

## **AN ANALYSIS OF THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS**

One of the aims of the writer to the Hebrews is to show that God is the God of both Old and New Covenants. Under the old covenant He spoke *in (or by) the prophets*, and under the new covenant He speaks *by (or in) the (his) Son*.

One thing we must be aware of is that the writer doesn't use the Old Testament to prove his arguments or to supply some illustrations, but because it is on the authority of the Old Testament that the validity of his narrative depends. The Old Testament to him is a revelation of God's purposes for the human race. In its records God *spoke to the fathers by the prophets at many times in many ways*, and all these fragmented, varied revelations become welded together and fitted into a perfect unity in Jesus Christ.

However the Old Testament is more than just a record of the past sayings of God.

In it the voice of God can still be heard, speaking to men and women of every age., and judging both our thoughts and actions. As the author of this letter to Hebrews says *The word of God is living and active sharper than a two edged sword piercing even to dividing soul and spirit . . . it judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart* 4:12.

The manner in which the writer introduces several quotations from the Old Testament makes it clear that he had a high view of its inspiration, and a deep sense of its permanent abiding message.

He doesn't say 'it is written' or 'the scripture says' but 'God says' or 'Christ says' or 'the Spirit says'. See for example Christ portrayed as making three quotes in chapter 2: 11–13. (1) from Psalm 22 "*I will declare Thy name unto My brethren*" Then (2&3) from Isaiah 8 : 17–18, '*I will put My confidence in Him, and I and the children God gave Me*'. And these quotes are introduced with '*Therefore He (that is Christ) is not ashamed to call them brethren . . .*' See also 7–11, a quote from Psalm 95: 7–11 where he begins "*as the body Spirit says ...*" and again 13:5 beginning with "God has said . . quoting from Deut, 31, and Psalm 118.

In this way the writer shows that the message of God spoken in times past remains a message which God speaks at all times, even in the present circumstances of Men's lives. See Heb. 12:5–6, quoting from Proverbs 3:11–12. It is this abiding voice of God speaking directly from the pages of the Old Testament which makes it for the author and still for us today, 'Holy Scripture'.

The fundamental theme of this powerful letter (message) is the belief that God has a purpose for Man which is destined to be fulfilled in Gods good time, a purpose which was in some measure made known to Israel of old and conveyed to them in a series of promises.

Towards the fulfilment of this purpose they were always striving; but could never quite reach it because of backsliding and disobedience. The nature of that purpose God has planned for Mankind, and which is unchanging, and which He will never abandon, however disobedient men might be, is set out in this address.

In chapter 2:5 it is called, *the world which is to come*, and in 1.1:10, *the city with foundations whose architect and builder is God*. The most characteristic description of it however is taken by the writer from Psalm 95. There the ultimate purpose for Man is described as *entering into the divine rest*, which means nothing less than actually sharing the life of God himself for this rest in the Bible is thought of as ‘Sabbath rest’, the rest which is perfect activity, and of which the weekly institution of Sabbath keeping is a symbol.

Augustine put it this way “Thou has created us for Thyself, and the human heart is restless till it rests, O God, in Thee”. So the writer to Hebrews looks back on the history of Israel as the story of their struggle to ‘*enter into the divine rest*’.

Their disobedience was always a stumbling block to their enjoying this rest from their time of release from Egypt, while in the wilderness, or when they entered the Promised Land. But the promises remain. *There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God* (4: 9). It is still Man’s intended future to enjoy it. The promise is set forth in Psalm 8 quoted in Hebrews 2:6–8, which says that though created inferior to angels in order of creation, Man would ultimately be *crowned with glory and honour*, and exercise universal lordship.

So far only one man, Jesus Christ, has fully entered into that rest. But He identifies with us in becoming the seed of Abraham to assist His brethren to join Him in the Sabbath rest. He alone exhibited the perfect rest of God for He alone was truly obedient. In His life was a combination of sympathy with Man and faith (trust) in God. Just as Isaiah (see Isa.8: 18), and his children were a faithful remnant of Israel, so that Isaiah could say “*here am I and the children God has given me*” (2.13), so Jesus used these words to denote He was both father and brother to the new society of faithful who, because of belief in Him, would be enabled to enter into the promised rest. Here in Jesus fulfil all the great Old Testament figures fore shadowing Him.

The opening chapters of this letter are concerned with showing that Jesus is superior to all His forerunners. In chapter one the writer uses a chain of quotes from the Old Testament to reveal the splendour and dignity of Christ’s person. The first quote is from Psalm 2 “*Thou art My Son today I have begotten Thee*”. The original words would have probably referred to a Jewish king such as David who, confronted by enemies, claimed relationship with God which would ensure victory. But never in David’s reign or any other did this salvation, and ultimate victory, become a reality. It was only in Jesus. David’s greater Son, that the words would find fulfilment. The victory of this true Son of God is a spiritual victory realized in His death and resurrection,

The next quote comes from 2 Sam. 7: 14. ‘*I will be his father and he will be my son*’ This was spoken by the prophet Nathan concerning the son of David, and although the original inference would be taken concerning Solomon, a fuller meaning waited till the coming of Jesus, Son of God.

A third quote comes from Deut. 32 13, [ see the Dead Sea Scrolls and LXX ] *let all the angels of God worship him*. This was part of the song of Moses which consisted of a prophecy of the destiny of Israel which will result in a final and decisive revelation of God’s judgement. The coming of Jesus God’s first born, would be the time of this perfect judgement.

Other quotes from the Psalms are from Ps 104 where he mentions the angels but goes on to say they are inferior to the Son by quoting Ps 45 and referring it prophetically to Jesus as the Christ – anointed one of God. In the quote from Psalm 102:25–27, we have one in great distress appealing to God as creator and pleading for the restoration of Zion. The writer of

Hebrews refers them to God the son the great agent of creation who is immutable and eternal, *You remain the same and your years will never end.* (Heb 1:12.)

Finally he ends this chain with Psalm 110: 1, his superiority to angels again spelt out, but with the stronger inference of the co-equality of God and His anointed one working together till all powers of evil are overthrown.

An important subject of this letter is the problem of how sinful man can, *draw near to God*, [ an expression that is characteristic of this address ]. It was the sin of man that prevented him from entering into the eternal rest of God, so this must be dealt with.

That man must draw near or seek to draw near, for that is his ultimate destiny, is one of the axioms of the Bible; and the Bible also assumes that the means by which we must seek to obtain that access, is by the forgiveness of sins. Because God is holy and righteous, man cannot approach Him unless his sins are forgiven. And it was for the attainment of this end that the Levitical system of sacrifices came into being, and it is to this side of the Jewish Law that our writer has given his attention.

At the centre of this body of laws was the fact that, *without the shedding of blood there can be no remission, from sin.* (Heb 11:6, 9:22.) Therefore for many generations it was *the blood of goats and bulls and ashes of heifers sprinkling the unclean to sanctify them so that they were outwardly clean*, 9:13. This was a temporary measure until the perfect sacrifice was to appear, *how much more then will the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death (or dead works) to serve the living God* (Heb. 9:13–14.)

Even the old 'Testament itself bears witness to the transitory nature of the Levitical system of sacrifices, for it speaks in Psalm 110 of another order of priesthood. As the Psalm was often interpreted, (and still is) in a Messianic tense, it was quite suited for the purpose of this writer. In the narrative about Melchizedek in Genesis 14 he appears suddenly confronting Abraham on his return from victory over the kings, and Abraham pays him tithes. And so Melchizedek is seen to be greater than Abraham and all his offspring including the Levitical priests.

The royalty of this King–Priest is revealed in his name Melchizedek as *king of righteousness*. The description in Genesis of Melchizedek as *king of Salem* also relates to his royal priesthood, for the name Salem means peace, and the true function of a priest is to establish peace between God and rebellious Man. The application to the priesthood of Jesus is then made explicit. Not only did Jesus possess that sympathy with humanity based on a knowledge of human life and experience, not only did He not take this office upon Himself, [two characteristics which accompany priesthood, Aaronic or any other] but His priesthood, like Melchizedek, was royal for it belonged to the tribe of Judah.

His priesthood was also permanent for it goes on unhindered by death. And it was righteous, for Christ knew no sin. Christ therefore *abides forever a priest after the order of Melchizedek*. It was as such a priest that Jesus offered His sacrifice, of which the superiority over the Levitical sacrifices is finally stated in chapter 10, and is illustrated by a quote from Psalm 40:6–8. This Psalm states an essential truth which is conveyed in many other passages of the Old Testament. The truth that the sacrifices of animals is less pleasing to God than the obedience, contrition, and moral purity of the human heart.

An acceptable sacrifice has now been made as Jesus the Christ has offered Himself in obedience to God; and by this sacrifice men are sanctified and so *able to draw near unto*

*God.* It is thus the means whereby the New Covenant between God and Man is ratified. This New Covenant of which Jeremiah wrote, (see Jer. 31) and is quoted in Heb.8: 9–12: 10:16–17, was concerned with the forgiveness of sins. The day would come when God *would no longer remember man's sins and iniquities*, for perfect atonement would have been made for them. In Heb. 10: 15, the author states that this is the meaning which the Holy Spirit is unfolding to us in this great passage of scripture.

The essence of the New Covenant, and so true Christianity, is the act of divine grace by which God freely bestows upon Man the forgiveness of sins; and when that forgiveness is accepted by repentance and faith, the other blessings of the New Covenant as foretold by Jeremiah become available. All men under the New Covenant are brought into direct and immediate first hand knowledge of God.

So Jeremiah foretold – *God would put His laws in men's minds and write it on their hearts, and once again they would be His people . . . for all would know Him from the least to the greatest.* (Jer.3: 33–34.)

This message then is concerned with the divine action in salvation brought about through the priestly sacrifice of Jesus, to confirm for the readers their complete standing in relation to God, with no need of any additives. There is nothing more they can do to change what God has already done on their behalf, or what He is about to do in the future as He has promised.

We now come to chapter 11 where the matter of faith is expounded, with illustrations from the lives of many familiar Old Testament characters, both men and women.

These persons listed were not always expecting the ultimate goal of human life was to be found in the present world, but who were always looking for something better that was to come. Out of all these persons Abraham and Moses are most important

The faith of Abraham was based on the belief in God's creative power, which enabled him to believe the promises even at a time when humanly speaking, it seemed impossible that he could have any descendants in whom they could be realised, While later again his Faith showed itself in his readiness to offer Isaac in sacrifice at the bidding of God. His willingness to make this sacrifice was then a fore shadowing of the obedience displayed by Christ, just as the subsequent resurrection of Isaac, though he wasn't actually dead, was a type pointing to the resurrection of Jesus. *He received him back from the dead* , figuratively speaking. (Heb. 11:19)

The faith of Moses was preceded by that of his parents, *who saw he was no ordinary child* Heb. 11:23. Moses was anointed ( set aside for a special purpose as a king [made a Christ, anointed one] ) for the purpose of leading Israel from slavery to freedom to be a peculiar people unto God. And like the true Christ whom he foreshadowed, bore the reproach and ridicule of those he sought to help. (Heb. 11:26)

It is the inspiration of these men and women of faith, and above all, by keeping the vision of the suffering and subsequent triumph of Jesus The Christ, their great high priest, ever before them, that the writer appeals to his readers to endure suffering. To follow *Jesus outside the camp, to despise not the chastening of the Lord, to lift up exhausted hands and restore paralysed knees*, and to consecrate themselves afresh to the Lord.

They are to beware *lest any root of bitterness springs up to incite them and by it many may be defiled*, This could be a reference to a passage in Deut. 29:18 where it occurs in a warning against idolatry and apostasy. When he goes on, be careful *lest there be any*

*fornicators or profane persons such as Esau who for a single meal sold his birthright.* These statements could also be referring to apostasy for fornication and adultery are used in this sense often in the Old Testament.

Finally, the author appeals to them to realise the predetermined fixture waiting them if they will remain in the fellowship of the redeemed, and in a magnificent passage he contrasts this final ‘destiny’ with all the preliminary and imperfect attempts to reach it. The revelation given on Mt Sinai, under circumstances of dread and awe, symbolized by fire, smoke, and storm, was a great stage towards the ultimate fulfillment of God’s purposes that Man should *enter into His rest*, and enjoy Him forever. There men learned that the fear of the Lord and obedience to His will are the *beginning of wisdom*.

Another mountain, Mt Zion at Jerusalem. had become the centre of Israel which had sought to keep the Law, and by means of the temple sacrifices, to make Israel worthy; entering that *rest*.

Entrance into the ‘heavenly Jerusalem’ however, had only been made possible by the out pouring of the *blood of Jesus*. This blood which *spoke of better things than the blood of Abel* was the means whereby He became mediator of the New Covenant which united God and Man in perfect fellowship; and the names of all who accept that sacrifice and are ‘put right with God’ are *enrolled in heaven*.

It is this hope of the heavenly city which is, and must always be, the greatest inspiration of the Christian.

You are come to Mt Zion unto the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, and to the general assembly of the Church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks a better word than that of Abel. (Hebrews 12:22-24.)

An excerpt from the introduction to Hebrews by Louis Evans Jr.

‘In the words of Professor Edmund Schlink to an assembly in the 1950s “ The whole point of Christian hope is that we live and act in faith. Christian hope is based in Jesus Christ alone.”

Evans continues – Who is this Jesus Christ? Why is hope founded on Him alone?

For one simple reason that has many facets; Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church’s being. The church’s existence is dependent upon its relation to the historical Christ. It is a matter of ontology ( the science of being and reality). Without Christ there is no church; without Jesus of Nazareth there is no reality for the church. Because of His identity, because of His life and ministry, because of His atoning death and resurrection, His gift of the Holy Spirit, and His promise of ultimate victory, believers are drawn into a fellowship of hope. To fail to understand Jesus Christ is to fail to understand the church. Cleave the branch from the Vine and the branch *will wither!* There is no way it can be kept alive apart from the Vine.

Renewal in the church depends upon a renewed understanding and commitment to Jesus Christ as God Incarnate; One of us; Priest, Sacrifice, and Coming Messiah. No other New Testament document so fully explores Him in these dimensions as does the Epistle to the Hebrews. The epistle makes no attempt to prove the existence of Jesus Christ or His atoning death. The author simply makes an exposition of that which he takes as given.’

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## 'Hebrews – A Call to Faith, Hope & Love'

### Introduction

The following is from the introduction to the letter to the Hebrews by William Barclay.

'Religion has never been the same thing to all men. "God" as Tennyson said, "fulfils himself in many ways." George Russell said, "there are many ways of climbing to the stars as there are people to climb." There is another saying which tells us that "God has his own secret stairway into every heart." Broadly speaking, there have been four great conceptions of religion.

- (1) To some men it is *inward fellowship with God* it is a union so close and so intimate that the Christian can be said to live in Christ and Christ to live in him.
- (2) To some religion is what gives a person *a standard for life and a power to reach that standard*.
- (3) To some religion is the *highest satisfaction of their minds*. Their minds seek and seek until they find that they can rest in God.
- (4) Lastly, to some religion is *access to God*. It is that which removes the barriers and opens the door to His living presence. That is what religion was to the writer of The Letter to the Hebrews. He found in Christ the one person who could take him into the very presence of God. His whole idea of religion is summed up in the great passage in Hebrews 10:19–23,

"Therefore, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh....let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

Yet I would want to add, "let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of Faith, Hope and Love.

Franz Delitzsch began his commentary with these words, "The Epistle to the Hebrews has not its like among the epistles of the New Testament, resembling in all its uniqueness of position, as well as in tone and spirit the great prophetic exhortation of Isaiah 40–66, which in like manner stands alone among prophetic writings of the Old Testament. The tone of thought in both these portions of scripture has the same transcendental character; each has a threefold division of its contents; the same majestic march and flight of language characterises each, the same Easter-morning breath from another world, and the same tantalizing veil suspended before the eyes of the vexed inquirer, now half revealing now concealing the origin and authorship of either composition

No other book of the New Testament is distinguished by such brilliant eloquence and euphonious rhythm as our epistle and this rhetorical form is not superinduced on the subject, but is its true expression, as setting forth the special glories of the new covenant and of a new and Christ-transfigured world.

E. F. Scott wrote, "Epistle to the Hebrews is in many respects the riddle of the New Testament.'

When it was written, to whom it was written and who wrote it are questions at which we can only guess.

### When was it Written?

As to when it was written the only information we can rely upon comes from the letter itself. (We will use the term 'letter' as stated in the title for the present and consider other options later.) From the reference in (Heb. 2:3) it seems that it was written to second generation Christians. Those who had heard the word had passed the message on. But they were not, new to the Christian faith and ought to have been more mature. (5:12). They must have had some history having been called to look back on former days, (10:32)

The thing that could help us most in dating this letter is its references to persecution. It is clear that they themselves had not yet suffered persecution to any great extent (12:4) but that their leaders had possibly died for their faith (13:7), There is evidence that they had undergone ill-treatment and the removal of their possessions, (1(1:37-34).

So from the outlook of the letter there is a very real risk of coming persecution. This would indicate at the time of writing it was a period between two persecutions. The two that seem most likely is the reign of Nero in AD 64 followed by Domitian about AD 85. Of course this is only one line of reasoning.

### To whom was it written?

To get some idea as to whom the original readers were we are dependent on such hints as we get from the message itself so let us look at what we know.

The indication in 5:12 is that it was written to a well established Church which had some time in the past suffered persecution 10:32-34. This Church had known great days with good leaders and teachers, 13: 7, but had not been directly founded by the Apostles, 2:3. It also was a Church known for its generosity and liberality 6: 10. One further hint is helpful see 13:24 in the closing section where some personal comments are made we read, *Those who come, from Italy send you greetings* (RSV). This could mean the readers have moved from Italy so their hem& left behind send greetings, or visa-versa , the ones sending the greetings have left and send back to Italy greetings to the readers If the latter is the case then we can assume the destination of the 'letter' is Rome.

William Barclay in his commentary tidies things up to his own satisfaction as follows:

**'Hebrews is a letter written by a great teacher to a little group of Christians in Rome, first was their teacher; at the moment he was separated from them and was afraid that they were drifting away from the faith: and so he writes this letter to them.'**

### By whom was it written?

If you have a King James Bible it will say St Paul wrote it, and it is placed at the end of his line of Epistles, but most commentators as far back as Luther and Calvin don't really believe he was the author. Thomas Hewitt in his commentary said it this way: "If Paul didn't write Hebrews then who did? Who was the brilliant first century writer who produced this outstanding work? Ramsay suggests Philip the Deacon; Harnack, Priscilla and Aquila, and Chapman, Aristion, but there is so little evidence to support such views. Some have claimed Clement of Rome as the author while four other well known names have been put forward

such as Barnabas, Apollos, Luke and Silas. But when we come to end of conjecture, we are compelled to agree with Origen who said 1700 years ago:

“Only God knows who wrote Hebrews.”

### The Question: Letter or Sermon?

Dr William Lane author of a commentary on Hebrews entitled ‘*A Call to Commitment*’ makes this statement in his forward:

‘Hebrews is a sermon, not a letter. When we read Hebrews we are exposing ourselves to early Christian preaching. Hebrews opens as we might expect a sermon to begin with a sharp flatus upon Clod who has spoken to us in the past and is speaking at this present time (1: 1–29). We should approach Hebrews as we would approach any sermon with a readiness to hoar what a pastor who is sensitive to God and deeply concerned for His people has to say.’

What then can we say about Hebrews today? It has a message rooted in real life. It addresses men and women like ourselves who discover they can be penetrated by circumstances over which they have no control. It is a sensitive response to the emotional fragile ness that characterises each one of us. And it throbs with an awareness of the struggle as it explores dimensions of the cost of discipleship.

Hebrews is a pastoral response to the sagging faith amen and women in a dilemma of their day. Are their facts then about its message that make this book more similar to our situation than we had previously realised? And are there factors that will enable us to identify ourselves with the writer and his friends and so encourage us to lead Hebrews with confidence? For Hebrews conveys as word from God addressed to the harsh reality of life in an insecure world. If you have ever felt yourself overwhelmed by that reality Hebrews is a message you cannot neglect. Herein lies a call to faith hope and love that will meet the requirements in any adversity we may thee on arty given day.

### Hebrews 1: The God who Speaks

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets...Heb 1:1

We need to pause right here and, realise the importance of these few words. God has chosen to communicate with men and women even in their rebellion and appointed from among them certain ones as prophets even as far back as Abel (Matt. 23,33– 35, Luke 11:47–51 [51] and Enoch (Jude 15, 15), who are both mentioned in chapter 11 as being men of faith, and in (11:32) it mentions unnumbered other prophets were also men/women of faith.

In the beginning, or actually before it, God had a creational plea and within that plan was a redemptive component, a salvation factor we like to call, as we look back, Salvation History. (see 1:14 7 2: 3f). To reveal this plan or parts thereof God by grace appointed various men and women with certain gifts to be His means of communication such as Prophets, priests and kings, each having specific tasks and functions and each bringing revelation to the offspring of Adam, and each foreshadowing the Christ. We will take further note of this when we come to such as Melchizadek, see 7:1, *This Melchizadek was king of Salem and priest of the God host High.*

Now throughout his address the author picks out various popular and well known of the above, (prophets, priests and kings) and makes reference to the part they played in this Salvation History, while bringing to the attention of his readers their contribution was limited

and temporary, pointing forward to complete communicator to be found in the Son who brings the whole counsel of God as distinct revelation, that, being believed, brings complete salvation. This Son is the true Man of Faith, Hope and Love.

Let us look at what these first few verses in Chapter one are saying. As Jesus claims in Rev. 22, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega we beginning and the end* . . . God is claiming here that His Son is the last word to the Nations, there will be no more, and that He has the right to bring this last word because He is the Author of the Universe, the One who spoke the First Word. John 1:1-4. *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God (as part of the trinity) and the Word as God. He was with God in the beginning Through Him all things were made without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life and that was the light of men* (c.f. Gen 1:1-3).

**Through whom He made the Universe.** Creation is important as the foundation for the writer's whole argument concerning God's eternal plan and the part the Son has to play in it all from the beginning to the, end of time we know it. See 11:3 *By faith we understand that the Universe was formed at God's command.* Faith is essential for us as with the early readers to accept the creational facts presented to us. See also 1: 10 ff, this passage from Psalm 102, was originally believed to refer to God but seems to be taken by this writer as proof of the position of authority invested in (God) the Son.

### Concerning Angels.

The passage in Hebrews 1:3-5, claims some things of the nature and work of Christ and his standing with God. Previously the writer has stated that God has *spoken this last word to us by a (the) Son*. There had been a time when God had spoken through prophets, the inference being that the Son is greater than these prophets:

With this in mind what then are wadi but messengers from God, and in the past God has spoken through angels bringing revelation through these servants to men, so just as Christ is greater than the prophets so *He is much superior to angels*.

It seems from the rest of the chapter that angels were held in high regard as those who communicate with men messages and revelation from God, and possibly in some way Jesus was considered by some to be one of them, or even an archangel highly placed in the hierarchy of heaven and among God's servants. The scriptures quoted here from the Old Testament seem to refute this Welt if indeed it did exist.

*Are not all angels' ministering spirits* (creatures of God) *sent to serve those who will inherit salvation* (1:14). This sums up their authority, they are servants (not sons) to serve God and those whom God has chosen to be His family. (2:11) Regardless of how important and binding the message spoken by angels was, it is not to angels that He (God) has subjected the world to come. This has been ordained for the offspring of Adam who by faith have surrendered to the grace of God.

### The Author and his Readers.

Before we venture further into this message let us again consider the author under the theme I believe is relevant to the desire of the writer to renew his readers in faith, hope and love, without which they are in danger of backsliding and floundering, purposeless and lacking confidence. (Heb.10. 35).

It is fairly evident from his introduction that he himself is a man of faith, hope and love, and has this burden for the object of his love, the community of believers of which he is one. This love is expressed in his passion for them to be renewed and confirm in their faith and hope so as to be able, to stand firm with assurance and Conviction even in the evil days in which they were living. With his own strong faith and sure hope he will confront them with the source of such Faith, Hope and Love with the intent to rekindle the spark of life that lies deep within each one of them if necessary.

He has nothing new to say to them as St Paul said (*I will know nothing among you other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified* (1 Cor. 2: 2) He is only reminding them of what they had already heard. We must pay more careful attention to what we have (already) heard. Heb. 2:1.

If they think by returning to the ritual religion of their fore-father; will somehow open them up to a new message from a latter day prophet, or even better, from an angel bringing a message directly from God to meet their current situation they are mistaken for it has all been said by prophets and angels in the past.

Messages spoken by angels in the past had been extremely important and to be obeyed with failure to do so having dire consequences. Heb. 2:2.

And now the last, very last word has been spoken by the Son the final authority concerning the present and the future. To substantiate this fact the writer takes scriptures evidently known to his readers to make his point. These angels may have a high office as to their proximity to God, and Jesus may have been for a season been a little lower than them having become flesh as one of us, but by His total obedience to God in going to the Cross to provide purification for sins (yours, mine, the writers and readers) He became much superior to the angels (both in deed and name) Heb.1: 3b-4) see also, Hebrews 9:14; and 1 Cor. 6:11.

Do we get the picture of (2:5) angels as in (1:14) functionally fulfil their roles to serve Adam's offspring, but this offspring renewed in the last Adam cleansed purified as those (born again John 3) will rule in the new creation as Adam and his family were meant to rule in this present world.

## **Chapter 2 The Matter of Salvation.**

*How shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? (2:3a).* Escape what? The penalty for denying the truth that has been revealed by and in the person of the Son, Jesus the Christ. See 3:7-19, *so I (God) declare on oath in my anger they shall never enter my rest* (v11) and So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief (v19). We will refer back to this later.

Now to the matter of salvation, (1:14) speaks of those who will inherit salvation. Let us turn to I Peter 1:3-12, and read this powerful passage concerning salvation and the inheritance that we have received and is kept for us through faith. Note in this passage the reference to, faith, hope and love.

From this reading we can see that salvation is more than just having your sins forgiven, taking away the fear of judgement and penalty for our past rebellion and unbelief, it has a very important future; aspect with present responsibilities.

*This salvation which was announced by the Lord was confirmed to us by those who heard him, (2:3b).* Such as the apostle Peter. So as we turn to (2:9ff) we see the action of this salvation in the words of our author.

- (1) Jesus has died: so that by the, race of God He might taste death for everyone(2: 9b). As by one man sin entered the world and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men because all sinned. Romans 5:12. But God demonstrated love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us Romans 5:8.
- (2) Bringing many sons to glory. (2:10) Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. Here we have glory, holiness and sonship.
- (3) The overthrow of the devil on our behalf:
- (4) Made atonement as a faithful high priest.
- (5) Can help in times of temptation. The last verse of this chapter 12:18), addresses directly the reason for this discourse, being suffering and temptation and in Jesus, the faithful high priest who makes atonement for them, understands their predicament and is able to help those who are being tempted

Picking up the matter of sonship in point 2 we will expand it a little. The intimate relationship of family (brothers) is stressed here continuing to use Old Testament texts to confirm the writers point. As sons more than servants we are embraced in the Fathers love. In (vs 16) Abraham's descendants is alluded to possibly because his readers are Israelites but having a double naming for Abraham is the father of all the faithful from every nation as promised by God and confirmed by Jesus. Genesis 15:4-6; 17:3-8; 18:18.

Paul in Romans 4 makes a strong argument for Abraham being not only the father of Israel but of many nations (vs18) and of all people of faith (vs16) He is the father of us all cf vs23-24, for us who believe in Him (God) who raised Jesus from the dead. We will further look at Abraham and his importance in this message when we come to him later as in c6 where hope is the primary concern and c11 the chapter on faith.

Turn now to 6:9-12 to see some things that accompany salvation. Note our threefold themes present here, the love, you have shown, in order to make your hope sure, and through faith and patience inherit what has been promised To see further what we have received as benefits accompanying our salvation read Ephesians 1:3-14.

### **Hebrews 3: Jesus and Moses.**

Therefore holy brothers who share in the heavenly calling.... What a positive way to address his readers ( my) holy brothers and or holy brothers of Jesus. Not just related to Abraham or Israel, but to the Messiah who is called Jesus the Saviour. With this relationship they also share in the heavenly calling. Why the, if this is true, would you want to go back under the laws demands and become again like those; who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (2:5). Come now and fix your thoughts on Jesus the apostle and high priest whom we confess. (3:16).

If you need to feel secure in some of the old familiar things such as prophets and priests you will find them so much more perfect than those of the past in Jesus the Christ.

Note: 'Prophets and apostles both spoke the truth as it was revealed from God having spent time in His presence.

The introduction to these roles of Jesus has been made and will be enlarged upon later in his discourse but for now the writer: is making the point that the highly revered Moses must take second place to Jesus. Moses was truly a faithful servant but Jesus is the faithful Son.

Using the illustration of building and possession of a house Moses is given credit for the building of this house, but the owner entrusts the oversight of the house to His Son. Continuing this theme he would desire to stimulate his readers to renewed hope and adds himself in with them, we are His house if we hold on to our courage and hope of which we boast (3:6) He keeps prompting them to take account of what has been presented to them and they have known as the truth – the Gospel and the benefits they have received living in faith and hope

- (1) Pay more careful attention to what we have heard so that we don't drift away (2: 1)
- (2) Hold on to our courage and hope of which we boast (3:6) what is this hope?
- (3) If we hold firmly .... the confidence we had at first (3:14). This confidence and hope must go together.
- (4) Be careful not to have, fallen short of the promised rest (4: 1)
- (5) let us hold firmly to the faith we profess (4:14)
- (6) Let us hold unswerving to the hope we profess (10:23).
- (7) Do not throw away your confidence (10:35).

See how the author lines himself up with his readers by his constant use of the inclusive : we and us. It could be said he was possibly a market gardener by the number of *let us*, patches to be found in this message, for instance such as in chapter 10:19–25, and also chapter 12.

Before we look at some of the warnings the writer places before his readers .I want to return to the first verse of chapter 3. Fix your thoughts on Jesus .. He has made strong claims about this One who is both Son and Christ being both Saviour and Creator and later in this chapter (vs 12–14 he again places emphasis on remaining focused on this One as if He was actually with them in their predicament. As we read on we will find he continues to present Jesus Christ as central to the past present and future of this community of His people.

Let us our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter finisher) of our, faith for the joy set before him endured the Cross scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (12:2–3) Fix your eyes, this is where true faith when we can [see] that in which we put our faith– (and hope).

### Warnings,

- (1) Warning to pay attention, 2:1–3a.
- (2) Warning against unbelief, 3:7–19.
- (3) Warning against falling away, 5:11–5:12
- (4) Warning against deliberate sinning, 10:26–31.
- (5) Warning against refusing God, 12:14–29.

These warnings are to be found in what Ian Pennicook in his commentary – *The Shadow and the Substance*, calls the exhortation passages. So we will use his commentary as our reference book as we view what the writer is presenting to his readers in consideration of the path they seem about to enter. This will lead them from the Way they have known which is being confirmed in his discourse.

On page 44 of *The Shadow and the Substance*, Ian makes this statement concerning point three above, 5:11–6:20, ‘If anything it is the major issue which the more doctrinal parts of the letter are meant to address’.

Now this apparent alternative path has hidden dangers such as quicksand, slippery slopes, and wild animals such as ‘lions on the road’, with little or no protection and the end of such a path offers no sanctuary [rest], .. *only a fearful expectation of judgement and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God* 10:27

#### **Chapter 4: A Sabbath Rest – Hope for the People of God.**

Therefore ore since the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short rill.

As he has in chapter two he puts the positive alongside of the negative, or better, the result of faith alongside of the result of unbelief (sin).

We will look at this important subject concerning rest from three aspects with the hop that we will grasp the significance of the writer’s insertion and explanation for the encouragement of his readers.

(1) The inference he makes by reference to the Genesis account of God resting after six days of creation Gen. 2:2, is that a rest of completion was established where all creation functioned perfectly according to God’s purpose. The outcome or ‘telos’ was unchangeable, where nothing would be added to it or taken from it so that all who are m harmony with this accomplishment enter into that rest in communion with the Trinity.

Look at Psalm 95:8–11 for. God’s condemnation of those who harden their hearts, therefore in my anger I swore, “then shall not enter my rest”.

(2) Joshua is mentioned as a chosen leader to take the Children of Israel into the Promised Land, where they hoped for rest from their wanderings, and, as is ini;ered if they had remained obedient and believed God, they would have known something akin to such a .test, but only as a type of the t\_ which was, and is available to those who remain ‘God’s people of faith’.

(3) *There remains then a sabbath rest for then people of God* 4:9. This Sabbath – rest is what the Promised Land rest was to be a type of and is available to all who persevere in faith, hope and love. The peace and joy of that day of rest.is a present reality for when Jesus said, it is finished, He meant it, for all that hindered that w. t for as had been removed at the Cross and the fruit of that completion can be found in Revelation 7.9–17; 14:11.13; 21:1–7; 22:..1–6.

Before we move on to the high priestly office of Jesus let us take note of some of the direct references to faith, hope and love.

A couple of passages stand out where the three are found together, 6:10--12; 10:19–25.

#### **Faith:**

4:14 *hold firmly to the faith we profess* And especially chapter 1, Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see 11:4. and without faith it is impossible to please God 1:6 Plus many other references throughout this chapter. And in chapter 12 – Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter (finisher) of our faith.

## Hope:

... hold on to your courage and hope 3:6. Now later he writes 3:14, hold firmly ... the confidence we had at first – this confidence is in the same object of his hope. 10:35 do not throw away your confidence. and 10:19–23. Since we confidence to enter the most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus ... let us hold unswerving to the hope we profess for He who promised is faithful

## Love:

Keep on loving each other as brothers 13:1.

let us consider how to spur one another on towards love .. 10:24.

## Jesus the Great High Priest after Melchizedek. ( 4:14; 5:10; & 7)

The writer knows his readers have been accustomed to having a high Priest appointed by God through the family of Aaron to stand before God on their behalf to plead their cause in times of trial. This has been the case for many generations. If then they are still the people of God with a closer affinity brought about by Christ's finished work on the Cross then surely high Priest .. be the normal requirement especially difficult times.

So the writer introduces into his message the fact that this Jesus Christ who is the Son. and Saviour is also ordained of God as High Priest not in Aaronic mode but in the order of Melchizedek.

The first mention comes in chapter 2:17. Then in chapter 3:1 he continues to reinforce this Priestly role of Jesus continuing to build up the theme in. chapter 4:14–15, In chapter 5:1–10 the role and function of the High Priest is outlined with reference to the difference of Christ's call from the usual succession previously known. In chapter 13:10–11, there is further reference to the function and office of the priests.

The last verse in Chapter 6, makes the statement, He has become a High Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek, followed up in chapter 7 with an explanation while continuing to quote Psalm 110: 4, first in 5:6, then 7:17 & 21.

Jesus rules as a High Priest in worship.

## Chapter 8: Jesus the High Priest of a New Covenant

Building on what he has said about the (new) priesthood which is a-permanent priesthood 7:24, cf verse 21b 'you are a priest forever' the writer states that Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant. 7:22.

In chapter 8 he will continue to remind them of the role of a priest and inform them that the ministry of Jesus is superior to theirs ( the other priests) and then follows this up with the covenant, of which He [Christ] is mediator, is superior to the old one, being founded on better promises. To reinforce the promise of this New Covenant he quotes a section from Jer. 31: 31–34. He goes on to tell his readers this New Covenant which has now come; makes the old one obsolete, continuing on in chapter 9 to remind them of what was the regulations of this old covenant which were good for the period they were meant for, but they were a; shadow and copy 8:5 of the real thing which is to be found in this New Covenant and the ministry of the New High Priest. ( read 9:11–15).

### Christ's Sacrifice Once For All: Chapter 10:1–18.

So Christ was sacrificed once for all to take away the sins of many people and He will appear a second time, not to bear sins, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him 9:28.

Chapter 10 commences with Ian Pennicook's theme the *Shadow and the Substance*, the good things that are coming.

What were these previous sacrifices but an annual reminder of sins? (10:3.)

The writer again quotes scripture Psalm 40:6–8, and goes on to explain this as a reference to the necessary temporary nature of the previous sacrifices and the coming of Jesus to effect the abolition of this old system with His obedient sacrifice of Himself: *I have come to do the will of God.*

By this once for all act of Jesus Christ we have been made holy and this is a w accomplishment, not part of the future anticipation.

This is a great passage for a sermon.

- (1) There is no longer any sacrifice for sin 10:18. The final sacrifice.
- (2) He will appear a second time 9:28b The second coming of Christ.
- (3) To bring salvation to those continuing to wait for Him The future aspect of salvation 12:28 the unshakeable kingdom, and, .13:14 we look for a city that is to come along with Abraham– 11.10 and many others from the past – (Aliens and strangers on earth) 11:10 Instead they were longing for a better country a heavenly one ... . God has prepared a city for them 11:16.

So when this priest (Jesus Christ) had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins – .. by this one sacrifice He had made perfect ( removed all imperfection ) forever those who are being made holy as an ongoing happening day by day.

To complete this section he refers to the testimony by the Holy Spirit being the passage found in Jer. 31:33–34.

### The Certainty of God's Promises: Heb. 6:10–20, 11: 8–16.

... we don't want you to become lazy but to imitate those who through– and patience inherit what has been promised (vs12) –.And so waiting patiently Abraham received what was promised 15).

Turning to Chapter 11 we find our writer again using the illustration of Abraham in the context of faith p, patience and promise from God. Those who are prepared to imitate such as Abraham, truly a man of faith of whom it was said he believed God and it was accounted unto him as righteousness, (Gcrl.3: 6) will be those who can be sure of their hope (6 11).

In Galatians chapter 3 we will find a section on this matter of **The Law and The Promise**. If the inheritance depends on the law then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in His grace gave it to Abraham through a promise Gal. 3:18. Clearly no one is jested before God by the law because "*The righteous shall live by faith*". (Habakuk 2:4).

The writer is encouraging his readers to be constant in faith and patience according to the promises of God of which He will not repent, thereby having this hope which the promise of God has placed in our hearts as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. (6:19)

So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God ( action of love which follows true faith and hope) you will receive what He has promised 10:35–36

## The Blood of Christ: Chapter 9:11-28

Indeed under the law almost everything is purified with blood and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (9:22).

The writer has spent some considerable space in his address to the matter of the high priest and the new covenant, to bring into focus for his readers the importance of what God has done in providing for their redemption, both in the Old and New Covenants. This would be revision for most Jews, while giving enlightenment to any Gentiles who may be in this community of Christians.

Now he moves on to a more attention gripping point, that of the very sacrifice itself where the chosen spotless animal (lamb) is slain and its blood used in the rituals for cleansing and purification of both people and place of sacrifice and worship.

How many generations have waited in anticipation for the annual day of atonement but he makes this astounding statement that this New Priest called the Christ is also the (lamb of God) chosen sacrifice of this New Covenant, and it is His blood shed once only, *He has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sins by the sacrifice of Himself* (9:26).

If this is true, what then is there to go back to in the old sacrifices of Judaism but bondage under the law, which they of themselves cannot, or will not keep.

## A Call to Perseverance: Chapters 10:19–39; 12:1–3.

In chapter 10:19ff we have one of the passages when the halos are together in the same context, as the writer encourages his readers and calls on them to persevere with these three at the very centre of their lives.

The use of his favourite inclusive expression, *let us*, stands out here as to again call on them to see clearly where they now stand because of what God has accomplished on their behalf in Jesus.

He begins this section with a strong call to move fully into the benefits of the New Covenant, *Therefore brothers (brethren) since we have confidence*, (a positive claim that they do have) to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus..... And later He says, *Do not abandon your confidence* (10:35). Here again he calls upon them to hold fast, or persevere with conviction, see (4:14), and then in (12:1) run with perseverance the race set before you (us). see also (6:1)

There will be times of suffering, 10:32f; you endured a hard struggle with suffering. When Paul wrote to the Romans covering this matter of suffering he said, *consider that the suffering of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us*. Rom. 8:18.

If all that the writer has reminded them of and enlightened them to is true, and they are recipients of God's grace, (so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone 2:9b), and actually heirs, (endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as [His] children. 12:7.). Turn to Romans 8:17, if we are the children of God, and joint heirs with Christ if in fact we suffer with him so that we may be glorified with Him. (vs. 24, In hope we are saved: vs 25, We wait for it (the outcome of our hope) with patience They need now to recall those earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with suffering. 10:32. For you need endurance so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what was promised. (10:36)

See also 12:3, *Consider Him [Jesus] who endured such hostility against Himself from sinners so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.*

To build on this call to perseverance by faith launches into this impressive list of witnesses in chapter 11.

### **The Witnesses of Faith Chapter 11.**

Faith, an outstanding word in the Church vocabulary that often slides off the tongues of the members with little thought as to what it means in the Biblical sense. To get a good description of faith as introduced in chapter 11 read Ian Pennicook's commentary pages 113–114.

One of the terms used for Christians has been 'people of faith' as in very early times they were often called 'people of the way'. But for us, as with the original readers the author wants us to realise the great gift it that has been entrusted to us, so that we can live with full assurance in the unfolding plan of God of which we are an integral part, even though we may be facing the worst possible circumstances imaginable with trials, tribulation and much suffering.

Faith takes us out of the current situation into the future reality so that which is unseen, now is seen and tasted, the revelation comes to the person of faith reality. *All these died in faith without having received the promises but from a distance they saw and greeted them (11:13)*

The 'now' happenings can be accepted as part of the process towards the things to come that are set firmly immovable as our hope.

In this chapter probably more than previously we can see the extent of the knowledge of the history and scripture; the writer has to lean all on to impress upon his reader God's salvation plan so that they will approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith . . . hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering for He who has promised is faithful .. provoke one another to love . . . as you see the Day approaching. (10:22–25).

*Having this assurance*; of faith the writer could encourage his reader, to not only follow the example of these witnesses but to look to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter ( beginning and end) of our faith for the sake of the joy that was set before Him [ as a man of true faith Jesus could see by revelation the outcome of what He was facing] endured the Cross disregarding the shame [because of where this was taking Him] and has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of God 12:1

*The great cloud of witnesses*, 12:1, some call a crowd. Cloud, I would rather, mails overshadowing or enveloping us. We had a series of sermons recently in the Church where Gloria and I attend, where these witnesses were portrayed as sitting in the stand watching us run the race, and giving us advice as to how we would better run, overcoming various stumbling blocks. It was an interesting exercise in highlighting problems Christians face; in daily life, and some answers to them, but I don't think this is what the author had in mind when writing these two chapters.

These persons in chapter 11 have been called 'Heroes of Faith' especially in Sunday school lessons, but this is not really true either, because the point the writer is making is surely that each one was a man or woman like us, who had what we might call 'God experiences', where the opportunity to exercise this gift of faith presented itself; and was effective as to certain happening in their lives and also nationally for the people of God.

Of course when we look at the list in the passage, 11: 32ff, we might consider these as heroes until looking a little closer find their weaknesses and failures beginning to show through. 'Yet they are listed alongside of such greats as Abraham and Moses who on reflection were not faultless, wilfully on occasions, making mistakes in judgement and deliberately disobeying God.

To get a picture of Abraham turn to Romans 4.

Let us try to capture the importance of this list as presented to us by the author as he strives to convince his readers of their personal need to also be men and women of faith walking and talking with God in the cool of the evening. Industriously building the Ark as Noah did, or leaving the security of the–homeland to travel to the promised land or situation, with confidence because they, or we, have had a vision of *a city that has foundations whose architect and builder is God* (11:10,16)

## A Call to Discipline: Chapter 12.

Now discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time ... 12:11.

In the current general attitude to discipline of any kind this statement would appear rather quaint, and maybe to some repulsive especially in regard to children. The idea that in any circumstance discipline could be pleasant certainly would be forgiven to modern psychology, being seen for the most part as repressive, destructive and anti–social in today’s society.

Looking back to the time of this writing it probably wasn’t much different in the hearts of the people, to avoid discipline wherever possible by using whatever strategies came to hand, and to excuse oneself for any reason for its application. Of course we can go further back, such as to the time in Genesis 3 when God confronts Adam concerning his disobedience, Adam answers with these words, The man said “*The woman You gave to me she gave me fruit, from the tree, and I ate.*” In other words “ Its not my fault (1) she gave it to me, and (2) You put her here with me, so you see I am not to blame”. And we all quickly took that stance on every occasion possible.

But here the writer is putting forward the benefits of discipline first as a means of identification. It is a great thing to know who you are as a person with roots and heritage which suggests an inheritance, even as the prodigal son: Luke 15. In Romans 8: 12–25, Paul gives us insight as to our inheritance There is big business today in ‘family trees’ to be looking for some base of security and reason to being.

In 1st Peter, we find this same sense of having to be prepared to accept suffering for a season, with the outcome being an imperishable inheritance, 1 Peter 1:3–7. Some of this inheritance is *that we may share in His holiness* (12:10). And, *we are looking for the city that is to come,* (13:14).

The second benefit is a therapeutic process towards healing, see the second part of 12:11b, *but later it yields peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it ... make straight paths for your feet so what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.*

## Don’t Reject God’s Grace.

For it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace 13. 9.

The theme of grace is to be found rending tight through this address, beginning in chr I. The Son has made purification for sins. (1:3) And followed up in chr. 2, We do see Jesus ... crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. (2:9.)

So as the writer has introduced the subject of salvation in these early chapters, he affirms this salvation is by grace. Then, when he expounds the new High Priest and New Covenant, the whole action of grace is unfolded for his readers as apart from the old covenant and the Law. *If the Son sets you free you are free indeed* (John 8:36)

In chapter 10:10, the writer states, it is 'by Gods' will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all And verse 18, Where there is forgiveness .... there is no longer offering for sin. Then in the same chapter he offers a strong warning on those who have spurned the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant (new ) by which they were sanctified and outraged the Spirit of grace, 10:29.

So, following on from his discourse on discipline, see to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God. (12: 15) The inference is that the penalties under the old covenant were fearful, where the, benefits of the New Covenant of grace are so much richer, but the penalties of rejection so much more frightening. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God 10:31. *And for indeed our God is a consuming fire.* 12:29. See Revelation for the outcome of the rejection God's grace.

### Concluding Words of Encouragement: Chapter 13

Chapter 13 is in itself like the closing remarks of the Pauline; Epistles, and would have contributed markedly to the title given this message by the earlier Church. The mention of Timothy, a close associate of Paul, would also have added strongly to this assumption

But for us it is more beneficial to continue the flow of the relationship between writer and readers. *Let mutual love continue...* the outcome of genuine faith should be love, for the love of God has been placed (poured) in your hearts Romans 5:5. Faith believes in the grace and promises of God. Abraham believed God ... Read Rom. 5:1-5.

1John 4 gives a good definition of this love. *Beloved since God loves so much we ought to love one another.* (1 John 4: 11)

Next, he stresses the depth of the unity between Christians; our bonding is such that when one of us is injured we should all feel the pain, like Siamese twins co-joined, as one body. Some members of families have reactions when one of the family is hurt or in a crisis, even when they are great distances apart: Husbands can even feel birth pangs as the mother gives birth, also when absent from the scene of the birth.

The reference to marriage here seems to be more than just a moral judgement, in light of what he has previously said. Evidence of Christian bonding should be seen in greater strength in the marriage union, *the two shall become one flesh.* (Eph. 5:31.)

There are others distractions than the possibility of persecution and suffering that need to be recognised and avoided, such as money and possessions. They are warned not to be sidetracked by these. 'I will never leave you nor, forsake you.' God said

There is no need to panic if this promise is true and sound for, *we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.* 12:28, 'You have been reminded of this long list of men and women of faith, but you also have more immediate evidence near at hand in the leader God has appointed for you,' states the writer.

Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. What does this mean here in this context? Well there are two possibilities we could-investigate. (1) The author is referring to 12:2 where he claims Jesus to be the pioneer and perfecter of our faith so all true exhibition of faith, past, present and future, has its foundation or roots in Him. Looking at the faith of these men we see Jesus and His faith on our behalf. (2) Or it could refer to what follows. Here, he reinforces that the teaching concerning Jesus as the one and only true sacrifice, leaves no room for any other ritual. Our part is to line ourselves with Him (Jesus) *outside the camp and bear the abuse He endured* 13:13.

In that bonded association with Him *let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God that is the fruit of lips that confess His name*, any other sacrifice is null and void.

For the welfare of any community, wise leaders need to be appointed as God chose rises, and followed up with Joshua, to bring Israel to the Promised Land. This community also has Faithful leaders, 13:7 Who need to be obeyed for the well-being of the whole community, so he urges them to be considerate so as not to make the task of the leaders more difficult. Another Pauline trait is sin here as the writer asks for prayer and hopes to see them in the near future. ' Was this author a close companion of Paul? See the passage from verses 22–25, which is also reminiscent of Paul's letters.

The benediction, vs 20–21, is a beautiful summary of all the writer has been outlining to his readers throughout his address, drawing all the threads together while commending them into the gracious care of God, being eternally bonded with the saviour Jesus Christ.

[Read the benediction together.]