

HEBREWS 7–13

Hebrews 7

Overview

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 355.

Following his transitioning pattern, the author once again uses the last topic mentioned in the previous discussion as the introduction to this one. In this case, it is Jesus as Great High Priest and forerunner who breached the veil and by so doing prepared the way for the faithful to enter heaven (Hebrews 6:20). The image of entering inside the veil evokes the Day of Atonement ritual when the Jewish high priest entered the Holy of Holies and performed the annual rite for the redemption of Israel. Only the high priest was ever allowed in the room, a proscription going all the way back to Aaron, the first Levitical high priest. That Jesus entered beyond the veil as the forerunner, showing the way for the rest of the faithful, made Him superior to Aaron (6:19; 7:11).

In this way, the author sets the stage for his further development of the theme he left off at 5:10—namely, (as proclaimed in Psalm 110:4) that God proclaimed the Son to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. The author uses the exposition of the psalm here as the foundation on which he builds a beautiful monument celebrating the Son's divine and eternal authority. In this chapter he develops the significance of the Savior being the Melchizedek High Priest forever, while in chapters 8 through 10 he develops the implications of the Great High Priest entering into the holy celestial realm as the forerunner.

7:1–10

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 367–368.

For the points the author of Hebrews wishes to make, Melchizedek and the priesthood he held play a key role. In three different chapters, the author brings them to the forefront.¹ One of the important reasons for his doing so was to show that the faithful priest was an excellent type of the Savior and, therefore, a figure who could more fully reveal the Son.

Since Genesis gives no genealogy of the faithful priest Melchizedek, the author describes him as without father, mother, or genealogy and, therefore, “having neither beginning of days nor end of life” (Hebrews 7:3). The author may have wanted to emphasize this because according to the Mosaic law, it was critical that a man be able to prove his priestly ancestry in order to be considered legitimate (Numbers 3:10, 38). The proscription was taken with such seriousness that when the Jews returned to Jerusalem from Babylon (circa 530 BC), only those who could prove their descent from Levi and Aaron were allowed to enter into the priesthood ranks (Ezra 2:61–63). The author uses this requisite to make a contrast with the higher priesthood, which requires no lineage of its holders. The author does his work well. Though the scripture suggests a strong resemblance between the ancient faithful priest and the Savior, it is the author’s “conscious selection and shaping of the Scripture that makes the resemblance impressive.”²

7:11–17

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 386–387, 389–391.

This section focuses on the means by which perfection (*τελειωσις, teleiōsis*) is attained. In some places, the Bible uses the word in a rather restricted cultic sense wherein it is tied to temple worship and the authority to perform temple ordinances. It is through these that both priest and people can draw nearer to Jehovah. In this context, then, perfection is reached when one is united with God on earth through priesthood ordinances. This unity and type of perfection paves the way for total unity (oneness with the Father and Son) and ultimate perfection in heaven.

In bringing about unity with God on earth, the old system did not work, the author argues. The problem was that the sacrifices were actually impotent, having no continuous means of cleansing the people and keeping them clean and thereby bringing them closer to God and to perfection (compare Hebrews 9:9; 10:1). The problem could clearly be seen in the case of the priests themselves. They suffered from human weaknesses and were burdened with sin.³ The author highlighted their impotency by citing Psalm 110:4, showing the need for another kind of priest to arise who was affected by neither of these debilitating problems.

Seen in this light, perfection not only includes the fulfillment and completion of the right relationship with God but adds the dimension of sinlessness. And more. It also connotes sanctification, that deep and abiding spiritual cleansing that makes the soul pure and holy.⁴

In addition, the definition implies a transformation through which the Saint becomes like Christ (compare 1 John 3:1–2). This transformation the old covenant simply could not accomplish. Higher ordinances,

covenants, and priesthood powers were required. All these came through Christ and were the means that enabled Him to bring ultimate perfection to the individual. Thus, though individuals may deny themselves of ungodliness and love God, it is only through the Father's grace and sufficiency that a person is perfected.

The emphasis in Hebrews, however, is not on this ultimate aspect of perfection (though it does stand behind it) but on oneness and unity with the Father and Son and the glory and rest that unity will bring.

It is on the strength of Psalm 110:4, the Father's decree that His Son will be a "priest for ever," that the author builds his case. The author contrasts the Levitical law and Melchizedek power, that which has its basis in the flesh and that which has its basis in an indestructible life (Hebrews 7:16–17). In this centers the entire superiority of Jesus, the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, over His Aaronic counterpart. Jesus is High Priest *forever*.

The author uses God's statement to emphasize the need for a new order of priesthood that could do what the old one could not. That did demand that old priesthood order be changed and a new order established (7:12). This new order differed from the old in a number of ways. First and foremost, it made unity with God surer than the old system (7:11). Second it was neither restricted by genealogy nor administered by flawed human beings but by the flawless and eternal Son of God. Third, it was not bound by lesser ordinances. Fourth, all the righteous had access to it. Finally, it administered all necessary ordinances to unite one fully with the Father. In short, the new order of priesthood overcame the insufficiency of the old one.

Beginning in 7:13, the author addresses a problem many of his readers would have been aware of. According to the law, the priesthood belonged exclusively to the Levitical tribe.

Further, many Jews believed that privilege and obligation was everlasting and thus nontransferable, and therefore, the ordinances assigned to it could only be executed by Levites. In 7:14 the author readily admits that the scriptures are quite clear on this subject and that Jesus was from the tribe of Judah. There was not a breath anywhere in the scriptures that suggested one from that tribe would ever have the priesthood. The tacit question was, then, how could Jesus lay claim to it? This question the author answers in 7:15. He notes that it is even clearer, based on Psalm 110:4 (which he does not quote here but tacitly points back to), that another kind of priest would arise like Melchizedek. The author then elucidates just what this means. The priesthood of this new priest would neither be tied to the regulations of the Mosaic law nor be bound by its genealogical restrictions (7:16). The author had already made it abundantly clear that a change in priesthood meant that the structures of the old law would no longer apply (7:12). A new order of priesthood would bring in a fullness of laws and ordinances. That another priest would arise from Judah only clenches his point.

7:18–25

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 403–404.

In Hebrews 7:18–25, the author continues to contrast the Levitical with the Melchizedek order of the priesthood. He has shown that the former was established by a fleshly ordinance—that is, on the basis of genealogical descent. He now shows how the restrictions based on law, ordinance, and flesh implies the inadequacy of the old order. Mere ordinance cannot compete with a divine oath; the promise of the law cannot compete with a “better hope” or the “better covenant” that God has given through His Son; a priesthood based on mortal descent cannot compete with one based on an “indestructible life” (Hebrews 7:16, 19, 21–22, 24). The problem with the old order, the author shows, was that its priesthood rested upon human weakness and was limited by human frailty without providing power to overcome both.⁵

7:26–28

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 404–406.

Having elucidated for his readers the great benefits that befall those who are ever true to the Great High Priest, the author now breaks into a grand description of all the ways that Jesus is exactly what His people need. In Hebrews 26–28, he ties insights from Psalm 110:4 with the themes he introduced in 2:17–18; 4:14–16; and 5:1–10 and which he will further develop in 8:1–10:18. In these verses he combines summary and announcement that skillfully highlight the truths he wants to proclaim. His skill calls his readers to engage with their Great High Priest, who has made Himself suitable for their specific needs. In doing so, he lays the groundwork on which he will further develop the Lord’s effectiveness. The author’s intent seems to be motivating his readers to reach for aid and find the means to persevere through the power of the Great High Priest.

To make his point, in 7:26 the author lists the attributes that make the Savior exactly what the people need. He first states that the Savior is holy, here carrying the force of being religiously observant to every moral obligation. The author uses the word to denote the Lord’s moral qualifications. He next states He is innocent, denoting the Lord’s blamelessness and impeccability in working with people. The author uses the word to denote the Lord’s social qualifications. He next states that the Savior is undefiled, denoting that which is unsoiled and clean in every respect but also carrying the idea of being ritually clean and, therefore, able to perform priestly temple service, more especially a sacrificial offering. The author uses it to highlight the Savior’s cultic qualifications. He next states that the Savior is “separated from those who sin,” the phrase highlighting not just that the Son is different from sinners but that He is actually separated from them by His exaltation. The author uses this also to highlight the Savior’s eternal qualifications. Finally, the author states the Savior is “exalted higher than the heavens,” here most likely meaning that He inhabits a realm beyond the firmament or earthly sky. This exalted position is the result of His having met all the necessary qualifications.

Only after having assured his readers of the Son's qualifications and exalted state does the author turn to the sacrifice that those required. He has been building up to this supernal act through his entire epistle. Continually raising his readers' anticipation and expectation, he has described the Son as "purging sin," tasting "death for every man," and offering "up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears."⁶ By placing the gracious, sinless, eternal, and exalted High Priest before his readers, the author has put them in a position to grasp the significance and result of the Lord's self-sacrifice.

It is by contrasting this effective self-sacrifice, inherent in the new covenant, with the ineffective sacrificial rituals of the old that the author is able to really emphasize what the Savior has done (7:27). He appeals to the ritual of the Day of Atonement and sets up a double contrast. The first is to the work of the Levitical high priest, who—due to moral weakness—must make a sacrifice for his own sins before he can perform those for his people. This act stands in contrast to the work of the Son, who—being full of moral strength—did not have to sacrifice for Himself. The second contrast is to the annual performance of the Levitical sacrifices. The continual practice was tacit evidence that the system did not work. The repeated nature of these sacrifices stands in contrast to the sacrifice of the Son that needed to be done but once to have full effect. The singularity of the act was tacit evidence that it did work once and for all.

Verse 28 serves as an excellent summary of all that the author wants to say about the divine High Priest. The author skillfully contrasts the ordinance of the Mosaic law that appointed weak men to the temporary position with God's oath that appointed the new and perfected High Priest to an eternal position. The former appointment was based on genealogy; the latter was based "on the power of an indestructible life" (7:13–19, 23–25). The former appointment ordained many human beings to be priests; the latter ordained only the Son to be the High Priest forevermore. The former appointment gave position to sin-prone men that necessitated making sacrifices for both them and the people; latter appointment gave position to the perfect Son, who needed not make sacrifice for himself, being sinless, but for the people only (5:1–3; JST, 7:27). Through this act, He became perfect, meaning He completed all the Father asked Him to do. The righteous Son achieved this state through a sacrifice He did not need to make in His own behalf but one He did, however, need to make in obedience to God.⁷

Hebrews 8

Overview

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 421.

With chapter 8 the author of Hebrews begins the central portion of his epistle. He will bring it to a close at 10:18. In the various sections that compose this portion, we find the heart of the author's Christological exposition as he more fully develops his explication of Christ. In doing so, he will release the tension he

has been deliberately creating up to this point. He has stressed that Jesus has become the one and only effective High Priest by offering himself once for all as the fully sufficient sacrifice for sin who “can also completely and eternally save those who come to God through him” (8:25 Rendition). Building upon this foundation—a foundation he has so carefully laid in the forepart of his epistle—he now discusses in detail the long-awaited theme of the significance and ramifications of the Savior’s self-sacrifice. He lays out his thesis so well that he satisfies the curiosity of all who want to know.

8:1–4

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 434–435.

In verses 1 and 2, the author sets the foundation on which he will build both his minor and major premises. The foundational ground is that the Son has ascended to the heavenly throne where He acts as the minister (*leitourgos*, *leitourgos*) of the “heavenly tabernacle” or, in other words, of the divine sphere. The author’s first minor premise, based on Psalm 110:1, 4 (along with his readers’ understanding of the role of the high priesthood, see 5:1), is that “every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices” in behalf of the people. With the phrase “therefore it is necessary,” the author introduces the first of two conclusions. The first he states in 8:3b: the Son, as high priest, must also have something to offer. He identifies what that offering is with the simple indefinite pronoun *τις* (*tis*), “something.” He seems to be deliberately leaving the description of the offering vague so that he can pick up the idea later (9:25–10:4) and more fully develop it.

8:4–5

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 435–436.

In verses 4 and 5 he develops his second conclusion. It begins with the obvious statement that if Jesus were on the earth, instead of ministering in heaven, he would not be a priest at all. The reason being that the Levitical priesthood’s various functions and responsibilities had already been assigned to others. That did not prevent Him, however, from holding a higher order of the priesthood and administering it in and from heaven. In fact, since no one ever before had been appointed to this specific and needful duty, it became all the more necessary for Him to do it.

To push his point even further, in 8:5 he defines the tabernacle, including the role of the Levitical priesthood, as but an example or a mere shadow of the eternal order of reality. As a proof text, he quotes from LXX Exodus 25:40. There Jehovah tells Moses to make sure, in building the tabernacle, to give great care to follow the “design” (*τύπος*, *typos*) as revealed to him. From this the author concludes that the earthly sanctuary . . . though an authorized counterpart, is still but a copy of the heavenly original (9:11).

Thus, the earthly priests are but precursors of the heavenly high priest who ministers not as they do in a temporal and temporary sanctuary set up by mortal man but in the eternal One set up by God (8:2).

8:3–6

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 438–439.

With verses 3–6 the author prepares his readers for the further development of his argument. Having established that Jesus currently serves in and administers from the “true tent” (8:3), the author then refers to the Levitical cult as an “example” (*ὑπόδειγμα*, *hypodeigma*) and “shadow” (*σκιά*, *skia*) of this reality (8:5). He then expresses the superiority of the Lord’s priesthood and the new covenant He administers over the old (8:6). Each of these points he will develop more fully in the following chapters, but he will do so in reverse order. He will examine the new covenant in 8:7–13; the typological character of the worship performed under the old covenant and its sanctuary in 9:1–10. And finally, he will define the nature of Christ’s self-sacrifice in 9:11–10:18.

In 7:11–19, the author linked priesthood and covenant such that the change in one necessitates a change in the other. Therefore, a change in priesthood meant a change in ministry. He readdresses that point in 8:6, but this time, rather than focusing on the superiority of Jesus’s sacrificial gift over that of the Levitical high priest, he stresses the result—Jesus has obtained a better ministry commensurate to the superiority of the new covenant over the old. The author describes the Lord’s higher ministry with the noun *μεσίτης* (*mesitēs*). Though the word usually refers to one who helps two parties become reconciled, in this case the author’s focus is not on that aspect of the Savior’s work. Instead, he looks to Christ’s relationship to the new covenant now enacted by God. The Savior is the one who both is bona fides of the law and acts as guarantee of its success. In sum, as the eternal High Priest, whose sacrifice He has formerly offered and which God has now accepted—thus His blood becoming the surety of the new covenant—He is the guarantee that the blessing promised will be realized by all those who enter into it and endure in faith to the end.

8:7–13

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 446–449.

To bolster and expand his point on the reality, need, and value of a new covenant, the author of Hebrews again appeals to scripture. He bases his argument on the faultiness of the first covenant. He uses LXX Jeremiah 38:31–34 (Jeremiah 31:31–34 in the KJV) to show what that fault was, what its result was, and what God intended as its remedy.

Three times Jeremiah assures his audience that these words come straight from God (38:31–33 LXX; 31:31–33 KJV). The triple repetition stresses that it was God Himself who found fault with the old covenant and promised a new one. The author uses this scripture to drive this point home.

Verse 9 presents a very paternal picture of Jehovah intervening in behalf of the Hebrews and leading them out of Egyptian bondage “by the hand.” This caring act makes their rejection of His covenant all the more scandalous because it highlights the ungrateful nature of the people and clearly expresses their infidelity.

In verse 10, the author shows that a major feature of the new covenant is where it will be recorded. Moses’s law, though produced by the finger of God, was written on stone tablets. It never made its way into the minds and hearts of the people. The result was twofold: the people remained in their sins and they never came to know God, the former being the major contributor to the latter. As the author shows, that will not be the case with the new one. It will be written in the minds and on the hearts of the people. The phrase does not refer to memorization, but to implementation. Jeremiah’s words suggest a spiritual transformation in the very depths of the people who willingly enter into the new covenant. Through its power, they will gain a transformed mind and a transformed heart. These will come as their consciences are purged of sin (1:3; 9:14) and result in empowerment through which deep and true spiritual worship will be maintained.

The author’s point is that the Lord will help His people understand the new law both intellectually, “in their minds,” and spiritually, “on their hearts.”

The new covenant, thereby, overcomes the fault of the old one by providing a way for people to overcome sin and come to know God. Verses 10–11 detail the “better promises” of the new covenant. They show that these are fourfold: first, the people will accept Jehovah as their God, second, He will accept them as His people, third, the entire community will come to know God, and finally, God will be merciful to them and remember their sins no more.

These “better promises” support the point the author made in 8:6 that “Jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry” than any former high priest. He is the minister of the new covenant and more. His blood acts as the covenant’s surety which allows Him to be the guarantee of its effectiveness. Those who enter into it in faith are ensured that the blessings will be realized because the high priest is already serving in the “true tabernacle” to their good.

Interestingly, God presents the result of the new covenant in the exact words He used to present the old one: “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”⁸ What is different is not the intent of the law—to create the spiritual family of God—but, as 8:11 shows, its result. This time the people will come to know Him and receive fully of His mercy and grace.

None of this works, however, unless the people come under the new covenant. The author is most anxious therefore that his readers realize the foolishness of returning to the old covenant. He makes his point in verse 13. He uses the verb *πεπαλαίωκεν* (*pepalaiōken*), “he has made old,” referring to a direct act of God. Note that the author does not base his argument only on an exegetical conclusion drawn from his

use of Jeremiah 38. The new covenant is not simply or only a question of definition. It is rather a new and wonderful act of God as borne witness by the scriptures.

Hebrews 9

Overview

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 451.

The author begins this section with a fuller development of what was but a minor theme in the previous one. There he focused primarily on “sanctuary” (8:1–2) and “covenant (8:7–13) with just a nod to “sacrifice” (8:3–6). His intent was to highlight Christ as the “mediator” of the new covenant who stood as “minister” in the heavenly tabernacle. When it came to the subject of the Lord’s sacrifice, he did little more than deny that it was different than those administered “according to the law.” He explained that these sacrifices were but a type and shadow of the true act (8:3–6). In this section, the theme of the Savior’s offering stands center stage while that of sanctuary and covenant take a minor but supportive role. The author discusses the Mosaic tabernacle (9:1–10) and Jehovah’s establishment of the old covenant (9:16–22) only to fully expose and stress their insufficient if preparatory character. With this as his foil, he “vigorously affirms the unfathomable efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice offered ‘according to the eternal Spirit’ and thus able to ‘cleanse the conscience’” (9:11–15).

9:3–4

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 473.

The author’s purpose in describing in detail the majesty of the Holy of Holies (9:3–4) seems to be to emphasize that its ritual was designed to foreshadow the Savior’s entrance onto the heavenly realm (see 9:11–14).¹¹⁵ Indeed, the Savior actually did what the Levitical high priest on the Day of Atonement only foreshadowed (see Lev. 16). The Lord, as true High Priest, with His own blood, entered the heavenly Holy of Holies and made expiation for the people.

9:5

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 471–472.

In 9:5 the author moves from his description of the furniture in the Holy Place to that of the Most Holy Place. In doing so he focuses his readers' attention on the place of atonement, the mercy seat. It was here that, under the Mosaic Law, expiation actually took place through the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrificial victims. All this was a type anticipating the sacrifice of the Lord. As High Priest the Savior made atonement for all and now governs from His divine throne. His act allows all who will accept Him to enter with Him into the true tabernacle, that is, into celestial glory where He and the Father dwell. By doing so, His throne becomes "a throne of grace" (4:16) and a true mercy seat for His people. The ritual of the Day of Atonement was thus full of foreshadowing that anticipated the all-sufficient power in Christ.⁹

9:7

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 472.

Up to this point, the author has distinguished the holiness and duties of the high priest over that of his fellow priests as he acts as a type of the Savior. In 9:7 that changes. To emphasize the ineffectiveness of the old covenant, the author emphasizes the inadequacy of the ordinances performed even by the high priest. He can enter the Most Holy Place only once a year. He must do so with blood, and that blood is shed . . . for the sins of the people but also for his own sins. Further, it must be done every year. The author's point is that all these items show how ineffective the system was.

A major point of the author's description of the nature and service of the old system stresses the impossibility of approaching the Divine through such an "earthly sanctuary" (9:1). The author uses the daily rituals performed in the sanctuary as evidence that the old law simply did not work because its ordinances had to be done over and over—thus evidencing their lack of effectiveness (9:6).

9:11–14

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 486–487.

The author's use of the phrase "but . . . Christ" presents a sharp contrast between the focus of 9:1–10 with that of 9:11–14. He has shown that the Holy Place provided no access to heaven, "but Christ" has now opened the way. The emphasis in the former is on the tabernacle itself while that of the latter is on the full sufficiency of the Lord's sacrifice that provides complete access to God. In this section, the author provides his most thorough analysis of the Savior's fulfillment of the typological sacrificial rites established by the Mosaic covenant. Throughout the author emphasizes "blood," "self-sacrifice," and "cleansing." The author makes it clear in 9:12–14 that the reason the Savior was able to enter the heavenly realm and make way for others to do so was because He did what the old covenant failed to do; He purged sins

and cleansed the conscience of the worshipper. The author is careful to help his readers see that the whole of the Levitical system was restricted exclusively to external purification. The best it could do was point to that internal purification so necessary to enter the presence of God.

From an Old Testament perspective, it was the victims' blood that contained a vital force capable of opposing and subduing evil and quashing spiritual death. In instituting the Mosaic rites, Jehovah explained that "the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for its blood shall make atonement for the soul" (Leviticus 17:11, authors' translation; compare Deuteronomy 12:23). "But in the sacrifice of Christ, the relationship was reversed: whereas in the Old Testament, it was the blood that gave value to the sacrifices, in the case of Christ it is His sacrifice that gave value to His blood."¹⁰

Evidencing the fully sufficient work of Christ is the author's note in 9:12 that the Savior entered heaven "once for all" (*ἐφάπαξ, epharax*), "a term that excludes both the necessity and the possibility of repetition."¹¹ The Savior's redeeming work was full, complete, and final, requiring nothing more forever.

In 9:14, the author clearly states the benefits of Christ's Atonement. The author first describes what it cleanses: "our conscience" (*συνείδησις, syneidēsis*). When God established His covenant with Israel, He also gave them His law. In doing so, He laid down the standard He expected His people to follow. At the same time, He created a condition in which the individual conscience had a standard external to itself. That meant a person did not decide what was right and what was wrong; the law did. The person, however, could choose to conform to the law or not. The result of choosing not to conform is a transgression (*παράβασις, parabasis*). It is a heavy sin because the person knows the law and the consequences of breaking it and yet chooses to do so. Even so, the Atonement of the Lord is so strong that it can reach even those who have broken the law in this manner and redeem them if they will but repent and follow Him.

The effect of the Lord's self-sacrifice was directed not at an outward cleansing as was the old covenant. Instead, it focused on the inward cleansing of the conscience. The Atonement also had the effect of purifying it. Both cleansing and purifying refer to the same reality.

9:15

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 498–499, 501.

In Hebrews 9:15 the author clearly points out how it was that Christ became the mediator (that is the guarantor) of the new covenant. It was because His blameless life made His self-offering acceptable to God. As a result, the Savior was able to redeem those who transgressed because of the weakness inherent in the first covenant. His sacrifice brought to an end all Mosaic sacrifices that could cleanse only the flesh (9:10). His sacrifice was, then, one of covenant inauguration. Of its new promise, He became the Mediator.

His work in that capacity is not, however, that of a mere go-between but that of the guarantee of the fulfillment of all promises that His Atonement makes possible.

The author stresses in 9:15 that a major aspect of the Lord's sacrifice was to redeem those who were guilty of transgressing the first covenant. His focus here on "former transgressions" committed under the Mosaic law is because the Israelites' redemption from those sins laid the foundation that made the new covenant possible. Their forgiveness made it possible for the new law to be written on their hearts because they were justified and could, thereby, receive the influence and power of the Holy Ghost.¹²

The author refers to those whose conscience has been cleansed as "those who have been called" (*οἱ κεκλημένοι, hoi keklēmenoi*). This group is composed . . . of those whose lives are directed by faith and the resultant obedience but also who continually preserve in the service of the Master. Noteworthy is that the author's words do not exclude those who rebelled during the Mosaic era. There is a subtle hint here of vicarious work for the dead through which even those rebellious souls can become "the called" and, with the living, receive the promise of an eternal inheritance.¹³

The author's words reveal both the breadth and width of the Lord's Atonement. Its breadth is vast covering all those who throughout the entire history of the world come to Him. Its width is narrow, for it excludes all those who do not. The Lord Himself made it abundantly clear that all must enter "at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."¹⁴

In 9:15 the author clearly states the two goals of the Savior's death. The first was for the redemption of those who transgressed under the first covenant and looks specifically at those transgressions committed against the Mosaic Law. The second goal was "so that those who are called might receive the promise of an eternal inheritance" (compare Rom. 3:24–26). The phrase prefigures the promises Jehovah made with Abraham (10:8–16) and thereby designates eternal lives (see Doctrine and Covenants 132:30–31).

9:18–20

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 502.

In Hebrews 9:18 the author makes his point: as with most covenants, the Mosaic law was inaugurated and ratified by the death of the sacrificial victim and the administration of its blood. To validate his point, in 9:19–20, the author appeals to Exodus 24:3–8. There the steps necessary to establish the covenant are recorded: Moses copied the law onto a scroll, he then read its contents to the people, they covenanted to live the law, Moses then inaugurated and ratified the covenant by sacrificing the animals and sprinkling a solution of the sacrificial blood and water upon the scroll and people thus binding them together, and finally the prophet declared that the law is now binding upon the people. To make his point, the author notes only that Moses read the law, inaugurated it by the sprinkling of blood, and declared its established validity.

9:23–28

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 512–516.

At this point, the author begins his more complete exposition of the Savior’s sacrificial death. He has carefully shown that both purification and redemption were associated with its inauguration. Both required the death of the sacrificial victim. In 9:23–28 he stresses the finality of the Lord’s once for all cleansing at the time when He inaugurated and put in force the new covenant (9:12). To stress that finality, he contrasts it with both the initiation of the old covenant and the ritual of the Day of Atonement. On the basis of his model, he insists that since early things associated with the first covenant had to be cleansed by sacrificial means so too did all corresponding “heavenly things.”

Extrapolating based on tabernacle typology, in 9:23 the author uses both the necessity and the method of purification of the tabernacle to explain why there had to be an atonement. As the earthly tabernacle with its furnishings had to be purified and dedicated through the administration of blood, so too did the heavenly. He stresses however that such a purification would require far more than that of mere fleshly sacrifices that worked for the temporal order (9:23). Due to necessity, the Savior did not appear in heaven without the necessary offering. Both his appearance and his offering were made in behalf of the believers’ interest (9:24).

The author points out clearly to his readers that Jesus died in their behalf (9:24). On the basis of the author’s cultic imagery, entrance into the “true” Holy Place involved . . . its consecration but also the purification of those who would enter. In this way, the author expresses both the subjective and objective significance of the Lord’s sacrificial act. The subjects are the individuals within the Christian community and the object is to bring them eternal life by preparing the way.

In 9:25 the author points out the vast difference between what the Levitical high priest did and the work that Christ did. In doing so, he sets the stage to showcase the grandeur of the sacrifice appropriate for the Lord’s cleansing of “heavenly things.” He shows there were three differences: First, the Lord presents Himself as the sacrifice which the high priest did not, second, He does not have to do it over and over as did the high priest, and third, He uses His own blood, not that of some sacrificial animal as the high priest did, to make the necessary offering.

In 9:26, the author shows that through His sacrifice, the Savior did more than merely weaken or restrain the effects of sin; He brought about their abolition (*ἀθέτησις*, *athetēsis*) once for all. He took the entire weight of the consequence of sin—not just the believers’ deserved punishment—and bore it away. In doing so, He is able to deliver people from its demands. In sum, the Savior did more than deliver His people from the consequences of sin. He also delivered them from its pollution and domination and thus made way for their total liberation from its demands. Through His self-sacrifice, He annulled the effects of sin, reducing them to nothingness. As a result, sin will never be able to regain its destructive

power—Christ vanquished it once for all. Through that act, He inaugurated the purification of the cosmos (8:10–12). Thus, His Atonement, inaugurated in Gethsemane and climaxed on Golgotha, dominates all history from the beginning to the end of time.

In 9:27–28, the author makes an interesting contrast between the consequences of people dying and Christ dying. “Men and women die once, by divine appointment, and in their case death is followed by judgment. Christ died once, by divine appointment, and his death is followed by salvation for all his people. This is so because he bore the ‘sins of many’ offering up his life to God as an atonement in their behalf.”¹⁵

In doing so the Savior provided for humankind the perfect antidote to what has been called “the universal human predicament.” All face the pall of death, and whether they know it or not, they will also face judgment. The latter will become appallingly clear to the ignorant, the denier, and the wicked upon the moment of death. If death has its sting, so much more will be the fear of judgment.¹⁶ Since judgment was a well-known principle among the author’s readers, these words would have rung abundantly clear (Hebrews 6:2; compare Alma 12:27).

Hebrews 10

10:1–4

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 527–530.

In Hebrews 10:1–4, the author recapitulates the foundation on which his criticism of the old covenant rests, but where in chapters 8 and 9 he focused on the ordinances of the tabernacle, he looks, this time, specifically at the Mosaic law. His is a rather bold if not radical critique of what many held as sacred and some inviolable. But his objective is to persuade many in his audience not to return to the Law and, therefore, he is not above pointing out that the problem rests with the very law itself, not just with its cultic practices. He admits that the law has its place as a shadow (*σκία*, *skia*) of “good things to come,” but it should not be taken as having power in and of itself to make one fit for entrance into God’s kingdom.

In 10:1 the author points out that like the tabernacle, the law itself was but a shadow. Even so, it silhouetted “good things to come” (8:5; 10:1). For that very reason it had its place. Though the system it generated could not bring salvation, it could and did anticipate a future by being its opposite and thus showing the need for what was to come.” The Mosaic law was thus “not a somewhat deceptive reflection of the eternal but a divinely ordained, though imperfect, anticipation and foreshadowing of God’s full salvation to come.”¹⁷ His point, tacitly made, is that for those with faith to see, the law prefigured the work and ministry of the Messiah from whom an actual cleansing of the conscience could come.

The key to understanding the author’s point lies in a correct interpretation of the phrase “a consciousness of sin” (10:2). A false reading would be that if a person has received forgiveness of sin, then

he or she would no longer have any recollection of it. That, however, is not the case. The author's position is that once cleansed, the faithful should not be plagued by the false notion that some taint of sin remains. In short, they should no longer feel any guilt. Giving up such a feeling takes faith on the part of the Saint. That faith rests on the belief in the total effectiveness of the atonement of Christ expressed through the process of repentance. Such faith brings about the necessary condition of a clear conscience as assurance comes.

The problem with the sacrifices of the old covenant is that by themselves, it was impossible for the offerings to cleanse anyone from sin because they consisted of nothing more than the blood of goats and bulls. The author pushes this point by placing the adjective *ἀδύνατος* (*adynatos*), "impossible," as the first word in 10:4. Though many had condemned any offerings of hypocrites as having no force, they still felt they had great value. The author, with the use of the verb *anaireō*, "abolish, destroy" (10:9), clearly, forcefully, and even pitilessly rejects the whole system standing alone as having any efficacy. As he has shown, he fully accepts the need for the shedding of blood that sin may be removed and an atonement be made (9:22), but it is utterly impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to do so. But as the means of coming to understand the work and ministry of the Lord through the Law's typology, the offerings held an important place. They witnessed that nothing short of the blood of Christ "offered once for all" would do (9:12, 14, 26).

10:5–9

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 530–531.

To drive home his point, the author first quotes from the Septuagint's Psalm 39:6–8 (Psalm 40:6–8 in the King James Version) in 10:5–7 and then requotes certain phrases in 10:8–9. In doing so, he appeals to the Old Testament itself as the basis for his harsh critique of the law. The scripture clearly states that Jehovah did not want any of the sacrifices or oblations Israel was offering. The idea was not novel. A number of prophets had stated the same thing, but with skill, the author chose exactly the right one to help make his case.¹⁸ There were at least four good reasons: "first, it lists several kinds of sacrifice to be rejected; second, it offered a replacement solution, the personal availability to do the will of God; third, an allusion to the incarnation of the son of God could be seen in this text, and therefore it could be put into the mouth of Christ at the time of his entry into the world; and finally, the attitude of availability expressed in the psalm ("Behold, I have come, O God, to do your will") is the attitude taken by Jesus in the gospels."¹⁹

Using the psalm, the author is able to note what has been abolished (namely, sacrifices and offerings) and then what has been established (namely, Christ's willing sacrifice). The author uses the scripture to push his point that with the coming of the Savior, God has rejected the old system. He did so not because it was wrong but because it was weak. By itself, it simply could not remove sin and transform the soul. Its ability to foreshadow and typify the real Power that was to come, however, gave it purpose and kept it in place *until*

the Type arrived. At that point, it had fulfilled its purposes and could be replaced. Thus, the author states that through the obedience of Christ, the first was abolished that the second might stand (10:9).

10:11–18

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 540–543.

Though the author in this section repeats points he has made earlier, this portion of the argument is not a mere résumé of what was said earlier. Rather, it serves as a climactic description and summary of all that the Savior has done and all that He has become through His self-offering resulting in His ability to empower His Saints to persevere during the present trials. The reason is that the Lord has now realized His Father’s invitation to “sit at my right hand” and can from there minister to His disciples’ needs (Hebrews 10:3, 13). Thus, this closing section (10:11–18) brings to readers’ minds the full impact of all that has been said about the greatness of Christ and what He has done and is doing for His people.

In 10:11, to drive home his point, the author again reminds his readers that the Levitical priests—not just the high priest, his primary focus up to this point—had to make sacrifices “day after day” but to no avail since the blood of the offerings were “never able to take away sins” and thereby sanctify and perfect the worshipper. Therefore they can never sit but must continually “stand” (*histēmi*) because their job was never done.

In 10:12, the author contrasts the ineffectual, if perpetual, work of the priests with the one saving act of the Lord. He does this by introducing the subject with an aorist participial instrumental phrase that shows Christ “offered for all time a single sacrifice for sin.” But the author’s focus is not on the sacrifice, but its result: the Savior “sat down on the right hand of God.” This singular act stands as visual witness that the Lord’s sacrifice worked. While the author’s image of the priests leaves them ever standing because their work is never done, that of the Son shows Him sitting because His work is finished, total, and complete.

In 10:13–17, the author returns to the theme he developed in 8:1–6 (using Jeremiah 31:33–34) using the imagery of a shadow to describe “the earthly counterpart to a heavenly reality.” Now he shifts from the vertical plane to a horizontal one to show that the shadow of good things that have come (10:1) describes a temporal reality—that is, Christ’s self-sacrifice. “By a single offering he has forever perfected those who are sanctified” (10:14). This idea is important to the author’s overall reason for writing. He is stressing the present reality of the Savior’s station as a minister already empowered in heaven who can be reached for assistance (4:16). Thus, he reassures his audience they will find help to persevere in faith.

Noteworthy in 10:14 is that perfection comes after sanctification. The verb *τελειόω* (*teleioō*), “perfect,” connotes that which is fully finished, completed, matured, and whole, thus made adequate for a necessary task. Though the author uses it primarily to denote priestly consecration by which they were made ready for cultic service, he also uses it for the state of the Saint that prepares them for eternal life. To enter

this state the disciple must first become sanctified (*ἀγιάζω*, *hagiazō*). In sum, the word means “holy” and designates the state of one who has met the qualifications for and participates in sacred work. Both verbs connote an enabling cleansing from sin and pollution that prepares the Saint to enter God’s presence. Here “perfect” may point to the direct, personal, and everlasting association between God and the person, while “sanctified” refers to the sinless state that makes the association possible.

In 10:15–17 the author reiterates part of his earlier quotation of Jeremiah 31:31–34 (in 8:8–12) that touches on the new law God will establish. However, he uses the scripture to make a different point by focusing on the results of the placement of the law: it will be written on the disciples’ hearts and minds, suggesting their total assimilation of the laws and, as a result, show the same willful obedience that their Savior did. But as grand as that is, the next phrase is the heart of matter: God will remember their sins no more. Because of this, the author concludes, where sin has been fully forgiven and forgotten, there is no further need for a sacrifice for sin (10:18). Thus, the all-sufficient work of Christ has done away with any need for any portion let alone the whole of the sacrificial system.

10:19–25

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 554–557.

The author has been feeding his readers the “solid food” of the gospel (5:14) and in so doing has prepared them for the banquet of which this portion of his epistle consists. By now they should have gained a profound understanding of and a deep appreciation for who Christ is and what He has done for them. Further, they should be fully prepared to take advantage of what He offers.

This stage being set, the author now gives them a comprehensive view of the expectations that they should realize because of what Christ has done. He lists these in the form of a series of admonitions that he introduces with the causal, circumstantial participle *ἔρχοντες* (*erchontes*), “since we have” (10:19, 21).

He shows them that, because of what Christ has done, they now have free access to the inner sanctuary or, less symbolically, to heaven itself. Jesus, through His self-offering, that is, “his body” (10:20) has done what a myriad of high priests could not do. In sum, the author is saying that since his readers have this Great Priest, they have gained three things: (1) an ability to penetrate the veil, (2) a way to do it, and (3) a priest who will take them through.

The author’s phrase “after we have cleansed our hearts from a consciousness of evil and washed our body with pure water” point to that work of the Saint that was made possible because of the Great Priest (10:22). Salvation is a cooperative effort. Therefore, each faithful person has to take advantage of what Jesus has made possible by repenting and accepting that the Atonement is sufficient. Further he or she must be willing to purify the body as well. Here the emphasis is on the present state of the author’s readers and stresses the current effect of what Christ has done. That both phrases contain a perfect participle

indicates . . . that these people have been cleansed but also that they continue to be cleansed through the effective work of their High Priest.

Based on Christ's Atonement and the confidence that should grow out of it, the author makes a three-fold admonition: first, he admonishes them to approach the sanctuary (that is, the heavenly realm) with true hearts in a fullness of faith (10:22); second, to exercise the confession of their hope without wavering (10:23); and third, to urge each other to love and good works (10:24). Note that by enjoining of the three virtues—hope, faith, and love—the author has encompassed the whole of Christian life and at the same time introduced the themes that he will develop in the next three chapters.

The first admonition takes its force from the power of what Christ has done. It now allows the people of faith to approach God by drawing continually near to Him through prayer and worship (10:22). The emphasis is on the need to keep drawing near to God. Being close to Him is not a matter of “once and done,” but of living in such a way that the distance between the self and the Father continually grows narrower. Thus, the act comprehends the entire compass of the life of faith. Being near God is essential to a person's spiritual well-being and the very essence of her or his station as a Saint—one of God's own people (4:16; 7:25). Further, it is their continued drawing close to their God that will be the means by which they will be preserved from their present and future trials until they enter into His divine presence (12:25– 29).

Tied directly to the first admonition is the second, to hold tight to the confession of the firm hope that they now enjoy (10:23). Because Jesus has opened the way, the faithful are able to continually draw near to Him. They must, however, not slide back but firmly hold on to the hope that their testimonies have brought. It is likely that the author's referral to the confession of hope (*ὁμολογία, homologia*) encompasses not just one's private assent to Christian ways but more importantly to the public witness of Christ's Sonship and the salvation that comes only through Him. It is in such active persevering that one acquires all that God has promised.

The author confirms for his readers that their hope (*ἐλπίς, elpis*) will be fully rewarded because the one who made the promise can be fully trusted (*πιστός, pistos*) to fulfill it (10:23). This hope is specific. It is the reception of full access to God, the bona-fides of which the readers are now realizing in their increasingly close relationship with him.

Tied directly to the second admonitions is the third, to help one another to keep the faith (10:24). The author's focus is on each individual and the help he or she can render to the community of the Saints. The author uses the noun “urging” (*παροξυμος, paroxsymos*) to stress the energy each person should put into helping the others. The object of the urging is toward two objectives: greater love and more good works. The noun “love” (*παροξυμος, paroxsymos*) denotes a very inclusive, warm, and divinely derived affection that wants nothing but the best and works to that end for the individuals within its circle. It goes well beyond mere sentimentality but connotes a heart oriented toward appropriate action. As such it provides not only the energy but also the direction for selfless care giving. The phrase “good works”

stands opposite that of “dead works” (9:14) from which the Savior has cleansed the believer. Good works both benefit and please the receiver and also God.

The author gives two ways in which his readers can realize his admonitions (10:25). First, they are to continue church attendance. It is here that they can find mutual support and help when needed. Second, they are to urge one another (*παρακαλέω, parakaleō*) to keep the faith and rely on the firm hope they have in God’s promises that can be realized both in the present and in the future.

The author’s admonition serves as a window giving a peek at the ongoing and relentless nature of the persecution these people are facing. Some have abandoned the Church altogether and by so doing have deprived their fellow Saints of much needed support. As the author has pointed out earlier, the abandonment has arisen in part because of the passage of time in which the converts’ initial enthusiasm for the gospel has died down. Some became lazy (*νωθρός, nōthros*; see 5:11–14), and this initially paved the way to inactivity and finally complete abandonment of the Christian cause (4:1–3; 6:4–6). As the author will point out in the next section (10:26–31), these people are in grave danger. Here his emphasis is on the promised blessings. It is Christ, the all-sufficient Great Priest who has provided the resources “of escaping the fate of the unfaithful and joining the victorious faithful. The urgency of obedience is all the clearer because the ‘word’ of God that the hearers have received is nothing less than the astounding revelation of Christ’s full sufficiency to save.”²⁰ All they have to do is take advantage of it and a large part of that is holding firm to their confession to the end.

10:26–31

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 565–570.

The warning the author gives in these verses stresses the importance of his readers’ following through with the admonition he gave in Hebrews 10:25. He has already given them such a warning (see 6:4–8), but earlier his intent was to rouse his hearers from their spiritual lethargy by seeing clearly the power of their Lord and realizing the importance of His high priesthood and the role it now plays in their lives. Here his focus is on the full sufficiency of Christ and His past and current work as their enthroned High Priest. Because of the clear and careful layout of his teaching about the Savior his readers are in a precarious position if they neglect—and especially if they abandon—the work. Thus, he raises the alarm lest his hearers reject the clearly explained and carefully arranged exposition on the salvation that comes only through Christ and His Atonement.

To further the force of his admonition, in 10:26 the author exchanges the impersonal speech he used earlier (see 6:4–8, “if they fall away”) for the fully personal speech (“if we fall away”) found in these verses. If anyone, including himself, should fall away through persistent willful sinning after gaining the knowledge they have along with the degree of the Lord’s power they have enjoyed, there is no forgiveness.

Such a result for those who have experienced such spiritual highs would be tragic and the author does not want this to happen.

In an attempt not to increase the anxiety among the overly sensitive faithful among his readers, he details specifically the aspects of such a gross sin that falling away entails. Such sin is “intention, persistent, and informed.” It is grounded on having had a knowledge (*epignosis*) that is specific, full, and personal. That knowledge is of the truth (*ἀλήθεια, alētheia*). Such knowledge consists of information coming largely through revelation and confirmation of the Spirit. In the present context, the emphasis seems to be on the gospel but particularly on the absoluteness and finality of the Christian message. Through coming to recognize and know the truth, one enters the community defined by the living God.

The author states very specifically the result of deliberately abandoning and working against such truth: “there no longer remains any sacrifice for sin” (10:26b). After knowing the Lord and then rejecting and fighting against Him and His cause, such people are left to themselves without hope, recourse, or remedy for their actions.

The author has already noted that because of the Savior’s actions, the faithful should fear neither approaching the throne of grace nor the Final Judgment and that He will assure them of their joyful place in the city of their God kingdom.²¹ In 10:27, he contrasts their reward with the fate of the willfully rebellious. These, repudiating Christ’s Atonement, have traded the blessing of hope for the terrible prospect of the Father’s “fiery fierceness” (*πυρὸς ζῆλος, pyros zēlos*) upon them. They have spurned Christ’s Atonement and have sought to defame Christ and His mission. In short, they have become not only the Savior’s but also God’s enemies (*ὑπεναντίους, hypnantious*) and therefore will feel the full weight of his wrath when they stand before Him (1:13; 10:21).

To stress his point, the author once again applies what has become known as the *qal ve-homer* argument, that is, he emphasizes the greater by contrasting it with the lessor. In 10:28, he notes that those who broke certain aspects of the Mosaic law were put to death without pity.²² Through committing certain sins, they forfeited their physical lives. How much greater should the penalty be, he asks in 10:29, for those who have repudiated Christ? Through the question, he appeals to his readers’ sense of justice and fair play as a means of having them side with God’s action in taking vengeance (*ἐκδίησις, ekdikēsis*) on the sinner (10:30).

At the end of 10:29, the author skillfully and clearly describes the egregious sin the rebellious have committed. It has three aspects. The first is treating the Son of God with disdain, the Greek word *καταπατέω* (*katapateō*) suggesting trampling someone with the intent to cause injury. The verb suggests the purpose of the rebellion is to hurt the Lord and mock His Atonement.

The next aspect points specifically to their attitude about the Lord’s self-sacrifice. They have profaned (*κοινάω, koinaō*) the blood of the covenant—that is, the sacrifice that made the new covenant possible. This very blood at one time had made them holy, but in spite of that, they now claim it to be ordinary and therefore of no effect.

The final aspect looks to the climaxing insult, one toward the Spirit of Grace. The author has already noted that these people have partaken of the Holy Spirit (6:4, compare 2:4). Having done such it has left them open to a condemnation spoken by the Lord when He stated, “All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.”²³ The reason is that a witness from the Holy Ghost comes with divine authority and testifies with revelatory power to the person. The result is a sure knowledge (*ἐπίγνωσις*, *epignosis*).

Such a judgment upon the willfully rebellions, as the author suggests in 10:30, is in keeping with the scriptural record of God’s dealings with such people. The author draws his support from Deuteronomy 32:35: “Vengeance is mine, I will repay!” In this scripture, God affirms both His right to judge the rebellious and His intent to do so. The term *ἐκδίκησις* (*ekdikēsis*), “vengeance,” as applied to God denotes neither retaliation nor revenge. It is rather the judicial act of avenging unjust and persistent misdeeds directed toward one of the Father’s own. Its purpose is to vindicate that person’s faith and steadfastness. The nature and extent of this retributive punishment is up to God alone.

In 10:30, the author quotes a portion of Deuteronomy 32:36: “The Lord will judge his people” (see also Psalm 135:14). In this context, the verb *κρίνω* (*krinō*), “judge,” likely takes on the positive aspect of vindication against those hostile to God’s own. The author appears to be using the scripture as a necessary corollary to the judgment that he sees coming against the unfaithful. God will repay these for their rebellion and, by doing so, will vindicate the faith of the steadfast. By making this point, the author lays the foundation for the words of comfort and the admonition he will make in the next section.

The author concludes this section with a solemn and alarming observation: “It is a frightening thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (10:31). The words express the author’s “deep conviction of the awesome holiness of the divine majesty,” of an ever-living God whose judgment never fails against the rebellious and ungodly.²⁴

10:32–34

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 581–582.

Having served his readers with a stern warning, the author now turns to an admonition that centers on the continued blessings his audience will receive if they continue to endure through faith. In doing so, he provides the modern reader with a window through which to view the hardships that these early Saints had gone through. The author acknowledges their great struggle (*πολλὴν ἀφλησιν*, *pollēn aphlēsin*). Using words that focus on arena and theater, he appeals to the status the public gives successful athletes in the hopes of encouraging this suffering minority to act in faith and endure their difficult hardships. By doing so, they can turn their present poor circumstances into a contest

through which they can achieve the victor's crown. He recognizes that they have gone through a period characterized with sufferings, tribulations, and reproaches (10:32–33). During that time some had endured open humiliation, often being made public spectacles, perhaps even being denounced in the theaters and beaten. With courage, those not directly targeted at the moment willingly stepped forward to assist those being derided and openly cared for those imprisoned. But the big show of faith was that they accepted the seizure of their property with good will (10:34). Just how this happened the author does not state, but it is likely that this disfavored minority were all too often the victims of greedy and covetous officials not uncommon in the Greco-Roman world. This often left the person or family destitute and the family situation even harder if the head of the household was banished or imprisoned.

10:34–35

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 582.

In Hebrews 10:34, the author notes what sustained these early Christians. They had a deep witness that there was an enduring, even eternal, possession awaiting them. This stand confirmed that they already possessed that attribute of faith that the author will focus on in the next chapter—an attribute that allowed them to see the hidden reality beyond earthy horizons where a treasure both “superior” (*κρείττονα, kreittona*) and “enduring” (*μένουσαν, menousan*) awaited them.

Based on their faithful past performance and its result, the author rests the admonition he now makes (10:35). Through the rest of the paragraph, his focus is on three key attributes that he wishes his readers to inculcate: confidence (*παρρησία, parrēsia*) in standing up for Christian ideals, endurance (*ύπομονή, hypononē*) during times of trial, and faith (*πίστις, pistis*) in the promises of the covenant.

10:35–36

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 583.

In Hebrews 10:35, the author cautions his readers against abandoning (*ἀποβάλητε, apobalēte*) their confident boldness in the Lord. The nuance of the admonition is that they continue to be bold in both living and proclaiming their Christianity. Such courageous acts show that their spiritual center focuses on the eternal not the transitory. He wants them to keep this attitude up. They must be willing to pass over present ease for the heavenly great reward (*μεγάλην μισθαποδοσίαν, megalēn misthapodosian*) that he assures them they will receive.

But, as he notes in 10:36, they will need more than confidence; they will also need endurance to get through their present distress. By the power of this virtue, they will accomplish the will of God in standing up for what they believe no matter what the cost. Here we find a strong echo to 10:7–10 and the Savior’s self-sacrifice that He made to fulfill the Father’s will. The author promises his readers that through endurance they will receive the fulness of the promise of the new covenant.²⁵

10:37–39

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 584.

To bolster his point, in 10:37–38, the author appeals to scripture. Coupling Isaiah 26:20 with LXX Habakkuk 2:3–4, he shows that the coming of the Lord is not long off, therefore, those who are righteous will need to endure but for a short time longer. Any desire to hold back in giving their all will bring upon them the Lord’s displeasure. The author closes the pericope (10:39) by assuring his readers that they, himself included, are not the kind of people who would hesitate to act (*ὑποστολής*, *hypostolēs*, the word denoting all signs of timidity, shrinking back, or hesitation) which would lead to destruction of the soul, but rather they are the kind who, through trust in making and keeping covenants with God, preserve the soul.

Hebrews 11

Overview

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 585.

The eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews is one of the most famous passages of the entire book (and, in many ways, of the entire New Testament). In this section, the author of Hebrews uses examples and allusions from the Old Testament to illustrate the importance of faith in the theological argument he is making. He begins with a description of faith, briefly discusses the elders (that is, those faithful Old Testament progenitors whom he will use as his examples), then shows how the activities and blessings of the various named individuals, beginning with Abel and ending with “the prophets,” demonstrates the manifold ways they expressed their faith.

The illustrations are of interest for at least two reasons. The first is that the accounts often include details that are not available in the biblical record as we currently have it. Whether these are interpretive additions or represent traditions available to the author of Hebrews, we do not know. The second is seeing how the author was able to make the Old Testament relevant to the needs of its readers.

11:1

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 592, 594–596.

The author begins this chapter with a description of faith (*πίστις, pistis*). The noun *pistis* can be translated as “trust, confidence, faith,” with “faith” being used by most biblical translators. Although the first readers of Hebrews probably understood this definition, that is not necessarily the case today. The different translations of this verse in the various modern translations and the differing interpretations in scholarly commentaries and papers witness to the difficulty in properly understanding this definition. The author’s objective, however, seems clear. He has crafted his first sentence such that it would stimulate his readers into a life of obedience to God.

How is faith the reality of things hoped for? Again, the examples the author presents are helpful. Because faith is expressed in enduring obedience, and this trait is the requirement for attaining eternal life, anyone who exercises faithful obedience will ultimately obtain all the promised blessings.

Taking the whole sentence together, it appears that the things hoped for already exist and are therefore an unseen reality. From the context of the chapter, they consist of such things as God’s acceptance, receiving his blessings and power in this life, and eventually eternal life. These are hoped for primarily because their full attainment is reserved for the future. What the author seems to have in mind by the phrase “things not seen” is that the power of God is available to His people while yet in the present, and it is a power that is not perceived or understood by those without faith. Thus, the author’s admonition to draw near is for the reception of the benefits available here and now, while his counsel to hold fast pertains to the final salvation in the future (4:14, 16; 10:22–23).

11:3

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 596–597.

In Hebrews 11:3, the author states that faith enables the believer to understand that God created entire worlds through the operation of His word.²⁶ The author of Hebrews has already noted that it was the Son “by whom [God] made the worlds” (1:2). Compare this with what God said to Moses: “By the word of my power, have I created [worlds without number], which is mine Only Begotten Son, . . . and I also created them for mine own purpose; and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten” (Moses 1:32–33). Also in the beginning of the Gospel of John we read, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God . . . [and] all things were made by him” (John 1:1–3).

The author emphasizes that it was through the power of invisible things—namely the word and power of God but also such things as His fidelity, providence, and love for His children—that brought the visible world into being.

11:4

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 617–618.

In Hebrews 11:4 the author begins his list of Old Testament heroes and heroines. Giving unity to the whole is the author's repeated use of the phrase "by faith" (*πίστει, pistei*), which he uses to introduce each illustration. The multiple uses of the word *serve* emphasize the point the author is driving home.

The first biblical figure the author mentions is Abel (Genesis 4:2–9; see also Moses 5:17–20). It is intriguing that the author's account of the faithful in Old Testament times begins with this figure rather than with his father, Adam. There are a number of possible explanations. Rhetorically, the purpose of this part of the discourse is to illustrate to the author's readers the various ways in which their ancestors have exercised faith. In Genesis, as it is currently constituted, there is not much to suggest that Adam exercised faith. Rhetorically, then, this chapter's point is better served by focusing on Abel rather than his father.

11:5

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 619–620.

The next individual the author focuses on, Enoch, resonates well in Latter-day Saint thought and in the worldview of the Epistle to the Hebrews. This figure, who is mentioned in only four sparse verses in Genesis 5:21–24, was a very important figure in some strands of the Judaism of the Second Temple period. As with Melchizedek, the all too brief verses found in the Bible about Enoch beg for further information. Interest is heightened especially because of the statement that he "walked with God" (Gen 5:22) and, further, the fact that, according to the English translation of the Masoretic text, instead of dying, "[Enoch] was not; for God took him" (Genesis 5:24). Hebrews follows the Septuagint and, thereby, underscores author's view of Enoch as a positive figure.

The positive figure of Enoch is by no means a required reading of Genesis. There is, in fact, a large and complex literature from the ancient world related to him and his connection to the heavenly realm, and Judaism is deeply ambivalent about Enoch. There is, in Hebrews, no ambiguity on Enoch's faithfulness—not only had he pleased God, he knew that he had done so. This recognition provided the groundwork for his faith if not amplifying it (11:6).

11:6

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 620–621.

At this point, the author makes an aside to justify how he can use Enoch as an example of faith when the scriptures do not mention it. The point the author makes is that anyone who understands how God works would know that faith must stand behind any commendation he gives for it would be impossible (*ἀδύνατος*, *adynatos*) to please God, no matter what the action, without it (11:6).

In making his declaration, the author reveals three conditions necessary for a person to truly worship deity (11:6). First, they must believe (*πιστεύω*, *pisteuō*) that God exists; second they must put considerable and sincere effort (*ἐκζητέω*, *ekzēteō*) in coming to Him with the intent of forming a bonding relationship; and third, they must believe that He rewards (He is the *μισθαποδότης*, *misthapodotēs*, “paymaster”) those who make the effort. Having made this assertion, the author continues to give scriptural examples to show its truth.

11:7

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 621.

Following Enoch, the author highlights Noah, the famous builder of the ark. The key point that Noah illustrates for the author is his faith in “things as not yet seen” (11:7), thus illustrating the thought in 11:1. The non-visual aspect of faith is a major point in the definition that the author builds up in this chapter (see 11:6, 16, 39–40), and Noah is an example without equal for he built the ark without having seen rain let alone a flood. Because of this, Noah, “condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (11:7). Thus, in addition to highlighting the non-visual aspect of faith, Noah represents the reward that is inevitable for the faithful.

11:8–22

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 636–639, 641.

Like the Bible itself, the author jumps from Noah to Abraham. Because this prophet is one of the two most important biblical figures (the other being Moses) to the Jewish congregation to which the epistle, in large part, was directed, the author gives him a good deal of attention. Abraham’s willingness to leave his homeland “not knowing whither he went” (Hebrews 11:8) provides the author with a chance to highlight two of his major themes. First, faith expresses itself in trustful obedience to God’s commands even when the objective or result of that command is not yet known. Such is not, however, blind faith. Obedience to the command is based on an assurance that God always works to the believer’s good. Sometimes faith is, admittedly, a step into the dark but one based on the success of trusting God in the past.

The second theme the author highlights using Abraham as his model is the discontent with this world felt by the followers of Christ. Even though Abraham lived, albeit as a sojourner in a promised land, it was for him a “strange country” (11:9–10). The word translated as “strange” in the KJV is *ἀλλότριος* (*allogrios*), “that which belongs to another,” but carries the nuance of that which is foreign, alien, and, therefore, strange. When pushed, it can even refer to that which is hostile to one’s well-being. The tension arose because Abraham, with the other patriarchs “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (11:10). This is significant especially in reference to 11:13–16, where the author extends the migration of Abraham and the sojourn of the patriarchs into an anticipation of living in God’s country.

With 11:13–16, the author breaks the flow of his narrative to make a point. It is easy to see why the author chose to do so. The point he wishes to make—faith’s ability to open the eyes of the righteous so they can see the ultimate reality and respond thereto—fits well with the patriarchal generation, and more explicitly with Abraham than with his son and grandson whose story he uses as a bridge to get to Moses. A counterpoint can most certainly be drawn from the wilderness generation who never had the faith to see that they could possess the Promised Land let alone the eternal city. Not so for the patriarchs.

In this section, the author emphasizes the nomadic aspects of the patriarchs’ lives stating that because of their faith they “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” He emphasizes they could have had it differently, but refused (11:15). This is all part of his lead up to one of the most important verses in this section: “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly” (11:16). Thus the attitude of Abraham (and his descendants) becomes an example of the one the Saint should have toward the things of the world. Their feelings also betray the longings of the righteous for our heavenly home.

At this point, the author brings Sarah (one of two women mentioned in this section) into view. Her role however is secondary for the focus remains on Abraham’s faith in God’s promise that he would sire a son, but through Sarah. She therefore played the essential role in bringing the promise to pass. Still it was Abraham who “judged him faithful who had promised” (11:11). This verse is important because it provides focus on another aspect of faith the author is developing, that of righteous people’s response to God’s faithfulness. The focus of the adjective is on trustworthiness and dependability, and ties to the idea of “the realization of things hoped for” (11:1) that faithful people have in the promises of God. As noted in 11:6, the reason people can express faith in God is because of their trust in Him to do as He says. Abraham’s response to God’s promise amply illustrates this aspect of faith.

In 11:17–19, the author discusses the attempted sacrifice of Isaac as recorded in Genesis 22. The importance of the illustration he uses here, as with the one above, is that it emphasizes that faith reveals itself in complete confidence in God’s trustworthiness. This particular trial of faith was based on the incongruity between God’s promise that through Isaac would Abraham’s large posterity come and his demand that Abraham sacrifice his son.

The author’s focus is on *why* Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac. The author has already stressed that God keeps covenants (6:13–20). The only way God could do that, as the author states in 11:19, is that

Abraham accounted that God was fully able to raise Isaac up from the dead. The Greek word translated as “accounted” is the aorist participle λογισάμενος (*logisamenos*) that carries the idea of evaluating or considering an idea very carefully and fully. The use of the word indicates that Abraham had been most careful in developing his faith in God and on that basis could, at this point, take God at His word that, even though that flew in the face of what God now demanded, Isaac would be the source of Abraham’s posterity.

The author next focuses on each of the patriarchs in turn, although not with equal coverage. Isaac, although important in the above discussion, receives only a brief mention that focuses on his prophetic ability revealed in his blessings to his children (11:20; see Genesis 27). Intriguingly there is no reference to the wrangling between Jacob and Esau. Given the generally negative valence that Esau/Edom had in Jewish writings of the second temple period, the omission is noteworthy but likely was left out because it did not demonstrate an aspect of faith the author needed.

Like Isaac, Jacob is included in this section and, like his father, the focus is on his prophetic ability as demonstrated in his blessings upon the heads of Joseph’s sons (Hebrews 11:21). The pattern continues with Joseph who prophesied that the Hebrews would return to the promised land (11:22). The author does not use any of the events in Joseph’s life that definitely show his faithfulness to God and God’s response to him (for example, refusing Potiphar’s wife or interpreting dreams). These patriarchs are used to highlight but one aspect of faith, that of seeing the future.

11:23–28

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 648–650, 652.

These verses continue the historical progression moving from Abel through Abraham and his descendants to arrive at Moses. This prophet’s section is, along with Abraham’s, one of the longest and most important parts of Hebrews 11. With Moses, the author moves both temporally and canonically from the book of Genesis to that of Exodus.

This section contains themes the author has already developed: faith as the means of seeing what is not naturally visible (11:27); Jehovah as the giver of rewards (11:26); and the escape from mortal death or near death (11:23, 28). The material in this section is, however, distinctive showing “the necessity for faith to make hard choices in the face of danger (although that certainly was the case for Abraham as well!), human wrath, and dishonor (11:23, 25–26, 27, 31). Faith demands fearing God rather than human rulers (11:23, 27).”²⁷

Hebrews 11:23 further emphasizes what the author of Hebrews wants to teach about faith. In discussing Moses, the author notes that, “by faith, Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents.” The way the KJV reads, it appears that Moses was exercising faith “when he was born.” The Greek text makes it clear, however, that it was his parents who were exercising faith and gives the reason why: they

could see he was handsome (*ἀστεῖος*, *asteios*). The word connotes a person of class and good breeding as well as one who has good features and charm. But under the word lies the suggestion that Moses's parents saw his divine potential. Indeed, they seemed to have sensed in him one who could resist all that Egypt offered in order to follow God (compare 11:24–25).

Focusing on Moses, the author notes that by faith, Moses gave up the riches of Egypt with its accompanying sinful lifestyle (11:24–25). It is of note that the author equates Egyptian rule with sin, likely because it meant the persecution of God's people. This verse affirms that the faith that allowed his parents to "see" his potential proved true. Like them, he could choose how to act in the present—that is, giving up a life of ease—because he possessed the vision that faith gives.

The author does not mention the singular act through which Moses forcefully separated himself from all things Egyptian. It was by killing an Egyptian in defense of two Hebrews who were being threatened by this task master (Exodus 2:11–12). The book of Exodus and the Epistle to the Hebrews come together on this matter by noting that the event took place "when [Moses] was grown" (*μέγας γενόμενος*, *me gas genomenos*). Moses's action made reconciliation between himself and Pharaoh impossible. It also shows the disdain with which Moses held the Egyptian taskmasters and suggests his opinion of all Egyptians in general.

At some point as Moses grew to maturity, through faith he came to see and desire what Jehovah promised. Motivated by this vision, he not only rejected Egypt and all it offered but viewed it as sin. Further, he willingly suffered with his people for the cause he knew was right (11:26). The author's intent comes out clearly here. He shows that Moses, through the vision faith brings, understood that by suffering he identified with the Messiah who was to come. The author's readers would have understood this was Jesus. Through Moses's example, the author encouraged them to imitate both Moses and the Savior. They, too, had to endure in faithful obedience the present distress for the cause of Jesus.

Being able to continually see Jehovah, as it were, gave Moses not only the incentive to face Pharaoh but also to do so without fear. He knew that the earthly ruler's power was no match for the invisible God (11:27). Moses had indeed experienced that power sometime before when he was "caught up unto an exceedingly high mountain" and there "saw God face to face, and he talked with him, and the glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his presence" (Moses 1:2). At that time the Lord revealed to him much of the history of the earth along with a glimpse of his creative power. When the vision was over, Moses concluded, "man is nothing," (Moses 1:10) and that included Pharaoh.

With the eye of faith, Moses commanded the Israelites to sprinkle blood on the lintels and posts of their doors. In doing so, he assured the Hebrews, the destroying angel would pass over them, not taking their first born (11:28). Of all the signs of Jehovah's power executed by Moses and Aaron, the final one was the greatest in two respects. First, it did what none of the other signs did: it humbled the Egyptian Pharaoh to the point that he let Israel go. Second, and more importantly, it displayed Jehovah's power to save his people through their faith.

But with all the elements the author highlights, what is conspicuously absent is a mention of Moses's receiving the Law. In the biblical account, this was the primary activity that Moses performed "by faith." Its absence is especially noticeable in light of the epistle's emphasis on law. It is likely, however, because the emphasis in Hebrews 11 is on the personal activities and actions which are derived from faith in God, that the author wants the focus to remain here rather than on God's response to that faith. Through the example of Moses, the author is able to focus on the reality of the "unseen" power which attends and sustains the righteous and enables them to do God's will despite threat or opposition. That is not to say that the author has lost sight of his theme of the future fulfillment of God's promises. He has not, but his focus is different here. It allows him to show how faith can assist his readers in their present difficult circumstances. Using these examples from Moses's life, the author strives to stimulate and encourage his audience to continue living with faith in God in face of persecution with its accompanying shame and rejection.

11:29–40

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 650, 664–668, 670–671.

The author of Hebrews is moving his audience historically, albeit not chronologically, through the Bible. He begins in 11:29–31 with the Exodus and stories from the book of Joshua. The first two examples break with the author's pattern of naming individuals, but simply look at the deeds done "by faith." The first act of faith is that of Israel as they followed Moses into the Red Sea (Exodus 14). Though they began the journey by fearing Pharaoh, they ended up reverencing Jehovah. The second act of faith was that of Israel before the fortress Jericho where their faith triggered Jehovah's action in causing its walls to fall (Joshua 6). The juxtaposition of the examples, though following chronological order, also tacitly suggests that as the new generation of Israelites entered the promised land, their faith had become Moses-like.

These and the verses that follow show that the author continues to emphasize that aspect of faith that expresses itself as confidence in God's real power that, though unseen, will and does manifest itself in the present as the people remain true. In doing so, the author is not depersonalizing the power but stressing the extent of its results. There is a tacit contrasting lesson to be learned here. When the Egyptian army, in a determined faithlessness that despised Jehovah's power, tried to cross the Sea, the Sea "swallowed [them] up" (*καταπίνω, καταπίνω*). The lesson anticipates God's final judgment (see 12:25–29) and clearly warns all that those who do not live by faith, but spurn God, will face the judgment of Him who is an all "consuming fire" (12:29).

In 11:29, the author describes one more sign that Jehovah would enact—that of splitting the Red Sea allowing Israel to cross on dry ground. Both of these acts (the destroying angel passing over the children of Israel and Moses parting the Red Sea) highlight the author's point that faith is the ability to see what is coming and to appropriately respond to the will of God. When Moses commanded the Israelites to mark

their homes, he did so because, through faith, he could see what was about to happen. When he brought them to the shores of the Red Sea, it was because he, through faith, could see what needed to be done.

In 11:30–31 the author focuses on the fall of Jericho reminding his readers of two associated events. The first is that, by faith, the walls of Jericho fell but not as a consequence of the Israelite siege (11:30). Noteworthy is that the author gives credit for the faith not to Joshua alone, even though he led the people, but to the people as a whole. After all, the walls fell down “after they were compassed [by the Israelites] about seven days,” tacitly giving Jehovah the credit but in response to the people’s corporate faith.

In 11:31 the author returns to his pattern of using specific individuals as examples. Here he notes the acts of Rahab (11:31). According to the text of Joshua 6:17, she was a harlot (Hebrew זֶנֶה רִי, *zōnāh*, Greek πόρνη, *pornē*) but one that was not devoid of faith. The author notes that she did not perish “with those who were disobedient.” The word translated as “disobedient” (ἀπειθεῶ, *apetheō*) carries the nuance of defiance in face of persuading evidence. The disobedient in this passage are, therefore, those who were unwilling to be persuaded even though they knew of Jehovah’s power. Rahab believed and therefore assisted the Israelite spies likely repenting of her past life as she became one with God’s people.

Rahab is significant in the context of the author’s discussion for five reasons: first, with Sarah, she represents the female side of faith; second, she is not an Israelite, but rather a Canaanite (and therefore outside of the Mosaic covenant). This suggests that, for the author, faith is not specifically bound up with Hebrew descent. What counts is not ethnicity, but one’s response to God’s word. Although this epistle is nearly always addressed to a Jewish Christian audience, it was an audience with quite a number of Gentile converts. These would have resonated with this example. Third, her former life shows that faith and its blessings are not contingent on previous merit. When she heard, she believed, accepted God’s will, and acted on her belief. In the end, that faith not only saved her but also her whole family (Joshua 2:12–13; 6:25). Fourth, like Moses, she identified with the children of Israel. When she met the spies, she welcomed them with “peace,” a salutation used by God’s own people. With that salutation she showed herself to be one with them. Finally, she is an excellent example of the aspect of faith the author, in this section, is highlighting. She believed in God and His power and acted accordingly.

The final section begins with verse 32 and runs through verse 40. These verses are different than the previous ones in that none of them are introduced by the phrase “through faith.” By dropping the phrase, the author is able to quickly and pointedly push his argument by listing person after person who exercised the kind of faith he wants his readers to emulate.

Beginning with 11:33–35, the author gives nine examples of the products of faith. The first two and the last two describe political successes. Three refer to those who escaped death. Then comes the general description of those who “were strengthened in weakness.” The section ends climactically with a stand-alone example, this one not of powerful men and marching armies, but of humble women whose faith overcame death and brought their children back to life.

Thus, we see that the author briefly focuses on a number of remarkable even miraculous activities that these people did because of their faith. His note that they “subdued kingdoms” (likely a reference to the success of Israel’s various rulers who subdued the various peoples who fought against them during the period of the Judges and kings), “wrought righteousness” and realized God-given promises. Because of the number the author could have had in mind, it is impossible to determine exactly who they might have been. It should be noted, however, that the actions he does numerate reflect one of the major themes in the book of Hebrews. It is that faithfulness brings the realization of the covenantal promises that come through Jehovah.

The author includes one who “stopped the mouth of lions.” This is likely Daniel whose story of being tossed into the den of lions is told in Daniel 6. In fact, Daniel 6:22 uses language echoed in Hebrews 11:33 when it says that God sent an angel who “shut the lions’ mouths.” The author next mentions those who “quenched the violence of fire.” He appears to have Daniel’s three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, in mind here. Because they would not bow to the king’s idol, he had them thrown into a great burning furnace. Instead of being burned, they walked “around in the midst of the fire, and . . . [had] no hurt” (Daniel 3:25).

The other acts of faith the author notes briefly in Hebrews 11:34 seem to refer to other faithful people whose actions are recorded in the book of Judges and elsewhere. These “escaped the edge of the sword, were strengthened in weakness, were made mighty in battle, [and] caused enemy armies to retreat.”

In 11:35 the author mentions faith-filled “women received their dead raised again to life.” The allusion is likely to the miracles of Elijah and Elisha for both responded to the faith of women and restored each of their children to life (1 Kings 17:18–23; 2 Kings 4:16–37).

We must emphasize that the author of Hebrews is realistic enough to know that faith does not always result in miracles. In 11:35 he tells of biblical heroes who “were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.” The word for torture (*τυμπανίζω*, *tympanizō*) refers to being beaten to death.

The remainder of the references in chapter 11 note traditions that are not in the Bible as we have it. They do have a connection through the Old Testament apocrypha which is part of the Septuagint thus supporting the idea that the author was referring to stories contained there. For example, the note in verse 37 that some were “sawn asunder” may refer to the tradition holding that the prophet Isaiah was martyred in this way.

The author’s aside in 11:38 that the world was not worthy of these people is full of irony. The worldly he has in view went out of their way to judge, ostracize, and make miserable the lives of the faithful. But the unrighteous’s complete condemnation of the faithful will prove a mirror of God’s complete condemnation of them. The misery they invoked on the righteous will be but an echo of the pain that they will suffer in hell.

In 11:39–40, the author concludes his treatise on faith. His statement in 11:39, given the many examples he has provided, that “all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised”

(11:39) is a bit startling. When we realize, however, that one of the overall themes of this epistle is the superiority of Jesus and His new covenant over Moses and the old, then we see why the author makes this point. Therefore, his readers must not confuse the fulfillment of the promises (11:11, 33) with the fulfillment of *the* promise. Many of the biblical heroes he refers to not only received promises but also saw them fulfilled, but none realized what the author referred to as the promise of “something better” (*κρεῖττόν τι, kreitton ti*; 11:40). According to his statement in 9:15, the promise consisted of obtaining an “eternal heritage.”

That these righteous people received divine commendation shows that the failure was not their fault. It was because something more had to be done before they could realize it. And so strong was their faith that they were willing to endure all the unfair abuses of life and temporarily forego receiving the promise until the necessary conditions had been met. That happened with the Atonement of Christ and the possibilities it opened.

Although all of these Old Testament heroes were faithful in their day, their final salvation and promised rewards had to wait until the ministry of Jesus Christ was finished. Though they labored under God’s authority, it was bound by the Mosaic Law and governed by the Aaronic order of the priesthood and therefore did not have the Melchizedek ordinances necessary for salvation. It was only after the Lord made the Atonement that the way was prepared for all to receive these ordinances and thus have the door opened to exaltation. As is the usual case in the Epistle to the Hebrews (even this long segment which draws example after example from the Old Testament) the final purpose of this chapter is to point toward Jesus and his saving work.

In this light, it would appear that the author of Hebrews understood that the cleansing, perfecting, and preparing of people for eternal life had to wait until the new covenant had been initiated and work for the dead begun. The Atonement activated the new covenant and allowed, at last, forgiveness of sins, justification, sanctification and eternal salvation to be fully realized for those not only under the new covenant but also the old.

Hebrews 12

12:1

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 690–691.

In this section, the author begins his exhortation. In verse 12:1, he creates the imagery of a large coliseum filled with spectators watching an athletic contest. These spectators are witnesses (*μάρτυρες, martyres*) to the power of faith for, through that means, they have already participated successfully in the games. But their role in this instance is passive. It is the author’s readers who have the active part for they are the

ones who must now run the race. The audience, however, plays an important role for they show the race can be won, their vast number emphasizing the point. The witnesses act as the cheering section energizing those who must now run. They empower the new athletes by giving them assurance and hope that, if they will run, they too will succeed.

Continuing his analogy, the author advises his readers to strip themselves of sin as a runner removes everything that will impede his speed. Given that Olympic athletes competed in the buff, the imagery suggests putting off all sin. The author is a realist recognizing just what sin is. He refers to it as “an impediment” that “hinders” (*εὐπερίστατος*, *euperistatos*) progress because it stands in the way of securing the reward.

With encouragement, the author relates what is necessary to win the prize. The key is “steadfast endurance” (*ὑπομονή*, *hypomonē*). By the rules of this game, the race is not just to the swift but to the sure. Everyone who crosses the finish line, no matter how long it takes, wins the full prize. For that reason the author admonishes his readers “with steadfast endurance, [to] run the race that is set before us” (12:1). He has already shown that it can be done because Christ, the great “Forerunner,” has opened the way (6:19–20). This is a privileged race because it will take all who endure to the promised prize. It is, however, self-selecting because any who desire are admitted.

12:2

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 691, 693.

From Hebrews 3:1–6, the author has prepared his readers to look to Jesus as the author and perfecter of faith. Here in 12:2, the author admonished them to look away from the world and fasten their eyes exclusively (*ἀφορέω*, *aphoreō*) on this author and perfecter. He has already successfully run the race of faithful endurance. In doing so, he not only has shown that it is possible but also that he is in a position to assist those who are now running. Because he has become High Priest and Savior, sitting on the right hand of God (4:14–5:11) they can look to Him to receive the promised rewards in mortality (as the many examples the author has given act as witnesses) and the final reward in the eternal city. In short, Jesus makes winning the race not only possible but sure.

With his statement that Jesus “endured the cross, disregarding its shame and ‘sat down on the right hand of God’s throne,’” the author shows precisely not only what Jesus did to perfect faith but also what He did to perfect faith-filled individuals (12:2; compare 2 Nephi 9:18). His motivation was to make them fit to receive the reward He has for them. The author notes three things the Lord did specifically: He endured the suffering of the cross, disregarded its shame, and took His place at God’s side. Because of these He is in the perfect position to act as Savior.

12:3

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 697.

In Hebrews 12:3 the author explains why he wants his readers to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus: so that they will follow His example and not become weary or lose motivation in face of the opposition they are going through. The author’s admonition echoes athletic training in which participants push themselves so they do not become overly weak or unduly fatigued during the actual contest. But as difficult this training is for the author’s readers, it was harder for the Lord. He faced not only outright and personally painful hostility (*ἀντιλογία, antilogia*) but also death. The Christians are not to consider Him only on the basis of the example He set for them but on what, through His endurance, He became—the one having full power to sustain them through their present trials.

12:4

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 697–698.

Unlike the Lord, the author notes, his readers have not yet resisted unto blood (*μέχρις αἵματος, mechris haimatos*) in their struggle against sin. The verbs “resist” (*ἀντικαθίστημι, antikathistēmi*) and “struggle” (*ἀνταγωνίζομαι, antagōnizomai*) were associated with the athletic contest and particularly boxing. This sport was especially brutal and bloody because the participants’ gloves were inlaid with bits of metal. Such stark imagery likely reminded the author’s readers of the lengths they needed to go in order to endure in faith and to defend the kingdom.

The focus of their resistance is against sin (*ἁμαρτία, hamartia*). In Hebrews 12:4 the focus is not on sin in general but on sin as expressed in opposition to God and His people. It is against this that the author encourages his readers to struggle. The present participle he uses denotes the need for continual striving against those forces that are battering the Saints. To bolster them, he appeals to the Savior’s own struggle against His adversaries even to death. There is a hint here, however, that His ultimate victory will also be theirs.

12:5–13

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 698–701.

The rest of this section of the author’s work rests on Proverbs 3:11–12. In Hebrews 12:5–6, he quotes it, in 12:7–11 he interprets it, and in 12:12–13 he applies it. His purpose is to encourage his readers to continue their faithful endurance. He uses the Proverb to introduce the theme of discipline (*παιδεία, paideia*) and

developments of its use and importance. The term has a negative connotation often referring to the chastisement a good father must inflict on a wayward child.²⁸ God put Israel under His discipline and was not above using severe disciplinary measures to correct them.²⁹

After Judah's return from Babylonian bondage, the idea of discipline developed another dimension. This was that Jehovah's teachings and loving hand was to be experienced through suffering. It was by this that righteousness and perfection could be achieved. The author picks up this theme to show his readers that suffering is a sign of God's love and, therefore, is no reason to lose courage. Indeed, it is a sign of their legitimacy in the divine family and that they are accepted by Him (12:6). The author has already taught that it was fitting that the Father perfect His Son through suffering (2:10). Here the author shows that it is also appropriate for the rest of God's children to so suffer in order to reach the same end. Such suffering is, therefore, not a chastening for an individual's sins (indeed, of these Christ has already cleansed him). Though the word "discipline" (*παιδεία, paideia*) carries the idea of training and instruction, it transcends these marking the Father's use of opposition as the means to strengthen and fortify His children. He does this so that they can both stay on and make progress along His path. The Father's discipline betokens their legitimacy as it did that of His only begotten Son and in doing so unites children with Son.

In 12:7–10, he uses the example of human upbringing. As mortal fathers are willing to chastise their children for their own good and growth, so too does God. The discipline can carry harsh measures as 12:6 shows, including that of being chastised (*μαστιγῶω, mastigoō*). The noun carries the idea, however, that punishment is not the purpose but the means to further the person's well-being. If they resist such discipline they are not only defying God and rejecting His love but also cutting themselves off from the growth such can produce.

The author makes an arresting point. In his example, a person has either a legitimate or an illegitimate status with God. Concerning an illegitimate status, because of the mores of the day the father was not responsible for one "baseborn" (*νόθος, nothos*) under Roman law. The child, from a civic or familial standpoint, had no place in the family and, therefore, need not be accepted. The author's point is that if an individual had no one to discipline him, it meant he had no head of household to be concerned about and deal with him. On the other hand, if he were disciplined, it meant he was legitimate and had a place in the family.

In 12:9, the author refers to "fathers of our flesh" and the "Father of our spirits." The noun *father* carries a strong nuance. In the patriarchal societies, the father had two primary responsibilities. First, he was the head of the household and therefore commanded respect due to his absolute authority. Second, he was responsible for providing for and guarding his family. This included inculcating his children with both moral and intellectual ideals. Theologically, the term when applied to God enforced the idea of His absolute authority but also His merciful love and served as background for His law and the discipline it demanded.

As the author of Hebrews notes in 12:10, God disciplines to bring about one condition, that of holiness (*ἀγιότης, hagiotes*). This condition is necessary for a person to abide in God's presence.

Though admitting in 12:11 that undergoing discipline is not at all pleasant while a person is going through it, the author points out that there is great reward for those who yield themselves to God's training hand. These souls eventually partake of the fruit of their continual effort which is the peaceful quality of life shared by the righteous.

The author concludes this section of his discourse (12:12–13) with an admonition that his readers push forward directly toward the eternal city. In doing so, he has come back to the beginning of his discussion in which he urged his readers “to run the race set before them” (12:1). In doing so, they will confirm the road that the “lame,” that is, the spiritually weak, should also take. Whether the term “lame” refers to the weak within the Christian community or to the community itself, those who walk the path will set an encouraging example for the weak to follow. For those who do run by making the path either “for their feet,” by moving obstacles out of the way, or “with their feet,” by walking in a straight course, the Saint will show the “lame” that the walk can be done and also provide the way not only to safeguard the weak against any further injuries but also to allow healing to occur.

12:14

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 708–709.

The author begins this argument with an imperative, *διώκετε* (*diōkete*), “seek,” which carries the nuance of rapidly and decisively moving toward an objective. In this case there are not one but three objectives. The first one is peace, the second one holiness, and the third guarding against bitterness.

12:15

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 711.

In 12:15 the author continues his admonition but one that holds a stiff warning. Though speaking to his readership as a whole, he shows concern for a specific group, those who are struggling with their faith. In this verse, he admonishes the members to take responsibility for one another, see to it (*episkopeō*) that struggling souls do not fall from grace (*charis*). If a member, did so, it would mean losing grace's empowerment which would leave these vulnerable Saints without the additional spiritual strength that they desperately need.

The third state the author wants his readers to watch out for is bitterness (*πικρία, pikria*) that, if it took root in the community, could result in the defiling the whole (*μαίново, miainō*). Bitterness often expresses itself in animosity and anger. The latter particularly can stand in the way of peace and can easily cause trouble (*ἐνοχλέω, enochleō*) the author warns. That trouble could express itself in strained relationships between members of the Church, their Gentile associates and antagonists, and even with God and Christ.

12:16

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 711–712.

The author's real concern, however, focuses more on the individual than on the community. He fears open apostasy that would result from the member's losing the grace of God, that enabling power that finds victory in spite of opposition (compare 4:16). Since those running the race do not do so fully on their own power, "falling short" (*ὕστερον, husterōn*) of grace guarantees their failure.

Based on this, the author gives clear instructions to his readers (12:16) to safeguard the community of believers from immoral and profane people. He uses as his example Esau. Jacob's brother became the epitome of a profane, thus godless man. Such a person lives without the godly fear so manifest in the faithful.³⁰ Though such are aware of God's promises, they reject the idea that God has power and spurn the promised reward. Such was Esau. For a single meal of bread and lentil soup, he sold to Jacob his birthright and after eating simply got up and walked away without a single thread of remorse (Genesis 25:34).

12:17

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 713.

In Hebrews 12:17, the author gives a severe warning again using Esau as an example. The hunter had the great blessing of the birthright. It was his alone and could not be contested by heaven or earth. However, in his younger years he had no regard for it. Jacob took advantage of his brother's disregard exchanging the blessing for "bread and pottage of lentils" (Genesis 25:34). Noteworthy is how easily Esau give the birthright away including swearing a solemn oath (Genesis 25:33) that likely invoked the name of Jehovah as witness. Making an oath was a potential self- curse because the procedure usually called on the divine to take action against the oath-maker if he broke it. Esau's actions gave the birthright to Jacob (Genesis 25:33) and God stood behind it. By making the oath, Esau forfeited any and all rights to it even if he changed his mind.

Though unstated, the author's warning is clear. What happened to Esau because he did not value and safeguard what was his, could also happen to any of the Saints. By having disrespect for God's grace, they too could put themselves beyond repentance's grasp and eternally lose their place in the heavenly Jerusalem.

12:18–24

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 724–728, 731.

At this point, the author brings to a climax the rhetorical elements to his epistle (Hebrews 12:18–24). He divides it into two distinct sections, the first indicated by “you have not come” (12:18) and the second by “you have come” (12:22). Though the author bunches up items in two lists to emphasize his point, the two lists are not parallel. Their purpose is to emphasize the difference between the conditions faced by the rebellious Hebrews and faithful Christians. Impersonal, climatic, and terrifying features dominate the first list while personal, warm, and joyous features dominate the second. Taken together, the two lists make yet another warning (albeit this one is quite subtle) and appeal. The author is fearful that his readers are in danger of missing out on the great blessing that the Father has bestowed and will bestow because of the sacrifice of the Son and his concern colors his exhortation. Even so, encouragement dominates the pericope.

In this section the author is reaching out to his readers in a climatic synthesis exhorting them to persevere in faith so that they do not lose what they have gained or worse, find themselves condemned before God. Because of what Christ as author, High Priest, and guarantor of the new covenant has done, He has opened the way to the heavenly Mount Zion for those who believe. On the other hand, He has also intensified the peril of Mount Sinai for those who follow the way of the unfaithful Israelites.

The author has so shaped his use of the Old Testament narrative that it accentuates the point he wishes to make. Noteworthy is that he does not even name the mountain but calls it “a place that can be touched” (12:18). By doing so, he acknowledges it has an actual geographical location, but underplays its name and site so that he can concentrate on its terrible majesty and forbidding nature. Both qualities are emphasized by Jehovah’s command that if anything, whether beast or human, approached the mount, it was to be killed. Thus, the author has skillfully made Sinai a symbol of both exclusion from Jehovah’s presence and of His dreadful judgment. The images of burning fire, darkness, foreboding gloom, and finally, roiling tempest create a terrifying picture. As the author tells it, even Moses both feared and trembled (12:21). Due to the author’s skill, Sinai has become a “fear-engendering event.” In this way, he has made it a foreshadowing of the result of apostasy and, thus, served as a tacit warning to his readers.

The metaphorical Mount Zion of verse 22 referred less to a location and more to the environment of righteousness associated with God’s people and His sanctuary, shedding the often negative and sometimes scathing nuances associated with the earthly Jerusalem. The antithetical relationship between city and mount, though not fully consistent in all the prophetic writings, remains ever more positive for Mount Zion. The term nuanced the place that enjoyed God’s blessing and peace. More fully, it figuratively referred to the cultic center and the community of the righteous as covenant keepers. Even so, Jerusalem, in spite of its association with rebellion and judgment, held both hope and promise. The prophets saw a future day when it would again be God’s city and the center of His heavenly reign—it would become Mount Zion.

The author of Hebrews points out that though Christ has done away with the old covenant with its Sinaitic attachments, He left joined, under the new covenant, the heavenly mount and heavenly city. In describing the place with three names, Zion, the city of the living God, and Jerusalem, the author indicates that it is a

real place but one that needs multiple terms to catch its manifold dimensions. One image simply cannot catch its breadth, majesty, and power. All the descriptions, however, point not just to the dwelling place of God but also to the place of “rest” for His people (3:1–4:11).

Zion, however, is not a city where residence can be achieved only in the future. Though the city is heavenly, membership therein can still be realized by mortals. Indeed, the author insists that these Christians have already come to Mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22). They have done so by entering into the new covenant which has provided for each member a key to a heavenly home in the eternal city. The possibility has become a reality for them because of the self-sacrifice of their Savior. That reality has been vouchsafed by their association with those who already dwell there—angels and just men and women made perfect in Christ.³¹ Thus the city is for them, both a present reality and also their ultimate future destiny. The author’s concern is that, though they now possess the very key to an eternal home, they can, if they do not endure in faithfulness, lose it and its attendant blessings.

In 12:23, the author shows the new celestial center to be the home of myriads of angels and also the assembly of the firstborn ones (*πρωτοτόκω, prōtotokōn*). The picture is one of a vast congregation in a celebration of joyful worship (*πανήγυρις, panēgyris*). It echoes the “Sabbath rest” and joy the author stated would be the destiny of the people of God (4:9). The author speaks of the “firstborn ones” as an exclusive group. It consists of all of God’s children from Adam and Eve on who willingly accept Jesus Christ (the Firstborn of the Father) as their Savior and Redeemer, and through obedience to His gospel become “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17). Each will obtain in heaven “all that [the] Father hath” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:38). In modern revelation, the Lord has declared, “I say unto you, I was in the beginning with the Father, and am the Firstborn; And all those who are begotten through me are partakers of the glory of the same, and are the church of the Firstborn” (Doctrine and Covenants 93:21–22).

With 12:24, the author reaches the climax of this pericope. The focus is on “Christ, the guarantor of the new covenant.” It is He who has made all the blessings the author has described in 12:22–23 possible and acts as guarantor for the faithful.³² Thus the blood He shed is better than that of Abel, for while the latter demanded vengeance and separation, the former makes possible forgiveness and oneness (12:24).

With the mention of Abel, the author has brought this portion of his argument full circle (see 11:4). The opening of the circle began with reference to the blood of this righteous soul and the closing of that circle now brings that blood again to the attention of the author’s readers. He does so, however, to make a point of contrast that allows him to stress what other and better blood has done, namely that of Jesus. It has made the blessing of having place on Mount Zion and in the heavenly Jerusalem possible. Further, those who come under its effects, He makes not only righteous but also perfect meeting all the requirements of celestial glory. Thus, they become members of the Church of the Firstborn and can commune with just men and women who also have been made perfect. They become part of the “festal assembly” (*πανήγυρις, panēgyris*) who rejoice because of what the Savior has done in putting all weakness, care, sorrow, suffering, and sin behind them (12:22).

12:25

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 739.

The author, leaving the positive vision of Mount Zion, again returns to the major purpose of his epistle: to warn against apostasy. He begins his dissuasion by admonishing (*βλέπετε, blepete*) his readers that they do not reject the clear instructions coming from the Father through the Son (12:25). Through Him—the faithful, obedient, self-sacrificing High Priest, who presides over His people—the Father now speaks from heaven. The author’s use of the present tense of the verb emphasizes the continuing nature of the revelation and inspiration that as yet continues to flow through the Church. The author’s words show that both the Father and the Son are as active and as present as Jehovah was at Sinai. To the Christian generation they are extending the same heavenly calling (3:1) to be God’s people and receive the associated blessings.

But God’s closeness brings with it both responsibility and consequences. They must listen to God and not refuse (*παραιτέομαι, paraiteomai*) His word or “turn away” (*ἀποστρέφομαι, apostrephomai*) from Him as did the faithless wilderness generation. To do so would put them under the same divine censure as the rebellious Israelites who refused to listen to the voice of God at Sinai.

12:26

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 740.

At 12:26, the author introduces his second *qal waḥomer* argument. He focuses on the verb “to shake” (*σαλεύω, saleuō*) referring to the time when God’s presence shook the earth. Here he contrasts “at that time,” referring to when the earth shook at Sinai, with “but now,” referring to when heaven and earth will shake due to God’s coming judgment. To bolster his point, the author references Haggai 2:6 stating that God will shake earth and heaven (compare Doctrine and Covenants 43:18; 84:118). He interprets the warning found there as God’s promise for the future. It seems at first puzzling that the author would refer to judgment by the positive word “promise” (*ἀπαγγελλομαι, arangellomai*), but in this context we can see that the author’s thrust is to encourage his readers to ever greater faithfulness even during times of anxiety and fear. That God will shake heaven and earth should hold no fear for the Christian because their abode is not in the weak transitory arena that cannot withstand the shaking but in Mount Zion and the heavenly City that are impervious to such (compare Doctrine and Covenants 45:32).

12:27

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 740–741.

In 12:27, the author interprets for his readers the message of Haggai. The phrase “yet once more” (*eti hapax*), found there, as he understands it, is critical to his message. The phrase refers to a single, decisive, and unique occurrence. The author has already used it to refer to the Son’s self-sacrifice “once for all” (9:26; 10:10). So, too, will be God’s final judgment and it can be fully implemented with both justice and mercy at play because of what the Son has done.

That “shaking” will be a once for all event and anything that cannot stand up to it will be removed (*μετάθεσις, metathesis*). The author is most specific that this applies to all things “that have been made,” that is, of the created or temporal order both physical and spiritual. Nothing that does not have a permanent foundation can withstand the final shaking including things both on earth and in heaven. These will be permanently removed from God’s presence.

12:29

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 744.

To reinforce the importance of service and thankfulness, the author ends this pericope with a stern reminder that focuses not on God’s majesty but on His power to destroy utterly (12:29). The author has already noted that it is “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (10:31). Here he identifies why. He has already appealed to Deuteronomy 4:11–12; 5:22–24, which describes the power of God felt by the Israelites and the force of the judgment that Jehovah meted out against them. Because of what God did then, the author’s readers must ever keep in mind Moses’s testimony: “your God is a consuming fire.” The author brings force for his audience by changing the text from reading “your God,” to reading “our God.” His point is that, if those who rejected Jehovah’s laws at Sinai fell under God’s judgment, how much more shall those who reject the new covenant. For such unfaithful souls, God’s fire awaits.

Hebrews 13

Overview

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 745–746.

This chapter is the author’s peroration, a rhetorical device used by orators as a final attempt to persuade an audience to accept the position they have set forth. In the case of our author, he uses it to further encourage his readers to a life of faithful endurance.

The transition between chapters 12 and 13 appears to be abrupt. He closed the previous section with a stern warning concerning the fear of God that his readers should have. He opens this one with an ap-

peal to love. The transition, however, is not as abrupt as it at first seems. One aspect of the old covenant contends that godly fear was the guarantee of good relations between people (for example, see Leviticus 19:14, 18), thus, the fear of God and love of neighbor find a close connection.

The author's new focus centers on how God is to be worshiped under current circumstances—through loving care and selfless service to one's fellows.

13:1–6

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 754–757, 760–762.

This section contains a carefully composed *peroration*, a common rhetorical device the author adopts in his final endeavor to motivate his readers to Christian service. It is composed of eight exhortations. The author begins with an admonition to love (13:1). He chooses the noun “brotherly love,” or more accurately, “love of one’s brother or sister” (*φιλαδελφία, philadelphia*), to express his desire. Though the word has a sense similar to the more popular scriptural word for “love,” *ἀγάπη (agape)*, it carries the added nuance of love between family members. The Savior used this family-oriented affection to express the kind of love He wanted His disciples to directed toward himself and others (Matthew 10:37). Further, it also expressed the kind of love the Father has for both His Son and His other children (John 5:20; 16:27). Indeed, the Father insists that “those whom I love [*φιλέω, phileō*], I discipline” (Revelation 3:19). No one under His love escapes His correction, but correction is also an expression of His deep love.

Love of and for the Father and Son is a *sine qua non* of salvation. This is because its expression toward God and His children sanctifies all that a person does. Paul expressed this idea when he said, “Greet those who love us in faith” (Titus 3:15). The idea behind his request is that brotherly love is correctly understood only when it is “reinterpreted in light of God’s love in the revelation of his Son.”³³ It is in this way that human love is transformed as love in faith. Therefore, the word must be understood more broadly than the figurative “sibling-like-love, but as the mutual love of those who are united” in the Christian bond.³⁴

Further, as distinctively noted by the author, Christians are not brothers and sisters only of one another but also of Christ Himself. Together the Lord and His people compose the divine and eternal family of the Father and are joint heirs together of all that He has.³⁵

In 13:2 the author gives his second exhortation. In it he defines that kind of love that should be directed to those outside the immediate community of faith. He defines it as “hospitality” (*φιλοξενία, philoxenia*). As with the old covenant, the new one is concerned with those outside its protective constraints. These, the author admonishes, God’s people are not to forget for they are to be concerned not only with the well-being of one another but also of others. All are to be offered friendship and assistance.³⁶ The Lord, during His earthly ministry, stressed hospitality’s importance for the Christian community, and it was generally adopted by the Church.³⁷

The author gives an interesting reason for extending such hospitality. He references those who have unknowingly entertained angels. He could have had Abraham and Sarah, Lot, or Manoah in mind.³⁸ Indeed, in the latter case the scripture is clear that it was only after the woman had entertained the stranger that she “knew that he was an angel of the Lord” (Judges 3:21).

In 13:3 the author gives his third and fourth exhortations. Here the author uses the more positive “remember” (*μυμνήθσκω*, *mimnēthskō*) than the rather negative “do not forget” which he used in the previous verse. To “remember” carries the nuance of not simply calling those who are suffering to mind but of having concern for them expressed by giving them appropriate care.

The author admonishes his readers to first remember those incarcerated. The living conditions in many Greco-Roman prisons were rather severe. First, the prisons themselves were often overly hot or cold, dark, dank, filthy places. The prisoners were supplied with no clothing and often no bedding. Food was often infrequent and unsatisfying. Making conditions worse was that some jailors had a propensity for sadism, and many were out for a bribe. When such was not forthcoming, they were extra hard on an inmate. Prisoners could receive help and benefaction from those outside and such care often relieved much of the suffering they had to endure.

The author’s context suggests that the people he has in mind are those who have been unjustly imprisoned due to the faith. To openly associate with them could easily put the Christian himself or herself in danger. These faithful people have, however, already shown such bravery (10:33–34), and the author wants them to continue to do so.

The author’s fourth admonition is more comprehensive than the third. It looks to all those who presently suffer. The verb he uses *κακουχέω* (*kakoucheō*) denotes not only maltreatment but also torture and suggests the harsh treatment that some are experiencing. Whether or not the author has only Christians in mind cannot be determined from the context. Certainly, Christian love should know no bounds. Even so, it is likely that it is those in the Christian community that the author has in mind. Seeing the sometimes severe maltreatment that was happening to others could make some balk at giving assistance. Thus, the author reminds them that they are yet “in the body” (*ἐν σώματι*, *en sōmati*). Being in that condition means that they are not immune from such suffering, and therefore, at some future time, they might find themselves needing such care and assistance.

In 13:4 the author gives his fifth admonition. Through it he emphasizes the highly prized state marriage should have. The author exhorts his readers to make sure that marriage maintains its supernal and holy state. He uses an adjective that means “precious, honorable, esteemed” (*τίμιος*, *timios*) and could also refer to expensive gems) to describe how the Saints should view marriage and in doing so stresses the extraordinarily significant state of marriage as viewed by God. So great is the marriage commitment that it excludes all other earthly obligations including one’s duties to parents (Genesis 2:24).

His next exhortation, “let the wedding bed be undefiled,” makes the former one more specific. His point is that the Christian should not let anything despoil the intimacy between couples that God designed

marriage to have. The author assures his readers that God’s judgment hangs over those who violate the law of chastity. This includes not only the adulterer (*μοιχός, moichos*) but also the fornicator (*πόρνος, pornos*). The former breaks the wedding covenant after the marriage, the latter before it. Indeed, expressed lust desecrates the wedding bed by forfeiting the oneness that God designed intimacy to create.

The author follows his sixth exhortation with a seventh having a connected theme, that of generosity (13:5). The Greek he uses (*ἀφιλάργυρος, aphilargyros*) means literally “not loving money” and connotes a kind and giving nature. This virtue stands opposite the vice greed (*φιλαργυρία, philargyria*, literally “love of money”) the very root of evil (1 Timothy 6:10).

The vices lust and greed have a natural connection in that many afflicted with one are also afflicted with the other. Both are grounded in acute selfishness and block out love and loyalty to others. Indeed, the love of money stands directly opposite the love of others. Further, the two are found juxtaposed in the eighth and ninth commandments (Exodus 20:14–15). Each alone was bad enough but together they destroy the oneness and unity of both the marriage relationship and the Christian community and lead to God’s withdrawal of His association and power. As the Savior said, “If ye are not one, ye are not mine” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:27). High moral behavior coupled with its associated generosity expressed as caring service, on the other hand, promote trust, unity, and oneness.

Note the absence of a promise that the faithful person’s life will be without trials. Rather, the promise is that God will be their companion during those times of particular need and assist them to come through victoriously.

The author uses Jehovah’s declaration that He will never break relations with or abandon the faithful with telling effect. It enables the author to bring together all of the quotations he has mustered from his biblical sources, where God has spoken to His people, to one grand conclusion. The God who continually warned, rebuked, and chastised the faithless will also continually sustain, lift, and strengthen the faithful with the same if not more energy and certainty. Thus, the author assures his readers that they can and must depend on their God rather than anything the world can offer. In 13:6, the author, quoting portions of Psalm 117:6 and 55:12 from the Septuagint, gives the result: the faithful can say with assurance that the Lord is their helper and will sustain them through all trials and tribulations. Therefore, they need never fear anything the world can do to them.

13:7–17

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 777–782, 784–785.

This section, beginning and ending as it does with an appeal to follow Church leaders, forms an inclusion that focuses on the inner life of the Christian community. It links to the former section with its continuing admonitions “to remember.” Here the focus is on leaders, both past (13:7) and present (13:17) and includes

an appeal to pray for the author (13:18). In between, to give his exhortations force, the author references points he has already made. A major theme is the need to persevere in faith (13:7) and to follow Christ's example (13:13–16).

The author of Hebrews bases his appeal on the lives of past leaders whom at least some of those in the congregation knew (13:7). Though he does not say so, apparently these past leaders had both run the course and finished the fight in faithfulness and in doing so left an example that the author wants his people to follow. Tacitly, he unites the heroes of the old covenant with those of the new as examples of endurance in faith. He also hints at God's faithfulness in sustaining them.

In 13:8, with no obvious connection to what he has said before or what he will say after, the author makes a declaration of the constancy of the Lord as “the same” throughout time. The declaration is a bit startling since it seems to sit independent of other syntactical connections. However, the statement is the ground upon which the entire epistle sits. It is Christ's constancy and eternity as God, Savior, and High Priest that is the mooring that tied the faithfulness of those in both the past and present generations. The statement has two important implications. First, it shows Christ as the perpetual facilitator of God's will whose effectiveness is a declaration and guarantee of God's own personal effectiveness. Second, it suggests that the availability of Christ's assistance to the faithful in past generations is just as readily available to those of the present.

Having made his declaration concerning the constancy of Jesus, the central and pivotal doctrine of his text, the author next warns his readers against false doctrine (13:9). He does not identify just what these pseudo-teachings are. That he did not need to explicitly state what they were suggests they were familiar to his readers. Unfortunately, that is not the case today and therefore the full range of his concerns can only be surmised. Even so, his cautions provide a clue, as shown below, as to what at least some of these may have been.

But first we must note his declaration on what testimony and commitment should be based. Simply put, it is grace (*χάρις*, *charis*). Based on teachings earlier in the epistle, the term looks most specifically at the gift that flows to the individual from the Lord's Atonement and confirms to the soul the reality and truthfulness of the gospel message.

The author's insistence that a person's moral and intellectual center, the heart (*καρδία*, *kardia*), should be “made firm” (*βεβαιώω*, *bebaiōō*) with grace suggests that there were those who were basing their testimony, and, therefore their salvation, on things that were not spiritual. Perhaps these were such things as philosophical speculations or external evidences or appealing practices of those around them. He speaks specifically of those who trust in partaking of certain foods (*βρῶμα*, *broma*) likely referring to participants in Mosaic sacrifices or followers of Jewish dietary practices. He firmly proclaims that such has proved itself totally useless to all those who adhere to the practice.

In 13:10, the author focuses on the imagery of the altar (*θυσιαστηριον*, *thysiaστήριον*) and notes that the whole of the Christian community can partake of its benefits. He contrasts that with those who “serve

the tabernacle,” referring not just to the Levitical priesthood but to all who practice the ways of Judaism, and declares that they have no right to partake of its benefits. His words should not be construed as indicating that certain Jews were trying to participate in Christian services without accepting the Lord as Messiah and Savior. Rather, he was indicating that the new and old covenants were distinct in serving God’s purposes and that the old covenant and its ways were not to be imposed in the new covenant and its rites. Though Levitical priests did, indeed, at one time have the priesthood, that did not give them authority to participate in the ordinances of the new covenant. In sum, the author is insisting that there must be a complete break between the two orders. He therefore sets up a contrast not between the Old and New Testament faithful (whom he sees as one people) but between “we who have the true altar” and therefore correct doctrine and “those who serve the tabernacle” and are promulgating “divers and strange teachings.”

But what is the Christian altar? The context suggests that it is the cross on which Jesus made the Atonement and, therefore, a metaphor for the Atonement itself.

The author, having mentioned the tabernacle in 3:10, now returns to the ritual of the Day of Atonement and the typological lesson that it can teach the Christians (3:11).

The author clearly sees the prophetic aspect of the sacrifice offered on the Day of Atonement that was burned outside the camp with that of Jesus’s being crucified there. Because of the author’s focus on what happened “outside the gate” and the lesson he wants his readers to learn, he leaves out certain aspects of the ritual. For example, he does not mention that the animal was actually killed in the tabernacle precinct before its body was removed. By not cluttering his reference with these items, he lets fall the full force of his argument and the exhortation he uses it to give.

Besides the location of the sacrificial animal’s burning and the Savior’s crucifixion, the author focuses on one more point of contact, that of the blood. Both the blood of the animal and that of Christ were shed. However, the author makes a point of contrast. The blood of the animal was shed for, that is, on account of, sin. On the other hand, the blood of the Savior was shed for the purpose of sanctification to make the people sinless and pure.

Because of what Christ has done, the author in 13:13, admonishes his readers to go outside the camp as Jesus did and take upon themselves the reproach (*όνειδισμός*, *oneidismos*) He suffered there. The author’s admonition is but a reminder of what he has already taught about the suffering of the Son (8:1–10:18) wherein He “endured the cross, disregarding its shame” (12:2, BYU New Rendition). The author now asks them to follow suit. Like Abraham who lived as a nomad, Moses who left the fleshpots of Egypt, and other Old Testament heroes, readers must withdraw from an unbelieving and faithless society that unjustly heaps scorn upon on those who reject their low moral standards. In doing so, Christians will find, as did the Son, that their suffering will be the means of gaining oneness with God and Christ and a place in the holy city (13:14).

The author admonishes his readers, like those who have gone before, to make sacrifices (13:14–15). In 13:14, the author reminds his readers that they have no place in the present earthly, faithless “camp,”

primarily because it has rejected the Lord but also because it has not permanent basis. Because of its transient nature, to place one's trust and confidence in it would be foolish. Rather, the Saints must continue to earnestly seek for (*ἐπιζητέω, epizēteō*) the "enduring city" that God has built (11:10; 12:22).

Earnest seeking rests on and is motivated by what the Christians have already received, that is, the altar of Christ—the Atonement—and the power they have enjoyed because of it. This experience brings assurance that they can achieve what they do not yet have (11:1–6). Perseverance based on what they do have is the sure way to achieve what they do not yet have.

The author next turns to those deeds that will assure his readers a place in the heavenly Jerusalem (13:15–16). He refers to these as sacrifices (*θυσία, thysia*) likely to contrast what the Christian is to do with what the Levitical system entailed. He sets the Christian sacrifices on the foundation of the "praise of God continually" and defines this as the open and verbal giving of acclaim for what Christ has done.

The author desires his readers to persevere in confessing Christ to an unbelieving world (3:1; 4:14; 10:23) thereby making the "sacrifice of praise" that is so pleasing to God "and thus the ultimate act of worship."

He shows, however, that there is more to such sacrifices than that of heartfelt witnessing. They also include continuous service in doing good (*εὐποιᾶ, eupoia*) coupled with an attitude of good will expressed by generosity (*κοινωνία, koinōnia*) to members within the Christian community. Christian concern and fellowship includes sharing material goods with those in need. The reason these acts of mutual concern are of benefit is because they are pleasing (*εὐαρεστέω, euarestēō*) to God.

The author now (13:17) turns his attention to the respect his readers should show for their current leaders and in doing so throws his complete support and confidence behind them. That respect, he insists, should express itself in obedience (*πειθῶ, peithō*) and willful self-submission (*ὕπεικω, hupēikō*) to those in authority. The force of the terms *obedience* and *submission* combine to stress the absolute need for faithful adherence to Church leadership. His use of the present imperative expresses his desire that his readers continue the obedience they have already rendered, but to now do it with renewed and determined effort.

The author gives three reasons why these people should make obedience to Church leadership a life-long habit. First, the leaders, with care and alertness, watch over the Saints' temporal and spiritual welfare. Second, the leaders' duty demands that they give an account (*λόγος, logos*) of the lives of those under their stewardship. And third, a leader's negative report would prove "unprofitable" (*ἀλυσιτελής, alysiteles*) for the faithless, leaving them spiritually bankrupt before God. The author concludes this admonition asking his readers to obey so that their leaders can give their report on each person with joy (*χάρα, chara*) without complaining (*στενάζω, stenazō*). That the leaders would feel these emotions toward those under their charge suggests the depth of their care.

13:18–21

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 792–793, 795–796, 798–799.

The author’s closing (13:18–25) follows the usual form of a conclusion and benediction consistent with many of the New Testament epistles. The author’s closing, however, is not a perfunctory following of tradition. Rather, using his considerable skills, the author crafts his conclusion to reinforce important elements in his letter. By saving them to this point, he addresses personal issues and concerns that would have detracted from his message elsewhere.

The author’s request that his readers pray for him and the other leaders (13:18) reveals the weight they feel for the responsibilities that are theirs and also the confidence that they have in the Father’s willingness to assist them due to the appeal of those they serve. The author assures his readers that he and the other leaders feel they can make the request due to their determination to live exemplary lives demonstrated by how they have lived up to this point. Indeed, he assures his readers that the leaders’ consciences are clear when it comes to the service they have rendered and therefore they are worthy of divine blessing. He, however, wants his readers to pray urgently and earnestly for a specific outcome (13:19). This is that he might be restored (*ἀποκαθιστάνω apokathistanō*) quickly to the pleasant associations he enjoyed when he was once with them.

Beginning with 13:20, the author both makes another appeal to and expresses a heartfelt wish for his fellow Saints. Noteworthy is that his urgent appeal for a prayer in his behalf is now followed by a wish in his readers’ behalf. His hope for the realization of his wish is based on the work of the Father who, “through the blood of the everlasting covenant” brought again Jesus “back from the dead.” Also noteworthy is that this is the first time in the entire epistle that the author has referenced the Lord’s resurrection. He has addressed the Lord’s ascension and His place on the right hand of God, but not what immediately preceded it.³⁹ Further, he does not use the usual word for denoting resurrection (*ἐγείρω, egeirō*) but instead one that was much rarer (*ἀνάγω, anagō*, meaning “to raise up, lead forth”).

Importantly, the author does not depict the resurrection “as an individual glorification that would only concern Jesus himself, but as a decisive event for the destiny of all the flock of which Jesus is ‘the great shepherd.’”⁴⁰

In 13:20, the author, for the first and only time in his epistle, uses the term “shepherd” (*ποιμήν, poimēn*) to describe the Lord. He likely did it to stress the Lord’s present intercession in behalf of His people in protecting them and leading them to the eternal city. The Gospel writers saw Jesus as fulfilling this function as He began to gather the flock into the kingdom of God. The Lord Himself took upon Himself the title stressing he was the good shepherd who would lay down His life for the sheep (John 10:1–30). This duty He passed on to Peter (John 21:16), telling him to “shepherd my sheep” (*ποιμaine τὰ πρόβατά μου, poimaine ta probata mou*).

Though the author was likely well acquainted with the imagery in the Hebrew Bible, to what degree he knew of the Christian usage of this term cannot be determined, but he certainly follows the pattern. By evoking the imagery at this point in his epistle, the author reinforces the caring and guarding aspect of the Savior. He also tacitly opens the door to the image of sacrifice—that is, of Jesus not as the shepherd but as the sheep.

The instrument that has made everything possible, including the Lord’s own resurrection, as the author explains it, is “the blood of the everlasting covenant” (13:20). The imagery points to that sacrifice that put the covenant into effect. That sacrifice culminated but did not begin at Golgotha. It began the moment Jesus determined He would do the Father’s will and bent Himself to that task no matter what the personal cost. For that reason, the sacrifice’s roots reach back into the premortal period when the Savior said, “Father, thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever” (Moses 4:2). It evidenced itself during His mortal ministry when He went about His “Father’s business” (Luke 2:49) and continued in Gethsemane when He cried, “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt” (Mark 14:36). All this made the “blood of the covenant” effective and opened the way for it to be both implemented and written “on the tables of the heart” of the faithful.⁴¹

Having laid the background of the initiation of the covenant in the previous verse, the author now (13:21) pronounces his sincere benediction upon his readers, desiring that they reap the full benefit that can flow from covenant keeping. To understand what he does here, background is important. The author has warned his readers about the consequences of not following the Lord and resisting God’s will (6:4–6). He has also upheld the Savior’s complete submission to the Father’s will as the perfect example for his readers to follow (10:5–10) in order to partake fully of the blessings of the new covenant. With this verse he touches on a most important point: how God uses the product of the Savior’s submission to work “his will within the human will, without destroying its freedom.”⁴²

The enabling process begins when an individual comes to understand who and what Christ is and what He has done for them and begins to desire, magnified by the help of the Spirit, to do the Father’s will. At that point, further benefits of the Atonement kick in and the Father equips them further to do His will. The Father’s equipping of His people to do His will is further defined as doing that which is “pleasing in his sight.” The emphasis of the phrase shows that the Saints do not live this kind of life on their own. Rather they rely on the grace and enabling power of their Great High Priest to draw ever nearer to Him and the Father. And it reaps a great reward. It is through the grace of God that one becomes perfect in Christ. Only through that power are they “sanctified in Christ . . . through the shedding of [his] blood . . . which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of [their] sins, that [they] become holy, without spot” (Moroni 10:33). To stress the author’s point, it is through Jesus Christ that the perfect life is made possible. The idea behind the phrase is that the enabling power comes not just by the Savior but because of him. He is the center of the whole operation.

13:22

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 804–805.

By calling his epistle an exhortation (*παράκλησις, paraklēsis*), given both the letter’s themes and development, the author appropriately identifies what he has produced (13:22). His work consists of appeals from God, Christ, a host of Old Testament prophets, as well as the recently past and current leaders of the Church to endure in faith and trust in the care of the divine. Thus, from beginning to end, this masterwork is an exhortation. Nonetheless, it is an exhortation built on a solid doctrinal foundation that centers on the teachings, mission, Atonement, Resurrection, and enthronement of the Savior, Jesus Christ. By placing his petitions on this foundation, the author gives them reason and meaning thus making them both relevant and appealing.

13:23

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 805.

In Hebrews 13:23, the author shares some good news with his readers. The well-known and respected leader, Timothy, has been released from prison. Though the text is ambiguous, it appears that the author is going to wait a bit to see if Timothy joins him, at which time they will travel together to meet with these Saints. The text does make two points clear. First, the author is going to travel to the readers’ location regardless of what Timothy does. Second, his use of the adverb *τάχιον (tachion)*, “shortly,” shows that he plans his visit for the near future, thus his request for the prayer in 13:19 that nothing impede him.

13:24–25

The following is adapted from Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, Epistle to the Hebrews (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 805.

He closes asking his readers to give his best regards to both the leadership and membership of the congregation (13:24). He has asked his readers to give due respect to their current leaders (13:17), showing the author’s own appreciation and respect for these men and women. Noteworthy is that the author’s words suggest that his epistle was not directed to the Saints in the area as a whole, but to a specific group within the community of believers. The reason is likely that he is addressing specific problems meant for a particular group of people.

Having asked his readers to give his best to other members of the Christian community, the author notes others want to send their regards to the community. These he identifies as “those from Italy.”

Whether or not his reference is to Saints living in Italy or those who once resided there, it shows the broad concern the Christians as a whole had for one another and that they were aware of each other's situations.

With a final prayer—a benediction that the all-sufficient power of Christ, expressed in the bequeathing of His grace, be upon his readers—the author closes a most magnificent and in-depth witness to the work, necessity, and power of the Father and the Son to whom glory be given forever.

Notes

- 1 Heb 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17, 21.
- 2 Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 178. For deeper Insights about Melchizedek, see Richard D. Draper and Michael D. Rhodes, “Excursus on Melchizedek,” in *Epistle to the Hebrews* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2021), 371–377.
- 3 See Hebrews 5:1–3; 7:11–14; 9:1–10.
- 4 Hebrews 2:11; 9:13; 10:11–14; compare Mosiah 5:2; Alma 5:14; 13:12; Romans 8:1–4.
- 5 See Hebrews 5:1–3. For a deeper look at the better covenant, see Draper and Rhodes, “Excursus on the ‘Better Covenant’ in Hebrews,” in *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 407–419.
- 6 Hebrews 1:3; 2:9; 5:7.
- 7 Hebrews 4:15; 5:8–9; 10:5–10.
- 8 Hebrews 8:10; see Exodus 6:7; Leviticus 26:12; Deuteronomy 26:17–19; Ezekiel 37:27.
- 9 For an in depth look at the rituals performed on the Day of Atonement, see Draper and Rhodes, “Excursus on the Ritual of the Day of Atonement,” in *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 476–477.
- 10 Albert Vanhoye, *The Letter to the Hebrews: A New Commentary* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2015), 148; compare Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, vol. 3 (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1968) 184–185; Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2007), 219–222.
- 11 William L. Lane, *Hebrews: A Call to Commitment* (Vancouver, CA: Regent College Publishing, 2004), 9–13, 239.
- 12 Hebrews 8:10; 10:16; Jeremiah 31:33.
- 13 See 1 Peter 3:18–20; 4:6; compare Doctrine and Covenants 76:73.
- 14 Matthew 7:13–14; see also 2 Nephi 31:18; 33:9; 3 Nephi 27:33; Doctrine and Covenants 132:22.
- 15 F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 231–232.
- 16 Jacob 6:13; Alma 40:11–14; Moses 7:1.
- 17 Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 427–429; see also Paul Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 490–491; Lane, *Hebrews*, 9–13, 239, 253–254, 259.

- 18 See, in the Septuagint, Psalm 50:18; Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 6:20; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:22.
- 19 Vanhoye, *Letter to the Hebrews*, 161.
- 20 Cockerill, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 463.
- 21 Hebrews 2:14–15; 4:16; 12:22–29.
- 22 Deuteronomy 13:8; 17:2–6; 19:13, 21.
- 23 Mark 3:28–29; compare Matthew 12:31–32; Luke 12:10.
- 24 Bruce, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 265; compare Lane, *Hebrews*, 9–13, 295–96.
- 25 See Hebrews 4:1, 8; 6:12, 17; 8:6; compare James 1:4; 1 Peter 4:19.
- 26 For a deeper look at Faith, see Draper and Rhodes, “Excursus on Faith,” in *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 598–610.
- 27 Johnson, *Hebrews*, 297–298.
- 28 Deuteronomy 21:18; Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 23:3; 29:17.
- 29 Deuteronomy 4:36; Hosea 7:12; 10:10.
- 30 Hebrews 5:7; 11:7; 12:28.
- 31 Hebrews 12:23; compare Doctrine and Covenants 76:54, 68, 69; 77:11; 78:21; 88:5; 93:22; 107:19; 129:3.
- 32 Hebrews 7:23–25; 9:14–15; 10:15–18.
- 33 *NID*, s.v. “φιλέω.”
- 34 Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 694.
- 35 Hebrews 6:17; Romans 8:17; Galatians 3:29.
- 36 See Genesis 19:13; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19; 31:32; 2 Samuel 12:4; Isaiah 58:7.
- 37 Luke 10:24–35; 11:5; 14:12–21; Romans 12:13–14; 1 Peter 4:9; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8.
- 38 Genesis 18:2–15; 19:1–22; Judges 13:2–24.
- 39 Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2.
- 40 Vanhoye, *Letter to the Hebrews*, 231.
- 41 2 Corinthians 3:3; compare Jeremiah 31:31–33; Hebrews 8:8–10.
- 42 Ellingworth, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 730.

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