

1) INTRODUCTION, AUTHOR & DATE OF WRITING:

- a. This letter was written by a Jew for Jews. The context being Judaism as the religious system held by the Jews. The principle elements include the “Decalogue” or the Ten Commandments detailed in Exodus 20; and a faith proscribed in the “Pentateuch” or the 1st 5 books of Scripture. The Pentateuch and “the Old Testament is a distinct religion of Law – with a Creed, Cult, and Conduct prescribed in detail by God. The “Torah” or God’s revealed Law and instructions revealed the will and nature of the Creator, it passed down wisdom and instruction that the people accepted as a gift of grace; that expressed what sinful humanity must do to remain in fellowship with this amazing and utterly Holy God.”¹ The focus of the people being delivered from their bondage [slavery] in Egypt is the backdrop of the Sinai Covenant. These concepts continued to be developed throughout redemptive history and led directly to Jesus and the deliverance to humanities bondage to Sin and death realized at Calvary. The superiority of the New Covenant in Jesus over the Old Covenant in Moses is the context for this letter.
- b. The letter is anonymous, but it clearly displays Pauline thinking and theology. However, the writing characteristics and style indicate pretty clearly that the author was not Paul.
 - i. Some suggestions for authorship have been forwarded for likely candidates that include Barnabus, Apollos, Priscilla, Silas, and Timothy to name a few.
 - ii. The author exhibits an apostolic ministry either directly or by association, but because we really don’t know who the author was... and since the text is silent about the writer’s identity, we should leave it at that rather than speculate. The letter has been granted apostolic authority as Scripture from a very early date, granting its inclusion in the New Testament canon.
- c. Several attributes about the author are clear, the author’s use of the Greek language and writing convention suggests Greek scholarship. The author’s understanding of Jewish Law and Traditions suggested being a Jewish scholar as well. This dual scholarship approach makes Hebrews all the more compelling. The Scripture used by the author and audience was likely the Septuagint – the Hebrew text translated into Greek, and they also most likely had an understanding of one or more of the Synoptic Gospels, as well as some of Paul’s Epistles.
- d. This letter nowhere mentions the fall of Jerusalem or the destruction of the Temple which occurred in 70 AD. The author would have certainly made mention of that occurrence, particularly since the Temple and priesthood are such a central component of this letter. A most probable date of writing is between 60-68 AD and is well accepted by scholars, and consistent with the historical context.
- e. Timeline of relevant current events of the era:
 - i. Jesus’ Birth – 6-4 BC
 - ii. Jesus’ Death, Resurrection, and ascension – 30 AD
 - iii. Paul’s conversion – 35 AD
 - iv. Messianic-Jewish Council at Jerusalem – 50-51 AD
 - v. Nero’s Reign – 54-68 AD
 - vi. Book of Hebrews written – 60-68 AD
 - vii. Paul’s final imprisonment and execution in Rome – 67-68 AD
 - viii. Destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem – 70 AD

¹ Zondervan’s Archaeological Study Bible; footnotes on Exodus 20:1-21

2) DESTINATION & PURPOSE:

- a. The language, allusions, cultural and historical perspective all resonate well with a Jewish readership in mind. Most Gentile converts would have been somewhat indifferent to the extent and focus of Jewish tradition exhibited in Hebrews. Hence the name of the letter suggests the audience intended as well.
- b. The letter to the Hebrews was directed to Messianic Jews... that is to Jews who came to believe in Jesus as their promised Messiah. Because of their faith they came under persecution from their Jewish brothers and sisters, as well as from the Roman State. Amid increasing pressure and persecution, many thought that a return to their Old Covenant roots would be prudent. With a detailed point by point argument, the author makes a strong case that Jesus is the culmination of redemptive history long anticipated by Jewish prophets, and thus there really was no going back.
- c. These Christians found themselves in a situation where it was no longer easy to publicly stand as a Christ follower. In our modern culture Christians are often maligned and even denigrated, and in many places in our world we know that active persecution occurs. It is easy to understand how these believers when reflecting back on their “good old days,” when faith wouldn’t cost you... your place in society, it wouldn’t cost you... your family and friends, and it wouldn’t cost you... your life.
- d. Into this ongoing drama an unnamed apostolic pastor writes furiously to remind these people why they believe in Jesus as their Messiah, and why they must hold on to their faith. So, what would you do if you were in their position? Would you stay true and hold on to your faith? Would you proclaim your faith confidently? Or would you become timid, or even capitulate and to look for an easier way out? This is the context of this letter.
- e. The Book of Hebrews in general speaks loudly into the Jewish theology of the Atonement, and especially in regard to the Christian theology of the sufficiency and superiority of Christ as the sacrificial Lamb of God... namely that Jesus is the Messianic King/Priest in the esteemed order of Melchizedek, and that Jesus rendered the only atonement both necessary and sufficient for all of humanity.
- f. The message that Messiah had come divided the Jewish community – some responded by faith while others rejected Jesus. The letter to the Hebrews is an Apologetic argument explaining Messianic concepts in the context of Jewish Law and customs, which provides a wonderful window for us to look into the historical & cultural setting of that era and how the reality of Jesus spoke into their lives.
- g. It is helpful to understand that these believers were not setting out to create a “new faith” per se, instead they thought and taught in terms of the consummation of the Jewish faith. Hebrews has an extensive Jewish content and reference because of this, that wouldn’t be necessary for a non-Jew or Gentile-Greek audience.

3) THEOLOGICAL THEMES:

- a. Jesus is presented as the Messiah meaning both King and Priest as promised to the Jews – 1:5.
 - i. Priest – 1:9
 - ii. King – 1:13
- b. Hebrews is a “Midrash sermon roughly based on Psalm 110”²

² The New Testament, by Dr Gary Tuck

- i. The Jews knew the Messiah would be a King, because He would be coming in the kingly lineage of David.
 - ii. That the Messiah was also Priest of the Most High God, who came from the lineage of Melchizedek the king-priest of the city of Salem [meaning peace] that David would later rename Jerusalem.
 - iii. Because of the persecution by Jews and Romans, many Christians were tempted to return to normative Jewish worship. The author explains how the New Covenant in Jesus is superior in every regard to the Old Covenant in Moses. This was the greater value that the Jesus priesthood spoke to. The old priesthood was no longer in force and should be rejected.
 - iv. For the Jews – the King would be from the tribe of Judah and the Priest would be from the tribe of Levi.
 - v. Though the Messiah as king and priest was unexpected, that Messiah would be the “suffering servant” in the prophecy of Isaiah in particular pointed to a new work of God. See the 4 “servant songs in Isaiah” – these appear in chapters 40 to 55... especially 42:1-4; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12.
- c. Monarchy – a major problem for our modern democratic society is the notion of King – we can relate to Jesus as Priest, we can accept Him as Savior, but we lack the theological connection to Jesus as King.
- i. As the Absolute Monarch, the king has complete authority. With a good king in this role who acts justly and serves the people, the monarchy is a fine form of government. However, the history of the monarchy in Jewish culture as recorded in Chronicles and Kings, demonstrates that power corrupts and a monarchy with corrupt king is the worst form of government.
 - ii. In Scripture, Jesus is called “King of Kings” and “Lord of Lords” – both relate to Him as King.
 - iii. The role of King was to rule God’s people justly and fairly as regent to the High-King of Heaven. The “regent-monarch” or “vassal-monarch” was to care for and protect the people and shepherd them toward God, protecting and nurturing them as God’s chosen people.
 - iv. The role of priest was to mediate God’s Covenant with His people by interpreting and teaching from Scripture and to minister sacrifices in the Levitical tradition of the Temple. Jesus’ conversation with the “Woman at the Well” in John’s Gospel 4:1-26 demonstrates the development of Jesus identity – from Jew (4:9), to Teacher [Rabbi] (4:10-15), to Prophet (4:16-19), to Messiah (4:20-26).
 - v. The role of prophet was to identify and anoint the King, and to keep the king and priests correctly aligned with God’s will. Samuel was the first Old Covenant prophet and John the Baptist was the last.
 - vi. With Jesus as King and Priest, and with the heart of individual believers now having become the Temple of God, the indwelling Holy Spirit acts as prophet keeping us aligned with our Priest-King Lord.
- d. Hebrews demonstrates that Jesus is superior to the leaders of the OC:
- i. Angels – 1:5-2:18

- ii. **Moses – 3:1-4:13**
- iii. **Aaronic priests – 4:14-7:28**
- e. **Jesus is superior to the high priest:**
 - i. **Better covenant – 8:1-13**
 - ii. **Better sanctuary – 9:1-12**
 - iii. **Better sacrifice – 9:13-10:18**
- f. **The Day of Atonement and the Scapegoat is a major theological development – here are excerpts from Scholars Bible Software version of Zondervan’s Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, an article by C. L. Feinberg:**
 - i. **The occasion for the day:**
 1. The death of Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1 ff.) is said to be the occasion for the Day of Atonement in order to emphasize God’s holiness which they had transgressed. Jubilees 34:17 connects the institution of the day with Jacob’s mourning for Joseph (Gen 37:29 ff.). Those committed to the critical school of OT interpretation find the setting for the day in Ezekiel 40-48.
 2. It is important to recall that the Year of Jubilee began on the Day of Atonement (Lev 25:9). There are those who suggest that the Day of Atonement (ch. 16) was the conclusion of several New Year observances.
 3. It should be pointed out that the atonement for the Temple occurs on the first day of the first month and on the first day of the seventh month (Ezek 45, LXX for vv. 18-20).
 - ii. **The purpose of the day:**
 1. The ritual of the day had in view one goal: **to avert** the wrath of God for the sins of the nation for the past year and to insure His continued dwelling among them.
 2. The shedding of blood and the sending off of the scapegoat were meant to cleanse the nation, including the leaders, priesthood, people, and the sanctuary from sin. The entire meaning of the sacrificial system reached its climax in this ritual, and the day has been well called the “Good Friday of the Old Testament.”
 3. This day was observed to remind Israel that in spite of all the daily, weekly, and monthly sacrifices, sin was not fully atoned for. Always the penitent believer stood at a distance from God, unable to enter the holy presence of God, typified by the Shekinah cloud over the mercy seat. On the Day of Atonement only the high priest was allowed by God to enter the Holy of Holies with blood as a representative for the people, and only after he had been ritually purified and prepared could he enter.
 - iii. **The basic principle underlying the Day of Atonement:**
 1. The ongoing offerings for sin throughout the year could not provide for or adequately cover the unknown (“secret”) sins of individuals.
 2. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is quoted as making these “hidden sins” known in his comparison of the OT and NT approach to the sins of murder and adultery – Matt 5:21-30. If we allow illicit desire to harbor in our minds and hearts, we are guilty of the sin. This Old Testament concept thus lands squarely in the New Testament in a way that would chasten any penitent believer’s heart.

3. As a result of these sins the individual, the sanctuary, the people, and the land were all rendered unclean. God could not be honored as He deserved under such unclean circumstances. The Day of Atonement was instituted for the accomplishment annually of an atonement for these sins (Lev 16:33).
 4. The whole priestly legislation was given its highest expression – God’s holiness was recognized and satisfied by this sacrifice. All the ceremonies and rituals of the day were meant to symbolize, as far as possible under the OT, a complete atonement for sin and the removal of their cause of God’s displeasure. The Day of Atonement marked the highest exhibition of the mediatorial work of the high priest. Through him all the people had access into the presence of God.
 5. According to later Jewish theology, on New Year’s Day God determined the fate of every man on earth and on the Day of Atonement He sealed His decree depending on their penitent response. The intervening ten days of penitence (actually counting from the first of Tishri through the tenth of the month) were observed in order to avert an unfavorable decree. Only unintentional sins were in view in this ritual (4:2, 13; Num 15:24).
- iv. **The importance of the day:**
1. The Day of Atonement is the only fast day stipulated in the Mosaic Law. In the couple of centuries before the advent of Christianity, it played a significant role in Judaism. References to it in the “Mishnaic Tractate Yoma” and in other Jewish sources leave no doubt in the matter.
 2. Conceptually, the Crucifixion accounts of the New Testament and the entire Epistle to the Hebrews, along with Paul’s letters, are directly related to the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement was so central and vital to Judaism that it has outlived the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 and the loss of the entire Levitical Sacrificial system. The observance actually manifested that Israel believed the cleansing of their sins was accomplished by the prescribed rites given by God, and that the forgiveness and grace of God were extended to them and formed the basis for their continuance in fellowship with Him as His covenant people.
 3. On the penitent’s part, this sacrifice demonstrated godly sorrow for their sins (as indicated by their fasting). It realized the purification of the sanctuary that had become defiled by the sins of Israel. Through this, Atonement was made for these hidden transgressions for the entire congregation and their leaders. The consciousness of sin in Israel was deepened through the exercises of the day. God was propitiated for the year just past.
- v. **The New Testament Spiritual significance and instruction for the Christian today.** The more one compares the rituals of this day with what was accomplished perfectly by Christ on Calvary, the more the conviction is confirmed that all the rites of the Day of Atonement, and all the religious appointments in Israel, were only shadows preparing for the coming of finality in Christ (Heb 9:24; 10:1)

4) **STRUCTURE:**

Schematic Outline from the Zondervan Archaeological Study Bible – Introduction to Hebrews:

- a. Superiority of God's New Revelation – 1:1-4
- b. Christ is superior to the angels – 1:5-2:18
- c. Christ is superior to Moses – 3:1-4:13
- d. Christ is superior to the Levitical Priesthood – 4:14-7:28
- e. The superior sacrificial work of Christ Jesus – 8-10
- f. Application exhortation – stand fast in your faith – 11-12
- g. Conclusion - 13

Thematic Development of Hebrews – Teaching is developed by “Theological Doctrine” with “Warnings” and “Dangers” – the warning passages may be a key as the book seems to vacillate from doctrine to warning throughout – notes from ideas originally presented by Dr Gary Tuck.

- h. Doctrine #1 – Jesus is the ultimate revelation – 1:1-3
 - i. NT authors & readers seem to accept that angels represented God – that is, they spoke to humanity for Him.
 - ii. Many scholars believe that God was represented throughout the OT by angels, that God did not come and enter history until Jesus came. That God's appointed messengers whether angels or prophets who then stood for God and presented His will is theologically reasonable.
- i. Doctrine #2 – Jesus Kingly work was to save and deliver humanity – 1:4-4:13; thus demonstrating His superiority to Moses – 3:1-6. Only Jesus could enable humanity to enter into God's rest – 3:11.
 - i. Jesus is superior to the Angels – 1:4-2:18
 1. A superior name – Son – 1:4-14
 2. Superior demands – 2:1-4
 3. Warning #1 – 2:1-4 – pay closer attention, don't drift away.
 - ii. Jesus performed a superior work – to save [rescue] humanity – 2:5-18
 - iii. Jesus is superior to Israel's OT heroes – 3:1-4:13
 - iv. Superior to Moses – 3:1-6
 1. Warning #2 – 3:7-4:11 – Jesus provided a superior rest in conformance with God's revelation [Ps 95:7-11]
 2. Entering the community of fellowship included –
 - a. Confession of Jesus as Messiah
 - b. Baptism – baptism replaced circumcision as sign of the new covenant.
 - c. Communion – replaced temple sacrifice as the penitent rite of the new covenant.
 3. 1st Danger – 3:12-19 – Is to fall away from their faith in unbelief – becoming hard of heart [dull].
 4. 2nd Danger – 4:1-10 – In order to enter into God's Rest, it is incumbent for individuals to persevere in their faith, as disobedience & unbelief are the same and prevent a person from entering God's rest.
 - a. Obedient call to fear God – 4:1-10.

are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.” Meaning Jesus is not just the High Priest, He is appointed as the King of Heaven and earth.

- iv. New Covenant revealed – 8:13 – the new made the old obsolete.
 - 1. Ch 9 – 13 – the cleansing of the flesh is Old Covenant outerman; the cleansing of the heart is New Covenant innerman.
 - 2. Ch 10 – [Num 15] – unintentional sin was covered by Temple sacrifice, intentional sin was not covered. Old Covenant has been annulled – New Covenant is infinitely better.
- v. 4th Warning – 10:19-39 – there are necessary implications – 10:19-25 – that lead to necessary judgment for rebellion – 10:26-31; amid personal reassurance – 10:32-39
- vi. Exhortations to faith and endurance – 11-12
 - 1. 11:1-12 – “Faith” is repeated – 11:13 – all of these though faithful died.
 - 2. 11:17-38 – “Faith” is repeated – 11:39 – gained approval through faith.
- vii. 5th Warning 12:18-29 – against rejecting the New Covenant in Jesus.
 - 1. Sinai = Law of Moses... represented by the mountain of fire was fearful and threatening.
 - 2. Zion = Law of Grace... represented by the Heavenly New Jerusalem... is a welcoming and wondrous scene.
- viii. Concluding exhortations – ch 13
 - 1. The Christian community requires love 13:1-3; sexual purity 13:4; material perspective 13:5-6; good examples born out in our life and faith 13:7-8.
 - 2. The final charge to leave Judaism because of its inferior sacrifices – 13:9-14.
 - 3. The final appeal to hold to Christianity because of its superior sacrifices – 14:15-17.
 - 4. Prayers, benediction & conclusion – 13:22-25.

5) BIBLICAL EXEGESIS OF THE TEXT – Passage of 9:11-27 in many ways is the meat of the letter; this is my own material that I recently taught at Elevation Church Santa Cruz. Though there are 16 verses in this passage, I chose 8, and noted specific concepts for my exegesis:

- a. Heb 9:11 – “When ‘Christ came as High Priest’ of the good things that are ‘already here’, He ‘went through’ the greater and more perfect Tabernacle that is ‘not man-made and not a part of this creation.’ ”
 - i. The first concept is, *Christ came as High Priest* – the author goes on in this chapter to contrast Jesus’ ministry as both High King and High Priest which cannot be adequately compared to Moses and the Levitical Tabernacle ministry. Jesus represents a much higher order.
 - 1. In discussing Jesus ministry, my New Testament and Theology professor Dr Tuck liked to remind his class that Jesus is not His first name, and Christ is not His last name. Jesus is THE CHRIST... He is the Messiah prophesied in the OT. I can’t tell you how many times I heard that... but it obviously stuck.
 - 2. Christ and Messiah both mean that Jesus is High King and High Priest...and as our lead pastor Chuckk so clearly pointed out 2 weeks ago, Jesus is a type of Melchizedek who also was both Priest and King of the Most High God... a superior order of priesthood.

- ii. The second concept, *Already here* – Is a reminder of the Spiritual benefits believers already possessed, namely:
1. The Grace Jesus inaugurated freed God’s people from their bondage to sin and death, and guaranteed them life with God in eternity. This concept of Grace and Peace were critical thoughts God’s people needed to hear then, and we need to be reminded of now.
 2. In the historical context of the time, there was a huge persecution of Christians and Messianic Jews in the 60’s when this letter was written, which continued for several decades throughout the Roman world. Shortly after this letter in 70 AD the Temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed, and as Jesus had in predicted in Luke 21:6, every stone of the Temple was thrown down. The Temple was utterly destroyed not to be rebuilt, and Temple worship had ended.
 3. By the end of this persecution, Roman and Jewish historians estimate that somewhere over one million believers were martyred. There was obviously great pressure placed upon God’s people to give up and go back to old patterns of life. But because life in the Spirit was real, and its power really did bring peace and hope and joy, Christians not only endured but thrived.
- iii. Third concept, *He went through* – refers to the Levitical High Priest who went through the veil and entered into the Holy of Holies once a year. The high priest could only minister within the limited context of a narrowly applied atonement. On the other hand, Jesus went through the veil that separates the earthly realm into the Heavenly realm. While the Levitical priests operated in the physical realm that was a shadow of the Heavenly, Jesus as the Messianic High Priest resides with God in the Heavenly realm. This is what is referred to here as the “greater Tabernacle” that is not man-made. Jesus stands where the earthly priests cannot... at the right hand of God in Heaven itself where He continually mediates a better Atonement for all of God’s people.
1. The OT atonement had limitations... for example it did not cover “high handed sin” as expressed in Numbers 15:30... these were sins of deliberate intent, committed knowingly and even arrogantly. These sins placed one outside of the sphere of God’s forgiveness in the Old Covenant. In other words you were cut off from God’s people and made an outcast.
 2. However, in the New Covenant in Christ Jesus, all *Sin* [humanity falling short of God’s perfection] is covered. Though there may be certain legal and civil ramifications where reparation is required; but as far as God is concerned, the Blood of Jesus appropriated by a penitent faith satisfies all of God’s requirements.
 3. Paul makes the point definitively in Romans 8:33-35 where he writes – “Who will bring a charge against us as God’s people? For it is God who justifies. Christ Jesus who died, and who was raised and who is at the right hand of God, and also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword?” In verse 38-39 Paul concludes with - “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, not things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able

to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

This is a powerful statement. These believers were most likely aware of this passage, which had to have brought them great comfort.

- iv. The final concept in this verse is, *not man made & not a part of this creation* – both refer that these are Heavenly things that earthly priests and kings could not deliver. Only the Messiah could bring these about and make them an obtainable reality. There are some who view this passage as referring to God going through the veil into the earthly realm as Jesus in the flesh. However the entire context of this passage is focused upon humanity coming into the Heavenly realm, rather than God coming into the earthly realm. Generally, it has a definite other-worldly character about it.

- b. Verse 9:12 – “Jesus did not enter by the means of the ‘blood of goats and calves [animals]’; but ‘He entered the most Holy Place once and for all by His own blood’, ‘having obtained’ eternal redemption [for all of humanity].”
 - i. First, the author refers to the effective means of the *blood of animals* in the Levitical system that can only have temporary benefit in our fallen material world; and this is no comparison against the Blood of Jesus which has permanent benefit. Where Levitical sacrifices offered limited access to redemption, the Blood of Christ is immediately available to all at any time and place [meaning beyond the Temple in Jerusalem], and has opened eternity for unlimited access for all of God’s people.
 - ii. Second, *He entered the most Holy Place once and for all by His own blood* – only God could do this, only the Messiah who is the ‘Emanuel’ meaning “God with us” could do this. Humanity could not long endure being in the Holy of Holies because of its proximity to God, neither could we enter Heaven and remain in God’s Presence, only Messiah could do this and by virtue of His own blood enter Heaven.
 - iii. Third, *having obtained* – The author writes that Jesus has already accomplished the perfect sacrifice of eternal redemption, this is not merely a temporary benefit. Christ is the only permanent remedy for humanity – Heb 9:26; 10:4-10.

- c. Verse 9:13 – “The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so they are outwardly clean.”
 - i. First, being “ceremonially clean” was a big deal for Jewish worship. If you were clean as a Jew you could enter the Temple and be consecrated to worship before God. If you were unclean, you could not enter the Temple, in fact you could not even come into contact with clean Jews. The scope and process of becoming clean again through purification rituals was fairly arduous. Because of this:
 - 1. Many Jews would prevent their becoming “defiled” by avoiding contact with others who might be unclean. This was especially true of the Jewish leaders and Rabbis as they wanted to maintain their uninterrupted right of access into the Temple, and unfortunately they usually cared little for the common people they were supposed to serve.
 - 2. For the Jews, if you were ceremonially clean and were even touched by someone unclean, you became unclean yourself and had to go through the lengthy

- purification ritual process. Purification rituals typically involved the cleansing agents of prayer, water, blood sacrifice, fire, and even monetary offerings; followed by a waiting period that could be days or even weeks. It was time consuming and extremely inconvenient, especially during the High Holy Days.
- ii. Second, ***outwardly clean*** – referred to the Jewish theology which held to an external standard of cleanliness, while it was clearly known that Jesus taught of an internal standard.
 1. Jesus was quoted as saying - “It is not what goes into a man that defiled him, but what came out of him” – Matt 15:1-20. Along this same line is Matt 23:25-26 - “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.” Obviously, the condition of our heart and character matters greatly to God.
 2. With regard to this external standard of Jewish purity, the only One who could touch someone who was unclean and remain clean was Jesus. This of course confounded the Levitical Jews of the time, but absolutely delighted the people!
 3. Note Appendix A which outlines the material world in the Jewish system.
 - d. **Verse 9:14 – “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’, ‘so that we may serve the Living God.’”**
 - i. First, ***Offered Himself*** – refers to the self-sacrifice Sin offering. Dealing with Sin was a serious problem, and animals didn’t volunteer to be sacrificed. However, Jesus offered Himself to save us, and completely satisfied our sin-debt.
 - ii. Second, In regard to mediating the Atonement for sin, the Levitical high priest offered ***“unblemished”*** animals... meaning the best of the best. To be worthy of being offered to God, these animals had to be without a flaw.
 1. We already mentioned the sacrificial process involved the blood of a bull [being a great sacrifice] and that of a goat [a really good sacrifice], but there was another goat that figures largely in this sacrifice. The 2nd goat in this great ceremony was called the “Scapegoat” – Although we now have a very different idea of what a Scapegoat means.
 2. In our culture we think of the scapegoat as being the “fall guy” the one who takes the blame for the team, but this is not consistent with Jewish theology.
 3. In Leviticus 16:7-10 the “Day of Atonement” is centered upon a bull and 2 goats which together constituted the “sin offering” for the people. One of the 2 goats would be sacrificed along with the bull and some of its blood sprinkled within the veil.
 4. Some of the blood would be smeared on the horns of the 2nd goat... the “Scapegoat.” Then the high priest would place his hands upon the horns of the Scapegoat and declare that all the sin of the people are hereby transferred onto this goat. The innocent scapegoat was thus called the “sin-bearer” for the

- people... in their view it “became sin” for the people. We who are familiar with the Scriptures see this imagery throughout the New Testament, but we may not have understood its origin here.
5. The Scapegoat would then be led out from the city amid great fanfare, and brought right up to the edge of the wilderness. It then would be driven out into the wilderness never to be seen again. The meaning here in sending the Scapegoat away is a picture of the irreversible removal of the sin of the people from the Presence of God.
 6. The Scapegoat when cast out became known as “Azazel” which some have believed to be the name of a desert demon. But God has no fear of demons and absolutely no need to placate them. Scholars present a more probable solution for the name Azazel as a conjunction of “ez” meaning goat, and “azal” meaning to be sent away. Thus the Scapegoat represents the banishment of sin to a place of total separation from the people and their Lord.
 7. In the OT, the scapegoat was powerful imagery and a blessing to the people carrying their sins away out of the community. In the NT, Jesus is certainly a type of Scapegoat but He took all the sin of the world upon Himself at the cross. In Jesus there is unlimited atonement, not just for the sin that occurred the previous year or for the Jewish community alone. Jesus resolved all sin of all time throughout the ages. Jesus completely satisfied the problem of the sin-curse.
- iii. Third, cleanse our consciences for acts that lead to death – Where animal sacrifices cleanse the flesh, the author is pressing the point that Jesus’ sacrifice cleanses not just the exterior but our inner life. The superior power of Jesus Blood over the Old Covenant animal blood, is that the Old Covenant dealt with the exterior conditions, and it couldn’t guarantee eternal life; however the New Covenant in Christ’s Blood cleans us from the inside out so we can enter eternity.
 - iv. Finally, so we may serve the Living God – is a reminder that we are saved for a purpose, namely to serve God. Salvation is not about getting a “get out of hell free card” – or “fire insurance” as a missionary friend calls it. We are redeemed at a great price and for a purpose, which is to serve God, and Heaven is our reward.
- e. Verse 9:15 – “For this reason Christ is the mediator of a New Covenant that those who are called [invited] may receive the ‘promised eternal inheritance;’ now that He [Christ] has ‘died as a ransom’ to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.”
- i. First, promised eternal inheritance – reframes our end goal... the “Old Covenant” was about God’s people inheriting the “promised land” of Canaan, and being blessed there. The “New Covenant” is about God’s people being blessed in the “promised land” of Heaven. Life is not merely about here and now; it is about forever with God! A way better inheritance.
 - ii. Second, He has died as a ransom – Christ paid the ransom that has solved the sin-debt we all inherited from Adam because of the Fall, it covered all sin for all time... past-present-and future for all of God’s people. It is called a ransom, because we would otherwise have had to pay it.

1. Moreover because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, our inner life now is being transformed so that we are incrementally becoming more like Jesus. It is this transformational power to change us from the inside out that really separates the Old and New Covenants.
 2. The New Covenant is obviously way better! Heb 7:18-19 says – “For, on the one hand, there is the setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness... for the Law made nothing perfect; and on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” Verse 7:22 concludes... “So much more also Jesus has become the guarantee [or ransom] of a better covenant.”
- f. Verse 9:22 – “In fact, the Law requires that everything be ‘cleansed with blood’, and without the ‘shedding of blood’ there is no forgiveness.”
- i. Regarding the shedding of blood – the Law placed a spotlight on the sin-problem and that substitutionary blood sacrifice was the solution. However the Law could only convict humanity of sin, and provide only a temporary resolution of our confessed sin. It provided no permanent Sin solution, and provided no Spiritual power for us to resist Sin, let alone to be transformed by the indwelling Holy Spirit. When we are cleansed with the Blood of Messiah, everything changes and we are invited into this new relational reality with transformational and eternal characteristics, and invited to further the Kingdom of God Christ saved us to serve.
 - ii. Paul confirms his expectation that we are saved for a purpose in Romans 12:1-2 – “I appeal to you brothers [and sisters] in view of God’s mercy, to make a dedication of your body as a living sacrifice, Holy and well pleasing to God... this is your reasonable service and Spiritual worship. Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the entire renewal of your mind [meaning your inner-life values and attitude].
 - iii. Paul’s encouragement is obviously not a request to die, but rather an invitation to live according to Jesus’ priorities. It is an “appeal” – meaning that we have a choice to cooperate with what God desires to accomplish in us and through us in our world.
- g. Verse 9:24 – “For Christ ‘did not enter a man-made sanctuary’ that was only a copy of the true one; ‘He entered Heaven itself’ now to appear for us in God’s Presence.”
- i. The author reiterates the limitation of the earthly-Levitical worship in the Temple, against the eternal-Heavenly worship in the Spirit. The Temple was an impressive feat of human ingenuity, but it was after all only man-made. All the splendor of this earthly copy of God’s Home paled in comparison with what lay ahead.
 - ii. As good as it was to stand before the Levitical priests, it had no comparison to standing in heaven in the Presence of God. Essentially the author is reminding these believers of the joy and wonders that await us... they just needed to hold on to their faith.
 - iii. As helpful as it was to have a high priest mediate an earthly blood covenant for sin, it was immeasurably superior to have a Heavenly High Priest mediate a Heavenly Covenant in the Presence of God.

- h. Verse 9:27 – “Just as humanity is ‘destined to die once,’ and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin [again], but to bring ‘salvation’ to those who are waiting for Him.”
- i. First ‘destined to die’ - is framed against ‘salvation’ [meaning destined to live forever] as a consequence of Jesus’ gift of Grace. *The* author is reframing the hope that all Christians live for. In looking at the evidence provided by Scripture as to what is pleasing to God and honorable to one another, it is “intuitively obvious” that the New Covenant in the Blood of Christ is far superior to the Old Covenant in the blood of animals.
 - ii. All of Scripture sets up the argument that leads directly to this conclusion...that Jesus is God’s best answer to humanities pressing Sin problem. It is ours to accept, and God’s to apply liberally in and through our lives.
 - iii. The net result of all of this is really wonderful... we live for Jesus now knowing He’ll come back for us, and then we’ll live with Him forever in eternity.
- i. Summation – this slide is often called the “Biblical Redemption Diagram” – it is a visual picture of what God has accomplished to rescue humanity. Jesus is the bridge that binds us to God in eternity.
- i. The people to whom the book of Hebrews was written knew that Jesus is Priest and King... both Savior and Lord, and that then as now Jesus is humanities only answer and atonement for the “soul poison” we call *Sin*. And *Sin* is Poison and it will kill us if we don’t take the antidote God has provided in Jesus. Just as the author of Hebrews encouraged his church, let’s continue to encourage each other to live and walk in faith believing. Jesus died so we could become free, meaning we don’t have to continue to live in bondage to *Sin* and death if we accept God’s provision of faith in Jesus.
 - ii. Scripture says that Jesus is faithful and true, that if we confess our *Sin* He will forgive us and heal us. Christians certainly aren’t perfect, but we can be honest about our shortcomings, and trust Jesus to sanctify and perfect us.
- j. Application – How do we as modern Christians apply the Message of Hebrews? How does Jesus being the Messianic Priest-King that Israel and the world have long awaited impact how I live my life? As I was pondering this application question, I had an insight... at 2 AM! I often wonder why it is that it’s in the middle of the night I think of this stuff. But here it is – and it involves our role as Christ followers.

We are invited to continue the work Jesus began, and to participate in activities that mature us as believers. There are activities that will grow us in two directions – 1) Jesus as our High Priest invites us into a closer and more intimate relationship with God and with others in our faith community. 2) Jesus as our High King invites us to serve His interests in expanding the Kingdom of God in our community and in the world. Here is my rationale behind this:

- i. Jesus as High Priest – Is well described by the Great Commandment in Matt 22:34-40: Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:

“Rabbi, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”

Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

- 1. In the Old Covenant, the priests interpreted God’s will and clarified Biblical truth for the people. This passage demonstrates this priestly function.**
 - 2. Jesus as High Priest invites us into greater intimacy with God. We can now approach God with confidence as His sons and daughters in Christ.**
 - 3. The application challenge for us is to deliberately become more involved in activities that grow us Spiritually – like quiet times of Bible study and prayer, Spiritual Formation exercises, etc. God invites us to deliberately press into Him through which we are increasingly transformed in displaying Christ’s character and nature. We become more Christ-like.**
- ii. Jesus as High King – is well described by the Great Commission in Matt 28:18-20: Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**
- 1. The High King of Heaven and earth has all authority, and as His sons and daughters, we are invited to serve God and work under His authority in advancing the Kingdom of God.**
 - 2. The application challenge is for us to become missionally involved in intentional discipleship activities. God invites us to grow in our maturity and to become intentional ambassadors of His Kingdom, and we are then invited to invest in maturing and serving others.**
 - 3. All Christ followers are both ministers of the Gospel and ambassadors of the Kingdom of God. This is not reserved for pastors alone, but for the entire congregation. Jesus’ missional invitation to us is to purposefully engage and influence the world around us to advance the Kingdom of God.**
 - 4. As a pastor, studies like this usually involve discovery of things that I wasn’t really aware of before, or finding new ways to apply truths I already know. Personally, I found this priest-king dynamic in The Great Commandment and The Great Commission really interesting. This opportunity for discovery keeps the Bible fresh and relevant, and I hope you’ll consider engaging in such activities.**

APPENDIX A – The Jewish view had the material world divided into either Holy [Sacred] or Profane [Common], and Profane elements further divided into unclean or clean. These clean profane elements could be offered to God only when consecrated by the priest. Once desecrated, they would have to go through the consecration process again; similarly once clean elements became unclean, they would have to go through the purification process again.

