of Philo for understanding the thought-world of the author, and thus this is an early expression of Christian philosophical theology.

Thompson, James W. *Strangers on the Earth: Philosophy and Rhetoric in Hebrews*. Cascade Books, 2020. Rejects a strong dichotomy between Hellenistic and apocalyptic Jewish ideas and rhetoric. The preacher articulates the Christian faith through the rhetoric and philosophy current at the time.

Westfall, Cynthia Long. *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship Between Form and Meaning*. Library of New Testament Studies, 297. London: Bloomsbury, 2006. Argues that 4:11-16 and 10:19-25 are transitional hinge texts that follow the same pattern, including three-fold exhortations ("let us").

Williamson, Ronald. *Philo and the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Arbeiten zur Literatur und Geschichte des Hellenistischen Judentums IV. Leiden: Brill, 1970. Though there is some linguistic overlap, the theological and hermeneutical substance of Philo and the preacher in Hebrews are incompatible.

Digital Resources

- Bird, Chad, "Who is Melchizedek," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMtuuXjc0Ng> (his thesis: "Melchizedek in Biblical and Extrabiblical Traditions" is available here: <https://www.ldscriptureteachings.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Melchizedek-in-Biblical-and-Extrabiblical-Traditions-Chad-Bird.pdf>)
- Capps, Matthew J. "Knowing the Bible: Hebrews—A 12-week Practical Study Series on the Book of Hebrews," TGC Website: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/knowing-bible-hebrews/#week-1-overview>
- Getz, Gene, "Hebrews: Life Essentials Videos," https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLI1Ws-jTetIgKdQH_CEcBNWdaJAkeMHO
- Guthrie, George H., "Hebrews, A Video Study," Zondervan, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siZncyexdto> (26 lessons for purchase at <https://zondervanacademic.com/products/hebrews-a-video-study>)
- Heiser, Michael. "Hebrews Playlist," <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLItsaKvrf2rBzqQHKx9jg8wuqx70KHw2U>
- Heiser, Michael. "Melchizedek Playlist," <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLInnjqphXKANu9Ibknd7ZSvHVsnXLoQSS>
- Hicks, John Mark. "[Implications of Hebrews 5:11-6:3 for Fellowship and Assurance](#)" (1987).
- Hicks, John Mark. "[Outline of Lessons: Hebrews](#)" (Fall 2002).
- Hicks, John Mark. "[Playlist for Hebrews: Wednesday Night Bible Class Lessons](#)" (2024).
- Matthews, Josh, "Why Melchizedek Matters," Bible Project Podcast: <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/why-melchizedek-matters/>
- Moffitt, David, "What Happened After Easter," Regent College, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdfa64R56Yc>
- Park, Sung Jin, "Melchizedek as a Covenantal Figure: The Biblical Theology of the Eschatological Royal Priesthood," <https://bible.org/article/melchizedek-covenantal-figure-biblical-theology-eschatological-royal-priesthood>
- Peeler, Amy, "Jesus, Melchizedek, and the Priestly Line," Bible Project Podcast, <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/jesus-melchizedek-and-priestly-line/>
- Pierce, Madison, David Moffitt, and Cythnia Long Westfall "Hebrews: Office Hours Bible Study," 7 Sessions, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6j_K45-IEs&list=PLMlp8n6T3aAoxB-uw5kn2NAdqv8M9q7i4
- "Study at Home: The Book of Hebrews," Third Millennium Ministries, playlist here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvJYIQLlf1gg8XDSPHcaQxjLdsUJefzQ8>
- The Bible Project, "The Letter to the Hebrews," <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/hebrews/>
- Thompson, James W. "James Thompson—Hebrews Curriculum," Sunset Ridge Church of Christ, San Antonio, TX, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=lu0eYXUNaI0>
- Westfall, Cynthia Long, "A Discourse Analysis of Hebrews," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RhsuwwtXwSk>

Table Discussions

Session 1

What is the theological meaning or function of preaching considering Hebrews 1:1-4:13?

Session 2

What is the theological function of the priestly work of Jesus that encourages perseverance considering Hebrews 4:14-10:18?

Session 3

What is the theological significance and importance of assembling and/or persevering considering Hebrews 10:19-12:29?