

Biblical Exposition of Hebrews 3:1-7

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February 25, 2022

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INTRODUCTION OF THESIS

“The contrast of Jesus and Moses serves as a rhetorical means by the author of Hebrews to persuade his audience to accept the New Covenant, enjoy their direct access to God, and recognize Jesus Christ as the faithful Mediator between God and man. This thesis will argue that Jesus as great high priest and Son ruling over God’s creation is superior to Moses as servant in God’s house.”¹

¹ Raleigh Bagley, “The Superiority of Christ,” original published research, 2020.

1. HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF HEBREWS 3:1-7

1.1 Authorship

“The writer of Hebrews was proficient in Greek and Hellenistic prose, saturated in the Old Testament, sympathetic to the history of redemption leading up to Jesus, and pastorally apprehensive for the original readers, who knew him directly (13:22, 23) and whose upbringing he recognized (10:32-34). Analogous to his readers, he came to faith by the apostle’s preaching (2:3, 4). Beyond that, he was an acquaintance of Timothy (13:23).²

There is still the uncertainty of the authorship of Hebrews and its deliverer. However, Clement of Rome’s familiarity with the letter does not indicate who the author is, and if he had such information, he does not share it. But what is sure, he is not the author of Hebrews, although many scholars have suggested that he is. Despite Clement’s familiarity with the epistle, his appeal for the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament is in contrast to the central arguments about the church's ministry.”³

F. F. Bruce adds, there is the Alexandrian belief that Paul was the author. This idea impacted the judgment of eastern Christianity and eventually western Christianity during the middle of the fourth century. In their sense of literary criticism, the leaders of the catechetical school at Alexandria determined that Pauline authorship was not capable of being straightforward as Romans or Galatians. The aftermath was an attempt to reconcile the linguistic data with the Pauline ascription. In his *Hypotyposes*, Clement of Alexandria said that Paul wrote Hebrews in Hebrew but that Luke was the epistle's translator and publisher in Greek. Thus, he determined to account for the similarities in Hebrews and the Lukan writings. A generation later, Origen, a speaker of both Hebrew and Greek, perhaps realized that there were no signs that the epistle had undergone translation from Hebrew to Greek.⁴

² David L. Allen, *The New American Commentary: Hebrews* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2010), 25.

³ Raleigh Bagley, “The Superiority of Christ,” original published research, 2020.

⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 14-15.

“Though numerous suggestions of authorship exist, still, Hebrews does not state the author’s name, leaving a provoking mystery. Although many premodern critics, such as Clement presumed that Paul was the author of Hebrews, nearly all scholars now acknowledge that Paul is not the author. Unlike some epistles that pseudonymously claim Paul’s name (e.g., 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus), Hebrews does not claim Pauline authorship; rather, it is anonymous. At some point, Hebrews began circulating with Paul’s letters, as attested by a third-century manuscript of the letters known as Chester Beatty Biblical Papyrus II, where it follows Romans. Here is where “To the Hebrews” is first entitled.^{5,6}

“In addition to Clement of Rome, suggested authors of Hebrews are Barnabas, Luke, Apollos, Epaphras, or Silas. Although it is difficult to eliminate any of these possibilities, it is quite difficult to establish a persuasive case for any of them. The significance is that this writing, like that of the Old Testament that preceded it, is what “the Holy Spirit says” (3:7).^{7,8}

1.2 Audience

The proposed audience for Hebrews has not yet been determined. “The document was known and quoted before the end of the first century, but not under the traditional title “To (the) Hebrews.”⁹ The title traditionally is associated with the last quarter of the second century or earlier, and has been the regular destination the New Testament’s work and that of Christian writers. Perhaps the title designation was included with the Pauline line corpus, and the editor, by analogy, gave it this label. Several commentators, both ancient and modern, consider the text targeting Jewish followers of Jesus. “A number of scholars have thought of Alexandria in Egypt as the city where the readers lived. Some Alexandrian association is

⁵ Fasciculus III, Pauline Epistles and Revelation (P46 and P47), text. (2019). *Kenyon’s Editions of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri Online*. Retrieved from <https://brentnongbri.com/2019/04/10/kenyons-editions-of-the-chester-beatty-biblical-papyri-online/>

⁶ Raleigh Bagley, “The Superiority of Christ,” original published research, 2020

⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 14-15.

⁸ Raleigh Bagley, “The Superiority of Christ,” original published research, 2020

⁹ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3

evident throughout the epistle; the author is evidently acquainted with the literature of Alexandrian Judaism.”¹⁰ However, a closer look at this theory would indicate that “‘Hebrews’ is used of a distinct class of Jews or Jewish Christians, as opposed to those called Hellenists, but it is unlikely that this distinctive usage is reflected in the traditional title of the epistle.”¹¹

1.3 Occasion

“Individuals embracing that a Jewish audience is the target of Hebrew’s writing perceive these Jewish recipients as being tempted to “backslide” into non-messianic Judaism, for fear of persecution as Christians. While dangers of persecution emerge in the text (10:32-34), it does not follow the recoil to a more traditional form of Jewish practice that would ease such persecution. From the period of the Jewish rebellion and sometime afterward, Roman-Jewish interactions were often strained. It appears improbable that Roman authorities would care what method of Judaism Jews practiced, specifically, whether specific Jewish groups did or did not believe in Jesus as Messiah. Presuming the historical setting, the text argues on the origin of Israel’s Scripture and not Judaism’s relation to the Temple in terms of first-century CE practices. Hence, Hebrews designated audience could include any followers of Jesus, Jewish in origin or Gentile, who know the Septuagint.”^{12,13}

1.4 Date

“It is not certain whether Hebrews was written before or after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 AD. Regarding the view 70 years ago, Hebrews has no written evidence to confirm the ruins. Undeniably, Hebrews does not make any statements about the temple. Instead, it centers on the wilderness Tabernacle (Ex.25:1-31:1; 36:1-40:38). Since the

¹⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 12.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹² Rebecca Denova. (2018). Early Christianity. *Ancient History Encyclopedia*. doi:<https://www.ancient.eu/article/1205/early-christianity/>

¹³ Raleigh Bagley, “The Superiority of Christ,” original published research, 2020.

text declares that the Jewish sacrificial system is supplanted by the one-time sacrifice of Jesus, a petition to the Temple's devastation would have greatly strengthened its principal argument that Levitical sacrifices had become outdated (Heb.8-10).

Further examination of a possible date of Hebrews will affect the audience question regarding the analysis of (12:4) "shedding of blood," most probable in the literary sense as referring to the Jerusalem church community at first glance. Still, the text association is not a reference to suffering or death for the faith. Accordingly, this rules out the Jerusalem church's theory as probable, but instead the persecution of Christians under the rule of Caesar Nero, of which minor persecution is (10:32-34) associated with Rome about A.D 49. The implication of figurative interpretation (12:4) widens the field, pointing one to Rome under the rule of Domitian (A.D. 81-96), and the events of (10:32-34) are likely those of A.D. 65. Considering this view, Bruce adopted "the epistle was written before, but not long after, the outbreak of persecution in Rome in A.D. 65."¹⁴ Such views not only affect the date of Hebrews, but the interpretation as well."¹⁵

1.4 Location

One may consider several important questions from previous analysis about Hebrew's audience at this juncture. Were all the recipients of Hebrews all Christians at large? Were they a definite congregation or a Christian group with a community? Three theories surface regarding Hebrew's audience location. Traditionally, the area finds the audience in or near Jerusalem. One may argue this point from the evidence of tabernacle theology, the priesthood, and the sacrifices. C. Mosser's dissertation argues that the proof of Jerusalem's location describes the believer's enduring persecution that makes the destination conceivable. This

¹⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 21.

¹⁵ Raleigh Bagley, "The Superiority of Christ," original published research, 2020.

forecast was the dominant view until the nineteenth century. He amassed evidence from Hebrews 13:13 as favorable for Jerusalem's location.¹⁶

In addition to the location of Jerusalem, Rome is a second possibility. Perhaps thought of as the dominant view of scholars now, Rome rose to prominence during the eighteenth century. The case for Rome as the setting of a house church is Lane's destination of the epistle. Here, R. Brown defends the idea in a significant critique by M. Issacs.¹⁷ Lane's Rome hypothesis has recently received its most sharp commentary by Mosser, whose examination broke new ground, pointing to Heb. 13:24: "those from Italy send you, their greetings." "Mosser examined first-century manuscripts employing the preposition *apo* followed by a place name, as in Heb. 13:24, and concluded 'they consistently interpret the phrase to indicate the place *from which* the epistle was written."¹⁸

A third possibility for the location of Hebrews is Antioch in Syria. An attempt to argue that the author wrote to a mixed audience of believers and unbelievers resulted in two different approaches by F. F. Bruce and P. E. Hughes. They both say that the author addresses professing Christians without the distinction that some were possibly unsaved. This idea seems to be favored. Thus, when the author uses the term "brothers" in 3:12, he does not necessarily reference truly saved individuals but those in the church. The presumption is Christians, but some not necessarily. The approach would almost certainly illustrate the local church congregations at this time because not all are genuine believers. John MacArthur's observation of the expository sections is the author's addressing both believers and unbelievers, but the warning passages address unbelievers only.¹⁹

¹⁶ C. Mosser, "No Lasting City: Rome, Jerusalem and the Place of Hebrews in the History of Earliest Christianity," (Ph.D. dissertation, St. Mary's College, University of St. Andrews, 2004).

¹⁷ Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, lvii-lx.

¹⁸ Mosser, "No Lasting City," 157.

¹⁹ David L. Allen, *The New American Commentary: Hebrews*, 63-64.

In 1923, J. V. Brown offered a promising solution to location, suggesting that the readers of Hebrews were former Jewish priests who became Christians. The passage cited is Acts 6:7. Spicq later argued for this same position in his research. Except for Spicq and P. E. Hughes, this suggestion did not receive the type of reception as expected in New Testament circles. However, Brown argued for those receiving Hebrews as priests and attributed part of the epistle's writing to Luke as a collaborator, suggesting that Paul was “chief framer, planner, and compiler,” but Luke is the editor. Other theories provided similar results, providing that the locations were either Jerusalem or Rome.²⁰

2. LITERARY ANALYSIS

2.1 Genre

“Although Hebrews has traditionally been considered a letter, 13:22 classifies the volume as a “word of exhortation,” which individual scholars indicate as a sermon. Others contend that Hebrews was written as an exposition on the nature, significance, and character of Jesus in God’s infinite design from the inception. A few scholars propose that Hebrews was written as a temple sermon for the Ninth of Av, considering subsequent sources note that the Torah and Haftarah passages for that holy day are Ex.20 and Jer.31, writings that appear noticeably in Hebrews. “Jews were only allowed access into the city on one day of the year, Tisha B’Av (Ninth of Av), the day on which the destruction of both Temples is commemorated.”^{21,22}

²⁰ David L. Allen, *The New American Commentary: Hebrews*, 63-64.

²¹ B. Rosenfeld (2020). Peace in Israel. *Christian News from Jerusalem: Connecting Christians to the Heart of Israel*. doi:<https://www.thejerusalemgiftshop.com/israelnews/peace-in-israel-part-1/>

²² Raleigh Bagley, “The Superiority of Christ,” original published research, 2020.

2.2 Contrast of Jesus and Moses

“To start with, contrasting Jesus with Moses may appear inadequate once the writer of Hebrews settled Jesus’ superiority to angels. “It would seem to go without saying that he is greater than Moses.”²³ Hence, comparing Jesus with Moses is beyond the rampage of 1:5-13, not a return. Besides, in first-century Jewish tradition, Moses was regarded as better than angels with God-like status. “The comparison was not simply a literary exercise that enabled the writer to speak of the excellence of Jesus or to exhibit his own exegetical skill. . . . He [the writer] chose to acknowledge the faithfulness of Moses because this appears to have been a significant consideration to the men and women whom he addressed.”^{24,25}

“Contrasting Jesus with Moses was almost an assurance in first-century Christian minds considering Moses’ name occurs more than any other in the Bible except Jesus and David. (762 times in the Old Testament and 85 times in the New Testament). The contrast of Jesus and Moses began to take shape with Jesus’ ministry (Matt.5:21-48; Mk.10:1-12; 14:24), in Christian evangelism (Acts 7:17-44), Paul’s ministry (2 Cor.3; Gal.3:19), John’s Prologue (Jn.1:17), and in John’s universal acclamation (Rev.15:1-4).^{26,27}

2.3 Moses as a Servant

“When one views Moses from a Jewish perspective, he was “the greatest person who ever lived: it was through Moses that God delivered Israel from Egypt, constituted Israel as a nation, and brought Israel the Law.”²⁸ However, Jesus said, “truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has risen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom is

²³ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews, A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 194.

²⁴ Brett R. Scott, “Jesus’ Superiority Over Moses In Hebrews 3:1–6” in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, April–June 1998, 202–203.

²⁵ Raleigh Bagley, “The Superiority of Christ,” original published research, 2020.

²⁶ Paul Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. 194.

²⁷ Raleigh Bagley, “The Superiority of Christ,” original published research, 2020.

²⁸ Donald A. Hagner, *Hebrews* (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 1990), 60.

greater than he” (Matt.11:11). Though Jesus’ statement alludes to God’s future more significant work in him, those who held Moses in such high esteem were blind that Jesus is better. “It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of Moses in Judaism, and the veneration with which he was regarded.”^{29,30}

“Moses functions as an inferior prototype of Jesus. He is a faithful servant (Gk. “therapon”), implying a priest or healer. “The author of Hebrews makes an allusion to Num.12:7, where God says of Moses, “He is faithful in all my house.” This affirmation of the great deliverer occurs in a passage on the rebellion of Miriam and Aaron, who spoke against Moses.”³¹ Though privileged to speak mouth-to-mouth and behold the likeness of the Lord (Num.12:8), Moses was nevertheless just “a servant” in the house of God (3:5).”³²

2.4 Jesus as Apostle and High Priest

“From the inception of Hebrews, the author placed the supremacy of Jesus in his audience’s minds. This rhetorical scheme of establishing the subject’s dominance to be exalted is comparable to the method in which the reign of Christ is exalted beginning in Paul’s letter to the Colossians. “Note the reader’s “faith in Christ” in Col.1:4, which no doubt has caused them to be identified with Christ [“transferred to the kingdom of his beloved Son” in 1:13] and even united with him [“in whom” in 1:14] in 1:13-14, which is directly linked to Christ as “the image of the invisible God” in 1:15.”³³ Paul’s exhortation to the Colossian Christians is comparable to the Hebrew author who exhorts his audience to respond with

²⁹ William L. Lane, *Hebrews*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1991), 74.

³⁰ Raleigh Bagley, “The Superiority of Christ,” original published research, 2020.

³¹ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 952.

³² Raleigh Bagley, “The Superiority of Christ,” original published research, 2020.

³³ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 845.

faithfulness and perseverance to God's redemptive work. "Jesus is worthy of supreme glory in that he is the faithful High Priest and Son of God."^{34,35}

When Jesus is designated as "the apostle and high priest of our confession," he is marked out as being both God's representative among human beings and their representative in the presence of God."³⁶ The writings of the Old Testament reveal God's self-revelation to human beings and their reaction to that revelation. The inspired writing of the Old Testament and man's response find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. God's complete and final revelation is in the Son. He is both a faithful high priest and envoy in one, comparable to Moses special place, "yet as great as Moses was, his status was inferior to Christ's."³⁷ As envoy and one who has faithfully discharged the duties that he was entrusted with "glorified his Father on earth by finishing the work which he had given him to do (Jn.17:4)."³⁸

3. EXPOSITION AND INTERPRETATION

"One of the central themes of Hebrews is that the kingdom has come in Jesus because he reigns as the priest-king (cf. 12:28)."³⁹ The writer reveals that Hebrew's audience was desirous to return to Levitical law sacrifices believing that true forgiveness was secured under this old system. The author counters by arguing that Jesus is superior to Moses and Joshua. "Furthermore, Jesus is the "apostle and high priest of our confession" (3:1), and he secured an atonement that Moses never could win (7:1-10:18)."⁴⁰ Jesus as the superior intermediary is understood in Matthew's Gospel (2-7), wherein Jesus is the new Moses and the Sermon on the Mount evokes the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai."⁴¹

³⁴ Matthew Z. Capps, *Hebrews* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2015), 27.

³⁵ Raleigh Bagley, "The Superiority of Christ," original published research, 2020.

³⁶ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 91.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

³⁹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 586.

⁴⁰ Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 586.

⁴¹ Raleigh Bagley, "The Superiority of Christ," original published research, 2020.

“In view of Hebrews 3:1-4:13, one will find the subjunctive characteristics of imperatives and hortatory beside the usage of first and second person verbs. In the section of Heb.3:1-6, a topic change brings forth the writer’s direct address to his audience by using eloquence. In 3:1, the exegesis of the conditional phrase’s imperatival idea in this verse is semantically encoded in v. 6. It unifies the paragraph by a rhetorical structure with the recurrence of “house,” while relating and comparing Jesus and Moses, and using *inclusio* with Jesus’ name in v. 1. and the “Christ” in v. 6.^{42,43}

One may ask, why such a comparison between Jesus and Moses? The premise is that Moses’ distinctive place of honor was held in normative Judaism, a view by Philo. He indicated that Moses was celebrated as both law-giver and high priest during the first century AD. “The author did not denigrate Moses in any way, but rather compared him favorably to Jesus in 3:1-2. There is little evidence that the author was refuting ‘new Moses Christology’ as opposed to ‘angelic Christology.’”⁴⁴

“Included in 3:1 is the inferential particle *hothen* (“therefore”) indicating a conclusive idea drawn from the forgoing reflection providing why one should consider Jesus over Moses. The semantical use of the word presents a foundation for the exhortation of Jesus— “Consider him” (Jesus is an apostle and great high priest). The use of this term, suggested by some, is the link between the previous section and all said about the Son in the first two chapters.^{45,46}

“Hebrews 3:2 uses the adjective “faithful” denoting that in two respects Jesus is faithful— as apostle and high priest. “Jesus was faithful to God who appointed him “just as Moses was faithful in all God’s house.” By studying the word “house” in this context, three

⁴² David L. Allen, *The New American Commentary: Hebrews*, 236.

⁴³ Raleigh Bagley, “The Superiority of Christ,” original published research, 2020.

⁴⁴ David L. Allen, *The New American Commentary: Hebrews*, 236.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁴⁶ Raleigh Bagley, “The Superiority of Christ,” original published research, 2020.

possibilities arise. First, the term can refer to the spiritual community of God (1 Tim.3:15; 1 Pet. 2:5; 4:17). “God’s program of redemptive covenants restores community between the faithful and God, and with one another. Community is a crucial aspect of the biblical concept of covenant.”⁴⁷ Second, house could mean “family or household,” an uncommon occurrence in the New Testament and only found once in Hebrews (11:7). “If nothing else, the epic history of salvation unfolds the restoration of community between God and humanity, and between the individual and the rest of humanity. Parallels between Genesis 1-3 and Revelation 21-22 reveal that the formation of a redeemed community is at the heart of God’s plan.”⁴⁸ Lastly, house could be what Hebrews 10:21 indicates— a priestly “house” where the tabernacle was the center of worship and priestly duties.^{49,50}

“In consideration of 2 Sam.7, one is told that David’s son would build a house for God’s name and this house would be sure forever. The term *oikos* is used fourteen times in this chapter and is prominent as the author speaks concerning God’s house, the Lord’s house or the house of David’s heir. “Part of the difficulty of unraveling the logic of Heb.3:3-4 has been the fact that both Jesus (by analogy) and God the Father are spoken of as builders. Yet, this mix of both God and Messiah spoke of as builders of a house is exactly what we find in 2 Sam 7.”^{51,52}

“Moses is the extraordinary minister of the law, but Jesus’ priesthood is even so higher. The writer says Moses is “faithful in all God’s house” is the implication of Num.12:7, which refers to the place where Moses received a direct revelation from God in “the tent of meeting” (Num.12:1-10). In God’s house, Moses’ faithfulness conveys the idea that he

⁴⁷ Paul Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming like Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Kregel Publications, 2008), 75.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ David L. Allen, *The New American Commentary: Hebrews*, 242.

⁵⁰ Raleigh Bagley, “The Superiority of Christ,” original published research, 2020.

⁵¹ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 952.

⁵² Raleigh Bagley, “The Superiority of Christ,” original published research, 2020.

communicated all of God's divine revelations in the tabernacle to Israel. As well, his ministry was to testify to Christ's coming. "If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?" (Jn.5:46-47). The Mosaic law's, shadows point toward the coming good things brought by Christ (9:11; 10:1). For its guidance, the Holy Spirit revealed that entrance into God's presence would arrive solely when the earthly tabernacle's replacement is something better (9:8)."⁵³

"The proposition of Hebrews 3:6 is a theme drawn throughout several scriptural references: God's house consists of his people (1 Sam.2:35; 2 Sam.7:6; Is.56:1-8; Eph.2:19; 1 Tim.3:15; 1 Pet.2:5). "If the household of God in which Moses served him so loyally was the people of Israel, what is the household of God today, over which the Son of God bears rule? That household comprises all believers: 'we are that household of his, if only we are fearless and keep our hope high.'"⁵⁴ God called Israel to be an obedient "kingdom of priests" (Lev.18:1-30). Israel was not to adopt practices of the surrounding pagan nations, but their obedience was to draw other nations to worship God (Deut.4:5-8). God's covenant with Israel in Postexilic Judaism limited membership in the community to ethnic Israel only, later advancing into an exclusive nationalistic "insider" mentality."⁵⁵

However, Isaiah (56:1-8) had promised full membership in the new covenant community to Gentile converts. His inclusive approach anticipated an even more radical revolution in which full membership by believing Jews and Gentiles is on the basis of faith in Christ alone, not of ethnic descent from Abraham or the traditional Jewish badges (circumcision, adherence to ceremonial food laws, or observation of Sabbath).⁵⁶

"“Christians live by faith and not by sight; but while their hope is in things unseen, it is something to exult in, not be ashamed of.”⁵⁷ As the writer contends for the faith of his

⁵³ Raleigh Bagley, "The Superiority of Christ," original published research, 2020.

⁵⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 94.

⁵⁵ Raleigh Bagley, "The Superiority of Christ," original published research, 2020.

⁵⁶ Paul Pettit, *Foundations of Spiritual Formation*, 77.

⁵⁷ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 94.

readers, he warns them of the pressure that could threaten their steadfastness in the faith. In deep concern, he calls upon them to stand fast in a final appeal. “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...’ (3:7).”⁵⁸

Considering the author’s plea to hear God’s voice and act accordingly distinguishes that the believer will heed the warnings. What are these warnings? The readers must not drift away (2:1) and neglect such a great salvation (2:3). The peril for those who violate these imperatives is the hardening of their hearts (3:8, 13, 15) and going astray (3:10). Those who do not heed the gospel by faith will develop an unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God (3:12, 19). Therefore, one must hold on to the assurance of faith until the end (3:14). At the focus of the author’s aim is the theme of faithfulness, which, by contrast sets up unfaithfulness’ theme drawing from Ps. 95. The Hebrew writer introduces the Holy Spirit as speaking (“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says...”). The presentation of the Psalms as a hortatory word to the recipients of Hebrews follows with a midrashic exhortation with various terms from the psalm in exhortation presented to the community (3:12-14: “heart,” “day,” “today,” “hear,” “enter,” “test,” “rest,” and “swear”), quoting once again Ps. 95.⁵⁹ Matthew provides a similarity as an imperative of one “seeking first the kingdom of God” (Matt. 6:33). The word “first” is not sequential but “priority.” The Christian’s priority, according to Jesus, is to seek God’s kingdom. The consummation is at the end of human history, where all enemies are “under the feet of Christ” (1 Cor. 15:25).

The antithesis of the believer’s faith is one that leads on to vacate one’s faith. The illustration in Hebrews is the readers sluggish and dull faith (5:11; 6:12). Beale and Carson note “the ruinous moment of rebellion recounted a Num. 14 and reiterated in Ps. 95” is an unremovable stain upon the Jewish nation and is a reflection of the rebels of the wilderness

⁵⁸ Raleigh Bagley, “The Superiority of Christ,” original published research, 2020.

⁵⁹ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 952-53.

becoming a symbol for disobedience (Neh. 9:15-17; Ps. 106: 24-26).⁶⁰ Here the motifs of “exodus” and “wilderness” are prominent illustrations appropriated in the New Testament. Hebrew’s readers are encouraged to move on to maturity by pressing (6:1) and showing diligence until the journey’s end (6:11), taking hold of the hope before them (6:15, 18).

4. CANONICAL ANALYSIS

Canonicity and authorship are distinct, but in earlier Christian centuries, the New Testament frequently involved canonicity and apostolic authorship in tandem. Augustine and Jerome, for example, followed Alexandrian precedence in recognizing Hebrews as one of the Pauline epistles, not so much for the evidence, but because of the safeguarding of its canonical status by apostolic authorship.

Hebrews’ canonical status may have been incorporated into a copy of *corpus Paulinum* by a second-century editor. From this time its status was not questioned in Alexandria. Its Scriptural merit was not doubted by Origen even though there were existing questions concerning its authorship. Its many themes relate to Old Testament passages and provide that a coming Messiah from the Davidic lineage would fulfill the foretelling of the prophetic message. This Davidic king will establish a new covenant and rule over a coming kingdom of both Jews and Gentiles. The ribbon of “the kingdom of God comprises redemptive history and an eschatological framing of a coming consummation.

In Mark 11, Jesus’ triumphant entry on a colt’s ass into the city of David is an illustration of his advent— first coming, and is the focus of the Davidic fulfillment of the Son’s ascension to the throne of God. The focus of the last half of John’s gospel is Jesus’ fulfillment at the cross. The gospel writers understood this focus of redemption in this period

⁶⁰ G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament*, 952-53.

of time. About thirty years from Jesus' arrival as king, this theme is seen in his triumphal entry into Bethany.

God's church is under Christ's headship as illustrated in Col. 1:9. The endurance of the saints, pronounced as an imperative of Hebrews (and here in Col. 1:9), asserts that God filled people with the Spirit so that they can live godly lives. This does not mean that Christians are being equipped to build a spiritual temple, but as in Isaiah, the word *gnosis*, and in Colossians, *epignosis* ("knowledge") indicates God giving believers an "understanding from God." As the believer is equipped to live a spiritual life, the idea provides that the true church is under the rule of a monarchy: "that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, as you bear fruit for every good work as you grow in the knowledge of God."

"The kingdom of God foretold in the Old Testament has come, for the king has appeared and invaded history. Hebrews 3:1–6 gives one hope of a new covenant revealing Jesus' superiority, faithfulness as a Son, and access to God the Father as apostle and high priest. Given His authority, followers, having entered into a New Covenant with God, have obtained more significant access to Him than was made possible by the Old Covenant. In their acknowledgment, Christians should hold fast in their profession of faith in the hope of the soon-coming kingdom of the sovereign God. "For it has been shown that Christ is far more noble than Moses, so that we should cling to Christ alone, in whom we have all things."⁶¹ All declare the king has come; Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of Man, Son of God, Messiah, final prophet, true Israel, and Lord of all."⁶²

⁶¹ Philip Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 140.

⁶² Raleigh Bagley, "The Superiority of Christ," original published research, 2020.

The theme of the kingdom of God is a pronouncement of Jesus in the Gospels associated with the sphere of God's reign, both universal and eternal. One finds rest in heaven (3:9) with Jesus as the believer's Joshua while holding confidence until the end. The idea here is not status but life-transforming power. Genuine Christianity is both out from and into the ultimate rest of a new heaven and earth. Jesus' high priestly ministry is the Son of God tied to the theme of Jesus as a great high priest. The believer's entry into both places is consequential of the resurrection ("He was tempted in every way, yet he did not sin") (4:7). Christian assurance is the basis of God's promises rather than evangelism (see John 5:24). It is realized over time with one's interaction with the gospel. One's faith is turned to Christ. In this frame, Hebrews 3 sheds light on Hebrews 6, with faith as a result of obedience out of gratitude and joy.

5. APPLICATION

One considers the a few Old Testament illustrations for Hebrew's warning both believers and unbelievers. Ezekiel's vision (1:4-28) is the chariot throne of God. It is not a fixed throne, but encircled the universe beyond. The eyes are God's own beholding the good and evil of man. The illustration of the famine for hearing God's word in Amos 8:11-12 suggests the fate of those refusing obedience to God. The streams of revelation will dry as it was with Israel's Northern Kingdom— a famine of hearing God's word. In observance of the present culture, one stands in the middle of a world and church that does not believe the word of God. The premise for many in this condition is that the word of God is laden with errors and therefore, not authoritative. There is a basic fallacy in thinking that unbelievers can be persuaded by "proofs" to believe God's word. These stand in the office of both critic and judge of God and his word. In this frame, God does not defend himself. No man can sit in the seat to judge the Creator and his word. On the other hand, only those chosen by God can

believe his word. “For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God” (1 Cor. 2:10).

Sin’s depravity provides that man is in denial for the need of liberation. Jesus’ confrontation with the blind congregation: “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You will become free’?” (Jn. 8:33), provides that there exists a problem with divine sovereignty. The deeper problem is the subject of free will and sin’s effect upon it. One is actively making choices that expose one to the judgment of God. It is not the Augustinian view of royal liberty supposed by some Reformists. Though one is free from coercion, one is never free from himself. Freedom has no bent toward sin, but one makes choices in the context of one’s imprisonment. “By nature, we are all children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3). However, sonship is measured by obedience. Jesus said, one’s free will desires to do the work of one’s father the devil (Jn. 8:31). Again, this is the dilemma of all men and the warning to all as well. By one’s choices we are willing accomplices to the evil one’s strategies. Jesus warns us again, “They don’t hear because they are not of God” (Jn. 8:47). But, “For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness” (Rms. 4:3).

While considering Hebrew’s implication of Jesus’ superiority in today’s church, one must contend that salvation’s purpose is more than wearing a “red badge” of courage for the world’s approval. It is more than communicating one’s social, political, and economic views. The end of one’s salvation is that God is glorified. The Hebrew writer communicates that his reader’s life and action matter to God. They either glorify or dishonor him. Preaching the gospel necessary for those chosen by God to believe. He has foreordained their existence as the church, but the minister’s call is to lead them to Christ through his word. “Thy word is truth.” Faith requires the believer’s positive response. This is not to think of one’s self-existence, but that of the saving grace of God— not brazen, bold or elitist, but knowing that

lowliness and humbleness is the way of Christ. Today's church seems ashamed of God and defends his actions with a counter-gospel excuse. The view that all religions are the same is based in one's social and political theories that do not want to offend, when the Bible says otherwise. The framing of the gospel is: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Augustine that faith without evidence is credulity. Anyone can believe in God, but the problem lies with one believing God. Loving God with our minds is impossible without regeneration. Unbelievers on the other hand, do not seek God—a misconception of the modern church. Aquinas said, "No, no, no. People desperately search for the things that only God can give them, while at the same time they are fleeing from Him."⁶³

In closing, wokeness is not the Biblical answer to the cultural sins of today. No movement for that matter has ever eradicated the Fall's aftermath— not then and surely, not now. America is seeing the rise of a new religion— one that is a mixture of Christianity, lukewarmness, pagan practices, and unbiblical approaches to race and gender. A recovery for the theology of the church is needed in this hour. Many of the tenets and early practices of the church have been lost. The role of pastor-theologian only exists in small instances, and in many cases, a hostility against a sound hermeneutical practice results in denial of biblical inspiration. One advocates for a back-to-the-basics approach to the Scriptures where one believes its sufficiency. The local church has been lost for a global desire of fame and fortune, especially for pastors. A recap of the Hebrew writer's appeal to the Christian audience provides for the readers attention directed to the terms of God's requirements. Jesus is both God's representative among humans and their representative in the presence of God.

⁶³ R. C. Sproul, "If 'no one seeks for God,' why did Paul call his listeners to seek God," <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/qas/if-no-one-seeks-for-god-why-did-paul-call-his-listeners-to-seek-god>

As God's representative among humans, Jesus has given revelation of himself and the response to that revelation is the believer's responding by faith. Recommunicating this one item will make a difference in the lives of those who may have forgotten the responsibility of pleasing him above oneself. Again, Jesus has revealed himself finally and completely, but also as the "perfect embodiment of humanity's response to God."⁶⁴

As human's representative before God, Jesus has proved himself as a faithful high priest (2:17) and envoy in the loyal discharging of his commission in which he has been entrusted by God. His faithfulness was manifested preeminently as the fulfillment of God's Messiah sent to redeem his people. He glorified the Father on earth by finishing the work which the Father had given him to do (Jn. 17:4).

By combining these two roles of divine envoy and priest are not a common reading in the Old Testament. The role only appears referring to few, but outstanding representatives—one of them being Moses. Though Moses occupies a special place as an apostle of God to his people and intercessor with God, yet his status was inferior to Christ's. Moses was a household servant, but Jesus is superior as the builder of the house. The Hebrew writer's appeal provides that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's divine plan of redemption.

⁶⁴ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 91.

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