

“The Epistle to the Hebrews”

The Supremacy of Christ

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This “masterpiece of first century prose” and “word of exhortation” (13:22) written in the most eloquent and excellent Greek of the New Testament with “sense of rhythm”¹ by who some call “the Isaiah of the New Testament”, started out as a sermon (eg. 2:5, 6:9, 11:32) but ended as a letter (13:22 KJV). It was initially written to a Palestinian congregation, but later sent to the church in Rome by the author.² Of all NT writings we trace with much certainty the author, but “the identity of the author of Hebrews is only known to God”, Origen declared in truth.³ The epistle might reflect Paul’s theological legacy, adjusted to reader context, for there seems evidence for it in its Christological and soteriological content as well as in its typical Pauline conclusion.⁴ The mentioning of Timothy in 13:23 and a different translation of the Greek perfect passive participle ἀπολελυμένον leads some to conclude that this epistle is Paul’s fifth prison epistle.⁵

The epistle is noble in doctrine, profound in theology, “more vigorous than any other New Testament writing” (Wescott), and “extols the priesthood of Christ splendidly”, said Calvin.⁶ It is not *just about* Melchizedek, nor *meaningless* when it comes to issues like the sprinkling of the blood of bulls and goats to make the unclean clean. It is all about the *inner* emphasis of *true* worship, about a truly *clean* conscience with which to enter the *real* sanctuary: not the earthly but heavenly one, not the one made by the hands of man, but in

¹ Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 2.

² Charles A. Trentham, *The Broadman Bible Commentary Volume 12, Hebrews-Revelation* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), 2.

³ Edgar V. McKnight, *Literary and Rhetorical Form and Structure in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ATLA: Review & Expositor 102 no 2 Spr 2005, p 255-279), 255.

⁴ James W. Thompson, James W., *The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Pauline legacy* (ATLA: Restoration Quarterly 47 no 4 2005, p 197-206), 199.

⁵ Christos Voulgaris, *Hebrews: Paul’s Fifth Epistle from Prison* (ATLA: Greek Orthodox Theological Review 44 no 1-4 Spr-Wint 1999, p 199-206), 199.

⁶ Hughes, 1.

Christ. It is an encouragement, spurring Christians to not accept the way things are, nor to be “low spirited”, but to press on in perseverance in God’s purposes “along the trail already blazed by the Pioneer of faith” (Hebr.2:10), and to enter “that eternal commonwealth which is the true homeland of loyal souls” (eg. Hebr.12:1-2).⁷

Outline and Structure

The epistle’s structure is debated. Some focus on “thematic movements” and divide the epistle in two parts: Christ’s superiority in 1:1-10:18, exhortations in 10:19-13:25.⁸ F.F. Bruce divides the epistle eightfold: 1. “The Finality of Christianity (1:1-2:18), 2. The True Home of the People of God (3:1-4:13), 3. The High Priesthood of Christ (4:14-6:20), 4. The Order of Melchizedek (7:1-28), 5. Covenant, Sanctuary and Sacrifice (8:1-10:18), 6. Call to worship, faith and perseverance (10:19-12:29), 7. Concluding Exhortation and Prayer (13:1-21), 8. Postscript (13:22-25)”.⁹ Zane C. Hodges divides the flow of thought into 5 parts, discussing its theology in three, opening it with the Prologue (1:1-4), closing it with the Epilogue (ch.13), while Part 2 focuses on “Gods King-Son” (1:5-4:16), Part 3 on “Gods Priest-Son” (ch.5-10), Part 4 on “Response of Faith” (ch.11-12).¹⁰

The 13 chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews can be divided into 6 parts painting 3 pictures borrowed from 3 main scenes of the Israelites as OT background applied and explained in its New Testament theology, according to Cockerill. They are intended to lead to true Christianity (10:32-13:17) to which the writer repeatedly exhorts the readers. The book

⁷ F.F. Bruce, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament, The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), xi-xii.

⁸ D.A. Carson, and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992/2005), 597.

⁹ Bruce, vii-x.

¹⁰ John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament* (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications Ministries), 780.

ends with prayer requests, benediction, news and a farewell from the author (13:18-25).¹¹ The 3 pictures include a NT interpretation of OT scenery in which Christ is compared to Moses and Israel's situation in the desert on pilgrimage, with believers running the race set before them (Hebr.12:1-2).¹² These Old Testament pictures are crucial to our understanding of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The epistle explains them in light of Christ's coming, death, resurrection, ascension and sitting at the right hand of the Father.¹³ When we understand how they "interrelate", we understand the Epistle to the Hebrews' overall thought.¹⁴

Christ stands supreme. Whereas all preceding revelations and covenants are a shadow (Hebr.8:5), Christ is the reality (Col.2:17), and the Epistle to the Hebrews explains what He achieved for us by His sacrifice and present priesthood.

Part I: The Sinai Picture: Hear the Word of God Spoken through the Son (1:1-2:4 and 12:14-29).¹⁵

The opening verses (1:1-4) present the epistle's main message: "the finality of God's revelation in the Son who is heir and agent of creation" and who radiates God's glory as bearer of His nature "upholding the universe by the word of power".¹⁶ It demonstrates "the logic of Scripture" and fulfilment of the Old Covenant, which was temporary, in Christ's coming and introducing the New Covenant, which is eternal.¹⁷ Christ's revelation is supreme,

¹¹ Gareth L. Cockerill, *Hebrews, A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1999), Contents, 20-21 and 28.

¹² Cockerill, 20-21.

¹³ Cockerill, 20-21.

¹⁴ Cockerill, 23.

¹⁵ Cockerill, 28-29.

¹⁶ Alexander C. Purdy, *The Epistle to the Hebrews, The Interpreter's Bible Vol.XI* (Nashville:Abingdon Press, 1987), 577.

¹⁷ Hughes, 5.

unchallenged by any human or angelic being¹⁸ and final, the Gospel asserting it.¹⁹ For, “the New is in the Old contained, the Old is in the New explained”. “The Old Testament is revealed in the New, the New Testament veiled in the Old” (St. Augustine). Christ is the Theme of *both* covenants (Hebr.10:7, Luke 24:27, 44, John 5:39).²⁰ In the Old He is “in shadow”, in the New “substance”. In the Old He is “in pictures”, in the New “in person”. In the Old “in type”, in the New “in truth”. In the Old “in ritual”, in the New complete “reality”. In the Old “latent”, in the New “patent” ... in the Old “prophesied”, in the New absolutely “present” ... in the Old “implicitly revealed”, in the New “explicitly” made known. *All* books of the Bible “convey the progressive unfolding of the theme of the Bible in the person of Christ”. And, *every* book in the New Testament builds on God’s revelation in the Old”.²¹ “The Law gives the *foundation* of Christ, history the *preparation*” of Christ. In poetry we find the “*aspiration*” for Christ, in prophecy the “*expectation*” of Christ. While Acts relates the “*propagation*” of Christ, the Epistles give an *interpretation* of Christ, and in Revelation we find the “*culmination*” of all things in Christ”.²²

Christ introduced a “*new order*”.²³ Of all New Testament writings, more than any other, the Epistle to the Hebrews explains the significance of Old Testament rituals. In Hebrews in the New, we understand the meaning of the “priesthood and sacrifices” of the Old. God’s intended purposes for *us* in the eternal *heavenly* places were foreshadowed in the

¹⁸ Hughes, 2.

¹⁹ Bruce, xii.

²⁰ Norman L. Geisler, and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968/1986), 22.

²¹ Cockerill, 20.

²² Geisler, 22.

²³ Hughes, 3.

Most Holy Place and Promised Land, the earthly places.²⁴ Christ is God's "*final revelation*", "the true culmination of all of God's earlier revelations", the complete "fulfilment of the Old Testament".²⁵ Christ is supreme as "God's perfect word to man" and "man's perfect representative with God".²⁶

This first picture in the background depicts the scene of God's people around Mount Sinai after their exodus from Egypt (Exodus 19:1-20:21). It was "the most important moment in Israel's relationship with God", their moment of revelation: God was speaking to them "in a voice of thunder", and they became God's "covenant people". But, after the covenant was closed, the Israelites had to respond: were they going to obey Yahweh's Torah?²⁷ Borrowing from these events the writer of the epistle gives a theological interpretation in light of the New Covenant. Christ is compared to angels and his role emphasized as revelatory. Whereas revelation came through angels at Mount Sinai, revelation now came through "the Son" through Whom God has spoken in the last days (1:1). And whereas the "previous word, now superseded, was serious", what about this new word?!"²⁸ Whereas the salvation of the Israelites from Egypt was special, much "great[er] salvation"²⁹ came to all mankind in Christ (2:3). However, "greater spiritual privilege" also "brings great responsibility". Following chapter 1, then, a first warning is given: if Christ is supreme to earlier revelation, "We must pay more careful attention, ... to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away" (2:1). And by the time the reader reads 12:14-29, the "great salvation" – or should we say 'greater salvation' because deliverance in Christ now is greater than the Israelites' deliverance from

²⁴ Cockerill, 12.

²⁵ Cockerill, 17, 20.

²⁶ Bruce, xii.

²⁷ Cockerill, 20.

²⁸ Cockerill, 21.

²⁹ All Scripture verses taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version* (International Bible Society, 1973-1984).

Egypt by Moses then - mentioned in 2:3 is much better understood.³⁰ Thus the exhortation in 12:14-29 exceeds in strength and urgency to the one in 2:1-4.

Part II: The Pilgrimage Picture: Don't Fail to Enter God's Rest through Unbelief (2:5-4:13 and 10:32-12:13).³¹

The opening verses (1:1-4) sound like a sermon³², the charge in 3:7-8, then, is for the readers to not harden their hearts but listen carefully to Him to enter the Sabbath-Rest God promised (4:1-13).³³ God is addressing readers "today" (3:7) with a "heavenly calling" (3:1) graciously inviting them to intimate relationship with Him and to join those who by faith receive what is promised us in Christ (6:12).³⁴ Christ's revelation supersedes Moses' one. Moses was a servant, Christ a Son. Moses was from earth, Christ from heaven. And if those who received God's "imperfect revelation" failed to enter God's rest (3:19) and died in the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land even though it's servant Moses was "faithful" (3:5), now that perfect revelation has come the recipients are exhorted to take heed of this warning to pursue holiness and faith (3:7-12).³⁵ The writer of Hebrews has a sense of "immediacy of God's Word".³⁶ There is a heavenly urgency: falling away from God's final revelation, Christ, in whom all revelation has culminated, is falling "away from the living God" (3:12).³⁷

³⁰ Cockerill, 21.

³¹ Cockerill, 28-29.

³² Cockerill, 12.

³³ Cockerill, 7, 12.

³⁴ Cockerill, 7, 12.

³⁵ Purdy, 578.

³⁶ Cockerill, 18.

³⁷ Cockerill, 19-20.

This second picture is borrowed from Numbers 10:11-14:45: the Israelites' wilderness experience on the way to the Promised Land.³⁸ However, whereas the Old Covenant was a foreshadowing of the New, in Christ the New has come (cf. 1:1-3, 8:5). Whereas Moses was good, Christ is better.³⁹ Whereas Christ in the first picture is the "Son" through Whom God has spoken, in the second picture Christ is the "Pioneer" who brings his people into the Promised Land. And whereas Moses and Joshua brought the Israelites into Palestine, Christ brings His people into the *true* Promised Land, the "heavenly homeland". He opened the way and made entry possible (2:5-18).⁴⁰ Continuing the Pilgrimage Theme in section 10:32-12:13, the epistle does not emphasize the Israelites' disobedience however, but rather points to godly men modelling faithfulness (11:1-40). Though they were pilgrims in the wilderness who suffered "hardship and persecution", they persevered in endurance. Abraham is mentioned (11:8-22). Moses is mentioned (11:23-31), others that went before us, witnesses (12:1). They were key faith figures who modelled obedience, even though Christ, the Pioneer (12:1-3), is exhorted to be the focus of attention (12:1-3) and following Him leads to perfecting in holiness (12:4-13, cf. 2:10-18).⁴¹

Part III: The High Priest Picture: Draw Near to God with a Cleansed Conscience (4:14-10:31).⁴²

We are pilgrims on a journey, and the goal is being in God's Presence eternally, which is made possible by Christ's sacrifice and High Priesthood.⁴³ In the first picture Christ is

³⁸ Cockerill, 20.

³⁹ F.F. Bruce, xii.

⁴⁰ Cockerill, 21.

⁴¹ Cockerill, 21-22.

⁴² Cockerill, 28-29.

⁴³ Cockerill, 23.

depicted “the Son”, in the second “the Pioneer”, but in the third He is “the High Priest who cleanses from sin and provides access into the heavenly most holy place”.⁴⁴ This third picture (4:14-10:31) turns to the concept of the high priestly ministry and entrance into “the Most Holy Place on the Day of Atonement” especially (cf. Lev.16:1-34).⁴⁵ This is the main theme of the larger part of the book (4:14-10:31),⁴⁶ in which the author’s statement in 1:3 - “when he had made purification for sins” - is “amplified” when the earthly shadow and heavenly reality are implicitly contrasted in the beginnings of the opening verses (1:1-4), but explicitly demonstrated in the message of the epistle.⁴⁷

This main section of the book compares the Person and Work of Christ to that of the Old Testament high priest after Aäron’s order. Whereas the mortal high priest after the order of Aäron was sinful, Christ, God’s Son, was perfect and blameless in obedience. Whereas the high priest after Aäron’s order was ineffective, Christ was effective because he was both divine and fully human. And whereas the high priest after Aäron’s order entered the earthly Most Holy Place, Christ as eternal High Priest entered the heavenly sanctuary, providing entrance to God’s Presence for all His people and at the culmination of all things “more fully”. Christ provided a once for all sacrifice and work of atonement (5:1-10, 10:8-10).⁴⁸

Sacrifice and covenant are the two themes at the heart of the epistle’s theology in 8:1-10:18.⁴⁹ “Christ’s priesthood operates in the realm of reality”, the “*heavenly* sanctuary”, and thus supersedes “the copy and shadow”, the *earthly* sanctuary (8:5) “where earthly high

⁴⁴ Cockerill, 21.

⁴⁵ Cockerill, 20.

⁴⁶ Cockerill, 22.

⁴⁷ Purdy, 577.

⁴⁸ Cockerill, 22.

⁴⁹ Purdy, 578.

priests officiate (8:1-6)". Christ offers, then, a *perfect* covenant while the old is not far from vanishing (8:13).⁵⁰

The Old Covenant sacrifices in the earthly sanctuary could never "perfect the conscience of the worshiper" (9:1, 9). Therefore Christ offers "a *better* hope ... through which we draw near to God (7:19), and in Him we have "the surety of a *better* covenant" (7:22), than man's priesthood offered. Christ's priesthood after the order of Melchisedek went *beyond* human limitations of an earthly priesthood (5:6, 10), because Christ's priesthood is eternal (7:12, 18-19). "Angels could not help because of their angelic nature. Moses was a man but not the Son." But in Christ we find the "*summum bonum* of religion": entrance to the throne of mercy and grace in time of need (4:14-16). He "entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption", the purification of our "conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (9:12, 14).⁵¹

The self-sacrifice of Christ is compared and contrasted to three of Moses:

1. The Day of Atonement sacrifice in 9:1-14: though the Day of Atonement was repeated annually, atonement for sin is now eternal by Christ's "once-for-all" sacrifice.
2. While OT sacrifices were ritual, Christ's sacrifice was real, initiating a "new order of relationship of God with man. He brought a new covenant into being, of which the prophets of old have spoken (9:15-22).
3. Comparing the Greek of the OT passages (Exodus 29:9, Leviticus 16:32, Leviticus 21:10) with the Greek of this NT epistle brings out that the word "consecration" is

⁵⁰ Purdy, 578.

⁵¹ Purdy, 578.

the same. The word for consecration of priests under the Old Covenant is the same Hebrews uses for Christ being “perfected” (Hebr.5:9) as Saviour/High Priest. This points to “His inauguration or consecration to High Priesthood” (10:1-18) as an animal sacrifice was brought to consecrate a priest to his office. But “Christ’s sacrifice of complete obedience” made Him effective to bring us victory over temptation (2:17-18, 4:14-16, 8:1-2). His priesthood is the product of his own sacrifice, initiating His new order (7:22).

Part IV and V: The Pilgrimage Picture: Hold Firmly to Your Faith Until You Enter the Heavenly Homeland (10:32-12:13).⁵² The Sinai Picture: Hear the Word Spoken from Heaven by A Holy God (12:14-29).⁵³

The first part of the epistle (1:1-10:31) follows the historical order of the Israelites, from Sinai to Pilgrimage, the second part (10:32-12:29) the reverse. The Israelites met Yahweh at Sinai, then went on Pilgrimage, but in the epistle’s last part our “Pilgrimage [also] *precedes*” [our] Sinai, “the mount of Gods speaking”, now Zion (:22). There is still a promise waiting to fullness. We travel not “from the mount God spoke to us in the past, but to the mount from where God speaks now”, and to which Christ prepared free access (12:14-29).⁵⁴ This births in us expectation and again a warning is given to listen (:25).

Christ’s *present* position with the Father is emphasized in this part of the epistle. The Israelites approached a holy God “under the arrangements of approach” set out in 12:18-21, *we* approach him under the “gracious” ones in 12:22-24, having access through “Jesus the mediator of a new covenant” (12:24). The Israelites feared and trembled, we may have

⁵² Cockerill, 28-29.

⁵³ Cockerill, 28-29.

⁵⁴ Cockerill, 23-24, 287

boldness (10:19).⁵⁵ The Israelites approached a physical mountain, we approach a spiritual Zion (12:22), though the NIV translation provided “mountain” (:18) where the Greek omitted it. Seven features are mentioned in verse 18-21 that caused the Israelites’ fear and trembling, eleven in verse 22-24 that fuel our gladness. The Israelites encountered a mountain “that can be touched, burning with fire” and “darkness, gloom and storm” (:18), “a trumpet blast, a “voice speaking words” - possibly the Ten Commandments – upon which they begged for no further revelation (:19) as “they could not bear what was commanded” when “even an animal who [touched] the mountain” had to be stoned” because of Gods holiness Presence (:20) so that even Moses was fearfully trembling (:21). But we have drawn near in Christ to “Mount Zion”, “the heavenly Jerusalem”, “city of the living God”, “thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven”... to God, the judge of all men, the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, .. to the sprinkled blood that” is so much “better [revelation] than the blood of Abel” (:22-24).⁵⁶

If Christ’s revelation and priesthood supersedes all previous ones and their arrangements, it is now important to “not refuse him” who still “speaks” (:25). The same God who spoke then, still speaks today, and the people He addressed then we are now, calling us to faithfulness and obedience (Sinai Picture). “Fear the peril of losing the holy life”, for “God is a consuming fire” (12:29) who deserves our reverence and awe and requires we worship Him “acceptably” (:28).⁵⁷ Though the Israelites modelled disobedience (3:7-4:13), the faith heroes modelled obedience encouraging us to follow them (Pilgrimage Picture, 10:32-12:13). And the resources are available to be brought to purity and perfection (High Priest Picture),

⁵⁵ Cockerill, 288-290.

⁵⁶ Cockerill, 288-292

⁵⁷ Cockerill, 293, 296-297.

and the purpose is to dwell in the Presence of God eternally which is made possible by Christ's atonement work, depicted by both the Most Holy Place and the Promised Land.⁵⁸

Part VI: Final Application and Farewell (13:1-25).⁵⁹

The Christian lifestyle, then, is the expression of true worship. This final chapter gives instructions on how to come near to God and bring proper sacrifice (13:15-16), even though many privileges are ours. "Virtually every aspect of the Christian life is involved" in this process. Not only vertical sacrifices are emphasized, of praise to God, also horizontal ones, of giving to others (13:1-4). Not only the Lord as provider and helper is pointed out, also to "remember leaders" and follow their example (13:5-6, 7).⁶⁰

Islamic Omar Rashied holds the exhortation to "not forget to entertain strangers" (13:2) as a call to interfaith dialogue that goes beyond the superficial "sandwiches" to real cooperation between Muslims, Jews and Christians. In his view, misconceptions of the other human lead to estrangement and even inhumane, hostile violence, often fuelled by ambivalent "sacred writings". The world desperately needs mutual understanding and acceptance. He criticizes both how the Dutch Reformed Church interpreted and used Scripture to discriminate others and promote South African apartheid, white supremacy, as well as Osama bin Laden's hermeneutics of the Qur'an to call for "global jihad, including acts of terror".⁶¹

Conclusion and application

⁵⁸ Cockerill, 21-22.

⁵⁹ Cockerill, 28-29.

⁶⁰ Cockerill, 301-309.

⁶¹ Rashied A. Omar, *Embracing the Other as an Extension of the Self: Muslim Reflections on the Epistle to the Hebrews 13:2* (ATLA: Anglican Theological Review 91 no 3 Sum 2009), p 433-441.

Christ is supreme. His revelation is greater than the prophets (1:1-4).⁶² He is above angels (1:5-14), above Moses (3:1-6), and the High Priest above Aäron (2:10-18, 4:14-5:10).⁶³ His covenant, service and sacrifice and its effects are superior to all preceding ones.⁶⁴ In fact, earlier revelation foreshadowed Him.⁶⁵ Though called by God (5:4), Aäron was from man (5:1), earthly, Christ was God's Son (5:5), heavenly. Aäron's priesthood was in the order of Levi (7:5), Christ's after Melchisedek's (6:6, 19, 20, 7:1). Aäron's priesthood was *from* Abraham, earthly, the order of Melchisedek *above* Abraham (7:1-2, 4-6, 7-10), heavenly (7:3), so much greater (7:11-28), much better (7:22). Aäron's priesthood was temporary (7:23), Christ's eternal (7:3, 8, 21-26). Aäron's priesthood was continually sacrificing (7:27, 9:25, 10:1-4), never completing, Christ's sacrifice once and for all, eternal, completely fulfilling (7:27, 9:25-28, 10:5-12). Aäron's priesthood after the law appointed imperfect men as high priests, the "oath ... after the law appointed the Son", who is eternally "perfect" (7:28). Aäron's priesthood was under the Old Covenant, a picture and shadow of the true reality (8:5), Christ's priesthood is of a New Covenant (8:6), better, supreme to Aäron's (8:6), *in* the true Reality, the true Tabernacle (8:2).

The Old Covenant wasn't perfect (8:7), the New is (8:8-13). The Old Covenant is fading, the New is staying (8:13). In the earthly Tabernacle the way to the sanctuary was not yet open (9:8), in the heavenly (9:11), in "the time of the new order", "restoration"⁶⁶ (9:10), Christ entered (9:11-12). He made atonement with His own blood forever (9:12-14), making Him mediator of a New Covenant, and making available the eternal inheritance (9:15). The

⁶² Walvoord, 780-781.

⁶³ Walvoord, 797-799.

⁶⁴ Walvoord, 799-802.

⁶⁵ Carson, 597.

⁶⁶ Dutch NBG-vertaling of "new order".

Law was just a shadow of the Future (10:1), in Christ that Future has come (10:5-18). The Law provided no full boldness, Christ did (10:19). Let us therefore enter boldly (10:19-22, 35), holy and in purity (:22), confess freely and steadfastly (:23), following the examples of the faith heroes relentlessly (Ch.11-12), believingly (11:6), looking upon the invisible heavenly (11:3, 12:2-3), receiving what is prepared to be ours duly (11:16, 39-40, 13:13-14). And let us preach Christ fervently (10:24-25)...

For, to Moses' people, the Israelites, God spoke "on earth", to us "from heaven" (12:25, 1:1-4). His voice *then* shook earthly things (12:26), His revelation *now* will shake *all* the universe, earth *and* heaven (12:26), removing what is shakeable, unstable, temporary, fading (12:27), leaving what is steadfast and enduring and eternal, ... an "unshakable Kingdom" (12:28-29). If Christ is superior to all preceding revelations,⁶⁷ it is extremely important to listen (3:7-19). Let us take heed of this epistle's many exhortations calling us from its theology ... because sincere faith and obedience is necessary due to the revelation of the New Covenant's urgency (2:1-4, 19, 3:7-19, 4:1, 3, 7, 11, 5:11-6:8, 10:19-39, 12:1-17, 12:25, chapter 13).

Practical application

He still speaks. His Message "is as vibrant today as it was to [Hebrews'] first readers".⁶⁸ The Israelites' (desert) Mount Sinai has become our (heavenly) Mount Zion.⁶⁹ Therefore, it is not only important to listen (3:7-8). It is also important to take action (chapter 13). This applies, then, to the daily practice of my life. I feel an inner urge to preach Christ and hear a call from heaven (3:1). His Message calls *me* as well. I need to follow the example

⁶⁷ Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), ix-x, and 3-4.

⁶⁸ Cockerill, 17.

⁶⁹ Cockerill, 25.

of the great heroes of the faith (11, 12:1-10), not compromise nor harden my heart in skepticism, and keep listening carefully. And the best is waiting: my heavenly homeland. I hope I don't have to pay taxes there, except surrender my whole life now, 100%. Thanks professor, for letting me write this paper, it has truly blessed, spiritually fed and it challenged me again to pursue the divine call on my life.

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