

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS^a

The Coming of God's Son—Who is Far above the Angels

1 Long ago, God spoke to our ancestors many times, and in many ways, through the prophets. ²In these ‘last days,’^b he has spoken to us through a Son. God has appointed the Son to inherit everything;^c and through him, he created the universe.^d ³He’s the brightness of God’s glory, and the exact image^e of his nature. He holds everything in existence by his powerful word.^f When he’d done a cleansing of people’s sins,^g he sat down at the right side of the Majestic One in the heavens. ⁴He has become much greater than the angels, just as the name that he has inherited is much greater than theirs.

⁵After all, which of the angels did God ever say this to:^h

You’re my Son—
I’ve become your Father today!ⁱ

^a This traditional name comes from the fact that the letter seems targeted at Christian Jews. Hebrews doesn’t say who it’s from. Despite the older assumption that it’s from Paul, its literary style is far more polished than any of Paul’s letters, the theology appears to be independent of Paul’s, and the author appears to say in 2:3 that he learned the good news from people who heard Jesus—something that Paul would probably never say. He insists that he got the good news in a heavenly vision of Jesus, directly, right when he was persecuting the Christians (Gal. 1:12; see Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-22 etc.). Could it be one of Paul’s friends, such as Barnabas? Apollos? Aquila? There’s nothing major to be said against any of these three as possible authors.

^b The “last days” is a way of talking about the end of history, the time leading up to God’s hoped-for intervention to renew the creation and put an end to injustice.

^c Lit. “has made him heir of all things.”

^d Lit. “the ages,” or “the worlds.”

^e Lit. “the stamp.”

^f Lit. “he carries/bears all things by the word of his power.”

^g Lit. “the sins.”

^h Traditionally: “For to which of the angels did he ever say.” Verse 5 is one long question.

ⁱ Ps. 2:7.

And this:^a

I'm going to be his Father,
And he's going to be my Son.^b

6And when God sends the Firstborn into the world, he says,

And let all God's angels worship him!^c

7And he says this about the angels:

He makes his angels winds,
And his messengers flames of fire!^d

8But God says this about the Son:

God, your throne is forever and ever,
And justice is your royal scepter.^e
You've loved justice and hated lawlessness;
9So^f God, your God, has anointed^g you with the oil of great joy,
Blessing you more than your companions.^h

10And this:

You laid the foundations of the earth in the beginning, Lord.
And the heavens are your creation.ⁱ
11They'll pass away, but you live on.
They're all going to get old like a piece of clothing,
12And you're going to roll them up like a blanket.
They'll get changed just like clothes.
But you are the same,
And your years are not going to come to an end.^j

13And which of the angels did God ever say this to:^k

Sit on my right, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.^a

^a Lit. "And again."

^b 2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chron. 17:13.

^c Deut. 32:43 (LXX); see Ps. 97:7.

^d Lit. "...the One who makes his angels winds, and his messengers flames of fire!" Ps. 104:4.

^e Lit. "the scepter of justice is the scepter of your kingship." See "Bible Words" under "scepter."

^f Lit. "Because of this."

^g See "Bible Words."

^h Ps. 45:6-7.

ⁱ Lit. "the work of your hands."

^j Ps. 102:25-27.

^k Traditionally: "For to which of the angels did he ever say?"

¹⁴Aren't the angels all spirits, on assignment for service? Aren't they sent for the sake of people^b who are going to inherit salvation?

The Son of God Became a Human Being in Order to Save Us

2 Because of this, we have to pay all the more attention to what we've heard, so we don't drift away from it. ²Because even what was said through angels^c turned out to be reliable—and every violation and act of disobedience got a fair punishment. ³If that's true, how are we going to get away with neglecting a salvation as great as this? It got its start being taught^d by the Lord;^e then it was confirmed to us by those who heard him. ⁴God testified alongside them—with miracles,^f wonders, various sorts of displays of power, and outpourings^g of the Holy Spirit by his will.

⁵After all, we're talking about the world to come.^h God didn't put that world under the authority of angels. ⁶But somebody testifies somewhere in scripture,

What is humanity,
That makes you notice us?ⁱ
Or what is a human being,^j
That makes you take care of us?
⁷You've placed humanity a little^k lower than the angels;
You've crowned us with glory and honor.
⁸You've placed everything under our feet.^l

Now, since God has placed everything^m under humanity, he hasn't left anything that's not subject to humanity. But we don't now see everything subject to usⁿ yet. ⁹But in the words, “placed a little^o lower than the angels,” we see Jesus. Because he went through death, he was “crowned with glory and honor.” He died so that, by God's grace, he could taste death for everyone. ¹⁰After all, it's because

^a Ps. 110:1.

^b Lit. “...service, because of those.”

^c That is, the Law given on Sinai. The author agrees with Paul (Gal. 3:19) and Stephen (Acts 7:38, 53) that God employed angels to help reveal the Law.

^d Lit. “spoken.”

^e I.e. the Lord Jesus.

^f Traditionally: “signs.”

^g Or “gifts”; traditionally: “apportionments.”

^h He's referring back to 1:10-13, which looks to the transition to a new creation in which Christ rules.

ⁱ Lit. “it.”

^j Traditionally: “a son of man,” i.e. a human being as such.

^k Or “for a little while”

^l Ps. 8:5-7. I've recast this quotation to make it gender-inclusive.

^m Lit. “For in placing everything.”

ⁿ Lit. “him.”

^o Or “placed for a little while”

of God and through God that everything exists. So, in leading many children to glory, it was appropriate for him to perfect the champion^a of their salvation through sufferings.

¹¹After all, the One^b who makes people holy and the people being made holy are all from one God. Which is why Jesus isn't embarrassed to call them brothers and sisters. ¹²He says,

I'm going to tell your name to my brothers and sisters!

I'm going to sing about you when I'm worshiping with my community!^c

¹³And again,

I'm going to put my trust in God.^d

And again,

Look at me, with^e the children God has given me!^f

¹⁴So since the children are all flesh and blood human beings, he shared the very same form of existence.^g That way, through his death, he could overthrow the one who has the power of death—in other words, the devil. ¹⁵And he could set free those condemned to lifelong slavery by their fear of death. ¹⁶After all, it's obvious that he doesn't help angels. No, "he helps Abraham's descendants."^h ¹⁷Because of that, he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way. That way he could be merciful to them, and be their faithful High Priestⁱ in front of God. And he could accomplish the forgiveness of^j the people's sins. ¹⁸After all, because he's suffered temptation himself, he's able to help people who are being tempted.

Jesus the Son of God is Far Greater Than Moses

3 Holy brothers and sisters, we share a calling from God. In view of what we've been saying, think about Jesus, the Messenger and High Priest^k that we profess.^a ²He's faithful to the One who appointed him, just as "Moses was faithful

^a Or "pioneer," or "author."

^b That is, Christ.

^c Lit. "In the midst of the congregation I will sing about you." Ps. 22:22.

^d Isa. 8:17.

^e Traditionally: "Behold, I and."

^f Isa. 8:18.

^g Lit. "So, since the children share in blood and flesh, he too, in just the same way [or, "similarly"], took part in the same things."

^h Lit. "seed." Isa. 41:8-9.

ⁱ See "Bible Words" under "High Priest."

^j Or "he could expiate," a sacrificial term for the same transaction. The author will later introduce the theme that Jesus offers himself as a sacrifice; here he's just introducing the role of high priest.

^k See "Bible Words" under "High Priest."

in all^b matters of God's household."^c ³And Jesus has been found worthy of greater glory than Moses—just as much as a person who built a house has greater honor than the house. ⁴(After all, every house is built by someone, and the One who has built everything is God.) ⁵Also, "Moses was faithful as a servant in all matters of God's household,"^d to testify to^e the things that were said by God. ⁶But Jesus, on the other hand, is faithful as a Son who's in charge of^f God's household. We are God's household, if we hold onto our boldness, and to the public profession of our hope.^g

A Warning Against Unbelief

⁷So, just like the Holy Spirit says,

Today, if you hear his voice,
⁸Don't harden^h your hearts, like they did in the rebellion,
 On that day of testing in the desert.
⁹That was where your ancestors really tested me,ⁱ
 And they saw what I did for forty years.
¹⁰So I was very angry with that generation, and I said,
 "They're always going off in the wrong direction^j in their hearts,
 And they don't understand my ways."
¹¹This is what I swore in my wrath:
 "They're never going to come into my rest."^k

¹²Be careful, brothers and sisters, so that there's not an evil and faithless heart in any of you—a heart that turns away from the Living God. ¹³But encourage each other every day, as long as it's still called "Today."^l That way, none of you will be hardened by the seductiveness of sin. ¹⁴Because we've become Christ's

^a Lit. "Whence, holy brothers, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the representative (traditionally: "apostle") and High Priest of our profession, Jesus."

^b Many mss lack the word "all."

^c Num. 12:7. Moses is seen as a kind of head servant in God's household.

^d Num. 12:7.

^e Lit. "as a testimony to."

^f Lit. "over."

^g Or "if we hold onto our confidence and the pride of our hope." But I don't think he's talking about inner attitudes. He's challenging them to continue publicly identifying as Christians.

^h Or "stiffen up."

ⁱ Lit. "they tested me in a test," the repetition being for emphasis; see Exod. 17:7; Num. 20:2-5.

^j Lit. "going astray."

^k Ps. 95:7-11.

^l He sees the prophetic invitation of Ps. 95:7b (Heb. 3:7) as currently active, so the word "today" still applies, and the opportunity to respond is still open.

companions,^a as long as we hold onto our original confidence, right to the end.
¹⁵It says,^b

Today, if you hear his voice,
 Don't harden^c your hearts, like they did in the rebellion.^d

¹⁶Now, who heard and rebelled? Wasn't it everyone that came out of Egypt, led by Moses? ¹⁷And who were those God "was very angry with for forty years"? Wasn't it the people who sinned—and "their bodies^e fell down dead in the desert"?^f ¹⁸And who was it that God swore to, that they were never going to come into his rest?^g Wasn't it the people who disobeyed? ¹⁹And we see that they couldn't come in because of their faithlessness.

Entering the Rest That God Has Promised

4 So let's be extremely careful. Because the promise of coming into God's rest is still open, and none of you should appear to miss out on it.^h ²After all, we've had the good news preached to us just like them. But the message they heard didn't benefit them—because they weren't unitedⁱ in faith with those who truly listened to it.^j ³Because it's those of us who have become believers^k who come into God's rest. Just as he says,

This is what I swore^l in my wrath:
 "They're never going to come into my rest."^m

Yet his work has been finishedⁿ since the creation^o of the world. ⁴Because this is what it says somewhere about the seventh day:^p

^a Or "we've become members of the community of Christ."

^b Lit. "In the saying." It's looking ahead to the question that follows the quotation in v. 16.

^c Or "stiffen up."

^d Ps. 95:7-8.

^e Lit. "whose bodies."

^f Num. 14:29.

^g Num. 14:22-23; Ps. 95:11.

^h Or "should be judged to fall short" (by God). The implication is that a person's own negligence can theoretically deprive them of entrance.

ⁱ Lit. "they weren't mixed together," or "they didn't mix together"

^j Lit. "...didn't benefit them, not being bonded [or "mixed together"] in faith with those who listened." "Listened," here, has to mean "really listened," or "obeyed." Later mss have, "...didn't benefit them, because it wasn't combined with faith within the listeners."

^k Or simply, "who have believed."

^l Lit. "As I swore."

^m Ps. 95:11.

ⁿ Lit. "his works have been done."

^o Lit. "foundation."

^p That is, someplace in scripture.

And God rested on the seventh day, from all his work.^a

⁵And it says again in this place,

They're never going to come into my rest.^b

⁶So some people still have to come into God's rest—because the first people who heard the good news didn't come in, because of their disobedience. ⁷So he sets another day, "today," speaking through David after all that time. That's what was said before:

Today, if you hear his voice,
Don't harden^c your hearts.^d

⁸After all, if Joshua had given them rest, David wouldn't have been talking about another day after that time.^e ⁹So there's still a Sabbath^f rest for God's people. ¹⁰Because whoever comes into his rest has rested from their own work, just as God rested.^g ¹¹So let's do our best to come into that rest. That way, nobody will fall down by following their example^h of disobedience.

¹²Because God's word is alive and active, and it's sharperⁱ than any two-edged sword. And it penetrates right to the boundary between soul and spirit, to the boundary between joint and marrow.^j And it's able to judge the inner ideas and thoughts of the heart. ¹³And there's no created thing that's invisible to the One we're dealing with—everything stands naked and exposed before his eyes.

Jesus is Our Great High Priest

¹⁴So, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus, God's Son, let's hold firm to what we proclaim.^k ¹⁵After all, we don't have a high priest that can't sympathize with our weaknesses: he's been tested in all the same

^a Lit. "works." Gen. 2:2.

^b Ps. 95:11.

^c Or "stiffen up."

^d Ps. 95:7-8.

^e Lit. "another day after these days" (the days of Joshua, who led the Israelites over the Jordan River and into the Promised Land of Palestine—see the biblical book of Joshua).

^f See "Bible Words."

^g Lit. "from their own works, just as God rested from his own."

^h Lit. "the same example."

ⁱ Or "and it cuts better."

^j Lit. "joints and marrows."

^k Lit. "our confession/profession," i.e. our public affirmation of loyalty to God and Christ.

ways as we have, without sin. ¹⁶So let's come boldly^a up to the throne of grace. That way we can receive mercy, and find grace for help when we need it.^b

5 Now, every high priest is selected from among the people. He's appointed to deal with God on their behalf,^c and to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He's able to be gentle with people who are ignorant and off base, because he's wrapped up in weakness himself. ³And because of that, he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins just as he does for the people's sins. ⁴And nobody takes this honor on for himself—far from it. They're called by God, just like Aaron was.

⁵In the same way, Christ didn't try to glorify himself by becoming high priest. No, it was God who said to him,

You're my Son—I've become your Father today!^d

Just like he also says in another place:

You're a priest forever, in the priestly line of Melchizedek.^e

⁷When he lived physically on earth, Jesus came to God praying and pleading for help, with loud cries and tears. He knew God was able to save him from death, and his prayers were answered because of his reverence.^f ⁸Even though he was a son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered. ⁹And he's been perfected, and has become the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey him. ¹⁰He's been welcomed by God as high priest, “in the priestly line of Melchizedek.”

¹¹We have a lot to say about this Melchizedek—and it's hard to explain, because you've gotten hard of hearing. ¹²After all, you should even be teachers by now. But you need somebody to teach you certain basic first principles^g of God's revelations^h again. You've become dependent onⁱ milk, and not solid food. ¹³And everybody that lives on milk is ignorant when it comes to right^j teaching, because they're still an infant. ¹⁴But solid food is for people who are mature. Mature

^a Lit. “with boldness,” or “with confidence.”

^b Lit. “and discover grace for timely help.”

^c Lit. “is appointed on people's behalf in regard to the things in front of God.”

^d Ps. 2:7.

^e Prn. *mel-kizz-a-dek*. Ps. 110:4; see Gen. 22:17.

^f Heb. 5:7-10 is one long, complex sentence in Greek. Verse 7 reads, literally: “Who, in the days of his flesh, brought forth pleas and supplications to the One able to save him from death, with strong crying and tears, and he was heard because of his reverence.” See Ps. 22.

^g Some mss have, “to teach you which are the basic first principles.”

^h Lit. “the first principles of the oracles of God.”

ⁱ Lit. “You've come to need.”

^j Traditionally: “righteous.”

people’s senses have been trained, through practice, to distinguish what’s good and what’s bad.

The Danger of Falling Away

6 So—let’s leave behind the first lessons^a about Christ, and move on to maturity. Let’s not lay down the foundation over again, by talking about

- a change of heart^b from deathly behaviors,
- faith in God,
- teaching on baptisms,
- laying on of hands, and
- resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

3And we *will* move on, with God’s permission.^c

4Now, suppose people have already been enlightened: they’ve tasted the heavenly gift; they’ve shared in the Holy Spirit; 5and they’ve tasted God’s good word, and the powers of the coming age. 6If they fall away after that, it’s impossible to bring them back to a change of heart again.^d Because they’re hanging the Son of God on a cross all over again for themselves, and they’re publicly disgracing him. 7After all, when the ground drinks up the rain that often falls on it, and it grows plants acceptable to the people it’s farmed for, then it gets a blessing^e from God. 8But if it produces thorns and thistles, then it’s worthless, and it’s close to being cursed.^f It’s destined to be burned.^g

9Now, dear friends, even though we’re talking like this, we’re convinced of better things in your case. We believe you’re holding on to your salvation.^h 10After all, God isn’t so unfair as to forget the things you’ve done, and the love you’ve shown for his name. You’ve served the holy ones, and you’re serving them now. 11We just really want each of you to show the same commitment to the fulfillment of your hope, right to the end. 12That way you won’t get lazy, but you’ll imitateⁱ those who inherit the promises through their faith and patience.

^a Lit. “the first teaching/word.”

^b Traditionally: “repentance” (see “Bible Words”).

^c Lit. “And this we will do, if God lets us.”

^d Lit. (vv. 4-6 are one long sentence): “For it’s impossible to restore again to a change of heart [traditionally: “to repentance”] those who’ve once been enlightened, who’ve tasted the heavenly gift, who’ve shared in the Holy Spirit and have tasted God’s good word and the powers of the coming age, when they fall away.”

^e Lit. “it gets a share of blessing.”

^f See Gen. 3:17-18.

^g Lit. “Its end is for burning.”

^h Lit. “we’re convinced of the better things concerning you, and things that belong to/hold to salvation.”

ⁱ Lit. “...the end, so that you won’t be lazy, but imitators.”

God's Promise is Certain to be Fulfilled

¹³Now, God made a promise to Abraham.^a Having nobody greater to swear by, he swore by himself:

¹⁴I swear I'm really going to bless you, and I'm really going to multiply your descendants.^b

¹⁵And so, when Abraham waited patiently, he got the promise. ¹⁶Of course, people swear by somebody greater than themselves. And for them, when an oath is sworn to confirm something, it puts an end to all argument. ¹⁷So when God wanted to demonstrate very clearly^c (to those who inherit the promise) the unchangeableness of his intention, he guaranteed it with an oath. ¹⁸So we, who have run^d to take hold of the hope that lies ahead of us, can have strong assurance. We take our assurance from two unchangeable things: the promise and the oath. With each of them, it's impossible for God to lie.^e

¹⁹Our hope is like an anchor for our life.^f It's steady and secure, and it goes right in to the innermost place, behind the curtain.^g ²⁰That's where Jesus has gone in first^h on our behalf. He's become

a high priest forever, in the priestly line of Melchizedek.ⁱ

The Ancient Priest-King Melchizedek Points Forward to Christ

7 Now, as for this Melchizedek,^j "Melchizedek was the king of Salem,^k and a priest of God Most High." He "met Abraham as he was returning from the defeat of the kings, and he blessed him," and

²Abraham gave him a tenth portion of all the spoils.^a

^a Gen. 22:16.

^b Lit. "Since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying: 'Surely, blessing, I will bless you, and, multiplying, I will multiply you'" (quoting Gen. 22:17). Repeating the verb, as in "Blessing, I will bless," is the normal way of making a statement emphatic in the original Hebrew language of the Old Testament.

^c Lit. "to demonstrate all the more."

^d Lit. "who have fled," or "who have fled for refuge." Verses 16-20 are one long, complex sentence in Greek, and I've simplified the structure.

^e The point isn't that God is forced to tell the truth, but that God used two self-commitment customs, the promise and the oath, to assure human beings that he will not back out of the promise.

^f Or "for the soul."

^g He's now introducing the concept of the heavenly Holy of Holies, corresponding to the holiest place in the Tent of Witness and the Temple. See Lev. 16:2-3, 12, 15.

^h Or "has entered as a forerunner."

ⁱ Prn. *mel-kizz-a-dek*. Ps. 110:4; see Gen. 22:17. The author has changed the words from the quotation so that it reads "high priest," rather than "priest."

^j Prn. *mel-kizz-a-dek*.

^k Prn. *say-lem*.

“Melchizedek,” in the first place, means “King of Justice.” Secondly, he’s also called “king of Salem.” That means, “King of Peace.”³ He has no father, no mother, no genealogy.^b And no beginning or end of his life is mentioned.^c And like the Son of God, he remains a priest for all time.^d

4 Just think how great this person was. Abraham, our famous ancestor,^e gave him a tenth of the spoils. 5 Now, some of Levi’s descendants are given the office of priest. According to the Law, they’re commanded to take a tenth from the people—that is, from their fellow Israelites.^f That’s even though they’re Abraham’s descendants.^g 6 Yet Melchizedek, who’s not in their family line, has taken a tenth from Abraham! And he has blessed the one who has the promise! 7 And it’s beyond all dispute that the person with less status is blessed by the person with more status. 8 And in the one case mortal human beings collect a tenth. But in the other case, Melchizedek has the testimony of scripture that he’s still alive.^h 9 You could even say that Levi himself, the one who collects the tenth, has given a tenth through Abraham. 10 Because Levi was still unborn in his great-grandfather’s bodyⁱ when Melchizedek met Abraham.

11 Now, then: the Law was given through the Levitical priesthood. So let’s say^j perfection^k was possible to achieve through that. Then what need would there be for somebody else to come along “in the priestly line of Melchizedek,” not from^l Aaron’s line? 12 Because when the priesthood is changed, it’s necessary for there to be a change in law too. 13 After all, the words, “You are a priest forever,”^m are said to a person who comes from a different tribe—and nobody has ever served at the altar from that tribe. 14 Because it’s clear that our Lord comes from the tribe of Judah. Moses never said anything toⁿ the tribe of Judah about being priests. 15 And it’s all the more obvious when a different priest, who’s just like Melchizedek, comes along. 16 That person’s identity is not based on a law with a

^a Gen. 14:17-20. The author is paraphrasing slightly. “Spoils” are things captured in battle.

^b See “Bible Words.”

^c Lit. “...genealogy, with neither beginning of days nor end of life.” The author means that none of this is recorded in Genesis.

^d Ps. 110:4.

^e Lit. “Abraham the patriarch.” The Jews regarded Abraham as an extremely great man.

^f Lit. “their brothers.” Levi was one of Israel’s twelve sons. His descendants were appointed as the people’s priests and Temple helpers. Num. 18:21.

^g Lit. “they come from Abraham’s loins,” i.e. from his reproductive organs.

^h Lit. “that he lives.”

ⁱ Lit. “his loins.” See the nt. on v. 5.

^j “Let’s say”: lit. “if.”

^k Or “if the fulfillment of the promise.”

^l Lit. “and not said to be from.”

^m Lit. “For these things.”

ⁿ Or “in reference to.”

command about who physically qualifies as a priest.^a No, it's based on the power of a life that can't be destroyed. ¹⁷Because the scripture says,^b

You're a priest *forever*, in the priestly line of Melchizedek.^c

¹⁸So^d on the one hand, the previous commandment is being set aside, due to its own weakness and lack of effectiveness. ¹⁹Because the Law hasn't perfected anything. And on the other hand, there's the introduction of a greater hope. And through that hope we are coming close to God.

²⁰And it's significant that there was an oath sworn.^e Because on the one hand, these folks, the descendants of Levi, have become priests without any oath being sworn. ²¹Yet on the other hand, this other person^f becomes a priest with the swearing of an oath by God, who said to him,^g

The Lord has sworn,
And it will not be taken back:
You are a priest forever.^h

²²So Jesus has become the guarantee of a covenant that's that much greater than theirs. ²³And there have been very many of those priests—because death prevents them from continuing. ²⁴But because he stays alive forever, he holds the priesthood permanently. ²⁵So he can also save, forever, those who come to God through him. Because he always lives to pray for them.

²⁶After all, it's only right that we should have a high priest like Jesus:ⁱ he's holy, innocent, and pure.^j He can't be corrupted by sinners,^k and is now^l higher than the heavens. ²⁷He's not like the Levitical high priests, who need to offer a sacrifice for their own sins day after day, and then offer a sacrifice for the people.^m He

^a Lit. "...Melchizedek, who hasn't come according to a law of a physical command." He's referring here to the Law's requirement that one be physically descended from Levi through Aaron in order to be a priest.

^b Lit. "For it is testified that."

^c Ps. 110:4.

^d Lit. "For."

^e Lit. "And inasmuch as it was not without an oath sworn." This connects with v. 22: the significance of the oath is that it indicates that a much greater covenant is being created.

^f That is, the person addressed as "my Lord" in Ps. 110:1. Our author sees this psalm as a prophecy of Jesus Christ.

^g Lit. "through the One who said to him."

^h Ps. 110:4.

ⁱ Lit. "For such a high priest is appropriate for us."

^j Or "undefiled."

^k More literally, "...pure, being separate from sinners." The idea is that a trustworthy High Priest, who was like a Supreme Court chief justice, would refuse to have any contact with corrupt politicians and their agendas.

^l Lit. "and having become."

^m Lev. 9:7; 16:6, 15.

doesn't need to do that. Because he sacrificed for the people^a once and for all, when he offered himself. ²Because the Law appoints people as high priests who have weaknesses. But the oath, that's sworn after the giving of the Law, appoints a Son who is perfect forever.

Jesus is Our High Priest and the Mediator of a New Covenant

8 Now, to sum up what's been said: that's what kind of high priest we have. He sits at the right of the throne of the Majestic One in the heavens. ²He serves in^b the Holy Place that's the true Tent of Witness.^c The Lord set that one up, not human beings. ³Now, every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices. So it's necessary for him to have something to offer. ⁴So if he were on earth, he wouldn't be a priest. After all, there are already people offering the gifts prescribed by^d the Law. ⁵They're serving a symbol and a shadow of the heavenly things. It's just like Moses was divinely instructed, when he was about to put together the Tent.^e Because God says,

Make sure that you make everything according to the pattern that was revealed to you on the mountain.^f

⁶But now, Jesus has received a much greater ministry, since^g he's the mediator of a greater covenant. It's a covenant that's based on greater promises. ⁷After all, if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, then there would have been no point in trying to make room for a second one.^h ⁸Yet God does indeed find fault. He says to them,ⁱ

Look! Days are coming, says the Lord,
When I will make a new covenant with the family^j of Israel,
And with the people of Judah.
⁹It won't be like the covenant I made with their ancestors,
On the day when I took them by the hand
And led them out of the land of Egypt.
Because they didn't abide by my covenant,
And I stopped caring about them too, says the Lord.

^a Lit. "Because he did this."

^b Lit. "He is servant of."

^c See "Bible Words" under "Tent of Witness."

^d Lit. "according to."

^e See Exod. 25–27.

^f Exod. 25:40.

^g Lit. "to the degree that."

^h Lit. "For if that first covenant had been faultless, no place would have been being sought for a second one."

ⁱ Some mss have, "Yet God does indeed find fault with them. He says."

^j Lit. "house."

¹⁰Now, this is the covenant that I'm going to make with the family^a of Israel after that time,^b says the Lord.

I'm going to give them my laws in their minds,

And I'm going to write them on their hearts.

And I will be their God,

And they will be my people.

¹¹And not one of them will ever teach their fellow citizen, or their brother or their sister,

by saying to them, "Know the Lord,"

Because they're all going to know me,

From the weakest to the most powerful^c of them.

¹²Because I'm going to be merciful about their wrongdoings,

And I'm never going to remember their sins anymore.^d

¹³By saying, "new," it has made the first covenant "old." And what's aging, and getting old, is close to disappearing.

The Earthly and the Heavenly Holy Place

9 Now, the first covenant used to have rules for worship^e and an earthly Holy Place. ²For example, it was set up so that the first part of the Tent had the lampstand,^f and the table with^g the offering of the loaves.^h That's called "the Holy Place."³ But behind the second curtain is an inner tent called "the Holiest Place."⁴ It has a golden incense altar and the "ark of the covenant,"^j which is covered with gold all over. In it there's a gold jar that has the manna,^k Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant.¹ ⁵Over the ark, the "cherubs^m of glory"

^a Lit. "house."

^b Lit. "after those days."

^c Lit. "from the small to the great."

^d Jer. 31:31-34.

^e Lit. "service," i.e. formal religious service to God.

^f Lit. "For a tent was set up, the first one, in which was the lampstand." See Exod. 25-26; Lev. 24:1-9.

^g Lit. "and."

^h Or "the bread of the Presence." See Exod. 25:23-30; Lev. 24:5-9. There were always twelve loaves of bread on a table to represent the twelve tribes of Israel in God's presence.

ⁱ Lit. "Holy of Holies." Exod. 26:31-33. From here on, the author appears to use the term "the Holy Place" to refer to the "Holiest Place" (see Heb. 9:8, 12, 24, 25; 10:19; 13:11).

^j See "Bible Words" under "ark of the covenant."

^k See "Bible Words."

¹ See Exod. 16:33; Num. 17:8-10; Exod. 25:16; Deut. 10:3-5.

^m See "Bible Words."

overshadow the “mercy seat.”^a We can’t talk in detail right now about these things.

⁶Now, with things set up this way, the priests go into the first tent all the time as they carry out their worship duties. ⁷But somebody goes into the second tent just once a year—only the high priest. And he always brings blood, on behalf of his and the people’s unnoticed sins. ⁸The Holy Spirit is showing us something here: as long as the first tent is still in place, the way into the Holy Place hasn’t been revealed yet. ⁹This is a symbol of the present time. During this time, gifts and offerings are being presented to God, but they’re not able to clear^b the conscience of the worshipers. ¹⁰They’re only about food and drink, and various washings. They’re rules about physical things,^c rules put in place until a time of restoration comes.

Christ Offers Himself in the Heavenly Holy Place

¹¹But Christ has arrived as the high priest of the good things that have come.^d He has gone through the greater and more perfect tent—the one that’s not made by human hands. In other words, it’s not of this creation. ¹²And he hasn’t gone into the Holy Place with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, once for all. He has succeeded in purchasing people out of captivity for all time.^e ¹³After all, when people have become ceremonially unclean, the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkled ashes of a heifer, make them holy, so their flesh is clean. ¹⁴Isn’t Christ’s blood much greater than that? He offered himself spotless to God, through the eternal Spirit. Won’t his blood cleanse our^f consciences from dead behaviors, so we can serve the Living God?^g ¹⁵And that’s why he’s the mediator of a new covenant. This is how it works: he experienced death for people’s release from their offenses against the first covenant. That way, those who are called could receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. ¹⁶Because in the case of a will,^h the death of the person who made it is necessary in order to bring it into force. ¹⁷After all, a will is valid in the case of the dead—since it never has force while the person who made it is alive. ¹⁸That’s why even the first

^a See Exod. 25:18-22. A number of rituals involving forgiveness of sins and divine mercy are associated with the “mercy seat,” which is the lid of the ark of the covenant. See e.g. Lev. 16.

^b Lit. “perfect.”

^c Lit. “regulations of the flesh.”

^d Some mss have, “that are coming.”

^e Traditionally: “...once for all, having found/attained an eternal redemption” (see “Bible Words”).

^f Some mss have “your.”

^g Lit. “For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have become common make holy for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ—who offered himself spotlessly to God through the eternal Spirit—cleanse our consciences from dead works, leading to worship of the living God?”

^h Or “where there’s a covenant.” In Greek, the same word means both “covenant” and “will.”

covenant is established with blood.^a ¹⁹Because when Moses had read aloud every commandment in the whole Law,^b he took the blood of calves,^c together with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop.^d And he sprinkled both the scroll and all the people. ²⁰He was saying,

This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.^e

²¹And he also sprinkled the Tent, and all the worship equipment in it, with blood. ²²And nearly everything is cleansed with blood according to the Law. And without blood being shed, there's no forgiveness.

²³So it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be cleansed by these rituals. But the heavenly things themselves had to be cleansed with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴Because Christ didn't go into the Holy Place made by human hands—into a copy of the real thing. No, he went into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵And it's not so he can offer himself lots of times—like the high priest, who goes into the Holy Place every year with blood that's not his own. ²⁶(In that case, Christ would have had to suffer lots of times since the creation^f of the world.) But now he has appeared once, at the wrapping up of the ages. He has appeared for the purpose of abolishing sin through his sacrifice of himself. ²⁷It's the destiny of human beings to die once, and after that comes judgment. ²⁸And it's the same with Christ. He has offered himself once for all, to bear the sin of many people; the second time around, he's not going to appear to deal with sin. He's going to appear for the salvation of those who are looking forward to his coming.

Christ's Self-Offering Takes Away Our Sins Once and for All

10 Now, the Law has a shadow of the good things that are coming. But it isn't the form of those things itself. Year by year, with the same sacrifices all the time, it^g can never perfect the people who offer them. ²After all, wouldn't sacrifices have stopped being offered in that case? Because the worshipers wouldn't be conscious of sins anymore. They'd have been cleansed once for all. ³But it's just the opposite—there's a yearly reminder of sins in the sacrifices! ⁴Because the blood of bulls and goats can't take away sins! ⁵So when Christ comes into the world, he says,

^a Lit. "Hence not even the first covenant has been established without blood."

^b Lit. "For, every commandment in the whole Law having been spoken by Moses."

^c Some mss add, "and goats" (see 9:12).

^d Lev. 14:4, 6, 49, 51; Num. 19:6, 18. See "Bible Words."

^e Exod. 24:8.

^f Lit. "foundation."

^g Some mss have "they," referring to the sacrifices. More likely it's talking about the Law.

You haven't wanted a sacrifice or an offering,
 But you crafted a body for me.
 6You don't value whole burnt offerings and sin offerings.
 7Then I said, See, I'm coming!
 It's written about me in the scroll.^a
 I'm coming, God, to do your will.^b

8Now, he says above,

You don't value sacrifice or offering or whole burnt offerings or sin offerings, and you don't want them.^c

(Yet those things are offered in line with the Law!) 9But then he says,^d

See, I'm coming to do your will.^e

He takes away the first so he can set up the second. 10It's by this will that we've been made holy, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

11Now, every priest stands there every day serving in the Temple, and offering the same sacrifices time after time. Those sacrifices can never take away sins. 12But Jesus offered one sacrifice for all time, and "sat down at God's right side."^f 13From that point on, he's been waiting "until his enemies are made^g a footstool for his feet."^h 14Because through one offering, he's perfected those who are being made holy, for all time. 15And the Holy Spirit testifies to us about this too. Because firstⁱ the Spirit says,

16"This is the covenant I'm going to make with them after that time," says the Lord. "I'm going to give them my laws on their hearts, and I'm going to write them on their minds."^j

17And then the Spirit says,

I'm never going to remember their sins and their rebellions again.^k

^a Lit. "in the roll of the scroll."

^b Ps. 40:6-8.

^c Ps. 40:6. The author has rearranged the words of the Psalm.

^d Lit. "said."

^e Ps. 40:7-8.

^f Lit. "hand." Ps. 110:1.

^g Lit. "placed."

^h Ps. 110:1.

ⁱ Lit. "after."

^j Jer. 31:33.

^k Jer. 31:34.

¹⁸So^a where there's forgiveness of these things, there isn't any offering for sins anymore.

Stay Strong Together in the Face of Persecution

¹⁹So, brothers and sisters, we have confidence^b to go into the Holy Place, thanks to the blood^c of Jesus. ²⁰He has opened this new and living way for us through the curtain—in other words, his flesh.^d ²¹And since there's a great priest over God's house, ²²let's come to God^e with true hearts, in the full confidence of our faith. Our hearts should be sprinkled clean from a bad conscience, and our bodies washed in clean water. ²³We should hold fast to the public profession of our hope—because the One who has promised us is faithful. ²⁴And let's be thinking about how we can stir each other up into love and into doing good things.^f ²⁵Let's not stop meeting with each other, as some have.^g Just the opposite—let's encourage each other all the more as you see the Day^h getting near.

²⁶Because if we sin deliberately after we've received the knowledge of the truth, there's no sacrifice for sins left anymore. ²⁷There's only the terrible expectation of judgment, and a furious fire that's going to burn up the enemies.ⁱ ²⁸If somebody defies the Law of Moses, they die without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹But suppose there's somebody who tramples on the Son of God. Suppose they treat as unclean the blood of the covenant—the blood that made them holy. Suppose they insult the Spirit of grace. How much worse punishment do you think such a person will deserve? ³⁰After all, we know the One who said,

Revenge is for me alone.
I will pay people back.^j

And again:

The Lord is going to judge his people.^k

³¹It's a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.

^a Lit. "And."

^b Or "boldness."

^c Lit. "in/by the blood."

^d He's saying that Christ's body offered on the cross is the curtain, the access portal, to God's full presence.

^e Lit. "come forward." This is standard language for approaching God to worship or offer a sacrifice.

^f Lit. "And let's be thinking about each other for the purpose of stirring up love and good deeds."

^g Lit. "as is the custom of some." Going to meetings in a time of persecution heightened the risk of exposure as a Christian.

^h That is, the day of Christ's return as their savior (Heb. 9:28).

ⁱ Lit. "consume the hostile ones." See Isa. 26:11.

^j Deut. 32:35.

^k Traditionally: "The Lord will judge his people." Deut. 32:36; Ps. 135:14.

³²But remember the early days.^a In those days, when you'd just been enlightened, you held out through^b a hard struggle with sufferings. ³³Sometimes you were publicly humiliated with insults and persecutions; at other times, you stood^c with people who were being treated in those ways. ³⁴Because you suffered along with those who were in prison. And when your possessions were^d taken away by force, you faced it with joy. You knew that you have possessions that are better and more lasting. ³⁵So don't throw away your boldness—there's a great reward for it. ³⁶What you really need is endurance, so you can do God's will and then get what's been promised. ³⁷After all,

In just a very short while,
 The One who's coming will come, and will not wait.
³⁸And my innocent ones will live by their faith.
 But^e if they shrink back, I won't be pleased with them.^f

³⁹But we're not about shrinking back towards destruction—no! We're about faith, that leads to our lives being saved.^g

The Meaning of Faith

11 Faith is the assurance^h of our hopes. It's the proofⁱ of things we can't see.^j ²Faith is what the ancients were commended for.^k ³By faith we know that the universe was^l crafted by the word of God, so that what we see^m hasn't come from things that are visible.

Heroes of Faith

⁴By faith Abel^a brought God a better offering than Cain did.^b Through faith Abel received God's testimony that he was in the right:^c God testified about his offerings. Through faith, though he's dead, he still speaks.

^a Lit. "the former days."

^b Lit. "you endured." But the word has an active sense, not simply a passive one.

^c Or "you stood in solidarity"; lit. "you became partners."

^d Or "your property was." People's houses and land could well have been confiscated.

^e Lit. "And."

^f Traditionally: "And my righteous one will live on the basis of [his] faith; and if he shrinks back, my soul is not pleased with him" (Hab. 2:3-4 LXX).

^g Lit. "faith, leading to the preservation of life/soul."

^h Or "substance," or "reality."

ⁱ Or "the certainty."

^j Lit. "of matters unseen."

^k Verse 2 logically belongs with the stories that begin in v. 4 below. In the recognized, ancient formal argument style that the author of Hebrews uses, it is standard practice to make a statement that gives a preview of your new section before you wrap up the current section.

^l Or "the ages were."

^m Lit. "the seen."

5By faith Enoch^d was taken up, so that he wouldn't face death.^e And "he was nowhere to be found,^f because God had taken him up."^g And^h before he was taken up,ⁱ it was testified that "he was pleasing to God." 6And without faith, it's impossible to please God. Because the person that comes to him has to believe that he exists, and that he rewards^j those who seek him out.

7By faith Noah was prophetically warned about things that weren't visible yet.^k He respected God and built an ark,^l which would save his family.^m Through faith he condemned the world, and he became an heir to the integrityⁿ that comes from faith.

8By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called, and set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance.^o And he set out without knowing where he was going. 9By faith he moved to the promised land, even though it was a foreign place.^p He lived in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were co-heirs of the same promise. 10He did it because he was looking forward to the city with real foundations. That city's architect and designer is God. 11By faith Sarah too, although she was infertile,^q received the power to give birth—and beyond what was possible for her age!^r She could do it because she regarded the One who had promised it to be faithful. 12So from just one man—and practically a dead one at that—were born descendants

As numerous as the stars of heaven,
And as countless as the sands of the seashore.^s

^a Prn. like the word "able."

^b See Gen. 4:3-10.

^c Or "that he was a person of integrity"; traditionally: "that he was righteous."

^d Prn. *ee-nock*.

^e Lit. "see death," that is, experience his own death.

^f Lit. "he was not found."

^g Gen. 5:24; see also Sir. 44:16; Wis. 4:10.

^h Lit. "For."

ⁱ Lit. "before the taking."

^j Lit. "becomes a rewarder of."

^k See Gen. 6:9-8:22.

^l See "Bible Words."

^m Lit. "an ark for the salvation of his household."

ⁿ Or "innocent verdict"; traditionally: "righteousness."

^o Gen. 12:1-5; see Acts 7:2-4.

^p Gen. 23:4; 26:3; 35:12, 27.

^q That is, she couldn't have children.

^r There is uncertainty in the mss tradition around this verse. It's very possible that it originally had Abraham being given the power of fathering children.

^s Gen. 15:5-6; 22:17; 32:12.

¹³All of these people died in faith, without getting the promises. However, they saw them from far away, and welcomed them. And they admitted that they were strangers and visitors on the earth. ¹⁴After all, people who talk like that are obviously searching for a home country. ¹⁵And if they were remembering the place they had come from as their home country, they had time^a to go back. ¹⁶But now they were yearning for something better—in other words, what’s in heaven. That’s why God isn’t ashamed of them, and is willing to be called their God. Because he has built^b them a city.

¹⁷By faith Abraham offered up Isaac when he was tested. This man, who had accepted the promise, offered up his only child. ¹⁸It was to Abraham that it was said, “Your descendants are going to be counted through Isaac.”^c ¹⁹He figured that God could even raise the dead! And so he did symbolically get Isaac back from death.

²⁰By faith Isaac also blessed Jacob and Esau,^d as to their future.^e

²¹By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of Joseph’s sons. And “he prayed^f as he leaned on the top of his walking staff.”^g

²²By faith Joseph, when he was dying, spoke about the time when the Israelites would leave Egypt.^h And he gave them instructions about what to do with his bones.ⁱ

²³By faith, when Moses was born, he was hidden by his parents for three months. They’d seen his beauty, and they weren’t afraid of the king’s order.^j

²⁴By faith Moses, when he grew up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s^k daughter.^l ²⁵He chose to be treated badly along with God’s people, rather than to have the temporary pleasure of sin. ²⁶He regarded disgrace with Christ^m as greater

^a Or “they would have had opportunity.”

^b Lit. “prepared.”

^c Gen. 21:12.

^d Prn. *ee-saw*.

^e Lit. “about things to come.”

^f Lit. “worshiped.”

^g Gen. 48:15-16; 47:31.

^h Lit. “called to mind the exodus of the children of Israel.” At that time, the exodus was something like 400 years in the future.

ⁱ Gen. 50:24-25; Exod. 13:19.

^j Exod. 1:22; 2:2.

^k Prn. *fehr-ohz*. Pharaoh was the king of Egypt.

^l Exod. 2:10-12.

^m Lit. “the disgrace of Christ,” which Moses himself faced when he renounced this-worldly power and status and chose to identify with the oppressed. See also Heb. 13:13.

riches than the treasures of Egypt. Because he was looking forward to his reward.
 27By faith he left Egypt without being afraid of the king's anger, because he stayed focused on the One who can't be seen.^a 28By faith he celebrated^b the Passover.^c And he had people spread blood on their doorposts so that the destroyer of the firstborn wouldn't touch them.^d 29By faith they walked across the Red Sea as if on dry land. And when the Egyptians tried it, they were drowned.^e

30By faith the walls of Jericho^f fell down, when the Israelites had walked around^g them for seven days.

31By faith Rahab^h the prostitute welcomed the Israelite spies with friendship, and she didn't dieⁱ along with those who were disobedient.

32And what else should I say?^j My time will run out if I tell about Gideon,^k Barak,^l Samson, Jephthah,^m and David—not to mentionⁿ Samuel and all the prophets. 33Through faith they conquered kingdoms, they did justice-making, they got things that were promised. They shut the mouths of lions, 34they couldn't be burned by fire,^o they escaped the edge of the sword. They were empowered from a position of weakness, they became strong in battle, they toppled^p foreign armies. 35Women got their dead back by resurrection. Others were tortured, and refused to be set free, so they would gain a better resurrection. 36And others faced ridicule, faced beatings with whips, and even faced chains and imprisonment. 37They were stoned, tortured,^q sawn in two. They died at the edge of the sword.^r They wandered around in sheepskins and goatskins—destitute, persecuted, mistreated. 38Here were people the world wasn't worthy of, wandering around deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.

^a Or "because he endured as if he saw the One who can't be seen."

^b Or "instituted."

^c See "Bible Words."

^d Lit. "By faith he made/has made the Passover and the smearing of blood, so that the firstborn-destroyer wouldn't touch them." Exod. 12:21-30.

^e Lit. "swallowed up" (by the water). Exod. 14:21-31.

^f Prn. *jerr-a-koe*.

^g Lit. "when encircled." Josh. 6:12-21.

^h Prn. *ray-hab*.

ⁱ Lit. "perish."

^j Or "Why should I say more?"

^k Prn. *gidd-ee-an*.

^l Prn. *ba-rack*.

^m Prn. *jeff-tha*.

ⁿ Lit. "and even."

^o Lit. "they quenched the power of fire."

^p Or "overthrew."

^q One of the earliest mss leaves out this word, which can also mean "tested."

^r Lit. "They died by the murder of the sword."

³⁹And these people all received God's commendation through their faith, yet they didn't get what was promised. ⁴⁰Because God foresaw something better about us. They were not going to be brought to perfection apart from us.

Run the Race with Endurance

12 And as for us, we have this large cloud of witnesses around us. So let's get rid of everything that slows us down,^a and the sin that so easily tangles us up. And let's run the race in front of us with endurance. ²Let's keep our eyes on Jesus, who's the champion^b and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay ahead of him, he endured the cross. He gave no notice to the shame of it, and has sat down on the right side of God's throne. ³Just think about him—how he has endured such hostility from sinners against himself.^c That way, you won't get tired and give up in your spirits.^d ⁴So far, you haven't resisted sin to the point of shedding your blood. ⁵And you've forgotten the encouragement that's spoken to you as sons and daughters:

My child,^e don't despise the discipline of the Lord,
And don't give up when you're corrected by God.^f
⁶Because the Lord disciplines those who are loved,^g
And punishes all those who are accepted as children.^h

⁷Endure what you're going through as discipline: God is dealing with you as sons and daughters. And what child doesn't get disciplined by their father? ⁸And if you're above the discipline that everybody takes part in, then you're illegitimate children, and not sons and daughters. ⁹And we had physical fathers to discipline us, and we respected them. So shouldn't we submit ourselves all the more to the Father of our spirits, and live? ¹⁰After all, they disciplined us for a while,ⁱ however it seemed right to them. But God disciplines us for our own good, so that we'll share^j in his holiness. ¹¹Now, for the moment all discipline seems painful, not joyful. But later, for people who've been trained by it, it bears the peaceful fruit of integrity.^k ¹²So

^a Or "every encumbrance." More literally, it's "everything bulky."

^b Or "pioneer," or "author."

^c Some early mss have "from people sinning against themselves," which is surprising, but could be what the author actually wrote.

^d Lit. "souls."

^e Lit. "son."

^f Lit. "him."

^g Lit. "those he loves."

^h Lit. "and whips every son whom he receives." Prov. 3:11-12.

ⁱ Lit. "a few days."

^j Lit. "for the sharing."

^k Or "right living"; traditionally: "righteousness."

Straighten up your droopy arms and weak knees,
 13And make straight paths for your feet.^a

That way, what's lame won't get injured,^b but will get healed instead.

A Warning Not to Turn Away from God

14Strive for peace with everybody, and for holiness. Without holiness, nobody is going to see the Lord. 15See to it that nobody comes short of the grace of God—that no poisonous^c root grows up and causes trouble, so lots of people get corrupted by it.^d 16Nobody should be sexually immoral, or godless like Esau.^e He sold his birthright for a single meal.^f 17And you know that afterwards he wanted to inherit the blessing, but was rejected: he didn't find any way to reverse his decision,^g even though he looked for one in tears.

18After all, you haven't come to a place that can be physically touched, to a mountain burning with fire, to gloom and darkness and storm, 19and to the sound of a trumpet and a voice speaking. When people heard that voice, they begged not to hear another word.^h 20Because they couldn't bear the commandment, "If even an animal touches the mountain, it has to be stoned."ⁱ 21And the spectacle was so frightening that Moses said, "I'm terrified and shaking."^j

22No, you've come to Mount Zion, to the City of the Living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem. And you've come to tens of thousands of angels gathered for the festival.^k 23You've come to the assembly of the firstborn,^l whose names are recorded in heaven. You've come to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of people of integrity^m who've been made perfect. 24And you've come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more powerfullyⁿ than the blood of Abel.

^a Isa. 35:3.

^b Lit. "put out of joint," or "sprained." A weak ankle or knee, for example, is vulnerable to getting "popped."

^c Lit. "bitter."

^d Or "—that no root of bitterness grows up and causes trouble, and through it many are polluted." Deut. 29:17.

^e Prn. *ee-saw*.

^f Gen. 25:33-34; 27:30-49.

^g Or, less likely, "any room for a change of heart"; traditionally: "any place for repentance."

^h Lit. "...trumpet and a sound of words, about which the hearers begged not to have another word added to them." See Exod. 19:16-22; 20:18-21; Deut. 4:11-12; 5:22-27.

ⁱ That is, killed by having stones thrown at it. Exod. 19:12-13.

^j Deut. 9:19.

^k Lit. "angels in festal assembly."

^l By this I suspect he means the angels who have helped administrate the development of life on this planet. See Job 38:4-7, which calls them "the sons of God"; see Deut. 33:2-3; Dan. 7:10.

^m Traditionally: "the righteous."

ⁿ Lit. "speaks better."

²⁵Make sure you don't ignore^a the One who is speaking.^b After all, those others^c didn't get away with it when they ignored^d the One who warned them on earth. So how much less will we get away with it, if we're turning away from the One who is warning us from heaven? ²⁶That time, God's voice shook the earth, but now he has given this promise:

I'm going to shake things one more time, and it won't just be the earth, but heaven too.^e

²⁷And when it says, "one more time," it's clearly about the removal of the things that are shaken—which are created things.^f That way, what remains will be what can't be shaken. ²⁸So since we're receiving a royal realm that can't be shaken, let's be grateful. Let's serve God with appropriate gratitude, reverence, and awe. ²⁹Because "our God is a consuming fire."^g

Final Challenges and Encouragements

13 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. ²Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers. After all, some people have taken in angels as guests without knowing it.^h ³Remember people who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them. And remember people who are being badly treated as though you were physically being treated the same way.ⁱ ⁴Marriage should be honored by everyone, and sex^j should be pure. Because God is going to judge people who are sexually immoral and people who are unfaithful to their spouses.^k ⁵Your lifestyle should be free from love of money. Be content with what you have. Because God has said,

I'm never going to desert you;
I'm never going to leave you.^l

⁶So we can be confident and say,

The Lord is my helper, and I'm not going to be afraid.
What can human beings do to me?^a

^a Lit. "decline" or, more colloquially, "shine on."

^b See v. 19 and the nt. there.

^c Lit. "speaking, for if they." Verse 25 is one long sentence in Greek.

^d Lit. "declined."

^e Hag. 2:6.

^f Lit. "the removal of the things that are shaken, as of things made."

^g Deut. 4:24; Isa. 33:14.

^h See Gen. 18:1-8; 19:1-3.

ⁱ Lit. "as though being the same in the body."

^j Lit. "the bed."

^k Lit. "adulterers." See "Bible Words" under "adultery."

^l Deut. 31:6.

7Remember your leaders, who have spoken God’s word to you. Look closely at the outcome of their lifestyle, and imitate their faith.

8Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. 9Don’t get carried away with all kinds of strange teachings. Because it’s good to strengthen your heart with grace—not special religious diets.^b They’ve been no use to people who’ve followed them. 10Those who serve in the Tent^c don’t have the authority to eat from the altar that we have. 11After all, the high priest brings the blood for the sin offerings into the Holy Place, and the bodies of the animals whose blood it is are burned outside the camp.^d 12And that’s why Jesus suffered outside the city gate: so that he could make the people holy by his own blood. 13So let’s go to him outside the camp! Let’s bear the scorn that he was subjected to.^e 14After all, we don’t have a lasting city here—we’re looking for the one that’s coming. 15So let’s continuously offer sacrifices of praise to God through Christ. That is, let’s offer up lips^f that publicly profess his name.^g 16And let’s not neglect doing good and sharing: God is pleased with those kinds of sacrifices.

17Obey your leaders and listen to them: they’re watching over your souls, as people who are accountable to God. That way, they’ll be able to do this ministry with joy, and not exasperation—which wouldn’t do you any good.

18Pray for us. We’re confident that we have a good conscience, and in every situation, we want to conduct ourselves well.^h 19And I’m asking you to prayⁱ all the more, so that I will be given back to you as soon as possible.^j

Final Blessing and Greetings

20-21Now may the God of peace outfit you with all goodness to do his will. God is the One who brought back the Great Shepherd of the sheep from among the dead by the blood of the eternal covenant: our Lord Jesus. May he do in us what is

^a Ps. 118:6.

^b Lit. “not foods.”

^c He’s referring metaphorically to the priests and Levites serving in the Jerusalem Temple without faith in Christ.

^d Lev. 16:27. The author is making an analogy between the place “outside the camp” in the wilderness and outside the city gates of Jerusalem, where Jesus was hung on a cross.

^e Or “...outside the camp, bearing his disgrace.”

^f Lit. “...that is, the fruit of lips.”

^g Or “Christ’s name.” See Hos. 14:2; Ps. 50:23.

^h Or “honorably.”

ⁱ Lit. “to do this.”

^j Lit. “I’ll be restored to you the sooner.”

pleasing in his eyes, through Jesus Christ. May God get the glory forever and ever.^a Amen.^b

²²Brothers and sisters, please accept this word^c of encouragement, because I've written you just a few things.^d

²³You know that our brother Timothy has been set free—if he comes soon, I'll come see you with him. ²⁴Say hello to all your leaders and all the holy ones. The people from Italy say hello to you. ²⁵May grace be with you all.

^a Some important mss lack the words “and ever.”

^b Verses 20-21 are one long sentence; I've simplified the structure.

^c Lit. “I ask you please to bear with this word.”

^d Lit. “for in fact I've written you briefly.”