

Hebrews

Introduction

This letter of Hebrews describes several contrasts and comparisons in the Bible. But the main one is between **Jesus** as the Son of God, Messiah, and high priest of the Jewish people through the **New Covenant** and **Moses** as the servant of God and leader of the Jewish people through the **Mosaic Covenant**. Paul, whom I believe to be the author of this letter, is exhorting his Jewish, Christian readers to maintain their belief in Jesus and not to return to believing in only Moses, which is what their fellow unbelieving Jews, who are persecuting them, are pressuring them to do.

Ultimately, of course, the matter boils down to the truth, which God has communicated to the Jewish people, and the necessity of holding on to this truth with persevering belief and obedience to God, so that the person of truth will eventually enjoy the eternal fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham, the founding patriarch of the Jews. As a result, another important contrast and comparison in the letter is between **sinful people of authentic belief** and **sinful people of unbelief**, because their eternal destinies are radically different.

In addition, there will be places in my translation that obviously are not the way we normally speak or write in English. But I am attempting to stay true to Paul's wording and the order in which he presents his ideas. Thus, my translation fits better in the additional document which I have created with the English in the left column and the Greek text in the right column.

The Letter

- 1:1 In many portions and in many ways,
after God spoke (λαλήσας) long ago to the fathers by means of the prophets,¹
1:2 in the last of these days,²
He has spoken (ἐλάλησεν) to us by means of the Son,³
whom (ὃν) He appointed (ἔθηκεν) heir of all things,⁴
in view of whom (δι' οὗ) He also made the ages (καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας),⁵
1:3 who (ὃς),
being (ὢν)
the radiance of His glory⁶
and
the reproduction of His identity⁷
and likewise bearing (φέρων τε) all things with respect to His word of power,⁸
after he himself made (ποιησάμενος) cleansing of sins,⁹
sat down (ἐκάθισεν) at the right hand of the Great One in the heights,¹⁰
1:4 having become (γενόμενος) so much greater than the *angeloi*,¹¹
inasmuch as (ὅσῳ) he has inherited (κεκληρονόμηκεν) a more excellent name than
they.¹²
- 1:5 Because to which of the *angeloi* did He ever say (εἶπέν),

You are My Son; today I have given birth to you <Psalm 2:7>.¹³

and again,

I will be as a Father to him, and he will be as a Son to Me <2 Samuel 7:14>?¹⁴
- 1:6 And whenever He again brings the firstborn into the inhabited world,¹⁵ it says (λέγει),

Indeed, let all the *angeloi* of God bow down before him <Psalm 97:7; Deut. 32:43 (LXX)>.¹⁶
- 1:7 Thus, on the one hand, it says (λέγει) regarding the *angeloi*,

He makes the winds His *angeloi* and flaming fire His ministers <Psalm 104:4>.¹⁷
- 1:8 and, on the other hand, regarding the Son,¹⁸

Your throne, O God,¹⁹ is into the age of the age,²⁰ and the scepter of uprightness is the
scepter of your kingdom;²¹
1:9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;
Because of this, God, your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your
companions <Psalm 45:6-7>.²²
- 1:10 In addition,²³

You, Yahweh, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the
accomplishments of Your hands;²⁴
1:11 They will perish, but You remain;
And all of them will grow old like a garment;²⁵
1:12 And like a mantle You will roll them up;
Like a garment they will also be changed.
But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end <Psalm 102:25-27>.²⁶
- 1:13 Now, to which of the *angeloi* has He ever said (εἶρηκέν),

Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet <Psalm 110:1>?²⁷

1:14 Are they all not ministering winds that were sent to serve on account of the coming ones to inherit salvation?²⁸

2:1 Therefore,²⁹ it is necessary that we pay much closer attention to the things that we heard,³⁰ lest we drift away.³¹ 2:2 For, if the message that was spoken (λαληθεῖς) through *angeloi*³² became established and every transgression and act of disobedience received a justifiable response of deserved justice.³³ 2:3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation,³⁴ which, after it acquired a beginning to be spoken (λαλεῖσθαι) through the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard (ὑπὸ τῶν ἀκουσάντων),³⁵ 2:4 as God likewise bore witness with them (συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος) by means of signs and wonders and various displays of power and distributions of the Holy Spirit according to His desire?³⁶

2:5 For He did not subject to *angeloi* the future inhabited world (τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν) that we are discussing (λαλοῦμεν).³⁷ 2:6 But someone has solemnly declared (διεμαρτύρατο) somewhere, saying (λέγων),³⁸

What is man that You remember him,
Or the Son of Man that You care for him?³⁹
2:7 You have caused him to be a little lower in status than the *angeloi*;⁴⁰
You have crowned him with glory and honor;
And You have appointed him over the works of Your hands.⁴¹
2:8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet <Psalm 8:4-6>.⁴²

Now, in subjecting all things to him, He has not left one thing that is not subject to him.⁴³
However, now, we do not yet see all things as being subject to him.⁴⁴

2:9 Yet, we do “see” the one who has been caused to be little lower in status than the *angeloi*, Jesus,⁴⁵ after having been crowned with glory and honor on account of the suffering of death,⁴⁶ in order that, with respect to the grace of God, he would taste death on behalf of everyone.⁴⁷

2:10 For it was appropriate for Him, on account of whom everything exists and in light of whom everything exists, while leading many sons to glory,⁴⁸ to cause the leader of their salvation to reach his goal (τελειῶσαι) through sufferings.⁴⁹ 2:11 For, likewise, the one who sets people apart and the people who are set apart are all from one,⁵⁰ for which reason he is not reluctant to call them brothers,⁵¹ 2:12 because it says (λέγων),

I shall proclaim Your name to my brothers;⁵²
In the midst of the assembly, I shall sing Your praises <Psalm 22:22>.⁵³

2:13 And furthermore,

I shall trust in Him <Isaiah 8:17>.⁵⁴

along with,

Behold, I and the children whom God has given me <Isaiah 8:18>.⁵⁵

2:14 Therefore, because the children⁵⁶ have shared in blood and flesh,⁵⁷ even he, likewise, participated in the same,⁵⁸ in order that, through death, he could nullify the one who has the power of death, that is, the adversary,⁵⁹ 2:15 and he could free these ones,⁶⁰ as many as were constrained by their slavery to the fear of death throughout their whole lives.⁶¹ 2:16 For, of course, he does not provide help to *angeloi*, but he provides help to the seed of Abraham.⁶² 2:17 Therefore, he was obligated, according to all that he does, to be like his brothers,⁶³ in order that he become a merciful and faithful high priest with respect to the things pertaining to God, to make

propitiation for the sins of the people.⁶⁴ 2:18 For, having himself been tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.⁶⁵

3:1 Therefore, brothers who have been set apart,⁶⁶ partakers of the heavenly calling,⁶⁷ think carefully about the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus,⁶⁸ 3:2 who was faithful to Him who created him⁶⁹ just as Moses also was in His whole household.⁷⁰ 3:3 For this one is considered more worthy of glory than Moses by just so much as the one who provides for the household has more honor than it.⁷¹ 3:4 For the whole household is provided for by someone, and God is the One who provides everything.⁷²

3:5 Indeed, on the one hand, Moses was faithful in His whole household as a servant to bear witness to the things that were to be spoken in the future <Numbers 12:7>.⁷³ 3:6 On the other hand, the Messiah was faithful as the Son over His household,⁷⁴ whose household we are, if we hold on to the bold confidence and the boast of hope firm until the goal.⁷⁵

3:7 Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says (λέγει),⁷⁶

Today, if you hear His voice,⁷⁷

3:8 do not harden your hearts, as at the place of strife [Meribah, מֵרִיבָה],

As in the day of the test [Massah, מַסָּה] in the wilderness,

3:9 where your fathers tested Me.⁷⁸

They demanded clear evidence of Me, even though they had seen My works.⁷⁹

3:10 For forty years,⁸⁰ therefore, I felt disgust for this generation,

And said, they always get it wrong because of their hearts,⁸¹

And they do not know My ways.⁸²

3:11 As I swore in My anger,

Certainly, they shall not enter My resting place <Psalm 95:7-11>.⁸³

3:12 Watch out, brothers, lest there be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief in withdrawing from the living God.⁸⁴ 3:13 Instead, encourage one another each day, as long as it is called "Today,"⁸⁵ in order that no one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.⁸⁶ 3:14 For we have become partners with the Messiah,⁸⁷ if, indeed, we hold on to the reliable beginning of our title deed until the goal (μέχρι τέλους),⁸⁸ 3:15 in line with its being said (λέγεσθαι),

Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts

as at the place of strife [Meribah, מֵרִיבָה] <Psalm 95:7-8>.⁸⁹

3:16 For who rebelled *after* they had heard? Was it not all those who went out of Egypt through Moses?⁹⁰ 3:17 And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who committed sin, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?⁹¹ 3:18 And to whom did He swear (ῥωσεν) that they would not enter His resting place but those who disobeyed?⁹² 3:19 Indeed, we see that they were not able to enter on account of unbelief.⁹³

4:1 Therefore, let us fear, lest, while the promise to enter His resting place remains, any one of you seems to fail to reach it.⁹⁴

4:2 For, indeed, we have had good news proclaimed (ἔσμεν εὐηγγελισμένοι) to us just as even those ones did, but the message they heard did not benefit those ones, because it had not been united with belief in the ones who heard.⁹⁵ 4:3 For, we, who believe, are in the process of entering the resting place,⁹⁶ similarly to how He said (εἶρηκεν),

As I swore (ῥωσσα) in My anger,

Certainly, they shall not enter My resting place <Psalm 95:11>.⁹⁷

even though His works are brought about from the foundation of the world.⁹⁸ 4:4 For it has said thus somewhere concerning the seventh day,⁹⁹

Indeed, on the seventh day God rested from all His works <Genesis 2:2>.¹⁰⁰

4:5 And, again, in this passage we have,

Certainly, they shall not enter My resting place <Psalm 95:11>.¹⁰¹

4:6 Therefore, because it remains for some to enter it, and the ones who formerly had good news proclaimed to them did not enter on account of disobedience,¹⁰² 4:7 again He fixes a certain day "Today" by speaking through David after so much time, just as it has been quoted above,

Today, if you hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts <Psalm 95:7-8>.¹⁰³

4:8 For if Joshua had brought them to a place of rest, then He would not have spoken of another day after these things.¹⁰⁴

4:9 Therefore, a Shabbat rest remains for the people of God.¹⁰⁵ 4:10 For the one who enters His resting place, he himself also rests from his works, just as God did from His own.¹⁰⁶ 4:11 Therefore, let us be diligent to enter that resting place,¹⁰⁷ so that no one fall because of the same pattern of disobedience.¹⁰⁸

4:12 For the message of God is living, active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, while also penetrating to the division of existence and spirit,¹⁰⁹ of both bone casings and bone marrow,¹¹⁰ and is capable of discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.¹¹¹ 4:13 Plus, there is no aspect of the creation that is hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and have been laid bare before His eyes,¹¹² before whom the matter exists for us.¹¹³

4:14 Therefore, because we have a great high priest, who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession.¹¹⁴ 4:15 Certainly, we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but he has been tested in all things similarly without sin.¹¹⁵ 4:16 As a result, let us approach with bold confidence to the throne of grace, in order that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.¹¹⁶

5:1 For every high priest,¹¹⁷ after he is taken from men,¹¹⁸ is put in charge of things pertaining to God on behalf of men, in order that he may offer up both gifts and tokens of loyalty on behalf of sins,¹¹⁹ 5:2 while he is able to deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, because he himself is plagued by weakness.¹²⁰ 5:3 Indeed, because of this, he is obligated, just as for the people, so also for himself, to offer up something on behalf of sins.¹²¹

5:4 In addition, no one takes the honor for himself, but after being called by God, just as indeed Aaron.¹²² 5:5 Thus, also, the Messiah did not glorify himself in order to become a high priest, but the One who said to him,

You are My Son. Today I have given birth to you <Psalm 2:7>,¹²³

5:6 likewise, also says in a different passage,

You are a priest into the age according to the order of Melchizedek <Psalm 110:4>,¹²⁴

5:7 who, in the days of his flesh, having made offerings (προσενέγκας) of both prayers and requests with loud cries and tears to the One who was able to save him from death, and having been heard because of his reverence,¹²⁵ 5:8 although he was the Son, learned obedience from the things which he suffered.¹²⁶ 5:9 And, having been brought to the end of his goal (τελειωθείς),¹²⁷ he

became the ground of eternal salvation to all those who obey him,¹²⁸ 5:10 having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek,¹²⁹ 5:11 concerning whom the message is great for us and yet hard to explain, because you have become slow to respond to things that you hear.¹³⁰

5:12 For, indeed, while by now you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the basics of the beginning of the sayings of God, and you have come to need milk instead of solid food.¹³¹ 5:13 For everyone who partakes of milk is unskilled with respect to the message of justification, because he is an infant.¹³² 5:14 In contrast, solid food is for those who are well on their way to their goal (τελείων), the ones who, on account of skillful practice, have the mental faculties that have been trained to make the distinction between good and likewise evil.¹³³

6:1 Therefore, leaving behind the beginning of the message of the Messiah,¹³⁴ let us move ourselves along to being well on our way to our goal (ἐπὶ τὴν τελειότητα),¹³⁵ not laying again for ourselves a foundation of repentance for actions that deserve death and of belief in God,¹³⁶ 6:2 of instruction concerning ritual cleansings,¹³⁷ the laying on of hands,¹³⁸ the resurrection of the dead, and likewise eternal judgment.¹³⁹

6:3 Indeed, we shall do this, if only God permits.¹⁴⁰ 6:4 For it is impossible for those who have once been enlightened,¹⁴¹ such that they have tasted of the gift of heaven,¹⁴² and have become partners with the Holy Spirit,¹⁴³ 6:5 and have tasted of the good message of God, specifically the powerful effects of it with respect to the coming age,¹⁴⁴ 6:6 and have fallen away,¹⁴⁵ to renew them again to repentance,¹⁴⁶ in so far as they crucify again for themselves the Son of God and disgrace him publicly.¹⁴⁷

6:7 For ground that drinks the rain that often comes upon it and brings forth plants that are fitting for those on account of whom it was indeed cultivated receives praise from God.¹⁴⁸ 6:8 But ground that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and near being cursed, whose end (τὸ τέλος) is burning.¹⁴⁹

6:9 However, we are convinced concerning you, beloved, of better things and things that do indeed involve salvation, even though we are speaking like this.¹⁵⁰ 6:10 Certainly, God is not unjust to forget your work and the love, which you have demonstrated towards His name, when you served and are serving the ones who are set apart.¹⁵¹ 6:11 Still, we desire each one of you to demonstrate the same diligence for the purpose of the full certainty of hope,¹⁵² until you reach your goal (ἄχρι τέλους),¹⁵³ 6:12 in order that you may not be lethargic.¹⁵⁴

Therefore, be imitators of those who, through belief and patience, inherit the promises.¹⁵⁵ 6:13 For, when God made the promise to Abraham, because He had no one greater by whom to swear, He swore by Himself,¹⁵⁶ 6:14 saying,

Surely, I will bless you and multiply you <Genesis 22:17>.¹⁵⁷

6:15 Indeed, in this way, because he was patient, he obtains the promise.¹⁵⁸

6:16 For men swear by someone greater, and among them an oath is the conclusion of every dispute for the purpose of guaranteeing the point,¹⁵⁹ 6:17 by means of which, because God desired even more to demonstrate to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, He guaranteed it with an oath,¹⁶⁰ 6:18 so that, in the light of two unchangeable things that matter, by means of which it is impossible for God to lie, we, who are fleeing from danger, may have strong encouragement to seize the hope that is set before us,¹⁶¹ 6:19 which we have as an anchor of our existence, sure and likewise certain and which enters inside the curtain,¹⁶² 6:20 where Jesus, the one going before us, enters on our behalf, because he has become a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek into the age <Psalm 110:4>.¹⁶³

7:1 For this man Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most-high god,¹⁶⁴ the one who met Abraham as he was returning from the defeat of the kings and who blessed him,¹⁶⁵ 7:2 to whom, indeed, Abraham apportioned a tenth of all that he had,¹⁶⁶ first of all, on the one hand, by the translation of his name, was king of *dikaioṣunay/tzedek*, i.e., justification,¹⁶⁷ and then, on the other hand, was also king of Salem, who is king of *shalom*.¹⁶⁸

7:3 Without father, without mother, without genealogy and having neither beginning of days nor end of life,¹⁶⁹ and because he was likened to the Son of God,¹⁷⁰ he remains a priest perpetually (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές).¹⁷¹ 7:4 And take note of how extraordinarily important this man was, to whom Abraham, the patriarch, indeed gave a tenth of the best part of the spoils.¹⁷²

7:5 And on the one hand, those who are of the sons of Levi and who received that priesthood have a commandment according to the Covenant to collect a tenth from the people—this is to say, from their brothers, in spite of the fact that they have come from the loins of Abraham.¹⁷³ 7:6 On the other hand, the one who cannot trace his descent from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who possesses the promises.¹⁷⁴

7:7 In addition, there is no dispute to the fact that the less important person is blessed by the more important person.¹⁷⁵ 7:8 Indeed, in this case, men who die received a tenth, but, in that other case, there was the one of whom it is witnessed that he “lives,” 7:9 even as the verse says.¹⁷⁶ In view of Abraham and Levi, the one who received a tenth, he has paid a tenth, 7:10 because he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.¹⁷⁷

7:11 Therefore,¹⁷⁸ if indeed reaching the goal (τελείωσις) were through the Levitical priesthood¹⁷⁹ (for the people have been given the Covenant on the basis of it),¹⁸⁰ then why was there yet the need for a different priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not to be called according to the order of Aaron?¹⁸¹

7:12 For when the priesthood is changed, there is, of necessity, a change of Covenant,¹⁸² 7:13 because the one concerning whom these things were being said has participated in a different tribe, from which no one has paid attention to the altar.¹⁸³ 7:14 For this is very obvious because our Lord has arisen out of Judah, in regard to which tribe Moses said nothing about priests.¹⁸⁴ 7:15 And it is even more obvious if the different priest arises according to the likeness of Melchizedek,¹⁸⁵ 7:16 who has become such, not according to a Covenant involving a physical instruction, but according to his credentials of an indestructible life.¹⁸⁶ 7:17 For it is attested,

You are a priest into the age (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) according to the order of Melchizedek
<Psalm 110:4>.¹⁸⁷

7:18 Consequently, on the one hand, there is the setting aside of a preceding instruction because of its weakness and uselessness,¹⁸⁸ 7:19 because the Covenant never brings someone to his goal (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐτελείωσεν).¹⁸⁹ On the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God (δι' ἧς ἐγγίζομεν τῷ θεῷ).¹⁹⁰

7:20 Indeed, inasmuch as it was not without an oath, because, on the one hand, there are the ones who have become priests without an oath;¹⁹¹ 7:21 on the other hand, there is the one who, with an oath, became a priest through the one who says for his benefit,¹⁹²

The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, “You are a priest into the age (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα)” <Psalm 110:4>.¹⁹³

7:22 so much more, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better Covenant.¹⁹⁴

7:23 Indeed, on the one hand, the ones who have become priests are many more, because of being hindered by death to continue.¹⁹⁵ 7:24 On the other hand, because he continues “into the age” (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα), he has a priesthood without successor.¹⁹⁶ 7:25 Therefore, he is also able to

save into the reaching of the goal (σώζειν εἰς τὸ παντελές) those who draw near to God with him in mind (τοὺς προσερχομένους δι' αὐτοῦ τῷ θεῷ), because he always lives in order to intercede on their behalf (εἰς τὸ ἐντυγχάνειν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν).¹⁹⁷

7:26 For it indeed fit the circumstances for us to have such a high priest¹⁹⁸—having become special,¹⁹⁹ innocent, undefiled, having been separated from sinners, and raised to greater heights than the heavens²⁰⁰— 7:27 who does not have the necessity daily (καθ' ἡμέραν), like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, then for those of the people, because he did this once and never again (ἐφάπαξ), when he offered up himself.²⁰¹ 7:28 For the Covenant appoints men as high priests, who have a weakness, but the statement of the oath, which was after the Covenant, appoints a Son, who has himself reached his goal (τετελειωμένον) into the age (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα).²⁰²

8:1 The main point in what is being said is that we have such a high priest,²⁰³ who has sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Great One in the heavens,²⁰⁴ 8:2 an administrator of the sacred things and of the true tent (τῆς σκηνῆς τῆς ἀληθινῆς),²⁰⁵ which the Lord pitched, not man.²⁰⁶

8:3 Because every high priest is put in charge in order to offer both gifts and tokens of loyalty, it is consequently necessary that even this one have something that he offers.²⁰⁷ 8:4 In addition, on the one hand, if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, because there are those who offer gifts according to the Covenant,²⁰⁸ 8:5 who serve a copy (ὑποδείγματι) and a shadow (σκιᾷ) of the heavenly things.²⁰⁹

Just as Moses has been given a divine injunction, when he was about to accomplish (ἐπιτελεῖν) the tent,

For “See,” He says, “you shall make all things according to the pattern (τύπος) that was shown to you on the mountain” <Exodus 25:40>.²¹⁰

8:6 on the other hand, he has now obtained a superior service, inasmuch as he is indeed the mediator of a better Covenant, which has been legislated on the basis of better promises.²¹¹

8:7 For if that first one were capable of making people uncondemned (ἄμεμπτος), there would have been no occasion sought for a second.²¹² 8:8 For deeming them condemned (μεμφόμενος), it says,²¹³

“Behold, days are coming,” says the Lord,²¹⁴
“and I will carry out/bring about the goal of (συντελέσω) a New Covenant
with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,²¹⁵
8:9 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers,²¹⁶
in the day when I took their hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt,
because they did not remain in My covenant,²¹⁷
and I had no regard for them,” says the Lord.²¹⁸
8:10 “Because this is the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel,
after those days,” says the Lord.²¹⁹
“In the midst of putting My instructions in their mind,
I will indeed write them on their hearts;²²⁰
and I will be to them as God,
and they will be to Me as people.²²¹
8:11 And they will not teach, each one his fellow citizen, and each one his brother, saying,
‘Know Yahweh,’
because they will all know Me,
from the least of them to the greatest,²²²
8:12 because I will be merciful to their transgressions,
and I will remember their sins no more” <Jeremiah 31:31-34>.²²³

8:13 By saying, “New,” He has made the first “old,” and that which has been made “old” and is growing old is near disappearing.²²⁴

9:1 Therefore, on the one hand, the first one had requirements of worship and the earthly set apart place.²²⁵ 9:2 For the first tent was constructed, in which were the lampstand, and the table, and the offering of breads, which is called “The Set Apart Places.”²²⁶ 9:3 Then, behind the second curtain there is a tent, which is called “The Set Apart Places of The Set Apart Places,”²²⁷ 9:4 having a golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar containing manna, and the staff of Aaron that sprouted, and the tablets of the covenant.²²⁸ 9:5 Then, above it were the cherubs of glory, overshadowing the place of mercy (τὸ ἱλαστήριον), concerning which things it is not the time now to speak in detail.²²⁹

9:6 And after these things have been constructed in this manner, on the one hand, the priests are continually (διὰ παντός) entering the first tent and completing/bringing about the goal of (ἐπιτελοῦντες) the performance of the worshipful things (τὰς λατρείας).²³⁰ 9:7 And, on the other hand, only the high priest enters once a year (ἅπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ μόνος) into the second tent, yet not without blood, which he offers for himself and the sins committed undefiantly by the people,²³¹ 9:8 while the spirit of the set apart one is making this clear to him—that the way of the set apart things has not yet been revealed as long as the first tent still has standing,²³² 9:9 which tent is a parable (παραβολή) for the present season, according to which parable both gifts and tokens of loyalty are being offered that, in accordance with his understanding, are unable to bring about the goal (τελειῶσαι) for the worshiper,²³³ 9:10 because the requirements of a physical nature (δικαιώματα σαρκὸς = requirements of flesh), i.e., only for foods and drinks and various washings, are imposed until the season of a new order.²³⁴

9:11 But the Messiah, when he made his appearance as a high priest of good things that are developing, by means of the “tent” which is greater and provides better for reaching the goal (τελειωτέρας σκηνῆς), not made with hands, this is to say, not of this creation,²³⁵ 9:12 and not with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood, entered once and never again (ἐφάπαξ) into The Set Apart Things, thus finding eternal redemption.²³⁶

9:13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer, by sprinkling those who have been defiled, set apart for the purpose of physical cleansing (πρὸς τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς καθαρότητα = for the cleansing of flesh),²³⁷ 9:14 how much more will the blood of the Messiah, who, in view of his eternal spirit, offered himself without defect to God,²³⁸ cleanse our understanding from dead works (καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν ἡμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων)²³⁹ in order to worship the living God?²⁴⁰ 9:15 Indeed, on account of this, he is the mediator of a *New Covenant*, so that, because a death has occurred for the redemption of transgressions under the *first Covenant*, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.²⁴¹

9:16 For where there is a covenant, it is a necessity that death of the one who is making it be carried out,²⁴² 9:17 for the covenant is firm touching on the dead, since at no time is it in force when the one who is making it lives.²⁴³ 9:18 In line with this, the first Covenant has indeed not been inaugurated without blood,²⁴⁴ 9:19 for after every commandment according to the Covenant was spoken by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of bulls and goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, he likewise sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 9:20 saying,

This is the blood of the Covenant which God commanded you <Exodus 24:8>.²⁴⁵

9:21 And, in the same way, he sprinkled both the tent and all the liturgical vessels with the blood.²⁴⁶ 9:22 And nearly everything is cleansed by blood according to the Covenant, and without the shedding of blood, forgiveness does not happen.²⁴⁷

9:23 Therefore, it was necessary, on the one hand, for the copies of the things in the heavens (τὰ μὲν ὑποδείγματα τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς) to be cleansed with respect to these issues (τούτοις καθαρίζεσθαι); and, on the other hand, for the heavenly things themselves with *better* sacrifices

than these.²⁴⁸ 9:24 For the Messiah did not enter into the hand-made set apart places, i.e., copies of the true places (ἀντίτυπα τῶν ἀληθινῶν), but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf,²⁴⁹ 9:25 and not so that he could offer himself often, just as the high priest enters into the set apart places each year (κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν) with blood that is not his own.²⁵⁰ 9:26 Otherwise, it would be necessary for him to suffer often from the foundation of the system.²⁵¹ Instead, now, once and never again (ἅπαξ) he has been revealed, touching on the completion/goal of the ages (ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων) for the removal of sin (εἰς ἀθέτησιν τῆς ἁμαρτίας) through his sacrifice.²⁵² 9:27 Indeed, inasmuch as it is unavoidable for men to die once and never again (ἅπαξ), and after this—judgment,²⁵³ 9:28 thus also, the Messiah, having been offered once and never again (ἅπαξ) in order to offer the sins of many, will be seen a second time, apart from sin, for those who eagerly await him for salvation.²⁵⁴

10:1 For the Covenant, because it contains a shadow (σκιάν) of the future, good things, not a veritable image of the things that matter (οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων), by the same kind of sacrifices year after year (κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν), which they offer without interruption (εἰς τὸ διηκεῖς), is never able to bring to their goal (τελειῶσαι) those who draw near (τοὺς προσερχομένους).²⁵⁵ 10:2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased being offered, because the worshipers, having once and never again (ἅπαξ) been cleansed, would no longer have the thought of sins?²⁵⁶ 10:3 But with the same kind of sacrifices, there is a *reminder* of sins year after year (κατ' ἐνιαυτόν), 10:4 because the blood of bulls and goats is powerless to take away sins (ἀδύνατον...ἀφαιρεῖν ἁμαρτίας).²⁵⁷

10:5²⁵⁸ Therefore, the one who engages in the religious system says,²⁵⁹

You do not desire sacrifice and offering.
Instead, You have prepared a body for me.²⁶⁰
10:6 You do not take pleasure in whole burnt offerings for sin.²⁶¹
10:7 Then, I said, 'Behold, I come
(in the scroll of the book it has been written of me)
to do Your desire, O God' <Psalm 40:6-8>.²⁶²

10:8 After saying above,

You do not desire and you take no pleasure in sacrifices, offerings, and whole burnt offerings, even for evil <paraphrase of Psalm 40:6a & c>,²⁶³

which are offered according to the Covenant,²⁶⁴ 10:9 then he has said,

Behold, I come to do Your desire <Psalm 40:7a & 8a>.²⁶⁵

He takes away (ἀναίρει) the first in order to establish (στήσῃ) the second,²⁶⁶ 10:10 in which “desire” we have become set apart in conjunction with the offering of the “body” of Jesus the Messiah once and never again (ἐφάπαξ).²⁶⁷

10:11 In addition, on the one hand, every priest has stood daily (καθ' ἡμέραν), serving and bringing the same sacrifices often (πολλάκις), which are never able to take away (περιελεῖν) sins.²⁶⁸ 10:12 On the other hand, this one, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time (μίαν ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν προσενέγκας θυσίαν εἰς τὸ διηκεῖς), sat down at the right hand of God,²⁶⁹ 10:13 waiting from now on until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet.²⁷⁰ 10:14 For with one offering (μὴ γὰρ προσφορᾶ), he has brought, for all time (εἰς τὸ διηκεῖς), completion of the goal (τετελείωκεν) for those who are being set apart (τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους).²⁷¹

10:15 And the Holy Spirit testifies to us, for, after having said,²⁷²

10:16 “This is the Covenant that I will make with them
after those days,” says the Lord.
“In the midst of putting My instructions on their hearts,

I will indeed write them in their mind,²⁷³

[He also says,]

10:17 “and their transgressions and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” <Jeremiah 31:33-34>.²⁷⁴

10:18 And where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer an offering for sin.²⁷⁵

10:19 Therefore, brothers, because we have bold confidence (παρρησίαν) to enter The Set Apart Places (εἰς τὴν εἵσοδον τῶν ἁγίων) by means of the blood of Jesus,²⁷⁶ 10:20 which he inaugurated for us, a fresh and living way through the curtain, this is to say, of his flesh,²⁷⁷ 10:21 and because we have a great priest (ἱερέα μέγαν) over the household of God,²⁷⁸ 10:22 let us draw near (προσερχώμεθα) with an authentic heart (μετὰ ἀληθινῆς καρδίας) in the full certainty of belief (ἐν πληροφῳρίᾳ πίστεως),²⁷⁹ having had our hearts sprinkled from an understanding of evil (ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως πονηρᾶς) and our bodies washed with clean water.²⁸⁰

10:23 Let us hold on to an unwavering confession of hope (τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἀκλινῆ), because the One who made the promise is faithful.²⁸¹ 10:24 And let us think carefully how to rouse one another to love and good deeds,²⁸² 10:25 not leaving out our assembling together, as is the habit of some,²⁸³ but, instead, encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near (ὅσῳ βλέπετε ἐγγίζουσιν τὴν ἡμέραν).²⁸⁴

10:26 For if we continue deliberately sinning (ἐκουσίως γὰρ ἁμαρτανόντων ἡμῶν) after receiving knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,²⁸⁵ 10:27 but a certain horrifying expectation of judgment and the intensity of fire that will consume those who are opposed <cf. Isaiah 26:11>.²⁸⁶ 10:28 Anyone who rebels against the Covenant of Moses dies without mercy on the basis of two or three witnesses.²⁸⁷ 10:29 How much worse do you think he will be counted worthy of punishment, the one who treats with disdain the Son of God and has considered as mundane the blood of the Covenant by which he has been set apart, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?²⁸⁸

10:30 For we know Him who said,

Vengeance is Mine, I will repay <Deuteronomy 32:35>,

and again,

The Lord will judge His people <Deuteronomy 32:36>.²⁸⁹

10:31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.²⁹⁰

10:32 And remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great struggle of sufferings²⁹¹—10:33 sometimes by being put to public shame with insults and likewise tribulations, and sometimes by becoming participants with those whose lives were thus turned upside down.²⁹² 10:34 For, indeed, you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and you accepted with joy the seizure of your possessions, because you yourselves knew that you have a better possession and one that remains.²⁹³

10:35 Therefore, do not throw away your bold confidence, which has a great reward (τὴν παρρησίαν ὑμῶν ἣτις ἔχει μεγάλην μισθαποδοσίαν).²⁹⁴ 10:36 For you have need of perseverance (ὑπομονῆς), so that after you have done the desire of God (ἵνα τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ ποιήσαντες), you may come into possession of the promise.²⁹⁵

10:37 For, yet, soon that which is coming will come and will not delay.²⁹⁶

10:38 But My just one will live by virtue of belief. And if he draws back, My existence is not pleased with him <Habakkuk 2:3-4; Isaiah 26:20>.²⁹⁷

10:39 However, we are not those who are timid that results in destruction (ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ ἐσμὲν ὑποστολῆς εἰς ἀπώλειαν), but we are those of belief that results in the preservation of existence (ἀλλὰ πίστεως εἰς περιποίησιν ψυχῆς).²⁹⁸

11:1 And belief is the guarantee of things hoped for, the proof of the things that matter not seen.²⁹⁹

11:2 For the men of old had witness borne to them by means of it.³⁰⁰

11:3 With belief, we understand the ages to have been created by the speaking of God, so that that which is seen has not come into existence out of things that are visible.³⁰¹

11:4 With belief, Abel offered a better sacrifice to God than Cain, in view of which it was borne witness that he was justified as God bore witness on the basis of his offerings, and through it, even though he has died, he still speaks.³⁰²

11:5 Because of belief, Enoch was removed so that he would not see death, and

he was not found, because God removed him <Genesis 5:24>.

For before his removal, it had been borne witness to him that he had been pleasing to God.³⁰³

11:6 Indeed, apart from belief, it is impossible to be pleasing, because it is necessary for the one who comes to God to believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.³⁰⁴

11:7 With belief, Noah, having been warned about things not yet seen, by showing appropriate concern, built an ark for the salvation of his household, through which he condemned the world and became an heir of *dikaio sunay* according to belief.³⁰⁵

11:8 With belief, having been called, Abraham obeyed by going out to a place which he was later to receive as an inheritance, and he went out not knowing where he was going.³⁰⁶

11:9 With belief, he lived as a stranger on the land of promise, as foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were fellow heirs of the same promise.³⁰⁷ 11:10 for he was waiting for the city-state which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.³⁰⁸

11:11 With belief, even barren Sarah herself received the ability for the building of seed, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered the One who made the promise to be faithful.³⁰⁹ 11:12 Therefore indeed, from one man, and one as good as dead, there are born these as the stars of heaven in number, and as innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.³¹⁰

11:13 All these people died in belief, having not received the promises, but having seen and greeted them from a distance, even confessing that they were strangers and refugees on the land.³¹¹ 11:14 For the ones who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.³¹² 11:15 And if, on the one hand, they were thinking of that one from which they went out, they would have had the opportunity to return.³¹³ 11:16 On the other hand, they now desire a better one, this is to say, of heaven.³¹⁴ Therefore, God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God, for He has prepared a city-state for them.³¹⁵

11:17 With belief, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and the one who received the promises was offering up the unique one,³¹⁶

(11:18 with regard to whom it was said, "In Isaac shall your seed be called <Genesis 21:12>."³¹⁷)

11:19 while he considered that God is able even to raise him from the dead. Therefore, he received him indeed in a parable.³¹⁸

11:20 With belief, Isaac also blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.³¹⁹

11:21 With belief, Jacob, before he died, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and he worshiped on the basis of the extent of his scepter.³²⁰

11:22 With belief, Joseph, as he was reaching the goal of his earthly existence, death (τελευτῶν), made mention of the exodus of the sons of Israel. In addition, he gave instructions concerning his bones.³²¹

11:23 With belief, Moses, after being born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw that he was a special child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict.³²²

11:24 With belief, Moses, after becoming great, refused to be called the son of the daughter of Pharaoh.³²³ 11:25 He chose, instead, to suffer with the people of God, rather than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin,³²⁴ 11:26 because he considered the disgrace of the "anointed one" to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, because he was paying attention to the reward.³²⁵

11:27 With belief, he left Egypt, not fearing the anger of the king, because he continued without wavering, while seeing the One who is unseen.³²⁶

11:28 With belief, he performed the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, so that the One who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.³²⁷

11:29 With belief, they went through the Red Sea as through dry land, on which, when they made the attempt, the Egyptians were drowned.³²⁸

11:30 With belief, the walls of Jericho fell, after being encircled for seven days.³²⁹

11:31 With belief, Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she welcomed the spies with "Shalom."³³⁰

11:32 And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, even Samuel, and the prophets.³³¹ 11:33 They, with belief, defeated kingdoms, performed righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,³³² 11:34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were strengthened from weakness, became mighty in war, put to flight foreign armies.³³³

11:35 Women received back their dead by resurrection, while others were tortured, not accepting their release, so that they would obtain the better resurrection.³³⁴ 11:36 Others received the test of mockings and whippings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment.³³⁵ 11:37 They were stoned, sawn in two, and murdered with the sword. They went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being deprived, afflicted, and mistreated,³³⁶ 11:38 of whom the world was not worthy, as they wandered in deserts, mountains, caves, and holes in the ground.³³⁷

11:39 And all these, having had witness borne to them in view of their belief, did not receive the promise,³³⁸ 11:40 because God has provided something better for us, so that, apart from us, they would not be caused to reach their final goal (τελειωθῶσιν).³³⁹

12:1 Therefore, indeed, because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us,³⁴⁰ while laying aside every impediment and the sin that so easily distracts us,³⁴¹ let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,³⁴² 12:2 while fixing our eyes on Jesus, the leader of belief and finisher of his race (τὸν...τελειωτὴν),³⁴³ who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, while thinking nothing of the humiliation, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.³⁴⁴

12:3 For consider him, the one who has endured such hostility by sinners against himself, so that you not become weary and fail with respect to your existences.³⁴⁵ 12:4 You have not yet opposed them to the point of blood in your struggling against sin,³⁴⁶ 12:5 and you have not forgotten altogether the helpful persuasion, which is addressed to you as sons,³⁴⁷

My son, do not think lightly of the training of the Lord,
and do not give up when you are reproved by Him,
12:6 because the Lord trains him whom He loves,
and He disciplines every son whom He receives <Proverbs 3:11-12>?³⁴⁸

12:7 Persevere for the purpose of training. God deals with you as sons, for what son is there whom his father does not train?³⁴⁹ 12:8 However, if you are without training, of which all have become participants, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.³⁵⁰

12:9 Furthermore, we had our fathers of the flesh as trainers, and we respected them. Shall we not much more rather submit to the Father of spirits and live?³⁵¹ 12:10 For, on the one hand, the ones trained for a few days according to what seemed best to them. But, on the other hand, the One trains on the basis of that which is advantageous, in order to participate in His being set apart.³⁵² 12:11 And all training does not seem for the moment to be joyful, but sorrowful. However, afterwards, it pays back the *shalom* fruit of justification to those who have been exercised/trained by it.³⁵³

12:12 Therefore, straighten the drooping hands and the knees that have become weak,³⁵⁴ 12:13 and make straight the paths for your feet, in order that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.³⁵⁵

12:14 Pursue *shalom* and being set apart in company with all others, without which no one will see the Lord,³⁵⁶ 12:15 while taking care that no one falls short of the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble and through it many become polluted,³⁵⁷ 12:16 that there be no immoral or worldly person like Esau, who, for one meal, sold his rights to be the firstborn.³⁵⁸ 12:17 For you know that, indeed, afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, because he found no place for a change of mind, even though he earnestly sought it with tears.³⁵⁹

12:18 For you have not come to something to be touched, and to a blazing fire, and to darkness, and to gloom, and to a windstorm, 12:19 and to the blast of the shofar, and to the sound of words, of which the ones who heard begged that no further message (λόγον) be presented to them,³⁶⁰ 12:20 because they could not bear that which was being commanded,

If even an animal touches the mountain, it will be stoned <Exodus 19:12-13>.³⁶¹

12:21 And, in this way, that which was appearing was horrifying—Moses said,

I am terrified and trembling <Deuteronomy 9:19>.³⁶²

12:22 Instead, you have come to Mt. Zion, indeed, to the city-state of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,³⁶³ and to countless thousands of angels, to a festal gathering, 12:23 and to the assembly of the firstborn ones, who have been registered in the heavens,³⁶⁴ and to God, the Ruler of all,³⁶⁵ and to the spirits of those who are justified, who have reached their goal (τετελειωμένων),³⁶⁶ 12:24 and to the mediator of the New Covenant, Jesus, and to sprinkled blood that speaks better than Abel.³⁶⁷

12:25 See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking. For if those did not escape on earth when they refused the one who was imparting a divine message, how much more shall we not escape, the ones who turn away from him who is from the heavens,³⁶⁸ 12:26 whose voice shook the earth then. And, now, He has promised, saying,

Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also heaven <Haggai 2:6>.³⁶⁹

12:27 As for the statement, “Yet once more,” it refers to the transformation of shaken ones, as they have been made, in order that unshaken ones may remain.³⁷⁰ 12:28 Therefore, because we receive an unshakeable kingdom, let us be grateful, in view of which we serve God acceptably with reverence and awe,³⁷¹ 12:29 because, indeed, our God is a consuming fire <Deuteronomy 4:24>.³⁷²

13:1 Let brotherly love endure.³⁷³

13:2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, especially because, through this, some have been unaware of giving lodging to *angeloi*.³⁷⁴

13:3 Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, who are being mistreated, as those who are also in the body.³⁷⁵

13:4 Let marriage be honored among everyone, and the marriage bed be undefiled, because God will condemn the sexually immoral and adulterers.³⁷⁶

13:5 Let your way of life be free from greed, while being content with what is presently yours, because He has said,

I will never abandon you, and I will never leave you <Deuteronomy 31:6>,³⁷⁷

13:6 so that, while being courageous, we say,

The Lord is my Helper, and I shall not be afraid.

What will man do to me <Psalm 118:6>?³⁷⁸

13:7 Remember those who were leading you, who spoke the message of God to you, whose, while giving careful thought to the end result of their way of life, belief—mimic.³⁷⁹

13:8 Jesus the Messiah—it is he who is, yesterday and today, the same, and into the ages.³⁸⁰

13:9 Do not be carried away by various and foreign teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, in which those who conducted their lives were not benefited.³⁸¹

13:10 We have an altar, from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat,³⁸² 13:11 because of whose animal's blood is brought concerning sin into The Set Apart Places by the high priest—whose bodies of these are burned outside the camp.³⁸³

13:12 Therefore, Jesus also, in order that he set apart the people through his own blood, suffered outside the gate.³⁸⁴ 13:13 As a result, let us go out to him outside the camp, while bearing his disgrace.³⁸⁵ 13:14 For here we do not have a city-state that remains, but we are seeking the future one.³⁸⁶

13:15 Consequently, in the light of who he is, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of admiration to God. This is the fruit of lips, which are acknowledging his name.³⁸⁷ 13:16 And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for God is pleased with such sacrifices.³⁸⁸

13:17 Obey those who are leading you, and be respectful towards them, for they keep watch over your existences as those who will give an account, so that they may do this with joy and not groan, because this would be unprofitable for you (*ἀλυσιτελές*).³⁸⁹

13:18 Pray for us, for we are persuaded that we have a good understanding, while we desire to conduct ourselves well in all things.³⁹⁰ 13:19 Thus, I encourage you all the more to do this, in order that I may be returned to you sooner.³⁹¹

13:20 And may the God of shalom, who raised up from the dead the shepherd of the sheep, the great one by virtue of the blood of the eternal covenant, our Lord Jesus,³⁹² 13:21 put you in proper condition in every good thing, in order to do His desire, while doing in us that which is pleasing in His sight in view of Jesus the Messiah, to whom be the glory into the ages of the ages. Amen.³⁹³

13:22 And I encourage you, brothers, bear with this message of encouragement, for, indeed, I have written to you briefly.³⁹⁴ 13:23 You know that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you.³⁹⁵

13:24 Greet all those who lead you and all those who are set apart. Those who are from Italy greet you.³⁹⁶ 13:25 May grace be with you all.³⁹⁷

¹ Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας τοῖς πατράσιν ὅτι ἐν τοῖς προφήταις – The theology of this letter is very sophisticated in its presentation of the Old Testament and correlating it with the life and death of Jesus as the predicted Messiah. The letter also mentions Timothy in 13:23 as someone who “has been released” and “with whom” the author will come if Timothy first comes to him. These two clues suggest strongly that the apostle Paul is the author, so that he is writing to Jews here and not to Gentiles as he did in his other letters.

In this first verse, Paul is referring to the many messages from God to the Israelites regarding God’s project of fulfilling His promise to them to make them a “great nation” according to the first promise of the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12:1-3 and that came via dreams, visions, “word of the Lord,” etc. and were recorded in the Old Testament. [Numbers 12:6](#) [God] said, “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, Yahweh, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream.”

“fathers” is the first clue that this letter is addressed to Jews and not to Gentiles. However, human “prophets” never spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, nor to any other Jew until Judges 6:7-8, but this prophet is not named. Yet, Paul is probably using the word “prophets” to refer to both *angeloi* (theophanies, i.e., divine prophets) of Yahweh and human prophets who communicated His message to the “fathers,” the OT Jews, going back all the way to Abraham. In Deuteronomy 34:10, Moses is identified as a prophet, and then Deborah is a prophetess in Judges 4:4, and Samuel is called a prophet sent by Yahweh in 1 Samuel 3:20.

[Judges 6:7](#) Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to Yahweh on account of Midian, [6:8](#) that Yahweh sent a prophet to the sons of Israel, and he said to them, “Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, ‘It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery.’”

As far as Paul’s opponents in this letter are concerned, God has spoken through only the prophets, especially Moses, and not yet through the Son. Thus, they reject Jesus as the Son of God because he is ontologically only a man and not a superordinary human being like the *angeloi* (theophanies) of Yahweh in the OT, a belief which they had and that Paul refers to in 1:4-2:18.

As a result, in the first chapter of this letter, Paul argues for the Son’s superiority to all the theophanies and other messengers of Yahweh in the OT. The latter were simply “ministering winds,” while the Son is God’s proxy and representative as God within the creation.

The subject of the long sentence of at least vs. 1-4 is “God” (ὁ θεός). The participial clause refers to His having spoken (λαλήσας) to the OT ancestors of his readers and that He spoke by means of “prophets” (ἐν τοῖς προφήταις) “in many portions and in many ways long ago” (Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι). It is obviously a really big deal that the transcendent creator communicates to and with created human beings. But this is exactly what He has done—for very specific reasons.

Also, I have broken out the various parts of v. 1-4 and demonstrated the sentence structure as a means to highlight how important Paul believes the “Son,” i.e., Jesus (even though he does not name him until 2:9), is—with all the red words that refer to him. I use this same pattern in the additional document which I have created with the English in the left column and the Greek text in the right column.

² ἐπὶ ἑσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων – Three options for “these days” –

1) The time period that began “long ago” (πάλαι) with Abraham and is now coming to an end with the first appearance of the Messiah, so that what will transpire from here on are the next days of the time period between his first appearance and his second appearance when he returns to fulfill the Abrahamic promise of ruling over the “great nation” of Israel and the world.

2) The time period that began with Jesus first coming and will end with his second coming—resulting in the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise by his ruling over the “great nation” of Israel and the world, so that the “last of” this time period is the entire time period.

3) The time period of the present age, the present times, that somewhat began with Abraham (cf. “long ago” and πάλαι) and will end with the inception of the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns and God fulfills His promise to Abraham to make his physical descendants a “great nation.” This is the same time period of God’s “speaking” to “us,” the Jews, and will include His fulfilling the Abrahamic promise to them, so that God’s speaking to the Jews goes on with the preservation of the NT message through its authors. Therefore, the word “last” refers to the completion of God’s promises to Abraham and the Abrahamic Covenant.

The third option makes the most sense. Paul is talking about the time of the first coming of Jesus as the Messiah after the time of “long ago” of v. 1 (“these days”) that sets the stage for the end of the present realm, that began with Abraham and that ends in the final age of the “great nation” of Israel. In other words, “these days” are the time period from Abraham to when God fulfills His promise to Abraham’s physical descendants, the Jews, and makes them the most powerful nation in human history under the rule of Jesus as their Champion, Messiah, and king, who died to intercede for them before God and to reconcile them to Him. Therefore, the “last” of “these days” is God’s final push to finish the age with the fulfillment of His promises to Abraham. This final push is the time from Jesus’ first appearance to his second appearance, which we now know is a rather long period of time, at least two thousand years—and still counting.

[1 Peter 1:20](#) For he was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in the last of the times (φανερωθέντος δὲ ἐπὶ ἑσχάτου τῶν χρόνων) for the sake of you.

[Genesis 49:1](#), “Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, ‘Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what will befall you in the days to come (אֲחֵרֵי הַיָּמִים = in the last of the days) (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν = in the last days).”

Also [Deuteronomy 4:30](#), “When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days (אֲחֵרֵי הַיָּמִים = in the last of the days) (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν = in the last of the days) you will return to Yahweh your God and listen to His voice.”

Also [Hosea 3:5](#), “Afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek Yahweh their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to Yahweh and to His goodness in the last days (אֲחֵרֵי הַיָּמִים = in the last of the days) (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν = in the last days).”

Also consider [Acts 2:17](#) from [Joel 2:28-32](#); and then [2 Timothy 3:1](#).

Also [James 5:3](#), “Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days (ἐν ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις) that you have stored up your treasure.” (pointing to the final judgment which will truly be in the last days of these days that really began with Abraham and ends with the end of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20)

Also [2 Peter 3:3](#), “Know this first of all, that in the last of the days (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν) mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own evil desires.” (pointing to the end of these days when Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of David on the land of Israel)

In all these passages, the speaker/author is referring to the end of the history of the present realm when God will bring about the final judgment of the Jews and the final transformation of the Jews into authentic believers that will constitute the eternal Kingdom of God, starting with the renewed Kingdom of Israel of Revelation 20 on the land of Israel and culminating in the eternal earth of Revelation 21. Sometimes the speaker/author refers to “the last days,” and sometimes he refers to “the last of the days.” In both cases, his meaning would seem to be the actual last days of the days of the present realm going back to the time of Abraham. But in the first case, he mentions explicitly only the last days of these days. Then, in the second case, he mentions explicitly the “last” of the days going back to Abraham, but he means the same thing, the last days of all these days from the time of Abraham to the time of Jesus as ruler of the Jews.

By the way, there is no use in the Septuagint of this Greek phrase with τούτων.

³ ἐλάλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ – The subject of this verb, ἐλάλησεν, is “God” in v. 1. Just as He spoke to the Jews’ OT ancestors by means of human prophets, He has also spoken now “by means of the Son” (ἐν υἱῷ) as the period of time gets closer to His finishing His project of producing the “great nation” of Israel and the eternal Kingdom of God on the new earth.

The “Son” refers to the descendant of King David (circa 1000 B.C.), beginning with David himself (cf. Psalm 89) and then Solomon, who, in Psalm 2, also calls God his “Father” and who continues the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7), whereby God has promised that David’s kingdom, and thus the earthly Kingdom of Israel (and, eventually, the eternal Kingdom of God by extrapolation), will go on for as long as God wants, with David’s descendants as the kings of this kingdom.

For example, [2 Chronicles 21:7](#) Yet Yahweh was not willing to destroy the house of David because of the covenant which He had made with David, and since He had promised to give a lamp to him and his sons forever (כָּל־הַיָּמִים) (πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας).

Jesus is the final Davidic king and therefore the final Son of God who, by implication, is the greatest of the biblical “prophets,” i.e., spokesmen of God, and has brought the most complete and final message from God (cf. Hebrews 1:5). While the primary purpose of the letter of Hebrews is to exhort the readers to continue in their belief in Jesus as the Son of God, who has come into history and therefore is their Messiah and high priest (cf. Hebrews 2:1, etc.), the secondary purpose is to argue that Jesus, as the incarnation of God, is an ordinary human being in his ontology and has qualified to be the Messiah, high priest, and eternal King by virtue of his death, which was his propitiatory offering to God for human beings who are sinful. With his offering and his role as high priest, Jesus brings reconciliation between God and sinners. Thus, he qualifies to intervene for other human beings and appeal for mercy on their behalf before God at the final judgment. It will be important to recognize that Paul’s argument in this letter does NOT state that Jesus brings salvation and reconciliation to sinners by paying the full amount of the punishment they deserve. Instead, he argues that Jesus qualified to intercede for them before God as their high priest by sacrificing himself through his own death on the cross.

“us” refers to the Jews of Paul’s day who were also contemporaries of Jesus during his first appearance and time on the earth that culminated in his death, resurrection, and ascension.

An important and remarkable feature of God’s relationship with human beings on this earth is that He has communicated the information that He wants us to have through only the Jews. This is what Paul is saying here in vs. 1 & 2, that God has spoken through the Jewish prophets to the Jewish OT ancestors and now through the Jewish Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Jewish Son of God. God has made Himself known in this way to no other ethnic group in the world. This is why any group, other than those who learn from the Bible, are wrong if they say that they have communication from God. It is only the Jews of the OT and the Jewish apostles and their close associates in the NT, except admittedly Luke who received his information through the Jewish apostle Paul and other Jewish apostles, to whom God provided the necessary, authentic, and authoritative information that He wanted them and the rest of humanity to have.

Paul says the same thing in Romans 3:1-4, **3:1** What then is the advantage of being a Jew, or what is the benefit of circumcision? **3:2** Great in every respect! Primarily, because they were entrusted with the messages of God (τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ). **3:3** But what if some of them have not believed? Will their unbelief render null and void that which God entrusted to them? **3:4** Absolutely not! Let God be someone who speaks truth, and let every man be someone who speaks lies, just as it was written, “So that You may be considered right when You speak and prevail when You judge” <Psalm 51:4b>.

⁴ ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον πάντων – Here Paul begins a relative clause with the objective relative pronoun ὃν, which means “whom,” referring to “the Son.” The subject of the verb is still “God” of v. 1, and He has appointed the Son to be heir of all things.

In the Ancient Near East, the king of an empire was the Son of God, i.e., the “Son” of the chief god of the people, who ruled over the god’s property as his proxy, stand-in, agent, and representative. Therefore, he was the icon or image of the god and was to be treated as though he were the god himself. Similarly, the Davidic kings were God’s icon and proxy, and Jesus is the final Son of Yahweh whom God considers to be His “firstborn” and heir to the whole creation, including and especially the eternal Kingdom of God that begins with the restored Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 after Jesus’ return and continues on the new and eternal earth of the newly created cosmos of Revelation 21. Thus, God has “appointed” and established Jesus to be the heir of “all things,” all that will continue as that which is the Kingdom of God after he returns.

Psalm 89:27, “I shall also make him [David] my firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth”.

Psalm 105:6 O seed of Abraham, His servant, O sons of Jacob, His chosen ones! **105:7** He is Yahweh our God; His judgments are in all the earth. **105:8** He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations, **105:9** The covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac. **105:10** Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, **105:11** saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion of your inheritance,” **105:12** when they were only a few men in number, very few, and strangers in it.

2 Corinthians 4:3 And if our good news has been concealed, it has been concealed in those who are being destroyed, **4:4** in whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelieving in order that they may not see the light of the good news of the glory of the Messiah, who is the icon of God.

Paul is making the same point in **Colossians 1:13** He rescued us from the authority of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His Son of love,⁴ **1:14** in whom we have deliverance, the forgiveness of our sins.⁴ **1:15** He is the icon of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,⁴ **1:16** because all things in the heavens and on the earth were created in regard to him (ἐν αὐτῷ), all things visible and invisible, whether thrones, lordships, rulers, or authorities. All things have been created with him in view (δι’ αὐτοῦ) and for him (εἰς αὐτόν).

⁵ δι’ οὗ καὶ ᾠκοδόμησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας⁵ – Here is a second relative clause that begins with the prepositional phrase δι’ οὗ, meaning “in view of whom.” Again, the subject of the verb is “God” of v. 1, and He has made cosmic and, especially, human history “in view of” Jesus, the Son of God.

Certainly, because of their belief in the traditional trinity of the three eternal persons of the Godhead, it makes sense that the English translators translate the διὰ at the beginning of this relative clause as “through,” thinking that Paul means that Jesus as the 2nd person of the trinity is the tool or instrument by whom God the Father created the ages of cosmic and human history.

However, in the light many other passages which provide an explanation of the relationship between the God the creator and His creation, including Jesus as a created human being (such as John 1:1-5, the *logos* is the story of the author, who is God), it makes more sense here to translate διὰ as “in view of,” thus identifying this particular Son of God, Jesus, as the central figure of all creation history (cf. Colossians 1:15-16 above). Consequently, God had Jesus in mind specifically when He created the cosmos and started and continues both cosmic and human history. And Jesus will rule over the eternal age of the Kingdom of God. In other words, God has brought into existence and determined all of the ages (τοὺς αἰῶνας) of history to fulfill His Son-centric plans of creating a realm where Jesus will be king forever.

We should also consider Paul’s use of ποιέω (*poieō*) in Hebrews 3:2 regarding Jesus—Jesus has been made and therefore created within the story that God is telling to fulfill the role of His Son over the household of His people, i.e., authentic believers. Jesus is the most important character in God’s story as the final Son of God and Davidic king. This is also more coherent with Paul’s previous statement to the effect that God has “appointed [Jesus] heir of all things.” He brought Jesus into existence and his assigned him and established him the specific function within His story to be Him and to rule over all that He has made both during the time of the restored Kingdom of Israel and the time of the eternal earth after it.

Thus, “the ages” (τοὺς αἰῶνας) refer not to the material cosmos and world per se, but to the events that occur on the earth and involve human beings who play such an important role in God’s story, so that Jesus is the centerpiece of this story.

⁶ ὃς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης – Verse 3 here begins another relative clause with the masculine, nominative pronoun ὃς, meaning “who,” and refers to “the Son” of v. 2, literally “is” with the present participle ὢν. The main verb of the relative pronoun ὃς is going to be “sat down” (ἐκάθισεν) as Paul makes the point that the “Son” is greater than all the theophanies of Yahweh in the OT. This is why his readers and he must continue their belief in him for eternal purposes. To be the “radiance of the glory” of God refers to Jesus’ role as the human being who is God in the story which He is

telling. Jesus did not literally shine as a light, because he was God. Instead, he lived his life and made specific choices that were truly a reflection of the transcendent God.

Paul will go on to say that Jesus is greater than any theophany and the appearances of God in the Old Testament, which were *angeloi* (messengers, not conventional angels) of Yahweh and also God within the story. But Jesus, again, has a completely different and greater role than any of the appearances of God in the Old Testament. He was and is not only a teacher of truth, but also a real man who died on the cross and then rose from the dead in order to continue his role as the king of the eternal Kingdom of God.

As a result, Jesus shares in the magnificence, glory, and moral perfection of the transcendent Father in the same way that light beams from the sun share in its brightness. Thus, Jesus is God within the creation, i.e., the incarnation (literally “in fleshness”) of God. He is the only mother-born, flesh and blood human being who can claim to be God in the story of human history. This is what Paul will describe in Hebrews 2.

⁷ καὶ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ – This indicates the second thing that the Son “is” that was started by the participle ὄν.

This statement is not easy to translate, but I think that Paul is saying much the same thing about Jesus as his being “the radiance of the glory” of God. Jesus represents God in a manner that no other naturally born human being ever has, by his being identified as God Himself within the creation. He has the “reproduction,” character, and very mark of God stamped upon his person the same way that a typewriter leaves a carbon image on a paper that is the exact representation and “reproduction” of the element. As a result, the mark that Jesus was always leaving on the land of Israel as he thought, spoke and acted as a human being was that of the morally perfect God in the midst of sinful human beings for the specific role that God assigned him, which was to teach, heal, encourage, and eventually offend and die for sinners. He was always reproducing God and representing God perfectly, albeit as a created human being in the story of history. There was, is, and will be nothing about what Jesus thinks, chooses, says, or does that someone would not say, “There is God in the creation because of what Jesus is thinking, choosing, saying, and doing.”

In addition, unlike the man in Genesis 18 who visited Abraham and who was Yahweh, i.e., an actual theophany and manifestation of Yahweh, Jesus was, is, and will be an expression of Yahweh with his own mind, will, and choice-making mechanism, so that he is always a separate person from him. Also, unlike the man in Genesis 18, Jesus is a permanent and eternal person within the created reality and not just a temporary one. Yes, he died and was dead for three days. But God resurrected him and will cause him to exist for all eternity at the centerpiece of created reality and the story which He is telling.

This is the only use of χαρακτήρ in the NT.

ὑπόστασις can mean confidence, literally a standing under, i.e., the underlying structure. Therefore, Jesus is the character or representation of the God’s underlying structure, of His moral nature and eternal intentions and purposes, whereby he is the central focus of the created reality.

⁸ ὁφείλων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ – The present participle ὁφείλων is the second one connected to the relative pronoun ὃς. The particle τε means “likewise,” similarly to who the Son is.

Jesus has patiently born and continues to bear patiently, i.e., carrying and even putting up with, all the things that God has powerfully said in the Old Testament regarding the Messiah, including that he would suffer, die, and then rule over the creation. As a result, God has brought about the three years of Jesus’ demonstrating that he is the Messiah, so that he accomplished all that God powerfully assigned him to do as the Messiah, including and most especially in this letter, his propitiatory death in order to qualify to be the high priest of sinners.

Therefore, “His word of power” is God’s speaking the creation into existence that has included and continues to include Jesus and his role as the Messiah. In other words, this phrase refers to God’s sovereign control of even Jesus’ existence for His eternal purposes.

Similar to Paul’s use of ὁφείλων in Hebrews 12:20, “For they could not bear the command, ‘If even...’”

Hebrews 13:13, “So let us go outside the camp, bearing his reproach”

John 20:27, “Then he said to Thomas, ‘Reach (ὁφείπε) here with your finger, and see my hands; and reach (ὁφείπε) here with your hand and put (βάλε) it into my side...’”

Alternatively, the Majority Text adds either δι’ ἑαυτοῦ or δι’ αὐτοῦ, the latter of which makes sense if Paul, the author of Hebrews, is referring with this added phrase to Jesus as the one through whom God supports His authority by speaking through him, for example, when Jesus says, “Get up, pick up your pallet and walk” (John 5:8).

Similar to [Hebrews 2:4](#) as God bore witness with them by means of signs and wonders and various displays of power and by distributions of the Holy Spirit according to His desire.

Or Paul could be referring to the three recorded times when the voice of God out of heaven said something to the effect, “This is my beloved Son...” (cf. Matt. 3:17; 17:5; John 12:28) so that this would be translated, “by His powerful statement.” However, if the δι’ ἑαυτοῦ or δι’ αὐτοῦ are not actually a part of the text, then the point is that Jesus patiently bears all things about God’s saying that he is to be the suffering Messiah by his accepting the position of teacher, propitiatory offering, king, ruler, and the one who intervenes and intercedes on behalf of sinners, thus proving that he is the biblical Son of God in all his capacity and to whom these readers need to listen, which then permits Paul to move on to talk about the Son in v. 3b and following.

⁹ τὸ καθαρὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ποιησάμενος – Before Paul gets to the main verb, ἐκάθισεν, of the ὃς relative clause, he mentions with another participial clause how it is that the “Son” is qualified to sit down so to speak at God’s right hand and rule the entire created reality.

This most especially has to do with Jesus' bearing up under all the God said and created in regarding him and his role on the earth. The aorist middle participle most likely has an emphatic meaning, that Jesus himself made "cleansing of sins" for Jewish (and, of course, Gentile) sinners, in contrast to thinking that the offerings and sacrifices of bulls and goats did. Thus, "after [Jesus] himself made cleansing of sins..." [he demonstrated that he had done so by acquiring a position of the highest status for any human being, that of ruling God's creation with same authority as God, i.e., by sitting at His right hand (see the rest of this verse)]

This is Paul's main point in this letter, that it is the sacrifice of the very human Messiah within the context of the New Covenant, not the sacrifice of animals according to the Mosaic Covenant, that achieves eternal forgiveness of sins from God. It also makes sense to translate this verb with the active voice as something Jesus did in the midst of bearing and enduring everything which God has spoken in the OT and his NT existence that was necessary for him to do to qualify as a propitiatory offering for the Jews in their sinful condition.

Cf. Exodus 30:10 where Aaron, as the first high priest of the Mosaic Covenant, was commanded by God to "atone" for the evil acts of the Israelites once a year, "Aaron shall make atonement (כִּפֹּרֶת) (ἐξιλάσεται) on its horns once a year; he shall make atonement (כִּפֹּרֶת) (καθαριεῖ or "cleanse") on it with the blood of the sin offering of atonement (כִּפֹּרֶת הַחַטָּאת) (ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν τοῦ ἐξιλασμοῦ) once a year throughout your generations. It is most holy to Yahweh."

In Hebrews, Paul uses several Greek words borrowed from the Septuagint or similar to words in the Septuagint, among which are καθαρισμός (purification, cleansing, 1:3), λύτρωσις (redemption, 9:12), ραντίζω (sprinkle, 9:13, 19, 21; 10:22), καθαρότης (cleansing, 9:13), καθαρίζω (cleanse, 9:14, 22, 23; 10:2), ἀπολύτρωσις (redemption, 9:15), ἀφαιρέω (take away (sins), 10:4), and λούω (wash, 10:22), all of which both in the Old Testament and in this letter refer to the demonstration of the moral deficiency of people, their need for God's mercy, and God's granting His mercy and forgiveness by virtue of a proper offering's being made in the light of the people's authentic inwardness, belief, and repentance.

While exhorting his readers not to give up their belief in Jesus as the Son of God, Paul's main argument is that Jesus, the human incarnation of God, is the most important high priest, who also has offered himself as a sacrifice for sins in order to qualify to intercede on our behalf at the judgment (cf. Hebrews 5-10). Paul's opponents have not put together the two ideas of Messiah/King and high priest from the NT with respect to one, future individual who fulfills both roles within the creation and human race. A Son of God who is merely human and suffers death is not part of their picture of the Messiah. But Paul is going to argue that this is the only understanding of the Messiah that makes sense of the OT data, especially Psalm 110.

¹⁰ ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν ὑψηλοῖς – Here begins the clause with the main verb of the relative pronoun ὅς at the beginning of v. 3.

My guess is that all Jews would readily acknowledge, if they have interpreted Psalm 110:1 correctly that David is referring to the future king of Israel and Messiah, that he would "sit at the right hand" of God and rule over the creation because his role will be to destroy Israel's enemies and restore the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel. Plus, I assume that they realize that God is speaking metaphorically, that it is physically and spatially impossible for a created being to position himself literally at the transcendent creator's right hand. But none of them, including Paul originally, would expect David's Lord to do so after making propitiation and "purification" for the people's sins by dying on a cross—in spite of God's also referring to him in v. 4 of Psalm 110 as a "priest forever according to the order of Melchizekek!" Surely, the Messiah would sacrifice something else and not himself! Right? No. Wrong.

Psalm 110:1 Yahweh says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand (יָשֵׁב בְּיְמִינִי) (κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου) until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet (יָדָם תַּחְתִּי כַּפְּיָם תַּחְתִּי) (ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου)."

The idea in Psalm 110 of sitting at God's right hand is a key concept for Paul in this letter (cf. Hebrews 8:1; 10:12; 12:2) in order to demonstrate Jesus' importance to his readers—that Jesus' own exalted authority is just under the transcendent God's by virtue of his "sitting at His right hand," again, metaphorically speaking. After Jesus suffered death as an offering for sin by which he obtains God's eternal mercy and forgiveness for sinners, he earned the title "Son of God" as the Davidic king who rules over the creation and advocates for sinners at the final judgment, which is why God resurrected him from the dead. I say that this statement is metaphorical because the created Jesus cannot go outside the creation and transcend it as God the Father does. Besides, God, assuming He is incorporeal, does not have an actual right hand and arm?

Hebrews 8:1 The main point in what is being said is that we have a high priest, who has sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Great One in the heavens, **8:2** an administrator of the sacred things and of the true tent (τῆς σκηνῆς τῆς ἀληθινῆς), that the Lord pitched, not man.

Hebrews 10:11 In addition, on the one hand, every priest has stood daily (καθ' ἡμέραν), serving and bringing the same sacrifices often (πολλάκις), that are never able to take away (περιελεῖν) sins. **10:12** On the other hand, this one, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time (μίαν ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν προσενέγκας θυσίαν εἰς τὸ διηνεκές), sat down at the right hand of God, **10:13** waiting from now on until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet. **10:14** Thus, with one offering (μὴ γὰρ προσφορᾷ), he has brought, for all time (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές), completion of their goal (τετελειώκεν) for those who are being set apart (τοὺς ἀγιάζομένους).

Hebrews 12:1 Therefore, indeed, because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside

every impediment and the sin that so easily distracts us,¹⁰ and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **12:2** while we fix our eyes on Jesus, the leader in belief and the one who finished his race (τὸν... τελειωτὴν). For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, while thinking nothing of the humiliation, and he has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Typical Christian theology assumes that God is part of our own reality and simply above us on the second floor of the same house (so to speak) that we inhabit. Therefore, Jesus as both God and man theoretically walked down the stairs from the second floor of reality to be with us on the first floor. Then he walked back up the stairs to be with the Father and to sit at His right hand on the second floor. This means, too, that we can walk up the same stairs to be with God on the second floor. And, indeed, we do make this movement when we die and go to heaven for all eternity to be with God and Jesus in their special realm on the second floor.

But I do not think that this does justice to the biblical data where God is described as an uncreated being and we are created beings. The radical difference between the uncreated realm of God and the created realm of human beings is not spatial. It is ontological, meaning that someone who is uncreated, i.e., God, can invade and manifest Himself in the created realm, but someone who is created, i.e., human beings, including Jesus as Paul will describe in chapter 2, cannot invade and manifest himself in the uncreated realm—because then he would have to become uncreated. In addition, not even God can manifest Himself in the created realm as if He is both ontologically uncreated and created, as most Christians try to imagine and claim that Jesus is. The only kind of ontological stuff that can exist in the creation is created stuff, the same way that Charles Dickens cannot insert his biological being into one of his novels and be that external, biological Charles Dickens in real life and a character in his story. The only kind of “biological” being that anything or anyone can be in his novels is a written text on the page, which is not even close to being the same as the ontological, biological person that Charles Dickens is who is writing the text on the page. It is a similar vast ontological difference that exists between God and human beings, including between the uncreated, transcendent God the Father and Jesus as the created icon of God on the created earth. Therefore, God, David, and Paul are speaking metaphorically about David’s Lord sitting at God’s right hand.

The “Great One in the heights” (ὁ μεγαλῶσύνῃ ἐν ὑψηλοῖς) is found only here in the NT and is obviously God, the majestic (=the one with the most impressive dignity, honor, power, and beingness) person in the highest of the high places of reality, i.e., in the uncreated realm, where only God can exist. The two Greek words also do not appear together like this in the OT. But, clearly, they both refer to the height of God’s beingness and His ability to be the powerful author of all created reality, so that Jesus’ sitting at His right hand is for him to take on the role of exerting His authority and rule over the creation, albeit as a created being himself and as the uncreated God’s proxy and representative.

It is the “Great One in the heights” who expressed Himself with “His word of power” regarding Jesus and his role as the suffering, dying, resurrecting, and eternal Messiah, which is why He is the “Great One in the heights.”

¹¹ τοσούτῳ κρείττων γενόμενος ὅτων ἀγγέλων – Here the aorist participle is explaining the circumstances for the Son’s sitting down at the right hand of God. It is because of his status and role relative to the *angeloi*, i.e., the theophanies of Yahweh—in spite of how great Yahweh Himself is and the role that His theophanies played in the history of His chosen people, the nation of Israel.

The phrase “angel of Yahweh” (מַלְאָכִי יְהוָה) (ἄγγελος κυρίου) is found 56x in the Old Testament. I think that there are two reasons within the context to interpret *angeloi* as theophanies of Yahweh and not as conventional angels. First is Hebrews 2:2, that the Mosaic Covenant came to Moses and the Israelites through the *angeloi* of Yahweh. In light of Exodus that states that Yahweh appeared to Moses on Mt. Sinai, the phrase *angeloi* of Yahweh refers to the ways that God appeared within the created reality, e.g. by a thick cloud in Exodus 19:9, and by thunder, lightning, and a thick cloud in Exodus 19:16.

Second is Hebrews 2:7 that quotes the Septuagint’s translation of Psalm 8:5 as saying that the Son of Man is a little lower than the *angeloi*, when the Hebrew text of this verse in Psalm 8 says a little lower than God, i.e., *Elohim*. Thus, the Son of Man is a little lower than any manifestation of Yahweh within the created reality, because the Son of Man, as the ruler of the created reality within the creation, is still lower in authority than the transcendent Creator Himself, i.e., than Yahweh.

Consequently, Paul is referring to the physical and temporary theophanies of Yahweh that were not ordinary mother-born flesh and blood human beings but some sort of superordinary beings. Other examples of *angeloi* of Yahweh are the burning bush of Exodus 3, the “man” who appeared to Abraham in Genesis 19, and the “angel” who wrestled with Jacob in Genesis 32. Because of God’s manifesting Himself in some form and manner to these human beings, we can conclude that some Jews were under the impression that the Messiah would likewise be a superordinary and indestructible being, an “*angelos* (angel) of Yahweh” like those of the Old Testament, who obviously then would not die on a cross. Instead, the “*angelos* of God” as the Messiah would only crush the Jews’ and his enemies, leading the Jews of Paul’s day to the conclusion that Jesus, the crucified “Messiah,” could not possibly be the Messiah.

In contrast, Paul in this letter is arguing that the Messiah is an ordinary human being like David and Solomon, albeit morally perfect and the “reproduction of [God’s] identity,” i.e., God within the creation (cf. Hebrews 1:3). In chapter 1, Paul demonstrates that Jesus as the Son of God has greater honor and a greater role within the creation than any of the *angeloi* of Yahweh, the temporary theophanies of God, because he will exist eternally and rule over God’s property, the whole creation, including and especially the eternal Kingdom of God comprised of both Jewish and Gentile believers. Nevertheless, in chapter 2, Paul will use Psalm 8 to argue that Jesus is less than the *angeloi* of Yahweh, the temporary

theophanies of God, because they refer to the transcendent Creator Himself and His authority. Thus, because Jesus is an ordinary man who died and yet who rules over the whole creation, he still is less in authority than the transcendent Creator. Jesus as the Son of God submits to the authority of Yahweh but also plays a much greater role within the creation than the theophanies of Yahweh by having become a faithful high priest who propitiates God's anger with his sacrifice and offering of himself and intercedes for sinners by obtaining God's eternal mercy and forgiveness for them. Paul is therefore also implying that no *angelos* of Yahweh is ever assigned the place or role of sitting at God's right hand. This is a permanent and eternal place and role for this person, who is nevertheless an icon and representation of God within the creation.

¹² ὅσῳ διαφορώτερον παρ' αὐτοὺς κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα – “Name” in the Bible refers to all that is involved in describing a person, i.e., his personhood, character, role, and function within all reality. Therefore, the transcendent Creator, God the Father, obviously has the greatest “name.” Then, while His proxy as ruler of the universe, the Son of God, has a “name” a little lower than God's (cf. Psalm 8:4,5; Hebrews 2:5-8), he still has a greater role and function than any of the temporary *angeloi* of God, such as the burning bush of Exodus 3.

Plus, this particular Son of God, Jesus, is both the permanent and eternal manifestation of God within the creation and also the eternal ruler of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, the name or title of Son of God involves the right to rule over God's creation (cf. Hebrews 2:5-9; Psalm 8), a name and role which Jesus “inherited” and acquired by suffering death on the cross for the sins of his people (cf. Romans 1:4). To have the name “Son” is greater than having the name “*angelos*,” i.e., “messenger,” because the final Son's role is to die and rise from the dead in order to provide eternal mercy for sinners and then to rule over God's creation and bring order and justice to it for former sinful human beings and for all eternity.

Hebrews 8:6 he has now obtained a superior service (διαφορώτερα τέτυχεν λειτουργίας), inasmuch as he is indeed the mediator of a better Covenant, which has been legislated on the basis of better promises.

¹³ Τίτι γὰρ εἶπέν ποτε τῶν ἀγγέλων υἱός μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε – Psalm 2, cited as a Psalm of David (Acts 4:25), was written to extol God at the coronation of Solomon, the new king of Israel who succeeded his father David. Thus, David says that God gave birth so to speak to Solomon as His “Son” when Solomon was crowned king. Consequently, Solomon, a mere human being (even sinful human being in this case) and king of Israel was greater than all the *angeloi* of Yahweh, the theophanies of God, because of his right and responsibility to be God's proxy on earth and ruler over the entire creation (as stated by David in Psalm 8 and confirmed by Paul in Hebrews 2:5-9 when he quotes Psalm 8).

And for God to say that He “gave birth” to Solomon and, by implication, the subsequent Sons of God, the kings of Israel, indicates a greater status for these men than any of the *angeloi* of Yahweh, who were temporary created manifestations of God. This is because of the role of the Sons of God, not because of their ontological condition. Their role was not just to communicate certain important information from the transcendent Creator, as the theophanies did, but was to exercise the same authority as an actual government over other human beings and the rest of the creation.

¹⁴ καὶ πάλιν ἐγὼ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν – 2 Samuel 7 lays out the Davidic Covenant that God made with David, first, explicitly in regard to Solomon as the Son of God (although David was the Son of God also – cf. Psalm 89), and, ultimately, in regard to Jesus, the final and eternal Son of God and king of both Israel and the eternal Kingdom of God. God borrowed, so to speak, the idea that He had already written into His story regarding the kings of the Ancient Near Eastern empires, who were each considered the Son of the people's chief god and therefore had the right and responsibility to rule over the god's property, which, in the case of Yahweh, was and is the whole creation (cf. Psalm 8; Hebrews 2:5-9).

Clearly, Paul is not interested in demonstrating that Jesus is the co-eternal 2nd person of the trinity. Otherwise, he would have made a direct trinitarian statement rather than focusing on the Davidic Covenant. Indeed, Paul's argument in this letter pertains to Jesus' role and status as the very human king and high priest of the Davidic Covenant and New Covenant respectively, not to his prior existence or co-eternity with God the Father.

God never stated or made one of His *angeloi* or theophanies a “Son of God” and ruler of Israel, the world, and the creation. He reserved this role for only the human kings who have been descendants of David, ending finally in Jesus, who also made purification for sins by his death on the cross. And the position and role of being God's proxy (along with dying to become a high priest for God's people for Jesus) is what gives any Davidic king and especially Jesus the greater status than any *angelos* or theophany.

¹⁵ ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην – cf. Psalm 89:27 where God calls David not only His Son but also His firstborn, the one who rules over the creation as God's proxy and deputy. God led each Davidic king into the “inhabited world” and “inhabited earth” (τὴν οἰκουμένην), so that each king was God's firstborn and, therefore, His Son. Thus, εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην means, in the final analysis, into the arena in which the Son of God as the Davidic king has God's authority and influence, i.e., his dominion that involves his rightful rule over the entire creation (cf. Psalm 8), the rule which God has granted him through the Davidic Covenant by calling him and appointing him His “Son.”

But God is going to bring/lead Jesus again (πάλιν) into the Davidic arena when he returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel and truly begins the ages of the eternal Kingdom of God (cf. Hebrews 2:5). Thus, God's calling each Davidic king His Son culminates in God's “bringing” and “leading” the final king and eternal firstborn Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, into the “inhabited world” at his return when all the *angeloi* of Yahweh (wind, rain, etc.) will effectively bow their knee to him because he will rule over them (even the burning bush to some extent because, after all, it is only a

bush ontologically that had a temporary role as a theophany of God).

Consequently, Paul's argument is not only that the crucified Messiah is our only sufficient and eternal propitiatory offering to God, but he also will come again in order to complete his role and become the king of the restored Kingdom of Israel and then of the eternal earth.

Psalm 89:27 "I also shall make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth."

¹⁶ λέγει καὶ προσκυνήσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ – The superscription before Psalm 97 in the Septuagint reads, "For David, when his land is established," thus indicating that when the psalmist writes "Yahweh reigns" in v. 1, he is speaking not only of the transcendent God whose name is Yahweh, but also of his deputy on earth, David as the Son of God and king of Israel.

Psalm 97:7 Let all those be ashamed who serve graven images, who boast themselves of idols; worship Him, all you gods (עֲלֵהֶם כָּל־לִלְוֵי־יְהוָה; Septuagint – προσκυνήσατε αὐτῷ, πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ).

I think that proper way to understand this verse is by realizing that the ANE people "worshiped," which is to say looked to only the natural elements and forces within the creation, such as the wind, the weather, the sun, and even death, as that on which they ultimately relied for life, happiness, meaning, and fulfillment during their existence on earth. Thus, they called these natural forces "gods" (עֲלֵהֶם, *elohim*), the same word that the OT uses to refer to the one true God, Yahweh. This is why the Septuagint translates *elohim* with "His *angeloi*," i.e., God's created messengers who communicate information about Him to human beings. This, in a sense, includes the theophanies of God, such as the man at Abraham's tent in Genesis 19 and the burning bush who spoke to Moses in Exodus 3. As a result, the psalmist in Psalm 97 is encouraging all the "things" which people "worship" and that are other than God Himself and that God the Creator has created to worship and serve their Creator, Yahweh.

By inference, these same created objects and forces should "worship" and "serve" God's proxy, the Davidic king of Israel. This would include even the objects whom God used as props, e.g., the burning bush, within His story. Therefore, in line with the Septuagint, the false gods, as aspects of nature, are like the *angeloi* of God. They are "winds" and "ministers" of Yahweh (cf. Psalm 104:4 and Hebrews 1:7). It is consequently appropriate for the false gods and the *angeloi* of God as created things to "worship," i.e., show respect to and serve, Yahweh and the Davidic king, even David and, ultimately, Jesus, since the king of Israel has a higher status and greater role than the theophanies of God who temporarily serve the people to whom God is appearing.

This also makes the most sense when we consider that the created reality is ontologically completely different from God, so that even the *angeloi* of God, e.g., the burning bush, were of created ontology and not of transcendent ontology. They were ontologically no greater than wind or fire. However, they were manifestations of Yahweh. Thus, the point in this passage is that Jesus is of created ontology, i.e., merely an ordinary human being, but he plays a greater role than the temporary, created theophanies of God. He is not only God within the creation but also the ruler and high priest of God's people for all eternity in the Kingdom of God. This is something that none of the theophanies per se can claim.

The Septuagint of Deuteronomy 32:43 is longer than the Hebrew text and includes the statement, καὶ ἐνισχυσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι θεοῦ (= and let all the *angeloi* of God strengthen Him), which is to say, let all the created elements provide help in God's carrying out His plans and purposes. Thus, it is similar to Psalm 97:7 and to Paul's point in this passage that the Son of God is greater in status and role than any other person or thing, including the theophanies of God, within the creation.

¹⁷ καὶ πρὸς μὲν τοὺς ἀγγέλους ᾧ λέγει ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πῦρ καὶ φλόγα – Here Paul quotes Psalm 104:4, where the whole Psalm is about God's sovereign creation and control of all the natural world that serves all living beings, including and most especially humans. Thus, the winds of nature and fire are God's *angeloi* and "messengers," as well as His servants and "ministers," in that they serve human beings by helping to provide temporary existence for temporary purposes that are far less than what the Son of God will do when he rules over the universe. Therefore, they can be called "messengers" (*angeloi*) of God, like the theophanies of God in the Old Testament (cf. Hebrews 1:14).

But I think that the NAS95 and other English translations are misleading. Whereas some of them translate Psalm 104:4 with "He makes the winds His messengers, flaming fire His ministers," here, in Hebrews 1:7, they transpose the words, "Who makes His angels winds, and His ministers a flame of fire." I think the point in the Psalm is that God can take anything within the creation and use it for whatever purpose He has. Paul is saying that God does the same thing temporarily with theophanies, while He uses the Son eternally for the specific purpose of ruling over Israel and the creation and providing the sinful Jews with eternal mercy and forgiveness through his death on the cross.

I think this is Paul's point in **2 Thessalonians 1:7**, "and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire (μετ' ἀγγέλων δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ ᾧ ἐν πυρὶ φλογός, ' = with His *angeloi* of power by means of a flaming fire), **8** dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus." [When Jesus returns, God is going to create fire as His own theophany to assist Jesus in destroying Israel's enemies.]

Consequently, Jesus' role as an eternal incarnation of God and the Messiah is greater than that of not only wind and fire, but also the temporary manifestations of God such as the burning bush. This may seem quite shocking that the Bible speaks of the forces of nature such as wind and fire as being on the same par as the manifestations of God when it comes to their fulfilling the same kind of role of being servants and messengers of God. Yet, when it is all said and

done, a “messenger” of God within the created reality is still simply playing the role of a messenger of God, while the Son of God, the Davidic king, plays the role of both messenger (teacher) and eternal ruler (and high priest, as we will see) of the creation within the creation with the same authority as God Himself.

Psalm 104:4 He makes the winds His messengers (מַלְאָכָיו רִיחָוּ) (ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα), flaming fire His ministers/servants (שָׂרֵי אֵשׁ לִפְנֵי) (καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πῦρ φλέγον).

¹⁸ πρὸς δὲ τὸν υἱόν – Again, Paul has in mind the Davidic king, not the 2nd person of the trinity. This passage and the upcoming quote from Psalm 45 are about any king of Israel as a fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, not about the trinity. On the one hand, wind and fire, even the burning bush of Exodus 3, are a particular “messenger” of God that plays a temporary role within the creation. On the other hand, Paul will use the following quote from Psalm 45 to indicate the greater role of the Son of God, who is the Davidic king. And, of course, Jesus is the Son who, at his return, rules over the restored Kingdom of Israel of Revelation 20 and then over the eternal earth of the Kingdom of God of Revelation 21-22.

¹⁹ ὁ θρόνος σου ὁ θεός – Psalm 45 was written to honor one of the Davidic kings of Israel during his wedding. Paul quotes the Septuagint of vs. 6-7.

Psalm 45:6 Your throne, O God, (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ) (ὁ θρόνος σου, ὁ θεός) is forever and ever (עַד וְעַד) (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος); a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom (רָבֶדְךָ עֹלָם) (ῥάβδος εὐθύτητος ἡ ῥάβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου).

45:7 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness (ἠγάπησας δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἐμίσησας ἀνομίαν). Therefore God, Your God has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your fellows (διὰ τοῦτο ἔχρισέν σε ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεός σου ἔλαιον ἀγαλλιᾶσεως παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου).

The Davidic, human king is called “God” (יְהוָה, Elohim) (ὁ θεός) in v. 6 (“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom”), because, according to the Davidic Covenant (2 Samuel 7; Psalms 2,8,89), the king of Israel is God’s Son, proxy, representative, and stand-in, who rules over the creation with the authority of God, i.e., as God’s deputy. Paul is thus saying that the Son of God, specifically Jesus, is greater than all *angels*, i.e., manifestations of God in the Old Testament, that were merely temporary servants of God as wind or fire might be. Starting with David, the king of Israel was concerned about righteousness and morality, for which reason God anointed (*messiahed, christed*) the king. Therefore, David, Solomon, Rehoboam, et al. were each God’s temporary Anointed Messiah, and Jesus is the final and eternal Anointed Messiah.

²⁰ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος (עַד וְעַד) – The Davidic kingdom of the nation of Israel will last for a specified length of time, i.e., for as long as God wants it to exist on the present earth, especially when God fulfills His promise to Abraham to make his physical descendants the “great nation” of the world. This will be during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 and until God destroys the present realm to make room so to speak for a new creation, which will contain an eternal earth. This new earth will survive into eternity and will be the eternal Kingdom of God in the new realm that God will create after the current one.

²¹ καὶ ἡ ῥάβδος τῆς εὐθύτητος ῥάβδος τῆς βασιλείας σου – The staff of the Son of God symbolizes not only his sovereignty over the Kingdom of Israel but also his concern for moral uprightness within his kingdom. This was supposed to be the case for all the Davidic kings in OT times, but only Jesus will exercise his rule with complete and perfect righteousness and morality.

Then, eventually Jesus will rule over only people who are morally perfect on the eternal earth of the future Kingdom of God after the “great nation” of the Jews exists for as long as God wants it to do so.

²² ἠγάπησας δικαιοσύνην καὶ ἐμίσησας ἀνομίαν διὰ τοῦτο ἔχρισέν σε ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεός σου ἔλαιον ἀγαλλιᾶσεως παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου – It was and is the Davidic king’s responsibility to lead his subjects in fundamentally being interested in moral purity as defined by God. Because the king has fulfilled this responsibility and because of his status as God’s proxy on earth, the psalmist addresses him with the vocative case, referring to him as God, i.e., ruling with the authority of the transcendent Creator. He also tells him that God has anointed him with oil, which is to say that he is God’s Messiah and Christ. In addition, this is the oil of gladness, referring to the fact that God is pleased with him as even God says of Jesus, for example at his baptism, “You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased” (Luke 3:22).

This human being as God’s Messiah clearly has a higher status than all other of his fellow Jews, because he has been granted by God the authority to rule over not only the Kingdom of Israel, but also eventually the whole earth and the entire creation.

This also makes the “Son” of greater status and with a greater role than any other created element, including the temporary theophanies who never sacrificed themselves to God and died for the forgiveness of sins and who never in and of themselves become the king of Israel and the ruler of the creation within the creation.

²³ καὶ – At this place in his argument, Paul is continuing from the previous verses what he is saying about the God of the king of Israel as the Creator of the cosmos and grantor of the Davidic kingdom, who Himself will survive the destruction of the present creation. Paul quotes Psalm 102 where Yahweh, God the Father and the transcendent Creator, is addressed in the 2nd person and is said to be eternal, while His current creation is temporary. Thus, Paul implies that his readers, who are struggling to continue to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, can be assured that God’s plans for the Son of God, specifically for Jesus as the final and permanent Son of God, to rule over the future restored Kingdom of Israel and the future eternal Kingdom of God will come to fruition.

Then, in v. 13, Paul will basically say, “Now, in light of who God is as the transcendent Creator and as I have quoted from Psalm 102, notice that the Son, and not any of the *angeloi*, sits at God’s right hand to rule over the universe.” This makes the Son superior in his role to the *angeloi*.

²⁴ σὺ κατ’ ἀρχάς, κύριε, τὴν γῆν ἐθεμελίωσας, καὶ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου εἰσιν οἱ οὐρανοί –

Psalm 102:25 “Of old You founded the earth,
and the heavens are the work of Your hands.

102:26 “Even they will perish, but You endure;
and all of them will wear out like a garment;
like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.

102:27 “But You are the same,
and Your years will not come to an end.

Psalm 101:26 κατ’ ἀρχάς σὺ, κύριε, τὴν γῆν ἐθεμελίωσας,
καὶ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου εἰσιν οἱ οὐρανοί·

101:27 αὐτοὶ ἀπολοῦνται, σὺ δὲ διαμενεῖς,
καὶ πάντες ὡς ἱμάτιον παλαιωθήσονται,
καὶ ὡσεὶ περιβόλαιον ἀλλάξεις αὐτοῦς,
καὶ ἀλλαγήσονται

101:28 σὺ δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς εἶ, καὶ τὰ ἔτη σου οὐκ ἐκλείψουσιν.

Paul is quoting directly from the Septuagint’s translation of Psalm 102:25 (הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ יְהוָה יִסְדָּתָהּ וְיִמְעָשָׁהּ יְיָ יְהוָה יִסְדָּתָהּ וְיִמְעָשָׁהּ).

The Psalmist is declaring God to be the maker of the present reality that includes the earth and all that is “above” it in the “heavens.” The entire created cosmos is God’s cosmos. He has brought everything created into existence and sovereignly rules over it.

²⁵ αὐτοὶ ἀπολοῦνται, σὺ δὲ διαμενεῖς, καὶ πάντες ὡς ἱμάτιον παλαιωθήσονται – cf. Psalm 102:27a. This is also a direct quote from the Septuagint. (יְיָ יְהוָה יִסְדָּתָהּ וְיִמְעָשָׁהּ יְיָ יְהוָה יִסְדָּתָהּ וְיִמְעָשָׁהּ). The Psalmist and Paul are saying that God is eternal while the creation is slated to disappear—for God’s purposes.

²⁶ καὶ ὡσεὶ περιβόλαιον ἔλιξεις αὐτούς, ὡς ἱμάτιον καὶ ἀλλαγήσονται (יְיָ יְהוָה יִסְדָּתָהּ וְיִמְעָשָׁהּ יְיָ יְהוָה יִסְדָּתָהּ וְיִמְעָשָׁהּ) σὺ δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς εἶ καὶ τὰ ἔτη σου οὐκ ἐκλείψουσιν (יְיָ יְהוָה יִסְדָּתָהּ וְיִמְעָשָׁהּ יְיָ יְהוָה יִסְדָּתָהּ וְיִמְעָשָׁהּ) – cf. Psalm 102:27b-28. Again, this is pretty much a direct quote from the Septuagint. Paul’s point is that God is permanent and indestructible, unlike the creation, which will eventually be changed by God.

Two options for what is the change that the Psalmist means – 1) This temporary creation will be destroyed and an entirely new and eternal one created by God which will include an earth on which Jesus will rule over all believers from all history (cf. 2 Peter 3 and Revelation 21), or 2) This age will end with another new age within this temporary creation, where the new age will be that of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 and much more enjoyable than the one in which we are now living.

#1 certainly is what all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, will enjoy (and what most people think is meant here), but within the Jewish context of this letter, it may very well be that the Psalmist and Paul are emphasizing God’s first promise to Abraham to make his physical descendants, the nation of Israel, the “great nation” of and on this earth—even in chapter 4 regarding God’s rest.

Therefore, the implication is that God’s plans and purposes, especially with respect to the Son, are permanent and indestructible also. Consequently, the Son is permanent and indestructible, unlike the *angeloi* of Yahweh, i.e., the theophanies of God which were only temporary, thus implying the greater status of the Son over the *angeloi* as Paul has been arguing. And in this case, anyone who has the title “God,” Jesus as the future king of the millennial kingdom Israel (like the former Davidic kings of Israel), will also go on into eternity with the transcendent, eternal God and His plans.

I think also that it is important to see Paul’s argument as referring to Jesus as the very human and sacrificed high priest of the Jewish people for the sake of God’s first promise to Abraham, which none of the theophanies was ever directed to become as the Davidic king was. Certainly, David and Solomon, for example, were very human kings, albeit sinful in nature. But they were never assigned the responsibility to become high priests for Israel in lieu of the Levitical priests with the animal sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant. Only Jesus takes on this responsibility as part of his role within the Davidic Covenant and pertaining to the New Covenant.

²⁷ πρὸς τίνα δὲ τῶν ἀγγέλων εἰρηκέν ποτε κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου

Psalm 110:1 Yahweh says to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet (κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου, ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου).”

Paul quotes the Septuagint of Psalm 110:1 exactly. He referred to this concept in v. 3 of chapter 1, and he will explain it in more detail in chapters 5-10. Therefore, in light of who God is as quoted from Psalm 102, notice that the Son and not any of the *angeloi*, i.e., theophanies and created elements such as wind and fire, sits at God’s right hand to rule over the creation. This obviously makes him as an ordinary human being to be superior in his role to the *angeloi* (cf. chapter 2). Indeed, this statement from Psalm 110 is central to Paul’s argument that a suffering Son of God is biblically necessary as opposed to a superordinary Messiah who is an *angelos* of Yahweh. Thus, the Messiah is David’s “Lord,” the Son of God, who is not only the king and ruler over the creation, but also the high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (cf. Psalm 110:4).

Nevertheless, the Messiah, i.e., Jesus of Nazareth, must offer himself and does offer himself to God through death in order to qualify to intervene on behalf of sinners at the final judgment. As a result, it is Jesus, not any of the temporary theophanies of Yahweh, who sits at the right hand of God so to speak, which is a position reserved for the co-ruler of God's property, the creation. And this is the God who sovereignly controls the existence and state of being of each element and thing within the creation, whether it currently exists or is being destroyed to make room so to speak for the new heavens and the new earth that will exist into eternity. Therefore, Jesus is more exalted than the *angeloi* of Yahweh because they were temporary "manifestations" of God who never sit at God's right hand, while the Son is an eternal "manifestation" of God, indeed a "manifestation" and individual person who plays the role of the king of the eternal Kingdom of God.

Also, God will crush all the enemies of the king of Israel and metaphorically turn them into a footstool for his feet. Never again will the king's enemies, and, by extrapolation, the Jews' enemies ever achieve some kind of superiority and ascendancy over them—as the Jewish leaders and the Romans did with respect to Jesus and as the Romans and others have done with respect to the Jews.

²⁸ οὐχὶ πάντες εἰσὶν λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα εἰς ᾧ διακονίαν ἀποστελλόμενα διὰ τοὺς μέλλοντας κληρονομεῖν σωτηρίαν – The *angeloi* of Yahweh as theophanies of the transcendent Creator were sent to present important messages to the present and future descendants of Abraham ("the coming ones" – τοὺς μέλλοντας), the nation of Israel, regarding how they were to "inherit" and obtain "salvation," which in this letter includes both promises that God makes to Abraham of not only the earthly Kingdom of Israel under the rule of the Messiah, but also eternal life under his rule also. Thus, the theophanies "serve" only temporarily, like wind (λειτουργικὰ πνεύματα) and fire (cf. 1:7), while the Son of God, Jesus, serves and rules permanently and eternally as God's proxy within the creation over the future restored Kingdom of Israel and over the new, eternal earth (cf. Revelation 20 & 21).

Paul is asking, "Isn't this all that the theophanies (and created things such as winds and fire) are?" And the answer is, "Yes."

²⁹ διὰ τοῦτο – Because the permanent and kingly/priestly Son has more clout than the *angeloi* of Yahweh, the temporary theophanies of the transcendent Creator, it is all that much more important to listen to him in comparison to what God said in the Old Testament through His theophanies—even those theophanic messengers who communicated the Mosaic Covenant to Moses and the entire nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai, an event that obviously came with much more immediate and dramatic fanfare than Jesus' first appearance—except for the multiple angels who praising God above the shepherds near his birth in Bethlehem. But just wait until his return and the glory that God will display when He destroys Israel's enemies and sets up Jesus' kingdom on the land of Israel and over the whole world.

³⁰ δεῖ περισσοτέρως προσέχειν ἡμᾶς τοῖς ἀκουσθεῖσιν – Paul is referring both to himself as an apostle and authoritative spokesman for the Messiah and to his Jewish readers, who have heard from other authoritative spokesmen, i.e., the other apostles, the message of Jesus as the Messiah and believed it to be true. In other words, even though Paul is an apostle, in a sense he differs from the original apostles in the midst of his having done his own study of the OT, which he mentions in Galatians 1 & 2.

Therefore, if the Jews of the Old Testament were obligated to listen to the *angeloi* and theophanies of God when they spoke, how much more important it is to listen to the final Son of God, God's permanent and eternal proxy within the creation and the one through whom God has spoken "in the last of these days" (cf. Hebrews 1:2).

³¹ μήποτε παραρῶμεν. – The verb is possibly a nautical term, i.e., like a ship without a rudder or mooring. The primary purpose of this letter of Hebrews is to exhort the readers to continue believing in Jesus as the very human crucified and resurrected Messiah as their high priest and to confront them with the consequences both of perseverance of their belief, which is eternal life, and of giving up their belief, which is eternal condemnation and destruction by God. Obviously, Paul wants them to persevere.

It is always a mental and willful exercise for Christians to grasp both God's sovereign predestination of those whom He chooses to gain eternal salvation and the existential and theoretical possibility that any sinful human could abandon his belief in God and Jesus, thereby missing out on eternal salvation. This theoretical possibility and the biblical authors' discussing it to the point of urging their readers and listeners to struggle against giving up their belief so as to persevere in it is part of how God has designed the created reality.

Here, we see Paul encourage his Jewish readers to listen now to the New Covenant message that has recently come through **Jesus** and **his apostles** even more closely than they have listened in the past to the fifteen-hundred-year old Mosaic Covenant message that came through **Moses**.

³² εἰ γὰρ ὁ δι' ᾧ ἀγγέλων λαλήθεις λόγος – This is referring to the message (λόγος) of the Mosaic Covenant, dramatically communicated in the midst of the various and multiple theophanies of thunder, lightening, thick cloud, and a loud trumpet sound, i.e., the manifestation of Yahweh as the transcendent Creator using natural, created elements that were familiar to the Israelites to emphasize the importance of what He was saying to them (cf. Exodus 19:16). These were all *angeloi* of Yahweh and "ministering winds" so to speak (cf. 1:14).

[Acts 7:53](#) you who received the Torah as ordained by angels (εἰς διατάγας (διατάσσω) ἀγγέλων), and yet did not keep it.

[Gal. 3:19](#) Why the Covenant then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels (διαταγείς (διατάσσω) δι' ἀγγέλων) by the agency of a mediator [Moses], until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

[Acts 13:48](#) When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had

been appointed to eternal life (ὅσοι ἦσαν τεταγμένοι (τάσσω) εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον) believed.

2 Thessalonians 1:7, “and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire (μετ’ ἀγγέλων δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ ἑν πυρὶ φλογός, = with His *angeloi* of power by means of a flaming fire), **8** dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.” [When Jesus returns, God is going to create fire as His own theophany to assist Jesus in destroying Israel’s enemies.]

Genesis 16:7 Now the angel of Yahweh found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. **8** He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from and where are you going?” And she said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.” **9** Then the angel of Yahweh said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority.” **10** Moreover, the angel of Yahweh said to her, “I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.”

Genesis 21:17 God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.

Genesis 22:11 But the angel of Yahweh called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

Genesis 22:15 Then the angel of Yahweh called to Abraham a second time from heaven,

Genesis 24:7 “Yahweh, the God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, ‘To your descendants I will give this land,’ He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there.

Genesis 31:11 “Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am.’

Exodus 3:2 The angel of Yahweh appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed.

Exodus 14:19 The angel of God, who had been going before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them.

Numbers 22:31 Then Yahweh opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angle of Yahweh standing in the way with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed all the way to the ground.

Judges 2:1 Now the angel of Yahweh came up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, “I brought you up out of Egypt and led you into the land which I have sworn to your fathers; and I said, ‘I will never break My covenant with you, [many times in the book of Judges]

Judges 6:22 When Gideon saw that he was the angel of Yahweh, he said, “Alas, Adonai Yahweh! For now I have seen the angel of Yahweh face to face.”

³³ ἐγένετο βέβαιος καὶ πᾶσα παράβασις καὶ παρακοή ἔλαβεν ἔνδικον μισθοποδοσίαν – God was serious about the 613 commandments that He gave the Israelites in the Mosaic Covenant. As a result, every act of disobedience by them that we have recorded for us in the Old Testament incurred the temporal and earthly punishment, literally “just wage,” that God stipulated in the covenant (cf. Hebrews 10:35; 11:26). These responses of “deserved justice” were from both God and the Israelites, so that Paul must be assuming that justice was carried out against violators of the Mosaic Covenant even if the violations and punishments have not been recorded for us in the Old Testament.

His point is to say that the message that came through temporary *angeloi* was definitely God’s message and deserved every Jew’s close attention in order to avoid His justice and punishment.

³⁴ πὼς ἡμεῖς ἐκφευζόμεθα τηλικαύτης ἀμελήσαντες σωτηρίας – Because we are talking about a salvation through the message that God has spoken *through the eternal Son*, not through mere temporary *angeloi* and theophanies, and regarding eternal salvation, that begins with the “great nation” of Israel and continues on the eternal earth in the final age (cf. Hebrews 1:1-3), and not just rescue from Egypt, this is obviously a much greater salvation for the Jews. So not only does **Jesus** have more clout than **theophanies** in the Old Testament, even those at Mt. Sinai, his message of eternal salvation is ultimately more significant also.

However, the contrast here that Paul is drawing is between the justice of the Mosaic Covenant and the salvation of Jesus through the New Covenant (cf. Hebrews 7 and following). If it is important to listen to a message from God through temporary **theophanies** about earthly justice, how much more important is it to listen to a message from Him through the eternal **Son** about eternal salvation? This is the difference between the value of and emphasis on the Mosaic Covenant and **Moses** and those of the New Covenant and **Jesus**.

³⁵ ἥτις ἀρχὴν λαβοῦσα λαλεῖσθαι διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ὑπὸ τῶν ἀκουσάντων εἰς ἡμᾶς ἐβεβαιώθη – The message of eternal salvation (feminine λαβοῦσα referring to the feminine σωτηρίας as a metonymy standing for the message) was originally proclaimed by **Jesus** as the eternal **Son** of God and Messiah in person (cf. Hebrews 1:1-3—and in contrast to the message existing of the Mosaic Covenant in the Old Testament but lacking the truly personal touch of an actual human being who is speaking the message). Then, he commissioned his **apostles**, including Paul, who heard him proclaim the truth about salvation and eternal life, to present the same message with the same accuracy and level of authority (cf. John 13-17). As a result, the **apostles** are the only authoritative spokesmen for the message of salvation spoken through Jesus, and they fulfilled their responsibility by proclaiming it as if **Jesus** himself were doing so.

³⁶ συνεπιμαρτυροῦντος τοῦ θεοῦ σημείοις ὅτε καὶ τέρασιν καὶ ποικίλαις δυνάμεσιν καὶ πνεύματος ἀγίου μερισμοῖς κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ θέλησιν – God confirmed the authority and accuracy of the apostles’ message regarding Jesus as the permanent Son of God by performing miracles through them (as he did with Jesus to confirm that he was the Messiah) and by distributing gifts of the Holy Spirit in the midst of their teaching, e.g., the unique gift of tongues,

also to confirm the genuineness of their message. The implied question is, “Isn’t this worth something that these designated hearers of Jesus’ message proclaimed it with the accompaniment of God’s miraculous works to confirm the truth of the message and the authority of the messengers?” And the obvious answer is a resounding, “Yes!”

“according to His desire” indicates that God sovereignly controlled all that the apostles said and did for the purpose of revealing the truth of Jesus as the Son of God through them. Thus, similarly to how Jesus fulfilled his role as the Son of God by becoming a propitiatory offering for sin, the apostles fulfilled their roles as authoritative spokesmen by being involved in miraculous events in the midst of their orally conveying their message to others—such as Paul’s readers.

³⁷ Οὐ γὰρ ἀγγέλους ὑπέταξεν τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν. περὶ ἧς λαλοῦμεν – The implication of Hebrews 1 is that the Jewish unbelievers, who are persecuting these Christians, believe that the Messiah will be a superordinary being like the theophanies of the Old Testament. However, Paul reminds his readers that God has not said that a theophany will rule over the Kingdom of God, starting with the millennial kingdom and that culminates in new heavens and a new earth that lasts for eternity (cf. 1:6,8; 12:27-29; 13:14) (“the future inhabited world” of mainly the “great nation” of Israel (in this context) and then the eternal earth). Instead, He has said that an actual descendant of David will. This also means that a very ordinary human being (ontologically) will be God’s proxy, the **Son** of God and final king of Israel—even someone like Solomon as Psalm 5 declares, because it was written by David after the events of 2 Samuel 7 when God made the Davidic Covenant with him and said that Solomon would be His “**Son**.” Therefore, part of the point is that the very human **Son** of God is greater in his role as the ruler of the future world than the temporary *angeloi* and theophanies of God.

Paul also says that it is this *future* world which his readers and he have been discussing.

³⁸ διεμαρτύρατο δὲ πού τις λέγων – Paul now goes on to demonstrate from Psalm 8 that it is the Son and not an *angelos* (or *angeloi*) who will rule the future created reality that includes living human beings. David wrote this psalm after God had declared in 2 Samuel 7 that his son, Solomon, would be God’s **Son** and ruler over the creation, implying that future human descendants of his would also perform this role. Maybe it made sense to David and other Jews that the pagans believed their kings to the proxy of their chief god, because they were both part of the created reality. But the fact of human proxies for the transcendent creator so awed and humbled David that he wrote Psalm 8 (cf. David’s prayer immediately following the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7:18-29).

Paul says that “someone has solemnly declared (διεμαρτύρατο),” meaning that David was very serious when he testified to what God had done by making the Davidic Covenant with him and by declaring that his son would be God’s Son and proxy on the earth. Remarkable stuff!

This psalm is not referring to the creation mandate of Genesis 1:26-28 and the role of man in general but specifically to the Davidic Covenant and the role of the kings of Israel who rule over the creation. This is clear also by virtue of the fact that Paul is not discussing the present world but “the future inhabited world” of the eternal Kingdom of God (v. 5), starting with the “great nation” of Israel on the land of Israel when Jesus returns.

Acts 2:40 And with many other words he solemnly testified (**διεμαρτύρατο**) and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!”

³⁹ ὅτι ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος ὅτι μιμήσκη αὐτοῦ. ἡ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ὅτι ἐπισκέπη αὐτόν – David is referring to the Son of God, the king of Israel according to the Davidic Covenant, who is from mankind, i.e., who is simply a lowly, real human being. Therefore, he is thinking specifically of Solomon, his son who will succeed him on the throne of Israel and will rule over the universe with an authority that is just a little less than God’s. This is because the Davidic king as the Son of God is God’s representative and proxy on the earth—as was the case for the kings of other nations and empires in the ANE. According to their belief system, they ruled their chief god’s property with an authority that was just a little less than that of the god himself. In the situation of Israel, God is the chief and only God, and the Davidic king rules over primarily the land of Israel, and secondarily over the rest of the world and the entire universe. That is a lot of authority and territory for a mere created human being.

⁴⁰ ἡλάττωσας αὐτὸν βραχύ τι παρ’ ἀγγέλους (Septuagint also) (מְעַלְמֵהוּ מְעַלְמֵהוּ) – There are two issues in this quote from Psalm 8:5. First is that βραχύ refers either to time (NAS95, NRSV) or position (KJV, NIV). Position makes more sense in Psalm 8 and here. God has exalted Solomon, David’s son, and David’s Messianic descendants, who are mere men, to the position of ruling over God’s creation, i.e., a position that is a little lower than God’s own position of authority as the transcendent Creator.

Second, the Hebrew text uses מְעַלְמֵהוּ, meaning “than *elohim*”, while the Septuagint uses παρ’ ἀγγέλους, “than *angeloi*.” The word *elohim* can refer either to God or to gods, while *angeloi* can refer either to theophanies of Yahweh or to conventional angels. It makes more sense in this psalm that the Septuagint translators are referring to theophanies and therefore to Yahweh himself. Thus, David and Paul are both saying that the Son of God, who is from humanity, is a little less in his position and authority than Yahweh by virtue of his ruling over Yahweh’s creation with the authority just under that of Yahweh.

Such is the notion that is so humbling and awe inspiring to David that he feels compelled to write this psalm, a statement of the exaltation of the very human king of Israel and anointed one, i.e., the Son of God and Messiah.

⁴¹ δόξη καὶ τιμὴ ἐστεφάνωσας αὐτόν, ἡ καὶ κατέστησας αὐτόν ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν σου – In Hebrews 1:10, Paul quoted Psalm 102:25-27 regarding the heavens being the “works of Your hands,” i.e., Yahweh’s creation that He fashioned with His hands so to speak. Here, in the midst of chapter 2, Paul is arguing that Jesus, the final Son of God, was and is an authentic flesh and blood human being (born of a woman and died on the cross, i.e., just as mortal (but not sinful) as any other human being and especially as the physical descendants of Abraham, who will receive God’s

promise of being the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-3).

Then, by quoting Psalm 8:4-6, Paul shows, as David himself stated, that the Son of God has been “appointed over the works of Your hands,” i.e., to rule over the entire creation that Yahweh has made, which will include the land of Israel, the whole earth, and the whole universe.

Thus, God has crowned Solomon and David’s descendants with the glory of ruling over the entire creation, including the works of God’s hands that will be the future realm of the eternal Kingdom of God, the restored Kingdom of Israel just after Jesus returns and then the eternal earth of the new creation afterwards. This is great “glory and honor” for a human being since it is authority that is just a little less than that of the transcendent creator.

And this level of authority and long period of time, eternity, is obviously much more than God grants to any *angeloi* or theophany who appears within the created reality, such as the burning bush of Exodus 3.

⁴² πάντα ὑπέταξας ὑποκάτω τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ – cf. Othmar Keel’s *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (1997), pages 254 & 255, where images of Egyptian art depict the Pharaoh’s sitting on the lap of the chief god Ra with his enemies under his feet and therefore in subjection to him. God “borrows” this ANE imagery to describe what the final Davidic king will experience with respect to not only his enemies but also the entire created reality.

Thus, “all things” are the entire creation, especially the land of Israel and the earth, so that their being under the feet of the Son of God puts him in a position of ruling them without question or opposition. The whole creation will be in subjection to him when God reveals his glory and establishes the Kingdom of God at Jesus’ return.

⁴³ ἐν τῷ γὰρ ὑποτάξαι [αὐτῷ] τὰ πάντα οὐδὲν ἀφῆκεν αὐτῷ ἀνυπότακτον – Again, God has “subjected” all things, the entire creation, to the authority and ruling of the Son of God, who is the Son of Man and king of Israel, even Solomon, of Psalm 8. As a result, Paul is emphasizing the fact that, in Psalm 8, David is stating unequivocally that the very human (and sinful!) Solomon, the Son of Man and therefore the Son of God, along with all his royal descendants and especially the final Son of God, Jesus (who is morally perfect), in contrast to the *angeloi*, have been appointed to rule over the whole of God’s creation with the same level of authority as God Himself—but just a little under that of the transcendent creator.

Plus, the *angeloi* existed temporarily to present important information to the Israelites that pointed to Jesus while Jesus exists eternally to present information of salvation *about himself* for sinful Jews and Gentiles and to rule forever over God’s Kingdom. Thus, David is humbled and awed by such generosity and graciousness by God. Again, this is the point. *Angeloi* serve only by conveying messages and leading the Israelites, e.g., the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. The Son of God, especially the final Son, Jesus, rules over the cosmos and provides eternal salvation to sinners. Clearly, he is greater in his role than the *angeloi*. Thus, he will rule over even the *future* millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 that will culminate in the eternal new heavens and new earth of Revelation 21-22, which is all truly important to all believers, especially to Jewish ones.

And there is “not one thing that is not subject to” the Son of God, which will obviously become clear when Jesus finally returns and establishes the first stage of the Kingdom of God, the “great nation” of Israel and of Jews who will all be believers.

⁴⁴ Νῦν δὲ οὐπω ὁρώμεν αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα ὑποτεταγμένα – Someone, maybe even of his readers who is being persecuted by unbelieving Jews, may want to object and say to Paul, “How can this be true when nothing in the present realm (other than the presence of believers in Jesus, who are constantly being persecuted somewhere in the world!) indicates that Jesus rules over the entire creation?”

And Paul admits this to be the case. The world appears to be far from being “subject” to the Son of God, and this is clear from the fact that “we do not yet see all things as being subject to him.” How many sinful human beings in the world, i.e., most of them (!), are unwilling to subjugate themselves to God, Jesus, and the Bible? Again, most of them! Therefore, it sure does not appear as though Jesus is ruling over any kind of magnificent kingdom right now. And this is true. Because Jesus’ kingdom does not come into existence practically speaking until he returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel and rules over the rest of the world.

Therefore, the Davidic king, the Son of Man and Son of God, does not yet rule over the creation completely, because Jesus has not yet returned to restore the Kingdom of Israel, and the final enemy, death, has not yet been eliminated when God will create the new and permanent realm of the eternal Kingdom of God (cf. Hebrews 1:13;10:13).

This statement by Paul makes the most sense only with the understanding of the concept of the Son of God in the ANE, i.e., the chief god’s proxy who rules over his property and of the concepts of the two promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.

⁴⁵ τὸν δὲ βραχύ τι παρ’ ἀγγέλους ἡλαττωμένον βλέπομεν Ἰησοῦν – As I stated above, the Septuagint translates ⲁⲓⲧⲓⲛⲓⲛⲓ with ἀγγέλους in Psalm 8:5. ἡλαττωμένον is a perfect tense participle so that Paul is referring to Jesus’ having been given a little lower status than that of the *angeloi* of Yahweh, and he still is lower in status than them. But both the Septuagint and Paul mean that the Son of Man, Jesus in this case, is lower in status than the transcendent Creator, God Himself. Why? Because he is a mere human being and not transcendent himself. God can grant him all the authority that He wants, but Jesus will always have authority that is a little lower than God’s and even His theophanies which were manifestations of Him and not of Jesus.

All this to say that Jesus is the Son of God, the Davidic king, who rules over the creation with the authority of God, but even he as the very icon and incarnation of God within the creation never becomes transcendent like Yahweh. He remains God within the creation into eternity (cf. Hebrews 2:7) and therefore “a little lower in status” than the

transcendent Creator Himself, the Father. It is this Jesus, who has “sat down at the right hand of the Great One in the heights” (cf. Hebrews 1:3) whom Paul says that we “see,” i.e., that believers have heard of, believed in, and embraced as their Messiah (and high priest as Paul will go on to explain).

⁴⁶ διὰ τὸ πάθημα τοῦ θανάτου δόξῃ καὶ τιμῇ ἐστεφανωμένον – Solomon was crowned with “glory and honor” simply because God designated him the Son of God according to the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7 (cf. Psalms 2 & 8; Hebrews 2:7). Differently but similarly, Jesus has earned his “glory and honor” and has been designated the Son of God, not only because he is David’s descendant like Solomon, but, ultimately, because he fulfilled his role by suffering death on the cross and offering himself to God on behalf of sinners.

Therefore, unlike Solomon, Jesus is a suffering and crucified king of Israel, and Paul is expressing the main point of this letter with this rather short statement. Jesus’ “coronation” was not like that of Solomon who went through an actual ceremony of making him David’s successor to the throne of Israel. His “coronation” ceremony was the cross and resurrection. This is truly remarkable because the greatest “glory and honor” does not come to people who die, even for their country, but to those who rule and gain tremendous power over people and territory—such as the president or prime minister of a country.

Thus, Jesus qualified to be not only king of the creation but also high priest of sinners, as Paul will go on to demonstrate in chapters 3-10. No other Davidic king was assigned the role of offering himself as a sacrifice who died in order to become everyone’s high priest. Only the final one was. And, again, this is the point of this whole letter. In fact, Paul mentions either the word “death” (5x) or the word “suffer” (3x) a total of eight times in this chapter, because this is a vital part of what makes Jesus unique among all the other Sons of God of Israel. It is by his death as a propitiatory offering and sacrifice for sins that the Jews find mercy and forgiveness from God in order to become the “great nation” of the Abrahamic promise.

It seems, too, that Paul could end his letter after chapter 2 because he has made his two main points—that Jesus is an ordinary human being (and not a theophany who suddenly appears and then soon after disappears) and he died as the basis for the Jews’ (and Gentiles’) eternal salvations. But he will go on in the rest of the letter to highlight Jesus’ role as a high priest “according to the order of Melchizedek.” In other words, he will use David’s own words and a careful analysis of the Mosaic Covenant to prove his point.

⁴⁷ ὅπως ἡ χάριτι θεοῦ ὑπὲρ πάντος γεύσῃται θανάτου. – God’s purpose in having Jesus die was both

- 1) to demonstrate the eventuality of death and, therefore, eternal condemnation that all sinful human beings deserve unless they obtain God’s mercy, and
- 2) so that Jesus could qualify to intervene at the final judgment as part of the work of God’s grace on behalf of those who have genuine belief.

God initiates in people’s minds and hearts to cause them to meet the necessary condition of having a changed heart and authentic belief in Him in order to obtain eternal forgiveness and life from Him. This God does by His “grace.” But just as important, if not more important, is the basis for sinners’ salvation, which is the death of the Messiah. These two elements of the creation story, Jesus’ death and God’s changing people’s hearts, are what God requires in order to provide Jews with the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham to be the “great nation” of human history and in order to provide Jews and Gentiles with the fulfillment of His second promise to Abraham of eternal salvation.

Therefore, the “everyone” of this verse are the sinners who take advantage of Jesus’ death and believe him to be their advocate before God, so that they may take part in the fulfillment of His promises.

⁴⁸ Ἐπρεπεν γὰρ αὐτῷ, δι’ ὃν τὰ πάντα καὶ δι’ οὗ τὰ πάντα, πολλοὺς υἱοὺς εἰς δόξαν ἀγαγόντα – Paul here in this clause is referring to God the Father and not to Jesus. Thus, the capital “H” of “Him” at the beginning of the verse. God the Father and transcendent Creator will lead many human beings to inherit both His property of the eternal Kingdom of God and moral perfection under the rule of Jesus as the king of this kingdom. Therefore, Solomon and Jesus are not the only “Sons of God” *per se*. All believers are also in the sense that they will submit to the ultimate Son, Jesus, and help rule over God’s eternal property of the Kingdom of God, including the land of Israel and the rest of the world during the millennial kingdom.

Paul’s use of the word “sons” (small “s”) here makes no sense if his argument is that Jesus as the Son of God is the co-eternal 2nd person of the trinity. If we as sinful and created human beings, too, are “sons of God similar to him by our inheriting the same property that he does, then obviously Paul is arguing that Jesus is an ordinary human being like us with the role of God within the creation and the responsibility to rule over the cosmos as the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. Yes, Jesus is God, but he is God within the creation and, therefore, ontologically an ordinary human being in the story that God composed before He brought the creation into existence in Genesis 1 and that He is now telling and will continue to tell into eternity.

7:26 For such a high priest—special, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and raised to greater heights than the heavens—indeed fit the circumstances (**ἔπρεπεν**).

⁴⁹ τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας αὐτῶν διὰ παθημάτων τελειῶσαι – Paul started by saying that “it was appropriate” (ἔπρεπεν) for God, while leading many sons to glory, to cause Jesus to accomplish his work by suffering death on the cross. This is because, as he will go on to argue, that God established the concept of propitiatory offering and sacrifice in the Mosaic Covenant. This concept then became an enduring principle for how God provides eternal mercy and forgiveness to sinners.

Does mercy require that someone pay the penalty that a criminal deserves? Obviously not, because God instructs us as human beings to forgive those who have sinned against us without our demanding that someone else pay their penalty.

And Paul will go on to argue that Jesus himself does not pay our debt to justice by his death on the cross. Instead, he qualifies to intercede on our behalf because he perfectly and lovingly obeys God and the requirement that He has placed on him to suffer death.

Therefore, Paul says God causes Jesus to reach his goal (τελειῶσαι) of leading sinners to eternal salvation through the sufferings he endured in the midst of his trials before the Jewish and Roman officials and in the midst of his execution on the cross. Because other believers are sinners who deserve to suffer death according to God's justice, Paul indicates that it was appropriate that the human being, who has become the basis for their acquiring mercy and eternal life, experience death likewise on the cross—and in accord with the principle of propitiatory offering in the Mosaic Covenant.

Consequently, Jesus leads the way to God's mercy and the eternal Kingdom of God by obeying Him perfectly to such an extent that he was willing to die on the cross for sinners and thereby qualify to intervene for them at the final judgment. No other Davidic king was assigned this particular responsibility. Thus, Paul can say that "it was appropriate" (ἔπρεπεν) for God to make the very instrument of human beings' receiving His mercy to be a human being just like them. Except Jesus is morally perfect and the icon of God within the creation. He is an ordinary human being ontologically while also being God within the story of creation.

Paul uses a form of τέλος in 19 verses of Hebrews. This is a key idea in this letter, where he is exhorting his Jewish readers who are wavering in their belief to persevere in their belief in order to reach their goal, because this is what both Jesus and past believers in Old Testament times did with their unfailing belief. And the goal is the "great nation" and the blessing of eternal life of the Abrahamic Covenant as described by God in Genesis 12:1-3.

⁵⁰ ὁ τε γὰρ ἀγιαζὼν καὶ οἱ ἀγιαζόμενοι ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντες – Jesus actively sets people apart for God's mercy and salvation when he intervenes at the final judgment and appeals to the Father for mercy on their behalf—because he was willing to obey God perfectly by permitting himself to be executed by crucifixion. In addition, Jesus and these people are all from one source and one kind of process of God's bringing people into existence and leading them in life through moments of suffering in order to reach the eternal Kingdom of God. Both Jesus and his followers who obtain eternal life come into existence from God's creating and manipulating the stuff of this creation, the organic material that starts out as zygotes in women's uteri and results in ordinary, mortal human beings (cf. Psalm 22:9,10).

This was just as true for Jesus, the leader of our salvation as it is for us. Rather than his being a superordinary being, an *angelos* of Yahweh, who did not have a physical origin like all other human beings (except, of course, Adam and Eve, but they are unique for the sake of how God wanted to bring about the initial creation), Jesus ontologically was an ordinary human being (cf. 2:14ff). He was created as a zygote in Mary's womb and then born of her, lived as an ordinary human being, and died on the cross to qualify to rule the creation as God incarnate and the Son of God in the eternal Kingdom of God. Then it was also true for Jesus as it is for us his followers that he suffered before obtaining his eternal destiny. His suffering was specifically through death on the cross while our suffering is through our sinfulness and its effects in this world that extend all the way from our personal, internal guilt to outward, physical harm towards and from other people or from disease. These effects include also mental and emotional ill-health and culminate in a "slavery to a fear of death" (cf. 2:15).

But true mental health is to assess reality accurately, even in the midst of our pain and suffering.

⁵¹ δι' ἣν αἰτίαν οὐκ ἐπαισχύνεται ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοὺς ῥαλεῖν – Even though Jesus is the ruler of the cosmos and morally perfect in contrast to the sinful human beings whom he saves, he does not feel that it is a disgrace to call other ordinary human beings his brothers, even though they are sinners, because they and he have all been born of women and trust God for His promises of the eternal Kingdom of God, while experiencing similar suffering in this world by means of rejection from sinners that allows them to commiserate with one another.

Jesus suffered because of sinful people's rejection of God and the truth of his being the Messiah, while his followers suffer the same kind of rejection because of their association with Jesus.

⁵² λέγων ἀπαγγεῖλω τὸ ὄνομά σου τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου – In Psalm 22, David, the first Son of God, laments his condition of suffering and, yet, by referring to the fact that the forefathers of the Jews had trusted (בטח) (Septuagint – ἐλπίζω) God and by making this statement that Paul quotes, he affirms his trust and hope in God and His promises to the nation of Israel and to the Gentiles.

In addition, even though David as the Son of God Messiah (anointed one) is the king and ruler of the entire cosmos (since he is included by God in the group who are each called a Son of God – cf. Psalm 89), he has no problem considering himself humbly equal to his fellow Jews who are his subjects, because they have the same ontological origin and trust in God to fulfill His promises of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. They are all created beings, born of women, and who have a mortal, human nature (cf. Ps. 22:9). In addition, they have the same kind of belief as David. Thus, they are not only David's subjects but also his "brothers" as fellow-heirs of the grace of God and His promises.

Certainly, David knows that his role and status as king and ruler of God's property are His doing, not his own. The same is true of Jesus in the midst of his suffering death on the cross. The suffering in no way detracts either from his origin as having been born of a woman resulting in his being a mortal, organic human being or from his role as the eternal Davidic king, icon of God, and Son of God. Despite his status as Messiah, Jesus, like David, is willing to call his fellow human beings, who are ontologically the same, his "brothers," who are in fact sinners unlike him, but who like him are trusting God for His promises.

This is why Paul can use statements by David and apply them to Jesus. Each of them is a Son of God and a fellow

⁵⁶ Ἐπεὶ οὖν τὰ παῖδια – Paul is referring immediately to the physical children of Isaiah, who, he has argued, were the children of a “Messiah,” and who were certainly genuine human beings. Thus, Jesus, the final Messiah, in order to rescue Isaiah’s children from God’s wrath and eternal condemnation, was required to be like them in their ordinary humanness. As a result, he can stand with them at the judgment, intercede for them as their high priest, and appeal to God for mercy on their behalf.

The upshot of all this is that Jesus is an ordinary human being like David, David’s contemporary Jews who were authentic believers, Isaiah, and Isaiah’s believing children, all who trusted God for His promises first of the “great nation” of Israel and second of the eternal Kingdom of God according to the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. Jesus is not a superordinary *angelos* of Yahweh. He is the very human and final king of Israel.

⁵⁷ κεκοινώνηκεν αἵματος καὶ σαρκός – Certainly Paul could mean “flesh and blood” by this phrase “blood and flesh” as we normally do, i.e., regular human physicality, but it makes sense in this context to see him referring to both normal, human birth from a woman and to mortal, physical human nature which results from a human birth. Therefore, Paul is arguing that it was entirely appropriate that Jesus, the Messiah, be an ordinary human being who was born of a human mother, then suffered and died (as our leader and high priest who offered himself to God). Consequently, he was not an extraordinary human being, like some of the *angeloi* of Yahweh, who were not born of a woman, did not suffer, and especially did not experience death (cf. Genesis 18-19 where Yahweh was one of the three men who appeared to Abraham, and Exodus 3 where Yahweh was the burning bush. These theophanies suddenly came into existence as creations within the creation and then went out of existence. They were not born of a woman, lived an existential life on the earth, and then died like normal human beings.)

⁵⁸ καὶ αὐτὸς παραπλησίως μετέσχεν τῶν αὐτῶν τ – In contrast to the *angeloi* of Yahweh, who could not be considered as actually “sharing in blood and flesh,” i.e., in human birth and mortal, physical nature, so that they were not susceptible to dying or destined to die in their role of manifesting God, Jesus, not only as an ordinary human being born of a woman, but also as the literal embodiment of God, could legitimately call other human beings, that is to say authentic believers, both Jews and Gentiles, his brothers.

These two things, Jesus’ ordinary humanness and his death, were probably the key elements about Jesus that were causing the Jewish persecutors of Paul’s Jewish readers to reject him as the Messiah. It is much more attractive if the Messiah is a conquering superordinary super-hero as opposed to a rather plain and simple crucified carpenter and stone mason.

⁵⁹ ἵνα διὰ τοῦ θανάτου καταργήσῃ τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου, τοῦτ’ ἔστιν τὸν διάβολον – Cf. Psalm 109:4,6 – “In return for my love they act as my accusers (שׂוֹנְאֵי) (ἐνδιεβαλλόν με); but I am in prayer... Appoint a wicked man over him [them], and let an accuser (שׂוֹנֵא) (καὶ διάβολος) stand at his [their] right hand.”

Satan, the devil (*diabolos*) and accuser, will also “stand with us at the judgment and accuse us before God of deserving His eternal condemnation” so to speak, and he will be right. This gives Satan the “power of death,” i.e., eternal death, over sinful human beings if God follows his advice and eternally condemns them. However, by being an ordinary human being and suffering death on the cross (in accordance with the previously prescribed propitiatory sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant), Jesus qualified to be our advocate to counteract Satan’s accusations and appeal to God the Father for mercy at the judgment. Thus, Jesus will prevail on behalf of true believers. This means also that it will not be enough for us to appeal to God for mercy at the final judgment. Only Jesus’ appeal as the Son of God who died on the cross will work (cf. John 5; 1 John 3:8, ἵνα λύσῃ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου).

The death of the Jesus as the final Son of God is key to his being the final Son of God, which, along with the idea of his being an ordinary human being, is what Paul is arguing in this whole letter. A conquering Son of God must be first a suffering and having died Son of God.

⁶⁰ καὶ ἀπαλλάξῃ τούτους – Jesus’ death as an ordinary human being (since he is not an extraordinary *angelos* of God) sets people free eternally from the innate fear of God’s eternal condemnation by his qualifying to appeal to the Father for their mercy at the final judgment (cf. John 5; Romans 1,3). He advocates and helps them before God in order not to incur His wrath, condemnation, and destruction.

⁶¹ ὅσοι φόβῳ θανάτου διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν ἔνοχοι ἦσαν δουλείας – All human beings have been unavoidably constrained throughout the entirety of their lives by slavery to the fear of death, i.e., to the fear of eternal condemnation at the judgment. As Paul indicates in Romans 1, all human beings know deep down inside that they deserve God’s condemnation, and they are enslaved to being afraid of the eternal repercussions of incurring His wrath. And it is because of their sinfulness, which also prevents them from humbling themselves, repenting of their sin, and believing God for His eternal mercy through Jesus.

Every human being, regardless of when and where he has lived in human history, knows that he is morally accountable and condemned by God because of his rebellion against Him. Thus, every human being not only knows that he deserves God’s condemnation at the final judgment, but he is also terrified of the judgment and is in despair (cf. Romans 1:32), regardless of how little he may display his fear and despair outwardly to himself and others—and how little he consciously admits to himself internally. Nevertheless, people’s sinfulness constrains them in their fear from escaping eternal condemnation apart from God’s grace, so that they remain enslaved to both their sin and their “fear of death.”

This fear of God’s condemnation and inextricably being tied to it apart from God’s grace leads people to place all their hope for happiness and fulfillment in this life and the things they can acquire along with the experiences they can have (cf. Matthew 6:25-34, Philippians 4:4-9). They therefore become more afraid of physical death and not getting the most

out of the available physical resources and personal experiences of this life than they are of God and His eternal condemnation. And they harshly criticize and try to force into compliance anyone who does not agree with their view and decisions to maximize their earthly security and lives, even if they reduce others' freedom to choose how they want to handle the risks of life.

Cf. Søren Kierkegaard's *The Sickness Unto Death* where he argues that every human being is in despair and fear at the prospect of God's condemnation, regardless of how happy people may appear. I have also written a commentary of the same title on Kierkegaard's book that can be found on the biblicalphilosophers.com website.

This is also why it is important to grant people the freedom to work out their own personal and individual theology and philosophy within certain necessary moral boundaries, so that they can choose for themselves how they are going to face God's judgment in the end. This includes religious freedom, economic freedom, and social freedom without taking other people's lives, property, reputation, and committed relationships, i.e., without murdering them, stealing from them, lying about them, and manipulating their spouses away from them.

⁶² οὐ γὰρ δὴ τοῦ ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται ἀλλὰ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ ἐπιλαμβάνεται – There is the principle of like for like. An *angelos* of Yahweh would provide help for the *angeloi* of Yahweh. A created human being would provide help for other created human beings. Besides the fact that an *angelos* of Yahweh would or even could not die, Jesus' death would be meaningless for us ordinary human beings if he were an *angelos* of Yahweh. If Jesus were an *angelos*, then he would provide help to other *angeloi*. But since he is an ordinary human being, he helps other ordinary human beings.

By virtue of this principle of like for like, his death as an *angelos* would be for other *angeloi* who do not require a high priest before God. Only sinful human beings need an advocate and helper before God for His mercy. Therefore, by virtue of his being an ordinary human being, at the final judgment Jesus provides help to other ordinary human beings who are of the same belief as Abraham and, therefore, the true "seed of Abraham," i.e., Jews (and, by extrapolation, Gentiles) who have the same kind of inwardness and belief that Abraham had (cf. Galatians 3:7, "Therefore, know that it is who are of belief who are sons of Abraham."). This kind of inwardness means that they believe in Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah who suffered death on their behalf, resulting in his appealing to God the Father for eternal mercy on their behalf.

⁶³ ὅθεν ὤφειλεν κατὰ πάντα τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι – Paul reverts to the "brothers" signification of David and his fellow Jews in Psalm 22. God had assigned Jesus the moral responsibility of suffering death as an ordinary human being in order to qualify to be the advocate at the final judgment for other ordinary human beings (to be like his brothers, τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι), specifically Jews here in this letter. Jesus had to become like his fellow Jews in every respect except sin and "according to all that he does" (κατὰ πάντα) as their Savior and Champion by suffering death on the cross.

⁶⁴ ἵνα ἑλεῖμῶν γένηται καὶ πιστὸς ἀρχιερεὺς τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εἰς τὸ ἱλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ – This, along with Jesus' being an ordinary human being, is the main point of the whole letter (cf. chapter 8). Jesus offered himself as a human sacrifice to God in order to qualify to be the high priest of human sinners who need his advocacy in order to obtain God's eternal mercy. He propitiates (changes God's anger into His being pleased, pacifies Him) the sins of the people in that he becomes the basis and instrument of God to turn His anger away from them, make Him pleased with them, and therefore not destroy them.

Not only must there have been a contingent of Jews who were claiming that the Messiah had to be some sort of superordinary being, i.e. an *angelos* (theophany of Yahweh) like the man of Genesis 18 or the burning bush of Exodus 3, but they also had not adequately connected the notion of high priest with that of the Son of God, Messiah, and king of Israel. Who would ever think that a king would also present himself through death, especially execution by his own people by crucifixion, as a human offering to God in order to become a priest? Therefore, these Jews believed that not only were both Jesus' being an ordinary human being and his suffering death on the cross good reasons for not believing that he was the Messiah, but they also would have believed that his death had no connection to and nothing to do with the notion of high priest in the Old Testament and with their being sinners. High priests do not offer themselves as a propitiatory offering. They offer something else, e.g., an animal such as a bull or goat.

On the contrary, Paul is arguing that Jesus' ordinary humanity and death are exactly what qualify him to be both Son of God and self-offering high priest. Indeed, he was obligated not only to be an ordinary human being born of a woman, but also to suffer death in order to qualify to be both Messiah and high priest. It was thus fitting that the final Son of God and Messiah be an ordinary human being like David, Solomon, Isaiah, et al. (while also being both God in the flesh and morally perfect in the story which God is telling), in order to be able to offer himself as a legitimate propitiatory sacrifice to God. Thereby, he qualified to intervene as a high priest at the final judgment for his fellow Jewish (and, by extrapolation, Gentile) human "brothers," who are sinners (cf. Hebrews 7:25), so that he could obtain for them salvation from God's wrath and eternal condemnation and death. In other words, by dying on the cross and appealing to God for mercy at the judgment, Jesus was fit to "make propitiation for the sins of the people" (εἰς τὸ ἱλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας τοῦ λαοῦ).

Later, in chapters 7 & 8, Paul will argue that changing priests also requires changing covenants, and thus Jesus is a high priest under the New Covenant in contrast to the Levitical priests under the Mosaic Covenant.

Exodus 34:6 Then Yahweh passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "Yahweh, Yahweh God, compassionate and gracious (יְיָ יְיָ) (ἐλεῖμῶν), slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth."

Jesus himself as an offering to God is also gracious and forgiving towards those who do not deserve his sacrifice as the

basis and means to their acquiring God's mercy and forgiveness.

Plus, he was "faithful" to his role and task to present himself through death to God as a propitiatory offering and sacrifice. He did not shirk or avoid his responsibility as the Messiah whose goal was to be crucified in order to become people's advocate. And he was not just any priest. He was the only and ultimate "high priest" for sinful Jews.

Cf. Exodus 28:41, "You shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him; and you shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, that they may serve Me as priests (וַיִּמָּלֵא אֶת־אֲהֹרֹן וְאֶת־בָּנָיו וְיָדְשׁוּ אֹתָם וְיִבְרְכּוּנִי לֵי) (וַיִּמְשְׁחוּ אֹתָם) (καὶ χρίσεις αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐμπλήσεις αὐτῶν τὰς χεῖρας καὶ ἀγιασεις αὐτούς, ἵνα ἱερατεύωσιν μοι)."

Cf. Exodus 29:7, "Then you shall take the anointing oil and pour it on his head and anoint him (וַיִּמְשֹׁךְ אֶת־הַמָּשְׁחָה אֲשֶׁר־עָלָה עַל־רֹאשׁ אֲהֹרֹן) (καὶ λήμψη τοῦ ἐλαίου τοῦ χρίσματος καὶ ἐπιχεεῖς αὐτὸ ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ καὶ χρίσεις αὐτόν) (ἐπιχέω is used only once in NT in Luke 10:34 when the good Samaritan pours oil and wine on the victim's wounds)."

Cf. Exodus 29:21, "Then you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and on his garments and on his sons and on his sons' garments with him; so he and his garments shall be consecrated, as well as his sons and his sons' garments with him."

Cf. Leviticus 21:10, "The priest who is the highest among his brothers, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured (וְהַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ הַמְּשֻׁחָה) (τοῦ ἐπικεχυμένου ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ ἐλαίου τοῦ χρίσματος) and who has been consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes."

As a result, Aaron was high priest in the Levitical order of priests, and he was an anointed Messiah besides. Paul is arguing that the Jews (and the world) have been waiting for an anointed Messiah who, in line with David's statements in Psalm 110, is a high priest in the Melchizedekan order of priests.

Exodus 25:17 "You shall make a mercy seat (כִּסֵּא־הַרַחֲמִים) (**ἱλαστήριον**) of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide."

Leviticus 25:9 "You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement (וּבְיוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים) (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ **ἱλασμοῦ**) you shall sound a horn all through your land."

Deuteronomy 21:8 "Forgive Your people Israel whom You have redeemed, Yahweh, and do not place the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of Your people Israel." And the bloodguiltiness shall be forgiven them (וְנִכְפַּר לָהֶם הַדָּם) (καὶ **ἐξιλασθήσεται** αὐτοῖς τὸ αἷμα).

Thus, Jesus became a place where God changes His mind about sinners, so that instead of being angry with them and destroying them, He forgives them, is pleased with them, and grants them life—all that they do not deserve and cannot deserve on their own. He is the basis of God's mercy and forgiveness towards sinners.

⁶⁵ ἐν ᾧ γὰρ πέπονθεν αὐτὸς πειρασθεὶς, δύναται τοῖς πειραζομένοις βοηθῆσαι – This verse could be more fully translated, "For, having himself been tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are tested by what they suffer." Paul's readers are truly being tested in their faith. Their fellow Jews who are unbelievers and terribly annoyed by their faith in Jesus as the Messiah have imprisoned them and taken their property from them (cf. Hebrews 10:32-35). Jesus, by fulfilling his obligation to the Father through suffering death on the cross, will help his fellow human beings, who by virtue of their sinful condition deserve God's eternal condemnation. Instead, at the final judgment Jesus will intercede for them and appeal to God for mercy after their faith has been tested and proven to be genuine like his in the present realm (cf. Hebrews 4:15,16).

Thus, it was appropriate that he go through normal human testing of his belief in God the Father just as Paul's readers are going through it. Indeed, Paul's primary purpose in this letter is to exhort his readers to persevere in their belief in Jesus as the Messiah and as their fellow sufferer of the exigencies of life in the present realm in the midst of a world hostile to the truth. In addition, certainly no *angelos* of Yahweh could have his faith tested because each one was simply a temporary manifestation of Yahweh with the main purpose of communicating information and ideas to sinful human beings. They did not suffer the hostility of the sinners who sought to destroy them and indeed did kill them—the way Jesus suffered and was killed.

It is natural for us to want Paul to be saying here that the "help" which Jesus provides is strength to persevere through the trials of life that test or faith. But this mention of his "help" is right after Paul's saying that Jesus makes propitiation for sinners through his death. Therefore, the help which Jesus provides is not direct involvement in the sustaining of believer's faith. This is the transcendent Creator's responsibility as He remains faithful and loyal to those whom He has chosen to obtain eternal life. Jesus' help will come later at the first resurrection when he acts as all believers' advocate before God. By his death and the ordeal he went through to get there that certainly tested his own belief in God the Father, he has qualified to "help" Jewish (and, by extrapolation, Gentile) sinners before God as their intermediary who appeals to God for mercy on their behalf. Thus, those whose faith is tested in the midst of hostile opposition to God and the biblical truth as his chosen people of genuine belief will receive his help at the final judgment so as to enter into the Kingdom of God—the "great nation" of Israel and eternal life afterwards.

⁶⁶ Ὅθεν ἀδελοῖ ἀγιοὶ – While Paul could have finished his letter at the end of chapter 2, having claimed that Jesus is both the Son of God who is greater than the theophanies and an ordinary human being who died to free Abraham's descendants from death, he now goes on to exhort his readers and to teach them in more detail about Jesus as the Messiah who suffered death.

In line with the previous discussion of David's and Jesus' calling other ordinary (and yet sinful) human beings

“brothers” as in Psalm 22, Paul now addresses his Christian readers as “brothers.” They are set apart (ἅγιοι) because Paul believes that they have been inwardly changed by God to be authentic believers and genuine followers of Jesus as the Messiah.

Nevertheless, as in all his letters, Paul leaves room for the possibility that God has not changed the hearts of some of his readers, so that these have entered into the group of Jewish Christians to whom he is writing, but not for the same reason. They have found something attractive about the message of Jesus as the Messiah and his followers to join them. But maybe they will not persevere in their belief and in their being willing to associate with those who have been and continue to be persecuted for their faith. Only time and the final judgment will tell.

⁶⁷ κλήσεως ἐπουρανίου μέτοχοι – If Paul’s readers are genuinely changed in their inwardness, then they are participants in an irreversible process whereby the transcendent Creator from heaven so to speak has caused them to respond with authentic belief to the message that Jesus is the Messiah.

God has “called” them, so that they participate, are partakers (μέτοχοι), of His calling them (κλήσεως) that includes His working in their inwardness and hearts. In other words, this “calling” is not a passive one, but an active one on God’s part. Plus, His calling is a “heavenly” (ἐπουρανίου) one, meaning that it comes from outside the created reality and certainly not from anything here on earth. It is performed by the author of this story in the creation.

Paul uses ἐπουράνιος six times in Hebrews. For example,

Hebrews 6:4 For it is impossible to renew again to repentance those who were once enlightened, such that they have tasted of the gift of heaven (τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς **ἐπουρανίου**), have become partners with the Holy Spirit,

⁶⁸ κατανοήσατε τὸν ἀπόστολον καὶ ἀρχιερέα τῆς ὁμολογίας ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν – The point of this letter by Paul is to encourage his readers to focus on Jesus as the Messiah on the basis of his credentials. He is the “apostle” (from ἀποστέλλω = I send) of their declaring themselves to be believers in him, which refers to Jesus’ having been sent by God to proclaim His message of Jesus’ messiahship (cf. Hebrews 1:1-4). He is the predicted and final Son of God, who provides eternal forgiveness from God through his death and who rules eternally over God’s people, both Jews and Gentiles, through his resurrection, ascension, and return.

Paul’s secondary purpose in this letter, and that which he spends the most time explaining, is to argue that Jesus is the Messiah by virtue of his ordinary human nature and his death, which was his propitiatory and atoning offering for sin as the Jews’ (and our) high priest, so that he qualifies to intervene for the nation of Israel (and all other peoples of the world) and to appeal for mercy before God at the final judgment. This means that all authentic believers in God have a common acknowledgement and agreement (“confession”) with God the Father that Jesus is the Messiah.

Paul wants his readers to “think carefully” (κατανοήσατε) about Jesus as to exactly who he is and what he has done, continues to do, and will do as the basis of their salvation (cf. Hebrews 1:14 & 2:2), because, by doing so, they will ensure their salvations from God’s judgment and condemnation.

⁶⁹ πιστὸν ὄντα τῷ ποιήσαντι αὐτόν – Paul had said in 2:17 that Jesus was a “faithful high priest” by offering himself as a propitiatory and anger-eliminating sacrifice to God. Here, he says the same, that Jesus faithfully performed the task which God had given him to die for his “brothers” who as sinners need him to intercede for them and appeal to God for mercy and forgiveness.

Just as all human beings are “made,” i.e., created, by God, Jesus was too, to be the most important character and thing within God’s eternal story, with the express purpose of his being not only the incarnation of God, i.e., God in the story of creation, but also the Jewish King/Messiah who suffered death in order to qualify for his role and responsibility of being sinners’ advocate at the final judgment, so that then he could move on to be the king of the eternal Kingdom of God, first on this earth during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 and then on the new and eternal earth as described in Revelation 21. Jesus was faithful to God the Father who created and made him for this specific role within the created reality.

Thus, Jesus was “faithful” (πιστὸν) to God as the one who made him to carry out the role that He had assigned him—to live, to proclaim God’s truth as laid out in the OT, and finally to die on the cross in order to qualify to be the interceding Messiah for believing Jews and Gentiles.

Other English Bibles and translations use the word “appointed” for ποιήσαντι = made, but I do not think that Paul has any problem with describing the very human Jesus as one who was made by God, since he understands that He is the potter and all of us as persons within the creation are clay pots, including Jesus. Traditional Christianity has tried to say otherwise, but it just does not appear to be what the Bible is saying.

⁷⁰ ὥς καὶ Μωϋσῆς ἐν ὁλῶν τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ – So just as Jesus was “faithful” to the One who “made” him, so was Moses, the one through whom God communicated the Mosaic Covenant. However, Paul cannot be saying that Moses was morally perfect and God incarnate like Jesus. Nevertheless, he did carry out his role in a very substantial way within the community of the nation of Israel.

The word οἶκος can mean either the actual building, the house where a family lives, or the household, the people who are members of one family who live within that building. In the Roman Empire and probably other ANE cultures, the servants and slaves were considered true family members under the care of the owner of the house.

In the OT, the household of God was the people of Israel, which comprised both Jews of authentic belief and Jews of unbelief. In other words, this “household” does not involve people who are ALL associated with Jesus as the Messiah, since some of them lack genuine belief. This is what Paul means here in v. 2, while he will change the meaning to authentic believers only in v. 6.

Numbers 12:7, “Not so, with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My household (Septuagint – οὐχ οὕτως ὁ

θεράπων μου Μωυσῆς· ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ μου πιστός ἐστίν) (אֲנִי מְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ בְּפִי לְפִי); with him I speak mouth to mouth, even openly, and not in dark sayings, and he beholds the form of Yahweh. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?”

When Miriam and Aaron questioned whether or not God spoke through only Moses, He said, yes. In fact, God said that He speaks to other prophets through dreams, but not so with Moses. With whom He speaks face to face. In line with this statement in Numbers and even using some of the same language from the Septuagint, Paul is making the point that his readers should listen to Jesus more than to Moses, whom their persecutors are insisting is God’s most important spokesman in His household, i.e., among God’s people, the Jews (cf. Hebrews 10:21).

Certainly, Moses was the spokesmen of God during the OT times of the Exodus, and the covenant, instructions, and commandments that God gave the nation of Israel through him will be relevant right through the millennium to the end of the present realm and universe. But Paul is making the point that no spokesman of God is as important as Jesus, the final Son of God. Therefore, if Moses was “faithful” to God as one sent by Him to speak to the people of Israel and give them truth and salvific information by means of the Mosaic Covenant, then how much more is Jesus faithful and someone to whom everyone should listen in order to learn how to obey God appropriately—in the light of the New Covenant, Paul will say in chapters 8-10.

⁷¹ πλείονος γὰρ οὗτος δόξης ἢ παρὰ Μωϋσῆν ἡξίωται, καθ’ ὅσον πλείονα τιμὴν ἔχει τοῦ οἴκου ὁ κατασκευάσας αὐτόν – Jesus as the icon of God (1:3), the Davidic ruler over God’s creation with the same authority as God (cf. 1:5, 2:5-8, etc.), and Israel’s high priest by virtue of his propitiatory sacrifice on the cross to God is more important than both Moses and God’s “household,” i.e., His people the Jews.

Paul is making the point that his readers must follow Jesus as he is doing more than they would follow Moses as their fellow *unbelieving* Jews are doing. Jesus did not come to encourage his fellow Jews to focus on Moses and the Mosaic Covenant. He came to exhort them to focus on him and the New Covenant—as Paul will go on to explain in the details of chapters 5-10.

The verb κατασκευάσας in this context seems more to mean “provide” and not “build.” Paul is contrasting Jesus’ role within Israel with Moses’ role in the same group. Moses definitely served a great purpose by communicating the Mosaic Covenant to the people and even leading them through the desert. But he did not “provide” for the Jews in any way that comes close to Jesus’ provision, which is to be the basis for God’s mercy, forgiveness, and eternal salvation. In fact, Paul will say in the next verse that God is “the One who provides everything” for the household of the nation of Israel. Jesus, as His proxy, provides rule, authority, and intercession for this same group of people, while Moses is merely a servant in the household. Thus, Jesus has also provided for the “household” by offering himself to God in order to qualify to be everyone’s propitiatory high priest and king.

In other words, Moses, the “servant,” is *just a sinful member* of God’s household who needs Jesus’ advocacy at the judgment, while Jesus as a member is apostle, high priest, and Son of God, so that he is *the unique provider* of salvation for the household, while he does not need salvation. Indeed, through his death (cf. chapter 2), he has provided salvation for even the sinner Moses. No one, not even Moses, provides for the nation of Israel what Jesus has provided. Therefore, to abandon belief in Jesus and subscribe to belief in Moses is to rebel against God, not obey Him.

⁷² πᾶς γὰρ οἴκος κατασκευάζεται ὑπὸ τινος, ὁ δὲ ὅτι πάντα κατασκευάσας θεός – Ultimately, of course, God the Father is the one who transcendently provides “everything,” including salvation for His people, while the Son as the embodiment of God, provides salvation *within the creation*. Therefore, Jesus as the Davidic king, high priest/advocate at the final judgment, and heir of the Father’s property is obviously a more important spokesman on behalf of God than Moses.

With this argument Paul is intimating that his readers need to listen to what God has done by providing mercy for the household through the ordinary human Jesus and Son of God, a concept that the readers’ persecutors misunderstand and are unwilling to believe to their eternal destruction if they persist in their unbelief and obsession with Moses and the Mosaic Covenant. These latter Jews are misunderstanding their Old Testaments, while Paul had to change his mind because of Jesus’ confronting him on the road to Damascus.

⁷³ καὶ Μωϋσῆς μὲν πιστός ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ ὡς θεράπων εἰς μαρτύριον τῶν λαληθησομένων – cf. Numbers 12:7, “Not so, with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My household (Septuagint – οὐχ οὕτως ὁ θεράπων μου Μωϋσῆς· ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ μου πιστός ἐστίν)...”

Paul borrows language from the Septuagint translation of Numbers 12:7 to indicate that Moses was not as important as Jesus. He merely was a servant who bore witness to more important things that would be said by Jesus, the Son, as God’s ultimate and most important prophet and spokesman in the last days (cf. Heb. 1:1ff.; 2:1ff.).

Paul will go on to teach in chapters 5-10 that Moses bore witness to Jesus and his message as the Messiah by commanding the Israelites to bring their offerings and sacrifices of bulls and goats to God in order to refer to the future offering and sacrifice of the Messiah when he is crucified. Again, Paul has already talked about this in chapters 1 & 2—the Son of God who is the ordinary human being who suffered death for this people and is greater in status than any theophany.

⁷⁴ Χριστός δὲ ὡς υἱὸς ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ – Jesus is not a mere servant, like Moses, among God’s people, “His household.” As the Messiah, high priest, and Son of God, i.e., the Davidic king who rules over the eternal Kingdom of God and high priest who saves the Jews from God’s condemnation, Jesus “provides” for God’s people with the same level of authority as the transcendent Creator Himself. He provides by ruling “over” (ἐπὶ) them and by offering himself to God in order to qualify to be the one who intercedes for people to gain mercy for them from God at the final

judgment. Indeed, he is the very embodiment of God on earth and the basis for sinners' salvation from God (cf. Hebrews 1:3 and chapter 2).

Χριστός is used 12x in Hebrews.

⁷⁵ τοῦ οἴκου ἐσμεν ἡμεῖς ἑάν[περ] τὴν παρρησίαν καὶ τὸ καύχημα τῆς ἐλπίδος ἵ [μέχρι τέλους βεβαίαν] κατάσχωμεν – Ultimately, the Jews who are really God's "household" (οἶκος) are those who embrace ALL the truth that God has proclaimed through His prophets, especially through the greatest prophet Jesus, the Son of God. Embracing God's truth and holding on to it until the end of one's life and the "goal" of eternal life provides a Jew with the confidence of receiving God's promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, so that he can be bold and even appropriately bragging (τὴν παρρησίαν καὶ τὸ καύχημα) in his expectation and hope (τῆς ἐλπίδος) of being granted both eternal mercy and life at the final judgment and that will include taking part in the time when the Jews' will be the most powerful nation in human history under the rule of Jesus as their king. This will be the end and "goal" of God's project for the Jews specifically (μέχρι τέλους βεβαίαν – in the TR).

Thus, while exhorting his readers to continue to believe in Jesus as the Messiah until God is finished with His project of making the Jews a "great nation," Paul is implying that the whole meaning of human existence is to be willing at the core of one's being to undergo any and all circumstances in the present realm, no matter how enjoyable or how difficult, while waiting expectantly for God to fulfill His promise of mercy and life, starting with the "great nation" time of Israel and continuing into the eternal realm, i.e., to be constant in belief, which is greatly helped by knowing and embracing the complete and accurate truth of the Bible, especially about the Messiah, Jesus, and what God has done with him through his created existence ("bold confidence" (παρρησία) – cf. Hebrews 4:16; 10:19,35; "hope" (ἐλπίς; ἐλπίζω) – cf. Hebrews 6:11,18,19; 7:19; 10:23; 11:1).

Here, by using the conditional "if" (ἐάν[περ]), we see Paul imply the possibility that his readers (and he included) may not be authentic in their belief. In other words, it is always possible to imitate authentic faith without having authentic faith. What is necessary is for any sinner to have a proper understanding of the depth of his sin and the greatness of God's grace through the inward work of the Holy Spirit and Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension, and return. This prevents him from either ignoring God altogether or producing a religious system whose performance he believes that he makes himself worthy of God's mercy and blessing of eternal life.

⁷⁶ Διό, καθὼς λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον – Paul starts this sentence with "Therefore" (Διό). If Jesus is the Messiah, an ordinary human being who is "over" God's "household," through whom the Jewish people acquire God's forgiveness and the fulfillment of His promises by his death, then the Christian Jews as the authentically believing people of God, should listen to Psalm 95, i.e., "just as the Holy Spirit says (καθὼς λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον)." We have here an example of one of the "prophets" (cf. 1:1) who spoke to the OT Jews, so that Paul is affirming their being communicators of God's truth in preparation of God's speaking through the "Son," Jesus (and his apostles). "Do not harden your hearts,"—by beginning with these words, Paul will go on to exhort his readers. His readers should soften their hearts and persevere in their belief in Jesus as the Son of God—because he is more important to God than Moses!

Interesting way of stating this, that the Holy Spirit, God's activity within the creation, has spoken in Psalm 95, so that the psalm is not merely the voice of the human author, David (the superscription in the Septuagint is αἶνος ᾠδῆς τοῦ δαυιδ = David's praise song; plus, Paul mentions him as the author in Hebrews 4:7). Actually, David himself switched from speaking from his perspective to speaking from God's perspective (notice the change in pronouns in Psalm 95:7-9 from the third person "He/Him" to the first person "I/Me." Here, in Hebrews 3, this is born out in verses 7-9).

In this way, we have an example via Paul's perspective on the meaning of biblical inspiration, that human authors with their thoughts, ideas, and intentions were ultimately speaking on behalf of God. Therefore, what they wrote was truth in the midst of God's superintending their thoughts and words. Certainly, it is always possible to communicate the same ideas with different words. But, for God's purposes, these words are the ones that He sovereignly chose, along with the human authors' choosing them too within their own personalities and manner of speaking and writing.

⁷⁷ σήμερον ἐάν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσῃτε – In Psalm 95, the author (David according to the Septuagint and Hebrews 4:7) exhorts his fellow Israelites to rejoice in God and worship Him. At the end of v. 7, he says, "Today, if you (pl.) hear His [God's] voice." Then, in v. 8, he goes on to say, "Do not harden your hearts..." But what specifically has God said and spoken with His voice to which the psalmist is referring and wondering if his readers have heard it? Very possibly, David is thinking of the six times that Moses used the word "today" in Deuteronomy as part of the way he was exhorting the Israelites to listen carefully to what he was conveying from God and to obey what he was saying. For example,

Deuteronomy 4:40 "So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today (σήμερον) (σήμερον), that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which Yahweh your God is giving you for all time."

We know from the next verses in Psalm 95 that God expressed "His voice" through Moses, His prophet, in the wilderness—with both words and actions (cf. v. 9 – "My works" (τὰ ἔργα μου)). And He is now expressing "His voice" through the author of this Psalm 95. Thus, the psalmist is asking if his readers have really "heard God's voice," i.e., if they have listened to what God has said through His prophets, even the scriptures of Moses,...

I think that he is assuming that his readers have heard the voice of God, and now he is concerned about what they are going to do with this information. Are they going to soften their hearts, believe the information, and embrace it, so that they rejoice in God and worship Him? Or are they going to harden their hearts and reject it? Therefore, the author is

saying, “Whatever day you read this psalm, since and if you are actually hearing what God is saying, even if it is just what I am writing in this psalm, make sure you listen very carefully with your mind and heart and believe and obey everything which God is speaking to you.”

By extrapolation, Paul has been saying that God has most recently expressed “His voice” through the Son, Jesus, and his apostles (as He did through both words and actions like Moses), to whom the readers do well to listen and believe in Jesus as the Messiah and not engage in inappropriate inwardness that demonstrates unbelief instead of belief.

Numbers 12:6-8 – [God] said, “Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, Yahweh, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. Not so, with My servant Moses. He is faithful in all My household; with him I speak mouth to mouth, even openly, and not in dark sayings, and he beholds the form of Yahweh. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?”

In other words and also by extrapolation from the context of Numbers 12, which Paul quoted in 3:5 above, why are the Jewish readers’ persecutors so bold in their speaking against God’s Son, Jesus, similarly to how Aaron and Miriam had spoken against Moses after God had made it clear through His actions that Moses was His primary spokesman at the time? Consider, for example, the miracles in Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea vs. the miracles that Jesus and his apostles performed (cf. Hebrews 2:1-4) and, especially, Jesus’ death as a “work” and “accomplishment of God whereby he qualified to be our high priest (cf. Hebrews 2:9-18)?

⁷⁸ μὴ σκληρύνετε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν ὡς ἐν τῷ παραπικρασμῷ κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ πειρασμοῦ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ οὐ ἐπείρασαν ὁ οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν – Just as David in Psalm 95 referred to the Israelites’ disobedience of God in the wilderness as they journeyed from Egypt to the promised land as a means to encourage his contemporary Jews to trust God for His promises, Paul is doing the same with his Jewish readers.

Again, we notice that the Israelites in the desert did not listen to and obey God’s voice through Moses, while Paul’s contemporary Jews, who are under persecution, are not listening and obeying, with all the confidence that they should, to His voice through the Son and his apostles. As a result, they are “testing” (πειράζω) God and even assuming that He is abandoning them when He has already given them plenty of evidence (Jesus’ life with its miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension, followed by the apostles’ own “signs and wonders/miracles”) that has shown that He is committed to them and will provide the fulfillment of His promises to them.

Exodus 17:7, “[Moses] named the place Massah (מַסָּה) (πειρασμός) and Meribah (מֵרִיבָה) (λοιδόρησις) because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested Yahweh (וַיִּסְתָּאֲזָרוּ אֶת־יְהוָה) (εὐὰ τὸ πειράζειν κύριον), saying, ‘Is Yahweh among us, or not?’”

The Israelites’ quarrel in the desert with God was after He had rescued them from slavery in Egypt with a great demonstration of His power and faithfulness. Thus, rejecting God’s goodness in the midst of His promises and previous faithful actions is to test God and incur His judgment and condemnation, which means failing the test that God brings on His people.

Exodus 16:4, “Then Yahweh said to Moses, ‘Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them (וַיִּסְתָּאֲזָרוּ אֶת־יְהוָה) (ὅπως πειράσω αὐτούς), whether or not they will walk in My instruction (וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת־קוֹלִי) (εἰ πορεύσονται τῷ νόμῳ μου ἢ οὐ).”

⁷⁹ ἐν δοκιμασίᾳ καὶ εἶδον τὰ ἔργα μου (the Septuagint and the Majority Text (TR) have ἐδοκίμασαν καὶ εἶδον (εἶδον – TR) τὰ ἔργα μου) (וַיִּסְתָּאֲזָרוּ אֶת־יְהוָה) = they demanded clear evidence of Me even though they saw My work(s) – It makes more sense to follow the Septuagint and Majority Text with ἐδοκίμασαν με = “they demanded clear evidence of Me,” as well as to follow the Hebrew (גַּם) (gam) and translate the καὶ (kai) as “even though.”

Therefore, the author of Psalm 95 and Paul mean that, even though the Israelites had just seen God perform the ten miracles of the plagues in Egypt, plus the miracle of parting the Red Sea, they still refused to trust Him soon afterwards when the spies had been sent into the land of Canaan for reconnaissance purposes and before they were to enter and conquer the land by the power and strength of God Himself!

The implied point is that Paul’s readers should not test God after “seeing” His accomplishments with and through Jesus (and his apostles) as the earthly Son who died and then was resurrected. It is this seeing of God’s works that is included in “hearing His voice” (cf. v. 7) and for which people are accountable, whether it was the Israelites and what they saw in Egypt and the desert or Paul’s readers and what Paul’s contemporaries have seen in regard to Jesus through being presented with the message and the miracles that both state clearly that he is the Messiah.

⁸⁰ τεσσαράκοντα ἔτη – It also makes more sense to follow both the Hebrew text and the actual story in order to connect these words with what comes after them, that for forty years God was angry with the Israelites after they disobeyed Him and even refused to enter into and conquer the land of Canaan after the spies had reported back to them that giants lived in the land. They were more afraid of human beings than of God.

Numbers 32:13, “So Yahweh’s anger burned against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until the entire generation of those who had done evil in the sight of Yahweh was destroyed.”

⁸¹ διὸ προσώχθισα τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ καὶ εἶπον αἰεὶ πλανῶνται τῇ καρδίᾳ – Here is the main issue, that people are characterized by their inwardness, that is oriented either toward authentically and humbly desiring biblical goodness and mercy from God, or toward rejecting God through some sort of man-made worldview and way of living life, even using a religious system (Jewish, Christian, or within some other religion) in the midst of appearing to be attracted to the biblical message like the desert Israelites.

In chapter 6, Paul will deal with this issue of coming in contact with biblical Christianity but then wandering away

from it because of a lack of a changed heart and authentic belief.

God was literally angry with the unbelieving Israelites for forty years, because, I assume, they continued to be unbelieving during that entire time. This means that even if there were believers in the group, these, too, died before they could enter the land of Canaan under Joshua's leadership. This is a case where the majority of unbelieving Israel affects the lives and existences of the smaller group of believers—as we see happening today in Israel. For example, Daniel and his believing friends were taken into exile by the Babylonians because of the unbelief and rebellion against God of the majority of Jews in the southern Kingdom of Judah. Yet, God most importantly preserved their faith through what became a test of it by God while they were living in Babylon and serving the king there.

⁸² αὐτοὶ δὲ οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τὰς ὁδοὺς μου – The Israelites intellectually knew what God had said and commanded them to do, but they were unwilling to obey His message. Thus, their knowing lacked having a changed (circumcised) heart, which would be accompanied by authentic belief, and therefore could be labelled as not knowing. They knew but did not know, similar to all sinful human beings who know God's moral instructions but are unwilling to obey them (cf. Romans 1) and similar to some people within the communities of followers of Jesus who here the Bible but are unwilling to obey it as God requires.

Cf. Søren Kierkegaard's *The Sickness Unto Death* and the chapter entitled "The Socratic Definition of Sin."

⁸³ ὥς ὥμοσα ἐν τῇ ὀργῇ μου εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου (אֶל־לְבָבוֹתֵינוּ וְאֶל־לְבָבוֹתֵינוּ) – Several passages are important for understanding Psalm 95 and this verse which Paul quotes.

First, **Deuteronomy 12:8-12, 8** "You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes; **9** for you have not as yet come to the resting place (אֶל־לְבָבוֹתֵינוּ) (εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν) and the inheritance which Yahweh your God is giving you. **10** When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which Yahweh your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest (שָׁלוֹם) from all your enemies around you so that you live in security, **11** then it shall come about that the place in which Yahweh your God will choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings which you will vow to Yahweh. **12** And you shall rejoice before Yahweh your God, you and your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance with you."

Thus, 500 years before David and Psalm 95, in Deuteronomy 12 God says that He intends to give the Israelites a "resting place" (אֶל־לְבָבוֹתֵינוּ) (κατάπαυσις) where, in a particular geographical location, the land of Canaan, they will be free from their enemies. Therefore, when He swore that the Israelites in Moses' day would not enter His resting place, this is at least part (if not actually primarily within the context of the Jews) of what He meant, the rest and repose from their enemies which He would give them that eventually would culminate in Abraham's physical descendants' being the "great nation" of the first promise which God gave him in Genesis 12:1-3.

Second, **Numbers 13:1,2, 1** Then Yahweh spoke to Moses saying, **2** "Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am going to give to the sons of Israel; you shall send a man from each of their fathers' tribes, every one a leader among them."

Thus, God intended to bring the Israelites safely into the land and give it to them regardless of the apparent difficulties of, for example, the strength and size of the people currently living on the land. Therefore, not to believe God for His promise of giving them the land would be rebellious towards Him. It was a matter of grasping the relatively weak nature of the giants in the land of Canaan in comparison to the strength of the transcendent God.

Third, **Numbers 13:30, 30** Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it."

Here we find that Caleb believed God for His promise that the Israelites would defeat the Canaanites regardless of how strong they looked, so that they could live on the land instead, and he was encouraging the fearful Israelites to believe God as he was.

Fourth, **Numbers 14:5-9, 5** Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the presence of all the assembly of the congregation of the sons of Israel. **6** Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; **7** and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, "The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. **8** If Yahweh is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us — a land which flows with milk and honey. **9** Only do not rebel against Yahweh; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and Yahweh is with us; do not fear them."

We see that Moses, Aaron, and Joshua also believed God for His promise to bring them all safely into the land and reacted to the people's unbelief. They encouraged belief instead of the existing unbelief which they saw among their fellow Israelites.

Fifth, Numbers 14:26-32, **26** Yahweh spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, **27** "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel, which they are making against Me. **28** Say to them, 'As I live,' says Yahweh, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will surely do to you; **29** your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me. **30** Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. **31** Your children, however, whom you said would become a prey — I will bring them in, and they will know the land which you have rejected. **32** But as

for you, your corpses will fall in this wilderness.”

Sixth, **Deuteronomy 28:65** “Among those nations you shall find no rest (לֹא מָנוּחַ) (οὐκ ἀναπαύσει σε), and there will be no resting place (מָנוּחַ) (στάσις) for the sole of your foot; but there Yahweh will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul.”

Thus, by “rest” and “resting place” in Numbers 13 & 14 and Deuteronomy 28, God is referring to the Israelites’ living securely on the land of Canaan/Israel free from their enemies. It must be at least partially (if not mostly) this that God through the psalmist, David, means by “My rest,” i.e., My resting place, in Psalm 95:11 (cf. Deuteronomy 12:10; 25:19; 28:65 (the Holocaust?) and Joshua 21:44; 23:1).

Seventh, **Psalm 132:13-18, 13** For Yahweh has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation (לְמִנְיָתוֹ) (εἰς κατοικίαν ἐαυτοῦ). **14** “This is My resting place forever (מָנוּחַ עָדָם) (αὕτη ἡ κατάπαυσις μου εἰς αἰῶνα αἰῶνος); here I will dwell (שָׁכַנְתִּי) (ὧδε κατοικήσω), for I have desired it. **15** “I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her needy with bread. **16** “Her priests also I will clothe with salvation (שְׁלֵמוֹת) (σωτηρίαν), and her godly ones will sing aloud for joy. **17** “There I will cause the horn of David to spring forth; I have prepared a lamp for Mine anointed (מְשֻׁחַ) (τῷ χριστῷ μου). **18** “His enemies I will clothe with shame (תְּכָפֶה) (αἰσχύνῃ), but upon himself his crown shall shine.”

Here in Psalm 132, “My resting place,” i.e., God’s rest, is the place where He dwells, is worshiped by His people, the Israelites and Jews, and provides them abundantly with all that they need to live securely and safely on the land, free from any harm from their enemies. Therefore, the “rest” and “resting place” of all these passages is both where God dwells and His people dwell. Plus, He is free from their unbelief, because they all have changed hearts and authentic belief, and they are free from any harm from His and their enemies.

In addition, regarding the Israelites in the wilderness, God probably means the cessation of the hard work of persevering in belief through the desert during the journey from Egypt to the promised land of Canaan (cf. Numbers 10:33; 14:20-24; Deuteronomy 12:9; Joshua 22:4). Therefore, Psalm 95 is an exhortation to worship Yahweh for His greatness as the Creator and Shepherd of His people, the Israelites, and to avoid rejecting Him as the Israelites did after He had rescued them from slavery in Egypt, which moved God to swear that they would not enter His “resting place” of the land of Israel.

However, because the Psalm involves authentic belief in contrast to a hard heart, then there is a further ramification of the Israelites’ unbelief, which is to miss out on the “resting place” of the Kingdom of God after resurrection from physical death, first on the land of Israel at the return of the Messiah (cf. Revelation 20) and second in the new creation of the eternal earth (cf. Revelation 21). In other words, the Israelites’ unbelief was not a one-time event, i.e., a single sin, but was coming from an unchanged heart of unbelief. It is this which David has in mind as he exhorts his readers to believe God’s promises to them, both to have a changed heart and to demonstrate authentic belief (cf. Hebrews 4:6-11). What follows in this passage and, especially Hebrews 4:8, makes it clear that God through David in Psalm 95 is referring to life on the land of Israel, which will be the beginning for the Jews of the Kingdom of God in the present realm and will culminate on the eternal earth of the next realm.

Isaiah 66:1 Thus says Yahweh, “Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest (מָנוּחַ) (τόπος τῆς καταπαύσεώς μου)?”

Again, all these passages, especially Psalm 132 and Isaiah 66 make it clear that the land of Israel is God’s resting place and His people’s resting place, so that even in 1500 B.C., God is looking towards the far distant future when He will complete His project of making the Jews a “great nation” according to His first promise to Abraham. Indeed, this is all that He is talking about explicitly in these passages and in the Old Testament, while implying the fulfillment of His second promise of eternal life to Abraham and all those who imitate his changed of heart belief and obedience. If God fulfills His first promise to the Jews, then He will also fulfill the second promise to them (and to all Gentiles who mimic appropriately and genuinely Abraham’s faith, belief, and obedience.

⁸⁴ Βλέπετε, ἀδελφοί, μήποτε ἔσται ἐν τινὶ ὑμῶν καρδιά πονηρὰ ἀπιστίας ἐν τῷ ἀποστήναι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ζῶντος – Paul says here that the danger for his readers is that any one of them would have “an evil heart of unbelief” (καρδιά πονηρὰ ἀπιστίας) resulting in the person’s “withdrawing from the living God.” This would mean that the person in the Christian community has made an effort to become a follower of Jesus as the Messiah, but their heart literally was not into it. Why? Because the Spirit of God has not changed their heart and transformed their fundamental desire and commitment to biblical righteousness as explained by the Bible. If they lacked a changed heart, they would be engaging in the same inappropriate inwardness of the Israelites in the wilderness and would not have genuine belief as that which characterizes them. As a result, they would forfeit taking part in the restored Kingdom of Israel and the ensuing eternal life by abandoning the message of Jesus as their Messiah and high priest who will intervene on their behalf at the final judgment (cf. Hebrews 2:1).

Thus, Paul uses the experience of the OT Israelites and David’s exhortation and warning to his contemporary Israelites 500 years later to exhort and warn (Βλέπετε) his own contemporary Israelites who are considering abandoning God’s truth in a similar manner. Even though they are thinking of focusing on Moses and the Mosaic Covenant, nevertheless, they would actually be abandoning God if they gave up believing in God’s ultimate spokesman, Jesus of Nazareth, their Messiah, King, and high priest. Plus, they most likely would adopt again the same perspective on doing the MC, that outwardly obeying its commandments would suffice to make themselves worthy of God’s promises.

⁸⁵ ἀλλὰ παρακαλεῖτε ἑαυτοὺς καθ' ἑκάστην ἡμέραν, ἄχρις οὗ τὸ σήμερον ⁸⁶καλεῖται – Paul is saying that the alternative for his “Christian” readers is that they care for each other in such a way that they recognize the inherent danger of “sin,” that it can deceive someone into thinking that the religious system of the Jews, as they have interpreted the Mosaic Covenant, is sufficient to gain God’s promises—as opposed to God’s grace through His Spirit’s inner work in people’s hearts and Jesus’ death, resurrection, etc. whereby he qualified to become a high priest for all believing sinners.

“Today,” as when David used the word in Psalm 95:7, is in the sense that Paul and his readers still live in the present realm before God brings about the final judgment and creates first the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel and then the new, future realm and earth of the eternal Kingdom of God. As long as God is not finished with the present realm and has not brought about the judgment of the Jews of the first resurrection, there is time, i.e., “Today,” for Jewish sinners to continue to respond to God’s works (ἔργα) and accomplishments through Jesus and his apostles and to believe the truth that God has spoken regarding him as the eternal Messiah.

But after Jesus’ return, this will be a moot point for the Jews, because God will cause all of them to be changed of heart believers during the millennial kingdom. They will still encourage one another to persevere in their faith, but none of them will be unbelievers while they live on the land of Israel under Jesus’ rule.

Nevertheless, this same kind of “Today” will also exist for Gentiles during the millennium kingdom after Jesus’ return, because many of them will be unbelievers and could pretend to be Christians.

⁸⁶ ἵνα μὴ σκληρυνθῇ τις ἐξ ὑμῶν ἀπ᾿ αὐτῆς τῆς ἁμαρτίας – The Israelites’ sinfulness and lack of changed hearts, in the midst of their suffering in the desert, led them to refuse to believe that God is faithful to His promises. Paul’s readers’ own sinfulness would lead them to the same kind of conclusion—that eternal life and trusting God are not worth the pain and suffering that is sometimes necessary to endure because of their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Paul’s encouragement is for them not to let sin deceive them into this false perspective. Of course, it would only if they lack authentic belief that comes from hearts that have been changed by God.

Paul is speaking of a dangerous dynamic in sinful human beings. Sin naturally has a hardening effect on a sinner’s heart and mind, such that it tends to make a person unwilling to believe God and to submit to His moral commandments. Apparently, its false promise of making a person’s existence more worth living than if he pursues biblical goodness and morality is somehow enticing enough and convincing enough that the person would naturally choose to abandon genuinely submitting to God if it were not for the inward force of God’s Spirit and grace keeping this from happening.

But, by definition, sin naturally leads people to believe and embrace lies and false ideas about the nature of reality. Indeed, they cannot help but do this.

⁸⁷ μέτοχοι γὰρ τοῦ Χριστοῦ γεγονάμεν – Paul now includes himself with his readers and claims that they have all become co-heirs with Jesus of the eternal Kingdom of God where he will be king first of the restored Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel (Revelation 20) and then of the eternal kingdom in a completely new realm on a new earth (Revelation 21).

Again, this is after Paul has argued that Jesus is the Messiah as a very human being who died (and then rose from the dead) to fulfill His role as stipulated by God the Father.

Just as it would have been appropriate to partner with Moses (or Joshua) in entering the land of Canaan, if Moses had been permitted by God to do so, so also it is appropriate to partner with Jesus, because he is the most important leader of the Jewish people.

⁸⁸ ἄνπερ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς ὑποστάσεως μέχρι τέλους βεβαίαν κατάσχωμεν – Paul’s readers will reach the goal of escaping from God’s condemnation and thereby gain the “great nation” of Israel and eternal life only by persevering in belief in the message that God has communicated to them through Jesus and his apostles, which is like a title deed showing that they will inherit salvation.

Thus, God’s message and a person’s belief in it is a reliable beginning to his journey toward taking part in God’s fulfilling His promises to believing Israel and to believing Gentiles.

ὑπόστασις refers to the basis of their expectation of obtaining eternal. This basis is the message that they have heard of Jesus as the very human and having died/resurrected Messiah that acts as a kind of title-deed to their “owning” the entirety of what they will receive, i.e., both promises to Abraham of the restored Kingdom of Israel and life on the eternal earth.

⁸⁹ ἐν τῷ λέγεσθαι σήμερον ἐὰν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε, μὴ σκληρύνετε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν ὡς ἐν τῷ παραπικρασμῷ – Belief in the “title deed” and good news of Jesus’ as the Messiah is “in line” with David’s statements and exhortation in Psalm 95. Therefore, Paul refers again to the issue in this psalm, that it is incumbent on authentic believers not to let life’s difficult, confusing, and potentially deceiving circumstances to sidetrack their belief in the fullness of the biblical message *that they have heard*. Therefore, Paul is emphasizing the sheer, human effort that is involved in any sinner’s persevering in belief after hearing God’s message of Jesus as the Messiah, which is what the first-generation desert Israelites did not do in regard to God’s message to them through Moses. Thus, Paul uses David’s message to the Jews of his day to exhort his readers to believe with changed hearts, so that they may avoid the negative consequences of unbelief, i.e., missing out on God’s promises and, instead, incurring eternal condemnation and death.

⁹⁰ ῥτίνες γὰρ ἀκούσαντες παρεπύκρναν; ἀλλ’ οὐ πάντες οἱ ἐξεληθόντες ἐξ Αἰγύπτου διὰ Μωϋσέως – cf. as above Numbers 13:1-14:45, especially 14:20-38 – This is the story of the twelve men who were sent into the land of Canaan to spy it out for the Israelites before they entered it and wiped out its inhabitants as God had commanded them. But

after they had heard God's command and then hear the spies' report, the Israelites, frightened out of their minds, rejected God's exhortation to enter and destroy the Canaanites, even after He had saved them from the Egyptians with the multiple miracles through Moses, which had demonstrated His power and commitment to them.

Paul is concerned about the same kind of "sin" affecting and deceiving his readers (Hebrews 3:13). After hearing the final message from God of the "Son," the Messiah, after "seeing" what He has done through Jesus, including the miracles reported by the apostles and also performed by themselves, and then initially embracing the message, they would rebel against God and reject this message because they are frightened by experiencing pain in the midst of persecution and suffering in the present realm (cf. Hebrews 1:1-3).

The message which they have heard and the negative example of the Israelites in the Sinai wilderness, who did not hold on to the message that they had heard, so that they died in the wilderness and God prevented them from entering into the promised land of Canaan (and, by extrapolation, into eternal life), should give them adequate motivation to continue to believe, especially now that Paul has explained the ontological and biological nature of the Messiah—that he is an ordinary human being whose purpose was to die a true, human death for the sins of the people.

⁹¹ τίσιν δὲ τ' προσώχθισεν τεσσαράκοντα ἔτη; οὐχὶ τοῖς ἁμαρτήσασιν, ὧν τὰ κῶλα ὑμῶν πέσειται ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ – cf. also Numbers 14:32, "But as for you, your corpses will fall in this wilderness (καὶ τὰ κῶλα ὑμῶν πεσεῖται ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ταύτῃ)." This verse makes it clear that the "resting place" for the Israelites was not only protection from their enemies but also a particular geographical location, the promised land of Canaan, as a stepping stone into the eternal Kingdom of God. Thus, God forbade them from entering into the promised land by causing them to die in the desert. In other words, the Israelites could not experience the "resting place" of protection from their enemies merely by God's shielding them *in the desert*. They would have had to enter into the land of Canaan in order to encounter the first step towards the "resting place" of the "great nation" of Israel to which God and David were referring in Psalm 95, culminating eventually in the restored Kingdom of Israel on the land when Jesus returns and then the eternal Kingdom of God on the earth of the new creation. Therefore, by their dying in the wilderness, God demonstrated that they lacked changed hearts and authentic belief. Indeed, they were characterized by abject rebellion against God.

And it was the whole generation of adults, most of whom were refusing to believe Him for His promise of the land and protection from their enemies, who spent the next forty years wandering the wilderness and dying, so that only the next generation were allowed to enter into the land under the leadership of Joshua.

⁹² τίσιν δὲ ὤμοσεν μὴ εἰσελεύσεσθαι εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ εἰ μὴ τοῖς ἁπειθήσασιν – Again, the OT Israelites rejected God's promise to cause them to conquer the land of Canaan and to defeat the giants in it, which would have brought them the first step of the "resting place" of God from their enemies and from working so hard to persevere in belief in the midst of the difficulties that they encountered in the desert wilderness.

But Deuteronomy 28 and Psalm 132 indicate that this "resting place" is also God's resting place whereby He claims the land of Israel as the place where He dwells with His people and is worshiped by them. Instead, God was angry with this disobedient generation of Israelites so that they died in the wilderness before their sons and daughters reached the eastern banks of the Jordan River opposite Jericho, a little north of the Dead Sea (cf. Numbers 10:33; Deuteronomy 12:9; Joshua 21:44; 22:4; 23:1). Thus, they would miss out on all the "resting place" which God has in store for His people that starts for the Jews in the restored Kingdom of Israel on the present earth when Jesus returns and ends with the Kingdom of God on the eternal earth afterwards (cf. Revelation 20-22).

⁹³ καὶ βλέπομεν ὅτι οὐκ ἠδυνήθησαν εἰσελθεῖν δι' ἀπιστίαν – Thus, Paul is saying that the disobedience of the Israelites by refusing to enter into the land and conquer the Canaanites is the same as unbelief, which we can conclude is the same as having an unchanged heart, which we can also conclude will result in all the possible negative consequences for these Israelites, including that they will miss out on the earthly "great nation" of Israel and the eternal Kingdom of God.

Paul is also making a direct connection between the unbelief/disobedience of the Old Testament Israelites and that which could possibly occur among his Jewish readers. The implication is that just as God did not permit the unbelieving and disobedient Israelites to enter the promised land of Canaan and *aionic* life (after defeating the indigenous Canaanites), neither will his readers enter into the future Kingdom of Israel and *aionic* life, if they abandon their belief in Jesus as the Son of God, especially after "seeing God's works" through Jesus so to speak (cf. Psalm 95:9; Hebrews 3:9). They will encounter the same kind of anger from God, and it will last for all eternity, resulting in eternal condemnation and destruction. Consequently, if these Jewish readers exist at the time of Jesus' return and in the light of the Mosaic Covenant and its relevance to the Jews as God's chosen nation, they as a conglomerate of unbelieving people could collectively and even individually experience God's anger and earthly consequences stemming from His anger and judgment of them as described by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse regarding the "great tribulation" between his two appearances and in the book of Revelation when disaster comes upon Israel and Jerusalem prior to the return of Jesus (the trumpets, bowls, and Great and Terrible Day of the Lord).

⁹⁴ Φοβηθῶμεν οὖν, μήποτε καταλειπομένης τ' ἐπαγγελίας εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ δοκῇ τις ἐξ ὑμῶν ὑστερηκέναι – Paul exhorts his readers and himself to "fear" God, "while the promise to enter into [God's] rest remains" (καταλειπομένης τ' ἐπαγγελίας εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ), which is to say that no one should ignore either His commandments or His promises that are connected to His commandments. And the reason is because there are serious negative consequences for not obeying God appropriately and believing Him for all that He has said. The most serious consequence is not entering into His "resting place," the Kingdom of God, where first He dwells on the land of Israel with His people, the nation of Israel, and then on the eternal earth with them (and believing Gentiles),

after having forgiven for their sins. Those who do not pursue obeying God's "voice" will not enter the rest (as the Israelites did not in the desert) and "fail to reach" the fulfillment of His Abrahamic promises, i.e., of the earthly Kingdom of Israel and the eternal Kingdom of God on the new earth.

Thus, Paul is referring to God's (and their) "resting place" of the future restored Kingdom of Israel in addition to eternal salvation, in the same way that God had promised to the Israelites the land of Canaan as a place of His "resting place" and dwelling among them and their "rest" from their enemies and hard work of persevering in belief in the desert as a stepping stone towards these two elements of His and their "resting place."

Paul will go on to compare the phrase "His resting place" for his readers to God's "resting place" after His "works" of creating the cosmos (cf. Genesis 2:2) as a way to teach them that they, too, are in a stage of working as they approach the "resting place" that God has in store for them because of their authentic belief. As a result, Paul means that, if his readers fail to continue to work by believing God for the Davidic promise of the earthly Kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of the eternal earth through Jesus as the Messiah, then, like the unbelieving Israelites in the desert who failed to reach the "resting place" of the promised land of Canaan and, eventually, this earthly kingdom, they will fail to reach the "resting place" of the entirety of the eternal Kingdom of God.

Cf. **Hebrews 12:15** Take care that no one fails to reach [the sanctification] that comes from the grace of God (ἐπισκοποῦντες μή τις ὑστερῶν ἀπὸ τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ), that no root of resentment spring up in bitterness, with which many become defiled.

Starting with this verse, thirteen times Paul uses the subjunctive 1 person plural to exhort his Jewish readers towards the truth and obeying it—

Heb. 4:1 Therefore, **let us** fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

Heb. 4:11 Therefore **let us** be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.

Heb. 4:14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, **let us** hold fast our confession.

Heb. 4:16 Therefore **let us** draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Heb. 6:1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, **let us** press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Heb. 10:22 **let us** draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil understanding and our bodies washed with pure water.

Heb. 10:23 **Let us** hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

Heb. 10:24 and **let us** consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

Heb. 12:1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, **let us** also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and **let us** run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Heb. 12:28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, **let us** show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

Heb. 13:13 So, **let us** go out to Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.

Heb. 13:15 Through Him then, **let us** continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.

⁹⁵ καὶ γὰρ ἔσμεν εὐηγγελισμένοι, καθάπερ κάκεινοι· ἀλλ' οὐκ ὠφέλησεν ὁ λόγος τῆς ἀκοῆς ἐκείνου.

μὴ 'συγκεκρασμένους τῇ πίστει 'τοῖς ἀκούσασιν' – The OT Israelites had heard the message of the good news of God's promise of their entering into the land of Canaan and defeating the indigenous peoples, the Canaanites, by virtue of His grace and power. They both "heard" and "saw" this good news through Moses' teaching and God's miracles respectively. Paul is saying that the Jewish believers and he have likewise heard and seen God's message through Jesus' and his apostles' proclamation of it orally and their miracles.

However, the OT Israelites refused to believe what God was saying, which meant that the good news was not good news to them and therefore useless in their lives. God demonstrated this uselessness by causing the adult generation to die in the wilderness, so that they were not allowed to enter into the land of Canaan, which He had promised to Abraham and to them as his descendants.

In this verse, we also are made privy to a key concept in the whole Bible—the combining into one package inside a human being of the knowledge/understanding of God's message, regardless how much or how little a person grasps it, and authentic belief in the message that stems from divinely caused true inwardness. It is these two human elements together, understanding AND genuine belief, that qualify a person for eternal mercy and life in the Kingdom of God where Jesus will rule (cf. Hebrews 3:19).

⁹⁶ εἰσερχόμεθα "γὰρ εἰς [τὴν] κατάπαυσιν οἱ πιστεύσαντες – Just as the OT Israelites could have been in the process of entering the promised land of Canaan (constituting God's own "resting place" in the OT), if they had committed themselves to believing and persevering in believing God for His promises, Paul says that the Jewish believers of his day and he are actually in the process of entering into the same "resting place" of the future Kingdom of Israel and the eternal Kingdom of God, both where God will "rest" by dwelling among His people, believing Jews on the land of Israel and later when believing Jews and Gentiles "rest" on the new, eternal earth.

⁹⁷ καθὼς εἶρηκεν, Ὡς ὅμοσα ἐν τῇ ὀργῇ μου, οἷ' εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου – Like David, Paul again uses Psalm 95 as a kind of negative exhortation. In other words, he is telling them, don't be like the OT Israelites. Instead, do be like any authentic believer who will receive the fulfillment of God's promises, whether the "resting place" of the promised land of Canaan for the Israelites (that will eventually be actualized in the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 after Jesus' return and the Jews become a "great nation" (cf. Genesis 12:1-3)), or the "resting place" of the eternal earth of Revelation 21-22 for both David's and Paul's readers.

⁹⁸ καίτοι τῶν ἔργων ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου γενηθέντων – Some English Bible translate this statement, "although His works were finished from the foundation of the world." But I think that Paul is merely adding parenthetically that God has continued working (so to speak) by sustaining the story of the creation, in spite of the story of Genesis 1 and 2:1-2, which says that God rested on the seventh day. This is also in light of Psalm 95 and 132, which speak of God's resting in and on the land of Israel, specifically in Jerusalem.

Paul is saying that God still works while He also will rest when He brings about the fulfillment of the first promise to Abraham to make his physical descendants a "great nation" of believers and authentically worshiping people. The first work is that of creating the cosmos, even though He finished bringing into existence any new thing. The second work is that of fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make the Jews a "great nation."

Therefore, the better way to translate γενηθέντων is not with the sense of finished, but with the sense of being brought about or being made to happen—as I have translated it. Plus, I think that καίτοι is better translated "even though." Or "and yet" would fit the context too.

Acts 14:17 and yet He did not leave Himself without witness (καίτοι οὐκ ἀμάρτυρον αὐτὸν ἀφήκεν), in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

⁹⁹ εἶρηκεν ὅγάρ που περὶ τῆς ἐβδόμης οὕτως – As in Hebrews 3:7, Paul continues to refer to the Holy Spirit, "it" in this case and, therefore, God's working within the creation, to say what He wants to say through the biblical authors. Here, Paul refers to Genesis 2:2, the "somewhere" of God's saying something about the creation and His rest. Paul is commenting further on the statement in Genesis that says that God did finish His works of bringing the creation as it exists into existence. But this is not to say that God did no work from this point on, as if His working to bring the Israelites out of Egypt and into Canaan to provide them with a "resting place" contradicts Genesis 2.

¹⁰⁰ καὶ κατέπαυσεν ὁ Θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ – cf. Genesis 2:2, καὶ συνετέλεσεν ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἑκτῇ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ, ἃ ἐποίησεν, καὶ κατέπαυσεν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ, ὧν ἐποίησεν (וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מְלַאכְתּוֹ מִכָּל-הָעֲמָלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיְהִי עֶשְׂרִי יָמִים).
Here Paul quotes a portion of the Septuagint of Genesis 2:2 to make explicit that the story of the creation does indicate that God "rested" from His "works" of bringing the creation into existence. The point of the verse in Genesis is to make it clear that everything that God wants to exist for His purposes that culminate in the eternal Kingdom of God with human beings' living in it does exist. He is the creator of every element within the creation, and no other kinds of things are necessary for Him to accomplish His purposes. Therefore, He "rested" after first producing the creation. But Paul is quick to say that this does not mean that He is doing no other work. For example, He will fulfill His promise to the nation of Israel to bring them into the land which He has promised them, so that this will eventually mean that He and they will "rest" on the land, because they will all be authentic believers, living safely and securely away from any harm that their enemies might want to bring upon them.

Thus, Paul is doing two things. One, he is asking if the "rest" that God promises to his readers is God's "rest" as declared in Genesis 2:2, whereby God rested from His "moral," creative actions of bringing the whole cosmos into existence. Since it still remains for some to enter into God's "rest" (v. 6,9), the answer is, no. Instead, God's "rest" for his readers is God's "rest" from His present cosmic creating actions that will actually involve another creation—first, the creation so to speak of the restored Kingdom of Israel and then the new and eternal earth after He destroys this realm.

Second, Paul is drawing an analogy between God's "resting" from His "moral," creative actions of bringing the whole cosmos into existence and two other events. First, there was the opportunity for the Israelites to enter into the promised land of Canaan and "rest" from their conflicts with their enemies and from their working at persevering in belief while on their journey from Egypt through the desert to Canaan. Arriving and living in Canaan would be "rest" from their "moral" obedience to God in the desert.

Second, there is now the opportunity for Paul's readers to "rest" from enduring persecution and from working in the present realm at persevering in belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Just as God finished His actions of the initial creation and rested, Paul is exhorting his readers to finish out their earthly actions of enduring suffering and persevering in belief with authentic inwardness, so that they will be able to "rest" in the eternal Kingdom of God. However, they must *finish their works* as God finished His (and as the desert Israelites should have finished theirs) in order to "rest." However, this they will do only if they do not abandon their belief in Jesus. Therefore, Paul's readers need to work like God in order that they can "rest" like God. Thus, through the Genesis passage, Paul is instructing his readers that "rest" has always been an important biblical theme, and that God first demonstrated this through His own resting after the "accomplishments" and "works" of the initial creation. As people read this passage, they can know that God has planned a "rest" for them, if they obey the good news of the biblical message.

¹⁰¹ καὶ ἐν τούτῳ πάλιν εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου – Now Paul returns to his main points, and he says "again" (πάλιν) what he quoted from Psalm 95 in 4:3, that God prohibited the previous Israelites in the desert from entering the land of Canaan, the promised land. Implied is that it was because of their unbelief and disobedience.

¹⁰² ἐπεὶ οὖν ἀπολείπεται τινὰς εἰσελθεῖν εἰς αὐτήν, καὶ οἱ πρότερον εὐαγγελισθέντες οὐκ εἰσηλθόν δι' ἁπείθειαν – Paul is saying that there is still a future “resting place” for both David’s and “some” of his own Jewish readers. We know from the Abrahamic Covenant and the OT that this is the “resting place” of the restored Kingdom of Israel on this earth, which will eventually lead to the continuation of the Kingdom of God on the next eternal earth. Both these, by implication, will constitute the totality of God’s “resting place” for them.

The Israelites could have enjoyed the “resting place” of the land of Canaan, safe and secure from their enemies (the “it” of this verse), if they had all believed the “good news” through Moses and become changed of heart genuine believers—which is what God promised in the Abrahamic Covenant eventually would be the case. It did not happen then “on account of disobedience” (δι' ἁπείθειαν) and unbelief, just as it has not happened yet.

¹⁰³ πάλιν τινὰ ὀρίζει ἡμέραν, σήμερον, ἐν Δαυὶδ λέγων μετὰ τοσοῦτον χρόνον, καθὼς ᾠροῦνται· σήμερον ἕαν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε, μὴ σκληρύνετε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν – Thus Paul completes the sentence and thought in 4:6. God promised the Israelites from Egypt to make them a “great nation,” if they believed and obeyed Him as they entered the land of Canaan and destroyed the indigenous and pagan peoples. However, because they hardened their hearts, it was not for that generation to receive the fulfillment of His promise. As a result, David could say to his contemporary Jews that they possessed the same possibility to become the “great nation,” if they all truly listened to God’s voice and they all obeyed Him.

Thus, in a sense, God has *always* been saying to the Israelites, “Today, do not harden your hearts,” in regard to the promises of their becoming a “great nation” and entering into *aionic* and eternal life. In other words, every day is a “Today” when all the Jews could believe and obey God as an entire nation and, thereby, finally become the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-3 on the land of Israel. And Paul is saying that this is especially true now in the light of the final and complete message of good news from God that Jesus has brought about, i.e., his being the Son of God and Messiah by speaking this message and performing miracles, which his apostles continued (cf. Hebrews 2:1-4). Above, in Hebrews 3:7, Paul identifies the “author” so to speak of Psalm 95 as the Holy Spirit, “Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, if you hear His voice...’” Here, he states that David is the human author. Interestingly enough, this is the only instance where Paul names David as the author of a psalm when he also mentions three other psalms pertaining to the Messiah and high priest of God’s eternal plans and that David wrote—Psalm 8 in Hebrews 2:6-8, Psalm 110 in Hebrews 5:6 & 7:17,21, and Psalm 40 in Hebrews 10:5-10.

¹⁰⁴ εἰ γὰρ αὐτοὺς Ἰησοῦς κατέπαυσεν, οὐκ ἂν περὶ ἄλλης ἐλάλει μετὰ ταῦτα ἡμέρας – If God, through Joshua, had brought the Jews, albeit the next generation, to a *final* “resting place” in the land of Canaan that involved all that He had in mind regarding the concept of their “resting place,” i.e., the millennial kingdom that we know is still future because of Revelation 20 (and that will eventually lead to the eternal earth and life of Revelation 21ff.), then God through David in Psalm 95, 500 years later, would not have spoken to his fellow Israelites, who were actually living in the land, of another day that will be the *final* “resting place” for the Jews. Therefore, the “another day” in this verse happens to be the day of Jesus’ return, when he restores the Kingdom of Israel and gives the Jews rest on their land. Paul properly interprets David this way and is using David, the first Son of God according to the Davidic Covenant, as his model of exhortation to his Jewish readers. Just as David said, “Today, if (and since) you Jews are hearing God’s voice...,” Paul is saying the same thing and encouraging his Jewish contemporaries to hear God through Jesus and obey both of them.

¹⁰⁵ ἄρα ἀπολείπεται σαββατισμός τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ – Sabbath comes from one of the Hebrew words for “rest,” Shabbat (שַׁבָּת; the other two Hebrew words are שִׁבְתָּ from שָׁבַת and the verb שָׁבַת, which means to be quiet and at peace; cf. Deuteronomy 28:65). Paul is arguing that the Messiah brings about the Sabbath “rest” and “resting place” of both the promised land of Canaan and the eternal Kingdom of God. This Sabbath is what God through David ultimately meant in Psalm 95 and that Paul is concerned about with respect to his contemporary Jewish readers. It is the life that all Jewish believers, the “people of God” in this context, acquire in the eternal Kingdom of God and according to the two promises in the Abrahamic Covenant.

¹⁰⁶ ὁ γὰρ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς κατέπαυσεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ ὥσπερ ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων ὁ θεός – Here Paul goes back to the creation story of Genesis 1:1-2:2 and likens it to the lives of his Jewish believers. By definition, “rest” implies that a person has worked hard *beforehand* such that the “rest” is a cessation of his “works,” which indicates a completion or finishing of the work or “works.” Therefore, just as God rested from His “works” of bringing the cosmos into existence at the “creation” in Genesis 1 & 2, after *finishing* these particular “works” (cf. Hebrews 4:4), so will each authentic Jewish believer enter into his individual “rest,” i.e., a “rest” in the “great nation” of Israel, followed by the eternal earth. This will be a “rest” from each Jewish individual’s “works” of being diligent to persevere in belief and obedience to God in the present realm (cf. Hebrews 4:4-5,11), after *finishing* these particular works.

¹⁰⁷ σπουδάσωμεν οὖν εἰσελθεῖν εἰς ἐκείνην τὴν κατάπαυσιν – Paul is saying that the present realm is a time to work hard at persevering in belief and obedience. This perseverance is a person’s “work” that he will complete and bring to an end when his life in the present realm ends and he enters into the eternal Kingdom of God. The primary purpose of Paul’s letter is to exhort the readers to persevere in belief in Jesus for the benefit that it brings—the “resting place” of the first promise to Abraham, the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel, and eternal life of God’s second promise to Abraham (cf. Hebrews 6:11).

¹⁰⁸ ἵνα μὴ ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ τις ὑποδείγματι πέσῃ τῆς ἁπείθειας – Paul is referring to his readers’ failing to enter into the restored Kingdom of Israel and the eternal Kingdom of God and, instead, incurring God’s complete destruction by

disobeying Him and not continuing to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, just as the Israelites “fell,” i.e., died physically, in the wilderness because of their disobedience and inappropriate inwardness, thus failing to enter into the “resting place” of the land of Canaan (cf. Hebrews 3:8,15,17).

Paul does not want his Jewish readers to adopt the same “pattern” (ὑπόδειγμα) of “disobedience” (ἀπειθεία) that their ancestors demonstrated in the wilderness and died as a result before entering into the land of Canaan and conquering the indigenous peoples so that they would have possessed the land all to themselves and worshiped God alone—if they all had changed hearts to become the “great nation” of the Abrahamic promise.

¹⁰⁹ Ζῶν γὰρ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἑνεργῆς καὶ τομώτερος ὑπὲρ πάσαν μάχαιραν δίστομον καὶ δίκνοῦμενος ἄχρι μερισμοῦ ψυχῆς καὶ πνεύματος – After claiming that his readers have heard the voice of God in the good news of Jesus as the Messiah and after exhorting them to believe it and not harden their hearts against it, Paul points out an important aspect of any truth that comes from God and the vital importance of the truth about Jesus as their high priest. Whenever God speaks, it is through His spokesmen, whether prophets or the *angeloi* of Yahweh. In this case, God has spoken through His Son, the final Davidic king, Jesus, and his apostles. And the message of God that they have brought is that Jesus is the Son of God and high priest of God’s and his people at the final judgment (cf. Hebrews 1:1-2; 2:3-4). Paul’s point is that the truth regarding Jesus as the message invades and reveals the innermost condition of a human being, where “existence” and “spirit” meet, i.e., where the person as a person (the combination of his spirit and body, i.e., his existence) and his spirit (God’s conception of the person for the purposes of all eternity) reside. The question that truth poses is, “Is the person humble and desirous of truth for the sake of eternal salvation, or is the person proud and closed to truth?”

The answer to this question is what the “voice” of God as the message of God brings forth from a person.

¹¹⁰ ἄρμων τε καὶ μυελῶν – “Joints” in the NAS95 is probably not the best translation. The point is that the gospel message infiltrates the innermost part of a person’s being where the important aspects of his personhood meet, his existence as a living human being and his spirit which is God’s plans and purposes for him. Therefore, “bone casings” is a better rendition of ἄρμων, i.e., “of bone casings and bone marrow.” cf. Louw & Nida’s article on μυελός.

¹¹¹ καὶ κριτικὸς ἐνθυμήσεων καὶ ἐννοιῶν καρδίας – The “voice” of God as the message of God is capable of revealing what kind of heart/inwardness a person has, either receptive or not to His message and truth, which, in this case, is that Jesus is the Messiah. Thus, the most important issue for a human being is his inwardness, what kind of person he is internally with respect to the biblical truth, i.e., as to whether or not he desires and believes this truth throughout his whole life and perseveringly lives a life commensurate with the truth—regardless of the circumstances he encounters. This would be the “thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

¹¹² καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν κτίσις ἀφανὴς ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, πάντα δὲ γυνὰ καὶ τετραχλησμένα τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ – God sees every aspect of the created reality at every moment. We can run away from Him, but we cannot hide. Therefore, Paul’s readers will not be able to conceal their rejection of Jesus if they merely pretend to believe in him and are not willing to exhibit their faith authentically in the face of persecution from unbelieving Jews.

Cf. Søren Kierkegaard’s concept of “confidentiality.” God is not just “confidentiality about confidentiality.” He is the very essence of “confidentiality” (Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, “Love is a Matter of Conscience” [and a pure heart and a sincere faith], pages 151-153).

¹¹³ πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος – Ultimately, Paul’s readers’ belief in Jesus as the Messiah will become the “matter at hand” (ὁ λόγος) at the final judgment, where all of their and our most confidential secrets will become known to God along with the true nature of their and our hearts.

¹¹⁴ ἔχοντες οὖν ἀρχιερέα μέγαν διεληλυθότα τοὺς οὐρανούς, Ἰησοῦν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, κρατῶμεν τῆς ὁμολογίας – Now that he has explained the importance of obeying the “voice” of God for the sake of entering His “resting place” of the land of Israel and the eternal earth, Paul gets back to the point that he was making at the end of chapter 2 where he was connecting the idea of high priest to the idea of the Messiah and the Son of God, while also demonstrating that Jesus, with his suffering death, was the perfect candidate for all three. Paul will now describe in detail in Hebrews 5-10 how the Son’s high priesthood fits with the OT texts and Jesus’ role by means of the New Covenant in contrast to the Levitical priests’ role under the Mosaic Covenant.

Thus, Jesus “has passed through the heavens,” meaning that he has transitioned from his earthly existence as an ordinary human being and Son of God to his metaphorical “sitting at the right hand of God” as an ordinary human being, the Son of God, and the high priest who intervenes eternally for sinners at the final judgment. The point of this whole letter is that Paul’s Jewish readers need to continue to believe this about Jesus for the sake of their eternal destinies. Indeed, he is not just a high priest. He is the “great” high priest.

¹¹⁵ οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν ἀρχιερέα μὴ δυνάμενον συμπάθειν ταῖς ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν, πεπειρασμένον δὲ κατὰ πάντα καθ’ ὁμοιότητα χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας – It is comforting to know that Jesus can sympathize with our moral weaknesses (ταῖς ἀσθενείαις ἡμῶν) even though he was morally perfect, since he, as an ordinary human being and not a superordinary being like the *angeloi*, was tested with respect to his own belief in God as his God and Father. For example, consider the tests that Jesus endured in the desert after his baptism (Matthew 4, Luke 4) as well as in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36ff.).

Cf. **John 20:17** Jesus said to her, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God’”.

His ascension to God was to take his place after his actual ascension to the position with created reality where he would rule it as God’s proxy, i.e. to God’s right hand, metaphorically speaking.

¹¹⁶ προσερχόμεθα οὖν μετὰ παρρησίας τῷ θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος, ἵνα λάβωμεν ἔλεος καὶ χάριν ἐνύρωμεν εἰς εὐκαιρον βοήθειαν – Paul could be speaking of the Messiah’s throne from where he rules over the universe (cf. Hebrews 1:8; Psalm 45:6), but, in this context about Jesus’ role as high priest, he is referring to God’s throne of both sovereign rule and judgment (cf. Hebrews 8:1; 12:2). Paul’s claim is that the only way to have confidence at the final judgment that God will grant a person eternal mercy is through persevering belief in Jesus as the Messiah and intervening high priest, in light of the fact, as he will go on to explain, that the OT makes it clear that a superordinary *angelos* of Yahweh as Messiah would be useless at the judgment. By virtue of having a suffering, human Messiah and high priest, the judgment seat of God becomes a throne of grace, because a sinful human will be able to take advantage of Jesus’ priestly actions of self-offering and intervention (cf. Hebrews 5-10).

In this verse, Paul is therefore stating the goal of a sinful human being. It is to approach God’s throne of judgment with the bold confidence of receiving eternal mercy and life. Then, once the approach is made, God grants the petitioner His mercy and life in the Kingdom of God as the ultimate part of the goal, and this all takes place because of Jesus’ intervention on the person’s behalf now that he has qualified through his death to be both ruler and high priest.

Cf. Hebrews 3:6; 10:19,35 in regard to παρρησία.

Cf. Hebrews 7:25; 10:1,22; 11:6; 12:18,22 in regard to προσέρχομαι and Hebrews 7:19 in regard to ἐγγίζω, which also means to draw near.

Therefore, the “timely help” (εὐκαιρος βοήθειαν) is at the judgment when it will be most needed and the penitent sinner will receive God’s eternal mercy and forgiveness through Jesus as high priest. But we know from the rest of the NT that the judgment for believers who lived before Jesus’ return will be at that very moment and they are either lifted from the earth or resurrected from the dead.

¹¹⁷ πᾶς γὰρ ἀρχιερεὺς – Paul now begins his in-depth explanation of Jesus as the ultimate and eternal high priest in comparison to the Levitical high priests of the Mosaic Covenant, as he earnestly works to convince his readers that Jesus is the only high priest with his offering to trust with their obtaining eternal mercy from God.

Leviticus 4:3, “...if the anointed priest (הַכֹּהֵן הַמְשִׁיחַ) (ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς ὁ κεχρισμένος = the anointed high priest) sins so as to bring guilt on the people, then let him offer to Yahweh a bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed.”

The word ἀρχιερεὺς appears only two times in the Septuagint (Leviticus 4:3 and Joshua 24:33) and 11 times in the apocrypha. The more common phrase is ὁ ἱερεὺς ὁ μέγας which appears 21 times in the Septuagint.

Leviticus 21:10, “The priest who is the highest among his brothers (הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדֹל) (ὁ ἱερεὺς ὁ μέγας ἀπὸ τῶν ἀδελφῶν αὐτοῦ), on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes.”

Exodus 28:41, “You shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him; and you shall anoint them (וַתְּשִׁיחֵם) (χρίσεις αὐτούς) and ordain them (וַתִּמְשָׁחֵם) (ἐμπλήσεις αὐτῶν τὰς χεῖρας = you shall fill their hands) and consecrate them (וַתְּקַדְּשֵׁם) (ἀγιάσεις αὐτούς), that they may serve Me as priests (וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ) (ἵνα ἱερατεύωσιν μοι).”

Leviticus 8:12, “Then he poured some of the anointing oil (הַשֶּׁמֶן הַקֹּדֶשׁ) (τοῦ ἐλαίου τῆς χρίσεως) on Aaron’s head and anointed him to consecrate him (וַתְּשִׁיחֵם) (καὶ ἔχρισεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἡγίασεν αὐτόν).”

¹¹⁸ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων λαμβανόμενος – Paul is referring to the fact that the Levitical high priests were picked “from the men” of the Israelite tribe of Levi. Therefore, each high priest was a real human being and not a superordinary being like the *angeloi* of Yahweh. The argument continues from chapters 1 & 2 that, like the Levitical priests and high-priest, the Son of God as the final Davidic king of Israel and of the the Kingdom of God is an ordinary human being. In addition, the Son of God as the high-priest who replaces the Levitical high-priest is also.

Exodus 28:1, “Then bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priest to Me (וַיָּבִיאוּ) (ἱερατεύειν μοι) — Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons.”

While Paul will sometimes refer to *daily* sacrifices by all the priests as prescribed by the Mosaic Covenant, his argument is mainly about the high priest who brings the *annual* sacrifice on Yom Kippur and sprinkles blood on the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies as the main way by which the Israelites were to demonstrate their understanding that God requires a blood sacrifice in order to obtain His mercy and forgiveness.

¹¹⁹ ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων καθίσταται τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, ἵνα προσφέρῃ δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίας ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν – Cf. 5:3,7; 8:3,4; 9:7,9,14,25,28; 10:1,8,11,12; 11:4,17; 12:7 — in regard to offerings and gifts that are made to God for purposes of getting His attention in the midst of one’s sins or needs.

Here, in one sentence, Paul states the main responsibility of the Levitical priests, and especially the high priest once a year, under the Mosaic Covenant – that they were to offer up to God “gifts” (δῶρά – Hebrews 8:3,4; 9:9; 11:13) and “tokens of loyalty” (θυσίας – Hebrews 7:27; 8:3; 9:9,23,26; 10:1,5,8,11,12,26; 11:4; 13:15,16) as a means to appeal to Him for mercy in light of people’s sinfulness and sinful actions and their deserving God’s condemnation and the punishment of death (cf. Hebrews 8:3,4; 9:9; 11:4).

Numbers 18:1, “So Yahweh said to Aaron, ‘You and your sons and your father’s household with you shall bear the guilt in connection with the sanctuary (וְהָיָה חַטָּאתְכֶם) (λήμψεσθε τὰς ἁμαρτίας τῶν ἁγίων), and you and your sons with you shall bear the guilt in connection with your priesthood (וְהָיָה חַטָּאתְכֶם) (λήμψεσθε τὰς

ἀμαρτίας τῆς ἱερατείας ὑμῶν).” This translation from the NAS95 does not quite interpret properly God’s intent. Notice that the Septuagint translates לָבִיחַ (from לָבַח) with λήμψεσθε (from λαμβάνω). In other words, “bear,” i.e., carry *per se*, is not what the priests do with Israel’s sins and sinful actions. Instead, they take or receive the responsibility to deal with their evil and intervene between God and them in order to appeal to Him for mercy. However, Paul will go on to argue that the Levitical priests were entirely unsuccessful themselves to obtain mercy, i.e., complete and eternal mercy. In other words, Paul’s whole argument in chapters 5-10 hinges on the fact that the sacrificial ceremonies required by the Mosaic Covenant involving mere animals were and are completely ineffective for obtaining God’s eternal mercy. In fact, the entire Mosaic Covenant is one big ineffective religious system that God gave to the Israelites simply so that they could be a didactic tool and signpost for the benefit of all the rest of humanity. The Jews’ obedience to the Mosaic Covenant is supposed to provide the Gentiles and themselves with a means to learn what kind of God the transcendent Creator is and that He is a God of morality, goodness, love, provision, justice, and mercy. However, Paul will argue that with respect to this last issue, mercy and, especially, complete and eternal mercy, the continual and multiple offerings of bulls and goats communicate only that the problem of a sinful human being’s deserving God’s eternal condemnation is never resolved by virtue of them.

In other words, some other methodology and, indeed, sacrificial offering, is necessary to obtain God’s eternal mercy. And Paul will argue from the OT that Jesus as the real, human Messiah, who offered himself once on the cross, qualifies to secure complete mercy from God. Therefore, anytime that God granted complete forgiveness to any of the Israelites in OT times, it was on the basis of Jesus’ future high priesthood and offering of himself in order to qualify for his priestly responsibility.

Leviticus 1:2, “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When any man of you brings an offering to Yahweh (וְכָל־אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל יָבִיחַ דָּבָר לַיהוָה) (ἐὰν προσάγῃ δῶρα τῷ κυρίῳ), you shall bring your offering (וְכָל־אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל יָבִיחַ דָּבָר לַיהוָה) (προσποιήσετε τὰ δῶρα ὑμῶν) of animals from the herd or the flock.’”

Leviticus 4:13,14,16,20, “Now if the whole congregation of Israel commits error and the matter escapes the notice of the assembly, and they commit any of the things which Yahweh has commanded not to be done, and they become guilty; when the sin which they have committed becomes known, then the assembly shall offer a bull of the herd for a sin offering and bring it before the tent of meeting... Then the anointed priest (וְהַכֹּהֵן הַמְשִׁיחַ) (ὁ ἱερεὺς ὁ χριστός) is to bring some of the blood of the bull to the tent of meeting... He shall also do with the bull just as he did with the bull of the sin offering; thus, he shall do with it. So the priest shall make atonement for them (וְכָפַר עֲלֵיהֶם) (ἐξιλάσεται περὶ αὐτῶν), and they will be forgiven (וְנִסְכְּלוּ) (ἀφεθήσεται αὐτοῖς ἡ ἀμαρτία).”

This last phrase, וְנִסְכְּלוּ and ἀφεθήσεται αὐτοῖς ἡ ἀμαρτία, should be translated better with something like, “and it (the sin) will be overlooked,” i.e., until God deals with the Israelites’ sinfulness at the final judgment through the high priesthood and advocacy of the Messiah.

By the way, God established in the Mosaic Covenant that the high priest’s role included his offering to Him something that functioned as an appeal and request to Him for a sinner’s forgiveness for his sins. Does His mercy technically require this? No. It is just that way God has arranged reality to accomplish His purpose of granting forgiveness to sinful Jewish people and human beings. Technically, He could just say to them, “You are forgiven,” and this would be the case. In other words, forgiveness does not require some sort of outward legal action in addition to the person who forgives’ choosing to do so so that the offender does not have to pay a penalty or be appropriately punished in order for justice to be served in an equitable, fair, and upright manner, i.e., in a quid pro quo way that demonstrates clear reciprocity and perfect give-and-take.

Nevertheless, as God has stipulated for how He accomplishes His purposes of granting forgiveness of sins to sinful human beings, high priests mediate on behalf of those who have rebelled against God in order to gain His mercy for them. Therefore, God has designed the story of creation so that an offering by the high priest is a necessary part of the process as. If there is no offering, then there is no mercy from God. If there is the right offering, then God grants eternal mercy. Therefore, in the case of Jesus, his offering provides the eternal mercy that Jewish and Gentile sinners need, because he is the only right offering with respect to it, which, in turn, qualifies him to act as high priest. He was assigned by God the function of acting as high priest for people, but he could not exercise his function until he had qualified to do so by dying on the cross as an offering to God. Thus, he carries out his responsibility into eternity, while he also rules over the creation and the eternal Kingdom of God—starting with the “great nation” of Israel and this world before God destroys the present realm and creates a new and eternal heaven and earth (cf. Revelation 20-22).

¹²⁰ μετριοπαθεῖν δυνάμενος τοῖς ἀγνοοῦσιν καὶ πλανωμένοις, ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὸς περικείται ἀσθένειαν – There is an important similarity between the Levitical high priest and the rest of the Israelites. They are both morally weak and sinful. And their sinfulness makes them unwilling to know and understand the real problem before God of their sin, and even when they think that they are listening to the Bible and doing what it prescribes in order to appeal to God for mercy and forgiveness, they are “misguided” in their thinking and miss the point about the depth of their sin and the ineffectiveness of their efforts and practices that are according to the Mosaic Covenant.

If the Levitical high priest truly understands his sinful condition, which the priests of Jesus’ day did not for the most part, he can exercise compassion and patience toward his fellow Jews and deal gently with them just as he would want God to exercise compassion and patience toward him (cf. James 5:14-20).

In other words, whenever a Levitical priest intervenes on behalf of the sins of an Israelite or the Israelites, he should ask himself, “What good is this really going to do, because I keep repeating the same religious practice, and I need someone to intervene on *my* behalf?” And, indeed, his actions do not really do any good. The issue of complete forgiveness only gets prolonged by means of the continual sacrificial offerings of the Mosaic Covenant. It does not get resolved. Thus, eternal mercy and forgiveness towards any human being, including a Jew, has always been and will always be on the basis of Jesus, the morally perfect and eternal high priest.

¹²¹ καὶ δι’ αὐτὴν ὀφείλει, καθὼς περὶ τοῦ λαοῦ, οὕτως καὶ περὶ αὐτοῦ προσφέρειν περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν – A Levitical priest is morally and covenantally obligated to deal with his own sins and sinful actions before God in addition to those of the other Israelites by bringing a sin offering to God. It is this issue of a high priest’s obligation to bring an offering to God that Paul will exploit in this letter as he compares Jesus as high priest to these others. The high priest is morally weak and sinful just as the people of Israel for whom he is bringing the offering to God to appeal to Him for mercy. Therefore, he is performing this offering for himself just as much as he is doing so for them.

Leviticus 9:7, “Moses then said to Aaron, ‘Come near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering, that you may make atonement for yourself and for the people (וְעָלְתָּ וְעָלְתָּ לְעֹלָתֶךָ) (καὶ ἐξιλάσαιο περὶ σεαυτοῦ καὶ τοῦ οἴκου σου); then make the offering for the people, that you may make atonement for them, just as Yahweh has commanded.’”

As with the the word כָּפַר (= forgive) as quoted above from Leviticus 4:20 in the notes for 5:1, כָּפַר and ἐξιλάσαιο refer to only prolonging the issue of God’s justice and mercy, but not resolving it.

The point that Paul makes in this paragraph is that the high priest’s responsibility is to bring a sacrifice to God in order to hold off His condemnation, as well as, in the case of the Levitical high priest, in order to do the same for himself, because he, too, is a sinful human being. Yet, if he really understands what God requires, he would know that eventually it must be some other high priest, indeed, a morally perfect high priest, who settles the issue of eternal and complete mercy between God and sinful human beings.

¹²² καὶ οὐχ ἑαυτῷ τις λαμβάνει τὴν τιμὴν ἀλλὰ καλούμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ καθόσπερ καὶ Ἀαρὼν – Here is another similarity between Jesus as high priest and the high priests of the Mosaic Covenant. They are both chosen by God. Thus, even if God does not directly communicate to someone like Moses who is to be the high priest of Israel under the Mosaic Covenant, i.e., Aaron, He still is doing so indirectly by requiring that this person be from the tribe of Levi. As a result, He “calls” and therefore commands each priest and high priest to serve the people on behalf of their sins. The high priest does not do this to himself.

5:1 and **Exodus 28:1**, “Then bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priest to Me — Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron’s sons.”

Exodus 28:43; Leviticus 8-10.

Leviticus 16:32, “So the [high] priest who is anointed and ordained to serve as priest in his father’s place (וְהַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל) = who anoints (sing.) it (?) and fills (sing.) its (?) hand to act as priest after his father) (ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ ἁγιάζων (pl.) αὐτὸν καὶ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ τελειώσων (pl.) τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ ἱερατεύειν μετὰ τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ = same as translation of the Hebrew, except verbs are plural) shall make atonement....”

Numbers 3-4, 8:5-26, especially **vs. 24,25**, “This is what applies to the Levites: from twenty-five years old and upward they shall enter to perform service in the work of the tent of meeting. But at the age of fifty years they shall retire from service in the work and not work any more.”

Numbers 18, especially **v. 23**, “Only the Levites shall perform the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations (וְהָיָה עוֹלָם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם) (νόμιμον αἰώνιον εἰς τὰς γενεὰς αὐτῶν), and among the sons of Israel they shall have no inheritance.”

Deuteronomy 18:1-8, especially **v. 5**, “For Yahweh your God has chosen him (וְיָבִיחֶם) (αὐτὸν ἐξελέξατο) [the individual Levite who is currently helping the sinful penitent Jew] and his sons from all your tribes, to stand and serve in the name of Yahweh forever (וְעָלְתָּ) (The Septuagint translation is not available).”

¹²³ οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς οὐχ ἑαυτὸν ἐδόξασεν γεννηθῆναι ἀρχιερέα ἀλλ’ ὁ λαλήσας πρὸς αὐτόν υἱὸς μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε – Jesus as the Messiah did not appoint himself to be a high priest. Instead, it was the person who had spoken in Psalm 2 about Solomon’s becoming the Son of God when he was crowned king of Israel. This person in Psalm 2 was God. However, every Davidic king after Solomon also became God’s Son and was called by Him to be His Son at his coronation, including now Jesus. Distinct from all the other Davidic kings, Jesus also became a high priest, as Paul will go on to demonstrate in the next verse and mainly in Hebrews 7.

Because Psalm 2 was written by David at the coronation of Solomon, and because God “gave birth” to Solomon as His Son by having him crowned the king of Israel, it makes sense that God “gives birth” to Jesus as His Son, indeed, the final Son of God of the eternal Kingdom of God. However, in contrast to Solomon and the other Davidic kings who were coronated during their lifetimes, Paul is arguing in this letter that Jesus has to fulfill a unique role and qualify to become the king of Israel, a high-priest, and the Son of God by a different kind of coronation ceremony—by his suffering death on the cross.

Therefore, God’s resurrecting Jesus from the dead becomes his confirmation of having gone through the beginning of his own coronation ceremony, which is also the moment when Jesus qualifies, by virtue of his willingness to be crucified, to be the only advocate on behalf of sinful human beings at the final judgment. As a result, Jesus’

resurrection is also the moment, in line with Psalm 2, when God “gave birth” to Jesus as the Son of God and king of Israel. Notice that, rather than refer to the three recorded times when God spoke audibly from heaven to declare Jesus His Son (cf. Matthew 3:17; 17:5; Mark 1:11; 9:7; Luke 3:22; 9:35; John 12:28), Paul refers to these Old Testament passages of Psalm 2 and Psalm 110, because he is dealing with believing Jews who need to understand better their Old Testaments in order to refute the arguments of the unbelieving Jews who are pressuring them to abandon their belief in such a low-life Messiah as Jesus of Nazareth, who was executed by the Jewish leaders, the Sanhedrin, and crucified as a bona fide criminal (apparently) by the Romans.

¹²⁴ καθὼς καὶ ἐν ἐτέρῳ λέγει· σὺ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ (Septuagint – Psalm 110:4, σὺ εἰ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ) – Psalm 110 and its verse 4 become the key to Paul’s argument about Jesus’ ordinary humanness and importance, which will become clear in Hebrews 7. Just as God declared that Jesus is His Son by virtue of his having qualified to be such through his death (see previous verse and note), so also, through David in Psalm 110, God called Jesus and declared that he is a high priest who intervenes eternally for sinful and rebellious human beings who are willing to accept his advocacy.

It is putting together the two ideas of Son of God (Psalm 2) and high priest (Psalm 110) that Paul does so marvelously in this letter in order to convince his readers to continue in their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, i.e., as the human king and high priest of both Israel and the Gentiles.

Paul’s point here is that Jesus as the Messiah, unlike the *angeloi* of Yahweh, receives his role, function, and the accompanying honor from God *through the words of the Bible and God’s calling him*, and not simply by being written into the story (except indirectly Psalm 104:4 as quoted above in Hebrews 1:7 that the “winds” and “flaming fire” are His *angeloi* also), since he is an ordinary man. Because the *angeloi* of God are simple manifestations of the transcendent Creator, they are so closely associated with Him that they can be said to “take” their own glory and honor (cf. Hebrews 5:4). For example, the burning bush would have naturally been able to refer to its divine glory, because it was the transcendent Creator who was appearing in the form of the bush. In contrast, Jesus was (and is) an ordinary (but morally perfect) human being, and rather than his “taking” on his roles simply by assuming them like the burning bush, he realized that God’s methodology for his becoming the Son of God and a high priest was by virtue of God’s statements through the Holy Spirit in both Psalm 2 and Psalm 110 that found their fulfillment in His resurrecting Jesus from the dead after he offered himself on behalf of the sins of mankind.

Therefore, the statement in Psalm 2 of God’s conferring “Sonship” onto the ordinary human being Solomon (and Jesus by extrapolation) only makes sense if the Son of God is an ordinary human being as God (in the case of Jesus, and not just a proxy of God) who has written Himself into the story of creation as a separate person and not an *angelos* and theophany like the burning bush who is the same person as the transcendent Creator. Similarly, the statement in Psalm 110 is addressed to a human being, not to an *angelos* and theophany of Yahweh.

As a result, in this last paragraph, Paul makes the point that high priests cannot be presumptuous and claim the right of this responsibility for themselves. They must be appointed by God. Likewise, God appointed Jesus to his role and even assigned him to be a member of a completely different order from the Levitical priesthood. He is of the order of Melchizedek, not of the order of Levi, and he holds his priesthood “into the age,” i.e., into the age of the Kingdom of God, which will include the millennial kingdom of restored Israel and the eternal earth of the new creation (cf. Revelation 20-22).

¹²⁵ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ δεήσεις τε καὶ ἱκετηρίας πρὸς τὸν δυνάμενον σῶζειν αὐτὸν ἐκ θανάτου μετὰ κραυγῆς ἰσχυρᾶς καὶ δακρύων προσενέγκας καὶ εἰσακουσθεὶς ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας – Here Paul refers to a very human and painful moment (or collection of moments) in Jesus’ life as the Son of God, moments that one would certainly not expect a superordinary *angelos* of Yahweh to have. Not only did Jesus not “take” independently the honor of being a high priest, he actually tried to avoid it when praying in the Garden of Gethsemane “with loud cries and tears”—albeit righteously, by sorrowfully praying that his responsibilities could be different. He also made and appeal of sorts to God on the cross when he used the words of Psalm 22:1 and cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.” And Paul calls these statements to God “offerings of prayers and requests” from Jesus to the transcendent Creator, because he was making these prayers with the most humble and genuine faith and belief in God—as the Israelites were supposed to do with their sacrifices to God at the temple.

Plus, Jesus was making no demands on God. Instead, he was willing to submit completely to His calling for him. As a result, God the Father accepted the human Jesus’ prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane because of his authentic inwardness, even though God was the One who could “save him from death,” i.e., death on the cross. However, He did not answer Jesus’ by saving him from the cross, and neither did Jesus ultimately want to avoid death, because he knew that this was his destiny in order to qualify to be the eternal high priest for sinful human beings.

These events in the Messiah’s life make no sense if he was supposed to be a superman and *angelos* of Yahweh. One would certainly never expect an *angelos* of Yahweh, e.g., the burning bush of Exodus 3, to be subjected to suffering and groan, cry, and pray for release from the suffering. Nor would one expect an *angelos* to suffer, period.

Hebrews 12:28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe (μετὰ εὐλαβείας καὶ δέους).

¹²⁶ καίπερ ὢν υἱός, ἔμαθεν ἄφ’ ὧν ἔπαθεν τὴν ὑπακοήν – While it might seem reasonable to think that the final Son of God, who is the ruler of the universe (cf. Psalm 2,8), would not suffer death at the hands of his enemies and would not have to learn obedience to the Father through the very human means of physical, psychological, and even spiritual suffering, this is exactly what happened to the very human Jesus—in order for him to qualify to be our priest and

advocate at the final judgment, because his suffering was his offering to God as a high priest (cf. Hebrews 9:11,12). Jesus willingly allowed the sufferings he endured to teach him obedience to the Father at a deeper level than he had experienced before his arrest, trial, beatings, and crucifixion. Jesus had been relatively in control of his life up to that point—traveling where he wanted, saying what he wanted, healing when he wanted, and even escaping from the Jewish leadership when he wanted. Then, the night before his crucifixion, others took control, and he suffered greatly as a result and obeyed God at a deeper level.

Thus, Paul is saying that suffering was God’s tool to enhance Jesus’ own obedience to Him, and the inference we can draw is that it is also a very important tool for us in our process of learning what it means to trust and obey God—to listen to His voice (cf. OT uses of this phrase), to believe what we hear from Him, and to choose to respond to what He says with as much willingness and fervor as His grace allows. Plus, we have to work hard at this, because, as with Jesus, we should not expect it to be an easy thing to choose in the midst of our own humanity—in spite of how easy it would be for God to change our stories and cause us to make the choice to believe and obey Him in the midst of our sufferings. At lower levels of suffering, we may have the sense that we are in control of our lives to a large degree. As the suffering increases, our sense of control grows less and less, and we are led to trust God more likely to a greater extent than we have had to do so before. Thus, our journey of suffering that leads to greater obedience can look very much like Jesus’ journey, even if we do not suffer death at the hands of those who violently oppose God.

¹²⁷ καὶ τελειωθείς – It does not make any sense to translate this statement as “And having been made perfect” as the NAS95, NIV, and KJV do. Jesus was already “perfect” in every aspect of his beingness and role. But what he had not done yet was reached the goal of his first appearance.

Thus, the *telos* or goal of Jesus’ existence on earth as the one person who would qualify to be the final Son of God was to suffer death on the cross for the sake of the nation of Israel and other sinners in order to become both their king and high priest. Paul first mentioned this idea in 2:10, that it was appropriate for God the Creator to lead the one who solves the problem of the sinfulness of human beings to his goal through the methodology of suffering.

Hebrews 2:10 You see, it was appropriate for Him, on account of whom everything exists and in light of whom everything exists, while leading many sons to glory, to cause the leader of their salvation to reach his goal (τελειῶσαι) through sufferings.

Also **Hebrews 3:14** For we have become partners with the Messiah, if, indeed, we hold on to the reliable beginning of our title deed until the goal (μέχρι τέλους).

Consequently, we reach our goal of the eternal Kingdom of God if we acknowledge and believe that Jesus as the Messiah reached his goal first by dying on the cross, rising from the dead, and ascending from the earth in order to return at a later date.

Notice also the passive voice of this verb, τελειωθείς. Ultimately, Jesus was brought to his goal by the God through His sovereignty.

¹²⁸ ἐγένετο πᾶσιν τοῖς ὑπακούουσιν αὐτῷ αἴτιος σωτηρίας αἰωνίου – Paul is saying that, through Jesus’ suffering death on the cross, he became the very ground (αἴτιος), basis, and personal justification of salvation from God’s eternal condemnation at the final judgment, having qualified to be the intermediary for God’s mercy on behalf of fundamentally rebellious human beings.

Thus, this is for all those who obey Jesus by embracing the message that he spoke from God the Father, to the effect that he is the Messiah, i.e., the eternal king and high priest, for the sake of their salvation.

The implications of this are that we become what God intends for us and the effect that we are to have on other people by our learning obedience through what we suffer. We never become the basis of their salvation. Only Jesus is that. But God may use us as His instrument and means to inform and encourage other sinners to repent and believe in Jesus for their salvations too.

Luke 23:4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no guilt [ground to declare him accountable for a crime] in this man (οὐδὲν εὐρίσκω αἴτιον ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τούτῳ).”

Acts 19:40 “For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today’s events, since there is no real cause for it (μηδενὸς αἰτίου ὑπάρχοντος περὶ οὗ), and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering.”

¹²⁹ προσαγορευθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀρχιερεὺς κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ – Jesus’ path to acquiring the ultimate, honorable role of king over the universe was through the suffering of death, a path which would be highly unusual for a superordinary *angelos* of Yahweh. Therefore, Jesus was an ordinary human being, who earned from God the titles of both Son and high priest by suffering death on the cross.

Paul is making the point that his readers must never abandon their belief in that which God has declared in both Psalm 2 and Psalm 110, that Jesus is both Son (Psalm 2) and priest (Psalm 110) for the sake of their eternal salvation. Thus, it was through the Holy Spirit’s and David’s words in Psalm 110 that Jesus was “designated by God” to be a “high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.” Paul will go on in chapter 7 to describe in more detail what it means for Jesus to be a high priest “according to the order of Melchizedek” vs. other human beings who were and are (in Paul’s day) priests and high priests according to the order of Levi.

In this paragraph, Paul has explained that Jesus acquired his ultimate role of high priest by qualifying for it through suffering, something that Paul is implying that Aaron and the Levitical high priests did not have to do to gain their responsibility. Thus, by Jesus’ suffering as he did, he went through the very human and existential process of learning obedience to the Father and reached his own goal as the Messiah to be the high priest of those who would approach

God to seek His mercy through him.

Paul will go on to use this idea of reaching a goal for sinful human beings, so that it becomes clear that their goal is to approach God and gain His eternal mercy and life in the Kingdom of God through Jesus' having reached his goal of suffering death on the cross, rising from the dead, ascending from the earth in order to return one day and bring about the eternal Kingdom of God. Consequently, the task of a sinful human being is to prepare himself for the judgment. And it becomes clear from the rest of the Bible that the effect of a sinful human being's obedience to God is to become a "priest" to others, who need instruction and encouragement to approach God with repentance, belief, and obedience. For example, God makes the entire nation of Israel a group of "priests" to the rest of the human race when He speaks through Moses to the Israelites whom He has brought out from Egypt—

[Exodus 19:5](#) "Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; [19:6](#) and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

¹³⁰ περὶ οὐ πολλὸς ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος καὶ δυσερμήνευτος λέγειν, ἐπεὶ ὠθροὶ γεγόνατε ταῖς ἀκοαῖς – Here begins a parenthetical section and excursus where Paul comments on the poor spiritual and intellectual condition of his readers, hoping that they will take to heart his warning and his encouragement to continue learning and growing in their belief in Jesus as their Messiah and high priest. He is saying that what is needed for all human beings, Jesus included as he just described above, is staying power when it comes to belief in and obedience to God. However, these readers are becoming "slow to respond" to what they are hearing about the gospel, which is not good. They need to be quick to respond and, therefore, eager to implement and obey, as they continue to learn and grow in their understanding of the biblical message.

Paul says that the explanation of Jesus as both Son and high priest according to the order of Melchizedek is πολλὸς, meaning it is both extensive in explanation and great in importance for us as human beings, because it involves understanding the relationship between passages such as Psalm 2 and Psalm 110, both of which Paul has just quoted. He will go on to demonstrate the profundity of the explanation in chapters 7-10. Now, though, he once again exhorts his immature readers to press on toward a more mature understanding and deeper belief in Jesus as the very human Son of God and high priest. Both the pressure and the intimidation that have been applied by their persecutors have made it difficult for them to respond positively to the concept of Jesus as God's Son (cf. Hebrews 6:12). It sounds as though Paul has already had some firsthand or at least secondhand experience with his readers' slowness to learn.

¹³¹ καὶ γὰρ ὀφείλοντες εἶναι διδάσκαλοι διὰ τὸν χρόνον, πάλιν χρεῖαν ἔχετε τοῦ διδάσκειν ἑμᾶς ὅτι τινὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν λογίων τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ γεγόνατε χρεῖαν ἔχοντες γάλακτος ὅ[καὶ] οὐ στερεᾶς τροφῆς – At this point in their journey as believers in the Messiah, Paul's readers ought to be able to explain what it means for the Messiah to be both king and high priest as Paul himself understands these concepts and is explaining it in this letter, but the effect of the persecution they are enduring has brought a dullness and reluctance both to endure the persecution and to grasp all the important ideas of the Messiah.

Paul uses the analogy of an infant who "needs" sustenance from his mother and can handle only her breast "milk" and not "solid food" that she may prepare for him. The child has to mature and become not only more capable in his eating ability but also more capable in digesting and therefore using the food.

Consequently, their "need" is not entirely a good one but a bad one, i.e., one that Paul says that they should not have. This "need" is basically that the only message that they can hear because of the intimidation from their persecutors is what the persecutors are saying about the Old Testament, the basics of the biblical message that lacks a proper explanation of the Messiah and how one acquires eternal life through his being their high priest at the final judgment and to some Levite's being such. As a result, they need to move on from the infancy of a poor and erroneous understanding of the Old Testament and Mosaic Covenant to the maturity of a more accurate and detailed explanation of the Old Testament (cf. 5:13-6:2), the Mosaic Covenant, and the New Covenant—as he will go on to explain. Therefore, their current "need" is not really a need but a lack. They lack of full grasp of the biblical message that includes exactly who is the Messiah and how Jesus of Nazareth fits the necessary criteria for this role in God's story.

¹³² πᾶς γὰρ ὁ μετέχων γάλακτος ἄπειρος λόγου δικαιοσύνης, νήπιος γὰρ ὅτι ἐστιν – Again using the metaphor of a child and the food he receives from his mother, Paul is referring to the person who lacks the proper skill that comes from working diligently and arduously with the Old Testament in order to connect the dots of the various passages that paint a whole picture regarding the Messiah and eternal salvation, including a proper understanding of grace. This is the "infant" in comparison to the adult who can eat all kinds of food in order to sustain himself in life. Indeed, it is through belief in the complete and accurate message of the Messiah that a person acquires eternal forgiveness and the promise of the Kingdom of God, both the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel and eternal life on the new earth, which all is at the heart of this message.

Notice that ἄπειρος comes from the same root as πειράζω = test, approve.

Also λόγου δικαιοσύνης could be either "the message of justification" or "the message of righteousness," meaning either the biblical ideas whereby belief in them results in justification before God or the biblical ideas whereby belief in them means that a person is doing the right thing. Both meanings seem to fit with the context, but I lean towards the first one that is the result of proper understanding when someone believes the biblical message as accurately and fully as possible.

¹³³ τελείων δέ ἐστιν ἡ στερεὰ τροφή. τῶν διὰ τὴν ἔξιν τὰ αἰσθητήρια γεγυμνασμένα ἔχόντων πρὸς διάκρισιν καλοῦ τε καὶ κακοῦ – Paul is referring to theologically mature people who are fully committed to their goal of eternal mercy, so that they have worked long and hard at understanding the extensive message of God’s project involving a Messiah who is both king and high priest. This is the “solid food” that only the mature of thought can grasp, so that their mental faculties have been adequately trained to discern “good” ideas from “evil” ideas, i.e., theological truth from error. This is what he is most concerned about for them in addition to the perseverance of their belief. A theologically mature person understands the “good” of the message of the gospel of Jesus as the very human Messiah and high priest, while a theological infant holds on to the “evil” of Paul’s readers’ Jewish persecutors by rejecting the proper explanation of God’s message, thinking that the Messiah has to be a superordinary being, an *angelos* of Yahweh, and that the idea of the Messiah does not connect to the idea of high priest via suffering death on a cross. In other words, it takes competence and proficiency of thought to think through and learn the various components of the Old Testament message that result in a person’s truly knowing and following the truth. Cf. Hebrews 9:8ff.

The theologically mature person can also be said to be a sinful human being who really is on his way to reaching his goal, i.e., the goal of eternal mercy and life in the Kingdom of God (cf. Hebrews 7:11, etc.).

¹³⁴ διὸ ἀφέντες τὸν τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ λόγον – It seems that for most modern Christians, the word “Christ” did not become relevant in biblical history until Jesus arrived on the scene so that they interpret Paul as speaking of Jesus and Christianity in this verse—that the Hebrew Christians need to move on from an immature understanding of Christianity (for example, from the “simple” idea of eternal salvation) to a more indepth understanding (for example, to speaking in tongues and healing those who are sick). However, the word “Christ” is the same as the word Messiah, which was a relevant term meaning Anointed One in Old Testament Israel regarding the special roles from God of priests, kings, and prophets.

Therefore, it makes more sense that Paul is not referring to the message of Jesus Christ *per se*, i.e., the message of Jesus as the Messiah, but to the explanation of the Messiah and eternal salvation in the Old Testament, through which it becomes natural and logical to conclude that Jesus is the Messiah as king and high priest, who suffered death on the cross and rose from the dead, and that we are saved by grace and not by outwardly following the ceremonial commandments of the Mosaic Covenant.

Paul would have been quite happy for his readers at least to embrace the beginning of the message of Jesus as the Messiah, but they were considering giving up altogether belief in this message. As a result, Paul wants his readers to leave behind the basics of the message of the Messiah *as taught in the Old Testament*, even in the Mosaic Covenant, and move on to a more mature understanding of this message as taught in the Old Testament. As a result, he brings together Psalm 2 (that the Son of God is king and ruler of Israel and of the whole world) and Psalm 110 (that the final ruler of Israel is a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek) in Hebrews 5:5,6 before he heads into a lengthy explanation of the connection between the ideas in these psalms in chapters 7-10.

For Paul, the written message regarding the Messiah begins and ends in the Old Testament (since the New Testament did not yet exist), to which, of course, the Jews had access. While Paul had learned from the OT what it says about Jesus as the Messiah (because he fits all the necessary criteria), the same is true of Jesus, that he based his understanding of himself on the Old Testament. For example, there is John 5:39, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; **it is these that testify about me** [emphasis mine].” In other words, Jesus obtained his understanding of what it meant for him to be the Messiah from the Old Testament just as much as Paul did about Jesus and his role as the Messiah. And Paul is saying that his readers need to move on from a basic and erroneous *Judaistic* understanding of the Messiah derived from the Old Testament, i.e., that he is coming and makes relevant only the basic concepts that Paul lists in vs. 1 & 2, to an accurate and fuller understanding that covers the extent of the concept of the Messiah as both eternal king and high priest. This latter understanding will then lead them to embrace the very human Jesus as the Messiah and to count strictly on God’s grace.

¹³⁵ ἐπὶ τὴν τελειότητα φερώμεθα – The word φερώμεθα can mean literally “let us carry,” but it can also mean “let us move on,” which is how, like others. I translate it, mainly “let us move ourselves along” with the additional reflexive idea by using the word “ourselves” also.

The prepositional phrase ἐπὶ τὴν τελειότητα can mean “to perfection/completeness/the goal,” and I think that Paul is talking about his goal for his readers (and that would include himself), which is to gain eternal life that comes from having grasped completely what it means for the Messiah to be a high priest and for Jesus (as a man who suffered death on the cross) to be this unique and only Messiah and high priest.

Thus, Paul is exhorting his readers and even himself to head diligently in the direction of their goal, “to being well of [their] way to” it, which, in the short term on earth, involves biblical, “adult” knowledge and moral behavior that come from fully embracing Jesus as the Messiah. In the long term, their goal is to move beyond a basic knowledge of Judaism and the Mosaic Covenant from the Old Testament to a sound, Old Testament knowledge of the Messiah, which makes it clear that Jesus uniquely is both the final Son of God and the Melchizedekan high priest. In turn, this will lead to the final goal for a sinful human being of acquiring eternal mercy and life in the Kingdom of God through Jesus and the New Covenant—and not through sacrifices and offerings of bulls and goats as prescribed by the Mosaic Covenant.

¹³⁶ μὴ πάλιν θεμέλιον καταβαλλόμενοι μετανοίας ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων καὶ πίστεως ἐπὶ θεόν – Correctly, the Jews were aware of the Old Testament’s and Mosaic Covenant’s call for them (and all human beings) to repent (μετανοίας)

and appeal to God for mercy because of rebellious actions that they have committed in violation of His moral commandments and that lead to a person's deserving His eternal condemnation and death, i.e., "for actions that deserve death (ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων). Also, clearly and obviously, the Mosaic Covenant and the whole rest of the Old Testament call for the Jews (and all others) to believe in the one true God (καὶ πιστεῶς ἐπὶ θεόν). But these are only foundational (θεμέλιον) concepts on top of which a **proper and complete understanding of the Messiah as presented in the Old Testament** should be built.

In other words, Paul's concern is not that they understand the OT in regard to repentance of sin and belief in God, because his readers' Jewish persecutors appeared to be practicing these authentically. He is concerned with connecting this concepts and practices to Jesus as the one and only Messiah who is both king and high priest. Of course, they should grasp the significance of everything in the Mosaic Covenant, but they should see these things as only the "beginning" of what the OT is talking about in regard to the Messiah, because he is the main point!

¹³⁷ βαπτισμῶν διδασχῆς – The Mosaic Covenant in the Old Testament teaches the Jews to perform ritual cleansings as part of their obedience to God. But these are merely the beginning of God's teaching that should end with completely understanding who and what the Messiah is all about. Meanwhile, the unbelieving Jews must be emphasizing ritual, water cleansings above understanding the Messiah, which is understandable because of their lack of changed hearts that would make them aware of the profundity and importance of their inner sin in contrast to our tendency as human beings to emphasize outward rituals.

The word βαπτισμός is not used in the Septuagint.

Leviticus 14:8 regarding the cleansing of a leper, "The one to be cleansed shall then wash his clothes (אֶת־בְּגָדָיו) (καὶ πλυνεῖ ὁ καθαρισθεὶς τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ) and shave off all his hair and bathe in water (בַּמֵּי) (καὶ ῥαρί) and be clean (טָהוֹר). Now afterward, he may enter the camp, but he shall stay outside his tent for seven days."

¹³⁸ ἐπιθέσεως τε χειρῶν – Laying on of hands of animals by the Jewish priests, especially the high priests, was an important outward act of obedience to the Mosaic Covenant and the Old Testament as a means for the Israelites to demonstrate their desire to receive God's blessings. Meanwhile, the unbelieving Jews must be emphasizing this ritual as the means to earn God's temporary and eternal mercy in contrast to Jesus' offering himself as a high priest for this purpose.

Exodus 29:10, "Then you shall bring the bull before the tent of meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull (וַיָּנִיחוּ אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד עַל־רֹאשׁ הַבָּקָר) (καὶ ἐπιθήσουσιν Ααρων καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ μόσχου)."

Leviticus 16:21, "Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat (וַיָּנִיחוּ [נָדָו] עַל־רֹאשׁ הַשָּׂעִיר הַחַי) (καὶ ἐπιθήσει Ααρων τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ χιμάρου τοῦ ζῶντος), and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness." This second verse pertains to Aaron as the high priest of that time and the day of atonement for the entire nation of Israel as they sought God's mercy and forgiveness for themselves.

¹³⁹ ἀναστάσεως ὅτε νεκρῶν καὶ κρίματος αἰωνίου – The Old Testament does not mention resurrection from the dead and *aionic* judgment and life as often as the New Testament does. But these concepts are there to be found and understood by the Jewish students of the Bible. Thus, the unbelieving Jews must have been convinced that they had made themselves worthy of both resurrection from the dead and escape from the judgment and condemnation of God through their diligent obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, therefore not needing a crucified Messiah to be the basis for these.

Isaiah 26:29, "Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, for your dew is as the dew of the dawn, and the earth will give birth to the departed spirits."

All these things were what not only the Old Testament but also the Judaism of Paul's day taught. And they were the focus of his readers' persecutors. However, as Paul is demonstrating, these things also fall short of a *complete* understanding of the Old Testament and *the Messiah* as Son of God and high priest—where Jesus is the only man whose life and experience fit the description in the OT regarding the Son and high priest.

¹⁴⁰ καὶ τοῦτο ποιήσομεν, ἐάνπερ ἐπιτρέπη ὁ θεός – Paul states the biblical fact that his readers and he will reach maturity, i.e., their goal of 6:1 of eternal life, by fully and accurately understanding what the Old Testament teaches about the Messiah—only if this is part of God's sovereign and eternal plan. This is to say that they will fully grasp the message of the Messiah, with Jesus as king of Israel and their high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (5:10), and then gain eternal life only if God in His grace allows, because ultimately it is up to Him as to whether or not any human being fully embraces the biblical truth and perseveres in belief throughout his life for the sake of obtaining participation in the eternal Kingdom of God.

All the NT authors continually emphasize this point. It is a definite check on human presumption in regard to anything good that occurs in our lives.

John 16:7,8, "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (ὁ παράκλητος = the Helper/Persuader) will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. And He, when He comes, will convict (ἐλέγξει = convince) the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment."

Here Jesus states that it is God through His activity within the creation who causes both the apostles to be fully persuaded of what he has taught them and the world to become convinced of the apostolic message of God's

perspective on human sinfulness that will result in His eternal condemnation if people do not embrace salvation through the Jewish Messiah.

¹⁴¹ τοὺς ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας – Here, the “enlightening” to which Paul is referring is not that someone’s heart has been completely changed by the Spirit of God when they heard the gospel message, because this is the kind of person who remains committed to the gospel because of God’s faithfulness and grace in spite of persecution any other kind of pressure on his belief to give it up.

Instead, Paul is referring to those who have at least been exposed enough to the NT message of Jesus the Messiah to make an informed decision to change from an erroneous and superficial Judaistic perspective on the Old Testament’s information regarding the Messiah and sinfulness to an accurate perspective that includes acknowledging the profundity of one’s sinfulness, belief in Jesus as the Messiah, and recognizing the significant consequences of eternal life or death that come from believing or rejecting this perspective.

In other words, there is great enlightenment in the proclaiming of the message of the gospel in a dark, dark world of lies and false beliefs. And there will be people who seem to embrace the message, when perhaps they actually have not.

¹⁴² γευσσάμενους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου – Here, Paul is referring to those who have been exposed, through Jesus the Son and through his apostles, to God’s gift of the message of Jesus’ Messiahship and salvation on account of his death and from the eternal consequences of sinfulness. The τε indicates that the three phrases that follow, “tasting the gift of heaven,” “becoming partners with the Holy Spirit,” and “tasting the good message of God” are subordinate to and explanatory of the clause “who once were enlightened.”

¹⁴³ καὶ μετόχους γεννηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίου – Paul is referring to those who, to a great degree, have matched intellectually the Holy Spirit’s (God’s) grasp of the NT gospel message, but they probably lack the proper inwardness to embrace the message for the sake of their eternal salvation.

He will go on to say that they have “tasted” but not really ingested and embraced the gospel message of Jesus as the Messiah.

¹⁴⁴ καὶ καλὸν γευσσάμενους θεοῦ ῥῆμα δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος –

The τε indicates that the phrase “the powerful effects of it of the coming age” is subordinate to and explanatory of the phrase “the good message of God.”

Paul is referring to those who have intellectually come to grips with the NT message and that there are serious and eternal effects regarding believing it or rejecting it, i.e., of eternal life or eternal death respectively, starting with the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel and then into to the time of the new and eternal earth. Nevertheless, they are probably choosing to reject the message, even though they know (as Paul describes in Romans 1) that they will incur God’s condemnation and eternal death.

In this context involving Jews, their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah would be because they have been relying on the Mosaic Covenant and its animal sacrifices to provide them with eternal mercy, and they are choosing to go back to these alone as their means to gain God’s eternal mercy.

[Matthew 12:32](#) regarding the phrase “coming age,” i.e., “Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come (οὔτε ἐν τούτῳ τῷ αἰῶνι οὔτε ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι).”

[Ephesians 1:21](#) also regarding the phrase “coming age,” i.e., “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come (οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι).”

¹⁴⁵ καὶ παραπεσόντας – Here is the bottom line for those who might reject Jesus as the Messiah, specifically after hearing the gospel that declares that he is. The real problem, Paul is saying, is that the Jewish “believer” is not really a believer. He has acquired all sorts of good, solid, biblical knowledge and understanding, while engaging in all sorts of apparent, good biblical behavior and obedience to God. Yet, he has taken what he now grasps intellectually of the NT message and willfully chooses to reject it.

Therefore, by deduction, neither his knowledge nor his obedience is actually biblical. He never had a changed heart by the Spirit of God, so that it is humanly impossible to renew him to Christian repentance. Only God, theoretically, could do this, because He is in control of the orientation of people’s hearts.

¹⁴⁶ ἀδύνατον...πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν – Certainly, it is not impossible for God to shape His story in such a way that He grants faith to someone who never had faith or who strengthens the faith of someone who is in the process of giving his up in the face of persecution—like Paul’s readers. But, humanly speaking, if a person remains entrenched in unbelief, after grasping intellectually or at least giving intellectual assent to the messages 1) of Jesus as Messiah and high priest, 2) of the profundity of human sinfulness, and 3) of the consequences of either eternal life or death that come from believing the message or rejecting it, it is hard to call someone back from this.

In addition, in the instance of someone’s having initially responded positively to the NT message but then having changed their minds by rejecting the message, it becomes humanly impossible to renew them to embracing the message authentically and to genuine, Christian repentance—as opposed to erroneous, Jewish repentance that cannot persevere in embracing Jesus as the Messiah.

This is what I think that Paul means here by the fact that it is ἀδύνατον = impossible to “renew again to repentance” someone who has rejected his belief in God and Jesus once he sets his heart to avoid persecution to the degree that Paul is referring in this passage. They have let themselves slip into unbelief and rebellion against God, and, humanly speaking, there is no turning back. This is how precarious the situation is for them. Nevertheless, of course God can

cause them to persevere in belief, which is exactly what they are going to need if they arrive at the theoretical point in their heart and faith to which Paul is referring here.

¹⁴⁷ ἀνασταυρόντας ἑαυτοῖς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ παραδειγματίζοντας – Anyone who intellectually grasps the message of the profundity of human sinfulness along with Jesus’ role as Messiah and high priest who has suffered death on the cross **and then rejects this message** is, in effect, hanging Jesus on the cross **again**. They are “crucifying” him “again for themselves” Jesus, who is the “Son of God,” the Messiah and basis for eternal salvation from God’s wrath and punishment of destruction.

Like Jesus’ first opponents in the Jewish community and the Roman Empire who executed him by crucifixion, the person in Paul’s day (and ours, too) who refuses to embrace Jesus as the Messiah might as well be hammering the nails into Jesus’ hands and feet again. He is saying a loud and emphatic “No” to Jesus, so as to give up the ultimate “goal” of eternal mercy. He is settling for something far less than it—wrath and eternal destruction from God as his recompense and wage for sinning against God.

Thus, Paul is saying that anyone who remains in this state of willful rejection of the NT message puts himself in a position whereby it is very difficult **humanly speaking** to believe the message again because of his intentionally hardening his heart.

¹⁴⁸ γῇ γὰρ ἡ πιόυσα τὸν ἐπ’ αὐτῆς ἐρχόμενον πολλὰκις ὑέτὸν καὶ τίκτουσα βοτάνην εὖθετον ἐκείνοις δι’ οὗς καὶ γεωργεῖται, μεταλαμβάνει εὐλογίας ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ – Paul uses an agricultural metaphor to illustrate the point that he has made in vs. 1-6. Everyone knows that seeds that reside in the ground sprout and grow as a result of rain that nourishes them and provides them with the ability to grow. Paul then adds the fact that, in a sense, God praises the seeds for the growth from the rain.

In the same way, those who embrace with authentic belief that Jesus is both the Messiah and high priest of their existences as sinful human beings will continue to grow in their understanding of him, in their repentance, and in the firmness of their belief, with the result that God eventually, at the end of the present realm, praises them and grants them their ultimate goal of eternal life in the Kingdom of God. These sinful human beings were dead seeds in the ground who needed the rain of the truth. And when it came into them and nourished them properly by their embracing it and living their lives on the basis of it, they grew towards being harvested for the eternal Kingdom of God when it arrives when Jesus returns.

¹⁴⁹ ἐκφέρουσα δὲ ἀκάνθας καὶ τριβόλους, ἀδόκιμος καὶ κατάρας ἐγγύς, ἥς τὸ τέλος εἰς καὺσιν – In contrast to the those of the previous verse, the sinful Jews (and all other sinful human beings) who hear the NT message, grasp it intellectually, and then reject it, never to embrace it at all or again for the purpose of enduring in their faith in it, are “close to burning” and will eventually incur God’s eternal condemnation and destruction—if they continue in this manner in their hearts and minds.

This is like the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13:1-23. Here in Hebrews, Paul is referring to mainly the second and fourth soils and seeds. The second are those who immediately receive the gospel with joy, but not having any firm root in themselves, when affliction or persecution arises, they reject the gospel. The fourth are those who understand the gospel, grasp it with an “infinite passion for the infinite” (as Kierkegaard calls it), and go on to bear fruit with it in their lives respectively, thus implying that they achieve the ultimate goal of the Kingdom of God.

¹⁵⁰ πεπεισμεθα δὲ περὶ ὑμῶν, ᾗ ἀγαπητοί, τὰ κρείσσονα καὶ ἐχόμενα σωτηρίας, εἰ καὶ οὕτως λαλοῦμεν – To the degree that it is possible for a human being to evaluate the authenticity of the belief of another human being, Paul is convinced that his readers are genuine Christians, so that they will learn from this letter exactly what it means for Jesus to be the crucified high priest as the Messiah and to heed Paul’s exhortation to persevere in their belief in him, resulting in their eternal salvation. Thus, “even though” Paul is warning against giving up their faith, he is convinced that they will not.

He will go on to say that the reason why he is convinced (πεπεισμεθα) of his readers’ salvation is because they have already gone through a period of working and loving others in a Christian way (cf. Hebrews 10:32-34 quoted below). In other words, their faith has been quite tested, and they genuinely seem to have come through the difficult time with their faith intact. Nevertheless, they are now wavering and need to persevere again in their faith.

The issue is the Messiah’s ontology and role—

1) Is he a supernatural *angelos* and theophany of Yahweh like the burning bush who does not suffer, but who only mightily destroys Israel’s enemies?

2) Or is he a real human being who dies on a cross and becomes the high priest of sinners by having offered himself as a sacrifice to God, plus he eventually destroys Israel’s earthly enemies?

Paul is arguing the latter and is explaining as such from Psalm 2, Psalm 110, and the New Covenant of Jeremiah 3:31-34.

Hebrews 10:32 Therefore, remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great struggle of sufferings—**10:33** on the one hand, by being put to public shame with insults and tribulations, and on the other hand, by becoming participants with those whose lives were thus turned upside down. **10:34** Indeed, you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and you accepted with joy the seizure of your possessions, because you yourselves knew that you have a better possession and one that remains.

¹⁵¹ οὐ γὰρ ἄδικος ὁ θεὸς ἐπιλαθέσθαι τοῦ ἔργου ὑμῶν καὶ τῆς ἀγάπης ᾗς ἐνεδείξασθε εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, διακονήσαντες τοῖς ἁγίοις καὶ διακονοῦντες – Genuine, inwardly sourced love of fellow believers is intimately tied to a mature knowledge of the message of the Messiah, and Paul has become convinced of the authenticity of the belief

of his Jewish readers by virtue of their mutual care and concern since the time of their initially believing the gospel. Thus, he is speaking of a salvation by works of sorts, in the sense that love and care for fellow Christians demonstrate authentic inwardness and belief in Jesus as the Messiah, both of which result in eternal life. Paul will mention these Christians' specific love for others in Hebrews 10:32-34.

1 John also addresses the same issue.

As a result, Paul (and John) is implying that their genuine love for one another should lead to their accepting his exhortation to believe what he is teaching them in this letter about Jesus as the Messiah and high priest, who suffered death on the cross. Their genuine love and serving one another is theologically and biblically tied to their genuinely believing God for the truth about Jesus as Messiah and high priest.

God does not reject those who have authentic inwardness with belief and obedience that manifests itself in serving one another. If He did, He would be evil and unjust (ἄδικος).

¹⁵² πρὸς τὴν πληροφορίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος – Paul is saying that their diligent and eager serving of their fellow Christians to the end of their lives should and will occur for the purpose of their embracing and being completely confident in the NT message that proclaims the inviolability of God's promise to grant eternal salvation to authentic believers (cf. Hebrews 10:22). Counting on God's promise regarding the future and His faithfulness to cause authentic believers to acquire what He has in store in the future is the only way to stay motivated to obey Him in the midst of pain and suffering. Thus, along with their genuine love should be a confident and eager hope and expectation of eternal mercy and life that comes from understanding exactly what Jesus the Messiah is about such that he has reached his goal and can be their high priest. Likewise, they will reach their goal through his intervention before God at the final judgment, i.e., when he returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel and initiate the eternal Kingdom of God.

¹⁵³ ἐπιθυμοῦμεν δὲ ἕκαστον ὑμῶν τὴν αὐτὴν ἐνδείκνυσθαι σπουδὴν πρὸς τὴν πληροφορίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἄχρι τέλους – Paul is exhorting these discouraged believers to engage now in the same eager diligence of serving and caring for their fellow Christians as they did in the past, which he will describe more specifically in Hebrews 10:32-34. Keep that persevering belief, moral obedience, kindness, caring, and serving one another going!

These Christians probably have become reluctant to do so because of the intensity of the persecution that they are experiencing. It keeps increasing and has made them less enthusiastic about Christianity and exposing themselves to more persecution as a result of helping their fellow Christians. But Paul is emphatic. It is only by constantly renewing their enthusiasm for belief and serving that they will receive eternal life as promised by the NT message.

¹⁵⁴ ἵνα μὴ νωθοὶ γένησθε – Paul is hoping that his readers consider carefully God's promise of eternal life to those who believe all the truth to which He exposes them, so that they can then respond immediately and positively to the extensive message of the Messiah as king and priest that he is presenting them. He already said in 5:11 that they are slow to respond to the truth, and he is exhorting them to become quick to respond.

Hebrews 5:11 Concerning him, the message is great for us and yet hard to explain, because you have become slow to respond to things that you hear (ἐπεὶ νωθοὶ γεγονάτε ταῖς ἀκοαῖς).

¹⁵⁵ μνηταὶ δὲ τῶν διὰ πίστεως καὶ μακροθυμίας κληρονομοῦντων τὰς ἐπαγγελίας – Paul wants his readers to act like all those who, since Abraham, received the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant promises by virtue of their patient, persevering belief (διὰ πίστεως καὶ μακροθυμίας) that authentically mimicked Abraham's. Abraham initially received God's speaking the promises to him (especially the promise of eternal life), and God said that those who are like Abraham in terms of their belief will also obtain the fulfillment of these promises. Thus, Abraham both believed God for His promises and patiently waited for their fulfillment, as Paul will go on to talk about in more detail in Hebrews 11.

Paul states that it takes great patience to wait for God to fulfill His promises and to finish giving authentic believers the "great nation" of Israel and life in the eternal Kingdom of God, especially in the face of all the suffering on earth that Christians are prone to experience in association with their Messiah, who also suffered greatly through his trial and crucifixion.

¹⁵⁶ Τῷ γὰρ Ἀβραάμ ἐπαγγελάμενος ὁ θεός, ἐπεὶ κατ' οὐδενὸς εἶχεν μείζονος ὁμόσαι, ὥμοσεν καθ' ἑαυτοῦ – Paul first mentioned Abraham in 2:16—

Hebrews 2:16 For, of course, he does not provide help to *angeloi*, but he provides help to the seed of Abraham. Jesus' work of dying, rising from the dead, ascending from the earth, and returning to established the Kingdom of Israel on the earth is for the "seed of Abraham," because it was within the promises that God made to Abraham that we find the foundation of what God has been doing and will continue to do within human history. This then is the second time that Paul mentions Abraham explicitly. He will also become an important part of his argument in chapter 7 and again in chapter 11.

"For" may not be the best way to translate γὰρ as Paul goes on to make the point of why it is that receiving the same promises that God gave to Abraham has such tremendous benefit for those who have authentic belief and patience—because God actually had future believers in mind when He swore an oath to Abraham in order to guarantee the certainty of His fulfilling His promises to him and them. In other words, Paul here wants that much more to encourage his readers, two thousand years after God's promise to Abraham and Abraham's belief and patience, to imitate him in regard to the truth of Jesus as Messiah and high priest so that they obtain the promises also.

The process of God's making His promise(s) to Abraham began much earlier in his life when God called Abraham to leave Ur and travel to Canaan (cf. Genesis 11 & 12). But God repeated and "made" the promise in Genesis 22 when He tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice Isaac and then swore an oath to Abraham in order to "guarantee" the

through him all the families of the earth would be blessed with eternal life.

Paul is saying that God's purpose for responding to Abraham's belief by swearing an oath regarding His promises was for the believing "descendants" of Abraham (both Jews and Gentiles), that they may understand even better and feel just that much more assured of the certainty of God's fulfilling His promises. Thus, they, too, can count on them with a confidence equal to that of Abraham's. God, therefore, will definitely fulfill His promises for Paul's readers just as He fulfilled them for Abraham.

What we have then is this—after first making the promises to Abraham in Genesis 12 and confirming them through the covenant ceremony in Genesis 15, God swore an oath in Genesis 22 in the midst of repeating the promises (cf. v. 17) in order to "guarantee" that He would fulfill His promises. Only the first action on God's part, the making of the promises in Genesis 12, was necessary to ensure that He would fulfill these promises. However, God made it doubly clear that He would do so via the promise of Genesis 12 and the oath in Genesis 22, not to mention the significance of the covenant ceremony in Genesis 15. This explanation of the oath to Abraham will allow Paul to refer to this same concept in 7:20-22 with respect to the Messiah himself.

In this way, God revealed that He "desired even more to demonstrate to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose." In other words, Paul is saying that the whole event of testing and demonstrating with clear evidence Abraham's belief was not for God but for Abraham and those who would follow him in history who would imitate his belief. God has demonstrated to them the "unchangeableness of His purpose" to make the Jews the most powerful nation in human history and to grant to both believing Jews and believing Gentiles an eternal Kingdom under Jesus' rule.

¹⁶¹ ἵνα διὰ δύο πραγμάτων ἀμεταθέτων, ἐν οἷς ἀδύνατον ψεύσασθαι ὁ[τὸν] θεόν, ἰσχυρὰν παράκλησιν ἔχωμεν οἱ καταφυγόντες κρατῆσαι τῆς προκειμένης ἐλπίδος – Paul is commenting on the purpose for which God both made a promise to Abraham about eternal life and swore an oath to him. It was so that Abraham and anyone in the future who wants to escape God's eternal condemnation and finds out about these two events would have just that much more certainty in their belief to be encouraged that He was going to fulfill His promises that would include them as authentic believers.

Understandably, therefore, the only way that it makes sense for sinful human beings to reach out metaphorically and seize the message of eternal life is if it is presented to them from God on the basis of His guaranteed faithfulness to His promises. Through the means of the Bible, we know that God has made His faithfulness clear, not only by making the promises of Genesis 12:1-3, but also by swearing the oath of Genesis 22:15ff. to fulfill them.

The promise of Genesis 12 is one of two "unchangeable things," and the oath of Genesis 22 is the second of two "unchangeable things." And it is both of these that obviously makes it "impossible for God to lie," even though one of them is sufficient for this purpose.

Paul is always "fleeing from [the] danger" of God's wrath, condemnation, and eternal destruction through his own belief, while his readers (and any authentic believers in God) are doing the same. Thus, they all "may have strong encouragement to seize the hope [of the fulfillment of God's promises] that is set before" them by the biblical message, going back to Genesis 12 and watching what God does in the history of the Jews and the story of Jesus who has finally appeared as their Messiah, king, and high priest. In this way also, the "hope" is a means to wait expectantly for God to finish His project of bringing about the Kingdom of Israel and of God. And this "hope" is always out there in the future until Jesus returns and it is finally realized. Meanwhile, we all wait and wait and wait—with "patience," eagerness and confident expectation.

Paul now repeats this message of the guaranteed promise by God and from God and clarifies this through his comments about the Son, Jesus the Messiah, because he has fulfilled his initial responsibility of suffering death on the cross in order to rise from the dead and ascend from the earth to wait for his return at a later date and bring about the "great nation" and eternal life of the Abrahamic promises.

¹⁶² ἦν ὡς ἄγκυραν ἔχομεν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀσφαλῆ τε καὶ βεβαίαν καὶ εἰσερχομένην εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος – The feminine accusative relative pronoun ἦν obviously refers to the word "hope" in 18, so that it is this absolute, guaranteed certainty of God's mercy through His promises and oath which "anchors" people to this mercy through their persevering belief in Jesus as the Messiah. People fortunately get stuck in God's promise and oath as that which gives them hope that they will obtain the fulfillment of His promises.

Also, this "hope" and expectation is not only "sure and certain" as God is sure and certain, but it is also something that "enters inside the veil," meaning that God's guarantee of eternal life, especially through Jesus and his role as the Messiah, is a kind of Holy of Holies in the temple of God, where human beings somehow appear before God and receive His complete mercy in contrast to incurring His wrath, condemnation, and eternal destruction.

Paul will go on in the next verse to say that through Jesus' suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension, he precedes believers into the courtroom and God's presence to plead for mercy on their behalf. The anchored hope that they have, i.e., the guaranteed fulfillment of God's promises of the "great nation" and eternal life in Genesis 12:1-3, guarantees God's eternal mercy on their behalf, because their high priest goes into God's presence to intervene for them and for all eternity (cf. Leviticus 16 and Hebrews 8-10).

This allows authentic believers to be anchored in their "existence" as they go through this life and wait patiently for obtaining the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham.

¹⁶³ ὅπου πρόδρομος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν εἰσῆλθεν Ἰησοῦς κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ ἀρχιερεὺς γενόμενος εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα – Jesus precedes believers into the Holy of Holies, the place where God resides in the temple and where mercy can be

appealed for in His presence. Thus, Jesus enters into the courtroom of the final judgment and into the eternal Kingdom of God. While he precedes believers, he also assuredly appeals to the Father for mercy on their behalf as their advocate and helper (cf. 1 John 2:1-2).

As a result, Paul makes Jesus a theological part of God's "oath" to Abraham and the guarantee that God was demonstrating to "the heirs of the promise." In effect, God guaranteed (to Abraham) that Jesus would come along as the Messiah in order to appeal to Him for mercy on his behalf and on behalf of all believers. Having entered inside the curtain of the heavenly and eternal temple, so to speak, Jesus appeals for the sake of repentant sinners for God's mercy at the final judgment (cf. Hebrews 9:3; 10:20).

Consequently, by virtue of both the Abrahamic promise/oath/guarantee and Jesus' death to become a high priest, sinful human beings can say that their "hope" of eternal life is as "sure and certain" as God's existence, because the eternal high priest, Jesus, has qualified to intervene for them. In this way, they receive God's mercy into the next and final age, while Paul will go on to show that Levitical priests cannot bring about this result. Indeed, the existence of Jesus as the Messiah and high priest within the story of the creation is God's working out His promises and oath to Abraham.

Therefore, Paul is tying the Messiah's death and role for which he qualified to Abraham and God's promise to him of eternal life. By implication and extrapolation, if Paul's Jewish readers want to be authentic descendants of Abraham, they must embrace Jesus as their Messiah and high priest and see him as a high priest of a completely different order of priesthood from the Levitical order. As David writes in Psalm 110:4, Jesus and David's "Lord" is "according to the order of Melchizedek," which allows him to intervene "into the age," i.e., into the age of the fulfillment of God's promises when the nation of Israel will dwell on the land that God has given them and rule the world from their home of that land when the Kingdom of God officially begins with Jesus' return.

¹⁶⁴ Οὗτος γὰρ ὁ Μελχισέδεκ, βασιλεὺς Σαλήμ, ἱερεὺς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου – There are three passages in the Pentateuch that are relevant to Melchizedek and Abraham's tithing to him—

Genesis 14:17-24, 17 Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). **14:18** (And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. And he was a priest of God Most High [El Elyon] (מֶלְכִּי־צֶדֶק מֶלֶךְ שָׁלֵם כֹּהֵן אֱלֹהִים) (Septuagint – καὶ Μελχισέδεκ βασιλεὺς Σαλήμ ἐξήνεγκεν ἄρτους καὶ οἶνον ἦν δὲ ἱερεὺς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου). **14:19** And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, creator of heaven and earth. **14:20** And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tenth of all. **14:21** And the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.") **14:22** And Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to Yahweh God Most High, creator of heaven and earth, **14:23** that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, 'I have made Abram rich.' **14:24** I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre. Let them take their share."

The above passage in Genesis clearly indicates that Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek was a kind of parenthesis to his meeting the king of Sodom. But Melchizedek "blessed," and Abraham tithed to Melchizedek.

Leviticus 27:30-33, 30 "Thus all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is Yahweh's. It is holy to Yahweh. **27:31** If, therefore, a man wishes to redeem part of his tithe, he shall add to it one-fifth of it. **27:32** For every tenth part of herd or flock, whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to Yahweh. **27:33** He is not to be concerned whether it is good or bad, nor shall he exchange it. Or if he does exchange it, then both it and its substitute shall become holy. It shall not be redeemed."

Here in Leviticus 27 is God's explicit statement that a tenth of all that the land of Israel (which He has promised to the nation of Israel) produces is that which the people should offer to God as a kind of sacrifice, presumably to indicate to Him and to them that they are wholly dependent on Him for sustaining their lives.

Numbers 18:21-24, 21 "To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting. **18:22** The sons of Israel shall not come near the tent of meeting again, or they will bear sin and die. **18:23** Only the Levites shall perform the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, and among the sons of Israel they shall have no inheritance. **18:24** For the tithe of the sons of Israel, which they offer as an offering to Yahweh, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance. Therefore, I have said concerning them, 'They shall have no inheritance among the sons of Israel.'"

And here in Numbers 18 God makes clear something that has not been mentioned yet in Exodus or Leviticus—that the tenth of the produce of the land that the people of Israel must offer to God is in turn to be taken by the Levitical priests and used to sustain their families and them in their existences as those who permanently serve God in the tabernacle and the temple.

Now that Paul has brought up the issue of God's promise to Abraham and Abraham's patience in waiting for its fulfillment, he finds it appropriate to compare Melchizedek to Abraham, because these two men figure so prominently in understanding the Messiah as king and high priest of Israel and of any other believers in history. Paul quotes the Septuagint of Genesis 14:18 exactly. This man Melchizedek is both king and priest, indeed king of a city whose name is Shalem (שָׁלֵם), which is very close to the name Shalom (שָׁלוֹם).

In Psalm 76:2 below, the psalmist refers to this city, Salem, in parallel with Zion as God's dwelling place, showing that Salem is the same as Jerusalem, which has "salem" as the last part of its name. The first use of the name Jerusalem is in

Joshua 10:1-4 where the Canaanite king Adoni-Zedek (אֲדֹנִי-צִדְקָה = my lord is righteousness/justification) is said to be king and has heard that Joshua and the Israelites have captured the city of Ai.

Psalm 76:1-2, 1 God is known in Judah. His name is great in Israel. **76:2** His tabernacle is in Salem. His dwelling place also is in Zion.

Melchizedek is also a priest of El Elyon (אֱלֹהֵי עֵלְיוֹן), i.e., “God/god Most High.” Even though El Elyon could refer to Yahweh, the God of the Jews, it is more likely that Melchizedek is the priest of the greatest god of the Canaanite pantheon, whom he worships. Cf. NIDOTTE, pg. 395, “El is a common, generic Semitic appellative for the [chief] deity. [As a result,] El is also the name of the high god [among other lesser gods] in some cultures, as evidenced in the Ugaritic texts (see *TDOT* 1:242–53). El ‘is the primordial [=first of all, earliest, basic, fundamental] father of gods and men, sometimes stern, often compassionate, always wise in judgment’ (253). Some of the El compounds...also have West Semitic counterparts; they are probably to be understood as local manifestations of El. The use of El Elyon by Melchizedek in Gen 14:18–19 may be one such reference.”

Another possibility, as I have mentioned but that would require more data in the text in order to verify it, is that

Melchizedek actually worships Abraham’s God (אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם), Yahweh, the one true God (cf. Genesis 14:19-22).

Therefore, this would be a reference to Melchizedek’s previous conversion at some point to worshipping Abraham’s God instead of the Canaanite pantheon and is similar to Rahab’s conversion to worshipping the God of the Israelites after hearing about His defeating their enemies. However, Paul’s point can be made even if Melchizedek worships only the chief pagan god of his group of Canaanites. And, to me, this seems more likely in the light of the religious culture in Canaan at the time around 2000 B.C., which is why I translate Paul’s words with small letters, “most high god.” Therefore, “Priest of God Most High” was a common title throughout the ANE for those men who functioned as intermediaries between the entire pantheon of their gods and the people, so that this title implied that there was a chief god, and it was to him that the priest and the people owed the greatest allegiance.

Nevertheless, in Genesis 14, Melchizedek refers to Abraham’s God as “God Most High” who is the “creator of heaven and earth.” Therefore, it would seem that this man understands the greatness of the greatest of his own gods, i.e., El Elyon, so that, in spite of his very likely being a polytheist, he worships his greatest god with the same respect that Abraham worships the one true God. As a result, he is most likely a henotheist and adhering to one particular god out of a group of many.

¹⁶⁵ ὁ ῥο συναντήσας Ἀβραάμ ὑποστρέφοντι ἀπὸ τῆς κοπῆς τῶν βασιλέων ἡ καὶ εὐλογήσας αὐτόν –

Genesis 14:19-20a, 19 And he blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, creator of heaven and earth (אֱלֹהֵי עֵלְיוֹן יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ) (Septuagint – καὶ ἡλόγησεν τὸν Ἀβραὰμ καὶ εἶπεν Εὐλογημένος Ἀβραὰμ τῷ θεῷ τῷ ὑψίστῳ, ὃς ἔκτισεν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν). **14:20a** And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.”

In the ANE, the gods were considered to own the land on which their worshipers lived, so that, even when their worshipers fought against another group of people who invaded their land, the most important part of the battle, which they believed actually determined the outcome on earth, took place between their separate and different gods in the heavens. In this case, Melchizedek has recognized the greatness of Abraham’s God by calling him “Owner/Creator (Septuagint) of heaven and earth” and not just owner/creator of a particular land on the earth. But this is also how Melchizedek is described in Genesis 14:18, as one who worships El Elyon.

Thus, in true ANE fashion, Melchizedek also recognized the favor that Abraham’s God was showing him by having defeated his enemies, the kings from whom Abraham had just rescued Lot in Genesis 14. If Melchizedek was not a worshiper of Abraham’s God alone, then he was at least acknowledging the unique and great role of Abraham’s God as sole maker of the entire created reality—which is how he thought of his own El Elyon. But exactly how he was fitting the El Elyon of Abraham into his own El Elyon and pantheon of gods in his somewhat (?) pagan worldview we do not know. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Melchizedek was making an important international, diplomatic gesture by bringing Abraham a meal and “blessing” him. He was not demanding anything from Abraham. He was giving sustenance and blessing (wishing him well in the sight of Abraham’s own God) to Abraham.

¹⁶⁶ ὃ καὶ δεκάτην ἀπὸ πάντων ἐμέρισεν Ἀβραάμ –

Genesis 14:20 And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he gave him a tenth of all (אֶת־הַכֹּל) (Septuagint – καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ δεκάτην ἀπὸ πάντων).

Abraham’s giving a tenth of his spoils to Melchizedek is the first mention of the concept of tithing in the Old Testament, most likely demonstrating that it was a common practice in the ANE prior to God’s using it within the Mosaic Covenant. What exactly was Abraham communicating to this “priest of god most high?” First, if we take into account that Melchizedek referred to Abraham’s God as אֱלֹהֵינוּ (Septuagint – ὃς ἔκτισεν τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν), i.e., the One who has created the entire cosmos, then it seems that Melchizedek definitely acknowledges an aspect of the greatness of Abraham’s God, even if he is still worshipping the chief Canaanite god, whom Genesis 14:18 indicates has the same greatness as Abraham’s God.

Therefore, Abraham is willing to show ANE deference towards Melchizedek and even present to him a gift deserving of a priest. Melchizedek brings a meal to Abraham and praises his god, i.e., THE one true God, and Abraham brings a tenth of the spoils to finish the process of the demonstration of mutual respect for one another vis-à-vis the ANE customs. For Abraham to be the progenitor of the chosen people of God certainly makes him a great man, but the obvious fact for Melchizedek is that Abraham’s God is greater than that of the kings whom he has just defeated.

Thus, Melchizedek, who himself serves El Elyon as a priest, blesses Abraham, who also worships El Elyon, and in return Abraham acknowledges Melchizedek's role as one who serves El Elyon and provides a tenth of his spoils to help Melchizedek sustain himself in his moral role of serving El Elyon.

As a result, for Melchizedek, a priest who is not from the line of Abraham and Levi, to respect Abraham and his God, his El Elyon, by virtue of Abraham's victory over these other men (and their gods) allows David in Psalm 110 to use him as an example of greatness, even eternal greatness (see below).

¹⁶⁷ πρῶτον μὲν ἐρμηνευόμενος βασιλεὺς δικαιοσύνης – Melchizedek's name (מֶלְכִּי־צֶדֶק) is made up of two Hebrew words, *melek* (מֶלֶךְ) and *zedek* (צֶדֶק), meaning king and righteousness/justification respectively. Abraham would have recognized the significance of this, which probably contributed to his ascribing greatness to Melchizedek.

And it makes sense to me that Paul is thinking that *tzekek* means justification in the light of the fact that it is Jesus who provides this in a sinner's relationship with God, which is to say that his death, resurrection, and role as our high priest results in God's viewing us, how imitate Abraham's belief and patience while waiting for the fulfillment of God's promises, as having a standing before Him whereby we have qualified to gain His eternal mercy and blessing of the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

¹⁶⁸ ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ βασιλεὺς Σαλήμ. ὃ ἐστὶν βασιλεὺς εἰρήνης – Besides Melchizedek's name meaning "King of Righteousness/Justification," Genesis 14:18 also says that he was the king of a city named Shalem (שָׁלֵם), Salem in the Greek Septuagint and NT (Σαλήμ), which is similar to the Hebrew word Shalom (שָׁלוֹם), which Paul translates with εἰρήνη, which is the basic word for peace, harmony, and safety. As a result, by virtue of his name and location, this man, coincidentally, covered the bases so to speak of two of the most important concepts for sinful human beings in the Bible, forgiveness (*zedek*, δικαιοσύνη, justification, forgiveness, mercy) and life that is characterized as whole and good (*shalom*, a peaceful, harmonious, and safe life that is complete and includes an eternal sense of wholeness and goodness in one's existence).

Consequently, we can assume that Abraham made these connections when he met him and learned his name, and these connections, too, helped him to respect Melchizedek by offering him a diplomatic gesture of tithing in return for the meal that he served him. Melchizedek, by his name, was associated with forgiveness, and he lived in a place whose name was associated with the kind of life that we all long for and that God ultimately was promising to Abraham. Plus, Melchizedek most likely informed Abraham that he was a priest of "most high god," who was very close to the same as, if not exactly the same as, Abraham's God. In fact, it may have come as a relief and encouragement to Abraham that he met someone among the pagan Canaanites who had the same perspective on his god, i.e., his chief god who really is God if one analyzes the situation accurately, as Abraham had. For God to be the creator of heaven and earth is for Him to be the one and only author of all the reality in which we reside, live, and exist as we move forward towards our eternal destiny.

¹⁶⁹ ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἀμήτωρ ἀγενεαλόγητος, μήτε ἀρχὴν ἡμερῶν μήτε ζωῆς τέλος ἔχων – There are two obvious options for what Paul means by these words—

1) God caused Melchizedek to appear out of nowhere, completely *ex nihilo*, so that he had no other beginning to his days on earth than God's all of a sudden bringing him into existence, and he had no other definite end to his life other than he may have disappeared immediately after his meeting with Abraham (so that some people who hold to the trinitarian view of God conclude that Paul is saying that, at that time before his birth by Mary, Melchizedek was the eternal Jesus and second person of the trinity made manifest for a very short time), or

2) Moses as the author of Genesis makes no mention of Melchizedek's father, mother, childhood, and death, so that his point merely is to describe very briefly this interaction between the two men and demonstrate that there was even a Canaanite king who recognized the greatness of Abraham's God and of Abraham himself, for the purpose of adding that much more weight to Abraham's journey towards God's fulfilling His promises to him. In other words, Moses' omission of these details about Melchizedek was intentional to focus on his recognition of Abraham's God and the future and eternal implications of His being his God.

I think that the second option makes more sense, especially since Moses describes Melchizedek as "king of Salem," i.e., of Shalom, which Psalm 76:2 identifies as the city in the land of Canaan which eventually became the Jerusalem of the Israelites and of God's dwelling place. This man was a real, live, sinful human being like Abraham who had become not only the king of an important city but also a priest and intermediary between his chief god and the people under his rule.

But there is also the question, as I have commented on above, of why Paul mentions these aspects of Melchizedek's existence—that the text says very little about him. There are two options—

1) Perhaps the fact that there is no connecting word such as καὶ or δὲ between this list and the previous statement that Melchizedek was "king of Salem/Shalom" (εἰρήνην) means that these "characteristics" are what help constitute "shalom" for Paul, or

2) Another option is that the lack of connecting word points the reader towards the next statement, that "he was likened to the Son of God." And how or where was he likened to him? In Psalm 110, which Paul will go on to argue in chapter 7.

I think that the second option makes more sense in the light of the flow of Paul's writing and explaining Jesus' priesthood according to Psalm 110. Therefore, it is important to notice that Genesis 14:17-20 does not explicitly say or mean that Melchizedek was "without father," etc. It is just that Moses leaves out this information about Melchizedek.

Consequently, I think that Paul is using these ideas *literarily* (notice, not *literally*). In other words, he is saying that, from a literary standpoint, we know from Genesis 14:17-20 very little about this man Melchizedek. For example, we do not know who his father was, who his mother was, when and where he was born, and when and where he died. He merely appears on the scene and then immediately disappears, never to be heard of again—until David mentions his priestly order in Psalm 110, which becomes hugely important. And he most likely connects Melchizedek's priesthood in Psalm 110:4 to his "Lord" whom he mentions in v. 1 because the text of Genesis 14 says nothing about his father, mother, birth, and death. This allows David to think of him as eternal **from strictly a literary standpoint**.

Thus, David's reference to Melchizedek (and now Paul's too) had nothing to do with his actual origin or destiny. It had to do only with his name, title, and role as a Canaanite king and priest of El Elyon and what is **not** said about him otherwise by Moses in the text of Genesis 14. As far as we know, there was nothing in Melchizedek's family lineage that qualified him to be either a king or a priest and that led to his being a priest of "most high god," who may or may not have been the same as Yahweh. This is all true especially because he was not from the Israelite tribe of Levi, which did not yet exist in Abraham's day and which God chose 500 years later as the one and only group who could supply priests to the nation of Israel under the Mosaic Covenant. Yet, Paul will go on to show that, similarly, while the kings of Israel came from the tribe of Judah, there was nothing in Jesus' family lineage that qualifies him to be a priest of the nation of Israel, especially in the light of the Mosaic Covenant.

Instead, Jesus' priesthood is entirely dependent on **David's making God swear an oath through him in Psalm 110:4** that results in his becoming a priest. And this is how God called Jesus and took him from among men—as Paul talked about in 5:1-6. It is this fact of David's speaking on behalf of God that sets Jesus apart from all other priests (and all other human beings) who could possibly affect the Jews' (AND the Gentiles') relationship with Yahweh with respect to their acquiring justification, forgiveness, and the fulfillment of God's promises.

¹⁷⁰ ἀφομοιωμένος δὲ τῷ υἱῷ τοῦ θεοῦ – The fact that David on behalf of God and according to Paul here in v. 3 *likens* Melchizedek to "the Son of God," who is his "Lord," David's own king in Psalm 110, becomes the foundation for Paul's argument that the final Davidic king and, therefore, Jesus, is both a king and a priest. This is what the Jews of Paul's day were missing in their study of the Old Testament regarding the Messiah and why Paul is going through this in such detail.

Notice that Paul does not say that Melchizedek *was* the Son of God, only that he was *like* the Son of God. In other words, Melchizedek was not Jesus, in spite of many people trying to make him such by misinterpreting this passage. Thus, David in Psalm 110 was also not claiming that his "Lord" was Melchizedek. Melchizedek was an ANE Canaanite priest, and the manner in which Genesis 14 presents him, as someone about whom we know only the barest of details from the passage, makes it possible for David to *liken* him to his "Lord," i.e., to comment on a similarity between him and his "Lord," who is eventually revealed in biblical history as Jesus of Nazareth.

¹⁷¹ μένει ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸ διηνεκές – For all time, again *literarily* (not *literally*) speaking, Melchizedek's genre of priesthood does not end as the Levitical priesthood does, **because information about his death is left out of the story in Genesis 14** (cf. Hebrews 10:1,12,14), which allows David to write on behalf of God that the priesthood of his "Lord" is as eternal as the lack of details in the text about Melchizedek which David exploits for his own *literary* purposes in Psalm 110:4. Paul does say that Melchizedek "remains a priest perpetually (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές)," but he means that his priesthood is what lives on—in the person of Jesus.

Thus, Paul can say that Jesus becomes a person *like* Melchizedek, a king of *shalom* and a priest of "god most high," because Jesus as a king is carrying on the *eternal-like* and perpetual priestly order of Melchizedek. To put it another way, Melchizedek, even though he died, "remains a priest perpetually" and without interruption, because his *priesthood* remains perpetually, indeed into eternity—through the eternal existence of Jesus as Messiah and high priest. It would be like saying that Aaron, the first high priest of Israel, "remains a priest" until God ends the Levitical priesthood when He brings the present realm to a conclusion and creates the new Kingdom of God (cf. Revelation 21). Just as the word Aaron stands for all the Aaronic priests down through time, so also Melchizedek stands for all the Melchizedekan priests down through time and into eternity by virtue of what is said in Psalm 110. However, as far as David and Paul are concerned, there were and are only two Melchizedekan priests—Melchizedek and Jesus. The lack of information in Genesis 14 makes Melchizedek sound eternal, while we know from both the Old and New Testaments that Jesus will actually be the eternal priest of the eternal Kingdom of God. Therefore, Jesus, and only Jesus, will carry on the *Melchizedekan order* into eternity.

The word διηνεκής and the prepositional phrase εἰς τὸ διηνεκές are used in only Hebrews (7:3; 10:1,12,14). The phrase basically means "perpetually" and without interruption, which is to say continuously for as long as God wants something to last. In Jesus' case as a priest, it is into eternity and past the end of the "great nation" of Israel and the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20.

¹⁷² θεωρεῖτε δὲ πηλίκος οὗτος, ὃ [καὶ] δεκάτην Ἀβραάμ ἔδωκεν ἐκ τῶν ἀκροθινίων ὁ πατριάρχης – If Abraham as "the patriarch" (the beginning father) is important to the Jews, think about how important Melchizedek is, because he was the first of the priesthood of the eternal "order of Melchizedek," of which Jesus is the most important and final member as Israel's and anyone else's final high priest. We can think of it this way. If we have a choice between a priest who is available to appeal to God for His eternal mercy on our behalf and succeed in obtaining it or Abraham as the progenitor of the Jews, we would obviously rather have the priest and not Abraham—because we really need an effective advocate on our behalf.

In line with this, the mere fact that the receiver of God's temporal and eternal promises, Abraham, tithed to

Melchizedek, would indicate that Abraham certainly considered him important in accordance with ANE customs. Therefore, Abraham simply followed ANE protocol, and the two men granted deference to one another in an historically and, eventually, theologically significant manner—because of David’s use of Melchizedek in Psalm 110. When Paul refers to David’s use of Melchizedek in Psalm 110:4 whereby he associates him with the person who will ultimately fulfill the Davidic Covenant and be David’s “Lord” (cf. Hebrews 7:8,9), Paul latches onto this and uses it as a vital part of his argument for why his Jewish Christian readers, who are thinking of giving up their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, *should not do so for the sake of their own eternal destinies*. Thus, through mainly David’s comments and also Abraham’s actions, Melchizedek becomes extraordinarily important in cosmic history as the one in whose footsteps and priestly order the Messiah as both the Jews’ and the Gentiles’ high priest follows.

¹⁷³ καὶ οἱ μὲν ἐκ τῶν υἱῶν Λευὶ τὴν ἱερατείαν λαμβάνοντες ἐντολὴν ἔχουσιν ἀποδεκατοῦν τὸν λαὸν κατὰ τὸν νόμον, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτῶν, καίπερ ἐξεληλυθότας ἐκ τῆς ὁσφύος Ἀβραάμ – The Levitical priests received their assignment from God under the Mosaic Covenant to be priests who mediate between the Jews and God, which the non-believing Jews of Paul’s day are insisting should be the focus of their relationship with God, rather than Jesus as the Messiah—especially since he was merely a man and was executed by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. Therefore, we know that their interpretation of Psalm 110 did not lead them to believe that the Son of God and the king of Israel of Psalm 2 is the same person as the “priest...according to the order of Melchizedek” of Psalm 110:4. Nor did they ascertain the significance of the “priest...according to the order of Melchizedek” in Psalm 110. They had not grasped the fact that this man was their *eternal* priest instead of the Levitical priests, especially in the light of the facts that Abraham tithed to Melchizedek, as the Israelites were supposed to do to the Levites, and that Melchizedek blessed Abraham, just as the Levites blessed the Israelites (Numbers 6:23, “Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, ‘Thus you shall bless the sons of Israel. You shall say to them: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance on you and give you peace.’”) Paul is, therefore, making the point that certain descendants of Abraham are to be viewed as “more important” than other descendants of Abraham in spite of the fact that they are all descended from Abraham. However, Paul will go on to say that these more important descendants of Abraham, the Levites, *are not as important as Melchizedek* (a non-Israelite) *because of what David writes about him* as superintended by God in Psalm 110. By extrapolation, the Levites are not as important as Jesus who is the ultimate “high priest according to the order of Melchizedek,” the concept which Paul is exploiting in his argument here.

Cf. Leviticus 27:33-34; Deuteronomy 12,14,26; Numbers 18:20-32 regarding the commandment for the Israelites to tithe.

¹⁷⁴ ὁ δὲ μὴ γενεαλογούμενος ἐξ αὐτῶν δεδεκάτωκεν Ἵ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τὸν ἔχοντα τὰς ἐπαγγελίας ἑυλόγηκεν – A key element in the analogy between Melchizedek and Jesus is that, just as Melchizedek is not from the line of Levi, neither is Jesus, who is of the tribe of Judah (cf. Hebrews 7:13,14). In addition, Melchizedek was “paid” and honored by Abraham for his being a high priest of El Elyon, “god most high”—even if Melchizedek was not completely aware of Yahweh’s being “God Most High.”

Thus, in a sense, Abraham recognized Melchizedek as a great person, who was also exercising his responsibility as a king. This greatness of Melchizedek was even in light of the fact that it was Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 to whom God had promised land, descendants, being a great nation, eternal life, and being the location of eternal salvation for the Gentiles, *including for Melchizedek himself*. Yet, it was Melchizedek to whom Abraham tithed (not the other way around), and it was Melchizedek who blessed Abraham (not the other way around). Melchizedek recognized Abraham’s greatness, and Abraham recognized Melchizedek’s even greater greatness.

¹⁷⁵ χωρὶς δὲ πάσης ἀντιλογίας τὸ ἔλαττον ὑπὸ τοῦ κρείττονος εὐλογεῖται – Paul states explicitly that someone whose genealogy did not require, on the basis of God’s commandments such as those in the Mosaic Covenant regarding the Levites, that he collect a tithe from Abraham and, by extrapolation, from the Levites, did actually do so. In addition, by virtue of David’s comment about Melchizedek in Psalm 110, this latter person *theologically* becomes more important than Abraham, a man of promise and blessing from God—because David makes him such by associating him with his “Lord” in Psalm 110, who is a priest “forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

All this data, put together as Paul is doing so, would be quite shocking to the Jews who are currently rejecting Jesus as the Messiah and persecuting the Jews who have believed in him. Nevertheless, all this data is exactly what their Bibles in the Old Testament are teaching and is meant to lead the Jews to see the relative importance of the Levitical priests (who are descendants of Abraham) in the light of the absolute importance of David’s Psalm 110 priest—his “Lord” and the Messiah.

¹⁷⁶ καὶ ὅδε μὲν δεκάτας ἀποθνήσκοντες ἄνθρωποι λαμβάνουσιν, ἐκεῖ δὲ μαρτυρούμενος ὅτι ζῇ καὶ ὡς ἔπος εἶπεν – The Levitical priests of Paul’s day are sinners and therefore rebels against God who die, while, “even as the verse [Psalm 110:4] says,” and therefore *literarily* speaking, Melchizedek “lives” on, which is to say that his priestly order continues into eternity and lives on. In other words, David causes Melchizedek to “live on” by *writing about* him in his explanation of his “Lord,” who ends up being Jesus of Nazareth, the *eternal* priest, who, like Melchizedek, is both king and priest. It would be like saying that Levi lives on in the lives of his descendants who continue the responsibilities of the priests in the temple under the Mosaic Covenant—until the end of the millennial kingdom. In contrast, Melchizedek lives on in the eternal life of Jesus who continues the responsibility of “priest to God Most High” and “king of Salem,” which is the association that David *literarily* makes in Psalm 110.

¹⁷⁷ δι' Ἀβραάμ καὶ Ἰερεμὶ ὁ δεκάταξ λαμβάνων δεδεκάτωται ἔτι γὰρ ἐν τῇ ὁσφύϊ τοῦ πατρὸς ἦν ὅτε συνήντησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Μελχισέδεκ – Thus, in a sense that also relativizes the importance and significance of the Levitical priesthood (in addition to the fact that the Levites die because of their sinfulness), Levi and his priestly descendants acknowledged that Melchizedek was greater in importance than they are, because, at the time of Melchizedek's meeting with Abraham, he was greater than Abraham, Levi's great-grandfather, by virtue of Abraham's tithing to him, which meant also that Levi tithed to him—"because he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him" (ἔτι γὰρ ἐν τῇ ὁσφύϊ τοῦ πατρὸς ἦν ὅτε συνήντησεν αὐτῷ ὁ Μελχισέδεκ) (cf. Hebrews 7:7). This meant, too, that the Levites should consider Jesus, the "priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek," to be greater than they are as priests and even use him as their priest in the presence of God in order to acquire His eternal mercy.

As a result, if given the opportunity, the Levites would actually defer to the Gentile, Canaanite Melchizedek (or really his priesthood) to intercede on their behalf before God because eventually, and, by extrapolation, they would defer to Jesus for him to intervene before God *on their behalf for eternal salvation*—because his priestly effect truly extends continually, without interruption, and into eternity. Clearly, God has set up a greater and more important priesthood than that of the Levitical. In David's language of Psalm 110:4, it is the priesthood of Melchizedek.

¹⁷⁸ οὖν – On the basis of the fact that even the Levitical priests through their tithing to Melchizedek through Abraham's tithing to him would recognize the superiority of Melchizedek and his priesthood—which includes Jesus as a result of Psalm 110:4...

¹⁷⁹ εἰ μὲν οὖν τελείωσις διὰ τῆς Λευιτικῆς ἱερωσύνης ὦν –

Hebrews 5:9, "and having been brought to the end of his goal (καὶ τελειωθείς), he became the ground of eternal salvation to all those who obey him."

James 1:4 And let endurance have its perfect result (ἔργον τέλειον = goal completing effect (?)), so that you may be perfect and complete (τέλειοι καὶ ὁλόκληροι = those who complete their goal and reach their destiny), lacking in nothing.

There are two options for this first clause of this verse in Hebrews—

- 1) If the first clause of this verse is objective in its sense, then it is referring to whether or not the Mosaic Covenant is capable of providing complete and eternal forgiveness and salvation for the Jewish believer, or
- 2) If the clause is subjective, then it is referring to the Jew's being able to ascertain whether or not he is completely forgiven via the Levitical priests' mediation with the sacrifice of animals, and therefore whether or not these Levitical sacrifices give the worshiping Jew complete confidence that he will receive God's eternal mercy.

As Paul will go on to argue, the meaning is the latter, because the multiple and continuous sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant were intended by God to communicate to the Jewish worshiper within the nation of Israel that he was *not* forgiven for the sake of eternal life by means of them. Instead, all of the Jew's obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, including his bringing his offerings and sacrifices to the Levitical priests to complete, was simply to qualify him through his authentic belief to be a *bona fide* member of the nation of Israel—who then looked forward to another manner by which God would forgive him eternally and would be the eternal basis for this. Paul will go on to say in v. 19 that the Messiah/Priest's responsibility was "the bringing in of a better hope," i.e., a better means to giving the Jewish believer confidence that he can obtain complete and eternal forgiveness at the final judgment.

Thus, the main point of chapters 9 & 10 will be that the daily, annual, and ongoing animal sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant could never provide the worshiper with complete confidence in his being *completely, finally, and eternally* forgiven by God. Otherwise, why not just stop sacrificing the animals and rest in one's complete and eternal forgiveness, or think that the animal sacrifices will actually continue into eternity and provide the basis for eternal forgiveness this way?

Indeed, Paul is arguing that a careful exegesis of Psalm 110, the key passage for him, leads the Jew to understand differently in regard to God's *eternal* mercy—that it is David's "Lord" who provides this and not the animal sacrifices, which for any Jew who is wholly focused on the Mosaic Covenant would be a shocking revelation! In other words, the careful Jewish Bible student of Psalm 110 should infer that it is David's "Lord" as a high "priest according to the order of Melchizedek" who provides him with the confidence that he will be eternally forgiven through some kind of priestly act by this same "Lord," David's Lord who must be from a tribe that is different from Levi.

¹⁸⁰ ὁ λαὸς γὰρ ἐπ' αὐτῆς ἑνενομοθέτηται – This is a parenthetical statement by Paul to remind his Jewish readers that the main reason for God's giving the Mosaic Covenant to the nation of Israel was to set up the Levitical priesthood—as an insufficient and less than confidence providing forerunner of the sufficient and eternally and completely confidence providing "Melchizedekan" priesthood that Jesus would fulfill for the sake of sinful Jews and other human beings' being granted *eternal* mercy.

The important passage of **Numbers 8:5-26** indicates that God commands Moses to cleanse and set apart the Levites as His "firstborn" and to serve Him in the tent by offering the Israelites' sacrifices to Him. Therefore, the Levitical sacrifices and offerings were merely part of the process of a Jew's demonstrating that he desired to participate authentically in the society of the chosen people of God, the nation of Israel. But as goes the Levitical priesthood, so goes the Mosaic Covenant and vice versa. If the Levitical priesthood has limited importance and effectiveness, then so does the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, the Israelites were never supposed to put their complete and eternal confidence in the Mosaic Covenant and their offerings to God that were brought by the Levitical priests.

¹⁸¹ τίς ἔτι χρεῖα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ ἕτερον ἀνίστασθαι ἱερέα καὶ οὐ κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Ἀαρὼν λέγεσθαι – Certainly, the Jews do not think that a "different priest" is necessary, because the Levitical priests are entirely sufficient

to intercede for them before God. But here is Paul's main point. The mere fact that the OT explicitly states in Psalm 110:1-4 that there is another priesthood, indeed one where *the high priest is also David's "Lord,"* indicates that the Mosaic Covenant, along with the Levitical priesthood, is not the means by which even the Jews can attain their goal of either participating in the "great nation" of Israel or *eternal* life and the mercy from God that is necessary for both. Thus, in Psalm 110:4, David chose to associate and align his "Lord" and coming Messiah with Melchizedek, thus identifying the need for his "Lord" to be also his high priest who is NOT a Levitical high priest. But Paul will go on to demonstrate that the inference from this is that this priest must be of another covenant besides the Mosaic Covenant. And Jeremiah 31:31-34, for example, will indicate that this different covenant is the "New Covenant," as Paul goes on to explain. It is these inferences that a careful exegete of the whole OT is supposed to draw, but which most Jews fail to do. They are missing the main point about exactly who and how it is that mercy and greatness are acquired from God.

¹⁸² μετατιθεμένης γὰρ τῆς ἱερωσύνης ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ νόμον μετὰθεσις γίνεται – Paul has just said in v. 11 that the basis for the giving of the Mosaic Covenant was the Levitical priesthood (and, therefore, the effect that this priesthood could have on appealing to God for mercy, which was minimal and only intended to allow the Jew to be a member in good standing of the nation of Israel). Consequently, if another priesthood is instituted, as David has done in Psalm 110:4 as a spokesman for God, then this requires a change from the Mosaic Covenant to *another* covenant, i.e., the New Covenant (cf. Hebrews 8-10). Probably, the readers' persecutors are claiming that the Mosaic Covenant is the perpetual focus of any Jew's relationship with God—especially when it comes to bringing offerings to God with the help of the Levitical priests.

Paul is arguing that the Bible teaches a change in covenants to the New Covenant that is completely separate from the Mosaic Covenant in its priesthood and that the Messiah, as David's "Lord" in Psalm 110, is the high priest of this latter covenant (cf. the next verses). It is the *new* high priest who must become the continual and perpetual focus of any Jew's (or Gentile's) relationship with God with respect to a sinner's being a person who qualifies for *eternal* mercy and citizenship in the Kingdom of God, which will include citizenship in the nation of Israel and its becoming the "great nation" of Genesis 12:1-3—even while practicing the Mosaic Covenant.

¹⁸³ ἐφ' ὃν γὰρ λέγεται ταῦτα, φυλῆς ἑτέρας ἠμετέσχηκεν, ἀφ' ἧς οὐδεὶς προσέσχηκεν τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ – The phrase ἐφ' ὃν could refer to—

- 1) the different priest of v. 11, or
- 2) the new covenant of v. 12.

The way that Paul continues, with φυλῆς ἑτέρας ἠμετέσχηκεν ("has participated in a different tribe"), leads to the second option. The person about whom David speaks in Psalm 110 is clearly from another tribe besides Levi. Indeed, he must be from the tribe of Judah, because David, who is from the tribe of Judah, is calling him Lord and, therefore, referring to the person who will be the final King and fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, which involves only his descendants and, therefore, members of the tribe of Judah.

As a result, Paul's argument here is that no person from the Judah has ever or is even allowed to perform the role of priest and with respect to the altar that is mentioned in the Mosaic Covenant, because he is from the wrong tribe. Therefore, if someone within Israel from a tribe different from Levi as going to perform the role of being a priest (at a different altar, besides), then it stands to reason that he will do this outside the Mosaic Covenant and under a different covenant.

¹⁸⁴ πρόδηλον γὰρ ὅτι ἐξ Ἰουδα ἀνατέταλκεν ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν ὁ, εἰς ἣν φυλὴν περὶ ἱερῶν οὐδὲν Μωϋσῆς ἐλάλησεν – Because Paul understands that it is vital to follow David, an author of the inerrant Bible text of Psalm 110, in his line of reasoning, he calls this person of this psalm "our Lord," thus agreeing with David about the authority that this person will exercise over all Jews of authentic belief (and, therefore, by extrapolation, all Gentiles of authentic belief) and of course himself. In addition, it is clear from the Mosaic Covenant that it prescribes only Levites to perform the function of priest. Thus, it should be obvious that another Covenant is necessary in order to accommodate this new priest, "our Lord," who is "out of Judah," i.e., from the tribe of Judah.

¹⁸⁵ καὶ περισσότερον ἔτι κατάδηλόν ἐστιν, εἰ κατὰ τὴν ὁμοιότητα Μελχισέδεκ ἀνίσταται ἱερεὺς ἕτερος – Two factors indicate the necessity for a change in covenant—

- 1) David's Lord is from the tribe of Judah and not from the tribe of Levi. Paul said this explicitly in the previous verse.
- 2) David has inerrantly declared that his Lord is a priest, but a "different priest" of a different order from the Levitical. Indeed, David's Lord is a priest "according to the order of Melchizedek," who himself in Genesis 14 was a king and priest and definitely not a Levite because he wasn't even Jewish! Thus, the manner in which this different priest, i.e., Jesus, has arisen "according to the order of Melchizedek" is by David's saying so in Psalm 110, including the fact that "Yahweh has sworn and will not change His mind" that David's Lord is this priest "according to the order of Melchizedek."

As a result, for Jesus to be from the tribe of Judah and for David to declare him (his "Lord") a "priest from the order of" a Gentile, Canaanite eternal-like king and priest going all the way back to the time of Abraham makes "obvious" and "even more obvious" respectively that a new and different covenant is necessary under which Jesus performs his priestly functions.

¹⁸⁶ ὅς οὐ κατὰ νόμον ἐντολῆς σαρκίνης γέγονεν ἀλλὰ κατὰ δύναμιν ζωῆς ἀκαταλύτου – The Levitical priests qualified one after the other under the Mosaic Covenant to perform their function on the basis of their physical lineage as descendants of Levi and because each one died, preventing him from continuing into history as a priest, and they were all from the same tribe. The Melchizedekan priest, who is David's "Lord" in Psalm 110:4, qualifies for his

function on the basis of *God's having sworn an oath* in Psalm 110 that he will be a priest continually and without interruption, because after his resurrection he does not die but exists “into the age.” In other words, a portion of the inerrant truth from God, written by David, is that which causes the Davidic Lord and King to take on the additional responsibility of priest “according to the order of Melchizedek.”

As a result, this new priest from the tribe of Judah has the proper credentials (“power”), those of an indestructible nature by virtue of God’s speaking of him in the eternal truth of God, the Bible, that he will be permanent in this age that includes the “great nation” of Israel, and by extrapolation, into the eternal Kingdom of God. He is also a priest who is adequate to mediate on behalf of immoral rebels and intercede before God on their behalf for so that they may receive God’s perpetual, continual, and even *eternal* mercy and forgiveness.

¹⁸⁷ μαρτυρεῖται γὰρ ὅτι σὺ ὁ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ (Septuagint – σὺ εἰς ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα κατὰ τὴν τάξιν Μελχισέδεκ) – Paul’s emphasis here in his quote from Psalm 110:4b is the phrase “into the age (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα).” Within the priesthood of Jesus as intermediary at the final judgment, there is the potential for life in the “great nation” of Israel and then immortal life in the next age of the eternal Kingdom of God, while the Levitical priests can act as intermediaries until each one’s death within only the present, mortal realm—and never provide any sinful Jew with the confidence that God truly does forgive him.

If God requires a priest to intervene at the eternal judgment for the sake of the future, immortal realm, and He does, then another and different kind of priest under another and different Covenant will have to come along. Jesus is this priest, “according to the order of the king/priest Melchizedek.” This inerrant and oathlike statement by God through David in Psalm 110 becomes the “indestructible” credential that Jesus needs in order to acquire an “indestructible” life of intercessor and king on behalf of sinful human beings.

¹⁸⁸ ἀθέτησις ὁ μὲν γὰρ γίνεται προαγωγῆς ἐντολῆς διὰ τὸ αὐτῆς ἀσθενὲς καὶ ἀνωφελές – The instruction regarding the physical requirements of Levitical priests within Mosaic Covenant, that came before David, Psalm 110, and the New Covenant by extrapolation, cannot provide the worshiper with either his goal of God’s *complete* and *eternal* mercy or subjective, complete confidence that God has forgiven him. Consequently, this instruction of physical lineage and the men who fulfill the role of priests in the life of a sinful Jew is “weak” and “useless,” so that it becomes relativized by the nature and purpose of the Mosaic Covenant itself and must never be allowed to dominate the Jew’s thoughts, life, and pursuits in comparison to the Melchizedekan priest of Psalm 110 and the New Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant is for the nation of Israel in the present realm only. The New Covenant is for the Jews primarily, but also the Gentiles, in the next and eternal realm, starting with the “great nation” of Abraham’s physical descendants on the land of Israel and ending with the new earth of the next creation (cf. Revelation 21).

God Himself always intended to move on from the Mosaic Covenant to the New Covenant, and so must the Jews—regarding complete and eternal forgiveness in the “great nation” of Israel and life on the eternal earth (cf. Revelation 20-22). Therefore, the former covenant should not figure into a Jewish worshiper’s thinking when it comes to the issue of *eternal* life, only to participating well in the society of the Jews in anticipation of eternal life. Actually, it never should have and did not for those like David who understood the importance of both inwardness and God’s providing mercy apart from continual animal sacrifices (cf. Psalm 51).

Nevertheless, the Mosaic Covenant still retains an important place in the present, temporal realm on this earth for historical and didactic purposes—for the Jews to demonstrate in a striking manner that they are God’s chosen people in history for the purpose of teaching the Gentiles about God’s moral nature, as well as to communicate via the animal sacrifices that God is serious about man’s sinfulness and His granting them mercy—through a different sacrifice, that of the high priest of Psalm 110. Obviously, this is what the Jews keep missing in their study of the Hebrew scriptures such that they do not connect the dots of the Son of David and David’s “Lord” who offers himself to God as implied in Psalm 110 (and explicitly stated in certain messianic psalms and Isaiah 53).

¹⁸⁹ οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐτελείωσεν ὁ νόμος – Assuming the aorist tense simply is stating a fact, Paul is emphasizing that the Mosaic Covenant is not suited or capable of providing a Jewish worshiper (or Gentile worshiper either) with adequate and complete confidence of God’s granting him eternal mercy through its method of appeal to God by means of inherently sinful priests and continual animal sacrifices.

Instead, God requires and provides a permanent, eternal, and morally perfect intercessor at the final judgment, in order to grant sinners the mercy and forgiveness that they will need to go on into the next age of the eternal Kingdom of God after the age of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. This provision is for even the Levitical priests, who themselves are sinful human beings and, therefore, need an intercessor other than themselves at the final judgment in order to acquire eternal salvation (cf. Hebrews 5:1-3).

Thus, only the New Covenant and David’s “Lord” of Psalm 110 as priest according to a different order, i.e., that “of Melchizedek,” fulfills the requirement of the right, permanent, perpetual, continual, and eternal intermediary for Jewish (and Gentile) immoral rebels (cf. Hebrews 5:1-3 and chapters 8-10), such that they can have complete confidence in obtaining complete and eternal mercy at the final judgment.

¹⁹⁰ ἐπεισάγωγῃ δὲ κρείττονος ἐλπίδος δι’ ἧς ἐγγίζομεν τῷ θεῷ – Here is the subjective element again. The “better hope” is the complete and perpetual confidence of a Jewish sinner that he is eternally forgiven by God. Paul is referring to not just a *better* hope, even though κρείττονος means “better,” but to hope in contrast to NO hope. The New Covenant along with the Davidic “Lord/Priest” both provide greater confidence to the worshiper with respect to his being able to acquire eternal life and mercy at the final judgment by virtue that his confidence is complete and adequate.

The Jew was commanded to approach God through the Levitical sacrifices with the hope that God would view him as a genuine member of the people of Israel, so that the whole group of Jews (hopefully) were properly teaching the Gentiles about God. Likewise, Paul is arguing that it makes sense for Jewish worshipers to approach God at the judgment having embraced the ideas presented in Psalm 110, rather than relying on devotion to the Mosaic Covenant, because the latter covenant will be forever terminated by God at the end of the present realm—when He has finished causing the “great nation” of Israel to exist.

Certainly, the task of a human being is to prepare himself for the judgment of God, and the Bible/Paul speaks of two available ways to approach God—

- 1) with the Levitical priests mediating for human beings, which method provides no confidence for eternal mercy to the worshiper, or
- 2) with David’s “Lord” mediating for them, which provides more than enough confidence for eternal mercy to the worshiper.

Paul will go on to say that even the Levites will need Jesus’ at the last judgment in order to obtain mercy from God and escape eternal condemnation. Thus, it makes no sense to rely on the Levitical priests to mediate adequately for anyone who is a rebel against God. Indeed, the Levitical priests cannot even rely on themselves to mediate eternally before God on their own behalf.

¹⁹¹ καὶ καθ’ ὅσον οὐ χωρὶς ὀρκωμοσίας· οἱ μὲν γὰρ χωρὶς ὀρκωμοσίας εἰσὶν ἱερεῖς γεγονότες – Paul has already established in 6:13-18 regarding Abraham the importance of God’s swearing an oath, that it is the foundation of confidence for human beings to the effect that what He says He is going to do, it is guaranteed that He will do it. Here, Paul uses the fact that God did not swear an oath in regard to the Levitical priests. Thus, he is arguing that they lack eternal importance in comparison to the Melchizedekian priest of Psalm 110 for the benefit of whom God did swear an oath.

Therefore, if the reader combines the significance of God’s oath to Abraham with the significance of God’s oath to David’s “Lord” and high priest, who ends up offering himself to God, he has grasped the importance of believing in a Messiah who died and thereby qualified to be an *eternal* high priest who provides the repentant sinner with complete and perpetual confidence that he will obtain God’s mercy.

¹⁹² ὁ δὲ μετὰ ὀρκωμοσίας διὰ τοῦ λέγοντος πρὸς αὐτόν – Just as God’s oath to Abraham was partially for *eternal* purposes (cf. Hebrews 6:13-20), i.e., with respect to His promise of eternal life, so also His oath through David and his speaking to David’s “Lord” in Psalm 110, i.e., the final Son of God, was for *eternal* purposes. Consequently, an oath by God implies not only *temporal* purposes and effects with respect to the “great nation” of the Jews, but also *eternal* purposes and effects with respect to the same people (and the Gentiles). This means that Aaron’s and any Levitical priest’s role was neither permanent nor eternal, because they were only “called” but had no oath sworn by God on their behalf (cf. Hebrews 5:1). While promises can be strictly temporary, oaths apparently are eternal (and not just guaranteed) and, therefore, likewise make specific promises eternal.

¹⁹³ ὡμοσεν κύριος καὶ οὐ μεταμελήσεται σὺ ὁ ἱερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ᾤ – Paul quotes all of Psalm 110:4 that includes the first part about David’s saying that God “has sworn,” which also means that the “will not change his mind,” that David’s “Lord” is “a priest into the age.” It is this oath that produces the effect of a perpetual, continual, and eternal priest who provides complete confidence in David and other Jews who understand what he is talking about here.

¹⁹⁴ κατὰ τοσοῦτο ὅ[καὶ] κρείττονος διαθήκης γέγονεν ἔγγυος Ἰησοῦς – The fact that God swore an oath regarding David’s “Lord” in Psalm 110 that is in addition to the promise that God made to David in the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7 demonstrates the perpetuity, continuousness, and eternity of Jesus’ priesthood. This also implies and produces a greater effect of Jesus’ fulfilling the role of this high priest “according to the order of Melchizedek.” Jesus’ intercession on behalf of eternally condemnable human beings at the final judgment even more *guarantees* the complete and eternal effect of his priestly role (cf. vs. 23-25). Just as God will not renege on His promise to Abraham to grant him the “great nation” of his descendants and eternal life for those who imitate his belief and patience (cf. Hebrews 6:13-20), so also will He not renege on His commitment to Jesus to be our successful advocate at the final and eternal judgment. In other words, the “betterness” of the New Covenant is ultimately its provision of a guaranteed eternal priest, that, in turn provides for “complete confidence” of eternal mercy for the Jewish (and Gentile) worshiper (cf. vs. 19, 23-25).

¹⁹⁵ καὶ οἱ μὲν πλείονες εἰσιν γεγονότες ἱερεῖς διὰ τὸ θανάτῳ κωλύεσθαι παραμένειν – The sinful Levitical priests would die, and the next sinful generation of Levites would have to take over for them, thus requiring a constant succession and procession of priests down through history. As a result, there were “many more” of them in comparison to Jesus as a one man priesthood.

But, like the Levitical priests, Jesus also died. But he did so on the cross. Therefore, “death” here primarily refers to its cause, i.e., mankind’s sinfulness, while also referring to physical death. Jesus did not die because of his own sinfulness. He died because of everyone else’s sinfulness and in order to intercede of their behalf to obtain God’s mercy. It is mankind’s innate and eternally problematic sinfulness, along with its consequence of even physical death, that prevented the Levitical priests from intervening at the eternal judgment on behalf of other sinful human beings and themselves as sinful human beings.

And this is precisely the issue for Paul. God, for His own reasons, requires a permanent and eternal high priest to intervene in order for sinful human beings to receive complete and eternal mercy (even though there is nothing inherent

in Jesus' death in comparison to the death of animals that makes his death more legally appropriate). But God has deemed that only a morally perfect priest, who does not deserve either physical or eternal death, can intercede for sinners. Otherwise, like all the Levitical priests, if a sinful human being had to stand alone before God (or with only Levitical priests' trying to intercede on his behalf), he would be condemned at the judgment too. As a result of needing an intermediary other than themselves at the judgment, all the Levitical priests will be disqualified to continue as priests into the eternal age. In the final analysis, the eternal condemnation that they all deserve prevents them from continuing as priests into eternity. Only the morally perfect and eternal "Lord" of David and king of Israel is allowed by God to perform the role of mediator before God and achieve complete and eternal forgiveness for sinners.

¹⁹⁶ ὁ δὲ διὰ τὸ μένειν αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἀπαράβατον ἔχει τὴν ἱερωσύνην – Jesus' role as high priest and advocate lasts "into the age (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα)," i.e., into the "great nation" of Israel and, by extrapolation, into eternity, which makes his intervention "better" than that of the Levitical priests, just as the New Covenant is "better" than the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Hebrews 7:21,22).

Rather than deserving eternal condemnation like the Levitical priests, Jesus deserves to be both king and priest on behalf of those who are otherwise eternally condemned by God. In addition, no one ever succeeds Jesus as eternal high priest, because he never dies *after* his resurrection and ascension. The Levitical priests were constantly dying, but Jesus, after his death and in the light of his being resurrected from the dead and alive now, is a permanent priest and king "without successor" (ἀπαράβατον). No one ever replaces him in his eternal role as both king and priest.

¹⁹⁷ ὅθεν καὶ σῶζειν εἰς τὸ παντελὲς δύναται τοὺς προσερχομένους δι' αὐτοῦ τῷ θεῷ, πάντοτε ζῶν εἰς τὸ ἐντυγχάνειν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν – Paul is referring to those who are heading towards drawing near to and approaching God at the final judgment with Jesus in mind as the one who will appeal to God for their mercy and will be successful in doing so vs. their having in mind the Levitical priests as their advocates during the time that they brought their sacrifices and offerings to God through them, which method of appealing to God would fail to bring them complete and eternal mercy.

Thus, Jesus provides the means into a state of complete and eternal salvation for people, even Jewish people who genuinely qualify to participate in Israel through their inward obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, in the midst of his being the only person qualified to intercede as a priest without successor on their behalf at the final judgment. Levitical priests cannot do this, because they, like everyone else except Jesus, need an intercessor and, thus, disqualify themselves from continuing as priests at the final judgment and into eternity. The Levitical priest has been adequate to provide the Jewish worshiper with the confidence that he is a *bona fide* member of the people of God, the Israelites, but he is no good at providing him with complete confidence that he is an authentic participant of the eternal Kingdom of God. Thus, if anyone stubbornly and with a hard heart relies on someone besides Jesus for interceding for him before God for eternal mercy after hearing about Jesus as the crucified Messiah and "Lord" of David, they will receive only eternal condemnation and not salvation and life.

Romans 8:34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us (ὁς καὶ ἐντυγχάνει ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν).

¹⁹⁸ τοιοῦτος γὰρ ἡμῖν ὁ καὶ ἐπρεπεν ἀρχιερεὺς – The situation of the Mosaic Covenant, whereby it merely started a person on the road to God's complete forgiveness by using the sacrificial practices involving animals and sinful priests as a means to participate properly in the nation of Israel but did not provide for complete confidence in God's eternal mercy or for complete and eternal forgiveness meant that Jesus, with his offering to God that qualified him to intercede continually and at the final judgment, along with God's oath through David in Psalm 110:4 that determined that he would be a permanent priest, truly "fit the circumstances for us," i.e., for Jewish sinners like Paul.

¹⁹⁹ ὁσῖος – This word is usually translated "holy," but in this context the reference is to Jesus' being special in all that he is and does as a human being. He is the very presence of God within the created reality (Hebrews 1:1,2). He fulfills the role of both king and priest according to the Davidic Covenant and Psalm 110. He is morally perfect and has suffered death in order to qualify for both his eternal roles of king and priest/advocate.

²⁰⁰ ὁσῖος ἄκακος ἀμίαντος, κεχωρισμένος ἀπὸ τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν καὶ ὑψηλότερος τῶν οὐρανῶν γενόμενος – Jesus as the "high priest" of sinners is "innocent" (ἄκακος), meaning that he is without evil. He is morally perfect so that all the he does, in contrast to the sinful Levitical priests, is morally perfect like him. Jesus is "undefiled" (ἀμίαντος), meaning that he is not mixed with either sin or lies. He is the very embodiment of moral purity and truth.

Jesus has been "separated from sinners" (κεχωρισμένος ἀπὸ τῶν ἀμαρτωλῶν), meaning like the other words that his is without sin and devoid of any moral or intellectual impurity. He is and does what is good, and he thinks only that which is good. He does not need an intercessor for himself.

Jesus is "raised to higher heights than the heavens" (ὑψηλότερος τῶν οὐρανῶν), meaning that he is above the whole creation since he is its ruler and God's proxy within the creation.

With these various necessary qualifications and as the king of Israel according to the Davidic Covenant, i.e., as the Son of God, Jesus rules over the heavens, which is to say that he rules over the entire creation as the Davidic king and God's proxy. In this sense, he is higher than the heavens and, consequently, than the Levitical priests just as even Solomon was (cf. Psalm 2 & 8).

²⁰¹ ὁς οὐκ ἔχει καθ' ἡμέραν ἀνάγκην, ὥσπερ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς, πρότερον ὑπὲρ τῶν ἰδίων ἀμαρτιῶν ἑαυτοῦ ἀναφέρειν ἔπειτα τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ τοῦτο γὰρ ἐποίησεν ἐφάπαξ ἑαυτὸν ἑαυτοῦ ἑαυτοῦ ἀνενέγκας – In this whole context, Paul is not speaking of only the Yom Kippur sacrifice for the Jews' sins and sinful actions, but the daily (καθ' ἡμέραν) and annual offerings

that the priests would bring. As long as God was requiring the ruler of the eternal Kingdom of God to mediate for the people who would inhabit it, He also chose to have him offer himself (ἑαυτὸν) as a propitiatory offering in order to qualify for his roles of both king and high priest. Yet, this was a onetime (ἐφάπαξ) offering by Jesus, because it was for others and not for himself.

The Levitical priests used themselves and their own animal sacrifices to God to qualify to be in the nation of Israel. But this is all that they could do for other Jewish sinners and for themselves. It would take the Messiah/Priest of Psalm 110 to be the means for their entering into the eternal Kingdom of God by his bringing the only offering which God accepts for the result of complete and eternal mercy and forgiveness—himself as both priest and offering. Thus, Jesus is an eternal priest as David states in Psalm 110 by literarily associating him with Melchizedek and as Paul is explicitly stating here by his bringing the one and only offering acceptable to God for complete and eternal purposes—himself (ἑαυτὸν).

And what a remarkable act on the part of Jesus, to offer himself instead of something else in order to appeal to God for mercy and life, even for others.

Hebrews 10:10 in which “desire” we have become set apart in conjunction with the offering of the “body” of Jesus the Messiah once and never again (ἐφάπαξ).

²⁰² ὁ νόμος γὰρ ἀνθρώπου καθίστησιν ἄρχιερεῖς ἔχοντας ἀσθένειαν, ὁ λόγος δὲ τῆς ὀρκωμοσίας τῆς μετὰ τὸν νόμον υἱὸν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τετελειωμένον – Here, again, Paul mentions the importance of God’s oath with respect to Jesus as the Melchizedekan high priest, in light of the oath that He swore to Abraham. The “weakness” of the Levitical priests, i.e., their sinfulness and dying without being able to live eternally and the fact that the Mosaic Covenant is only temporary and for the people of Israel, would lead to their own eternal condemnation, if God were not to grant them mercy through some other means. Thus, they need a completely different priest and cannot be their own priests according to what God has designed for the story of history and the way that these truths have been described in the OT, e.g., in Psalm 110. Paul emphasizes that, in Psalm 110:4, God swore an oath that the final Son of God would be an eternal priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” who brings complete and eternal confidence to Jewish (and Gentile) sinners.

Paul is also saying that, because David wrote Psalm 110 five hundred years after the Mosaic Covenant, we know that his statements in the psalm supersede the Covenant. Thus, Jesus’ responsibility as the Son of God was to die for the sinfulness of the people, in order that he could qualify to be their priest and intercessor at the final judgment and their king and high priest in the “great nation” of Israel and the eternal Kingdom of God of the new earth after it (cf. Hebrews 5:9-10)—by being resurrected from the dead.

For God to appoint a Son, i.e., a king, to be also the ultimate priest for His people, does sound quite unusual, unless one takes a look, as David did in Psalm 110, at the ANE and people like Melchizedek. Then, it makes all the sense in the world. But a Jew must allow the Mosaic Covenant to be relativized in its importance in his mind, or he will miss these vital aspects of the ANE and OT in the light of the OT’s even mentioning the New Covenant.

²⁰³ κεφάλαιον δὲ ἐπὶ τοῖς λεγομένοις, τοιοῦτον ἔχομεν ἀρχιερέα – Here Paul is saying that his goal in this letter and especially in this section of chapters 5-10 is to provide an adequate argument for Jesus of Nazareth’s being both a high priest and a king, both an advocate for immoral rebels of sinful Jews (and Gentiles) and their ruler over the entire creation in the eternal Kingdom of God. In addition, he has argued that Jesus is fully human, morally perfect, eternal, and brings the proper, eternal offering of himself in order to intercede successfully for sinful human beings before God for His eternal mercy. Not only is an *angelos*, a theophany of Yahweh, incapable of fulfilling such a role as Messiah and high priest (cf. chapter 1), but so are the Levitical priests (chapters 5-10). It is the latter that Paul has focused on in chapters 5-7, ending with 7:23-28.

This high priest, who is a “according to the order of Melchizedek,” is different from the Levitical priests, because they keep dying and bringing animal sacrifices so that they are completely inadequate to intercede eternally and completely for rebellious human beings so as to provide them with complete confidence in approaching God and receiving His eternal grace, mercy, and forgiveness. Jesus is not only different in his moral ontology (he is morally perfect), but he is different by also being an eternal king, by virtue of his being permanently raised from the dead, over the people whom he rules—again, because he never dies after his resurrection and after he has become a high priest.

²⁰⁴ ὃς ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θρόνου τῆς μεγαλωσύνης ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς – Back in Hebrews 1:3, Paul said that the Son, Jesus, has sat down at the right hand of the Great One in the heights after he made cleansing of sin to indicate how much authority, the same as the uncreated God but just a little less since Jesus is created, that Jesus has. Then, in Hebrews 1:13, Paul asked if God has ever asked one of the *angeloi* to sit at His right hand until He makes his enemies a footstool for his feet. This is what David indicates in Psalm 110:1 that God says to his “Lord.”

Psalm 110:1 Yahweh says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand (יָשֶׁב לְיְיָ) (κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου) until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet (יַעֲרֹךְ אֶת אֹרְשֵׁי הָאֹיְבִים לְרַגְלֶיךָ) (ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου).”

God means that he wants David’s “Lord,” who is one of his descendants and who ultimately fulfills the Davidic Covenant as the final and eternal king of Israel and the Kingdom of God, to rule over God’s creation eternally, both over the temporary Kingdom of Israel (on the present earth of Revelation 20) and over the eternal Kingdom of God (on the eternal earth of Revelation 21) with a level of authority that is just under that of Yahweh Himself.

David was obviously speaking metaphorically when he mentioned his Lord’s sitting at the right hand of God, because no created king, even Jesus, can exist outside the creation and become uncreated and transcendent like Yahweh, the

Father and Author of this story that He is telling. But, as I have said, to sit at God's right hand is to be granted His authority to rule over God's creation. This aspect of Jesus' role makes him completely different from the Levitical priests who only mediate and advocate for the people of Israel in regard to their own sins and the sins of the rest of the people, but who do not rule over them. They instruct them but are not their kings.

The "Great One in the heavens" means that God is the greatest being, and He is eternal and transcendent in comparison to the creation which is temporal, temporary, and created. There is no created time outside the creation, even though there may be sequence in God's existence. Plus, the creation is contingent and at risk of disappearing merely by its existence being entirely dependent on God's willing it to exist. If He were all of a sudden to will it not to exist, then it would not. Therefore, only God is uncreated and self-existent. Everything else is dependent on Him for its existence at every moment.

1 Chronicles 29:11 "Yours, Yahweh, is the greatness (גְּדֻלָּתְךָ) (ἡ μεγαλωσύνη) and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth. Yours is the dominion (מְלִכְיֻתְךָ) (δεσποζεις), Yahweh, and You exalt Yourself as head over all."

²⁰⁵ τῶν ἁγίων λειτουργὸς καὶ τῆς σκηνῆς τῆς ἀληθινῆς – Just as Aaron and the Levitical priests administrated and personally managed all the sacred tasks involving sacrifices and offerings to God in the earthly tabernacle/temple under the jurisdiction of the Mosaic Covenant, in order to appeal to God for His temporary mercy and approval of the individual Jews as members in good standing of the nation of Israel, so also Jesus, as the high priest of the New Covenant, administrates and manages these tasks in the heavenly temple under the New Covenant by means of his sacrifice and offering himself and appealing to God for complete and eternal mercy at the final judgment (cf. Hebrews 9).

Does a literal "tent" exist "in the heavens" where Jesus sprinkles his blood on an ark, etc. to appeal to God the Father for forgiveness for the Jewish sinners? No. Paul is speaking metaphorically by taking the physical tent/temple of the Israelites and in Jerusalem and using it as a word picture for where Jesus performs his function and role as the permanent and eternal high priest for the people. Consequently, this is not that an actual, eternal temple building that God literally built in heaven, but Jesus appeals for eternal mercy within the courtroom of God at the judgment so to speak. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 indicates that the "judgment" for believers takes place when Jesus returns, so that, if someone is raised from the dead or ascends alive from the earth into "the clouds to meet the Lord in the air," he has received God's mercy through Jesus' appeal to Him. In other words, Paul is speaking analogously about the heavenly "tent" and temple as the "true" one where eternal judgment and mercy both take place for the sake of entering the eternal Kingdom of God.

Also, there are at least three specific meanings for ὁ ἅγιος in the OT—

- 1) The different compartments of the tabernacle/temple. For example, [Exodus 26:33](#), "You shall hang up the veil/curtain under the clasps, and shall bring in the ark of the testimony there within the veil/curtain; and the veil/curtain shall serve for you as a partition between the holy place and the holy of holies (הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵינֵן קֹדֶשׁ הַקִּדְשִׁים) (ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ ἁγίου τῶν ἁγίων)." Also, see [Hebrews 9:1-12](#), especially v. 12.
- 2) The moral commandments of God. For example, [Leviticus 19:20](#) (26:2), "You shall keep My sabbaths and revere My sanctuary (וְיִרְאָהוּ אֶת־הַמִּקְדָּשׁ) (καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἁγίων μου φοβηθήσεσθε); I am Yahweh." Rather than "sanctuary" being the correct translation here, in the context it is more likely that it refers to "sacred commandments involving morality and offerings."
- 3) The sacred offerings of the people that involve the prescribed rituals of the Levitical priests under the Mosaic Covenant such that these offerings also become literal food for the Levites. For example, [Numbers 18:10](#), "As the most holy gifts (הַמִּנְחָה הַקֹּדֶשׁ) (ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ τῶν ἁγίων) you shall eat it; every male shall eat it. It shall be holy to you." Notice that the words literally translate "in the holy of holies," as though God is speaking of the room and place where the ark of covenant was kept. However, He probably is not speaking of the priests' eating the offerings of the Israelites in the Holy of Holies. Instead, he is saying that they need to treat these offerings as really sacred stuff, even while they eat them as their payment and compensation for their fulfilling their duties as priests, because they came from the prescribed offerings to Him by way of the Levitical priests. This food is their inheritance, as God says in [Numbers 18:21](#), "To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting."

Indeed, there are very many uses in Exodus through Numbers of a form of ὁ ἅγιος that refer to the Levites and the sacred place of the tabernacle along with the sacred rituals and offerings. For example, there is also [Numbers 8:19](#), "I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the sons of Israel, to perform the service of the sons of Israel at the tent of meeting and to make atonement on behalf of the sons of Israel, so that there will be no plague among the sons of Israel by their coming near to the sanctuary (אֶל־הַמִּקְדָּשׁ) (καὶ οὐκ ἔσται ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ προσεγγίζων πρὸς τὰ ἅγια)." Then, in regard to the eternal "temple," there is [Exodus 25:8,9](#), "Let them construct a **sanctuary** (מִקְדָּשׁ) (ἁγίασμα) for Me, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I am going to show you, the pattern of the tabernacle (τὸ παράδειγμα τῆς σκηνῆς) and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it."

Thus, Jesus serves in the true, "heavenly" tabernacle/tent so to speak of the judgment room of God (cf. [Hebrews 8:5](#);

9:1-28), and his attention is toward the really sacred things of God's eternal mercy, as in Hebrews 9, not the earthly issue of temporarily, properly participating in the nation of Israel.

²⁰⁶ ἦν ἐπηξεν ὁ κύριος, ἡ οὐκ ἄνθρωπος – God has set up a “place” for eternal purposes where Jesus as high priest administrates and carries out his duties of appealing for complete mercy and forgiveness from God on behalf of sinful human beings. This place is metaphorically the courtroom of God where the final judgment of all human beings’ takes place upon Jesus’ return (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

If people are raised from the dead when he returns or lifted from the earth to meet him as he descends towards Jerusalem, then they have gone through the judgment of God and been granted eternal mercy by Him through Jesus’ appeal on their behalf. This will be the “true tent” (τῆς σκηνῆς τῆς ἀληθινῆς) where our High Priest, Jesus, appeals to God for eternal mercy for us and succeeds in doing so.

²⁰⁷ πᾶς γὰρ ἀρχιερεὺς εἰς τὸ προσφέρειν δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίας καθίσταται· ὅθεν ἀναγκαῖον ἔχειν τι καὶ τοῦτον ὃ προσενέγκῃ – As I said in the note for Hebrews 5:1, but it is worth repeating here, God established in the Mosaic Covenant that the high priest’s role included his offering to Him something that functioned as an appeal and request to Him for a sinner’s forgiveness for his sins. Does His mercy technically require this? No. It is just that way God has arranged reality to accomplish His purpose of granting forgiveness to sinful Jewish people and human beings. Technically, He could just say to them, “You are forgiven,” and this would be the case. In other words, forgiveness does not require some sort of outward legal action in addition to the person who forgives’ choosing to do so so that the offender does not have to pay a penalty or be appropriately punished in order for justice to be served in an equitable, fair, and upright manner, i.e., in a quid pro quo way that demonstrates clear reciprocity and perfect give-and-take. Nevertheless, as God has stipulated for how He accomplishes His purposes of granting forgiveness of sins to sinful human beings, high priests mediate on behalf of those who have rebelled against God in order to gain His mercy for them. Therefore, God has designed the story of creation so that an offering by the high priest is a necessary part of the process as. If there is no offering, then there is no mercy from God. If there is the right offering, then God grants eternal mercy. Therefore, in the case of Jesus, his offering provides the eternal mercy that Jewish and Gentile sinners need, because he is the only right offering with respect to it, which, in turn, qualifies him to act as high priest. He was assigned by God the function of acting as high priest for people, but he could not exercise his function until he had qualified to do so by dying on the cross as an offering to God. Thus, he carries out his responsibility into eternity, while he also rules over the creation and the eternal Kingdom of God—starting with the “great nation” of Israel and this world before God destroys the present realm and creates a new and eternal heaven and earth (cf. Revelation 20-22). **Hebrews 5:1** Every high priest, after he is taken from men, is put in charge of things pertaining to God on behalf of men, in order that he may offer up gifts and tokens of loyalty on behalf of sins (ἵνα προσφέρῃ δῶρα τε καὶ θυσίας ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν).

²⁰⁸ εἰ μὲν οὖν ἦν ἐπὶ γῆς, οὐδ’ ἂν ἦν ἱερεὺς, ὄντων ἡ τῶν προσφερόντων κατὰ τὸν νόμον τὰ δῶρα – The Mosaic Covenant specifically stipulates that the members of the tribe of Levi and only the tribe of Levi are responsible for being priests. No other tribe has the right to be priests, not even the tribe of Judah, of which Jesus is a member. Therefore, Jesus is theologically and biblically not permitted to be a priest under Mosaic Covenant. Indeed, it would be outright disobedient and illegal of him to practice the rites of the Levites in the earthly tabernacle/temple according to the Mosaic Covenant. He would be condemned by God and have to die for doing so.

As a result, Jesus’ service as a priest has nothing to do with the Mosaic Covenant, demonstrating that this covenant is irrelevant when it comes to gaining God’s complete and eternal mercy. The Levitical priests, therefore, by definition, are not performing their function with respect to eternal mercy. Their function has to do with something entirely different. It has to do with gaining God’s statement of approval that the individual Jews are participating properly in the nation of Israel—albeit through their biblical inwardness and changed hearts that produce authentic belief. Therefore, Jesus’ service is not and cannot be an “earthly” priesthood (as Melchizedek’s was), i.e., of the present realm in the “earthly” temple in Jerusalem. Instead, his is a “heavenly” priesthood outside the earthly temple of Jerusalem and that continues into eternity, i.e., through the millennial kingdom of the “great nation” of the Jews onto the new and eternal earth after this creation. His is the priesthood that pertains to eternal life and the Jew/Gentile Kingdom of God and not just the temporary existence of the Jewish nation of Israel on the present earth as was the case for the Levites.

²⁰⁹ οἳτινες ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ λατρεύουσιν τῶν ἐπουρανίων – The earthly temple, along with its prescribed rituals under the Mosaic Covenant, is merely a copy of the “heavenly” and thereby eternal place and its sacred “ritual” of Jesus’ appealing for mercy on behalf of sinful human beings, in the sense that the temple follows the pattern and drawings that were shown Moses on Mt. Sinai and provides a place where the Levites can perform the same kind of function for earthly and temporary benefit for the Israelites.

Because “heaven” is not actually a spatial location as something that exists above the earth, this statement demonstrates that “heavens” means permanent and eternal, not a place. It is a term of sequential time within the creation, not a term of location and space. It also means that there is no actual temple building in heaven. Paul is simply using these terms as a word picture for what Jesus does through his return and restoring the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel.

²¹⁰ καθὼς κεχηρμάτισται Μωϋσῆς μέλλων ἐπιτελεῖν τὴν σκηνὴν· ὅρα γὰρ φησιν. ποιήσεις πάντα κατὰ τὸν τύπον τὸν δειχθέντα σοι ἐν τῷ ὄρει – Exodus 25:8-9, 40 is the key to understanding what Paul is getting at here—

Exodus 25:8 “Let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. **25:9** According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the dwelling place and the pattern of all its furniture (יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּבַנְיָהּ כָּל-כֵּלֶיהָ)

וְכַדְּכֵן תִּבְנֶינָהּ (τὸ παράδειγμα τῆς σκηνῆς καὶ τὸ παράδειγμα πάντων τῶν σκευῶν αὐτῆς), just so you shall construct it...”

Exodus 25:40 “See that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain (רָאָה בְּהָרֵי סִינַי) (ὅρα ποιήσεις κατὰ τὸν τύπον τὸν δεδειγμένον σοι ἐν τῷ ὄρει).”

תִּבְנֶינָהּ is derived from בָּנָה = he built. Thus, the word basically means a building plan. God showed Moses something on Mt. Sinai that provided him with an image of exactly what the portable tabernacle/dwelling place and its utensils would look like. Eventually, the stone temple as God’s dwelling place, along with all its sacred implements, would look like this too. Probably, though, it was just a floor plan of the building, because it is the placement and location of the various objects used in the tabernacle/temple that was most important. For example, the Holy of Holies had to be separated by a curtain from the rest of the tabernacle, in order to provide a place where only the high priest entered once a year during Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

Paul is using the idea of God’s showing and even giving a divine injunction to (κεχρημάτισται) Moses “on the mountain” (ἐν τῷ ὄρει) of Sinai a building/floor plan, a pattern (τύπος), and telling him to stick to it exactly to say that this is similar to the relationship between the Moses’ obeying God and building the “building” and what Jesus does to obey and serve God, that the former obeying of God is a merely a pattern (τύπος) of Jesus’ performing his ministry that results in his serving God eternally, i.e., in the heavenly “temple.”

In terms of time and events, which is the meaning of “heavenly” in this case, Jesus was told to stick exactly to the plan that God had for him to obtain a way to serve sinful human beings that is superior to that of both Moses and the Levitical priests. They as sinners built a material tent and brought animals as offerings to God. The morally perfect Jesus suffers, dies, rises from the dead, and serves God eternally as the perpetual high priest of believing sinners. Thus, God manifested Himself within the creation (as an *angelos*), and on Mt. Sinai He showed Moses a pattern that He wanted him to follow when the Israelites constructed the tent that they would carry with them in the wilderness and where they would perform their worship of Him with the Levitical priests serving in the tent. The goal was the tent as God’s dwelling place (מִשְׁכָּן), and there was a “divine injunction” of a pattern and floor plan that Moses was required to follow in building it. And just as God directed Moses to follow the pattern and build His portable dwelling place, so also God directed Jesus to follow His requirements to become an eternal high priest for Jewish (and Gentile) sinners. Therefore, I think that this part of v. 5 begins another sentence that will end with v. 6.

²¹¹ ἡ δὲ διαφορά τῆς λειτουργίας, ὅσην καὶ κρείττονός ἐστιν διαθήκης μεσίτης, ἥτις ἐπὶ κρείττοσιν ἐπαγγελίαις νενομοθέτηται – I think that we can say that Moses’ service of the actual earthly temple by building the tabernacle/dwelling place of God was superior to the pattern (τύπος) that he was shown by God. Similarly, Jesus’ service of living, dying, rising from the dead, etc. is superior to both what Moses did by building the tabernacle, what the Levites do by bringing offerings to God within it, and the heavenly copy, i.e., pattern (τύπος), of this tabernacle/temple that is on earth.

As a result, Jesus is “indeed the mediator of a better covenant” (καὶ κρείττονός ἐστιν διαθήκης μεσίτη), and the New Covenant was “legislated on the basis of better promises” (ἐπὶ κρείττοσιν ἐπαγγελίαις νενομοθέτηται) than the Mosaic Covenant. The New Covenant is most explicitly described according to Jeremiah 31:31-34 that Paul will quote in a moment. Its promise is to forgive *completely and eternally* the Jews simply on the basis of His changing their hearts and the offering of the Messiah (the latter being implied in Jeremiah 31:31-34), not on the basis of animal sacrifices, even if God were to change all their hearts so that they all “keep” the Mosaic Covenant, as He states in Deuteronomy 29-31 that He is eventually going to do.

Consequently, within this context, Paul has been arguing and will go on to argue that the *complete and eternal* forgiveness of the Jews includes a new priesthood that is “heavenly,” i.e., eternal, and not earthly, i.e., temporary involving just the nation of Israel, that goes beyond merely the temporary effects of the Mosaic Covenant for the Jewish people, because the Messiah will intervene on behalf of human beings at the *final* judgment. The Levitical priests cannot do this. Indeed, they themselves need Jesus’ advocacy at this judgment.

In addition, Paul has already explained that the “promise” of the Mosaic Covenant could not provide an intercessor and priest at the final judgment and on into eternity. However, Deuteronomy 30 did promise a change of heart for all the Jews, but it should be considered as comments by God that also imply a change in covenant and a new priesthood, that of the New Covenant and the priesthood of Melchizedek respectively. Thus, Deuteronomy 30 is making the same promise as the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34, that, at some point in the future, all of the nation of Israel would become authentic believers (cf. Deuteronomy 30; Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:5-10, 15-18). And both passages are implying both the Davidic Covenant and God’s calling the final Davidic king to function as a high priest “according to the order of Melchizedek.” In other words, those who have understood properly the Mosaic Covenant are not surprised and even willingly and immediately accept the production of a NEW Covenant with a new priesthood that has an eternal and complete effect. This brings the confidence that sinners need to approach God and receive His eternal forgiveness. Therefore, Jesus’ service to sinful human beings is superior (διαφορώτερας) to that of Levitical priests and, by extrapolation, Moses, because he brings about complete and eternal forgiveness and not just the same kind of temporary effects of the Mosaic Covenant. In addition, he will serve as king in the eternal Kingdom of God after the temporary restored Kingdom of Israel, so that he rules and intercedes at the same time, which neither any of the other Davidic kings nor any of the Levitical priests ever did.

To put it succinctly, the “better promises” of the New Covenant is the promise of a new high priest whose function will

bring about complete and eternal forgiveness and participation in the Kingdom of God, not just in the nation of Israel, even though God made the New Covenant specifically with the Jews.

²¹² εἰ γὰρ ἡ πρώτη ἐκείνη ἦν ἄμεμπος οὐκ ἂν ἑδυνέας ἐζητεῖτο τόπος – ἄμεμπος is typically used to refer to people who are uncondemned before God (cf. Luke 1:16; Philippians 2:15). In this case, Paul is saying that the Mosaic Covenant is incapable of bringing about a standing before God whereby a sinful human being is *completely and eternally* uncondemned, because it did not provide for the proper high priest and offering that would satisfy God in their appeal for His *complete and eternal* mercy. In other words, the Mosaic Covenant uses only mortal, sinful priests, along with animals, so that these Levitical priests themselves need Jesus to appeal to God for eternal mercy on their behalf. Therefore, the Mosaic Covenant is insufficient in its personnel and practices to accomplish eternal mercy and life for the Jews.

The New Covenant, with Jesus as its high priest, does provide complete and eternal mercy and will involve eventually all living Jews, because they will become changed of heart by God, as Paul goes on to explain in vs. 8-12.

See also Hebrews 9:1-10:18, which is a full explanation of this statement in Hebrews 8:7. Thus, even the Jews should have realized from the inception of the Mosaic Covenant that they should seek a second and better covenant other than the Mosaic Covenant in order to obtain God's complete and eternal mercy. Once one understands the relative nature of the Mosaic Covenant, all the time, energy, effort, and thought that the Jews have put into understanding and obeying it and the Talmud, etc. seems rather ridiculous and wasteful in the light of what Paul is arguing here. Likewise, all the time, energy, effort, and thought that Christians have put into creating and maintaining a religious system that includes such things as buildings, staff, payrolls, administration of organizations, etc. seems rather ridiculous and wasteful in the light of what Paul is arguing here.

I think that this is the point of Deuteronomy 30:11-14—

Deuteronomy 30:11 “For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. 30:12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ 30:13 Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ 30:14 But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.”

Even though there are 613 commandments within the Mosaic Covenant, the people's inward change that is manifested in humility, belief, and pursuing obedience to these commandments is more important than actually doing each and every individual commandment at every moment of their lives. Their committed willingness to obey the covenant is more important than outward practice of the external injunctions is.

²¹³ μεμφόμενος γὰρ αὐτοῦς λέγει – Hebrews 8:8-12 is tricky, because these verses seem to indicate that the only problem with the Jews was their hearts, so that, if they had acquired changed hearts under the Mosaic Covenant, then God would grant them eternal mercy. However, this would not be coherent with Paul's argument in Hebrews. Instead, there were two problems with the OT Jews under the Mosaic Covenant. One was that they lacked the kind of hearts that God required for even obeying properly the Mosaic Covenant and participating correctly in the nation of Israel. But even the Mosaic Covenant in Deuteronomy 30 promised to correct this problem. Therefore, there must have been another problem that is implied by both the Mosaic Covenant and God's statement of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31. This was the problem of a less than adequate priesthood for Jews' obtaining God's complete and eternal mercy. As a result, the New Covenant promises not only changed hearts for the Jews (which the Mosaic Covenant does), but also a new and eternally adequate priest for them, indeed, the Messiah and Davidic king who is a “priest according to the order of Melchizedek.”

It just so happened that it was clearly the case that God could consider the OT Jews condemned (μεμφόμενος) because they lacked proper inwardness. But He also considered them condemned because they were rejecting the clear message of the Mosaic Covenant by virtue of its multiple, animal sacrifices and Levitical priesthood (cf. Hebrews 9 and 10) that it was pointing to a second, different, and NEW Covenant, which would be necessary in order for God to grant them *complete and eternal* mercy—in line with how He had composed and designed the story to proceed. Thus, God deemed them condemned and declared that He would institute a New Covenant whereby He would forgive them all completely and rescue them eternally from His condemnation by changing the heart of each one of them (v. 8) in the midst of providing them with a different and eternally effective high priest (cf. Hebrews 10:5-10,15-18, which is a fuller explanation of this point and includes comments by David that he understands the importance of another method besides the sacrifices of animals for obtaining eternal mercy).

The implication of all this, as Paul will go on to argue in Hebrews 9 & 10, is that the New Covenant applies to only Jews not only who are inwardly changed but also who grasp the significance of the eternal Melchizedekian priest of Psalm 110.

²¹⁴ ἰδοὺ ἡμέραι ἔρχονται, λέγει κύριος – In the rest of vs. 8 through v. 12, Paul directly quotes the Septuagint of Jeremiah 31:31-34, the most explicit statement of the New Covenant in the Old Testament. With this covenant, God is saying that He will finally and completely forgive the sins of His people, the nation of Israel, which He implies has not been the case under the Mosaic Covenant, as important as it has been to them and to the Gentiles in history as a didactic tool for everyone—or at least this is what it was supposed to be according to Exodus 19, for the Jewish people to be a kingdom of priests and therefore teachers to the rest of the world, and according to Deuteronomy 4, for the Gentiles to recognize the wisdom of the Jews as they obey it.

With this description of the New Covenant, God is also implying that He will use a different method to bring about the

forgiveness of sins for the nation of Israel, which Paul explains here is David's "Lord," the "priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" as mentioned in Psalm 110.

Certainly the entire description of the New Covenant points towards a significant change in the people of Israel, that not only will they all have changed hearts and "know Yahweh," but God "will remember their sins no more"—which we now know is only through Jesus' death and his interceding for them.

Here, in the middle of v. 8, Paul quotes Jeremiah 31:31, Septuagint – ἰδοὺ ἡμέραι ἔρχονται, φησὶν κύριος; Hebrew text – הִנֵּה יָמֵי בָּאִים, i.e., "Behold, days are coming," says Yahweh. –

First, a minor issue, that Paul must be using a more up to date way of writing that someone "says" something by substituting λέγει for the Septuagint's φησὶν throughout these verses of Jeremiah 31:31-34.

God said this back about 580 B.C., and we are still waiting for Him to fulfill these words completely. Jesus has arrived as Messiah, king, and high priest through his death and resurrection to qualify for these roles, but what God says in Jeremiah 31:31-34 that He is going to do has not found its fulfillment yet, which will coincide with His fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make his descendants a "great nation." In other words, the people of Israel as the "great nation" of the Abrahamic Covenant will be the same people whose sins are forgiven by God when they all become changed of heart authentic believers in Yahweh.

And God is definitely not in as much a hurry as we typically are to complete the process of the New Covenant or would like Him to be. He waited 580 years after Jeremiah to bring Jesus into existence and to die, rise from the dead, and ascend from the earth as the means for him to qualify to be both king and high priest for Israel. Now, He has waited another two thousand years, and He has not yet brought about the "great nation" of the Jews.

²¹⁵ καὶ συντελέσω ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον Ἰουδα διαθήκην καινὴν – In this next line of v. 8, Paul also quotes approximately a portion of Jeremiah 31:31, Septuagint – καὶ διαθήσομαι τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰουδα διαθήκην καινὴν; Hebrew text – וְאֶת-בְּרִית יְהוָה בְּרִית אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת-בְּרִית יְהוָה בְּרִית אֶת-יְהוּדָה – i.e., and I will cut a New covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah –

Paul clarifies that the New Covenant is to be made specifically with the Jews, "the house of Israel [the northern kingdom of Israel that was destroyed by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.] and the house of Judah [the southern kingdom of Judah that was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.], while Gentiles will certainly be able to take advantage of it in order to obtain their goal of complete and eternal mercy, similar to the Jews. Therefore, Gentiles are hitchhiking off this covenant when God changes their hearts and they demonstrate authentic belief in both Yahweh and the Jewish Messiah.

In addition, God specifically planned to make a covenant with the Jews that would permit them not only to fulfill the Mosaic Covenant in order to live securely on the land that God promised them through the Abrahamic Covenant, but also to move beyond the Mosaic Covenant, as that which simply qualified them to be members of their ethnic nation, and obtain complete and eternal forgiveness by virtue of the special high priest that the New Covenant provides—by connecting what God says in it with what David says of his "Lord" in Psalm 110.

²¹⁶ οὐ κατὰ τὴν διαθήκην, ἣν ἐποίησα τοῖς πατράσιν αὐτῶν – In v. 9, Paul moves on to Jeremiah 31:32a, Septuagint, οὐ κατὰ τὴν διαθήκην, ἣν διεθέμην τοῖς πατράσιν αὐτῶν; Hebrew text – לֹא כִבְרִית אֲשֶׁר כָּרַתִּי אֶת-אֲבוֹתָם – i.e., not like the covenant which I cut with their fathers

God made the Mosaic Covenant with specifically the ancestors of the Jews with whom He will make the New Covenant in the "days" that "are coming." But the New Covenant is going to be different in that He will change the hearts of all the Jews so that they can obey it properly, which God goes on to imply indirectly in v. 9 by stating that the Israelites of old were unwilling to obey the Mosaic Covenant.

²¹⁷ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐπιλαβομένου μου τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῶν ἐξαγαγεῖν αὐτοὺς ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου ὅτι αὐτοὶ οὐκ ἐνέμειναν ἐν τῇ διαθήκῃ μου – This is the middle of v. 9 and Paul quotes more of Jeremiah 31:32, Septuagint – ὅτι αὐτοὶ οὐκ ἐνέμειναν ἐν τῇ διαθήκῃ μου; Hebrew text – אֲשֶׁר-הִפְקַחְתִּי בְּיָדִי, i.e., My covenant which they broke.

Here, God points to a specific problem with the Jews of Moses' day, that they lacked the proper inwardness and hearts to obey the Mosaic Covenant. They did not have changed hearts that had been circumcised by the Spirit of God.

Therefore, while they were journeying through the desert to the land of Canaan that God had promised to them, and even after they arrived in the land, they continually demonstrated their inward inability to "remain" in and keep the covenant.

Nevertheless, another of God's promises under the Abrahamic Covenant has always been to turn the Jews into a "great nation" at some time in history. This radical transition from a relatively rebellious and ragtag group of people to a nation that clearly has inwardly and intellectually grasped the eternal plans and purposes of God will require that they ALL have changed hearts.

Thus, Paul will go on to quote in v. 10 that the New Covenant is stating that all living Jews at some point in history will have changed hearts. Then, the part of the quote in v. 12 implies that there will be a change in priesthood for the Jews' (and Gentiles') eternal sake that will include the restored Kingdom of Israel of Revelation 20. This new priesthood is most important for Paul's argument in this section.

²¹⁸ καὶ γὰρ ἡμέλησα αὐτῶν, λέγει κύριος – The end of v. 9 is the last part of Jeremiah 31:32 – Septuagint – καὶ ἐγὼ ἡμέλησα αὐτῶν, φησὶν κύριος; Hebrew text – וְאֶנֶכִּי בָעֵתָּהּ, i.e., – And I ruled/was a husband to them," while the Septuagint says, "And I had no regard for them."

The Hebrew is the same root as Ba'al (בַּעַל), meaning lord, owner, master, and husband. Maybe the Hebrew word can

mean two things, to rule or be devoted to a woman as her husband, and its opposite, to abandon, divorce, have no regard for and neglect her—depending on the context. But Paul quotes the Septuagint to the effect that God did not care for or approve of the Jews, probably because they were unwilling to believe and trust Him. Therefore, it can also be said that God abandoned them of sorts because of their massive disobedience even in the Sinai desert after He had rescued them from slavery in Egypt.

As unattractive an idea as this might be to any Jew, Paul is saying that it is true, which can be verified by God's dispersing the Jews from the land of Israel both in the 700-600 B.C. time period by the Assyrians and Babylonians and in A.D. 132 by the Romans after the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Yet, Jeremiah and Paul are declaring that God will remain faithful to the Jews by means of the New Covenant, even to the point of ensuring that they become a "great nation" and acquire *eternal* life and mercy—both of which are the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant.

²¹⁹ ὅτι αὕτη ἡ διαθήκη ἣν διαθήσομαι τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ μετὰ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκεῖνας, λέγει κύριος – Now, in v. 10, Paul quotes Jeremiah 31:33 where God begins describing the New Covenant and how it is going to be different from the Mosaic Covenant – Septuagint – ὅτι αὕτη ἡ διαθήκη ἣν διαθήσομαι τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ μετὰ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκεῖνας, φησὶν κύριος; Hebrew text – הַיְּהוָה יִשְׁכְּלֵנִי אֶת־בְּרִית אֲכַלְתִּי מִן־הַבְּרִית הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָכַלְתִּי אֶת־בְּרִית הַבְּרִית הַזֶּה, i.e., "because/but this is the covenant which I will cut with the house of Israel after those days," declares Yahweh.

God now moves on from the unbelief of the Israelites and His resultant not having regard for them to how He began this passage, that He would make a New Covenant with them. This obviously implies just exactly how faithful and loyal God is to His people, that the sin and rebellion of the Jews will not stop Him from fulfilling His word to them so that they will always be His people, ethnically speaking, on the earth and during this realm.

Here, "house of Israel" refers not to just the northern Kingdom of Israel that was destroyed by the Assyrians, but to the whole nation of Israel, i.e., the ethnic Jews in their entirety, with whom God will make this New Covenant.

God also says that this covenant will go into effect "after those days," meaning after the time of His making the covenant with the elements necessary for it to go into effect as He is describing it. I think that he means, after Jesus' first appearance when he qualifies by his death on the cross to be both Israel's king and Israel's high priest. But this will also mean that he becomes king and high priest for the Gentiles.

In fact, we notice that God is not referring to Gentiles in this statement of the New Covenant. Yet, we know that they will participate in all the benefits of this covenant, both the temporal ones of the "great nation" of Israel when they participate in its existence by supporting it or living in it (as mortal believing sinners during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20), or overseeing it (as immortal and morally perfect human beings after Jesus' return). This will all be through the Gentiles' belief in the Jewish Messiah and counting on him to appeal to the Father for mercy on their behalf, too, in order to obtain the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that through him "all the families of the earth will be blessed."

²²⁰ διδοὺς νόμους μου εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν ἐπιγράψω αὐτοῦς – Here, from Jeremiah 31:33, we have the beginning of the explicit actions of God that will make this covenant New – Septuagint – διδοὺς δώσω νόμους μου εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν γράψω αὐτοῦς; Hebrew text – אֶת־תּוֹרַתִּי אֶת־הַלֵּב אֲכַלְתִּי מִן־הַבְּרִית הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָכַלְתִּי אֶת־בְּרִית הַבְּרִית הַזֶּה, i.e., I will place my Torah within them and on their heart I will write it.

Here is the crux of the New Covenant from the standpoint of the ontological and moral effect on the Jews. Based upon what God will say and Paul will quote in v. 11, I think we can assume that God is speaking of performing these actions on all the Jews living at the time when He ultimately brings this about. He states explicitly that He will cause the Jews to obey His "Torah" by changing them inwardly. Not one Jew will lack this change or circumcision of heart that God actually required of them under the Mosaic Covenant in Deuteronomy 10:16.

As we will see, part of this new Torah will be what Paul quotes in v. 12—the fact of their eternal forgiveness and the implication of their confidence in being eternal forgiven—by means of the new Melchizedekan high priest, i.e., Jesus of Nazareth from the tribe of Judah. Indeed, the Torah will include the commandment to believe in this high priest that will dominate all of God's instructions (תּוֹרַתִּי) (νόμους) in the minds and hearts of the Jews. In other words, the Torah of the Mosaic Covenant will be included in this set of New Covenant instructions, but it will be secondary to the Torah of believing in the crucified Jewish Messiah and high priest, Jesus. Consequently, there will come a time when all the Jews, for the first time in history, will properly obey the Mosaic Covenant by virtue of the changed inwardness that God will cause them to have (cf. Deuteronomy 29,30), AND they will properly obey the Torah to believe in and follow the crucified Jewish Messiah. In this way, the New Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant will exist together for the Jews this side of eternity, such that the Mosaic Covenant, for them, will be under the umbrella of the New Covenant when God changes all their hearts. For Gentiles, there is only the application of the New Covenant to them by their participating in the eternal benefits of the Abrahamic Covenant through changed inwardness and belief in its different and Melchizedekan high priest—Jesus of Nazareth.

See also Ezekiel 36:22-38.

²²¹ καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς θεόν, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μοι εἰς λαόν – One of the effects of God's changing the Jews' hearts is here at the end of v. 10 from Jeremiah 31:33 – Septuagint – καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς θεόν, καὶ αὐτοὶ ἔσονται μοι εἰς λαόν; Hebrew text – וְאֲנִי אֶהְיֶה לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים וְהָיוּ לִי לְעָם, i.e., And I will be to them for God, and they will be to me for people.

The result of all the Jews' becoming inwardly changed is that they can claim that God is their God, and God can say that they are His people—finally, for the first time in history, with respect to the entire nation of Israel, who received

forever and where the distinction between Jews and Gentiles disappears.

In 9:10, Paul speaks of the Mosaic Covenant as regulations for the Jews “until the season of a new order,” which will come into existence when God destroys the present earth and creates an eternal earth. At that point, the temporary, earthly, and historical purposes of the Jews through the Mosaic Covenant will also disappear. They will no longer play the role of teachers of God to the Gentiles of the earth, because both all the Jews and Gentiles, whom God has predestined to eternal life, will live on the new and eternal earth.

In the meantime, the Mosaic Covenant simply grows older and older so to speak as it approaches its time of disappearing completely. It becomes less and less permanent for the Jews as they look to or should look to the New Covenant only and, specifically, Jesus’ priesthood in line with Psalm 110:4 for their obtaining God’s eternal mercy. In addition, the animal sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant are completely irrelevant and unnecessary from an eternal perspective now that the new high priest has qualified for his role through his suffering death on the cross. This clear and explicit relativizing of the animal sacrifices allows for an individual Jew, if necessary, to omit them from his Jewish life under the Mosaic Covenant without forfeiting God’s complete and eternal mercy and existence in the eternal Kingdom of God, as, for example, was the case with Paul during his travels in Turkey, Greece, Rome, etc. As long as a Jew has changed inwardness and embraces Jesus as his king and priest, while also pursuing obedience to the Mosaic Covenant as that which demonstrates that he is bona fide member of the nation of Israel, God certainly will grant him complete mercy and eternal salvation.

²²⁵ εἶχεν μὲν οὖν ὁ [καὶ] ἡ πρώτη ἡ δικαιοσύνη λατρείας τὸ τε ἅγιον κοσμικόν – Paul now goes on in chapters 9 & 10 to point out the profound differences between physical and useless requirements of the Mosaic Covenant and Jesus and his eternally effective requirements of the New Covenant.

With the Mosaic Covenant, God had established specific religious and physical rituals for the Levites and a specific and unique place on earth, “the earthly set apart place” (τὸ τε ἅγιον κοσμικόν) where they would perform them—the “sanctuary” or “set apart place” or “tent/tabernacle” during their wanderings in the wilderness and in the Land of Canaan.

Exodus 25:8,9 “8 Let them construct a sanctuary/set apart place for Me (וְעָשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ) (καὶ ποιήσεις μοι ἁγίασμα), that I may dwell among them (וְאָנֹכִי בְּתוֹכָם) (καὶ ὀφθήσομαι ἐν ὑμῖν = and I will be experienced (literally “seen”) among you). 9 According to all that I am going to show you, as the pattern of the tabernacle (וְכַפְּתוֹת הַמִּשְׁכָּן) (τὸ παράδειγμα τῆς σκηνῆς) and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct it.”

Regarding וְכַפְּתוֹת הַמִּשְׁכָּן = pattern, see notes for Hebrews 8:5. The word וְכַפְּתוֹת הַמִּשְׁכָּן is from שָׁכַן = he dwelt, he settled, which seems synonymous with יָשַׁב. Notice that the Hebrew word “dwell” in v. 8 is the verb form of the noun “tabernacle” in v. 9. The Septuagint uses ὀφθήσομαι (=I will be seen) in the first case and τῆς σκηνῆς (=the tent) in the second. Our word “tabernacle” comes from the Latin *taberna* = hut, tavern, and is the diminutive of it, i.e., *tabernaculum*.

Paul will go on to say that the New Covenant also has sacred requirements, but ones that Jesus alone fulfills by his singular death and that produces eternal mercy and entrance into the Kingdom of God. In other words, there are no sacred, ritual requirements for followers of Jesus as the Messiah, except the Mosaic Covenant for Jews, but it is highly relativized and made almost trivial in comparison to the New Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant is for the present realm only, while the New Covenant is for the “eternal” realm of both the millennial kingdom of the nation of Israel and the eternal earth after it.

²²⁶ σκηνὴ γὰρ κατασκευάσθη ἡ πρώτη ἐν ᾗ ἦ τε λυχνία καὶ ἡ τράπεζα καὶ ἡ πρόθεσις τῶν ἄρτων ἤ, ἥτις λέγεται ἅγια – Why is Paul going into so much detail on these physical aspects of the Mosaic Covenant? To contrast their strictly religious and ineffective nature in contrast to the legal and eternally effective nature of Jesus’ offering himself through death to God.

There were two compartments or rooms in the original tabernacle/tent that God directed the Israelites to construct in the wilderness. The first, or outer one, was a sacred place and contained the two items of the lampstand, i.e., the menorah, and the table with its showbread.

Exodus 26:33,34, 33 “You shall hang up the curtain (וְהָפַקְתָּ אֹתָהּ) (τὸ καταπέτασμα) under the clasps, and shall bring in the ark of the testimony (וְאָרְנוּ אֶת-אֲרוֹן הָעֵדוּת) (τὴν κιβωτὸν τοῦ μαρτυρίου) there within the curtain; and the curtain shall serve for you as a partition (וְהָפַקְתָּ לָּךְ אֶת-וְהַבְדִּילָהּ) (διοριεῖ τὸ καταπέτασμα ὑμῖν) between the holy place (וְהַקֹּדֶשׁ) (τοῦ ἁγίου) and the holy of holies (וְהַקֹּדֶשׁ הַקֹּדֶשׁ) (τοῦ ἁγίου τῶν ἁγίων). 34 You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the holy of holies (וְבָרָשׁוּת וְכַפָּרִית וְכִסֵּי הַכַּפָּרִית) (ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ τῶν ἁγίων).”

²²⁷ μετὰ δὲ τὸ δεῦτερον καταπέτασμα σκηνὴ ἡ λεγομένη “Ἅγια Ἀγίων” – On the one hand, first, God instructed the Israelites to make ten “curtains” that would form the outer walls of the portable dwelling place. These are described in Exodus 26:1-6. Here is Exodus 26:1, “Moreover you shall make the tabernacle with ten curtains (וְרֵיזֵתִים) (αὐλαίας) of fine twisted linen and blue and purple and scarlet material; you shall make them with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman.”

Second, God instructed them to make eleven “curtains” that would form the roof of this portable dwelling place. These are in Exodus 26:7-14. Here is Exodus 26:7, “Then you shall make curtains of goats’ hair (וְרֵיזֵתִים עֵיזִים) (δέρρις τριχίνας) for a tent over the tabernacle; you shall make eleven curtains (וְרֵיזֵתִים) (δέρρις) in all.”

Third, God instructed the Israelites to make a “screen” for the doorway of the tent. This is described in Exodus 26:36-

37. Here is [Exodus 26:36](#), “You shall make a **screen for the doorway of the tent** (לְהַחֲסֹךְ דְּלֶת הַמִּשְׁכָּה) (**ἐπίσπαστρον**) of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen, the work of a weaver.” In this last case, the Septuagint uses the one word **ἐπίσπαστρον** to translate three Hebrew words for “a screen for the doorway of the tent.” This is the only time that **ἐπίσπαστρον** is used in the Septuagint, and it is not used in the NT. Notice also that the Septuagint translates **מִלִּיִּם** = curtains as **αὐλαίαις** when the Hebrew word refers to the walls ([Exodus 26:1-6](#)) and as **δέρραις** when it refers to the roof ([Exodus 26:7-14](#)).

Fourth, God commanded the Israelites to surround the tent with a court, i.e., courtyard, that was a wall around the entire tabernacle/tent by “hangings” with a “screen” for a gate. This is described in [Exodus 27:9-18](#). Here is [Exodus 27:9](#), “You shall make the court of the tabernacle. On the south side there shall be **hangings for the court** (לְהַחֲסֹךְ לְהַיְוֵה) (**ιστία τῆς αὐλῆς**) of fine twisted linen one hundred cubits long for one side.” There is also [Exodus 27:16](#), “For the gate of the court there shall be a **screen** (מָסָךְ) (**κάλυμμα**) of twenty cubits, of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen, the work of a weaver, with their four pillars and their four sockets.”

Then, on the other hand, God instructed the Israelites to make a “curtain” that would form the partition between the two parts of the sanctuary, i.e., between the outer “set apart place” (“holy place”) and the inner “set apart place of the set apart places” (“holy of holies”). This is described in [Exodus 36:31-35](#). Here is [Exodus 36:31](#), “You shall make a **veil** (מָסָךְ) (**καταπέτασμα**) of blue and purple and scarlet material and fine twisted linen; it shall be made with cherubim, the work of a skillful workman.” In [Exodus 36:33](#), God says, “You shall hang up the **curtain** (מָסָךְ) (**καταπέτασμα**) under the clasps, and shall bring in the ark of the testimony there **within the curtain** (בְּתוֹכָהּ) (**ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος**); and the **curtain** shall serve for you as a partition (מָסָךְ) (**καταπέτασμα**) between the set apart place and the set apart place of the set apart places (בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין הַקֹּדֶשׁ הַקְדָּשִׁים) (ἀνά μέσον τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ ἀνά μέσον τοῦ ἁγίου τῶν ἁγίων).”

The Greek word διορίζω is defined as “to set limits.” Consequently, with the words “Then, behind the second curtain (μετὰ δὲ τὸ δεῦτερον καταπέτασμα),” Paul is referring to the curtain (מָסָךְ & **καταπέτασμα** in [Exodus 36:31](#)), that separated the inner sanctum of the Set Apart Place of The Set Apart Places from the outer sanctum of The Set Apart Place, so that “the first curtain” so to speak, that Paul does not mention explicitly, would be the curtains that formed the outside walls that shape the tabernacle/tent as instructed by God in [Exodus 26:1-6](#).

In v. 2, Paul is also calling the outer sanctum of the The Set Apart Place “the first tent (σκηνή... ἡ πρώτη).” As a result, the “second tent,” that he does not explicitly mention with these words, would be the “Set Apart Place of The Set Apart Places” as the innermost part of the tabernacle which contained the “ark of the testimony,” i.e., the ark of the covenant ([Numbers 10:33](#) Thus they set out from the mount of Yahweh three days’ journey, with the **ark of the covenant** of Yahweh (אֲרֹן הַבְּרִית יְהוָה) (καὶ ἡ κιβωτὸς τῆς διαθήκης κυρίου) journeying in front of them for the three days, to seek out a resting place for them.). It was here in this very inner room that the high priest entered once a year on Yom Kippur, according to the instructions in [Leviticus 16](#) (cf. [Hebrews 9:7](#)). It was also this curtain that split and revealed the Set Apart Place of the Set Apart Places (the Holy of Holies) in the temple in Jerusalem when Jesus died on the cross, thus symbolizing that the new and only *eternally valid* manner to approach God for His complete and eternal mercy had been brought into existence by Jesus’ death. The basis of salvation had finally arrived.

[Matthew 27:51](#) – καὶ ἰδοὺ, τὸ **καταπέτασμα** τοῦ ναοῦ ἐσχίσθη εἰς δύο ἀπὸ ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω – “And behold, the **curtain** of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”

[Hebrews 6:17-20](#) – 6:17 God, because He desired even more to demonstrate to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, guaranteed it with an oath, 6:18 so that in the light of two unchangeable things, by means of which it is impossible for God to lie, we, who are fleeing from danger, may have strong encouragement to seize the hope that is set before us, 6:19 which have as an anchor of the soul, sure and certain and which enters inside the curtain (εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ **καταπετάσματος**), 6:20 where Jesus, who precedes us, entered on our behalf, because he has become a high priest into the age according to the order of Melchizedek <[Psalm 110:4](#)>.

[Hebrews 10:19-22](#) – 10:19 Therefore, brothers, because we have confidence (παρρησίαν) to enter the set apart places (εἰς τὴν εἰσοδὸν τῶν ἁγίων) on the basis of the blood of Jesus, 10:20 a fresh and living way that he inaugurated for us through the curtain, this is to say, of his flesh, 10:21 and because we have a great priest (ἱερέα μέγαν) over the household of God, 10:22 let us draw near (προσερχώμεθα) with an authentic heart (μετὰ ἀληθινῆς καρδίας) in the full certainty of belief (ἐν πληροφορίᾳ πίστεως), having had our hearts sprinkled from an understanding of evil (ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως πονηρᾶς) and our bodies washed with clean water.

²²⁸ χρυσοῦν ἔχουσα θυμιατήριον καὶ τὴν κιβωτὸν τῆς διαθήκης περικεκαλυμμένην πάντοθεν χρυσῷ, ἐν ᾗ στάμνος χρυσεῖ ἔχουσα τὸ μάννα καὶ ἡ ῥάβδος Ἀαρὼν ἣ βλαστήσασα καὶ αἱ πλάκες τῆς διαθήκης – Paul includes the altar of incense that stood in front of the second “curtain” but that belonged to the Set Apart Place of the Set Apart Places (Holy of Holies) as part of its own importance. However, the ark of the covenant with its contents and mercy seat, i.e., place of propitiation, mainly provided the Holy of Holies with its importance.

The stone tablets on which were written the Ten Commandments were located in the ark. But this is in contrast to the New Covenant when God writes His Torah on the hearts of all the Jews, meaning that He causes them to become

appropriately obedient as sinful human beings and provides them all with forgiveness through an eternal high priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” the Messiah Jesus (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:15-18).

²²⁹ ὑπεράνω δὲ αὐτῆς χερουβὶν δόξης κατασκήζοντα τὸ ἱλαστήριον περὶ ὃν οὐκ ἔστιν νῦν λέγειν κατὰ μέρος – Exodus 25:17,18, “You shall make a mercy seat (כִּפְתֹּלֶת) (ἱλαστήριον) of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and one and a half cubits wide. You shall make two cherubim/cherubs (כְּרֻבִּים) (χερουβίμ) of gold, make them of hammered work at the two ends of the mercy seat (כִּפְתֹּלֶת) (τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου).”

Also, God says to Moses regarding the Holy of Holies, Exodus 25:22 “There I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat (כִּפְתֹּלֶת הַכֹּדֶשׁ) (ἀνωθεν τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου), from between the two cherubim/cherubs which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel.”

Therefore, it was during Yom Kippur and from His “position” within the Holy of Holies and above the ark of the covenant that God would grant the Israelites a level of mercy that indicated that He considered them all rightful participants of the nation of Israel, whom He would faithfully protect from their enemies and provide with abundant food, clothing, shelter, etc. on the Land of Israel.

In other words, whatever God was dispensing from His position in the earthly Holy of Holies, it pertained to only the Jews as His earthly chosen people. His operation from this position would also exist for only the time that the Jews existed on the earth as a separate nation of people, which is until the end of the present realm and the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 when He will destroy this realm so that the Kingdom of God on the new and eternal earth will be the only location for human beings to inhabit. There all ethnic distinctions will disappear.

²³⁰ τούτων δὲ οὕτως κατεσκευασμένων εἰς μὲν τὴν πρώτην σκηνὴν διὰ παντὸς εἰσίσαιιν οἱ ἱερεῖς τὰς λατρείας ἐπιτελοῦντες – The first or outer section of the tabernacle, the Set Apart Place (Holy Place), was used every day by the priests to complete the process of making offerings and sacrifices to God. Consequently, the Israelites were to bring their offerings to God daily to demonstrate their desire to participate wholly in the nation of Israel. Because the Levitical priests were acting as mediators of a sort in accordance with God’s requirements for them under the Mosaic Covenant, He would lend His approval to the worshipers (*who had changed hearts*) (by not killing them and destroying them physically) and grant them proper status on earth during their physical existences among His chosen people ethnically speaking.

But this is as far as God would go in grant them something important with these offerings through the Levitical priests under the Mosaic Covenant. But as long as the worshipers had changed hearts, then He would look ahead to Jesus’ sacrifice, resurrection, and subsequent actions to grant them complete and eternal salvation and life. In other words, only Jesus’ death and resurrection can be and is the basis for anyone’s eternal salvation and life. This is why it is so important for the Jews, who tend to obsess on the Mosaic Covenant, to understand properly the New Covenant and the role that Jesus plays in God’s story of salvation history.

²³¹ εἰς δὲ τὴν δευτέραν ἅπαξ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ μόνος ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς, οὐ χωρὶς αἵματος ὃ προσφέρει ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ ἁγνομάτων – The second or inner section of the tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, was used only once a year on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, by the high priest who performed the ritual necessary for obtaining God’s annual earthly and temporary forgiveness of sorts for the Israelites’ sinful actions as well as for his own (ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τῶν τοῦ λαοῦ ἁγνομάτων = “for himself and the sins committed undefiantly by the people”). God granted this as long as the whole nation of Israel were not in a state of abject rebellion against Him that originated from their innate sinfulness so that they were almost completely lacking in authentic inwardness and belief (cf. Leviticus 16).

The OT speaks of sins and sinful actions on the Jews’ part that were not committed from an inner condition of fundamental defiance that stems from one’s natural born sinfulness with an unchanged heart, as well as sins that were committed defiantly and with an unchanged heart. The former can be forgiven, because the person has a circumcised heart according to Deuteronomy 10:16, so that God grants this kind of individual Israelite the status of properly participating in the nation of Israel (and even eternal forgiveness on the basis of Jesus’ future death, which is what Paul is arguing in this letter). The latter cannot be forgiven, because this kind of individual Israelite is still fundamentally in rebellion against God.

Numbers 15:28 & 30, 28 “The priest shall make atonement (וְכַפֵּר הַכֹּהֵן) (καὶ ἐξιλάσεται ὁ ἱερεὺς) before Yahweh for the person who goes astray when he sins unintentionally [undefiantly] (וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁכָּח) (ἀκουσίως), making atonement for him that he may be forgiven (וְכַפֵּר עָלָיו וְיִסְלַח לוֹ) (ἐξιλάσασθαι περὶ αὐτοῦ)” & 30 “But the person who does anything defiantly (וְהָיָה כִּי יַעֲשֶׂה בְּיָדוֹ בְּגֵרָה) (= with a high hand) (ἐν χειρὶ ὑπερηφανίας), whether he is native or an alien, that one is blaspheming Yahweh (וְהָיָה כִּי בִלְשׁוֹן יְהוָה יְבָרֵךְ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) (τὸν θεὸν οὕτως παροξύνει); and that person shall be cut off from among his people.”

It would seem that the Septuagint’s use of τὸν θεὸν οὕτως παροξύνει (=this person is “blaspheming” God) indicates that its translators consider the word בִּלְשׁוֹן יְהוָה to refer to God’s response as a result of the Israelite’s defiant action, not to the defiant action itself or its quality. Thus, the word “blaspheme” would be better translated “provokes God to wrath, anger, justice, and condemnation” or “evokes or elicits a response from God of His anger, justice, and condemnation.” Thus, God’s justice occurs because the Israelite is intentionally and defiantly (without a changed heart) choosing to rebel against God.

Paul uses the word ἁγνομάτων (from ἄ and γινώσκω = *not* and *knowing*) to refer to the OT concept of sins done

“unintentionally,” i.e., unknowingly, without one realizing it, but it more likely means undefiantly, like those that Paul talks about in Romans 7 where he does that which he does not want to do, because his heart has been changed by God (Romans 7:19 For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. 7:20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. 7:21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. 7:22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 7:23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.).

Numbers 15:24, “then it shall be, if it is done unintentionally [undefiantly] (לְבַיִתָּא) (ἀκουσίως), without the knowledge of the congregation (לְעֵינֵי כָל־הָעָם = away from the eyes of the congregation) (ἐξ ὀφθαλμῶν τῆς συναγωγῆς), that all the congregation shall offer one bull for a burnt offering, as a soothing aroma to Yahweh...”
Leviticus 5:18 “He is then to bring to the priest a ram without defect from the flock, according to your valuation, for a guilt offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his error in which he sinned unintentionally [undefiantly] (לְבַיִתָּא) (περὶ τῆς ἀγνοίας αὐτοῦ, ἣς ἠγνόησεν) and did not know it (וְלֹא יָדָע) (καὶ αὐτὸς οὐκ ᾔδει), and it will be forgiven him (וְכִסְּפוּ) (καὶ ἀφεθήσεται αὐτῷ).

Therefore, even though the high priest, in effect, was entering into the presence of God to intervene on behalf of both other people and himself, the ritual itself made sense to only those Jews who had genuine belief and for whom the high priest was actually interceding. In other words, the Mosaic Covenant was intended for only Jews who had authentic inwardness (cf. Deuteronomy 10:16, “So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.”). Anything less than authentic inwardness meant that the worshiping Jew would not understand what was really go on with the covenant. In fact, no offering to God, including the sacrifice of bulls and goats prescribed by the Mosaic Covenant, would make proper sense to a Jew apart from his having a changed heart and genuine belief (cf. Cain and Abel in Genesis 4).

This is to say that the Mosaic Covenant was requiring a changed inwardness just as much as the New Covenant does. In addition, the whole message of the Bible is that a human being cannot really bring an appropriate sin offering to God and expect to receive forgiveness without authentic inwardness and repentance. Rituals alone are insufficient, and a person with a heart of abject rebellion will never receive God’s mercy, because this person is operating strictly on the basis of his natural born sinful humanity. Furthermore, God considers only those Jews with changed hearts to be authentic and bona fide members of the nation of Israel with the proper status on earth during their physical existences among His chosen people ethnically speaking. This is the same as having the status of properly participating in the nation of Israel.

As a result, a word such as “undefiantly” or “unwillfully” would be a better translation than “unintentionally” in Numbers 15:24 & 28. The defiant person who sins “with a high hand” does not have a changed heart. The person who sins undefiantly does have a changed heart.

Hebrews 10:26-29, 26 “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 10:27 but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. 10:28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 10:29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean [mundane] the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?”

The word “blood” is used 8x in Hebrews 9 and 3x in Hebrews 10. Hebrews 9 really is the chapter of blood—that God requires a blood sacrifice in order to grant mercy and forgiveness to sinners.

²³² τοῦτο δηλοῦντος τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου, μήπω πεφανερῶσθαι τὴν **τῶν ἁγίων** ὁδὸν ἔτι τῆς πρώτης σκηνῆς ἐχούσης στάσιν – The first clause contains a genitive absolute. There are two options for the words τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου –

- 1) The Holy Spirit, i.e., God, who is making it clear by the first “tent,” the physical tabernacle and temple, with its prescribed rituals within the Mosaic Covenant of multiple and continuous animal sacrifices, that it cannot provide eternal salvation.
- 2) The spirit (=the overall understanding and intent) of the Jew who has been set apart by the Spirit of God (by virtue of God’s predestining this Jew to have a changed heart and new understanding of reality) to understand the relative significance of the temple worship in comparison the Jesus’ death on his behalf to bring about eternal salvation. While most translations interpret τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου as the Holy Spirit of God, it makes more sense in the flow of Paul’s argument that he is thinking of the Jew who is an authentic believer, e.g., David, whom he will quote from Psalm 40 in Hebrews 10, who comes to the realization of the eternal ineffectiveness of the repetitive Mosaic Covenant offerings of animals at the temple in comparison to the complete and eternal effectiveness of the one and only New Covenant offering of the Messiah in the greater “tent” which brings about the final goal of eternal salvation and forgiveness of the authentic worshiper.

Part of what Paul has been doing is not only explaining the biblical role of the Messiah, who is Jesus, but also exhorting his Jewish readers to become more biblical in their understanding of the Messiah, which involves grasping the significance of the New Covenant with its single ritual of the sacrifice of its high priest in comparison to the Mosaic Covenant with its multiple rituals of offerings, sacrifices, etc. by both the sinful worshipers and the sinful priests. Paul has been weaving the necessity of a Jew’s understanding the various elements of the OT into his explanation of the identity and role of the Messiah (e.g., Hebrews 5:14, In contrast, solid food is for those who are well on their way to

their goal (τελείων), who, on account of proficiency, have the mental faculties that are trained to make the distinction between good and bad.). The OT multiple rituals are useless for a sinful human being apart from the single ritual of the Messiah. (Nevertheless, it is the Holy Spirit who is active within a sinful human being to change his “heart” and to open his eyes and mind to grasp the significance of Jesus as the crucified Messiah while also causing him to choose authentic “belief” in and “obedience” to God.)

Therefore, the words in the genitive case, τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου, refer to the spirit of the Jew whom God has set apart by virtue of His miraculous inner work. This person’s inner thoughts and understanding have made clear to him something important about the Mosaic Covenant and its prescribed rituals. The word τοῦτο refers to what follows after the genitive absolute and what the set apart and theologically discerning Jew clearly understands—that, as long as the Mosaic Covenant has more standing intellectually, emotionally, psychologically, morally, and spiritually for someone than it should, then the functionally legitimate and actual way of obtaining God’s *eternal* mercy (“the way of the holy things” (τὴν **τῶν ἁγίων** ὁδὸν)), i.e., by means of some other way, i.e., the death of and intercession by the Messiah, has not yet been revealed to and actualized in this person.

It was certainly not uncommon in Paul’s day (and in modern times, too) for a Jew to focus strictly on the Mosaic Covenant, relative to all other elements of the OT. The Jew thinks that following Moses is the only biblical way to relate to God and that the Messiah will agree and encourage the Jews (and Gentiles) to obey the Mosaic Covenant for this purpose. Indeed, Paul himself had done just exactly this before his conversion on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. The third clause, **ἔτι τῆς πρώτης σκηνῆς** ἐχούσης στάσιν, also contains a genitive absolute like the first clause, referring to the fact that the tabernacle, with its earthly and animal-based process of seeking God’s mercy, still has a primary position of importance in a Jew’s life (**ἔτι...ἐχούσης στάσιν** = still...has standing) *as long as this Jew has not properly grasped the propitiatory significance of the Messiah*, especially now that the Messiah himself, Jesus of Nazareth, has appeared. Whereas the phrase **ἡ πρώτη σκηνή** in Hebrews 9:2 and 9:6 refers to the first compartment of the tabernacle called The Set Apart Places, which the priests entered daily, in contrast to the inner sanctum of the tabernacle, The Set Apart Places of the Set Apart Places, where the high priest entered once a year, here **ἡ πρώτη σκηνή** as the “first tent” refers to the whole Mosaic Covenant tabernacle/tent in contrast to the “second tent,” i.e., the heavenly tabernacle, where Jesus enters to appeal to God for *eternal* mercy on behalf of the believing Jew at the judgment.

While God was dealing with the Israelites in OT times, He was making it obvious through the offerings of the Mosaic Covenant that having an advocate who could mediate between Him and them was at the heart of their relationship with Him (e.g., **Hebrews 7:11**, Therefore, if indeed reaching the goal (τελείωσις) [of eternal mercy and life] were through the Levitical priesthood (*for the people have been given the Covenant on the basis of it*), then why was there yet the need for **a different priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek**, and not to be called according to the order of Aaron? (emphasis mine)).

In addition, the focus of the Jews’ appealing to God for mercy, even *eternal* mercy, was *daily* on the basis of the rituals of the Mosaic Covenant and the earthly tabernacle/tent. However, for the authentic believing Jew, this daily attention to the physical matters of the Mosaic Covenant, including its animal sacrifices, was clearly not enough to convince him intellectually with his mature understanding that he had obtained God’s *eternal* mercy, as Paul will go on to show in chapter 10 with a quote from David and Psalm 40!

Therefore, Paul is arguing that when the focus shifts for a believing Jew of mature understanding to some other way different from the Levitical priesthood and offerings under the Mosaic Covenant, i.e., to the crucified Messiah as “priest according to the order of Melchizedek” under the New Covenant, then the actual reality of *complete and eternal* mercy through him also becomes true for this Jew.

²³³ ἥτις ἡ παραβολὴ εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τὸν ἐνεστηκότα, καθ’ ἣν δῶρά τε καὶ θυσίαι προσφέρονται μὴ δυνάμεναι κατὰ συνειδήσιν τελειῶσαι τὸν λατρεύοντα – Paul says that the ἡ πρώτη σκηνή (the feminine noun to which ἥτις refers) serves the role of being literally a parable (παραβολή), an analogy, something that is like something else, with respect to what is happening now by virtue of the revelation of the Messiah as Jesus of Nazareth. The Levitical offerings are only *similar* to the offering that the Melchizedekan priest brings, but they are clearly *not the same*. They are for only “the present season” (εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τὸν ἐνεστηκότα) until the Messiah imposes his rule on Israel and the world, so that they clearly lack the effectiveness and ability to “[bring] about the reaching of the goal for the worshiper” (τελειῶσαι τὸν λατρεύοντα), i.e., to convince the Jewish worshiper of God “in accordance with his understanding” (κατὰ συνειδήσιν) that he is completely and eternally forgiven.

The bona fide changed sinful Jew and his grasp intellectually of the significance of the Mosaic Covenant offerings (animal and plural!) in comparison to Jesus’ New Covenant offering (his own and one time only!) is guiding himself to see how the former gives him no confidence of complete and eternal forgiveness from God, while the latter does. This is “the spirit of the set apart one” of 9:9. Thus, the Levitical priests and their offerings are unable to provide an understanding of and confidence for complete and eternal salvation, which is what Jesus’ death does since it is the offering of himself as the Messiah, who qualifies to intercede for rebellious human beings at the final judgment when he returns (as said by Paul in Hebrews 7:25).

All this is to say that God has required Jesus’ single offering on the cross followed by his resurrection (and then his ascension from the earth) in order for sinful humans to be forgiven eternally and completely by Him. As a result, it should be obvious, especially by now in Paul’s explanation, that neither the Levitical priests nor their animal sacrifices can intercede for human beings at the final judgment of God, because the priests need their own intercessor, and dead

bulls as offerings do not rise from the dead to appeal to God for mercy for the ones who offered them to God! Nevertheless, the whole concept of a new separate high priest, in accordance with the Davidic Covenant and the New Covenant, was (and still is) certainly difficult to figure out for the Jews as they studied (and continue to study) their OTs. Only certain Jews, such as David, did so along the way, and this is why he was able to write Psalm 110 and Psalm 40. Plus, the apostles eventually learned this concept as Jesus taught them with his words and his death, resurrection, and ascension.

²³⁴ μόνον ἐπὶ βρώμασιν καὶ πόμασιν καὶ διαφόροις βαπτισμοῖς ἑ, δικαιώματα σαρκὸς μέχρι καιροῦ διορθώσεως ἐπικείμενα –

Leviticus 14:8 regarding the cleansing of a leper, “The one to be cleansed shall then wash his clothes (וַתִּטֵּחַ הַכֹּהֵן אֶת־הַבְּגָדִים הַלְּבָשׁוֹת) (καὶ πλυνεῖ ὁ καθαρισθεὶς τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ) and shave off all his hair and bathe in water and be clean. Now afterward, he may enter the camp, but he shall stay outside his tent for seven days.”

Commandments like this regarding “cleansing” lepers and other activities required by God show that the rituals of the Mosaic Covenant were intended to allow a Jew to qualify for participating properly in the society and life of the physical and ethnic nation of Israel. Indeed, this was all that they accomplished. The activities and rituals were not of an inherently moral quality that could be considered universal like the commandment not to murder another human being, and they certainly did not make a Jew morally perfect.

If it is possible to talk about forgiveness that God grants to the Israelites through their offerings, it is a significant only in the light of what Jesus’ offering himself and becoming their high priest according to the order of Melchizedek provides in regard to complete and eternal forgiveness that leads to obtaining life in the eternal Kingdom of God. Thus, “the requirements of a physical nature...are imposed [as that which was only available at the time] until the season of the new order,” when Jesus’ appears to demonstrate the actual basis for forgiveness through his death, resurrection, and ascension. Now that Jesus has performed his “requirements” that involved his death, the “new order” has arrived that allows the Jewish sinner to have the complete confidence that he is eternally forgiven and granted life in the “great nation” of Israel and on the new earth that will last for eternity.

As a result, God ultimately looked forward to the future sacrifice of Jesus to grant complete and eternal forgiveness to any Jew who had a circumcised heart and genuine faith and obedience. Indeed, it was always this inward condition that was necessary for any Jew to receive bona fide forgiveness for violations of the Mosaic Covenant and eternal forgiveness for violations of truly moral commandments within this covenant and that are universal, regardless of when and where the Jew lived then or lives now. Nevertheless, it was this process of earthly, physical offerings and rituals that were to remain at the *physical* center of a Jew’s daily worship of God, even after a new and improved process, i.e., Jesus and his crucifixion and resurrection, could provide *eternal* forgiveness along with moral perfection in the future Kingdom of God.

Paul’s whole argument in Hebrews is that this latter process was instituted through the New Covenant and involves the offering of the Messiah and his intercession on behalf of sinners at the final judgment. While the Mosaic Covenant certainly requires authentic inwardness, its focus has always been on continuous outward religious rituals and the earthly tabernacle that required constant attention to the rituals by the Levitical priests and that is not eternally substantive. The New Covenant is quite boring in comparison with its one-time sacrificial act by its Melchizedekan priest and without any requirements of explicit, multiple religious rituals. But it is nevertheless, in contrast to the Mosaic Covenant, eternally effective, which ultimately is the most important issue. The Mosaic Covenant makes Jewish people (and Gentiles, if they want) Jewish. The New Covenant makes Jewish people (and Gentiles) qualified to obtain eternal forgiveness and life.

In addition, the Mosaic Covenant remains in effect for the Jews only until the New Covenant corrects this shortcoming of the Mosaic Covenant by completing God’s promises of fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant’s promise of eternal life in the Kingdom of God of the next creation after God fulfills the promise of making the Jews a “great nation” first. Therefore, while the rituals of the Mosaic Covenant *physically* dominate the daily worship of an authentically inwardly believing Jew, even throughout the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20, it is the ritual of the human offering of the Messiah of the New Covenant that *intellectually and theologically* dominates his overall worship of Yahweh, because he understands that it is only the latter by which he will be granted complete and eternal mercy by God. And this he believes with all his heart and mind.

A version of the word διορθώσις appears as διορθωτής in Wisdom 7:15 and seems to mean corrector, specifically that God is the corrector of people who are wise and willing to be corrected by Him, i.e., to become even wiser.

1 Corinthians 9:16 For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion (ἀνάγκη γάρ μοι ἐπικεῖναι); for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.

²³⁵ Χριστὸς δὲ παραγενόμενος ἀρχιερεὺς τῶν ᾑρουμένων ἀγαθῶν διὰ τῆς μείζονος καὶ τελειοτέρας σκηνῆς οὗ χειροποιήτου. τοῦτ’ ἔστιν οὐ ταύτης τῆς κτίσεως – Here Paul presents the most important thing for a sinful Jew under the Mosaic Covenant must grasp, that Jesus, the Jewish Messiah and Jewish high priest from the tribe of Judah, could not perform his priestly duties in the earthly tent and has had to do so in the “tent” so to speak of the next creation. I do not think that Paul is saying that this latter tent actually exists in a realm that constitutes the presence of God at the final judgment. It is a metaphorical tent, which is why I have put in quotes in my translation.

Paul is pointing out that a “high priest” (ἀρχιερεὺς) who performs his intercessory function in the presence of God (“the good things to come”, τῶν ᾑρουμένων ἀγαθῶν) is, in effect, doing so in the Holy of Holies, which was where

God dwelt among the Israelites as stated in the OT ([Exodus 25:8](#), “Let them construct a sanctuary (שְׂכֵנִי) (ἀγίασμα) for Me, that I may dwell among them.”). By extrapolation, God not only dwelt in the earthly tent of the Israelites in the wilderness, but He also “dwells” wherever is His judgment seat at the final judgment, which may be simply where Jesus is when he returns and God either raises former believers from the dead to bring with Jesus or lifts living believers from the earth (the “goal” that the other “tent” involves). Thus, both locations of the earthly tent and the eternal “tent” can be called the Holy of Holies. The first is the temporary place of propitiation and approval for the Jews to obtain from God good status as citizens of the nation of Israel in the present realm, while the second is the place of eternal mercy for Jews (and Gentiles) in order to obtain from God citizenship in the Kingdom of God in the next realm. Both goals and the confidence that a sinful Jew will reach these goals is what happens through Jesus’ offering as a high priest and not through the Levitical offerings as high priests.

Paul is explaining that Jesus appears as a high priest of the really valuable things of eternal mercy and life for a Jewish believer that are in the process of coming about through ultimately the intercession of Jesus for the Jew at the final judgment (cf. “eternal redemption” in v. 12). Cf. Hebrew 10:1 – τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν.

²³⁶ οὐδὲ δι’ αἵματος τράγων καὶ μόσχων διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος εἰσηλθεν ἐφάπαξ εἰς τὰ ἅγια τῶν αἰωνίων λύτρωσιν εὐράμενος – Here is the crux of the issue in this letter. The Messiah has offered himself once in order to qualify to be the Jew’s high priest at the final judgment in the particular Holy of Holies, the Set Apart Places of the Set Apart Places, of God’s eternal courtroom so to speak in order to obtain complete and eternal forgiveness and salvation for sinful, believing Jews and Gentiles. The “blood of bulls and goats” can obtain good standing in the ethnic and physical nation of Israel for the Jew (on the basis of Jesus’ offering himself), but Jesus’ “own blood” that he shed only once (ἐφάπαξ) also obtains entrance into “The Set Apart Places” (τὰ ἅγια), i.e., the eternal place of seeking God’s mercy on behalf of sinners, that results in the final and eternal Kingdom of God for this same Jew, and, therefore, it is accompanied by God’s complete and eternal mercy.

Hebrews 7:27 who does not have the necessity daily (καθ’ ἡμέραν), like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, then for those of the people, because **he did this once and never again (ἐφάπαξ), when he offered up himself.**

Hebrews 10:10 in which “desire” we have become set apart in conjunction with the offering of the “body” of Jesus the Messiah **once and never again (ἐφάπαξ).**

²³⁷ εἰ γὰρ τὸ αἷμα τράγων καὶ ταύρων καὶ σποδὸς δαμάλεως ῥαντίζουσα τοὺς κεκοινωμένους ἁγιάζει πρὸς τὴν τῆς σαρκὸς καθαρότητα – The comparison is between the offering of animals and the offering of the Messiah and their respective effectiveness on a sinful Jew’s understanding of where he stands in his relationship to God. The former can refer to only a temporary life within the community of the Jews as God’s chosen people, even if the person has a changed heart that should convince him that he can be confident that he additionally has an eternal good standing before God. In other words, his set apart inwardness is all that God requires of the sinful Jew to acquire the fulfillment of His Abrahamic promises—on the basis of Jesus’ death, whether this takes place after he lives within the nation of Israel or before it. Therefore, the sacrifices of animals point to only their outward, physical religious rituals and their being a bona fide member of the Jewish people, either as a *worshiper* who brings his offerings to God, or as a *priest* who submits the worshiper’s offerings to God (cf. v. 10, foods, drinks, and various washings—that are strictly Jewish according to the Mosaic Covenant).

And Paul is explaining that an animal offering keeps the worshiping Jew physically alive within the nation of Israel—because of his circumcised heart. He is also in the process of explaining that Jesus’ offering keeps the worshiping Jew alive in the eternal Kingdom of God.

Numbers 19:1-10, “...2 This is the statute of the law which Yahweh has commanded, saying, ‘Speak to the sons of Israel that they bring you an unblemished (תָּמִיךְ) (ἄμωμον) red heifer in which is no defect and on which a yoke has never been placed. 3 You shall give it to Eleazar the priest, and it shall be brought outside the camp and be slaughtered in his presence. 4 Next Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and sprinkle some of its blood toward the front of the tent of meeting seven times... 9 Now a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer and deposit them outside the camp in a clean place, and the congregation of the sons of Israel shall keep it as water to remove impurity; it is purification from sin (חַטָּאת) (ἁγισμός—*hapax legomenon*, i.e., used only here in the Septuagint in Numbers 19:9) [an offering with a ‘cleansing’ effect, i.e., it qualifies the worshiping Jew to participate properly in the nation of Israel].”

In **Psalm 51:7**, the Septuagint translates חַטָּאת (=either the commission of a sinful act or the dealing with a person’s sinfulness in such a way that mercy results, depending upon the context) with ῥαντίζω (=sprinkle). Thus, this latter physical term of splashing blood on a person or thing refers to God’s taking care of a person’s moral problem, i.e., his immoral problem of sin, such that He grants him mercy and escape from His wrath, condemnation, and destruction. In the case of the Jewish worshiper obeying the Mosaic Covenant, God granted the person life in the community of Jews, God’s chosen people. In the case of the Jewish worshiper submitting to the New Covenant and its other way of bringing an offering to God, He granted the person life in the eternal realm. But it is true, also, that God looked forward to Jesus’ sacrifice of the New Covenant to forgive eternally the circumcised of heart Jew who was worshiping according to the requirements of the Mosaic Covenant. Therefore, this kind of Jew was granted life on earth and life in the “great nation,” etc. of the Kingdom of God.

²³⁸ πόσω μάλλον τὸ αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὃς διὰ πνεύματος ἁιωνίου ἑαυτὸν προσήνεγκεν ἁμωμον τῷ θεῷ – It makes more sense to interpret πνεύματος ἁιωνίου not as Holy Spirit (because of certain variants that use the word αἰγιου), but as Jesus' whole mindset and heart, according to the eternal plan of God, as focused on eternity and the eternal effect of his first appearance that culminated in his qualifying to be the one who intercedes on behalf of sinners for all eternity. He took God's gift of forgiveness to a whole new level and extended it beyond the present world and existence to the future Kingdom of God and the eternal earth of Revelation 21.

Certainly, it is always God and His Spirit as His work within the creation who was and is in operation in Jesus, but what He was always producing was a personness in Jesus whereby he was oriented towards his eternal responsibilities and to do what was necessary to make sure that he fulfilled them.

As a result of Jesus' eternally focused spirit and mind, complete and eternal salvation comes to rebellious Jews (and Gentiles) in view of what the morally perfect (ἁμωμον = without defect, not outward and physical like the animals but ontologically and in terms of his actions) Jesus was all about as the Messiah and icon of God, whose role within the creation was to provide this eternal salvation through his death, resurrection, and intercession (see also Romans 1:4 – κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης = according to his set apart spirit). Paul is stating that Jesus was always focused on this role and its effect, because he knew that not only would it eventually lead to his death as an offering to God, but also it would have eternal effects for the true worshiper of God—both Jews under the Mosaic Covenant and Gentiles outside this covenant.

²³⁹ καθαριεῖ τὴν συνείδησιν ἡμῶν ἀπὸ νεκρῶν ἔργων – Paul explains that Jesus' offering, and, by implication, not the offerings of bulls and goats in obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, provides the properly worshiping Jews, i.e., those with circumcised hearts, with the understanding and confidence that they are saved from their innate rebellion against God that results in actual sinful actions that are deserving of eternal death and destruction (i.e., dead works – νεκρῶν ἔργων = sinful actions that deserve and result in eternal death). And this salvation comes about by virtue of the death and intercession of their one, eternally official high priest, the Messiah. While the animal sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant definitely demonstrate how evil a Jew is, nevertheless, they, and the flagrant sins and sinful actions that any person commits, still leave him "dead" and condemned eternally speaking before God—if this is all they rely on even with changed hearts.

Every Jew is a sinful human being who deserves God's wrath, condemnation, and eternal destruction by virtue of his sinful "works." However, Jesus' death just that much more indicates how nothing that the Jews did could qualify them for eternal forgiveness and salvation from God's condemnation and destruction. In other words, not only the Levitical priests but also all other sinful Jews need Jesus' divine and morally perfect intercession at the final judgment on the basis of his death on the cross.

Yet, Jesus' offering as the Messiah and eternal high priest clearly demonstrates to those who need God's eternal mercy that they can confidently approach God and obtain His mercy through Jesus—because his death is exactly what God has required within the story of creation to bring about complete and eternal forgiveness through his intercession as the uniquely qualified high priest for sinners. Additionally, this is in the midst of the eternally *inadequate* offerings of the Mosaic Covenant and people's sinfulness. Jesus' blood and death show that all authentically believing Jews will certainly receive God's mercy and entrance in His eternal kingdom. And they can be as confident of this as they are of God's and Jesus' existence.

²⁴⁰ εἰς τὸ λατρεῖν θεῷ ζῶντι – There are two options for to whom Paul is referring here—

- 1) Jesus who serves and worships the living God through his death, etc.
- 2) The sinful Jew whose understanding is cleansed when he hears of Jesus' propitiatory offering to God so that he then serves and worships the living God.

The second option makes more sense, because Paul's encouragement to his readers is that they worship God properly by embracing Jesus as their high priest and Messiah. Thus, Jesus' death, along with the inward work of the Holy Spirit (cf. vs. 8ff.), opens up the eyes of the worshiper of God to the effect that he understands that he finds completion of his goal, which is eternal forgiveness and eternal life, through Jesus' death and the New Covenant and not through the Mosaic Covenant and its animal sacrifices. In addition, God is alive, and the purpose of the present existent cosmos is to provide the means to eternal aliveness in the future realm to those who embrace the truth of God and His offer of forgiveness through Jesus as the Messiah. When people embrace this truth in the present realm, they can be said to be worshiping and serving the living God, which is worship and service that will continue into the "great nation" of Israel and the eternal realm. By implication, Jews, who are merely following the Mosaic Covenant without grasping the fact that they need another high priest who must intercede on their behalf for God's mercy, are not really "worshiping" and "serving" God. They are as guilty as pagan idolators of rebelling against God—because they lack a circumcised heart that is required to perform authentic belief.

²⁴¹ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο διαθήκης καινῆς μεσίτης ἐστίν, ὅπως θανάτου γενομένου εἰς ἀπολύτρωσιν τῶν ἐπὶ τῇ πρώτῃ διαθήκῃ παραβάσεων τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν λάβωσιν οἱ κεκλημένοι τῆς αἰωνίου κληρονομίας – Jesus' death and offering provide eternal forgiveness for all those sins and sinful actions that the Jews have committed under the Mosaic Covenant, even if the Jews have been offering bulls and goats as sacrifices to God with genuine obedience, i.e., with authentic, biblical inwardness based upon a circumcised heart.

However, all these sacrifices by themselves, even those brought by a worshiper who has authentic inwardness, only qualify the Jew to participate appropriately in the nation of Israel. Thus, eternal forgiveness has always been on the basis of another way to appeal to God for mercy, i.e., on the basis of Jesus' death and sacrifice. As a result, God fulfills

the promises of both the “great nation” of Israel and eternal life that He made in the Abrahamic Covenant for those Jews whom He changes inwardly such that they have grasped in OT times (and even later after Jesus’ first appearance) that God would use a different process from the Mosaic Covenant animal sacrifices.

He also fulfills His promise for those Jews whom He changes inwardly such that they have grasped in NT times that this different process involves Jesus as the Messiah, who has offered himself to God on their behalf (see also [Genesis 12:2 & 3, 2](#) And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great. Thus, you shall be a blessing, [3](#) and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed).

This has required a “New Covenant” (διαθήκης καινῆς) of which Jesus is the “mediator” (μεσίτης), and his “death” (θάνατον) as opposed to the death of bulls and goats, is what God has required within the created reality that produces eternal freedom from condemnation, i.e., “redemption” (ἀπολύτρωσιν), for all worshipers of God, including those who have been sinning and worshiping Him under the Mosaic Covenant, so that they who have been “called” (οἱ κεκλημένοι) by God to eternal salvation will definitely acquire what Paul labels “the eternal inheritance” (τῆς αἰωνίου κληρονομίας), which most likely refers to both the “great nation” of Israel on this earth as the first stage of this inheritance and the eternal earth of the next creation as the second stage of this inheritance.

It is this “New Covenant” to which Paul referred and quoted in chapter 8 from Jeremiah 31:31-14 and which he will quote again chapter 10. This is how important it is for Paul’s Jewish Christians to grasp the significance of the New Covenant.

²⁴² ὅπου γὰρ διαθήκη, θάνατον ἀνάγκη φέρεσθαι τοῦ διαθεμένου – These next two verses are difficult to translate and to interpret.

Several options where the question of exactly to whose “death” (θάνατον) is Paul referring, Jesus’ death or the Jewish sinners’ death—

1) According to the EBC and in line with the NAS95 translation, Paul uses the example of a human being who writes his last will and testament to pass on his assets as an inheritance to those whom he specifies in his will. But the will is not in force while he is living, only when and after he dies. The same is true of Jesus who made a “will,” i.e., covenant, with the Jews which only can be applied when and after he dies in order to be their high priest.

2) The New Covenant is of a nature where it simply requires that the person making it, i.e., Jesus as the icon of God and His Messiah, die that corresponds to the person for whom it is enforced and benefits, who dies through his sinfulness and then comes alive eternally through his faith in Jesus. This is similar to what happens to the Jewish sinner under the Mosaic Covenant—the death of the bulls and goats to rescue the Jewish worshiper headed for physical death because of his sin.

3) Paul is stating that Jesus’ death was inherent in the very nature of the New Covenant just as the bulls’ and goats’ deaths were inherent in the nature of the Mosaic Covenant. But Jesus’ death provides for the complete and eternal forgiveness of any authentically believing Jew (cf. Jeremiah 31:34 and Hebrews 8:12). However, in order to bring this about, God required that its new and unique high priest offer himself in order to qualify as its high priest, even though God does not need this death either from a legal or spiritual perspective. Basic mercy is a person’s saying, “Yes, I will grant you a complete reprieve from paying for your wrongdoing, *even if no one pays for it.*” Nevertheless, for His own purposes, God has required that the high priest of the New Covenant qualify for his role by suffering a criminal’s death on the cross during the times of the Roman Empire.

4) In line with Jack Crabtree’s translation just below, Paul is saying that “death” (incurring eternal condemnation and passing out of existence) of Jews because of their sinfulness under either the Mosaic or New Covenant is necessary in order for either covenant to be put in force and applied to these Jews. Paul will go on to say that the death of bulls and goats and the death of Jesus are applied to the “death” and condemnation of the sinful Jewish people, but only to believers, for the sake of their arriving at a point in their relationship with God where they “stand” to inherit eternal Life instead of “death.”

“Now where there is a covenant, the death of the one subject to it is a necessary, pre-existing reality. 2 Indeed, any binding covenant is over “dead” men, because at no time is one in force when the one subject to it stands to receive Life.”

The problem with #1 that I see is that it does not make as much sense that Paul would use a human instrument, a man’s last will and testament, as an analogy for God’s covenants with the Jews. Instead, it would be more profound for him to be referring directly to the situation of the Mosaic and New Covenants, where there are three deaths involved—

- 1) the Jews’ deaths, even eternal deaths, for being sinners
- 2) the deaths of bulls and goats as propitiatory sin offerings for the Jewish people
- 3) Jesus’ death as the ultimate propitiatory offering for the Jewish people.

There is also the question of the meaning of aorist participle middle voice of τοῦ διαθεμένου and does Paul mean—

- 1) the one who is making the covenant, i.e., God and/or Jesus, or
- 2) the one who is subject to the covenant, i.e., a Jewish sinner

I am thinking that #3 of the four options above is correct and #1 of the two options above is correct—that death is simply an integral part of God’s making the two covenants, the Mosaic and the New, with the Jewish people, so that through death He grants eternal mercy and life to Jewish sinners who are authentic believers in Him. Thus, the “death of the one who is making it” is the “death involving the one who is making it,” whether Moses performs the death and sprinkles the blood on covenantal objects, including the people, or Jesus dies on the cross and “sprinkles” his blood on

the Jewish sinful people as their advocate and the one who intercedes for them at the final judgment. In other words, God placed a necessary condition on Himself for accomplishing His purposes regarding these two covenants. Moses demonstrates it for the Mosaic Covenant, as Paul will go on to describe in vs. 18-22, and Jesus demonstrates it for the New Covenant in vs. 23-28. These two kinds of death are those which touch on the “dead” Jews, i.e., the Jews headed towards death because of their sinfulness.

Hebrews 8:10 “Because this is the covenant that I will make with **the house of Israel** (ὅτι αὕτη ἡ διαθήκη ἦν διαθήσεται τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραὴλ), after those days,” **says the Lord**. “**I will put My instructions into their minds, and I will write them on their hearts; and I will be to them as God, and they will be to Me as people.**”

Hebrews 9:23 Therefore, it was necessary, on the one hand, for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with respect to these issues (ἀνάγκη οὖν τὰ μὲν ὑποδείγματα τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς τούτοις καθαρίζεσθαι); and, on the other hand, for the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

This verse has the same structure with ἀνάγκη and and object τὰ μὲν ὑποδείγματα τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς τούτοις and an infinitive καθαρίζεσθαι, which is the same as other verses in the NT that use ἀνάγκη.

²⁴³ διαθήκη γὰρ ἐπὶ νεκροῖς βεβαία, ἐπεὶ μήποτε ἰσχύει ὅτε ζῇ ὁ διαθέμενος – In line with option #3 above, each covenant, either the Mosaic Covenant or the New Covenant, “is firm touching on the dead” (ἐπὶ νεκροῖς βεβαία), meaning that it applies to people who will die the death of eternal extinction if they do not repent by acquiring a condition of a changed heart and authentic belief. If the person actually could earn eternal life by being morally perfect, then the covenants would be irrelevant. As a result, eternal death is the outcome of sinfulness, while the nature of the covenants, which actually include death, i.e., that of bulls and goats for the Mosaic Covenant and that of Jesus for the New Covenant, brings about forgiveness for persons who would otherwise experience eternal “death.”

²⁴⁴ ὅθεν οὐδὲ ἡ πρώτη χωρὶς αἵματος ἐγκεκαίνισται – In line with the whole issue of death, e.g., that of animals who were killed under the Mosaic Covenant in regard to God who made this covenant and that of Jesus who died under the New Covenant in regard to God who made this covenant, too, He prescribed in the first covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, that death play a major role in His granting physical life to the Israelites who deserved death because of their sinful and disobedient actions under this covenant. That is all that Paul is saying in this verse.

However, as Paul continues to argue, the blood of animals that was spilt for the Jews was in anticipation of the death of the high priest who would be instrumental in making the New Covenant and providing eternal mercy and forgiveness for the Jews—Jesus the Messiah.

²⁴⁵ λαληθείσης γὰρ πάσης ἡ ἐντολὴς κατὰ ὁτὸν νόμον ὑπὸ Μωϋσέως παντὶ τῷ λαῷ, λαβὼν τὸ αἷμα τῶν ῥύσων [καὶ τῶν τράγων] μετὰ ὕδατος καὶ ἐρίου κοκκίνου καὶ ὑσσώπου αὐτὸ τε τὸ βιβλίον καὶ πάντα τὸν λαὸν ἐρράντισεν λέγων τοῦτο τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης ἧς ἐνετείλατο πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὁ θεός –

Exodus 24:8, Septuagint – ἰδοὺ τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης, ἧς διέθετο κύριος πρὸς ὑμᾶς περὶ πάντων τῶν λόγων τούτων; Hebrew text – וַיִּקַּח מֹשֶׁה אֶת הַדָּם הַהוּא וַיִּזְרֹק אֹתוֹ עַל הָעָם וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה הַדָּם הַבְּרִית אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יְהוָה בְּתוֹכְךָ וְעַל כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּים – **Exodus 24:8** So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which Yahweh has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

When God made the Mosaic Covenant with the Israelites and even before choosing priests from the tribe of Levi in Exodus 28 and Numbers 3:4ff., Moses made it clear through the ceremony in Exodus 24 that death was to play a vital and necessary role in the operation of the covenant. Indeed, it can be said that God “cut” the covenant with the Israelites during this ceremony of killing the animals and Moses’ sprinkling their blood on the utensils of the covenant and on the people of Israel. Therefore, sprinkling the items with the bulls’ and goats’ blood communicated that everything used within the covenant had meaning only by virtue of its connection to the death of the propitiatory offerings and of the people that they deserved because of their sin, so that there was an important connection between the death the Jews deserved and their offerings and appeals to God for physical life in the midst of their sins and sinful actions that deserved death.

Leviticus 1:4, “He [the Jewish worshiper who is bringing his offering to God] shall lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, that it may be accepted for him to make atonement on his behalf (עַל-כַּפֵּר) (ἐξιλάσασθαι περὶ αὐτοῦ). He shall slay the young bull before Yahweh; and Aaron’s sons the priests shall offer up the blood and sprinkle the blood around on the altar that is at the doorway of the tent of meeting.”

Paul is arguing that all these offerings of the Mosaic Covenant anticipated God’s making/cutting the New Covenant through Jesus’ death on the cross and the spilling of his blood for the sake of “sprinkling” it on sinners (Jews in this context) so that they may obtain God’s *complete and eternal* mercy. I think he is also commenting on how complicated the Mosaic Covenant was and is in comparison to the New Covenant with its singular ritual, the death of Jesus only.

²⁴⁶ καὶ τὴν σκηνὴν δὲ καὶ πάντα τὰ σκεύη τῆς λειτουργίας τῷ αἵματι ὁμοίως ἐρράντισεν –

See **Exodus 24:6; 40:9; Leviticus 8:15,19; 16:14-16** – The OT does not mention the sprinkling of blood on the tabernacle/tent. Instead Exodus 40:9ff. describes the anointing of “the tabernacle and all that is in it” with “anointing oil” (הַשֶּׁמֶן הַטֹּב וְהַיָּשָׁן) (τὸ ἔλαιον τοῦ χρίσματος). Perhaps what Paul means by mentioning the sprinkling of the scroll of the covenant and the people in Exodus 24, it can be inferred that as each new piece of the Mosaic Covenant religion came into existence, Moses did the same with it. This is how important and vital is the “contact,” either physically or through belief, of blood, i.e., death, with the elements of God’s relationship to His people, the Jews and the material stuff of the Mosaic Covenant and all people of genuine belief, both Jews and Gentiles, metaphorically under the New Covenant.

²⁴⁷ καὶ σχεδὸν ἐν αἵματι πάντα καθαρίζεται κατὰ τὸν νόμον καὶ χωρὶς αἱματεκχυσίας οὐ γίνεται ἄφεσις – The point is that the granting of life from God’s mercy and forgiveness for people who deserve death because of their sinfulness comes through the process of something’s or someone’s death’s taking place. Therefore, almost everything (not “everyone,” which would not be as coherent with what Paul goes on to say in vs. 23ff.) involved in the Jew’s existence is affected by this process. Eventually, the death of the Messiah as high priest fits with all the death and blood that was poured out from animals as offerings to God under the Mosaic Covenant, including the very first event of this kind when God was making the covenant with the Jews and Moses sprinkled blood over practically everything within his reach (cf. Exodus 24).

The only conclusion that one can make is that forgiveness for sins from God cannot happen without their being blood spilt through something’s or someone’s death. This is simply how God has designed reality to work, and it works with only Jesus’ death for the complete and eternal forgiveness of sins.

By the way, “cleansing” (καθαρίζεται) means the same thing as forgiveness (ἄφεσις). For the Jews to acquire cleanness under the Mosaic Covenant is for God to forgive them and grant them physical life within the nation of Israel. For the Jews to acquire cleanness under the New Covenant is for Him to forgive them eternally and grant them eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

²⁴⁸ ἀνάγκη οὖν τὰ μὲν ὑποδείγματα τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς τούτοις καθαρίζεσθαι, αὐτὰ δὲ τὰ ἐπουράνια κρείττοσιν θυσίαις παρὰ ταύτας – Paul draws the conclusion from the example of Moses that God has set things up within human history to make it a theological necessity (ἀνάγκη) that death play a major role in “cleansing” the temple implements of worship and the people of Israel, thus granting both the people and this important building a temporary stay of execution and destruction respectively.

Paul also says that these elements, and he means the temple and the tools of worship within it, are “copies of the things in the heavens” (τὰ μὲν ὑποδείγματα τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς), when “the things in the heavens” are an imaginary and metaphorical temple and tools of worship, pointing to their eternal nature because of the eternal mercy that comes through the high priest, Jesus. Therefore, the “cleansing” through death of animals is effective for any individual Jew and the Jews as a whole nation under the Mosaic Covenant for life on the land of Israel and this earth—as they look forward to the “cleansing” by the Messiah to ensure their life and safety on the land.

Likewise, the acquisition of eternal mercy for an individual Jew (and any Gentile individual) and for the Jews as a whole nation eventually happens through the death of Jesus when they become the “great nation” of the Abrahamic Covenant promise under the New Covenant and continue into the eternal Kingdom of God on the new earth of Revelation 21-22.

Paul also draws the conclusion from what he knows and has been arguing about the role of the Messiah that the New Covenant requires an offering and death that is “better” (κρείττοσιν) and superior to that of bulls and goats under the Mosaic Covenant. In the case of the New Covenant, the very human Messiah Jesus, who is acting out his role as God within the creation, king of the eternal Kingdom of God, and high priest for rebellious human beings at the final judgment, is precisely this “better” offering. Paul uses the plural “sacrifices” while meaning the single sacrifice of Jesus’ death.

²⁴⁹ οὐ γὰρ εἰς χειροποίητα εἰσῆλθεν ἅγια Χριστός, ἀντίτυπα τῶν ἀληθινῶν, ἀλλ’ εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν, νῦν ἐμφανισθῆναι τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν – Paul has already argued that Jesus is not permitted to operate as a priest under the jurisdiction of the Mosaic Covenant and, therefore, cannot operate as priest inside the physical tabernacle on this earth. Instead, Jesus has to operate under the jurisdiction of the New Covenant and carry out his priestly role in the heavenly tabernacle, i.e., at the final judgment, where, in the presence of the Father so to speak, he appeals to Him for eternal mercy on behalf of the Jews who have believed God for another and eternally effective way to grant them mercy that is different from bulls and goats as offerings.

It is not as though there is an actual building or temple in “heaven,” i.e., “not hand-made set apart places” (οὐ χειροποίητα ... ἅγια). Paul simply uses the language of the tabernacle/temple of the Mosaic Covenant to talk about the same kind of process of appealing to God for forgiveness and life in the face of death that a person deserves. Wherever the actual “meeting” takes place between Yahweh and a morally rebellious Jew with Jesus at his side to intervene on his behalf, “into heaven itself” and literally “before the face of God on our behalf” (εἰς αὐτὸν τὸν οὐρανόν... τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ θεοῦ ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν), Jesus will be successful in obtaining eternal mercy for this person. Nevertheless, Paul calls the earthly tent with its Holy of Holies, Set Apart Places of Set Apart Places, “copies of the true things” (ἀντίτυπα τῶν ἀληθινῶν).

²⁵⁰ οὐδ’ ἵνα πολλάκις προσφέρῃ ἑαυτόν, ὥσπερ ὁ ἀρχιερεὺς εἰσέρχεται εἰς τὰ ἅγια ἑκάστῃ ἐνιαυτὸν ἐν αἵματι ἄλλοτρίῳ – The Levitical high priests were ordered by God under the Mosaic Covenant to enter into the Holy of Holies once a year on a continuous basis, year after year, with blood that did not belong to them but to the animals that they sacrificed each time. Thus, they had to do this “often” (πολλάκις). Paul is stating that the Messiah’s offering is different in two important respects—

1) His is not done on a continuous basis. It is done only once.

2) And his does not involve the blood of something or someone else (ἄλλοτρίῳ = not his own). It is with his own blood through his own death that he makes his offer.

²⁵¹ ἐπεὶ ἔδει αὐτὸν πολλάκις παθεῖν ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου – If Jesus’ offering were of the same kind as that of the Mosaic Covenants, i.e., “often” (πολλάκις), where he was sinful and God required multiple sacrifices for his and other’s benefit, then he would have had to offer himself continuously in order to obtain God’s postponement of

execution for himself and any one else who wanted to take advantage of his sacrifice and role as priest. Plus, Paul is saying that this would have needed to happen from the beginning of the system of the New Covenant with its designated relationship between God and the Jews. However, the system of sacrifices under the New Covenant is different. Rather than repetitive and multiple sacrifices being necessary, only one is required—that of Jesus, the system’s high priest, on the cross.

The “foundation of the system” of sacrifices under the New Covenant makes more sense than the “foundation of the world,” in order to match the system of sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant. God inaugurated this latter covenant when he instituted the animal offerings in the earthly tabernacle/temple, and He did the same for the New Covenant when He instituted Jesus’ death on the cross.

²⁵² νυνὶ δὲ ἅπαξ ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων εἰς ἀθέτησιν [τῆς] ἁμαρτίας διὰ τῆς θυσίας αὐτοῦ πεφανέρωται – Paul is saying that God instituted the Mosaic Covenant with the plan that it, with its continuous animal sacrifices, would exist for a rather long period of time in the history of the present realm, so that Jesus’ sacrifice has come at a point in history where the time remaining for this realm is relatively short and “for the removal of sin” (εἰς ἀθέτησιν [τῆς] ἁμαρτίας).

Or, at least, Jesus’ sacrifice definitely points to the completion and finalizing of the realm, while the animal sacrifices could point only to Jesus’ sacrifice. Thus, at the beginning of the period of time that constitutes the completion of the ages (ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων) leading up to the eternal Kingdom of God, Jesus, the king and high priest of this kingdom, with the single (ἅπαξ) offering of his own death on the cross, i.e., “through his sacrifice” (διὰ τῆς θυσίας αὐτοῦ), is the foundation of complete and eternal salvation, who, eventually, brings it about for human beings whose basic, moral, and internal structure is characterized by rebellion against God (cf. Hebrews 1:1-4).

²⁵³ καὶ καθ’ ὅσον ἀποκείται τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαξ ἀποθανεῖν, μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο κρίσις – God, the transcendent Creator and Judge, has so arranged human existence that people die once and only once (ἅπαξ), and then they experience the final judgment (κρίσις) that ultimately results in either eternal forgiveness and life or eternal condemnation and destruction.

²⁵⁴ οὕτως καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἅπαξ προσενεχθεὶς εἰς τὸ πολλῶν ἀνενεγκεῖν ἁμαρτίας ἐκ δευτέρου χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας ὀφθήσεται τοῖς αὐτὸν ἀπεκδεχομένοις εἰς σωτηρίαν – Paul is showing that there is a single event that corresponds to the single death that all human beings experience in the present realm. This single event is Jesus’ second appearance. He died once (ἅπαξ) “in order to offer the sins of many” (εἰς τὸ πολλῶν ἀνενεγκεῖν ἁμαρτίας) during his first appearance, and human beings die once (ἅπαξ) at the end of their own lifetimes on earth. Jesus will appear a second time, and human beings will be able to experience the benefits of this second appearance by being rescued from God’s eternal condemnation. Jesus’ offering (not really “bearing”) their sins was his experience of physical death, which he did not deserve but which sinful human beings deserve (along with their deserving eternal destruction), in order to qualify to intercede for them at the final judgment. In other words, Jesus offered to God what God would require of every sinner—death! And this is what God required of him for him to intercede for sinners.

Hebrews 7:27 who does not have the necessity daily (καθ’ ἡμέραν), like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices (θυσίας ἀναφέρειν), first for his own sins, then for those of the people, because **he did this once and never again (ἐφάπαξ), when he offered up himself (ἑαυτὸν ἑαυτὸν ἀνενέγκας).**

And Paul indicates that an important, existential characteristic of those who will experience the positive benefits of Jesus’ second appearance will be that they are now “eagerly awaiting him for salvation” (τοῖς αὐτὸν ἀπεκδεχομένοις εἰς σωτηρίαν). Christians obviously do not have a ho-hum attitude towards Jesus’ return and their eternal destiny. It is the most exciting aspect of their human existences, that they know that God has guaranteed the Kingdom of God to them through Jesus’ advocacy. And they are willing to believe and be patient until God fulfills this promise to them. Paul is using parabolic and analogous language to refer to what he describes in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 where Jesus will return in order that those who have looked forward to it for their salvation will either rise up to meet him in the air if they are still alive or be raised from the dead if they died before his return. But both groups will be with him for the rest of eternity, which effectively is his appealing to the Father “at the judgment” for their eternal mercy (“now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf” – 9:24).

Romans 8:19 Thus, the eager longing of the creation eagerly awaits (ἀπεκδέχεται) the revelation of the sons of God.

Romans 8:23 And not only this, but we also, because we have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, while we eagerly await (ἀπεκδεχόμενοι) our adoption, being released from our body.

Romans 8:25 However, if we hope for what we do not see, we are eagerly awaiting it (ἀπεκδεχόμεθα) with patient endurance.

²⁵⁵ σκιὰν γὰρ ἔχον ὁ νόμος τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν, οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων, κατ’ ἐναντίον ταῖς αὐταῖς θυσίαις ἧς προσφέρουσιν εἰς τὸ διηνεκὲς οὐδέποτε ἵδνεται τοὺς προσερχομένους τελειῶσαι – Paul has been arguing that the Mosaic Covenant has only shadow-like elements of eternal mercy that cannot provide complete confidence for a sinner that he will escape God’s eternal condemnation, which are both the goal of sinful Jews who “draw near” to God for His mercy—because they understand correctly the reality of their situation before God and are truly seeking Him with genuine repentance and belief.

Now, Paul says that this Covenant does not have even an image of the things that really matter (οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων). In other words, the Mosaic Covenant is so devoid of anything beneficial for helping a sinful Jew obtain eternal life from God, that it can be said to lack even an image, e.g., a photograph, of Jesus and his death. Yes, there is a shadow (σκιὰν γὰρ ἔχων) of Jesus and his death in the covenant. But this is all there is, which means that the

covenant lacks anything really substantive to commend a sinful Jew to God to obtain His eternal forgiveness. Consequently, Jesus' single death is the only way that this total and eternal level of mercy can be obtained by any other human being (cf. 8:5). Another way to say this is that the shadow that constitutes the Mosaic Covenant with its multiple "same sacrifices year after year" (κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν ταῖς αὐταῖς θυσίαις) is nothing compared to the actual death of Jesus that allows for a confident approach to God for salvation, also because the high priests of the Mosaic Covenant make propitiatory offerings "without interruption" (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές)—in contrast to Jesus' being a high-priest "without interruption." (cf. Hebrews 7:3; 10:12,14).

Paul has been maintaining that the fact that many sacrifices year after year are necessary in order to fulfill God's requirements for the Jews under the Mosaic Covenant indicates that it is inadequate to provide complete and eternal mercy. The Jews who appeal to God for mercy through only the methodology of the Mosaic Covenant always have next year (indeed, the next day) to contemplate and bring more sin offerings for the next sins that they commit, thus correctly never feeling completely confident that they have obtained complete and eternal forgiveness from God. There are two distinct meanings given to the Greek word εἰκὼν in the NT. The first, and more numerous, is its obvious meaning (for us who speak English) of image or representation, referring to something that is far less than the reality which the image represents. For example, a photograph of a beautiful landscape is still much less real than the landscape itself.

Then, there are a couple of places where εἰκὼν means appearance, referring to the very thing itself. For example, Romans 8:29 where it means appearance – "because those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the appearance (εἰκὼν) of His Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brethren." In other words, Christians will appear just like Jesus, i.e., morally perfect. There is also 2 Corinthians 3:18 – "And we all with unveiled faces, while reflecting like a mirror the awesomeness of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image (εἰκὼν) from glory into glory, just as from the Lord, that is, the Spirit." In other words, Christians, with a modicum of glory in their hearts and actions whereby they are pursuing moral perfection, are in the process of eventually being completely transformed into morally perfect human being that comes from God and His sovereign plans and purposes for them.

In spite of the possibility that Paul is here using this second meaning, his argument is stronger if he is using the first meaning, so that the image is a very close representation of the real thing, but it is still not the real thing. Therefore, his point is that the Mosaic Covenant's sacrifices are not even an image of the real thing, which is Jesus' sacrifice. They are merely a shadow. As a result, Jesus' sacrifice is the only valid avenue to the proper existential goal of a human being—eternal forgiveness and life and the bold confidence to draw near (τοὺς προσερχομένους) to God and seek His forgiveness, knowing that one will actually get it.

Along with the inclusion of αὐτὴν in the phrase οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων where it means actual or very, Paul is saying that the Mosaic Covenant does not have even the very image of the most important things with respect to a sinful Jew's human existence, i.e., the completion of his goal of eternal mercy and life that can come *only* through the Messiah Jesus. In this way, Paul, for the sake of convincing his readers that they dare not abandon their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, is emphasizing the wide and irreconcilable discrepancy between what God instituted through Moses, the Mosaic Covenant, and what He has instituted through Jesus, the New Covenant.

²⁵⁶ ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἂν ἐπαύσαντο προσφερόμενοι διὰ τὸ μηδεμίαν ἔχειν ἔτι συνείδησιν ἁμαρτιῶν τοὺς λατρεύοντας ἅπαξ κεκαθαρισμένους – Once again, Paul mentions that that the multiple and continuous sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant were worthless for providing the worshiping Jew with eternal mercy and the complete confidence of eternal mercy. If they had been adequate for such, then the Jews could have stopped bringing them to the Levitical priests, and they could have felt settled in their hearts and minds that God would grant them salvation in the eternal Kingdom of God on the basis of them. This is to say that, if one Levitical offering were eternally effective, then the worshippers who used it to approach God for His forgiveness could think that the whole issue of obtaining and retaining God's mercy had been taken care of once and for all, so that they would never have to slaughter a bull or a goat again and offer it to God on behalf of their rebellion against Him.

Clearly, Paul is indicating that there is something about the psychological and intellectual connection between bringing an offering to God and the sense of what this has done as an important part of the process of seeking His mercy. What a person would like to be able to do is bring one offering to God, humbly appeal to Him for eternal mercy, and have God say, "Done deal! You have accomplished all that is necessary and will reach your goal of eternal life!" Afterward, the Jewish worshiper could leave the tabernacle/temple, continue living his existence as a human being in, for example, the tribe of Naphtali near the Sea of Galilee, and be completely confident that he actually has God's eternal forgiveness and the certainty of living in the "great nation" of Israel and the eternal Kingdom of God, never having to do anything else or repeat coming to God with an offering. Paul's whole argument hinges on the fact that only Jesus' single offering under the New Covenant accomplishes this—both as a sufficient action for his being a sinner's advocate before God and to provide the sinner with complete confidence that he is eternally forgiven.

²⁵⁷ ἀλλ' ἐν αὐταῖς ἀνάμνησις ἁμαρτιῶν κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν ἀδύνατον γὰρ αἵμα ἰταύρων καὶ τράγων ἁφαιρεῖν ἁμαρτίας – Here is Paul's definitive statement. The ongoing death of bulls and goats "year after year" (κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν) is absolutely useless for appealing to God for eternal mercy. In fact, the daily and annual repetition is only a *reminder* (ἀνάμνησις) that the problem of man's innate rebellion is not yet settled and can never be settled by these ongoing multiple sacrifices, so that there is still a lack of eternal forgiveness until God institutes another way to deal with it. Indeed, the way that God has set things up within the creation, an eternal, human high priest, who is morally perfect

and king of the universe, is necessary to appear at the final judgment and intercede on behalf of sinful human beings. And it is the *final judgment* that is the main event for obtaining God's eternal mercy. Slaughtered and resurrected, if it were the case, bulls and goats will not be there to help. They actually will remain dead and destroyed.

Paul has also argued in chapter 7 that the priests who have brought these animal sacrifices to the altar of the Mosaic Covenant tabernacle/temple need their own mediator, thereby rendering them useless for interceding on behalf of other human beings for their eternal mercy. And the final piece of this puzzle is that the appropriate high priest who appears at the final judgment qualifies for this eternally important role by offering himself as a sacrifice to God, which Jesus of Nazareth did when he died on the cross.

²⁵⁸ Hebrews 10:5-18 are a fuller explanation of Paul's point that the continuous sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant are merely a reminder that there must be another way to gain God's eternal mercy. Paul uses David and his comments from Psalm 40 to show that he, even as king of Israel, recognized this important point.

²⁵⁹ διὸ εἰσερχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον λέγει – Paul will now go on to explain that David, whenever he engaged in performing the religious system of the Mosaic Covenant that God had prescribed, understood that God would provide a method separate and different from the Mosaic Covenant in order for him to obtain God's mercy.

Again, as in 9:26, τὸν κόσμον is the religious system of the Mosaic Covenant, not the "world." Plus, this is about David, not about Jesus. And εἰσερχόμενος = when he enters into or when he engages in, meaning when David enters into performing the Mosaic Covenant, this is what he knows to be true about God and his relationship with God.

²⁶⁰ θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν οὐκ ἠθέλησας, σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι –

Psalm 40:6a – תִּפְחֹתֶיךָ יְיָ וְיִמְנָתֶךָ וְיִבְרַח לְךָ = You do not delight in sacrifice and offering; and Psalm 40:6b לִי אָזְנוֹתַי כָּרִיתָ = You cut/hollowed out my ears for me.

The Septuagint translates Psalm 40:6a with θυσίαν καὶ προσφορὰν οὐκ ἠθέλησας = You do not desire sacrifice and offering, and it translates Psalm 40:6b with ὠτία [i.e., σῶμα] δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι = You put in order/prepared my ears [i.e., my body] for me.

There are two possibilities here for David is saying in the Psalm and for what Paul is doing by quoting him here in Hebrews 10—

1) In line with the Massoretic Hebrew text from around A.D. 500, David could be speaking of how God caused him to respond appropriately to his sins and sinful actions, with a changed heart and an inward commitment to obey God by pursuing goodness. Therefore, the hollowing out of his ears would represent David's God-given desire and willingness to embrace the truth of God, which he was able to do only because God had miraculously changed his inwardness. Thus, the Septuagint translates it as putting his ears in order. However, there is a textual variant in the Septuagint that uses σῶμα = body instead of ὠτία = ears, thus indicating that there is a possibility that David meant that God had put his whole body in order by transforming him into a person who fundamentally understands the truth and the importance of inward humility before God for the sake of appealing to Him for mercy. As a result, Paul would be talking about David's inwardness, not Jesus' obedience, and the former as a precursor to what God would do for all the Jews according to the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 (cf. Hebrews 10:15-16). In addition, David understood, because of his changed heart, that the actual ritual of offering animal sacrifices was not ultimately what God desired from him. Instead, He desired an inwardly changed, humble, and repentant heart that could recognize the inadequate nature of the Mosaic Covenant concerning eternal salvation. Cf. Hebrews 9:8ff.

2) Another possibility is that Paul's quote is from the Septuagint that uses σῶμα = body, while the Massoretic Hebrew text with "body" had been changed to "ears" by the Jews before A.D. 500 in order to counteract the arguments of Christians who used this passage to argue exactly what Paul is arguing, that the *multiple* Mosaic Covenant animal sacrifices were and are worthless for obtaining God's eternal mercy, while the Messiah Jesus' *one* "body" and sacrifice does provide for it. Therefore σῶμα = body is not necessarily being used by David in Psalm 40 to refer to Jesus' body, but David is simply saying that God will provide a "body" that is *something other than the Mosaic Covenant animal sacrifices* for him as a sinner in need of God's eternal mercy, in the midst of his authentic inwardness that can be assumed simply by virtue of the way that David is speaking. This "something other" then becomes the ground for David's appeal to God for eternal forgiveness. If this is the case, then certainly by the time David writes Psalm 110, he has grasped that his "Lord" is also a "priest according to the order of Melchizedek," which probably leads him to conclude that this man is also the "something other" that provides God's eternal mercy for him.

Which option is correct? Vs. 6-10 should help decide.

²⁶¹ ὁλοκαυτώματα καὶ περὶ ἀμαρτίας οὐκ εὐδόκησας –

Psalm 40:6c – תִּשְׂאֵהָ נָחְלָה וְעֹלָהּ = Burnt offering and sin offering You do not ask/require.

The Septuagint translates this with ὁλοκαύτωμα καὶ περὶ ἀμαρτίας οὐκ ᾔτησας = Whole burnt offering and concerning sin You do not ask/require.

Paul changes "asked" to "are pleased" or "take pleases," that God neither asks for nor is pleased with the actual animal sacrifices. David must mean that these animal sacrifices and offerings in and of themselves are worthless for obtaining His eternal mercy. What pleases Him vis-à-vis the Mosaic Covenant is a changed and humble heart and inwardness that results in a sinner's, i.e., David's, recognizing that God will provide eternal mercy some other way. Thus, Paul has been arguing that the New Covenant's sacrifice, Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, is vastly pleasing and even necessary to God, because he is required to be present and act as intercessor at the final judgment on behalf of those who embrace him as their high priest on into the Kingdom of God.

By implication, the understanding of a sinner that acknowledges the vast difference between animal sacrifices and Jesus' sacrifice is pleasing to God and what He asks and requires.

²⁶² τότε εἶπον, ἰδοὺ, ἤκω ἐν κεφαλίδι βιβλίου γέγραπται ὅτι ἐμοῦ τοῦ ποιῆσαι, ὁ θεός, τὸ θέλημά σου –

Psalm 40:7 – אָלְהִים יְהוָה בְּכִתְּבֵי סֵפֶר בְּמִלְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵרָאֵה יְהוָה יֵרָאֵה יְהוָה יֵרָאֵה = Then, I said, “Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me.

The Septuagint translates this with τότε εἶπον ἰδοὺ ἤκω, ἐν κεφαλίδι βιβλίου γέγραπται περὶ ἐμοῦ = Then, I said, “Behold, I am present; in the scroll of the book it has been written concerning me.

Psalm 40:8a – אֶשְׂכַּח אֶת־רְצוֹנְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל = I delight to do Your will, O God.

The Septuagint translates this with τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου, ὁ θεός μου ἐβουλῆθην = I want to do Your will/desire, O my God.

This verse indicates that David has grasped two important truths—

1) That God had “written” in His book, i.e., His account/script of the story of the creation (cf. John 1:1), that He had “written” before He began creating and telling the story, that David would be an individual Jew who would be authentically obedient to God.

2) That his obedience to God would be to do what God desires, i.e., a Jew whom God would choose to cause to become inwardly committed to His values and desires, i.e., abhorring and repenting of immorality, while recognizing that God would provide a different basis for mercy from the animal sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, David is doing the desire of God according to the story of God and from God, by recognizing that there must be another method of avenue of mercy, which bolsters Paul's argument to his Jewish readers who are being persecuted by Jews who claim that they know the OT, which to these other Jews who are persecuting them that they must rely on the animal sacrifices for obtaining God's forgiveness.

²⁶³ ἀνώτερον λέγων ὅτι ‘θυσίας καὶ προσφορὰς’ καὶ ὀλοκαυτώματα καὶ περὶ ἁμαρτίας οὐκ ἠθέλησας, οὐδὲ εὐδόκησας – Paul paraphrases Psalm 40:6a & c and even adds more words to David's text in order to make it clearer that David had realized that God was not fundamentally interested in the sacrificial rituals that he was performing *according to the Mosaic Covenant*.

²⁶⁴ αἵτινες κατὰ τὸν νόμον προσφέρονται – Paul admits that the Mosaic Covenant did certainly prescribe and command the Jews to present animal sacrifices and other kinds of offerings to God. Thus, they were and are truly being obedient to God whenever they did and do so, i.e., when they did and do so with authentic inwardness.

²⁶⁵ τότε εἶρκεν ἰδοὺ ἤκω τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημά σου – David pursued obedience to God, not on the basis of the the Mosaic Covenant rituals that he was performing, but on the basis of another method that God would provide, all of which constituted David's doing the desire of God, in complete contradiction to the theology of Paul's readers' persecutors. Thus, Paul has been arguing that, through the New Covenant and David's Lord and priest according to the order of Melchizedek, David will gain God's eternal mercy—because his heart is such that he appropriately recognizes the limitations of the Mosaic Covenant and the eternal effectiveness of the New Covenant. In other words, David's doing God's desire is from a circumcised and changed heart that is necessary in order to satisfy the condition which God has placed on all sinful human beings in order to obtain the eternal Kingdom of God.

²⁶⁶ ἀναρῶν τὸ πρῶτον ἵνα τὸ δεῦτερον στήσῃ – Two options for who the “He” is at the beginning of this sentence—

1) God is the one who “takes away”

2) David is the one who “takes away”

Even if it is David whom Paul means, he definitely accomplishes a kind of theological switch, but one that God actually ultimately intended and continues to intend. David “takes away” (ἀναρῶν) and switches out the rituals of the Mosaic Covenant animal sacrifices for the methodology that arises through the New Covenant, the sacrificial offering of the high priest of this latter covenant. We know from Psalm 110 that David came to realize that his “Lord,” the future and final Messiah and King of Israel (from the tribe of Judah, because this was David's tribe!), would also be a “priest,” indeed a “priest according to the order of Melchizedek.” And it seems that Psalm 40 indicates that David realized that God would require a different sacrifice, even a “body,” instead of the animal sacrifices, even if David could not have completely described exactly how this would happen (option #2 in endnote for the quote from Psalm 40:6 in Hebrews 10:5). Yet, David also recognized that his “doing God's desire” was something that God had given to him after predestining him to this kind of understanding, heart, and belief within the history of sinful human beings.

²⁶⁷ ἐν ᾧ θελήματι ἡγιασμένοι ἐσμεν ὅτι διὰ τῆς προσφορᾶς τοῦ σώματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐφάπαξ – Here, Paul is clearly talking about God's “desire” (θελήματι), that it is within it that his readers (if they are authentic believers) and he have become set apart (ἡγιασμένοι ἐσμεν) and therefore slated to acquire eternal life “in conjunction with the offering of the body of Jesus the Messiah “once and never again” (διὰ τῆς προσφορᾶς τοῦ σώματος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐφάπαξ). Thus, Paul and his readers are following David's example of recognizing the necessity of an alternative method from the animal sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant for obtaining God's forgiveness. As a result, his fellow Jews and he become “set apart” by God from other Jews (indeed, it has been written in God's book and He has predestined it) for the Kingdom of God, especially now that Jesus as Messiah and sacrificed high priest has appeared and made himself known as the other and only way through his body (and not the organic containers of bulls and goats) to obtain God's complete and eternal mercy.

See also John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and life. No one comes to the Father but by me.”

If, with whatever Hebrew word was used in Psalm 40:6, David was not referring to an actual human body but simply to another “method” that God would use to provide eternal mercy, then Paul is using σῶμα = body in the same way. Thus,

the genitive phrase Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ is in apposition to the words τοῦ σώματος, indicating that Jesus as the Messiah is the method and alternative way that God has used to correspond to what David had written.

As a result, Paul is using David's understanding to show that, now, the means for NT sinful Jews to survive the final judgment is the Messiah's death + belief in the Messiah and his death, because he is their high priest who appeals to God for eternal mercy. Belief in the biblical truth of the inadequacy of the Mosaic Covenant and the necessity of an alternative method of offerings is what God causes a Jew to "do" according to His plans and purposes for the creation, so that, not only David, but also Paul and other NT believing Jews "do" the will and desire of God to understand the difference between the two covenants and to believe God for another and eternally effective way for obtaining His complete and eternal mercy.

²⁶⁸ καὶ πᾶς μὲν ἱερεὺς ἔστηκεν καθ' ἡμέραν λειτουργῶν καὶ τὰς αὐτὰς πολλάκις προσφέρων θυσίας, αἵτινες οὐδέποτε δύνανται περιλεῖν ἁμαρτίας – Paul once again repeats his argument of chapters 7-9. The Levitical priesthood was never intended do provide complete and eternal mercy by virtue of their multiple offerings that never could suffice for obtaining God's complete and eternal mercy and never could give a Jew a sense of confidence such that he knew that it was ok for him to stop bringing his animal sacrifices. In addition, Paul emphasizes the fact that the position of the Levitical priests was always one of standing, in contrast to that of the Messiah and high priest...

²⁶⁹ οὗτος δὲ μίαν ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν προσενέγκας θυσίαν εἰς τὸ διηνεκὲς ἐκάθισεν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ – In contrast to the Levites, who kept time after time, day after day, offering the Jews' and their own sacrifices, then died and remained dead, Jesus has died, risen from the dead, and taken his eternal position of ruling over the creation by sitting down at the right hand of Yahweh, metaphorically speaking (as God declares in Psalm 110:1).

In addition, by their very nature, the Levitical priests' sacrifices were temporary and implied that other sacrifices would follow only until the end of the present age. In contrast, Jesus' sacrifice was once and eternally effective (εἰς τὸ διηνεκὲς = for all time), implying that no other sacrifices would follow for all of eternity. Therefore, Jesus is the only qualified eternal high priest. His single offering of himself as the morally perfect icon of God within the creation qualifies him to intercede on behalf of even sinful Levitical priests, in order to provide the right and confident sense of complete and eternal mercy.

In addition, as with the continual *standing* of the Levitical priests in order to fulfill their priestly responsibilities, Paul is saying that the Melchizedekan high priest was able to *sit down* after his own sacrifice, and, indeed, he *sat down* at the right hand of Yahweh (metaphorically speaking), thus resulting in his taking on the responsibility of ruling over the creation, something the Levitical priests could never dream of doing. Only the Davidic king could do so as God's proxy within the creation according to the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7.

Psalm 110:1 Yahweh says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand (שֵׁב יְדִימִינִי) (κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου) until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet (עַד-אֲשָׁשִׁית אֹיְבֶיךָ תַּחְתִּי) (ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου)."

²⁷⁰ τὸ λοιπὸν ἐκδεχόμενος ἕως τεθῶσιν οἱ ἐχθροὶ αὐτοῦ ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ – As Paul wraps us his explanation for why the one new high priest of Psalm 110 is better than the multiple high priests of the Mosaic Covenant, he indicates why his readers and he do not yet see this high priest in action. It is because Jesus is waiting until God gets to the point in His story where He wants to crush this high priest's enemies. Thus, besides ruling over the creation, the high priest of the New Covenant can count on God's eliminating his (and Israel's) enemies, which God promised to do for the Jews, and therefore for the Levitical priests, under the Mosaic Covenant also. However, the destruction of the Jews' enemies is strictly for earthly purposes, while the destruction of the Messiah's enemies is for "heavenly," i.e., eternal, purposes—whereby the last enemy as indicated in other parts of the New Testament will be death (cf. 1 Corinthians 15).

Thus, Paul is declaring that Jesus, having qualified as high priest and ruler over the creation, including over the temporary Kingdom of Israel in the present creation and the eternal Kingdom of God in the new creation, merely waits for God to complete His project when there will be no more enemies of truth, Jesus, and God within the creation. As I have said before, this is ANE and Davidic Covenant language, thus tying together Jesus' New Covenant and Melchizedekan priesthood with his role as king, which Paul has been arguing since the end of chapter 2 (cf. 2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 110:1; Hebrews 10:26ff; 1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

Psalm 110:1 Yahweh says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand (שֵׁב יְדִימִינִי) (κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου) until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet (עַד-אֲשָׁשִׁית אֹיְבֶיךָ תַּחְתִּי) (ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου)."

²⁷¹ μὴ γὰρ προσφορὰ τετελείωκεν εἰς τὸ διηνεκὲς τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους – This has been Paul's main point. By virtue of his role as the Davidic king and Melchizedekan priest, Jesus can finish the task of obtaining complete and eternal mercy for divinely caused inwardly appropriate Jews (cf. the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34) and, by implication, all sinful human beings with proper inwardness ("those who are being set apart" – τοὺς ἁγιαζομένους). Jesus will be able to appeal to the Father for mercy at the final judgment, something the Levitical priests were incapable of doing, because they will need the Messiah's intercession just as much as any other sinful human being will need it (cf. Hebrews 10:10,15-18).

Therefore, this "completion" and bringing it to its proper goal and end (τετελείωκεν) as mentioned by Paul is more than just complete confidence for the Jewish worshiper. It is complete salvation—for all time and eternity (εἰς τὸ διηνεκὲς – cf. Hebrews 10:1), that Jesus brings with his role as the single and unique offering of the New Covenant and mediator

at the final judgment in contrast to the multiple and continuous offerings of animals by the Levites under the Mosaic Covenant.

²⁷² μαρτυρεῖ δὲ ἡμῖν καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον μετὰ γὰρ τὸ εἰρηκέναι – Paul obviously believes the Bible to be God’s communication to mankind and, therefore, inerrant (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16). In addition, it was God who was speaking through Jeremiah when He spoke of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34. But, because it was God *in the creation* who was speaking through Jeremiah, Paul can appropriately identify the person who is speaking as the Holy Spirit, i.e., God as He operates within the creation.

²⁷³ αὕτη ἡ διαθήκη ἣν διαθήσομαι πρὸς αὐτοὺς μετὰ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκείνας. λέγει κύριος διδοὺς νόμους μου ἐπὶ καρδίας αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ τήν διάνοιαν αὐτῶν ἐπιγράψω αὐτούς – Paul first draws the readers’ attention to the portion of Jeremiah 31:31-34 that he quoted in chapter 8, although he reverses the words “hearts” and “mind.” Nevertheless, the meaning is the same.

Here, in Jeremiah 31:31-34, God says that He will eventually change the inwardness of all the Jews with a new covenant, indeed, the New Covenant. This change corresponds to what Paul has just implicitly pointed out in verses 5-10 about David, that he understood that, by understanding that God would provide an alternative method to animal sacrifices under the Mosaic Covenant for receiving His forgiveness, he was doing God’s will and being an authentically biblical inward person.

And Paul is arguing that the Jews of his day can finally have God’s new Torah of believing in the crucified Messiah placed on their hearts and in their minds, which would be the contemporary form of David’s doing God’s will. In other words, with the the New Covenant, God commits to turning the Jews into a people who obey Him appropriately with “circumcised hearts” by causing them to embrace His commandment to believe in and follow Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah.

Deuteronomy 10:16, “So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.”

And Romans 2:28,29, “28 The true Jew is not the one who is such outwardly, and neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh, 29 but the true Jew is one in his hidden, innermost parts. And circumcision is of the heart by means of the Spirit, not of the letter. In addition, his praise is not from men but from God.”

It was all this that God was promising in Deuteronomy 29 & 30. For example, Deuteronomy 30:6, “Thus, Yahweh your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants so that you love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your being, in order that you may live.”

Thus, the commandment to embrace a crucified Messiah for the sake of complete and eternal forgiveness becomes the new Torah for the Jews vis-à-vis the New Covenant, while they retain the Mosaic Covenant as national obligation for teaching the Gentiles about God.

²⁷⁴ τ καὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν ἀνομιῶν αὐτῶν οὐ μὴ ἴμνησθήσονται ἔτι – Secondly, Paul draws the readers’ attention to the next portion of Jeremiah 31:31-34 that he quoted in chapter 8. God’s purpose for making the New Covenant with the Jews is to provide them with eternal forgiveness and mercy (οὐ μὴ ... ἔτι = no more), thus implying, by virtue of the change in covenant, a change in priesthood.

In other words, eternal forgiveness for the Jews cannot take place through the multiple and continuous sacrifices of animals of the Mosaic Covenant without the single sacrifice of the New Covenant. As a result, there is a new priesthood that further demonstrates that the Levitical priesthood and animal sacrifices are useless for obtaining the goal of a human being, the Kingdom of God in the next realm. God did remember the sins of the Jews who merely practiced the Mosaic Covenant and thought it was sufficient to obtain His forgiveness (if they lacked changed hearts), while He will not remember (οὐ μὴ ἴμνησθήσονται) their sins who practice the New Covenant by embracing Jesus as a single sacrifice and high priest (and who, like David (cf. Psalm 51), recognized that the multiple and continuous sacrifices did not bring complete and eternal forgiveness).

Paul has been arguing that the change of priesthood is fulfilled by Jesus as the Messiah and high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, as stated by David in Psalm 110. It is this and not the performing of multiple and continuous sacrifices according to the Mosaic Covenant that is important for Paul’s readers to understand and believe, thus obviously putting them at odds with their persecutors who are promoting only the Mosaic Covenant and its animal sacrifices as the only focal point of a Jew’s relationship with God.

²⁷⁵ ὅπου δὲ ἄφεσις τοῦτων, οὐκέτι προσφορά περὶ ἁμαρτίας – Here is the obvious conclusion and the bottom line. As Paul has been arguing since chapter 7, only Jesus’ one offering of himself, not the multiple offerings of the Levitical priests, suffices and is effective for complete and eternal forgiveness—so that even during OT times, God looked towards the future and Jesus’ death and resurrection to forgive completely any Jew of a changed heart who was bringing his offerings and sacrifices to the Levitical priests in obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Theologically and logically, wherever God has declared a person completely and eternally forgiven, He has also declared that no more sacrifices and offerings are necessary to bring to Him, because Jesus’ one offering will result in his intervening on their behalf at the final judgment.

Clearly, the psychological switch for a worshiping Jew from all the instructions about the tabernacle/temple, i.e., multiple offerings and multiple priests, to the one priest and one offering of the New Covenant is huge. However, it is absolutely necessary, Paul is arguing, in order to obey God properly and acquire His complete mercy and forgiveness. And when this psychological switch takes place within a Jew, it is this one offering of the New Covenant priest, Jesus, that he intellectually and spiritually focuses on and not the tabernacle/temple with its offerings.

Imagine this occurring on a grand scale among the Jews in Israel in Paul’s day (or our day) with the temple existing in

Jerusalem, and one has a picture of the ramifications of what Paul is writing here. Even if the Jews were to continue offering animal sacrifices in line with their national obligation to the Mosaic Covenant, their sense of the importance of these animal sacrifices would be hugely relativized by their focus on their eternal high priest, Jesus of Nazareth. In the millennial kingdom, the Jews will continue offering animal sacrifices out of respect for God and their unique position in the world as His chosen, ethnic people to teach the rest of the world with the Mosaic Covenant, but they will know that their king and his personal, individual, and single sacrifice are all that they need to acquire God's complete and eternal forgiveness.

²⁷⁶ ἔχοντες οὖν, ἀδελφοί, παρρησίαν εἰς τὴν εἴσοδον τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ – As Paul mentioned at the end of chapter 6 and has been arguing since then, Jesus' death (ἐν τῷ αἵματι Ἰησοῦ) qualifies him to enter the Holy of Holies, the Set Apart Places of the Set Apart Places, of the heavenly temple so to speak, i.e., the judgment room, and appeal to God for mercy on our behalf, thus permitting us also to enter with bold confidence (παρρησίαν) this same place of the Holy of Holies and judgment room of God and actually receive complete and eternal mercy through Jesus' intercession and intervention.

Paul now goes back to the main purpose of his letter, to *exhort* his readers to embrace God's whole truth that includes the suffering Messiah as their high priest at the judgment and to live morally now, while also boldly and confidently expecting eternal salvation and life. If they were really honest with themselves, the Jews had no basis for courageously walking into God's presence and asking Him for eternal mercy in the midst of their bringing their multiple and continuous animal sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant to Him. Only Jesus' one offering and sacrifice is a legitimate basis for a bold and confident approach to God, to drawing near to God.

Hebrews 3:6 On the other hand, the Messiah was faithful over His household as the Son. We are His household, if we hold on to our bold confidence (τὴν παρρησίαν) and the boast of our hope until the end.

Hebrews 4:16 As a result, let us approach with bold confidence (μετὰ παρρησίας) to the throne of grace, in order that we may receive mercy and find grace for timely help.

Hebrews 10:35 Therefore, do not throw away your bold confidence that has a great reward (τὴν παρρησίαν ὑμῶν ἣτις ἔχει μεγάλην μισθαποδοσίαν).

²⁷⁷ ἦν ἐνεκαίνισεν ἡμῖν ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ – There are three nouns before the accusative, singular, feminine relative pronoun ἦν to which it could refer, and one after it to which it could refer. These are: 1) παρρησίαν, 2) εἴσοδον, 3) αἵματι, and 4) ὁδὸν. Plus, the verb ἐγκαίνιζω can mean 1) to renew something that is old or 2) to cause something to start or begin as that which is new and never existed before.

The options of what Paul is saying are –

- 1) Jesus has renewed the Jew's bold confidence to enter the presence of God by means of his blood and death
- 2) Jesus has given the Jews bold confidence, which they never had before, to enter the presence of God by means of his blood and death
- 3) Jesus has renewed the entrance to God's presence by means of his blood and death
- 4) Jesus has given the Jews entrance to God's presence, which they never had before, by means of his blood and death
- 5) Jesus has renewed his blood and death
- 6) Jesus has provided his blood and death, which the Jews never had before
- 7) Jesus has renewed the way through the curtain, so to speak, by his blood and death
- 8) Jesus has given the Jews a new way through the curtain, so to speak, which they never had before, by his blood and death

It would make more sense that Paul is referring to a feminine noun before the relative pronoun ἦν, because this just seems to be how relative clauses work. Therefore, options #1-6 are more likely the sense. As I mentioned above in this endnote, Paul talks about the Jews' "bold confidence" (παρρησία) in three other verses in this letter, so that it is a very important concept for him—that the Jews finally have the proper basis to obtain complete and eternal forgiveness from God. And the basis is what allows them to have "bold confidence" in approaching God and seeking His mercy. Therefore, I think that option #2 is correct, that it is Jesus' death that gives the Jews the bold confidence that they never had—as a practical and existing condition, because Jesus had not yet died as their high priest.

Then, Paul provides an appositive to indicate that is the cause of this new "bold confidence"—Jesus' offering of his own body by his death on the cross as the new and living way (ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν) past the curtain that separates the Holy of Holies from the rest of the heavenly tabernacle and into the very presence of God (διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος) to intercede on our behalf.

His purpose in offering himself was so that Paul and his fellow Jews (and all other authentic believers by extrapolation) may obtain God's complete and eternal mercy, because he qualified to be raised from the dead and become their high priest, in contrast to the bulls and goats who died at the hands of the Levitical priests under the Mosaic Covenant and who will remain dead for all eternity. The bulls and goats were never raised to intercede for sinful human beings. Nor were the Levitical priests themselves raised to do so and to continue their roles as priests, especially because they themselves as sinners will also need Jesus as their advocate at the final judgment.

The statement τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ (= this is of his flesh) refers specifically to that kind of "fresh and living way" (ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν) to bring about the whole process by which Jesus qualified to be our high priest and intercede for sinners.

²⁷⁸ καὶ ἱερέα μέγαν ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ – Having both bold confidence to appeal to God for mercy within the Holy of Holies of the heavenly tabernacle so to speak, i.e., the judgment place of God, and also a high priest who is great, eternal, and intercedes on behalf of authentically inward Jews, means that these Jews actually obtain eternal mercy (cf. Hebrews 3:1-6). As high as the high priest of the Mosaic Covenant was and is, he is nothing in comparison to the great priest (ἱερέα μέγαν) of the New Covenant.

The “household of God” are the authentic believers in Jesus, and, in this context, Paul is emphasizing Jewish believers as he did in Hebrews 3:1-6.

²⁷⁹ προσερχώμεθα μετὰ ἀληθινῆς καρδίας ἐν πληροφορίᾳ πίστεως (cf. Hebrews 6:11) – Paul wants his readers to understand that they can be absolutely certain that Jesus will appeal to God for mercy for them as they approach now and continue approaching God right up to Jesus’ return and the final judgment with an authentic, biblical heart and inwardness. Therefore, they will obtain eternal mercy. As a result, they should approach God in such a manner even now in anticipation of the final judgment.

However, he is implying that it takes a different kind of inwardness and heart from that of most Jews in history, who have been so focused on the Mosaic Covenant at the expense of understanding the Davidic Covenant and Psalm 110. It is this appropriate kind of heart that makes it clear to a genuinely worshiping Jew, like David (cf. Psalm 40:6), that God must provide another way to grant people mercy apart from multiple and continuous animal sacrifices, as Paul also explained in Hebrews 9:8ff.

²⁸⁰ ῥεραντισμένοι τὰς καρδίας ἀπὸ συνειδήσεως πονηρᾶς καὶ λελουσμένοι τὸ σῶμα ὕδατι καθαρῷ – Paul’s exhortation throughout this letter has been for his Jewish Christian readers to see that the Mosaic Covenant terminology of the cleansing, i.e., forgiving, of their sinfulness, etc. through animal sacrifices is exactly what happens to them when they understand the depth of their sinfulness and the extent of the effectiveness of Jesus’ actions as high priest. However, in the case of Jesus as their advocate, they have grasped the whole meaning of his work as Messiah and priest, thus giving them complete confidence in obtaining God’s complete and eternal mercy. They are now “clean” before God in the sense of being accepted by Him as those who will qualify for His mercy and entrance into the Kingdom of God, not just as those who qualify to participate appropriately in the temporary nation of Israel, which was possible under simply the Mosaic Covenant.

Their human “bodies” have been “washed” so to speak, meaning likewise that they have received complete and eternal forgiveness from God. As a result, the Jew who embraces Jesus as his sacrificed and resurrected high priest obtains all the “cleaning” that he needs to be eternally forgiven by God. And their “understanding of evil,” i.e., that they know with certainty that they are deeply and inextricably sinful and evil as human beings, arrives at the point that they are clear in their thinking that they have been forgiven by God in order to gain the Kingdom of God on this earth and the next eternal earth.

²⁸¹ κατέχομεν τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἢ ἀκλινῇ, πιστὸς γὰρ ὁ ἐπαγγειλάμενος – The Jews who are rejecting Jesus as the Messiah and, therefore, holding on to only the Mosaic Covenant are missing the point about God’s promises and faithfulness. Not only is Jesus the right and only high priest on whom to depend to intercede before God, but God will be faithful to His promise to employ this priest of the New Covenant to gain entrance into the eternal Kingdom of God for those who have correctly relativized in their minds the Mosaic Covenant with its sacrifices and have placed their “unwavering confession of hope” (τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἐλπίδος ἢ ἀκλινῇ) in God’s alternative method for obtaining His mercy. In other words, Jesus is the only “way” that a sinful Jew can experience the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham. This is why Jesus says that he is the “way, the truth, and the life” and that “no one comes to the Father but by” him (John 14:6). Consequently, Paul exhorts his readers and himself to hold on perseveringly to these promises, which certainly is part and parcel of the Abrahamic Covenant with its promise of the “great nation” of Israel and the promise of eternal life (cf. Genesis 12:2, “And I will bless you) and of the New Covenant with its promise to forget forever the sinfulness of the Jews.

Really, it is always God’s faithfulness to His promise and grace that are the basis for anyone’s holding on to a confidence that good things will happen to him in the future, e.g., mercy and the Kingdom of God.

²⁸² καὶ κατανοῶμεν ἀλλήλους ‘εἰς παροξυσμὸν’ ἀγάπης καὶ καλῶν ἔργων – One of the most difficult things to do when a person is suffering is to love others with outward, explicit actions that are marked by patience, grace, mercy, and hope, even hope of eternal life. Paul wants his readers to think carefully (κατανοῶμεν) how to help each other (εἰς παροξυσμὸν) keep loving one another (ἀγάπης καὶ καλῶν ἔργων), especially when life is difficult and it would be easier if they stopped embracing Jesus as the Messiah in order to avoid the persecution that they are experiencing from the non-believing Jews.

Paul is also saying that the effect of being properly related to God (through belief in Jesus as king and priest for forgiveness instead of actions in line with the Mosaic Covenant) is not religious actions but genuine loving actions (καλῶν ἔργων).

²⁸³ μὴ ἔγκαταλείποντες τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν ἑαυτῶν, καθὼς ἔθος τισὶν – Probably because of fear of persecution that is coming from unbelieving Jews, who would take note of the fact that they were going to Christian meetings and, as a result, would react negatively to them, Paul encourages his readers to assemble with one another (τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν ἑαυτῶν) nevertheless in order to encourage one another and help each other persevere in belief in Jesus as their king and priest. Apparently, there are those who are refusing to associate at all with Christians (καθὼς ἔθος τισὶν).

Does this really sound like a good idea, that Paul would want Christians to get together even if it meant suffering for them as opposed to remaining safe as individuals? Hmm. Or, maybe, he is just concerned about these Christians at least

staying in touch with one another in order to help each other persevere in belief. This latter seems more likely in the light of the next part of the sentence. Paul is not advocating placing the whole Christian community in danger from the enemies unnecessarily but simply doing whatever they can to encourage one another in their faith.

²⁸⁴ ἀλλὰ παρακαλοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς καὶ τοσούτῳ μᾶλλον ὅσῳ βλέπετε ἐγγιζούσαν τὴν ἡμέραν – The “day” of Jesus’ return and judgment is approaching (ἐγγιζούσαν τὴν ἡμέραν), regardless of how far it may be, and Paul considers his readers’ looking forward to it as part of the basis for their encouraging one another (παρακαλοῦντες) to persevere in their belief. In other words, his main concern in vs. 24 & 25 is his readers’ taking advantage of the fact that they have one another to help each other persevere in belief in the midst of the suffering and persecution that they are experiencing. To ignore this readily available tool of mutual encouragement would naturally be part of the effect of any suffering and persecution. But Paul wants them to combat the temptation to avoid one another and, instead, to continue pointing each other intellectually and in their heart and spirit towards the return of their Messiah and priest.

Philippians 1:6 because I have been persuaded of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will be in the process of bringing it to its intended goal until **the day of the Messiah Jesus**.

Philippians 1:9 And this I pray, that your love will increase still more and more in the midst of an accurate understanding and all discernment, **1:10** so that you may assess to your advantage the things that are different, in order that you may be pure and without fault for **the day of the Messiah**, **1:11** because you have been filled with the fruit of justification, the fruit that is in light of Jesus the Messiah for the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 2:14 Do all things without grumbling and arguing, **2:15** so that you will be without fault and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a corrupt and perverted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, **2:16** holding on to the message of life, so that I may boast in **the day of the Messiah**, because I did not run in vain nor labor in vain.

²⁸⁵ ἐκουσίως ὁ γὰρ ἁμαρτανόντων ἡμῶν μετὰ τὸ λαβεῖν τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς ἀληθείας, οὐκέτι περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἁπολείπεται θυσία – Here is a great implicit explanation of the connections between truth, belief, and eternal salvation. If Paul’s Jewish readers reject belief in Jesus as the Messiah and the one “sacrifice for sins” (περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν ἁπολείπεται θυσία) and revert to following only the Mosaic Covenant (actually, the tradition that they have created of the Mosaic Covenant) as the primary and sole basis of their relationship with God after all this detailed explanation that he has given them about why Jesus is their Messiah and high priest (μετὰ τὸ λαβεῖν τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τῆς ἀληθείας = after receiving knowledge of the truth), then they are, in effect, rebelling against God and “deliberately sinning” (ἐκουσίως γὰρ ἁμαρτανόντων ἡμῶν), with the result that they will incur God’s eternal condemnation and not salvation—as Paul goes on to say (cf. Hebrews 3:12ff.).

Being committed to relying solely on the multiple sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant instead of the single sacrifice of Jesus, after all this biblical explanation which Paul has presented them, results in their not being any sacrifice for their sins.

²⁸⁶ φοβερὰ δέ τις ἐκδοχὴ κρίσεως καὶ πυρὸς ζήλος ἐσθίειν μέλλοντος τοὺς ὑπεναντίους – See also Hebrews 6:4-8. Also, see footnote above.

Isaiah 26:11, Yawheh, Your hand is lifted up. Yet they do not see it. They see Your zeal for the people and are put to shame. Indeed, fire will devour Your enemies (וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִשְׂרָאֵל) (καὶ νῦν πῦρ τοὺς ὑπεναντίους ἔδεται).

Psalms 110:1,2 – Yahweh says to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies (וְיִשְׂרָאֵל) (τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου) a footstool for Your feet.” Yahweh will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, “Rule in the midst of Your enemies (וְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיָדְךָ) (ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἐχθρῶν σου).”

After reading Paul’s explanation of Jesus as the crucified Son of God and offering to God for their sins and by still rejecting him as their Messiah and high priest, Paul’s readers would be making themselves enemies of God who will be destroyed by Him—as the Old Testament promises.

²⁸⁷ ἀθετήσας τις νόμον Μωϋσέως χωρὶς οἰκτιρῶν ἑ ἐπὶ δυσὶν ἢ τρισὶν μάρτυσιν ἀποθνήσκει – Ironically, there is a principle within the Mosaic Covenant that the readers’ persecutors would agree with wholeheartedly that actually condemns them and spells their destruction. Anyone who *willfully* rejects God’s instructions in the Mosaic Covenant incurs His justice and dies physically, whether at the hands of the people or by means that God miraculously produces within the created reality (for example, **Numbers 21:6**, The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died.). However, here, Paul is specifically referring to situations where Jews personally testify against other Jews, who then are executed by these very human Jews on earth. In other words, God’s justice within the requirements of the Mosaic Covenant demands that sin receive a just punishment, including death if this is warranted. Therefore, ...

²⁸⁸ πόσῳ δοκεῖτε χεῖρονος ἁγιάσθησεται τιμωρίας ὁ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καταπατήσας καὶ τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης κοινὸν ἡγησάμενος, ἐν ᾧ ἡγιασθή, καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς χάριτος ἐνυβρίσας – The phrase ἐν ᾧ can mean “on the basis of which” as in **Acts 4:12** “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which (ἐν ᾧ) we must be saved.”

Paul lists three blatant sins that his readers’ persecutors are guilty of and that they themselves are risking performing themselves—

1) To “treat with disdain” and therefore reject God’s Son (ὁ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καταπατήσας), His proxy within the creation, is to reject God Himself and be executed by Him through the lack of advocacy of the very human Messiah and priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

2) To think that Jesus' death was as ordinary as any other human being's death, i.e., "to consider as mundane the blood of the [New] Covenant" (τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης κοινὸν ἡγησάμενος), is to miss the point of how the Messiah had to qualify to become a high priest through his death. Indeed, it is to agree with the Jewish leaders that Jesus was a criminal who was violating the Mosaic Covenant by falsely claiming to be the Messiah.

3) Also, to reject the NT message of Jesus as the Messiah is to turn one's back on the gracious activity of God within the creation through the work of His Spirit (καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς χάριτος ἐνυβρίσας) that leads the apostles such as Paul to proclaim this message.

The bottom line is that all this is to reject God. The Jewish persecutors firmly believe that they are worshiping God in a biblical manner by focusing strictly on the Mosaic Covenant and rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, but they are not. They are in rebellion against God. And Paul is pointing out how much graver is their rebellion against God in comparison to any Jew who violates one of the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, thereby being subject to physical execution and removal from the nation of Israel. To reject the grace and mercy of God through the death of the Messiah/priest and which is made available for people to learn through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit is to deserve eternal destruction by God, not just physical destruction by their fellow Jews.

²⁸⁹ οἶδαμεν γὰρ τὸν εἰπόντα· ἐμοὶ ἐκδίκησις, ἐγὼ ἀνταποδώσω ὦ. καὶ πάλιν ὦ κρινεῖ κύριος τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ – Deuteronomy 32:35 'Vengeance is Mine, and retribution. In due time their foot will slip. For the day of their calamity is near, and the impending things are hastening upon them.' (Septuagint – ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐκδικήσεως ἀνταποδώσω)

The Hebrew text states the first three words with עָנִי עָנִי עָנִי = To Me is vengeance and retribution.

The Septuagint translates it as ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐκδικήσεως ἀνταποδώσω = in the day of vengeance I will repay.

Deuteronomy 32:36 "For Yahweh will vindicate His people and will have compassion on His servants, when He sees that their strength is gone, and there is none remaining, bond or free.

The Hebrew text states the first line with יְהוָה יִשְׁפֹּט = because Yahweh will judge His people.

The Septuagint translates it as ὅτι κρινεῖ κύριος τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ = because the Lord will judge His people.

Deuteronomy 32:1-43 is Moses' song of God's assessment of the rebellion of the Israelites and His intended response of judgment towards them. In other words, according to Paul, the very Covenant on which the unbelieving Jews are focusing condemns them and Paul's readers, if the former reject Jesus as the Messiah and the latter succumb to the persecution of the former and give up their belief in the truth of the Messiah and Melchizedekian priest, because God is a God of justice and subsequent condemnation, if He does not choose to dispense mercy according to His sovereign plan.

²⁹⁰ φοβερὸν τὸ ἐμπεσεῖν εἰς χεῖρας θεοῦ ζῶντος – Here is the bottom, bottom line. Paul warns his readers that incurring God's eternal condemnation will not be a pleasant experience and one that they should avoid!! In fact, it will be terrifying (φοβερὸν). And this is the "living God" (θεοῦ ζῶντος) he is talking about. God is not dead or does not exist. He is very much alive and a God of both mercy and justice. He is not to be reckoned with if someone is not willing to worship Him and obey Him.

²⁹¹ Ἀναμνησθεσθε δὲ τὰς πρότερον ἡμέρας, ἐν αἷς φωτισθέντες πολλὴν ἄθλησιν ὑπεμείνατε παθημάτων – We have to wonder exactly what has transpired in these Jewish Christians' lives. Apparently, they had become Christians (φωτισθέντες = they were enlightened), and now it has been a while since that time. And in the "former days" (τὰς πρότερον ἡμέρας), they "endured a great struggle of sufferings" (πολλὴν ἄθλησιν ὑπεμείνατε παθημάτων). Was this similar to what they are going through now? Was it persecution for their faith and belief in Jesus? It would seem so. This also may be a clue to indicate that Paul is addressing Jewish Christians who were arrested or at least persecuted in Jerusalem as a result of the incident of Stephen in Acts 6 and then scattered from there to other parts of the Roman Empire, probably remaining where they went, but now requiring being set straight in their theology by Paul because of the strong influence of unbelieving and persecuting Jews in their communities. Then, they experienced persecution again, and it is so intense that they are seriously thinking of giving up their faith in Jesus and going back Moses and the Mosaic Covenant only.

The point is that belief in Jesus will result in some kind and some level of suffering in this world and perhaps multiple times that will come from unbelievers who are fundamentally hostile to God and unwilling to learn about Him and submit to Him and the Bible. Jesus obviously experienced this kind of suffering on the cross, and so do his followers to some degree during the course of their lives.

²⁹² τοῦτο μὲν ὀνειδισμοῖς τε καὶ θλίψεσιν θεατριζόμενοι, τοῦτο δὲ κοινωνοὶ τῶν οὕτως ἀναστρεφόμενων γεννηθέντες – When these Jewish Christians had first been exposed to the enlightening news of Jesus as the Messiah and then embraced this information as true, they had experienced quite a bit of suffering from harsh treatment by their Jewish community. They were "put to public shame with insults and tribulations" (τοῦτο μὲν ὀνειδισμοῖς τε καὶ θλίψεσιν θεατριζόμενοι) and "by becoming participants with those whose lives were turned upside down" (τοῦτο δὲ κοινωνοὶ τῶν οὕτως ἀναστρεφόμενων γεννηθέντες). Again, what exactly happened to these people? Not sure, but whatever it was, they suffered quite a bit, as Paul will go on to indicate in the next verse.

Obviously, now the resilience of their belief has decreased, so that they are seriously considering giving up their faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Paul wants them to remember how well they had responded to the persecution at that earlier time and to respond to the present situation with the same strength and endurance of belief.

²⁹³ καὶ γὰρ τοῖς δεσμοῖς συνεπαθήσατε καὶ τὴν ἀρπαγὴν τῶν ὑπαρχόντων ὑμῶν μετὰ χαρᾶς προσεδέξασθε γινώσκοντες ἔχειν ἑαυτοὺς κρεῖττονα ὑπαρξίν ὦ καὶ μένουσαν – In the midst of the previous persecution that these Christians endured at the beginning of their journey of authentic faith, they had things, their own personal possessions,

taken from them (τὴν ἀρπαγὴν τῶν ὑπαρχόντων ὑμῶν) because of their faith, in addition to some of them being imprisoned.

However, they let go of these things of this world “with joy” (μετὰ χαρᾶς) and “welcomed” (προσεδέξασθε) the opportunity to suffer for their faith as Jesus had done so. Thus, they continued focusing on the fact that God had promised them even more and better possessions (κρείττονα ὑπαρξιν) so to speak in the eternal Kingdom of God, which would remain and endure into eternity (καὶ μένουσαν).

If they had already experienced such suffering and persevered in their belief through it, why not do so now also? Paul is exhorting them to renew the steadfastness of their belief on the basis of all the good and paramount information about Jesus’ role through his death that he has provided them in this letter, even if it means further suffering (and perhaps, the loss of their lives, like Jesus). Amen.

This also is demonstrating how Christians can endure mistreatment for their faith from others initially, but then they become tired and start thinking that going back to their old and unbelieving lifestyle would be better.

²⁹⁴ μὴ ἀποβάλλετε οὖν τὴν παρρησίαν ὑμῶν. ἥτις ἔχει μεγάλην μισθαποδοσίαν – Paul here verifies that his Christian readers have xa “great reward” (μεγάλην μισθαποδοσίαν) ahead of them in the eternal Kingdom of God. He writes of it that it is literally “a great wage.” Speaking metaphorically, God will grant these Jewish Christians the “wage” of eternal life in the Kingdom of God if they persevere in their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, instead of “throwing away their bold confidence” (μὴ ἀποβάλλετε οὖν τὴν παρρησίαν ὑμῶν) by succumbing to the pressure of their Jewish persecutors who want them to focus on only the Mosaic Covenant (cf. v. 36—10:36. Indeed, you have need of perseverance (ὑπομονῆς), so that after you have done the desire of God (ἵνα τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ ποιήσαντες), you will receive the promise.).

Clearly, the rest of the Bible teaches that sinful human beings cannot *earn* God’s mercy and eternal salvation, but Paul uses a common business term, “wage,” to refer to the response of God to genuine inwardness and belief that He himself has brought about through His grace (see for example [Hebrews 11:6](#); Indeed, apart from belief, it is impossible to be pleasing, because it is necessary for the one who comes to God to believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.).

Therefore, Paul wants his Jewish readers to reflect on the confidence and courage that they can employ in approaching Yahweh for His complete and eternal forgiveness, because this kind and level of confidence and courage gets “paid” with eternal life. This would be in contrast to a complete lack of confidence in obtaining God’s mercy if a Jew relies on only his sacrifices according to the Mosaic Covenant in the midst of his unchanged heart (cf. 9:13-10:4).

²⁹⁵ ὑπομονῆς γὰρ ἔχετε χρεῖαν ἵνα τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ ποιήσαντες κομίσησθε τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν – In the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12:1-3, God promises that the physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob will become the most powerful nation in all human history and that they will receive the blessing of eternal life if they appropriately mimic Abraham’s belief. In this way, receiving the fulfillment of these promises requires belief in the alternative method of the high priest of the New Covenant and that perseveres until the end of one’s life. Paul wrote of David’s doing this in 10:5-10.

This is “the desire of God” (τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ) for inherently sinful human beings, i.e., that which He commands them to “do” (ποιήσαντες) in order to obtain the eternal life that He has promised. Paul says that his readers will “come into possession” (κομίσησθε) of this “promise” (τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν) as a result of the “perseverance” (ὑπομονῆς) of their belief and doing God’s desire, which is what they “need” (ἔχετε χρεῖαν).

See also David’s statement from [Psalm 40:6-8](#) that Paul deals with in [Hebrews 10:5-10](#), where he speaks of the same thing, the “desire of God” that God Himself even produces within a rebellious human being and that produces genuine, persevering belief in Him. Thus, persevering in what God desires by recognizing that He must provide an alternative method for obtaining His eternal mercy outside of the Mosaic Covenant will result in obtaining the promise of the New Covenant that God will forgive the Jews forever through Jesus’ advocacy.

²⁹⁶ ἔτι ὅταν μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον, ὁ ἐρχόμενος ἤξει καὶ οὐ χρονίσει – Here, Paul quotes from two verses in Habakkuk and from one verse in Isaiah to bolster his point that belief in the truth which God has presented, which now his readers know includes Jesus as their crucified Son of God under the auspices of the New Covenant.

[Habakkuk 2:3](#), For the vision is yet for the appointed time (וְהָיָה לְמוֹתָם וְלֹא יִכָּזֵב) (διότι ἔτι ὅρασις εἰς καιρὸν); it hastens toward the goal and it will not fail (וְהָיָה לְמוֹתָם וְלֹא יִכָּזֵב) (καὶ ἀνατελεῖ εἰς πέρας καὶ οὐκ εἰς κενόν).

Though it tarries, wait for it (וְהָיָה לְמוֹתָם וְלֹא יִכָּזֵב) (ἐὰν ὑστερήσῃ, ὑπόμεινον αὐτόν); for that which is coming will certainly come (וְהָיָה לְמוֹתָם וְלֹא יִכָּזֵב) (ὅτι ἐρχόμενος ἤξει). It will not delay (וְהָיָה לְמוֹתָם וְלֹא יִכָּזֵב) (καὶ οὐ μὴ χρονίσει).

[Isaiah 26:20](#), Come, My people, enter into your rooms and close your doors behind you; hide for a little (בָּרִצְנוּ) (ἀποκρύβηθι μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον) until indignation runs its course.

These are the only verses in the OT and the NT that contain the Greek phrase μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον, which means “for a little while,” and Paul conflates these two OT passages from Habakkuk and Isaiah. Habakkuk is standing watch until the “vision” that God has shown him about the destruction of Judah by the Babylonians is fulfilled at its “appointed time” around 600 B.C. Isaiah is encouraging the Israelites to wait “a little while” until God has punished the rebellious Jews (within the world system?) and restores them to their land in shalom and peace. The point is that, at the final judgment, God will “soon” (ἔτι ὅταν μικρὸν ὅσον ὅσον) judge and destroy those who oppose Him and bring about His promise of the “great nation” on the land of Israel and eternal life in the Kingdom of God for those who persevere in believing Him for all His promises, including that of complete and eternal forgiveness within the New Covenant.

Notice that the Septuagint uses the masculine participle **ἐρχόμενος** to refer to what is coming. I think that it is interpreting Habakkuk in regard to the “appointed time” (καιρὸν), not the “vision” per se, because this latter word, ὄρασις, is feminine. It is the appointed time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians that is coming. Therefore, it is appropriate to translate it as “that which is coming.” The same is true for Paul, that **ὁ ἐρχόμενος** is not referring to person, even to Jesus per se, but the the time of the judgment and Israel’s enemies and of the restoring of the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel when Jesus returns. These together will definitely come!

Psalm 40:17, Since I am afflicted and needy, let the Lord be mindful of me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay (לֹא־תִבְזֶז־לִי) (μὴ χρονίσῃς), O my God.

This is a psalm of David from which Paul quotes above in Hebrews 10:5-7.

²⁹⁷ **ὁ δὲ δίκαιός μου ἐκ πίστεως ζήσεται, καὶ ἔάν ὑποστείλῃται, οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ** – Here, Paul continues to bolster his point that authentic belief is that which importantly characterizes the person who stands to acquire God’s ultimate promise of the millennial kingdom and the eternal Kingdom of God. This is what pleases (εὐδοκεῖ) God at the core of His “existence” (ἡ ψυχὴ μου).

Habakkuk 2:4, Behold, as for the proud one, his existence is not right within him (הִנֵּה עֹבֵדָה לֹא־נִשְׁתָּרָה נַפְשׁוֹ בְּיָדוֹ) (**ἔάν ὑποστείλῃται, οὐκ εὐδοκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἐν αὐτῷ**); but the righteous will live by his faith (יִצְחָק בְּאַמְּוֹתָיו יִחְיֶה) (**ὁ δὲ δίκαιος ἐκ πίστεώς μου ζήσεται**).”

The Septuagint is different in the first part of this verse, but the sense is still the same, that God will not accept the proud person who rejects His truth. In addition, eternal life comes to those who live their lives on the basis of persevering belief in God’s statements regarding what He is going to do—that He will punish those who rebel against Him and bring eternal life to those who persevere in belief in Him.

Paul simply reverses the order of the Septuagint, encouraging his Jewish readers, who are wavering in their belief in Jesus as the Messiah, to consider God’s justice and rejection of those who reject Him, as well as the fact that it is those who persevere in belief in the truth as Paul has explained it in this letter who obtain life, i.e., eternal life, from God.

²⁹⁸ **ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐκ ἐσμὲν ὑποστολῆς εἰς ἀπώλειαν ἀλλὰ πίστεως εἰς περιποίησιν ψυχῆς** – This verse is a good example of the contrasting destinies of human beings. On the one hand, eternal destruction and no existence except a memory of God for those who remain committed to unbelief and refuse to submit their existences to God. On the other hand, eternal existence and life in the Kingdom of God for those who willingly submit to all the biblical truth they hear—whether it is just the creation that speaks the existence and power of God or it is the gospel and all it is saying about Jesus as the Son of God, the Messiah, and high priest through his death and resurrection.

It takes great courage to be a believer in Yahweh and His truth, including, and perhaps most especially, the truth of Jesus of Nazareth as the Jewish Messiah.

Thus, in this verse, Paul talks about two radically different kinds of people. The first are those who are timid in the midst of persecution and draw back from the truth (ὑποστολῆς), while throwing away their confidence in Jesus as their high priest, who intercedes before God on their behalf (10:35-36), especially after they have heard the good news of him as their crucified and resurrected Messiah and apparently believed in it. Unfortunately, these incur God’s condemnation and eternal destruction (εἰς ἀπώλειαν).

The second are those of authentic belief in Jesus as their high priest (πίστεως), whose eternal destiny is the preserving of their existence (εἰς περιποίησιν ψυχῆς) through God’s resurrecting them from the dead and granting them eternal moral perfection or continuing existence if they are alive when Jesus returns. To continue to believe biblical truth in the midst of pain and suffering results in eternal mercy and salvation. Paul is confident that his readers and he will have the courage, by God’s grace, to be in the latter category and obtain salvation and eternal existence.

Romans 9:22 What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction (εἰς ἀπώλειαν)?

Philippians 3:19 whose end is destruction (ὃν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια), whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing [being destroyed] (**ἀπολλυμένοις**), but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

2 Corinthians 2:15 For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing [being destroyed] (**ἀπολλυμένοις**).

²⁹⁹ ἔστιν δὲ πίστις ἐλπίζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων – In this chapter and in the light of Paul’s just mentioning the difficulties from their own Jewish kinsmen that his readers have faced as believers in Jesus and the eternal importance of authentic belief, whether for Habakkuk’s listeners/readers or Paul’s, he states and then demonstrates through the example of OT believers, who went through hard times and tests of their faith and belief, that the response of belief (as the umbrella over a life that has been sanctified or set apart by God) to truth, such as that which he has just provided his readers about Jesus as high priest in comparison to the Levitical priests of the Mosaic Covenant, is what qualifies a sinful human being to have God bear witness that he is forgiven and will be granted the “reward” of eternal life.

Thus, this statement in verse 1 is to the effect that belief in biblically presented truth, especially that of the suffering Messiah, as the proper subjectivity of a needy sinful person is both the guarantee of eternal life that the person is eagerly expecting as well as the proof that he really will obtain it, even though no one in the present realm can see the eternal realm yet.

ὑπόστασις = substantial nature, essence, actual being, reality, realization, plan, project, undertaking, endeavor, situation, condition, guarantee, title deed in BDAG. In Hebrews 1:3, Jesus is the representation/stamp of God's ὑπόστασις, which I have translated as "identity," i.e., that Jesus as a morally perfect human being with a unique role within history as the Messiah represents God exactly with whatever he says and does—to the extent that a human being can do so. Here in Hebrews 11:1, Paul is making the point that belief is the "likeness," representation, and guarantee of what all true believers hope for, which is God's promise of eternal life that begins with the first resurrection at Jesus' return and he establishes the millennial kingdom on the land of Israel and the rest of the earth.

Thus, belief is the obvious "stamp" of God's promise. Belief that exists in a concrete human being is the substantial likeness in the created reality of the concrete promises that exist in the mind of God and which He will fulfill on behalf of those who exercise concrete, authentic belief in Him. As a result, belief as something substantial in the creation becomes the "guarantee" of life for sinners in the next ages, because certainly God cannot go back on His promises that require the condition of authentic belief.

ἔλεγχος = proof, proving, accusation, reproof, censure, correction in BDAG. Subjectively, belief is the concrete, contemporary proof and evidence of the invisible reality of eternal life, i.e., the things that matter and that really matter, that God will bring about in the future, when He deems it proper to do so and that He currently holds as a promise in His transcendent mind, so that He will definitely fulfill His promise(s).

Hebrews 10:1 For **the Covenant**, because it contains **a shadow (σκιά)** of **the future, good things, not a veritable image of the things that matter (οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων)**, is never able, for all time, by **the same kind of sacrifices which they offer year after year (κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν)**, to bring to their goal (τελειῶσαι) **those who draw near (τοὺς προσερχομένους)**.

³⁰⁰ ἐν ταύτῃ γὰρ ἑμαρτυρήθησαν οἱ πρεσβύτεροι – Paul uses the passive voice ἑμαρτυρήθησαν, which means that the men of old (οἱ πρεσβύτεροι) had witness borne to them that they were pleasing to God and had qualified to obtain the fulfillment of His promises when He decided to bring them about in the future.

Consequently, in all the following Old Testament examples, everything good that people did was ultimately a result of their authentic belief in God, so that belief with its related activities (that are not necessarily religious, e.g., not outward and ritual obedience to the Mosaic Covenant) was what truly pleased God—even in the midst of their being sinners in need of eternal mercy.

In some of the examples, Paul mentions that God bore witness to, i.e., communicated to, the Old Testament believers that He approved of their authentic belief.

For example, **Hebrews 11:4** With belief, Abel offered a better sacrifice to God than Cain, in view of which it was borne witness (ἑμαρτυρήθη) that he was justified as God bore witness (μαρτυροῦντος) on the basis of his offerings, and through it he still speaks, even though he has died.

³⁰¹ πιστεῖ νοοῦμεν κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι θεοῦ, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων 'τὸ βλεπόμενον' γεγονέναι – Because Paul lists many Old Testament people who authentically believed in God and had witness borne to them that this is what they were doing, it makes sense to interpret the "we" here as Paul, his readers, and, by implication, any other authentic believer in either Old Testament or New Testament times.

He is saying that, from the standpoint of the object of belief, it begins by believing that God has brought all of the created reality into existence, so that belief in everything else God is and does merely follows from this because the events of the creation are a story that God is telling, so that He then responds to such belief by granting eternal life to those who have a genuine form of it (cf. Hebrews 11:6).

Notice the words "the ages" (τοὺς αἰῶνας), i.e., history, indeed all events in history as that which God has created, does create, and will create.

Paul said the same thing in **Hebrews 1:1** God, after He spoke to the fathers long ago by means of the prophets in many portions and in many ways, **1:2** in the last of these days, has spoken to us by means of the Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, in view of whom He also made the ages (δι' οὗ ὁ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας),...

John 1:3 All things came [come?] into being through it (the *logos*/story of God), and apart from it (the story of God) not one thing which has come into being has come [comes?] into being.

Everything that exists other than God has come and does come into existence out of "things," so to speak, that are not "visible," i.e., God and His mental process of composing this story of the history of the creation whereby He then used the "speaking" of things into existence to create the story of which we are a part (cf. Genesis 1). God has created and continues to create everything *ex nihilo*, literally out of nothing. And "the ages" will go on into eternity for authentic believers as exactly as God has planned them from before the beginning of the creation.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the *logos*/plan/story, and the *logos*/plan/story was with God, and God was the author of the *logos*/plan/story.

Also, Paul says in **1 Timothy 1:17**, Now to the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory into the ages of ages (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων). Amen.

Also **2 Timothy 4:18**, The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and will save me into his kingdom from heaven. To Him be the glory into the ages of ages (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων). Amen.

³⁰² πιστεῖ πλείονα θυσίαν Ἀβελ παρά Κάιν προσήνεγκεν ὡς θεῷ, δι' ἧς ἑμαρτυρήθη εἶναι δίκαιος, μαρτυροῦντος ἐπὶ τοῖς δόροις αὐτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ δι' αὐτῆς ἀποθανὼν ἔτι ἡλαλεῖ – Again, Paul uses the passive voice ἑμαρτυρήθη to say that "it was borne witness" to Abel that he was justified, i.e., he had gained a standing before God such that he was forgiven and accepted so that he would eventually obtain eternal life.

Genesis 4:3-5, 3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to Yahweh of the fruit of the ground. 4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And Yahweh had regard for Abel and for his offering; 5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.

Paul is referring to the above passage in Genesis, that God somehow demonstrated to Abel that He approved of his offering, which must have been because of his authentic inwardness, i.e., his belief, not because he brought a better and blood sacrifice than Cain. Nevertheless, Abel did bring the “firstlings,” i.e., the best of his flock, while Cain offered anything of what he grew just by grabbing it. He was not appropriately thoughtful in bringing the best to God. Thus, Cain lacked authentic belief that can result in actions that are themselves better than those emanating from unbelief. Otherwise, God would have accepted Cain’s agricultural offering, too.

Also here, Paul uses the active voice participle μαρτυρούντος in a genitive absolute, meaning that God bore witness to Abel on the basis of his offerings. God responded positively to Abel’s offerings because he had a changed heart and true inwardness that included authentic belief. This is why **Genesis 4:4b** says, “And Yahweh had regard (הִתְחַלֵּץ) for Abel and for his offering.” The Septuagint translates this part of v. 4, καὶ ἐπείδεν (looked upon) ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ Ἀβελ καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς δόροις αὐτοῦ.”

Thus, Abel’s sacrifice was not “better” (πλείονα) because it itself inherently affected God, as if Jesus’ “body” as his sacrifice was inherently better than any “body” of a bull or goat. It was better because of Abel’s inward condition, similar to how Jesus’ sacrifice as better because his morally perfect being, action, and role of dying in order to intercede on behalf of sinners at the judgment. He obeyed God inwardly and outwardly. Abel did, too. Cain kind of obeyed God only outwardly.

Certainly, Paul’s intent is for his readers to find encouragement in these stories of Old Testament believers in order that they, too, persevere in their authentic belief in Jesus as the Messiah from a position of changed inwardness.

³⁰³ πιστεῖ Ἐνὼχ μετετέθη τοῦ μὴ ἰδεῖν θάνατον, καὶ οὐχ ἠύρισκετο διότι μετέθηκεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεός. πρὸ γὰρ τῆς μεταθέσεως ὁ μεμαρτύρηται εὐαρεστηκέναι τῷ θεῷ – Again, Paul uses the passive voice μεμαρτύρηται, so that “it had been borne witness” to Enoch that, like Abel (assuming that the condition is always the same—inner change of the heart), his inwardness and belief were authentic, so that God was pleased with him and would grant him eternal life.

Genesis 5:24 Enoch walked with God; and he was not (לֹא־הָיָה) (καὶ οὐχ ἠύρισκετο), for God took/removed him (וַיִּקַּח אֱלֹהִים אֶת־עֵנֹךְ) (ὅτι μετέθηκεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεός).

The point in Genesis 5:24 is that Enoch was a man who “walked with God,” i.e., he believed God for who He is, at the very least that He is the creator of all reality, and because of his biblical subjectivity, he somehow God communicated to him, so that he gained the confidence that he was pleasing to God. This is to say that God somehow made it clear to Enoch that he was not only pleasing to Him but also fully justified because of his genuine belief. And then God removed him from his existence on the earth. To where? And how? We do not know.

³⁰⁴ χωρίς δὲ πίστεως ἀδύνατον εὐαρεστησάιν πιστεῦσαι γὰρ δεῖ τὸν προσερχόμενον ὁ θεὸς ὅτι ἔστιν καὶ τοῖς ἑκζητοῦσιν αὐτὸν μισθαποδότης γίνεται – Paul uses business terminology in order to communicate this idea.

Hebrews 10:35 Therefore, do not throw away your bold confidence that has a great reward (τὴν παρρησίαν ὑμῶν ἧτις ἔχει μεγάλην μισθαποδοσίαν).

Thus, God is a “rewarder” (μισθαποδότης), literally one who pays wages, of the sinful human being, who is characterized by authentic, biblical belief that stems from his changed inwardness and results in his “seeking Him” (τοῖς ἑκζητοῦσιν αὐτὸν). These are the sinful human beings who genuinely want to know God, understand God, learn from God about how to live life wisely, and who truly pursue doing so.

Nevertheless, human beings do not earn God’s “reward.” He grants it to them by His grace on the basis of their proper inwardness that He has created and manifests itself in true belief in all that God says about Himself through the creation and through the biblical message in the midst of life’s circumstances. This would be whereby a person grasps as much as he can about God and becomes committed to acting in a manner that is in line with his belief in God. As a result, this kind of belief is essential as that which God has required for obtaining His promise of eternal life.

Paul is making this point in the light of the truth of Jesus as his readers’ high priest according to the order of Melchizedek which he has presented to them in this letter.

³⁰⁵ πιστεῖ χρηματισθεὶς Νῶε περὶ τῶν μηδέπω βλεπομένων, εὐλαβηθεὶς κατεσκεύασεν κιβωτὸν εἰς σωτηρίαν τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ δι’ ἧς κατέκρινεν τὸν κόσμον, καὶ τῆς κατὰ πίστιν δικαιοσύνης ἐγένετο κληρονόμος – Noah is a great example of someone who believed God for future events that could not be seen with his physical eyes (περὶ τῶν μηδέπω βλεπομένων)—the flood in comparison to eternal life to which Paul refers in 11:1. Therefore, he took to heart what God said about the coming flood and acted on the basis of his belief that God would follow through on His plan to destroy the rest of mankind with a flood, even though his actions of building an ark would have been scorned by his contemporaries because of the otherwise complete lack of “scientific” evidence to the effect that the flood would take place (εὐλαβηθεὶς κατεσκεύασεν κιβωτὸν εἰς σωτηρίαν τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ).

As a result of his genuine belief and acting on his belief, he “condemned the world and became an heir of *dikaio sunay* according to belief” (κατέκρινεν τὸν κόσμον, καὶ τῆς κατὰ πίστιν δικαιοσύνης ἐγένετο κληρονόμος). In other words, he taught the rest of the people in the world (at least in his area of it, and now through the story in the Bible) about God and confirmed his own standing before Him of eventually acquiring eternal life. The result can be, of course, that people now who imitate Noah’s belief also become heirs of justification, so that they will obtain completely and eternal

forgiveness and life through Jesus the Messiah. And, also, our belief and moral pursuits in obedience to God condemn the world similar to what Noah did, because the world should acknowledge and imitate our belief, too.

Thus, taking to heart what God says and then acting on it, as Noah did, are essential characteristics of authentic belief.

2 Corinthians 2:14 Yet, thanks be to God who always leads us in His victory parade in the Messiah, and who manifests the aroma of the knowledge of him through us in every place, **2:15** because we are a fragrance of the Messiah for God among those who are being saved and among those who are being destroyed—**2:16** to the ones an aroma from death to death, and to the others an aroma from life to life.

1 Peter 3:19 On the basis of this [Noah's building the ark] He also went and announced to the spirits in prison, **3:20** who were disobedient back then when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, while the ark was being built, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were rescued in the midst of the water.

Genesis 6:9, Noah was a righteous man (נֹחַ צַדִּיק), blameless in his time (וְהָיָה נֹחַ בְּדָוָר); Noah walked with God (וַיֵּלֶךְ נֹחַ אִתָּהּ); Noah was a *dikaios* man, accepted by God in his generation and who stood to be forgiven eternally by Him. Noah was pleasing to God and on the basis of his belief and inwardness and, thus, would inherit eternal life (cf. Hebrews 11:6). Therefore, to “walk with God” is to live one's life in a manner, both internally and externally, that is pleasing to God (τῷ θεῷ εὐηρέστησεν). And the result is that God forgives the person on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice, death, and role as Messiah and high priest.

Noah was a *dikaios* man, accepted by God in his generation and who stood to be forgiven eternally by Him. Noah was pleasing to God and on the basis of his belief and inwardness and, thus, would inherit eternal life (cf. Hebrews 11:6). Therefore, to “walk with God” is to live one's life in a manner, both internally and externally, that is pleasing to God (τῷ θεῷ εὐηρέστησεν). And the result is that God forgives the person on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice, death, and role as Messiah and high priest.

³⁰⁶ πίστει ἡ καλούμενος Ἀβραάμ ὑπήκουσεν ἐξελθεῖν εἰς ἄ τόπον ὃν ἤμελλεν λαμβάνειν εἰς κληρονομίαν, καὶ ἐξῆλθεν μὴ ἐπιστάμενος ποῦ ἔρχεται – With his genuine belief, Abraham obeyed God's command (καλούμενος) to leave the familiarity of Ur of the Chaldees (in southern Iraq) and travel to the unknown land of Canaan (μὴ ἐπιστάμενος ποῦ ἔρχεται). He had never been there before, but he knew he could trust God for his journey and for getting him there safely.

Paul focuses on this land as Abraham's future “inheritance” instead of on the blessing of eternal life. The former was God's first promise to Abraham, while the latter was His second promise to him, both of which He mentioned in the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12:1-3. Paul will continue to focus on this land and its accompanying promise of God's making Abraham's physical descendants a “great nation” on it throughout the rest of chapter 11.

Thus, obedience to God by means of His grace and through authentic belief, to the extent that sinners can obey God in being willing to leave behind their own plans for their lives and submit to God's, is an essential characteristic of authentic belief and true inwardness.

Genesis 12:1-4a, Now Yahweh said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” So Abram went forth as Yahweh had spoken to him...

³⁰⁷ πίστει παρώκησεν εἰς γῆν τῆς επαγγελίας ὡς ἄλλοτριαν ἐν σκηναῖς κατοικήσας μετὰ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ τῶν συγγενῶν τῆς επαγγελίας τῆς αὐτῆς – God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his physical descendants in Genesis 12:1-3 and that they would eventually become a “great nation” on it. But Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were willing to live as those who did not yet possess the land and were not yet the most powerful nation in human history—until the time when God would fulfill His promise, even if they died before they possessed the land and became great (cf. v. 13). They believed that it was not necessary to grab the land and become great as soon as they arrived but to be granted the land and their authority by God according to His sovereign plan.

As a result, Abraham “lived as a stranger on the land of promise” (παρώκησεν εἰς γῆν τῆς επαγγελίας). He was a stranger or foreigner on his own land that was currently being inhabited by indigenous people who would themselves become foreigners on the land if they continued to live on it. Plus, Abraham lived in temporary dwellings, i.e., “in tents” (ἐν σκηναῖς), and this living situation continued into the next two generations of Isaac his son and Jacob his grandson. Thus, for three generations, until Jacob and his sons moved to Egypt during the famine, the people to whom God gave the land did not really possess it all.

This shows that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were quite content to wait for God to bring about what He had told them that He would do, thereby existing in conditions that were much less than those which would be true for Abraham's descendants who would experience the fulfillment of His promise to him.

Waiting for God to finish what He has said that He is going to do is not easy, but it is necessary as part of what it means to have genuine belief.

³⁰⁸ ἐξεδέχετο γὰρ τὴν τοὺς θεμελίους ἔχουσαν πόλιν ἣς τεχνίτης καὶ δημιουργὸς ὁ θεός – Even though Abraham was living in the “land of promise,” the land of Canaan, he felt like a stranger because, ultimately, he was waiting, in the midst of less than ideal circumstances, for what God had promised in the future—the land's belonging to him and his people when God would deem it the right time at some point in the future. Eventually, God would provide the city-state (πόλιν) on the land by which Abraham and his descendants would exercise authority and governance over it. This we now know through the rest of the Bible is when Jesus returns to set up his millennial kingdom with its capital in Jerusalem (cf. Revelation 20).

In this case, “foundations” (pl.) (τοὺς θεμελίους) refer to God's establishing this city with its city-state. It will be a city that is the capital of a state, a union, and a nation that will be the fulfillment of God's promise to make the Jews the most powerful people and nation in human history. It will have such divinely produced “foundations” that it cannot be

destroyed by man, because God will build it, establish it, and maintain its existence according to His sovereign plan and by His omnipotence (ἡς τεχνίτης καὶ δημιουργὸς ὁ θεός). He will be the demiurge (=people-worker so to speak) of the city and its state and nation.

Also, it makes sense to interpret this city as the earthly city and city-state of the millennial kingdom on the land of Canaan/Israel, rather than the city of the new heavens and earth of Revelation 21, because the former is more coherent with Paul's use of "land of promise" and the patriarchs' "dwelling in tents" in the previous verse and Abraham's "go out to a place which he was later to receive as an inheritance." The point that Paul wants to make in this whole chapter is that the Old Testament Jews (along with a few Gentiles who understood OT history and God's promises) were waiting for God's fulfillment to them specifically of living on the land of Israel safely and securely, along with the importance of authentic belief in what God was saying. This fits well with the rest of the letter regarding Jesus as the sacrificed Messiah for Jews in connection also with the Mosaic Covenant for the Jews, to whom God made the promise of land and being a "great nation."

³⁰⁹ πίστει καὶ αὐτὴ Σάρρα στείρα δύνανται εἰς καταβολὴν σπέρματος ἔλαβεν ὁ καὶ παρὰ καιρὸν ἡλικίας ἔπει πεισθὼν ἡγήσατο τὸν ἐπαγγειλάμενον – Sarah's story is important in this context as the first woman to bear the physical descendants ("building of seed" – εἰς καταβολὴν σπέρματος) of Abraham to whom God promised the land of Canaan/Israel as their inheritance of the millennial and restored kingdom of Israel.

Thus, barren Sarah (Σάρρα στείρα), who was also past the normal age to bear children (καὶ παρὰ καιρὸν ἡλικίας), also had authentic belief in God and His promise to provide them with a child and descendants beyond him (πεισθὼν ἡγήσατο τὸν ἐπαγγειλάμενον), in spite of her behavior that we can read about in the Genesis account and that could lead us to conclude otherwise about her belief. Her behavior only shows that believers are sinners too and can do things that do not look very believing at all.

³¹⁰ διὸ καὶ ἀφ' ἐνὸς ἐγεννήθησαν καὶ ταῦτα νεκρωμένοι, καθὼς τὰ ἄστρα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τῷ πλήθει καὶ ὡς ἡ ἄμμος ἣ παρὰ τὸ χεῖλος τῆς θαλάσσης ἡ ἀναρίθμητος – "These" (ταῦτα) are not just Isaac and Jacob but the innumerable, so to speak, physical descendants of Abraham who would eventually inherit the land of Canaan/Israel along with their status and position as the "great nation" of Genesis 12:1-3. Even though Abraham and Sarah were beyond the age of childbearing (Abraham was "as good as dead" in his ability to father a child (νεκρωμένοι)), and Sarah was basically barren in addition, God fulfilled His promise to them and will continue to do so into the future—which is why I translate the aorist ἐγεννήθησαν with the present tense "are born." It is an ongoing process of God to bring Jews into existence so that eventually there will be the "great nation" of them on the land of Israel under Jesus' rule.

Genesis 22:17, Indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.

Like the fulfillment of the promise to make of Abraham and his descendants a "great nation," the fulfillment of the promise that he would even have descendants occurred by means of a miracle. Plus, Paul is implying that the existence of such a vast number of Jewish descendants has been, is, and will be a miracle, especially when we consider how many of them have died as a result of God's disciplining them for their disobedience to Him.

And, again, waiting with firm and persevering belief for God to produce the miracle is a vital characteristic of people who ultimately inherit the millennial kingdom and the eternal earth beyond it.

³¹¹ κατὰ πίστιν ἀπέθανον οὗτοι πάντες, μὴ λαβόντες τὰς ἐπαγγελίας ἀλλὰ πόρρωθεν αὐτὰς ἰδόντες καὶ ἀσπασάμενοι καὶ ὁμολογήσαντες ὅτι ξένοι καὶ παρεπίδημοί εἰσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς – Here ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς is better translated "on the land" instead of "on the earth," because the context is still the promises (τὰς ἐπαγγελίας) of the "great nation" of Israel on the land of Canaan/Israel. They saw and "greeted" the fulfillment of the promises only from afar (πόρρωθεν αὐτὰς ἰδόντες καὶ ἀσπασάμενοι). And they were but "strangers and refugees on the land" (ξένοι καὶ παρεπίδημοί εἰσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς).

But is this really the life of belief, not receiving (μὴ λαβόντες) what God has promised until later when God wants to fulfill His promises? Yes, indeed. Thus, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob (and the numerous ones after them who lived on the land but were never the "great nation" as defined by God in the OT passages where He exhorts the Jews/Israelites to believe Him as an entire group of people) were willing to wait until the land of Canaan became God's fullblown existential gift to them—even after their own deaths if necessary (when they will be resurrected along with all other believers who have died to meet Jesus at his return to set up his millennial kingdom on the land).

This is true even of the modern state of Israel, because they are not meeting the condition of all having changed hearts that God requires for them to be the "great nation" of Genesis 12:1-3. The land of Israel is theirs in promise, but it will not be fully theirs until Jesus returns and God changes the hearts of all the living Jews, so that they then live in appropriate subjection to him as their Messiah, king, and high priest.

³¹² οἱ γὰρ τοιαῦτα λέγοντες ἐμφανίζουσιν ὅτι πατρίδα ἐπιζητοῦσιν – Here the context points to "homeland" (πατρίδα) as meaning the land of Israel with the Jews living on it as the great nation. By dwelling on the land of Canaan without grabbing for it, the patriarchs exhibited that they were homesick for the land of Canaan as it would be granted them and their descendants by God in the future—during the millennial kingdom (to the extent that they had any details, which were not many, of this kingdom). And by living "with belief," they were "saying such things" (τοιαῦτα λέγοντες) to the effect that they were waiting for God to bring about the fulfillment of His promise. As a result, they were "making it clear that they were seeking a homeland" (ἐμφανίζουσιν ὅτι πατρίδα ἐπιζητοῦσιν) that would appear in the future in God's own time, while they waited, and waited, and waited.

People who are willing to live out their present, earthly existence without ever receiving the ultimate promise of God, eternal life in their “homeland” of the earthly kingdom of Jesus first and then the new earthly kingdom of Jesus second, demonstrate their authentic belief. In the midst of less than ideal and less enjoyable circumstances than they will experience in the future, they are willing to wait for a place that they can truly call home, where they do not feel like strangers and foreigners, i.e., a permanent and eternal place to live that is truly theirs and is completely safe and secure—by God’s grace.

³¹³ καὶ εἰ μὲν ἐκείνης ἔμνημόνευον ἂν ἡς ἔξέβησαν, εἶχον ἂν καιρὸν ἀνακάμψαι – Still referring to land and lands on this earth and not to the eternal earth of Revelation 21, Paul’s point here is to say that even Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob (along with future believing Jews who understood what God was promising as the “great nation” of Israel) were expectantly waiting for the earthly great nation on the land of Canaan. “If they were thinking of that homeland from which they left” (εἰ μὲν ἐκείνης ἔμνημόνευον ἂν ἡς ἔξέβησαν), they could have gone back to Ur or Haran (εἶχον ἂν καιρὸν ἀνακάμψαι = they would have opportunity to return). Those places were relatively safe and secure for Abraham and sufficed as places where they could live and survive relatively well. But they were willing to wait for God to grant them in its completeness a homeland on the land of Canaan—with their Davidic king ruling over them and providing them with forgiveness from God by means of his interceding for them (as David later discovered was going to be the case). And this even if they had to die first. It will be an eternal existence of sorts, but it begins with God’s establishing their homeland for them on the land of Israel, and then they transition to the eternal earth of Revelation 21-22. For this they wait in the midst of their current homesickness as “strangers and refugees on the land” (ξένοι καὶ παρεπίδημοί εἰσιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς – v. 13).

This is at least part of the emotional and psychological perspective that all Christians should adopt as they eagerly await the future Kingdom of God in the midst of less than satisfying and enjoyable circumstances in the present realm.

³¹⁴ νῦν δὲ κρείττονος ὀρέγονται, τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἐπουρανίου – It makes more sense in the context to interpret ἐπουρανίου as “from heaven” instead of “heavenly.” Paul is not talking about the patriarchs’ desiring a better “homeland” (πατρίδα) from v. 14 that comes “from heaven,” not that is “in heaven.” This is because Paul is still talking about the patriarchs (and future Jews living on the land of Canaan/Israel) and their looking forward to God’s promise of making their descendants a “great nation” in the present realm on the land of Israel. Thus, this phrase “from heaven” (ἐπουρανίου) is synonymous with the city’s having “foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (τὴν τοὺς θεμελίους ἔχουσιν πόλιν ἣς τεχνίτης καὶ δημιουργὸς ὁ θεός) in v. 10. The “homeland” comes from God, which is to say, “from heaven (ἐπουρανίου).”

Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob (and others), with their limited knowledge, grasped the significance and magnificence of a city-state, etc. on the land of Canaan which God would miraculously provide at some time in the future. The fact that it is “from heaven” (ἐπουρανίου) means that the very source of this homeland/city is heaven in that it will be the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham as starting the blessing of eternal life and the eternal Kingdom of God when Jesus returns. And it will be so much better (κρείττονος) a “homeland” (πατρίς) than the patriarchs’ (and future Jews’) present situation on the land as well as so much better than if they were to return to the “homeland” of Ur in modern-day southern Iraq, or even to try to establish it themselves (as the Zionists have been attempting to do since the 19th century).

Thus, the “now” (νῦν) includes the time period of the apostle Paul when the Jews are living under the authority of the Romans. By extrapolation, it will include the modern time period for Jews of authentic belief until Jesus’ return.

³¹⁵ διὸ οὐκ ἐπαισχύνεται αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς θεὸς επικαλεσθαι αὐτῶν ἡτοίμασεν γὰρ αὐτοῖς πόλιν – It is understanding the value of the future fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham with a humble desire for it demonstrated by feeling as though one is a stranger on the land of Canaan, as it did exist and as it exists even now with the modern state of Israel in place, to which God responds with granted inwardly changed Jews (and Gentiles) to participate in this future set of circumstances. Therefore, a willingness to go through all of life in the present realm without receiving what God has ultimately promised, the millennial kingdom as the first part of eternal life and moral perfection (complete and substantial change in our moral condition) which will begin for resurrected and lifted from the earth believers at Jesus’ second coming, while never feeling completely settled and secure in this world and yet enjoying whatever elements God grants us to enjoy and weathering whatever hardships God grants us to endure, is an essential characteristic of authentic belief.

In this way, Abraham and his descendants are God’s people, and He is their God, such that He is not ashamed to be their God (οὐκ ἐπαισχύνεται αὐτοὺς ὁ θεός). He is glad to “be called their God” (θεὸς επικαλεσθαι αὐτῶν). And “He has prepared a city-state for them” (ἡτοίμασεν γὰρ αὐτοῖς πόλιν) in the future which will be the “great nation” of Israel.

Consequently, it will be when the entire nation of Israel is made up of changed of heart and committed believers in God when Jesus returns that this will all find its final fulfillment. Therefore, this “city-state” is not the “new Jerusalem,” i.e., the eternal earth, of Revelation 21-22, which is the new creation that comes into existence after the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Instead, it is the city-state of the millennial kingdom when Jesus sets up his capital in the present Jerusalem on his return, restores the Kingdom of Israel, and rules over the entire earth with his fellow Jews (and the resurrected and raptured Jews and Gentiles at his return).

The city-state is “prepared” (ἡτοίμασεν) in that it exists in God’s mind and plans and purposes. Therefore, nothing will prevent it from actually coming into existence when Jesus returns, exactly because God has planned it.

³¹⁶ πίστει προσενήνοχεν ᾿Αβραάμ τὸν Ἰσαάκ πειραζόμενος καὶ τὸν μονογενῆ προσέφερεν ὁ τὰς ἐπαγγελίας ἀναδεξάμενος – Speaking of the people to whom God has made these earthly promises to Abraham, Isaac is the next generation. Yet, God tested Abraham in regard to him (τὸν Ἰσαάκ πειραζόμενος), just as He had done in regard to the land by having him live on it as a stranger and foreigner without ever fully taking possession of it. Isaac, not Ishmael, was the “unique” son (τὸν μονογενῆ) through whom God promised to give Abraham descendants within the Abrahamic Covenant. Therefore, if Isaac died, the promise would seemingly die with him, as implied by the parenthetical quote from [Genesis 21:12](#) in the next verse, Hebrews 11:18. Nevertheless, Abraham was willing to believe God for His promise of physical descendants through Isaac and risk losing the promise by killing Isaac, because he knew that God is trustworthy and that he would not lose the promise. Therefore, he “offered up Isaac” (προσενήνοχεν ᾿Αβραάμ τὸν Ἰσαάκ), while he, Abraham, was “the one who had received the promises” (ὁ τὰς ἐπαγγελίας ἀναδεξάμενος).

This indicates that God’s promises do not come except through situations which “test” those who will receive the promises, in order to evaluate the authenticity of their belief. Do they truly believe that God will remain faithful to His promises, or not? The answer must be, “Yes,” in order for them to receive the fulfillment of these promises—such as the “great nation” of Israel and eternal life, the two promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. Therefore, we should not be surprised by pain and suffering that comes into our lives, and we must not think ill or less of ourselves when we are experiencing an inordinate amount of pain and really struggling to believe God for His faithfulness and promises. This is simply the loving God at work in our hearts and minds and experiences to direct us towards Him to rely on Him alone for our existences.

Also, in this situation, in comparison to Exodus 32, it is very similar in that God is commanding Abraham to bring an end to the life of his son, while Moses is being invited to believe God for the promises which He had made in the past, to use the entire nation of Israel, including the tribe of Judah which would be wiped out, to bless them and the rest of the world. In both cases, the person or persons through whom the promises must come are at risk of being eliminated and unable to play their necessary part in the fulfillment of the promises. And because God is the truthful and faithful God, we know that somehow God will still produce the fulfillment of His promises when it looks from a human standpoint that it will be impossible for Him to do so.

In the case of Isaac, God could resurrect him from the dead so that he grows up, gets married, and has children (specifically Jacob), so that more descendants could come from his children. In the case of all the other Israelites, God could resurrect all of them after He kills them, or He could change His mind and not put them to death. We know from the story in Exodus 32 that the latter is what He did (at the request of Moses) to keep the promise alive. And we need to keep in mind that pain, suffering, and even death are not barriers or obstacles to the transcendent Creator and His ability to fulfill His plans and purposes. Manipulating created reality as He desires is very easy for Him to do. In fact, it is what He is doing at every moment the creation exists.

³¹⁷ πρὸς ὃν ἐλαλήθη ὅτι ἐν Ἰσαάκ κληθήσεται σοι σπέρμα – [Genesis 21:12](#) But God said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named (עַרְבָּאֵי יִצְחָק בְּיִצְחָק) (ὅτι ἐν Ἰσαάκ κληθήσεται σοι σπέρμα).”

Paul quotes the last part of the verse above exactly from the Septuagint. When Sarah has banished Hagar and Ishmael from the family because she saw Ishmael mocking Isaac, Abraham becomes distressed because he does not want to treat his son Ishmael in this way. But God assures him that Ishmael’s descendants will become a nation, too, meaning that he will grow up, get married, and have children who will have children and descendants of their own. And God also says that the promises to Abraham are going to come through Isaac and not through Ishmael when He states as above, “In Isaac your seed [descendants] will be called/named.”

In other words, God has already promised, guaranteed, and assured Abraham that Isaac will produce at least one child, who will continue the promise of his descendants’ eventually becoming the most powerful nation in all human history. Thus, Abraham has God’s word that this is true while he is also being tested by offering him up to God by being in the process of killing him on the altar of sacrifice.

³¹⁸ λογισάμενος ὅτι καὶ ἐκ νεκρῶν ἑγείρειν ᾿δυνατὸς ὁ θεός, ὅθεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐν παραβολῇ ἐκομίσατο – Abraham knew who God is, that death cannot prevent Him from fulfilling His plans, because He has the power to raise people from the dead (ἐκ νεκρῶν ἑγείρειν ᾿δυνατὸς) if it is someone (like Jesus) who plays a very important (or not so important) role in human history. God could have raised Isaac from the dead, just as He had brought Isaac into existence. These creative activities are very simple and easy for the transcendent author of the story of reality, the same way that Charles Dickens could cause any event he wants to occur in his novels.

As a result of his understanding of God, Paul says that Abraham received Isaac from the altar of sacrifice as if God had raised him from the dead. This is the parable or analogy (ἐν παραβολῇ) that God produced in Abraham’s life—like or similar to the very resurrection which he expected would have to be the case if he truly did kill Isaac. The parable was for Abraham, not for the readers, as if this paragraph is pointing to the resurrection of Jesus as the Messiah. God wanted him to grasp who He is as the transcendent Creator and even how He can command one thing and then change His mind and command another, in order to enhance His story and make it tell that much more about Him and His character and plans.

Remarkably, this is how much Abraham believed that God is faithful to His promises. Thus, believing God for His

promises when circumstances appear humanly impossible (for example, when one thinks that his belief is going to be crushed by very, very difficult circumstances) is an essential characteristic of authentic belief.

³¹⁹ πίστει καὶ περὶ μελλόντων εὐλόγησεν Ἰσαὰκ τὸν Ἰακώβ καὶ τὸν Ἡσαῦ – Isaac passed down to his sons the promises of God, even though he was tricked into blessing Jacob and not Esau. But he believed these promises. Thus, his doing the right thing in the midst of others' doing the wrong thing, so that he did the “wrong” thing, did not change the eternal value of his authentic inwardness. And if was entirely in accord with God’s eternal plans. Isaac’s belief in the midst of doing the “wrong” thing included an authentic desire for what God had promised to Abraham of a land and a great nation, which Isaac had not yet seen happen and would not see happen, even though God had promised him exactly the same thing. And now he was going to die.

Thus, these “things to come” refer to the earthly promise of land and great nation, not to eternal life *per se*.

And God had already determined that Jacob would inherit the blessing as He had said to Rebekah in [Genesis 25:23e](#), “The older will serve the younger (Genesis 25:23).”

[Genesis 26:2](#) Yahweh appeared to him [Isaac] and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you. [26:3](#) Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. [26:4](#) I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; [26:5](#) because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.”

³²⁰ πίστει Ἰακώβ ἀποθνήσκων ἑκάστον τῶν υἱῶν Ἰωσήφ εὐλόγησεν καὶ προσεκύνησεν ἐπὶ τὸ ἄκρον τῆς ῥάβδου αὐτοῦ – In a condition of very old age near his death, Jacob believed God for not only eternal life but also the fulfillment of his promises to Abraham’s physical descendants, including His making them a “great nation.” Thus, he “blessed each of the sons of Joseph” (ἑκάστον τῶν υἱῶν Ἰωσήφ εὐλόγησεν), who were half Jewish through their having an Egyptian mother, in order to state explicitly that he was incorporating them into his family and descendants of Abraham through Isaac and himself.

[Genesis 35:9](#) Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him [Jacob]. [35:10](#) God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; you shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.” Thus He called him Israel. [35:11](#) God also said to him, “I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you. [35:12](#) The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you.”

[Genesis 47:31b](#), Then Israel bowed in worship at the head of the bed.

The Hebrew of the verse above reads, **וַיִּשְׁתָּחוּ עַל-רִאשׁוֹ הַמִּטָּה** = and Israel worshiped at the head of the bed. The Septuagint reads, καὶ προσεκύνησεν Ἰσραὴλ ἐπὶ τὸ ἄκρον τῆς ῥάβδου αὐτοῦ = and Israel worshiped on the top of his staff.

Paul uses the same wording as in the Septuagint, but ῥάβδος can mean scepter and, therefore, be used as a metonymy for the people over whom someone rules or whom he leads. And the Hebrew **מִלְכָּה** can also as in Joshua 7:1. In addition, ἄκρον can mean extreme limit or extent, and **שָׂרָא** can also. Thus, Jacob is thinking about believing all that God has promised of his own tribe, the nation of Israel, which will include the extreme limit of their possessing and ruling over the land of Canaan as a great nation. It makes more sense that Paul is saying that it is for this that he is worshiping God as he charges Joseph with the responsibility to bury him in the land of Canaan and not in Egypt. He is looking to the future, even after he dies, for God’s fulfilling His promises to his tribe, so that he wants to rise from the dead so to speak from the land which God has promised to them and where He will establish the city-state of the “great nation” of Israel according to Genesis 12:1-3. Plus, in Genesis 35:11ff., God does say that He “will give the land to [Jacob’s] descendants after [him].”

³²¹ πίστει Ἰωσήφ τελευτῶν περὶ τῆς ἐξόδου τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἐμνημόνευσεν καὶ περὶ τῶν ὁστέων αὐτοῦ ἐνετείλατο – As Joseph reached the goal of his earthly existence, death (τελευτῶν), he reflected back on what God has promised to Abraham, his grandfather, that “the sons of Israel” would be in Egypt for only 400 years and then leave it (περὶ τῆς ἐξόδου τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἐμνημόνευσεν). He also instructed his twelve sons to bury him in the land of promise, the land of Canaan (καὶ περὶ τῶν ὁστέων αὐτοῦ ἐνετείλατο)—all this while he looked forward and believed God for the fulfillment of His promises to Israel, that they would be a “great nation” on the land of Israel. Assuming this to be what he was thinking, Joseph wants to be resurrected from that land when this all happens.

³²² πίστει Μωϋσῆς γεννηθεὶς ἐκρύβη τρίμηνον ὑπὸ τῶν πατέρων αὐτοῦ, διότι εἶδον ἄστειον τὸ παιδίον καὶ οὐκ ἐφοβήθησαν τὸ διάταγμα τοῦ βασιλέως. – Somehow, Moses’ parents discovered (we do not know how, maybe just God’s giving them a subjective impression) that he had a special role within the history of God’s people (διότι εἶδον ἄστειον τὸ παιδίον). But they were going through a difficult time and with belief in God’s promises that included the earthly great nation, they hid him to keep him alive, when the Pharaoh had ordered the death of all newborn Jewish sons (καὶ οὐκ ἐφοβήθησαν τὸ διάταγμα τοῦ βασιλέως). They were more concerned about pleasing God than risking the ire of the Egyptian leader.

[Exodus 2:2](#), The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was good/special (**טָרַח אֶת־בְּנִי**) (ιδόντες δὲ αὐτὸ ἄστειον; ἄστειον = impressiveness of a person of high standing) (Acts 7:20 – καὶ ἦν ἄστειος τῷ θεῷ, i.e., impressive in the eyes of God), she hid him for three months.

However, the context would seem to indicate that both **טָרַח** (literally good) and ἄστειον mean special, not physically

beautiful. Thus, this verse is about the belief in God of Moses' parents regarding his special role within the nation and history of Israel—as a role that pertained to Israel's eventually becoming the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-3, because this must always be kept in mind when interpreting the OT and statements about the Jews and the nation of Israel. We, too, must never allow our fear of other human beings to prevent us from believing in and obeying God for what He has informed and instructed us.

³²³ Πίστει Μωϋσῆς μέγας γενόμενος ἠρνήσατο λέγεσθαι υἱὸς θυγατρὸς Φαραώ – Moses as a grown up was a “great” man (μέγας γενόμενος), because he was raised by Pharaoh's daughter. As a result, he could have become a wealthy and powerful member of his household, but he refused to go that direction in his life (ἠρνήσατο λέγεσθαι υἱὸς θυγατρὸς Φαραώ)—presumably because he wanted to associate with his own people, the Israelites, as Paul goes on to say in the next verse.

³²⁴ μᾶλλον ἐλόμενος συγκακουχεῖσθαι τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ πρόσκαιρον ἔχειν ἀμαρτίας ἀπόλυσιν – Just as it would be sin for the readers to abandon their obedience to God and their belief in Jesus, so also it would have been sin for Moses to abandon his religious and cultural heritage as a descendant of Abraham in order to enjoy living out the rest of his life within the royal household of the Egyptians, pursuing all their sinful practices that included idolatry (ἢ πρόσκαιρον ἔχειν ἀμαρτίας ἀπόλυσιν). Instead, he chose (ἐλόμενος) the temporary hard times of associating with his kinsmen (συγκακουχεῖσθαι τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ), the Jews, than the eternal times of enduring God's wrath and destruction.

Somehow, in the midst of the story of Exodus 2 and his mother's nursing him while he was under the household of Pharaoh's daughter, he learned that he was an Israelite and not an Egyptian. As a result, when he saw an Egyptian taskmaster beating an Israelite, he killed the Egyptian. The next day, two Israelites were fighting, and he attempted to intervene. When they informed him that they knew about his killing the Egyptian the previous day, he realized that he could not keep the incident secret. Plus, the Pharaoh found out about it and wanted to kill him, so that he fled to the land of Midian where he spent forty years, which included his meeting with God who was in the burning bush. Here the “people of God” are the physical descendants of Abraham, to whom God had promised that they would be a great nation on the land of Israel, but who also would spend four hundred years in Egypt.

³²⁵ μείζονα πλοῦτον ἡγησάμενος τῶν Αἰγύπτου θησαυρῶν τὸν ὀνειδισμόν τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἀπέβλεπεν γὰρ εἰς τὴν μισθαποδοσίαν – What does Paul mean by the strange phrase “the disgrace of an/the anointed one”? Several options—1) The disgrace of being hunted by the Pharaoh who wanted to kill him, while he knew that he was eventually going to have a special role in the history of the Israelites because he was basically “an anointed one,” i.e., a special leader of Israel.

2) An ethnic Jew, where the rest of the them were “disgraced” by doing hard labor for the Egyptians and therefore considered less than second-class citizens in Egypt, so that they were special and he was special by guilt by association. But he chose to be a “special” and “disgraced” (τὸν ὀνειδισμόν) Jew rather than fold into Egyptian society.

3) Paul is speaking somewhat metaphorically by thinking ahead on behalf of Moses to the real “anointed one,” Jesus, who becomes the crucified Son of God for even Moses (as Paul has been arguing in this letter), so that Moses can be considered to be in association with the disgrace that Jesus endured from his own people while he pursues his own role within the nation of Israel, including being much less than a member of the royal household of Pharaoh and then rejected by his own people initially, when the two men who were fighting and he tries to reconcile them identify him as a murderer and want nothing to do with him.

Certainly, Moses endured the Israelites' ridicule and rejection when he first approached them to help them when the two men were fighting with one another. But eventually he realized that loyalty to Yahweh and His purposes, including the setting apart of the Jews as His people on earth, would gain him a greater “reward” (τὴν μισθαποδοσίαν – cf. Hebrews 10:35; 11:6), i.e., seeing the fulfillment of God's promises that included both the earthly “great nation” of the Abrahamic Covenant on the land of Israel and eternal life, than that of becoming a royal dignitary within the household of the Pharaoh.

I am inclined to think that #3 above is correct, that Moses as a leader of the Jews who had the right to join with their enemies, the Egyptians, at the highest level of society, considered his special role and the disgrace in the eyes of the Egyptians that this would bring to be “greater riches” (μείζονα πλοῦτον) than remaining with the high society of the Egyptians. Plus, he was looking ahead to the “reward” (ἀπέβλεπεν γὰρ εἰς τὴν μισθαποδοσίαν), which would be participating in the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham of both the “great nation” of Israel and eternal life as the ultimate blessing from God.

So here is a positive “test” of someone's belief, the possibility of a position of power and wealth instead of suffering with the people of God, as opposed to a negative “test,” where the suffering is simply thrust upon a person completely out of his control.

But this is not a voluntary renouncing of wealth and power like Francis of Assisi. Instead, it is not allowing the power, wealth, and success to dissuade him from following the path which God is explicitly offering and even commanding. Also, Moses' disgrace as a member of the disgraced people in the eyes of the Egyptians is similar to but not the same as Jesus' disgrace as the Messiah who is considered disgraced by his own people. This may mean that it makes more sense in the passage to see the “anointed one” as referring to Moses, because God chose Moses for a special purpose which was initially going to involve disgrace from the Israelites. But #3 above still makes more sense to me.

³²⁶ πίστει κατέλιπεν Αἴγυπτον μὴ φοβηθεὶς τὸν θυμὸν τοῦ βασιλέως· τὸν γὰρ ἀόρατον ὡς ὁρῶν ἐκαρτέρησεν – Moses continued and did not waver (ἐκαρτέρησεν) in his belief, caring more for what it meant to obey the invisible

God with His promised outcome (“while seeing the One who is unseen” – τὸν γὰρ ἀόρατον ὡς ὄρων), going back to the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and not being afraid of the anger of the Pharaoh (μὴ φοβηθεῖς τὸν θυμὸν), the visible man, who threatened to kill Moses if he were to see him again for his killing the Egyptian taskmaster. Moses did not back off from following God at the risk of angering the Pharaoh even more. Moses knew that He was going to be ok, even though he could not see God and exactly what He has promised in the future.

Exodus 2:15 When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well.

Even in the future event of crossing through the dry bed of the Red Sea, Pharaoh was visible and commanded a very visible army, which Moses and the Israelites could not match. But Moses trusted God for the result of his leadership, that the Israelites would escape anything Pharaoh tried to do to harm them.

So also Paul’s readers (and future believers in Jesus the Messiah) should not fear anyone who threatens them because of their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. God, the unseen God, will keep them continuing without wavering in their belief until they arrive at the end of their lives and eventually enter into the eternal Kingdom of Israel, first on the land of Israel and then on the new earth.

³²⁷ πίστει πεποιήκεν τὸ πάσχα καὶ τὴν πρόσχυσιν τοῦ αἵματος, ἵνα μὴ ὁ ὀλοθρεύων τὰ πρωτότοκα θίγῃ αὐτῶν – Moses followed through on God’s instructions in Exodus 12 in spite of the risks with respect to the Egyptians, because he feared God, who was going to and did destroy the firstborn of every household. Moses and the Israelites obeyed God’s instructions regarding the first Passover even if it meant that the Egyptians suffered the kind of loss they did in the light of who God is.

Exodus 12:7 Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.

Exodus 12:22 You shall take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood which is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and the two doorposts; and none of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning.

In the same way Paul’s readers should fear God who can destroy them eternally if they give up their belief in Jesus. And the Jews with authentic belief should celebrate the annual Passover before God who will not destroy them the way that He will do so towards their enemies at the return of Jesus.

³²⁸ πίστει διέβησαν τὴν ἐρυθρὰν θάλασσαν ὡς διὰ ξηρᾶς ὁγῆς, ἥς πείραν λαβόντες οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι ἑκατέποθησαν – In Exodus 14:22-29, when the Egyptians received the opportunity to test the situation (cf. Hebrews 11:36), they failed, because God’s purpose for them was to die in the sea and on its temporary dry land (διὰ ξηρᾶς ὁγῆς), not pass through it and live as the Israelites had.

In this way, they demonstrated their unbelief in God and His promises, while the Israelites (or at least a few of with changed hearts) demonstrated their authentic belief in God’s promises, which would include experiencing the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-3 on the land of Israel and then eternal life on the new earth.

So also, Paul’s readers and future Christians should follow God through every experience in life as a miracle of His to demonstrate the authenticity of their belief.

³²⁹ πίστει τὰ τεῖχη Ἱεριχὼ ἔπεσαν κυκλωθέντα ἐπὶ ἑπτὰ ἡμέρας – Paul says that there was least some authentic belief in God’s promises among the Israelites (certainly in Joshua) as they marched around the city of Jericho and the walls fell after entering into the promised land of Canaan and circling the city for seven days (τὰ τεῖχη Ἱεριχὼ ἔπεσαν κυκλωθέντα ἐπὶ ἑπτὰ ἡμέρας – cf. Joshua 6:20).

This is different from Abraham, who had to remain a nomad in the land and this attested to his belief. In contrast, God commanded Joshua to enter the land and overtake it with the rest of the Israelites as an attestation to his and their belief—to the extent that they had it, which they did not all have. As a result, life can look quite dissimilar for two people of belief, depending upon what God’s plans are for them at the time. For Abraham, it was time to live as a foreigner and temporary inhabitant on the land, so that it was not yet time for him to take the land and truly own it as his. For Joshua, the Israelites and he were intended to enter, conquer, and own the land as truly theirs. Nevertheless, they did not become the “great nation” of the promise that God had made to Abraham, because they did not obey God completely, and they did not all have changed hearts and authentic belief.

We notice also that Paul skips the events of the 40-year journey of the Israelites through the Sinai wilderness, which was when the unbelieving generation of Jews died for their disobedience, so that it was only the next generation that entered into the land of Canaan. Paul had referred to time of unbelief when he quoted Psalm 95:7-11 in chapter 3.

³³⁰ πίστει Ῥαβὰ ἢ ἡ πόρνη οὐ συναπώλετο τοῖς ἁπειθήσασιν δεξαμένη τοὺς κατασκόπους μετ’ εἰρήνης – In Joshua 2:9ff., Rahab as a Gentile prostitute (clearly, a sinner) had heard stories and as a result embraced the notion of God’s ability to grant His promises for both the Jews and the Gentiles, so that she also grasped God’s purposes for the city of Jericho—that it was being destroyed and taken over by the Jews. As a result, God chose to save her family from the death of the unbelievers during the destruction of the city (οὐ συναπώλετο τοῖς ἁπειθήσασιν) when she welcomed the Jewish spies into her Gentile city.

It was this simple belief which changed the course of her life in comparison to her fellow city dwellers. She greeted the spies with their ultimate desire in the land and for the land, “Shalom” (δεξαμένη τοὺς κατασκόπους μετ’ εἰρήνης), and counted on and hoped for the same for herself from Yahweh. Thus, she welcomed the Jews into their land, because she recognized that it ultimately belonged to them (?). This is vital for all people to do whenever Jews show up to enter the land of Canaan/Israel and inhabit it. Instead, if people fight against the Jews and reject acknowledging their right to

possess the land as theirs for their eventually becoming and being the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-3, God will destroy them! To be against the Jews is to be against God. Look at what happened to Assyria and Babylon after they attacked and destroyed the two kingdoms in the 8th and 7th/6th centuries respectively, and to Rome after the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D.

Here in Hebrews 11: 31, we have the first Gentile to be mentioned by Paul in this list that opens the door for Paul in v. 35 to refer to the Gentile women who received back their sons after they had died. And it even more demonstrates the importance of belief since Gentiles as members of all the families of the earth are included in the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant which God fulfills towards those with authentic belief.

No matter what ethnicity, sinful human beings should embrace the Jewish God and His Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, while welcoming the Jews into their land in anticipation of Jesus’ return and restoring the Kingdom of Israel on that land.

³³¹ καὶ τί ἔτι λέγω; ἐπιλείψει ‘με γὰρ’ διηγούμενον ὁ χρόνος περὶ Γεδεών, Βαράκ ὁ Σαμψών, Ἰεφθάε, Δαυὶδ τε καὶ Σαμουὴλ καὶ τῶν προφητῶν – Paul now refers to other men whose faith and belief in God he could describe for the same purpose of highlighting how important authentic and persevering belief is for obtaining God’s promises whenever He chooses to fulfill them.

It is not as though all these men were persons of sterling character or great wisdom. However, they did have authentic belief (and therefore changed hearts) in God’s promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, which would eventually result in the “great nation” of Israel and then eternal life on the new earth. And their belief did not need great character and impeccable moral behavior to be authentic. It required the inner commitments of their hearts in the midst of their sinfulness.

Also, we notice that the genuine belief that these men displayed did not result in some sort of victorious Christian life—where everything went perfectly well for them throughout their lives because they were able to appropriate the power of God and remain sin free and problem free. Instead, it resulted in the opposite—difficult and bitter experiences of suffering.

Gideon – Judges 6-8; Barak – Judges 4-5; Samson – Judges 13-16; Jephthah – Judges 11-12; David – 1 Samuel 16ff.; Samuel – 1 Samuel 1:20ff; and the prophets from people like Elijah in 1 Kings 17 to Malachi with his book at the end of the Old Testament.

³³² οἱ διὰ πίστεως ‘κατηγωνίσαντο βασιλείας’, εἰργάσαντο δικαιοσύνην, ἐπέτυχον ἐπαγγελιῶν, ἔφραξαν στόματα λεόντων – Certainly there were some very positive moments in the lives of OT believers as they looked forward to God’s fulfilling His Abrahamic promises to them.

They “defeated kingdoms” – Judges ch 4, 7, 11, 14; 2 Samuel 5:17-20; 8:1f; 10:12.

They “performed righteousness” – 1 Samuel 12:4; 2 Samuel 8:15.

They “obtained promises” – 2 Samuel 7:11f. (the promise of the Davidic Covenant to David).

They “shut the mouths of lions” – Judges 14:6; 1 Samuel 17:34ff; Daniel 6:22.

³³³ ἔσβεσαν δύναμιν πυρός, ἔφυγον στόματα μαχαίρης, ἔδυναμώθησαν ἀπὸ ἀσθενείας, ἐγενήθησαν ἰσχυροὶ ἐν πολέμῳ, παρεμβολὰς ἐκλιναν ἀλλοτρίων –

They “quenched the power of fire” – Daniel 3:23ff.

They “escaped the edge of the sword” – Exodus 18:4; 1 Samuel 18:11; 19:10; 1 Kings 19; 2 Kings 6; Psalm 144:10.

They “were strengthened from weakness” –

They “became mighty in war” – Judges 7:21; 15:8, 15f; 1 Samuel 17:51f; 2 Samuel 8:1-6; 10:15ff.

They “put to flight foreign armies” – Judges 7:21; 15:8, 15f; 1 Samuel 17:51f; 2 Samuel 8:1-6; 10:15ff.

³³⁴ ἔλαβον ἡ γυναῖκες ἐξ ἀναστάσεως τοὺς νεκροὺς αὐτῶν ἄλλοι δὲ εὐμπανίσθησαν οὐ προσδεξάμενοι τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, ἵνα κρείττονος ἀναστάσεως τύχωσιν – But there were also some very negative moments in the lives of OT believers in addition to the fact that God resurrected from the dead some of them, or at least relatives of some of them. This would be a reference to 1 Kings 17:1ff. and 2 Kings 4:36ff. where God raised from the dead the son of the woman of Zarephath with whom Elijah was staying and the son of the Shunammite woman through Elisha respectively. Other authentic believers were willing to suffer greatly by being “tortured” rather than give up their belief in God for the fulfillment of His promises (ἄλλοι δὲ εὐμπανίσθησαν οὐ προσδεξάμενοι τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν). Plus, escape from torture in this life is nothing in comparison to being a participant in the first of the two resurrections, the “better resurrection” (ἵνα κρείττονος ἀναστάσεως τύχωσιν), which will be one of blessing and eternal life on first this earth during the millennial kingdom and then the new earth after it (cf. Revelation 20-22). This is “the better resurrection” (ἵνα κρείττονος ἀναστάσεως τύχωσιν) in comparison to being raised from the dead in this realm only to die again at the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20. This is to say that women of the OT received back their dead children, not that they were snatched from “heaven” and eternal life. Instead, they were brought back from actual death in this present world and earth and lack of existence.

So death does not mean that we are immediately translated into “heaven,” but we await the resurrection of the dead when Jesus returns, in order to live on the present earth for the restored Kingdom of Israel and then the new earth for all eternity with immortal and morally perfect bodies.

³³⁵ ἔτεροι δὲ ἐμπαιγμῶν καὶ μαστίγων πειραν ἔλαβον, ἔτι δὲ δεσμῶν καὶ φυλακῆς –

They “received the test of mockings and whippings” –

They received the test “of chains and imprisonment” – 1 Kings 22:27; 2 Chronicles 18:26; Jeremiah 20:2; 37:15.

They received the opportunity to have their belief tested (cf. Hebrews 11:29). And Paul is implying that they passed

this test as he would want for his readers if they were put in the same situations, and indeed they have to a degree as he mentioned in chapter 10.

³³⁶ ἐλιθάσθησαν, ἑπρίσθησαν, ἐν φόνῳ μαχαίρης ἀπέθανον, περιήλθον ἐν μηλωταῖς, ἐν αἰγείοις δέρμασιν, ὑστερούμενοι, θλιβόμενοι, κακουχούμενοι –

They “were stoned” – 1 Kings 21:13; 2 Chronicles 24:21.

They “were sawn in two” – 2 Samuel 12:31; 1 Chronicle 20:3.

They were “murdered with the sword” – 1 Kings 19:10; Jeremiah 26:23.

They “went about in sheepskins and goatskins, being deprived, afflicted, and mistreated” – 1 Kings 19:13, 19; 2 Kings 2:8, 13f; Zechariah 13:4.

Some very difficult experiences that could easily crush anybody’s faith. But their faith survived we can assume only because of God’s grace and His commitment to strengthen them in their belief.

³³⁷ ὃν οὐκ ἦν ἄξιος ὁ κόσμος, ἔπι ἐρημίαις πλανώμενοι καὶ ὄρεσιν καὶ σπηλαίοις καὶ ταῖς ὀπαῖς τῆς γῆς – “who wandered in deserts, mountains, caves, and holes in the ground” – 1 Kings 18:4, 13; 19:9.

The world is not worthy of such people (ὃν οὐκ ἦν ἄξιος ὁ κόσμος), because the world has abandoned God and deserves His condemnation and destruction, not the benefit of the presence of people who can offer the only message of true hope that has an eternal effect. Believers are an expression of God’s grace, but the question is whether or not unbelievers will take advantage of their presence and become believers themselves.

Paul is indicating that authentic belief will eventually get a person in trouble with “the world” (ὁ κόσμος), but this is why belief looks to God’s promises for its and His ultimate fulfillment. The negative response of the world to authentic belief is not exactly the victorious Christian life for believers and Christians. But God’s promises will result in the greatness of the nation of Israel under Jesus’ rule with resurrected and lifted from the earth believers ruling with him. Our task is to hang in there for this by persevering in our belief and obedience to God’s moral instructions.

³³⁸ καὶ οὗτοι πάντες μαρτυρηθέντες διὰ τῆς πίστεως οὐκ ἐκομίσαντο ‘τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν’ – See also Hebrews 10:36. All the people of authentic belief received the bearing of witness by God to the genuineness of their belief “in view of their belief” (οὗτοι πάντες μαρτυρηθέντες διὰ τῆς πίστεως). Paul probably means that the witness being borne to them was the persevering of their belief under such harsh circumstances that would naturally crush their belief if God did not sovereignly cause it to continue to exist.

Paul’s readers and future Christians should examine the perseverance of their faith and realize that this happens only by means of God’s grace and commitment to them, thus taking note of God’s having borne witness to them that they are authentic believers.

Thus, they demonstrated that they were acceptable to God. They were *dikiai* before God. Yet, God’s plan did not include that, during their lives, they would experience the Jews’ becoming the “great nation” on the land of Israel as God had promised Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. They kept having to wait for Him to fulfill His promise to the Jews, and they were willing to do so for the sake of participating in it.

It is interesting that Paul does not include any apostles in his list of authentic believers and witnesses to the truth of God about Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God whose role is also to be a high priest for Jewish (and Gentile) sinners.

³³⁹ τοῦ θεοῦ περὶ ἡμῶν κρείττον τι πρόβλεψαμένου, ἵνα μὴ χωρὶς ἡμῶν τελειωθῶσιν – The OT believers did not reach their ultimate goal of receiving the earthly, Jewish promises of God by His grace of the “great nation” of Israel (ἵνα μὴ χωρὶς ἡμῶν τελειωθῶσιν – passive voice!), so that there could be others (“us” = Paul and his readers – ἡμῶν) after them who could do so also. In other words, if they had received the fulfillment of God’s promises, Paul and future believers would potentially not even come into existence. Or, clearly the millennial, earthly Kingdom of Israel has not yet come about through God’s power and activity, so that earlier Jewish believers have not reached this kingdom yet, and neither have existing Jewish believers.

Indeed, each *Jewish* believer’s death before Jesus’ return when he inaugurates the restored Kingdom of Israel after the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord of Malachi 4:5 indicates that there is still time for other believers, both Jews and Gentiles, to come into existence and receive the promise of the greatness of the nation of Israel along with the promise of eternal life. In addition, we will experience the fulfillment of God’s promises at the same time as Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, et. al in Hebrews 11—at the return of Jesus and the first resurrection.

Therefore, these statements explode the myth in Christian culture that heaven now exists for believers. Instead, each *Jewish* (and Gentile) believer dies in order to await at Jesus’ return the resurrection of all believers who have died (or who are still alive to be lifted from the earth)—from Abel to the very last believer who dies (or is still alive) before Jesus’ return.

³⁴⁰ τοιγαροῦν καὶ ἡμεῖς τοσοῦτον ἔχοντες περικείμενον ἡμῖν νέφος μαρτύρων – This “great cloud of witnesses surrounding” (τοσοῦτον ἔχοντες περικείμενον... νέφος μαρτύρων) the Jewish believers and Paul in their day are the Old Testament believers of Hebrews 11 who, in a literary and figurative sense, surround Paul and his readers and bear witness to the value of persevering in authentic belief for the sake of obtaining the fulfillment of God’s promises to Abraham of the “great nation” of Israel and the new, eternal life.

Paul is not referring to their witnessing or observing him and his readers now, as if they are in heaven looking down on them. He is referring to these OT believers as those who bore witness with their lives of persevering belief to the importance of continuing to wait and be patient for God to fulfill His promises. They never gave up in their journeys of belief in God on earth, no matter how difficult, confusing, or problematic life became for them. They kept their eyes on the reward of the future Kingdom of Israel under the rule of the Messiah and the future Kingdom of God on the

eternal earth—to the extent that they understood these concepts with what God had revealed to them regarding their details whenever they lived in the ANE.

³⁴¹ ὄγκον ἀποθέμενοι πάντα καὶ τὴν ἑυπερίστατον ἀμαρτίαν – Like Moses’ situation (cf. Hebrews 11:24-26) and the situation of the Israelites who were journeying through the desert (cf. Psalm 95 and Hebrews 3:12ff.), there is the encumbrance and impediment of sin (ὄγκον ἀποθέμενοι πάντα καὶ τὴν ἑυπερίστατον ἀμαρτίαν) of inherent hostility toward God that is in the fabric of the natural born humanity of Paul and his readers and that would lead them astray and distract them (εὐπερίστατον) so as to compromise with the “world” and buy into even the erroneous, Jewish religious culture that lacks authentic inwardness and belief.

Engaging in following this sin would be in order either to grumble against God because of experiencing suffering and pain in the present realm or in order to avoid it. Paul and his readers are tempted to abandon their belief in Jesus as the Messiah in order to avoid the persecution that they are enduring from Jewish unbelievers. But this is what Paul has been stating would be rebellion against God and a concrete impediment to their obtaining His blessing of the Kingdom of God and eternal life—because they would be unwilling to suffer in a similar manner to Jesus. By extrapolation, every other sin, which would distract them and us and seduce them and us from keeping our eyes on the prize of the Kingdom of God, we should also get rid of in our lives. We should never allow the imperfections of this existence, no matter how extensive they are, from motivating us to persevere in our faith for the sake of obtaining the promises of God, which He will eventually bring about.

³⁴² δι’ ὑπομονῆς τρέχωμεν τὸν προκειμένον ἡμῖν ἀγῶνα – The Greek races had the goal of finishing and winning. In this case, the goal and winning is obtaining the earthly millennial Kingdom of God and the new earthly eternal Kingdom of God that will constitute the Sabbath rest of God (cf. Hebrews 4:1-11). Therefore, Paul urges his readers and himself to run the race of life towards the finish line of the Kingdom of God “with endurance” (δι’ ὑπομονῆς), in the midst of all that it brings them (and us) with the thought in mind that they and we are committed to finishing and winning the race, regardless how much suffering we endure in the present existence. This is “the race that is set before us” (τὸν προκειμένον ἡμῖν ἀγῶνα).

And the OT witnesses who lived before these Christians and Paul, with their former and persevering belief, “surround” and “lie around” them (περίκειμαι), while the “contest” and “race” of life leading up to the Kingdom of God “lies before” them (πρόκειμαι). This is the historical and theological context in which these Jewish believers engage in life with their authentic belief for the purpose of obtaining the future Kingdom of God with Jesus their king and high priest.

³⁴³ ἀφορώντες εἰς τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν Ἰησοῦν – Paul encourages his readers, along with himself, to “fix their eyes on” (ἀφορώντες) Jesus, even though this is only metaphorical. Instead of modeling their lives after Jews who focus on the Mosaic Covenant apart from Jesus, Paul wants his readers to consider the example of Jesus, who finished the race of his own belief and won it by persevering in his belief and dying on the cross. He was “the leader in belief and the one who finished the race” (τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν).

In other words, he endured the hostility of his fellow Jews who were unbelievers and, in the process, finished the race that God had set before him, which included the very difficult end of his race, dying on the cross. Therefore, to follow Jesus, metaphorically, is to run the same kind of race that he ran in the midst of the same kind of opposition from a hostile world that he encountered. But he reached the finish line and crossed it into the eternal Kingdom of God that he himself will bring about when he returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel.

Similarly, we follow right behind him and run right behind him in order to cross the same kind of finish line into the same Kingdom of God.

³⁴⁴ ὃς ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς ὑπέμεινεν ὁ σταυρὸν αἰσχύνης καταφρονήσας ἐν δεξιᾷ τε τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ ἑκαθήκεν – Jesus’ “joy” was something he was looking forward to as the final outcome of his life that was “set before him” (τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς), i.e., becoming the king of the eternal Kingdom of God and high priest for believers at the final judgment. Thus, he was willing to “endure the cross” (ὑπέμεινεν ὁ σταυρὸν) and suffering of a death filled with humiliation and shame (αἰσχύνης), which he felt emotionally, psychologically, and physically. As a result, he gained his position of metaphorically sitting at the right hand of God (ἐν δεξιᾷ τε τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ ἑκαθήκεν) in order to rule over Jewish (and Gentile) sinners and to intercede on their behalf before God for His eternal mercy.

Psalm 110:1 Yahweh says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand (שֵׁב לְיָמֵינִי) (κάθου ἐκ δεξιῶν μου) until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet (עַד-אֶשְׁתִּית אֲבִיבִי תַּחַת-רַגְלִי) (ἕως ἂν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου).”

Psalm 110:4 Yahweh has sworn and will not change His mind, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

David states that his Lord is both king of the universe and high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (cf. Hebrews 7-10). This is different from the people in Hebrews 11 who are still in their graves. Jesus is out of the grave and has taken his place as ruler of the created reality, even though his kingdom has not come into existence as it will when he returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel on the land of Israel and rules both the Jews on this land and the Gentiles in the rest of the world.

Consequently, he is the best example of persevering belief and the one who truly leads us into the kingdom, because he has reached his goal as king and high priest and the immortality that is necessary for him to fulfill these roles. He was already morally perfect as the icon of God within the creation, but now his body has become eternal besides. We look forward to becoming both by running our races and finishing them right behind him.

³⁴⁵ ἀναλογίσασθε γὰρ ὅτον τοιαύτην ὑπομεμενηκότα ὑπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἀντιλογίαν, ἵνα μὴ κάμῃτε ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὁμῶν ἐκλυόμενοι – Paul switches from including himself in his exhortations to encouraging directly his readers directly. Jesus had to run toward the goal and end of his race while being mistreated by angry people, even to the point of death by crucifixion. He “endured such hostility by sinners towards himself” (τὸν τοιαύτην ὑπομεμενηκότα ὑπὸ τῶν ἁμαρτωλῶν εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἀντιλογία). Paul wants his readers to “consider” and think about this (ἀναλογίσασθε).

As a result of Jesus’ endurance and perseverance in his belief and faith, he did not give up on God and his belief in His plans and purposes for him that included his suffering on the cross. Paul wants his readers to draw encouragement and motivation to do the same from Jesus’ example, so that they, too, do not “become weary” and “fail with respect to [their] existences” (μὴ κάμῃτε ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὁμῶν ἐκλυόμενοι), i.e., with respect to their belief in God’s love, faithfulness, and purposes for them to acquire the eternal Kingdom of God and their obedience to His moral instructions in the midst of whatever suffering they as authentic Christians experience from their fellow Jews who are unbelievers.

³⁴⁶ οὐπω ἄχρις αἵματος ἀντικατέστητε πρὸς τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἄνταγωνιζόμενοι – Paul reminds his readers that, in both their internal battle of resisting the sin of rebelling against God, which could lead to giving up on believing in Jesus as the Messiah, who provided them with such a wonderful example of persevering faith, and their internal battle against the sin and rebellion of others, which could also lead to giving up their belief, they have not yet been persecuted as harshly as Jesus was, who was killed for his belief and claim to be the Messiah. They have “not yet opposed” their persecutors “to the point of blood” (μέχρις αἵματος ἀντικατέστητε) as they “struggle against sin” (πρὸς τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἄνταγωνιζόμενοι).

This is Paul’s way of saying the same thing as Jesus in Matthew 10:28, “Do not fear those who kill the body but who cannot kill the existence. Instead, fear Him who is able to destroy both existence and body in Gehenna.” It is not that Paul is saying that persecution will never lead to death. This is why he uses the word οὐπω = “not yet.” But, so far, God has stopped short of bringing the same conclusion in the lives of his readers as He did for Jesus, which gives them ample opportunity to demonstrate authentic belief by persevering in it through the difficult times which they are experiencing. Maybe they would welcome death as an end to the pain of their suffering, but, so far (!), Paul will go on to say that their current suffering is part of God’s love for them in training them up to become mature believers in Him, so that they reach their goal of the Kingdom of God.

³⁴⁷ καὶ ἐκλέγησθε τῆς παρακλήσεως, ἥτις ὑμῖν ὡς υἱοῖς διαλέγεται – Paul reminds his Jewish readers that, hopefully, they are remembering their Hebrew scriptures (just as Christians need to remember their whole Bibles). Surely, they have been attending synagogue on a weekly basis, so that, in the midst of the suffering that they are experiencing from their persecutors, they are keeping in mind an important idea that the Old Testament expresses. Thus, the statement, “you have not forgotten altogether the helpful persuasion that instructs you as sons” (ἐκλέγησθε τῆς παρακλήσεως, ἥτις ὑμῖν ὡς υἱοῖς διαλέγεται).

The Old Testament contains the same message as the NT, that sinners, even the Jewish nation, will go through hardship that is orchestrated by and from God in order to refine their belief and instruct them to persevere in holding on to the truth. And now Paul will quote Proverbs 3:11-12 to this effect.

³⁴⁸ υἱέ ὁμου, μὴ ὀλιγώρει παιδείας κυρίου μηδὲ ἐκλύου ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐλεγχόμενος ὃν γὰρ ἀγαπᾷ κύριος παιδεύει, μαστιγοῖ δὲ πάντα υἱὸν ὃν παραδέχεται –

Proverbs 3:11-12 – 11 My son, do not reject the discipline of Yahweh or loathe His reproof (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ לֹא יִשְׁמָד וְלֹא יִשְׁמָד וְלֹא יִשְׁמָד) (υἱέ, μὴ ὀλιγώρει παιδείας κυρίου μηδὲ ἐκλύου ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐλεγχόμενος). 12 For whom Yahweh loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֵלֵינוּ לֹא יִשְׁמָד וְלֹא יִשְׁמָד וְלֹא יִשְׁמָד) (ὃν γὰρ ἀγαπᾷ κύριος παιδεύει, μαστιγοῖ δὲ πάντα υἱὸν ὃν παραδέχεται).

Paul quotes the Septuagint and these verses. God remains faithful to His people, bringing “loving” training and discipline (wrath?) upon the Israelites as a nation because of their unchanged hearts, unbelief, and disobedience to the Mosaic Covenant, thus also bringing loving training and reproof upon believing Jews (and Gentiles) because of their continued sinfulness under the New Covenant.

It may feel as though God is punishing us believers, but the loving hardship is intended to produce, through the inward activity of God and His Holy Spirit, persevering belief that will result in eternal mercy in the Kingdom of God, starting with the “great nation” of Israel on the land of Israel and ending with the new, eternal earth. As a result, there will be hard times in believers’ lives, not because they have done anything wrong, but because it is good training in the course of faith and belief.

Paul is saying that this is what is happening to these Jewish believers. God is training them as a father trains his own children through hard and even painful work in order to shape them into the kind of people that they need to be to pursue obedience to God and to be successful in life while surrounded by lazy, deceitful, and evil people.

³⁴⁹ εἰς παιδείαν ὑπομένετε, ὡς υἱοῖς ὑμῖν προσφέρεται ὁ θεός. τίς γὰρ υἱὸς ὃν οὐ παιδεύει πατήρ – I would take this as a command. Paul wants them to “persevere for the purpose of training” (εἰς παιδείαν ὑπομένετε). They should look with biblical eyes at the hardship which is occurring in their lives, and they should be willing to subject themselves to the training that their “Father,” God, is taking them through (ὡς υἱοῖς ὑμῖν προσφέρεται ὁ θεός). In this way they will persevere in their belief just as the OT believers of chapter 11 did.

For “what son is there whom his father does not train” (τίς γὰρ υἱὸς ὃν οὐ παιδεύει πατήρ)? If he is a good father,

the answer is, none. Good fathers are willing to subject their children to loving hardship and work in order to train them how to live life well and skillfully. They do not pamper them and give them the impression that life can be easy and even perfect. For this is no perfect moment in anyone's life—as much as our minds look for some place and experience where this is the case.

³⁵⁰ εἰ δὲ χωρὶς ἔστε παιδείας ἢς μέτοχοι γεγονάσιν πάντες, ἄρα νόθοι καὶ οὐχ υἱοὶ ἔστε – Paul's readers might wonder if it were possible to be a child of God without suffering/pain and the training for the purpose of bringing about persevering faith (εἰ δὲ χωρὶς ἔστε παιδείας ἢς μέτοχοι γεγονάσιν πάντες)? And the answer is a resounding, No. It would mean that they are without God as their Father and, therefore, bastards (νόθοι), spiritually speaking. The fact is that all (πάντες) Christians find themselves being trained by God at various times of their lives. No authentic believer escapes God's love, training and the resultant maturation of their belief by means of hard times, because they all are "sons" (υἱοί). So if there is no training from God, then they are not "sons" of God.

³⁵¹ εἶτα τοὺς μὲν τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν πατέρας εἶχομεν παιδευτὰς καὶ ἐνετρεπόμεθα· οὐ πολὺ ὅ[δὲ] μᾶλλον ὑποταγησόμεθα τῷ πατρὶ τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ ζήσομεν – The analogy of earthly fathers holds, so that, whether or not we like it, the only way to gain the Kingdom of God and eternal life is by submitting to the training of the Father of spirits (ὑποταγησόμεθα τῷ πατρὶ τῶν πνευμάτων), the One who is the very source of the existence of our "spirits," i.e., of our persons, the design of our personalities, ambitions, and beliefs, and our stories, because we are those who continue our existence into eternal life and the Kingdom of God.

Our earthly fathers were "fathers of the flesh" (τοὺς μὲν τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν πατέρας) and were our "trainers" (παιδευτὰς) that we might survive and behave properly in this life. We "respected" (ἐνετρεπόμεθα) them for this role that God gave them by design within the created reality, meaning that we were willing to allow them to guide us in what it means to be a human being (especially for Paul and his fellow Jews who at least had access to the Hebrew scriptures!). "How much more should we submit" (οὐ πολὺ ὅ[δὲ] μᾶλλον ὑποταγησόμεθα) to God who trains us to subordinate ourselves to His plan for our life and to gain eternal life (καὶ ζήσομεν).

Obviously, this proverb does not apply to fathers who reject God and rebel against Him in the midst of "training" their children. Does it really make sense to respect evil fathers? No.

³⁵² οἱ μὲν γὰρ πρὸς ὀλίγας ἡμέρας κατὰ τὸ δοκοῦν αὐτοῖς ἐπαίδευον, ὁ δὲ ἐπὶ τὸ συμφέρον εἰς τὸ μεταλαβεῖν τῆς ἀγιότητος αὐτοῦ – The job of earthly, Jewish fathers, who train their children, ends when they grow up and become adults. They train their children "for a few days according to what seemed best to them" (πρὸς ὀλίγας ἡμέρας κατὰ τὸ δοκοῦν αὐτοῖς), implying that it is not always the best training that the children could use. But if it is from the Hebrew Bible, then it is better than what pagan and evil fathers would do.

God's training of Christians to mature them and encourage them to persevere in their belief goes on during the rest of their lives because God has eternity in mind, i.e., that which is advantageous (ὁ δὲ ἐπὶ τὸ συμφέρον). God wants Christians to persevere in their belief, which is "to participate in His being set apart" (εἰς τὸ μεταλαβεῖν τῆς ἀγιότητος αὐτοῦ), which will result in their reaching eternity when Jesus returns and they are raised from the dead or raised from the earth if they are still living when he arrives. God is set apart by His moral perfection, and He has predestined authentic Christians to become set apart and morally perfect like Him in the Kingdom of God. As a result, Christians never really grow up in the same way that children do (or should do) with respect to their earthly fathers—by leaving them. This is to say that they never get to a point where they should not need the training of their "Father" God. Of course they need it, so that always remained under the tutelage of God.

In order to participate in what it is for God to be set apart and different from the world that is hostile towards Him and that culminates in being set apart and different by obtaining moral perfection in the eternal Kingdom of God, believers must go through a training process in the midst of their continued sinfulness and rebellion. If a person is fundamentally willing to participate with God by being different like Him in a hostile world when things are even difficult and suffering is involved, then the person will meet the condition required for obtaining eternal life. But this takes the internal resolve of persevering in belief while, most likely, wishing the pain to go away—the latter of which is only human. And this perseverance happens only because God by His grace causes it to happen. But it is still painful—as Paul goes on to say!!

³⁵³ πᾶσα ᾧ δὲ παιδεία πρὸς μὲν τὸ παρὸν οὐ δοκεῖ χαρὰς εἶναι ἀλλὰ λύπη, ὅστερον δὲ καρπὸν εἰρηνικὸν τοῖς δι' αὐτῆς γεγυμνασμένοις ἀποδίδωσιν δικαιοσύνης – Yes, God's training can definitely hurt. It is not "joyful, but sorrowful" (χαρὰς εἶναι ἀλλὰ λύπη). God never promised that the Christian life could be without pain and suffering—even though some Christians convince themselves that Jesus' death buys this for them—that he suffered in this life so that they would not have to suffer in this life, if they have enough faith in him (probably the same way that they believe that they can heal people by means of their belief; as if God is always waiting to provide a wealthy and healthy life for Christians, if they will be avail themselves of Him through their persistent prayer, fasting, and faith). Thus, they think that they can live the victorious Christian life on the basis of his death on the cross. But Paul is teaching a different kind of Christianity here, that God Himself brings suffering and pain into Christians' existence in order to train them in persevering in their faith.

And as the result, the outcome of God's training for Christians is *the eternal Kingdom of God*, the shalom environment (καρπὸν εἰρηνικὸν) that comes from our justification, which is our acquiring a standing of soon to obtain the Kingdom of God by our being accepted by Him through belief in the Messiah. Translating εἰρηνικὸν as *shalom* rather than peaceful makes more sense in line with Paul's use of joyful and sorrowful earlier in the verse and his speaking to Jewish Christians who have been exposed to the OT and its multiple mentions of *shalom* (238x of שָׁלוֹם). *Shalom* is a

flourishing and thriving existence that is joyful and not sorrowful and that becomes the existential experience of Christians in the eternal Kingdom of God.

Dikaiousune is “justification” and here refers to being in a place where one stands to inherit eternal *shalom*, the latter being the “fruit” of the former. Consequently, *dikaiousune* is the fruit of the training and that one knows he is in by virtue of the training and testing of his belief, which endures the hardships and difficulties of the training. As a result, this is also the eternal shalom which is the fruit of dikaiousune. To be trained by God in persevering belief and obedience through suffering is to be in a place where one stands to receive eternal life. And to be in this place of standing is the the best place a sinful human being can inhabit during his life this side of eternity—regardless of his present circumstances, whether joyful or sorrowful.

³⁵⁴ διὸ τὰς παρειμένας χεῖρας καὶ τὰ παραλελυμένα γόνατα ἀνορθώσατε –

Isaiah 35:3 Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble (יְהִי כֹחַ יְהוָה וְיִבְרְכּוּ כְּשִׁלּוֹת אֲמָצִי) (ισχύσατε, χεῖρες ἀναιμένας καὶ γόνατα παραλελυμένα = Strengthen the loosened hands and weak knees) – Isaiah is encouraging the Jews who are weak in faith and living in the midst of rebellious Jews, while experiencing God’s final episode of wrath, the Day of the Lord, on Israel just before Jesus’ return, to look forward to God’s fulfilling His promises of causing them to live on their land in complete peace and security. He wants them to persevere in their faith in spite of the hardships they are and will be enduring because of God’s disciplining them.

Paul is speaking metaphorically of a person’s motivation to persevere in belief in the eternal Kingdom of God through Jesus’ intercession and as our leader. The idea is to strengthen oneself with the truth of the gospel and God’s sovereignty, faithfulness, and grace to His people both to train them through hardship, such as persecution, and to cause them to reach the ultimate goal of eternal life. And Paul wants them to do this when they are weary from enduring suffering and even shaking in fear because of the potential for harm and hardship in the present life.

³⁵⁵ καὶ τροχιάς ὀρθάς ᾗ ποιεῖτε τοῖς ποσὶν ὑμῶν ἵνα μὴ τὸ χωλὸν ἐκτραπῇ, ἰαθῇ δὲ μᾶλλον – A lame leg could cause someone to walk in circles, never reaching his destination, which requires proceeding on a straight path in only one direction. Paul uses the metaphor to suggest that unbelief will only cause a sinful human being to walk in circles and never reach the goal of God’s blessing of eternal life. Only healing and fixing the lame leg of unbelief so that a person can walk on the straight path of belief and pursuing goodness and morality will allow him to so.

Proverbs 4:26 Watch the path of your feet (פְּלִס מַעַלְלֶיךָ רַגְלֶיךָ) (ὀρθὰς τροχιάς ποιεῖ σοὶς ποσὶν) and all your ways will be established. **4:27** Do not turn to the right nor to the left. Turn your foot from evil.

Solomon encourages his son to look straight ahead at morality and its payout, to live a life of wisdom and not foolishness.

Paul is offering the same encouragement and motivation to persevere in belief, to live on the basis of the truth of the gospel of God’s grace and mercy through the sacrificed and resurrected high priest Jesus. This is the wise way to live life, because its outcome is eternal life—even if the training by God has involved unwise decisions and choices on the part of the trainee in the midst of enduring the pain of His training.

Again, speaking metaphorically, the belief of Paul’s readers has been injured, so that they are potentially walking through life lame and in circles from the lies being forced upon by the unbelieving Jews. This has resulted in their belief’s coming close to being “knocked out of joint,” i.e., being lost and non-existent anymore. Therefore, Paul wants them to heal their belief by persevering in embracing Jesus as King and high priest for the sake of eternal life. If their belief becomes “dislocated,” then they lose their opportunity for eternal life. If it is healed through grasping the truth and through the work of God’s grace, they will gain eternal life.

Lame belief is not unbelief. Dislocated belief is. It is certainly not unusual to experience a decided limp in one’s belief. But the truth and confidence in it as one embraces it—by fixing one’s eyes on Jesus’ experience of willingly suffering death on the cross—heals the limp and strengthens the legs that being seduced by falsehood and unbelief causes.

³⁵⁶ εἰρήνην διώκετε μετὰ πάντων καὶ τὸν ἀγιασμόν. οὐ χωρὶς οὐδεὶς ὄψεται τὸν κύριον – Paul is exhorting his Jewish readers to pursue *shalom*, i.e., the wholesome existence God has promised in eternal life, and a life of being set apart in company with all those who are pursuing this same thing (probably he means both Jews and Gentiles), by doing it together with the single message of Jesus as the Messiah, Son of God, and high priest on their behalf (εἰρήνην διώκετε μετὰ πάντων καὶ τὸν ἀγιασμόν).

Ultimately, all Christians should pursue being different from the world (καὶ τὸν ἀγιασμόν) according to God’s work within them, especially in the midst of sorrowful and difficult training events—such as the persecution that Paul’s readers are experiencing from unbelieving Jews. It is authentic inwardness and facing into the depth of their sin which makes them unworthy of God’s forgiveness and blessing of life that will result in their eternal salvation and allow a person to see Jesus, the Lord of God’s kingdom (οὐ χωρὶς οὐδεὶς ὄψεται τὸν κύριον).

Without being different from the world (and being willing to submit to God’s training that is painful and sorrowful), a person cannot see Jesus when he returns and participate in the Kingdom of God.

³⁵⁷ ἐπισκοποῦντες μὴ τις ὑστερῶν ἀπὸ τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ, μὴ τις ῥίζα πικρίας ἄνω φύουσα ἔνοχλῃ καὶ ᾗ δι’ αὐτῆς μιανθῶσιν ἧ πολλοί –

Deuteronomy 29:18, “so that there will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from Yahweh our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; that there will not be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood” (μὴ τίς ἐστὶν ἐν ὑμῖν ῥίζα ἄνω φύουσα ἐν χολῇ καὶ πικρίᾳ).

Wormwood is a woody shrub with a bitter aromatic taste, used as an ingredient in vermouth and absinthe and in medicine.

Psalms 10:7 His mouth is full of curses and deceit and oppression (וּמִן־מַלְּאָכָיו וּמִן־חַיִּי וּמִן־חַיִּי) (οὐ ἄρα τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ γέμει καὶ **πικρίας** καὶ δόλου); under his tongue is mischief and wickedness.

Lamentations 3:15 He has filled me with bitterness (בְּמַרְרָה בָּרַחֲמֶיךָ) (ἐχόρτασέν με **πικρίας**). He has made me drunk with wormwood (בְּחֹלֶה) (ἐμέθυσέν με χολῆς).

Acts 8:23 “For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity” (εἰς γὰρ χολὴν **πικρίας** καὶ σύνδεσμον ἀδικίας ὁρῶ σε ὄντα or ἐν χολῇ, which makes more sense).

Paul is talking about the poison (“root of bitterness”) of resentment and rebellion toward God in the light of his readers’ being mistreated, so that they end up angry and disobedient towards Him as a manifestation of unbelief (=idolatry in Deuteronomy 29:18 above), that would move a person to get so angry with God that he would give up being set apart and different by his inwardness and belief that are the necessary conditions for salvation and eternal life.

In addition, once one person in a group that is suffering persecution and pain becomes resentful and angry by grabbing “idolatry” (abandoning God for the supposed but false comfort of the creation) as his solution, others can soon follow suit, especially after the first person starts voicing his resentment and justifying it (“with which many become polluted [with unbelief]” (‘δὲ αὐτῆς’ μιανθῶσιν ἑ πολλοί))—just like the people of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, who collectively grumbled against God and convinced each other that they were doing the right thing for themselves by refusing to believe in Him for His providence.

Romans 3:14 “Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness (ὃν τὸ στόμα ἔαρᾶς καὶ **πικρίας** γέμει).”

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ).

Ephesians 4:31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice (πᾶσα **πικρία** καὶ θυμὸς καὶ ὀργὴ καὶ κραυγὴ καὶ βλασφημία ἀρθήτω ἀφ’ ὑμῶν σὺν πάσῃ κακίᾳ).

³⁵⁸ μή τις πόρνος ἢ βέβηλος ὡς Ἡσαῦ, ὃς ἀντὶ βρώσεως μιᾶς ἀπέδετο τὰ πρωτοτόκια ἑαυτοῦ – Paul urges his readers not to let the allure of the comforts and pleasures of this creation and this life, even social acceptance in one’s community, dissuade a person from persevering in belief in the truth of Jesus as the suffering Messiah and high priest. He refers to Genesis 25 where Esau let the pain and suffering of his physical hunger (“one meal”) (ἀντὶ βρώσεως μιᾶς) overshadow his understanding of and desire for the value of his inheritance and all that comes with it as the firstborn son (“his rights to be the firstborn” (τὰ πρωτοτόκια ἑαυτοῦ)).

In the whole scheme of things, including the Abrahamic Covenant, Esau took something valuable, God’s promise to Abraham that he would eventually become a “great nation” and which Esau was culturally inheriting as the firstborn son, and exchanged it for food—the immediate stuff of this creation. He trivialized and denigrated the promise of the future, considering it insignificant in comparison to the satisfying of his physical desire. He allowed his sensual need to rid himself immediately of the pain of of hunger to convince himself that his inheritance from God was worthless in comparison. This made him immoral and worldly (πόρνος ἢ βέβηλος), i.e., just like everybody else in the world.

Paul even uses the word πόρνος, which typically refers to sexual immorality, to refer to Esau and his readers if they abandon their belief in God’s promise through Jesus as their Messiah and high priest. And the word βέβηλος refers to someone who has no interest in matters that transcend the created reality, i.e., in God, the only God! But nothing in this world is worth God and His future inheritance of the eternal Kingdom of God.

But sometimes it is really difficult to stay the course of authentic belief and obedience to God, because we just want the pain to go away—because it is so intense! And we are tempted to want or do something that would mean giving up God’s promise of eternal life. But only God can make the pain go away if He chooses as He grants us enough proven belief that we accept what has happened in our life as from the sovereign hand of a loving God, that we live in and learn from what has happened and move on—only to be willing to wait for the next time that God trains us with a sorrowful situation according to what Paul describes in 12:7-11 above.

³⁵⁹ ἴστε γὰρ ὅτι καὶ μετέπειτα θέλων κληρονομήσαι τὴν εὐλογίαν ἀπεδοκιμάσθη, μετανοίας γὰρ τόπον οὐχ εὑρεν καίπερ μετὰ δακρύων ἐζητήσας αὐτήν – Paul takes the Old Testament story of Esau in Genesis 25 and 27, and makes it analogous to the final judgment. Esau sought the full inheritance due a firstborn son after Jacob had tricked his father, Isaac, out of it (θέλων κληρονομήσαι τὴν εὐλογίαν ἀπεδοκιμάσθη). He even pled with him and shed copious tears (μετὰ δακρύων ἐζητήσας αὐτήν = the blessing (τὴν εὐλογίαν)), but it was culturally impossible for Isaac to change the blessing of the firstborn from Jacob to Esau. This is to say that Esau “found no place for a change of mind” by Esau (and for repentance for himself regarding giving up his birthright for food from Jacob) (μετανοίας γὰρ τόπον οὐχ εὑρεν).

Paul is saying that Esau’s experience is analogous to a person who has committed himself during this life to giving up God’s promise of the blessing of the restored Kingdom of Israel on this earth and then finds himself at the judgment of God when Jesus returns or at the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Once the unbeliever arrives at the judgment, he, like Esau who was later than Jacob in securing the firstborn blessing from their father, will have lost the opportunity for God to change His mind so that He can inherit the blessing of eternal life (and too late for his own repentance that he failed to engage in during his life). It will be too late to turn from the what he thought was the attractiveness, the comfort, the happiness, and the security of the present life and acquire, instead, eternal life. Even though he may shed copious tears at the judgment, he will not be able to express authentic belief in God and satisfy His condition for entering into the Kingdom of God.

It is curious that Esau willingly sold his birthright for a meal and then was surprised when Jacob tricked their father

Isaac into granting it to him. It shows the distorted thinking that accompanies rebellion against God and trivializing the things that are truly important, especially God's eternal mercy and life. And Jacob was even right when he told his father that the reason why it took so little time to find the food that his father requested was because God had provided it—back when He told Rebekah his mother that Esau and his descendants would serve (עֲבָדוּ) (δουλεύσει) Jacob and his descendants.

³⁶⁰ οὐ γὰρ προσεληλύθατε ψηλαφωμένῳ ἔρει καὶ κεκαυμένῳ πυρὶ καὶ γνώφῳ 'καὶ ζόφῳ' καὶ θυέλλῃ καὶ σάλπιγγος ἤχῳ καὶ φωνῇ ῥημάτων, ἧς οἱ ἀκούσαντες παρητήσαντο ὅμη ἡ προστεθῆναι αὐτοῖς λόγον – This list includes all the ways that God revealed himself to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai in Exodus 19-20 when He presented the Mosaic Covenant to them and displayed the truth of His being a God of justice, including the fact that the Israelites begged that God stop talking because His voice and commandments were so frightening (cf. Deuteronomy 5:25). There was no indication of mercy in God's initial display of His majesty to Moses and the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. Paul also must be talking about what his readers would be doing if they were to go back to the Mosaic Covenant—seeking God's acceptance through what they can touch (ψηλαφωμένῳ) and their outward performance of this covenant in the midst of a fiery and gloomy situation where no mercy can be found. The non-believing Jews, who are persecuting Paul's readers, while hoping to obtain God's acceptance in the wrong manner, groping for it with their religious rituals, will experience this same dark and threatening divine justice if they continue in this perspective towards God, the Mosaic Covenant, and Jesus. In addition, they are basically stuck looking at this scene by their focus on the Mosaic Covenant rather than moving on to seeing the celebration of God's grace and mercy through the New Covenant of Jesus' death and intercession at the judgment—stuck in the negative instead of moving on to the positive. They can expect to live in fear of God, not in joy in God, because they are relying on their own obedience to make themselves worthy of God's blessings instead of depending strictly on His grace to be the means by which they acquire them.

Romans 8:15ff. speaks of the same fear of God that comes from not embracing His grace and mercy through Jesus as the Messiah. They will live always wondering if they have done enough to please God with the psychological and emotional effect of sheer fear, which is only natural for sinful human beings because of the way He has made them psychologically and spiritually.

Consequently, Paul is saying that his readers have not come (οὐ γὰρ προσεληλύθατε) to this situation. Instead, they have come to the New Covenant and God's final and complete solution to their sin, i.e., Jesus' propitiatory death that leads to his interceding on their behalf and obtaining complete and eternal forgiveness from God for their sins.

See Acts 17:27 for one kind of meaning for ψηλαφάω, “that they would seek God, if perhaps they might search/grope for (ψηλαφήσειαν) Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us”

But it still seems to me that here in Hebrews 12:18 Paul is not talking about groping or searching for God, but the very physical and experiential circumstances of God's presentation of the Mosaic Covenant through Moses to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai, so that “touch” is more coherent with the other things mentioned.

³⁶¹ οὐκ ἔφερον γὰρ τὸ διαστελλόμενον· καὶν θηρίον θίγη τοῦ ὄρους, λιθοβοληθήσεται – It was a very frightening scene at Mt. Sinai, and God had established set, physical boundaries for where the people and their animals could go during the covenant making process. If any living thing, man or animal, touched the mountain, He would kill him or it. Exodus 19:12 “You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, ‘Beware that you do not go up on the mountain or touch the border of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. 19:13 No hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through. Whether beast or man, he shall not live.’ When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they shall come up to the mountain.”

³⁶² καί, οὕτως φοβερὸν ἦν τὸ φανταζόμενον. Μωϋσῆς εἶπεν· ἐκφοβός εἰμι καὶ ἔντρομος – Besides the fact that the Israelites as a whole group were terrified by the manner of God's presence at Mt. Sinai when He was making the Mosaic Covenant with them, Moses himself was too. And Paul refers to the golden calf incident in Exodus 32 when God was going to destroy them all and start again with Moses. Indeed, Moses was terrified of God's wrath and anger, and Paul quotes from a portion of Deuteronomy 9:19 and adds the words καὶ ἔντρομος = and trembling.

Deuteronomy 9:19 “For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure (וַיִּחַדַּתִּי מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה) (καὶ ἐκφοβός εἰμι διὰ τὴν ὀργὴν καὶ τὸν θυμόν) with which Yahweh was wrathful against you in order to destroy you, but Yahweh listened to me that time also.”

Paul has stated in Hebrews 9:16,17 that a Jew who violates the Mosaic Covenant incurs God's justice and deserves death. Ironically, the non-believing Jews, who are persecuting Paul's readers, are violating the Mosaic Covenant while thinking that they are champions of it.

³⁶³ ἀλλὰ προσεληλύθατε Σιών ὅρει καὶ πόλει θεοῦ ζώντος, Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐπουρανίῳ – If the Mosaic Covenant is such a terrifying place to be in a sinful Jew's relationship with God, the contrast of the New Covenant is striking as Paul goes on to describe in the next three verses.

“Instead,” Paul says, “you have come to Mt. Zion” (ἀλλὰ προσεληλύθατε Σιών ὅρει). The Old Testament uses Mt. Zion to refer to Jerusalem, the capital city of the kingdom of Israel and the Jews. The prophets, especially, use Mt. Zion to refer to Jerusalem during the revival of the Jews at the end of history. However, it makes more sense that Paul is using all three phrases, “Mt. Zion, ...the city-state of the living God, the Jerusalem heavenly,” to refer to the eternal Kingdom of God, which begins with the earthly Kingdom of Israel centered in the actual city of Jerusalem and the temple mount, i.e., the Mt. Zion, and continues, as Paul knows, into the eternal kingdom of the new earth, created after the destruction of this realm.

Therefore, Paul is here talking about what his readers are doing if they continue in their belief in Jesus the Messiah and remain committed to him as God's high priest for them. They can expect to live in joy in God, not in fear of God. They do not have to worry if they have done enough religious activities to please God, because Jesus will intercede on their behalf and gain them mercy—even though they do not deserve God's grace and forgiveness. They cannot earn their salvation from God, and they cannot lose it either by failing to deserve it. The result will be that they will live first in the Kingdom of Israel after the 2nd coming and return of Jesus and then in the Kingdom of God in the new, created realm of the eternal earth.

Thus, they have come “to the city-state of the living God” (πόλις θεοῦ ζώντος), i.e., the city of Jerusalem and country of Israel with Jerusalem as its capital, starting with the millennial kingdom after Jesus' return and then the new earth. The former is “the heavenly Jerusalem” (Ιερουσαλὴμ ἐπουρανίῳ), but I think it makes sense to interpret this as the Jerusalem which comes from “heaven” and from God when He fulfills His promise to Abraham and makes the Jews the “great nation” of Genesis 12:1-3. God produces this city and the surrounding nation of Israel as Abraham in Hebrews 11:10 was “waiting for the city-state which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”

³⁶⁴ καὶ μυριάσιν ἀγγέλων, πανηγύρει καὶ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων ἁπογεγραμμένων ἐν οὐρανοῖς – Paul goes on to say that his readers have come to three more things—

1) To thousands of conventional angels (μυριάσιν ἀγγέλων) rejoicing in the heavenly realm over God's justice and mercy. This is like the vision of the book of Revelation that speaks of a large gathering of angels, who are praising God and Jesus, the Lamb of God—

Revelation 5:11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands (καὶ ἦν ὁ ἀριθμὸς αὐτῶν μυριάδες μυριάδων καὶ χιλιάδες χιλιάδων), 5:12 saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

2) to “a festal gathering and the assembly of the firstborn ones, who have been registered (i.e., whose names have been put on the list) in the heavens” (πανηγύρει καὶ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων ἁπογεγραμμένων ἐν οὐρανοῖς). There is also this “gathering” of people who have not yet arrived in the future and eternal (ἐν οὐρανοῖς = in the heavens) Kingdom of God but are destined to rejoice in the grace of God and salvation after the first judgment of Jesus' return and after the Great White Throne Judgment at the end of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20, because their “names have been put on the list in the heavens.” Thus, “in the heavens” does not refer to a location and place but to the extent, i.e., eternal, of the existence of the “assembly of the firstborn ones.”

This means that God predestined them before He brought the creation into existence and is the same as having their names written in the “book of life”—

Revelation 20:15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

As a result, they are heirs of God's inheritance of the eternal Kingdom of God. They are truly a festal gathering, celebrating God's grace and salvation, and they will do so for all eternity, first in the millennial kingdom and then on the eternal earth of Revelation 21-22. This joyous and celebratory group is in contrast to people who were scared out of their minds at Mt. Sinai because of the possibility of God's executing His justice on them. Even if the readers' persecutors are not willing to admit it, such fright should be their perspective. While Jesus is THE firstborn one (cf. Hebrews 1:6), the author is saying, that, because these believing Jews will inherit the same eternal kingdom as Jesus, they are firstborn sons also, and Jesus will be their leader. They are on the list of the predestined and chosen, justified sinners who stand to receive God's promise of eternal life and then will do so when he returns.

³⁶⁵ καὶ κριτῇ θεῷ πάντων – Paul's readers have also come to “God, the Ruler of all.”

It probably makes more sense to interpret the “all” not as all human beings throughout history, but, in the light of the next part of this sentence, to “all” the sinners who genuinely approach God for His eternal mercy as opposed to those who are persecuting the readers of this letter from Paul.

κριτῆς could be translated “judge” or “ruler” (cf. Judges 2:16,18; Ruth 1:1). It also may refer to Jesus, not to the transcendent Creator, the Father. But I think it makes more sense that Paul does not refer to Jesus until v. 24, so that this is “God, the Ruler of all,” who sovereignly causes all His people of genuine belief to enter this new Jerusalem of the millennial kingdom and on into the eternal Kingdom of God on the new earth.

³⁶⁶ καὶ πνεύμασιν ἁγίοις τετελειωμένων – Here Paul emphasizes that the “all” people over whom God rules are—

1) “spirits” (πνεύμασιν), meaning that they are genuine human beings who, in the mind of God and according to His plans and purposes, have been given the destiny that He has established for them.

2) “justified” (δικαίων), meaning that they stand to be eternally forgiven by God, the Ruler of all these who arrive at the new Jerusalem of the millennial kingdom, and

3) “who have reached their goal” (τετελειωμένων), meaning that they have gained that which they know is the final step in their existences on this earth as sinners, i.e., entrance into eternal life. And it is implied that they obtained this final goal because of having persevered in belief during their earthly existence before death and/or the rapture and first resurrection. They are in their graves now (or still alive on earth), but they will be resurrected (or lifted from the earth) to eternal life and morally perfect bodies at Jesus' return.

So this covers angels, God, and human beings in vs. 22-23.

³⁶⁷ καὶ διαθήκης νέας μεσίτη Ἰησοῦ καὶ αἵματι ῥαντισμοῦ ῥκεῖτον λαλοῦντι παρὰ τὸν Ἀβελ – Here, in v. 24, Paul adds Jesus to the group of beings to whom his readers have come through the New Covenant as opposed to the frightening mountain of the Mosaic Covenant.

They have come “to Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant” (καὶ διαθήκης νέας μεσίτη Ἰησοῦ), meaning that he is the high priest of this newer and more effective covenant that is completely separate from and different from the Mosaic Covenant, because it involves—

Jesus’ “sprinkled blood that speaks better than Abel” (αἵματι ῥαντισμοῦ ῥκεῖτον λαλοῦντι παρὰ τὸν Ἀβελ), meaning that Abel’s blood, when Cain killed him, cried out for justice, while Jesus’ blood, when the Sanhedrin and the Romans crucified him, cries out for mercy—and mercy from God that leads to eternal life which is obviously “better” (κρεῖττον) than justice from God that results in eternal death and destruction.

It is interesting that Paul compares Jesus’ blood of the New Covenant with Abel’s, the latter which had nothing to do with the Mosaic Covenant, instead of with that of bulls and goats that was required under the Mosaic Covenant. This is why I think the comparison is between justice and mercy, not between a human sacrifice and animal sacrifices.

In other words, this statement is about grace and mercy. While Abel’s blood said, “I cry out for vengeance” for myself (Genesis 4:10-12), Jesus’ blood says, “I appeal for mercy on behalf of others who are sinful human beings,” which is the main point of Paul’s letter and Jesus’ statement in Luke 23:34 as he was dying on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing.” And Jesus’ blood works to appeal for mercy in contrast to the blood of bulls and goats which does NOT work. Paul has been clear that the latter’s blood can point to only Jesus’ blood as the eternally effective blood.

³⁶⁸ βλέπετε μὴ παραιτήσησθε τὸν λαλοῦντα· εἰ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι οὐκ ἔξέφυγον ἐπὶ γῆς παραιτησάμενοι τὸν χρηματίζοντα, πολὺ μᾶλλον ἡμεῖς οἱ τὸν ἀπ’ οὐρανῶν ἀποστρεφόμενοι – Is Paul referring to God, the transcendent creator, as the one “who is speaking” (τὸν λαλοῦντα) or to Jesus?

The fact that Paul referred last in the previous paragraph to Jesus, and the fact that both Hebrews 1:1-3 and 2:1-4 (as quoted below) refer to Jesus’ being the means through whom God has communicated His most important message, I think that it makes more sense to interpret Paul as citing Jesus as the speaker. He is imparting a divine message from God just as Moses (“him”) imparted God’s message at Mt. Sinai in the form of the Mosaic Covenant. Then, the Jews experienced God’s judgment under the Mosaic Covenant several times when, for example, God killed many of them in the desert after God brought them out of slavery from Egypt and/or by expelling them from the land of Israel and they were taken into captivity by the Assyrians and Babylonians around 700 B.C. and 600 B.C. respectively.

Thus, Paul is exhorting his readers not to “refuse him who is speaking...from the heavens” (παραιτήσησθε τὸν λαλοῦντα ... ἀπ’ οὐρανῶν). And the reason is that “if those did not escape on earth when they refused him [Moses] who was imparting a divine message, how much more shall we not escape, how much more” (εἰ γὰρ ἐκεῖνοι οὐκ ἔξέφυγον ἐπὶ γῆς παραιτησάμενοι τὸν χρηματίζοντα, πολὺ μᾶλλον) will Paul and his readers not avoid God’s eternal condemnation and destruction if they refuse to listen to Jesus and submit to and follow his instructions.

The messenger and speaker of God is “from the heavens” in the sense that Jesus is the very embodiment of God and the Son of God, i.e., God’s proxy within the creation on earth, who is both Messiah and high priest (cf. Hebrews 1:1-3 and chapters 5-10).

Again, we have the contrast and comparison between Moses as the spokesman for God in regard to the Mosaic Covenant and Jesus as the spokesman for God in regard to the New Covenant.

Even though the readers should focus on the celebratory gathering of the angels and of authentic believers as Jesus comes from heaven so to speak (i.e., from his place of inter-appearance within the creation) to establish the millennial kingdom, there still remains the fact that God is a God of judgment and condemnation for those who refuse to embrace His grace and mercy through His divine messenger Jesus. These latter will experience His eternal condemnation and destruction while believers will enter the eternal Kingdom of God.

Hebrews 1:1 God, after He spoke to the fathers long ago by means of the prophets in many portions and in many ways, **1:2** in the last of these days, has spoken to us by means of the Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, in view of whom He also made the ages, **1:3a** who is the radiance of His glory and the reproduction of His identity.

Hebrews 2:1 Therefore, it is necessary that we pay much closer attention to the things that we heard, lest we drift away. **2:2** For, if the message that was spoken through *angeloi* became established and every transgression and act of disobedience received a justifiable response of deserved justice, **2:3** how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it acquired a beginning to be spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, **2:4** as God bore witness with them by means of signs and wonders and various displays of power and by distributions of the Holy Spirit according to His desire.

³⁶⁹ οὐ ἡ φωνὴ τὴν γῆν ἐσάλυσεν τότε, νῦν δὲ ἐπὶ γῆν λέγων ἔτι ἅπασι ἐγὼ ῥσεισω οὐ μόνον τὴν γῆν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν οὐρανόν – The relative pronoun οὗ (=whose) is masculine and genitive and, therefore, refers to a masculine noun before it. Which noun is it? Probably the whole phrase τὸν ἀπ’ οὐρανῶν makes the most sense. But I think this refers to Jesus, the one who is “from the heavens,” so that Paul means that he is the proxy of God as the human embodiment of God and, therefore, should be considered as God Himself within the story that He is telling. Consequently, it will be God who shook the earth when He made the Mosaic Covenant with the Israelites and who will shake it again when Jesus returns.

Thus, the sound of God’s speaking at Mt. Sinai (“then”) shook the mountain and the earth (οὐ ἡ φωνὴ τὴν γῆν ἐσάλυσεν τότε) in Exodus 19 because God wanted to communicate not only His mercy, but also His justice. God

“now has promised” the same kind of shaking that will definitely communicate His justice again at the end of this temporary history when Jesus returns and at the final judgment and He recreates the earth for the eternal Kingdom of God (νῦν δὲ ἐπιγγέλλεται λέγων).

Exodus 19:16 So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled.

19:17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. **19:18** Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because Yahweh descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. **19:19** When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder.

Thus, Paul quotes **Haggai 2:6-7** to substantiate the fact that God will “shake not only the earth, but also heaven” (ἔτι ἅπαξ ἐγὼ σείσω οὐ μόνον τὴν γῆν ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν οὐρανόν) at the final judgment.

Haggai 2:6 “For thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land (שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ יָבֵשׁ וְיָם וְיַבְשָׁה יִרְעָדוּ) (Septuagint – ἔτι ἅπαξ ἐγὼ σείσω τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ τὴν θάλασσαν καὶ τὴν ξηρὰν). **7** I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says Yahweh of hosts.”

God is saying that He will “shake,” i.e., execute His justice and even destroy to a degree, the Gentile nations and Israel at the second coming of Christ—the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord. The result will be according to Haggai 2 that there will be a new temple built with great wealth brought to Jerusalem by Gentiles who will want to participate in its construction. And this will include God’s reconciliation with His people, the Jews.

See Acts 4:31 for a mini-shaking at the time of Jesus’ first coming – **Acts 4:31** And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

As Paul goes on to say, shaking both the earth and heaven also refers to a new structure and even laws of nature to a degree for the created realm, first during the millennial kingdom when Jesus will exercise complete hegemony over all the newly restored Kingdom of Israel and over the whole earth, and second when God produces the brand new creation of Revelation 21-22 that will contain only immortal and morally perfect human beings.

³⁷⁰ τὸ δὲ ἔτι ἅπαξ δηλοῖ [τὴν] τῶν σαλευομένων μετάθεσιν ὡς πεποιημένων, ἵνα μείνῃ τὰ μὴ σαλευόμενα – Here Paul describes the “transformation of shaken ones” (τῶν σαλευομένων μετάθεσιν), which are the changes to people that God will produce in the present realm and that will characterize the eternal realm after it. I am interpreting the neuter “shaken things” as actually people and not inanimate things.

The transformation and change refer initially to the millennial kingdom after the shaking of both the Gentile nations and the Jewish nation of Israel. The only ones of the Jews who will remain will be the “unshaken ones,” those persons among the sinful Jews whom God changes inwardly in order that they, “as they have been made” (ὡς πεποιημένων), may align with God’s purposes of both the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, such that the Jews as God’s people can and will submit to Him properly as a whole nation. Each one of them will have a changed heart as brought about by the Holy Spirit within them. And the result will be their belief in and submission to Jesus as their Messiah, King, and high priest. The “unshaken ones” in the millennial kingdom will also “remain” (μείνῃ) eternally, even though the people of Israel and their fellow Gentile believers will not yet be characterized by immortality and moral perfection. But eventually they will be when God produces the eternal universe and creation of Revelation 21-22.

³⁷¹ διὸ βασιλείαν ἀσάλευτον παραλαμβάνοντες ἔχωμεν χάριν, δι’ ἧς ἡλατρεύομεν εὐαρέστως τῷ θεῷ μετὰ εὐλαβείας καὶ δέους – The “unshakeable” Kingdom of God (βασιλείαν ἀσάλευτον) begins at Jesus’ return, so that the Jews and the land of Israel will never be subject again to God’s wrath and judgment. Plus, Jesus will rule the whole world, and no one will dare rebel against him until the end of the millennial kingdom, when, according to Revelation 20, Satan is released to deceive the Gentiles once more for the last time.

At the present moment, our response is gratitude, joy, reverence, and awe as this unshakeable/indestructible kingdom comes closer and closer. Now we are to pursue living our lives that are given over to loving God, loving others, and dealing with others truthfully, morally, and wisely even while suffering the training of God.

Philippians 2:12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; **2:13** for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

In the above Philippians verses, Paul encourages his readers to work out their salvation with fear and trembling—at God!!! Not at man. Christians continue to respect God for His justice while appreciating His grace and mercy which they do not deserve.

Psalms 118:6, “Yahweh is for me. I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

Romans 8:38-39, “For I am convinced that [nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

³⁷² καὶ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν πῦρ καταναλίσκων – God is not only a God of mercy, but also a God of “consuming fire” (πῦρ καταναλίσκων), meaning that He is the ultimate source of judgment and condemnation for those who refuse His message of mercy and obedience that involves Jesus as Messiah and high priest. To reject His message and follow the lies of Satan that he has injected into the world is to face the wrath and destruction by God.

Deuteronomy 4:24 “For Yahweh your God is a consuming fire (אֵשׁ מִכָּלֵב) (πῦρ καταναλίσκων), a jealous God.”

³⁷³ ἡ φιλαδελφία μενέτω – This chapter is a list of practical ways that the readers, who are Jewish believers, can serve God in the midst of the oppression and persecution that they are experiencing (cf. Hebrews 12:28) from their fellow Jews, who are unbelievers. This list contains ways of serving God that can very easily be ignored by Paul's readers, because they may overlook them in the midst of the troubles which they are experiencing. Paul begins with an exhortation for their care and concern for one another as believers in Jesus as the Messiah to continue.

This is typical of Paul. For example, Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3 —

Ephesians 4:1 Therefore I, a prisoner because of the Lord, encourage you to live in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, **4:2** with all humility and gentleness, as you bear with one another with patience. With love **4:3** labor to preserve the unity of the Spirit by means of the mutual bond of shalom.

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as those who are the chosen of God, set apart and loved, certainly put on an inwardness of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, **3:13** bearing with one another and forgiving one another, whoever has a complaint against someone. Just as the Lord forgives you, so also should you forgive others. **3:14** Above all these, put on love, which is the bond that makes for reaching the goal (*telos*) (τῆς τελειότητος). **3:15** And let the peace/*shalom* of the Messiah, to which you were called in one body, dominate in your hearts, and be thankful.

³⁷⁴ τῆς φιλοξενίας μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε, διὰ ταύτης γὰρ ἔλαθόν τινες ξενίσαντες ἀγγέλους – By showing hospitality and giving lodging to travelers, these believing Jews may have unknowingly taken in people whom he labels as *angeloi*, which usually means conventional angels or theophanies. But, here, it makes more sense that they are people sent to these believers who serve them as messengers of the gospel, so that the travelers eventually become believers themselves. The travelers are a kind of reverse-messengers of God. They are not doing the serving, but their hosts are.

³⁷⁵ μνησκεσθε τῶν δεσμίων ὡς συνδεδεμένοι, τῶν κακουχομένων ὡς καὶ αὐτοὶ ὄντες ἐν σώματι – Even though believing Jews have been wrongly put in prison, they are still a part of the “body,” the community of believers.

Therefore, Paul exhorts his readers to visit and encourage them while they are physically separated from their fellow Christians.

Where would this most likely have happened in the first century in the Roman Empire? Jerusalem? Or somewhere nearby in the area of the land of Israel proper?

³⁷⁶ τίμιος ὁ γάμος ἐν πᾶσιν καὶ ἡ κοίτη ἀμίαντος, πόρνους γὰρ καὶ μοιχοὺς κρινεὶ ὁ θεός – Just as God declares in the Ten Commandments and that Paul mentions in other letters, marriage is a sacred vow between a husband and wife and should be respected as such—without going outside the relationship to engage in sexual intercourse.

Therefore, willful pursuit of any kind of sexual immorality, including adultery, demonstrates a heart of rebellion towards God and a lack of appreciation for the value of morality.

And Paul mentions adultery probably because of the incredible decadence of the Roman Empire and maybe the temptation for these Christians to try to hide by conforming to the culture (even the surrounding Jewish culture?). Thus, he warns his readers that those who are committed to sexual immorality and adultery will face only the judgment and condemnation of God, as opposed to those who in the weakness of their humanity have on occasion succumbed to the temptation to commit immorality.

This may mean too that these Jewish believers are experiencing persecution from Romans as well as from the Jews. But it should not come as a surprise that religious Jews (just like religious Christians) are involved in sexual immorality like Gentiles who are entrenched in any pagan culture in the first century Roman Empire.

³⁷⁷ ἀφιλάργυρος ὁ τρόπος, ἄρκοῦμενοι τοῖς παροῦσιν. αὐτοὺς γὰρ εἴρηκεν· οὐ μὴ σε ἄνω οὐδ' οὐ μὴ σε ἔγκαταλίπω – Here Paul addresses the temptation that we all face as sinful human beings, that our hearts and minds are more attached and focused on this world and the material wealth that is available within it than we are on God's present provision and His promise of the abundance of an incomprehensible quality of life in the eternal Kingdom of God.

As a result, the presence of greed within Paul's readers would be their putting more importance on their material property than their belief and its eventual result, eternal life, in the midst of being persecuted for their Christianity. They are having their property taken away from them, and are finding it difficult to survive in a hostile environment. Certainly, it would be tempting to allow the disappointment from all the loss that they are experiencing to overwhelm their belief. To desire the eternal Kingdom of God more than what money can get them is Paul's exhortation here to these people who are possibly experiencing great loss because of their belief in Jesus.

Certainly, the promises of Deuteronomy 28:1-14 are for Israel and not to Gentiles, so that religious Jews could convince themselves that their sinful desire for and pursuit of material wealth is morally righteous before God. But Paul is warning his Jewish readers that they may have crossed the line from obeying the Mosaic Covenant for the purpose of receiving God's blessings to succumbing to the sin within them in the fundamental human nature.

But Paul also quotes Deuteronomy 31:6 to the effect that God was stating through Moses that He would fight with them and for them as they were entering the land of Canaan in order to destroy the people on the land and take it over for themselves—according to God's promise five hundred years earlier to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. Paul is using that statement around 1500 B.C. to encourage his Jewish readers, who are believers, that God will fight with them and for them against giving up their belief as they are tempted to do in the midst of the intense persecution from Jews that they are enduring.

Therefore, Paul is using Deuteronomy 31:6 as a reference to the character of God, that He will grant His people (here, Jewish believers, and by extrapolation, Gentile believers also) the strength to continue to believe authentically in the face of difficult circumstances that could potentially crush their belief. In other words, Paul is not promising them that

God will always make sure they have enough physical and materially to survive this present existence and never die. Instead, he is promising them that God will always sustain their belief for the purpose of their entering the eternal Kingdom of God.

³⁷⁸ ὥστε θαρροῦντας ἡμᾶς λέγειν, κύριος ἐμοὶ βοηθός, ὁ[καὶ] οὐ φοβηθήσομαι τί ποιήσει μοι ἄνθρωπος – Paul quotes Psalm 118:6, where the whole psalm is an exhortation to the Jews as the nation of Israel to be grateful to God for His goodness and loyal love towards them. Consequently, to think of God as one’s helper (βοηθός), who cares about His people, is especially important for Paul’s Jewish readers, who are experiencing such intense persecution from their own Jewish community. He therefore borrows from the Psalmist the concept of trusting God rather than caring about what other people think about you or even do to you. Ultimately, all that matters in the midst of the thick and the thin of human existence is what God’s view of us is in the midst of His caring for us and giving us the strength to persevere in our faith for His sovereign purposes.

Psalm 118:6 Yahweh is for me. I will not fear. What can man do to me? (מָה יַעֲשֶׂה לִּי אִדְּמָה יְהוָה לִּי עֹזִי)

(Septuagint – κύριος ἐμοὶ βοηθός, οὐ φοβηθήσομαι τί ποιήσει μοι ἄνθρωπος).

Thus, if God has promised both Jews and Gentiles eternal life, anything that we go through in this life is **trivial** in comparison to existence in the eternal Kingdom of God. Anything money can buy is **trivial** compared to **the eternal future** which God has promised us.

³⁷⁹ μνημονεύετε τῶν ἡγουμένων ὑμῶν, οἵτινες ἐλάλησαν ὑμῖν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, ὧν ἀναθεωροῦντες τὴν ἔκβασιν τῆς ἀναστροφῆς μιμῆσθε τὴν πίστιν – Assuming these Jews had apostles, maybe even Peter, who originally presented the NT “message of God” to them (οἵτινες ἐλάλησαν ὑμῖν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ), Paul wants them to remember them as they led them (μνημονεύετε τῶν ἡγουμένων ὑμῶν) and to think carefully about the beneficial outcome of their pursuit of persevering in belief, i.e., eternal life (ὧν ἀναθεωροῦντες τὴν ἔκβασιν τῆς ἀναστροφῆς). At the least, even if these Christians’ leaders were not actually apostles, they most likely were the first generation of Jewish believers who had access to and were taught by living apostles and who were eyewitnesses of Jesus ministry, death, and resurrection. Paul also exhorts his readers to “mimic” and imitate this kind of belief (μιμῆσθε τὴν πίστιν), just as he urged them to consider the persevering belief of those in the OT. However, the emphasis is on the message and believing it, not on the leaders per se, as Paul goes on to describe Jesus in v. 8.

For us, we, likewise, should remember the apostles’ and close associates’ documents of the New Testament, because these are what we rely on to “speak the message of God” to us, so that we, too, should give “careful thought to the end result of their say of life” and “mimic their belief.” We do not have living apostles and their close associates among us. But, at least, we have the New Testament—and the Old Testament, too.

³⁸⁰ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐχθὲς καὶ σήμερον ὁ αὐτὸς καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας ᾤ – This is probably some sort of idiomatic expression that refers to the fact that Jesus the Messiah, not the Mosaic Covenant, should be the focal point of their lives and of the creation even into the future of the eternal Kingdom of God. This is what they should remember. The message of Jesus does not change and will go on into eternity, while the message of the Mosaic Covenant and the covenant will come to an end when God has finished fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make his physical descendants a “great nation” on this earth during the present realm.

³⁸¹ διδασκαίς ποικίλαις καὶ ξέναις μὴ παραφέρεσθε· καλὸν γὰρ χάριτι βεβαιοῦσθαι τὴν καρδίαν, οὐ βρώμασιν ἐν οἷς οὐκ ὠφελήθησαν οἱ περιπατοῦντες – Paul calls the teachings of the Jews who are persecuting his readers “various and foreign” (ποικίλαις καὶ ξέναις), i.e., unbiblical, even though they seem to come from the Bible. These Jews are missing the point about the Messiah as an ordinary man who suffered death as an offering for sin so that he can act as high priest at the judgment. They are also focused on only performing the Mosaic Covenant and upholding the Levitical priesthood, while ignoring Psalm 110:4. In addition, Paul points out that even the Levites’ eating the sacrifices to God has done and continues to do nothing for their temporal or eternal standing before God.

The contrasting concept is God’s grace that strengthens the human heart (καλὸν γὰρ χάριτι βεβαιοῦσθαι τὴν καρδίαν) that is not dependent on religious performance of the Mosaic Covenant. Thus, sinful human beings are benefited not by religious performance and ingesting physical food (οὐ βρώμασιν ἐν οἷς οὐκ ὠφελήθησαν), as if these could make a person worthy of God’s blessings, but by learning about and experiencing God’s independent favor toward them, relying on only it and not on their religious performance for His kindness, love, and mercy.

The Jews’ offerings to God on the altar of the Mosaic Covenant never have been the basis for receiving His mercy, which is strictly a gift of His absolute sovereign grace through Jesus’ death and resurrection.

³⁸² ἔχομεν θυσιαστήριον ἐξ οὗ φαγεῖν οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἑξουσίαν οἱ τῇ σκηνῇ λατρεύοντες – Paul insists that Jewish Christians worship God at an “altar” different from that of the Mosaic Covenant, which originally was part of the temporary tent setup in the wilderness. The Jewish Christians’ “altar” is the cross on which Jesus offered himself, given to them by God, so that they eat this sacrifice by believing Jesus to be the Messiah. In spite of the importance of the Levitical priests’ function, even they have no right to participate in the eating of this sacrifice as long as they are men of unbelief and focus strictly on performing the Mosaic Covenant (ἐξ οὗ φαγεῖν οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἑξουσίαν οἱ τῇ σκηνῇ λατρεύοντες).

³⁸³ ὧν γὰρ εἰσφέρεται ζῶων τὸ αἷμα περὶ ἁμαρτίας εἰς τὰ ἅγια διὰ τοῦ ἀρχιερέως, τούτων τὰ σώματα κατακαίεται ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς – Here Paul uses an analogy to make the point that something or someone that has died is then completely destroyed “outside” (ἔξω) the place of worship and living by the Jews, but this ostracized thing becomes the means to acquire God’s mercy and forgiveness. Therefore, just as bulls and goats, after being sacrificed in the temple by their high priest, were then taken “outside the camp” of the Israelites and destroyed by being burned

during their journey through the wilderness after God had rescued them from slavery in Egypt, so also Jesus was sacrificed on the cross “outside” the gate” (ἔξω τῆς ἑρῦλης) of Jerusalem.

Again, it is the “outside” element that is important to Paul. For something that is used to worship God for the sake of obtaining His forgiveness for sins to spend at least part of its time during the prescribed ritual “outside” the place of living and of worshiping God by the people is for it to be where those who use this thing for forgiveness themselves need to go to join it/him in their proper worship of God.

Leviticus 4:11 “But the hide of the bull and all its flesh with its head and its legs and its entrails and its refuse, **12** that is, all the rest of the bull, he is to bring out to a clean place outside the camp (חֲצֵר־הַמִּשְׁכָּן) (ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς) where the ashes are poured out, and burn it on wood with fire; where the ashes are poured out it shall be burned.”

Leviticus 16:27 “But the bull of the sin offering and the goat of the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall be taken outside the camp (חֲצֵר־הַמִּשְׁכָּן) (ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς), and they shall burn their hides, their flesh, and their refuse in the fire. **28** Then the one who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body with water; then afterward he shall come into the camp.”

There was a portion of the animal offerings to God that was considered unfit for offering and was rejected by not only God but also the people, because the high priest laid his hands on it as transferring the sins of the people to it (Leviticus 16:21).

³⁸⁴ διὸ καὶ Ἰησοῦς, ἵνα ἀγιάσῃ διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος τὸν λαόν, ἔξω τῆς ἑρῦλης ἔπαθεν – Like the portion of animal offerings that was rejected by the Jews and taken “outside the camp,” Jesus was rejected by them also, as shown by his being crucified as a common criminal “outside the gate” of Jerusalem. The Jews were saying that he had no right to exist among them, because he was impure and defiled, just as God said that the portion of the sacrificed animals had no right to exist among them. Even God “rejected” Jesus in a sense when He required that he die as a demonstration of His rejecting unclean portions of offerings and eventually “unclean” Jews whose hearts have not been turned towards God (by the Spirit of God).

But it is Jesus’ blood and death, not by the blood and death of bulls and goats sacrificed under the Mosaic Covenant, by which Paul’s readers become set apart from the whole rest of humanity by associating with Jesus and trusting him to be their king and high priest, thus receiving eternal mercy from God.

³⁸⁵ τοῖνυν ἐξερχώμεθα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἔξω τῆς παρεμβολῆς τὸν ὀνειδισμὸν αὐτοῦ φέροντες – By using “camp” (τῆς παρεμβολῆς) as an anachronism, Paul is encouraging his readers to go outside (ἔξω) the present, erroneous Judaism that is centered in the earthly Jerusalem and that misunderstands the Mosaic Covenant and Jesus as the mediator of the New Covenant. Those who are persecuting the Jewish believers have centered their attention on the animal sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant as their primary way to obey God, while Paul and the Jewish believers have centered their attention on Jesus’ sacrifice as the only way to acquire God’s eternal mercy. As the sacrificed animals were rejected by the Jewish community for obedience purposes, so also Jesus as a sacrificed human being has been rejected by the unbelieving Jewish community for the sake of believers’ embracing him as the basis of God’s forgiveness and eternal blessing of life in the Kingdom of God.

Consequently, the Jewish believers will be rejected and feel disgraced by the erroneous Judaism of their day just as that portion of the animal sacrifice and Jesus were. In other words, if the people of God, the Jews, reject Paul’s readers as Jesus was rejected, then so be it. They are suffering rejection from their fellow Jews just as Jesus suffered from rejection from his fellow Jews.

Thus, Paul is exhorting his Jewish, Christian readers to associate with Jesus and his death instead of with bulls and goats and their deaths.

³⁸⁶ οὐ γὰρ ἔχομεν ὧδε μένουσαν πόλιν ἀλλὰ τὴν μέλλουσαν ἐπιζητοῦμεν – As attractive as it is to call the present Jerusalem home because it is the very center of Judaism and worship of God through the Mosaic Covenant, it is better for these believers to consider themselves as outcasts from this present city-state (“here” – ὧδε) and the present Jewish government on the land of Israel while looking forward to the new and future Jerusalem (τὴν μέλλουσαν) of the first stage of the eternal Kingdom of God, when Jesus returns and sets up his government over the restored Kingdom of Israel in the same physical location.

In addition, the future Jerusalem will be radically different and better with Jesus as the Jews’ ruler who also exercises hegemony over the whole rest of the world of Gentiles.

This is what Paul was discussing in Hebrews 11:10 concerning Abraham’s waiting for the city-state whose architect and builder is God, i.e., the city of Jerusalem and the city-state of Israel of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20.

³⁸⁷ ὅτι αὐτοῦ [οὖν] ἀναφέρωμεν θυσίαν αἰνέσεως διὰ παντὸς τῷ θεῷ, τοῦτ’ ἔστιν καρπὸν χειλέων ὁμολογούντων τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ – Paul is saying that Christians’ offering and “sacrifice of admiration” (θυσίαν αἰνέσεως) “to God” (τῷ θεῷ) and that they do “continually” (διὰ παντὸς) that comes from their lips (χειλέων) is the acknowledgement (ὁμολογούντων) of all that Jesus is about as the Messiah and high priest, i.e., “his name” (τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ), thus praising God for His provision of an eternal king and intercessor at the judgment.

The obvious implication, as Paul has already argued in the body of this letter, is that the animal offerings and sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant simply are inadequate to gain God’s love and mercy. They point to the eternally effective offering to God of Jesus’ crucifixion, which Christians acknowledge not through outward rituals but through inward praise and worship of God that manifests itself by what they say about God and Jesus in the midst of their obeying the biblical moral commandments.

³⁸⁸ τῆς δὲ εὐποιΐας καὶ τῆς κοινωνίας μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε· τοιαύταις γὰρ θυσίαις εὐαρεστέται ὁ θεός – Paul makes explicit here that religious rituals such as animal sacrifices are immaterial in the light of Christians’ just “doing good and sharing” (τῆς δὲ εὐποιΐας καὶ τῆς κοινωνίας) their love, knowledge, and understanding with one another. In the midst of Christians’ “bring[ing]” one particular sacrifice to God, i.e., their belief in Jesus, they also bring the sacrifices and offerings of pursuing morality and caring for one another by sharing what they have that is necessary for life here on earth, which probably includes in Paul’s mind their knowledge of the gospel and understanding of God whereby they have an accurate grasp of the New Covenant in comparison to the Mosaic Covenant. Notice the lack of mention of communion, baptism, spiritual disciplines, or any other religious practice, because these are completely unnecessary for living out authentic Christianity. Again, it is loving other Christians through good moral acts that sustain people’s understanding and belief in God that will bring attention to them and puts them in a position where they are courting persecution and suffering from unbelievers.

³⁸⁹ πείθεσθε τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν καὶ ὑπακούετε, αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀγρυπνοῦσιν ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν ὡς λόγον ῥαποδῶσόντες, ἵνα μετὰ χαρᾶς τοῦτο ποιῶσιν καὶ μὴ στενάζοντες· ἀλυσιτελὲς γὰρ ὑμῖν τοῦτο – Paul indicates that the leaders of these Jewish believers are certainly continuing to follow the truth of Jesus as Messiah and high priest, while those whom they are leading are considering giving up their belief and going back to focusing on the Mosaic Covenant, which is causing the leaders to groan with disappointment (στενάζοντες).

Paul wants the leaders to be able to “keep watch over [his readers’] existences” (αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀγρυπνοῦσιν ὑπὲρ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν) “with joy” (μετὰ χαρᾶς), especially since the leaders “will give an account” (λόγον ῥαποδῶσόντες) of their work by virtue of seeing how effective on an existential level their proclaiming the gospel will end up being to those whom they teach. Plus, these readers would be kept from reaching [their] goal (ἀλυσιτελὲς) of God’s forgiveness and eternal life if they were to ignore or reject what their leaders are teaching them.

It would definitely be eternally unprofitable for the readers to abandon their belief in Jesus, as Paul has explained in this letter. And who are these leaders? Are they the same people as in v. 7? Probably not. Otherwise, why repeat this kind of exhortation. Therefore, these leaders are not those who first presented the gospel to Paul’s readers but those who are still living with them and are probably having trouble convincing them to stay dedicated to the apostolic message of the previous leaders of Hebrews 13:7 above.

Again, as regarding Hebrews 13:7 above, I suggest that what Paul is saying here does not directly apply to Christians after the time of the apostles, because it was only these leaders in his day, who could be trusted to provide the truth of the gospel as they had been taught it by living apostles like Paul. This becomes clearer when we acknowledge how many different theologies exist in the various Christian communities and churches throughout the world. Which leaders are completely in line with the apostles and their understanding of the gospel? Really, only God knows the answer to this question. This is why it is incumbent on every Christian, i.e., necessary as one’s individual responsibility and duty, to do his own work in studying and learning the biblical message. In other words, Bible teachers after the death of the last apostle should be more discussion leaders than teachers.

³⁹⁰ προσεύχεσθε τὸ περὶ ἡμῶν πειθόμεθα γὰρ ὅτι καλὴν συνείδησιν ἔχομεν, ἐν πασὶν καλῶς θέλοντες ἀναστρέφεσθαι – Paul would have his Jewish, Christian readers pray for his co-workers and him (προσεύχεσθε τὸ περὶ ἡμῶν), that they may return to them soon and continue teaching them truth in contrast to what they have been hearing from the unbelieving Jews (cf. v. 19). Paul is persuaded that his co-workers and he have a good grasp of the gospel (προσεύχεσθε τὸ περὶ ἡμῶν), so that they are living out their Christianity well in the midst of all their circumstances (ἐν πασὶν καλῶς θέλοντες ἀναστρέφεσθαι) and can continue to proclaim the gospel as they should. This is all something that every Christian should aspire to do—to understand the gospel as well as Paul and to live it as well as he did.

³⁹¹ περισσότερως δὲ παρακαλῶ τοῦτο ποιῆσαι, ἵνα τάχιον ἀποκατασταθῶ ὑμῖν – Apparently Paul knows these people personally and has been with them before. Thus, he exhorts his Jewish readers all that much more to pray for his co-workers and him to be returned to them as soon as possible. And then, obviously, he will be able to help them with their understanding of the gospel and their working at avoiding giving it up in the midst of the heavy persecution that they are currently enduring.

³⁹² ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης, ὁ ἀναγαγὼν ἐκ νεκρῶν τὸν ποιμένα τῶν προβάτων τὸν μέγαν ἐν αἵματι διαθήκης αἰωνίου, τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν τὸν – Paul begins an appeal to God with the words “May the God of shalom” (ὁ δὲ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης), this being the God who brings about eternal peace, security, safety, and completely fulfilling and meaningful life for sinners whom He rescues from His eternal condemnation. This is the God “who raised from the dead the shepherd of the sheep” (ὁ ἀναγαγὼν ἐκ νεκρῶν τὸν ποιμένα τῶν προβάτων), who is obviously Jesus (as Paul goes on to say), the one who leads and guides his flock of authentic believers into the Kingdom of God.

He is also “the great one by virtue of the blood of the eternal covenant” (ὁν μέγαν ἐν αἵματι διαθήκης αἰωνίου), meaning that through his death he is the great high priest who is the basis of the New Covenant, which has eternal ramifications in that Jesus intercedes for sinners and obtains God’s complete and permanent forgiveness and mercy for them.

In this way, Paul is speaking of the New Covenant, that saves eternally for both Jews and Gentiles, as opposed to the Mosaic Covenant, whose purpose is temporary for the people of Israel only to obey and use to teach the Gentiles.

³⁹³ καταρτίσαι ὑμᾶς ἐν παντὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν εἰς τὸ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ, τὸ ποιῶν ἐν ἡμῖν τὸ εὐάρεστον ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας [τῶν αἰώνων], ἀμήν – Paul’s desire is that God grant his readers the proper inner condition (καταρτίσαι ὑμᾶς), probably of mind, heart, and spirit, to do what He desires (εἰς

τὸ ποιῆσαι τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ) just as He grants to Paul and his associates the proper inner condition to be pleasing to Him as they all move forward to participate in the eternal nature of the New Covenant through and “in view of Jesus the Messiah” (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), who died and was raised from the dead after qualifying to be the Messiah and high priest of authentic believers.

This is different from a perspective that thinks that God is waiting for people to act first in order that He can work in their lives. Paul’s view is that God is the one who creates the understanding through hearing the information of the gospel, the belief in this message, and the perseverance of belief and obedience in sinful human beings, which will result in their gaining the blessing of eternal life.

And Paul’s desire is that God receive and be the “glory into the ages of ages” (ὃ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας [τῶν αἰώνων]). The word δόξα is the one in the NT that most succinctly points to the incredible and indescribable grandness and majestic quality of not only God, but also that which He will bring about in the eternal Kingdom of God, where the existence that people who obtain it will simply be fundamentally awed by what they will experience for all eternity. It will be so wonderfully different from anything this world has to offer and all the evil that people have endured and become aware of as a result of their living in this world.

Paul does not use merely the word “eternal” but the phrase “into the ages of ages” (considering that the Majority Text is correct (cf. Galatians 1:5, “To Him be the glory into the ages of ages”). Thus, the narrative of God will go on with drama and interest and fascination designed into it for each qualifying human being from age to age to age, etc., i.e., on into eternity that will never end!

And Paul adds a final “Amen” (=May it happen!!!) to this declaration and desire of his for his readers and ultimately for their (and his) God.

³⁹⁴ παρακαλῶ δὲ ὑμᾶς, ἀδελφοί, ἵνα ἐνέχεσθε τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως, καὶ γὰρ διὰ βραχέων ἐπέστειλα ὑμῖν – Paul encourages (παρακαλῶ) his Jewish Christian readers to “bear with the message of encouragement” (ἀνέχεσθε τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως), which he has “written to [them] briefly” (καὶ γὰρ διὰ βραχέων ἐπέστειλα ὑμῖν), Briefly? Well, yes, in that there is so much more to the information about Jesus as the Messiah than in this letter. For example, one could add Romans and Ephesians and Colossians and all the other of Paul’s letters.

Or is Paul referring to just what he is adding to the letter here at the end, in the sense that the body of the letter is a word of exhortation while the note that he is appending is brief, so that he would prefer to write more on a personal level? My sense is that it is the former. Paul himself knows how extensive is the information about Jesus, but here in Hebrews he has focused on just the part about his being a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek for the sake of his Jewish readers who are undergoing tremendous persecution and need this “message of encouragement” (τοῦ λόγου τῆς παρακλήσεως).

³⁹⁵ γινώσκετε τὸν ἀδελφὸν ἡμῶν Τιμόθεον ἀπολελυμένον, μεθ’ οὗ εἰάν τάχιον ἔρχεται ὁψομαι ὑμᾶς – Either Timothy alone must have been in prison and yet now has been released, or Paul and Timothy were imprisoned together and Timothy has been released while Paul is still in prison. My guess is the former, so that Paul has heard word that Timothy is finally free and he is waiting for him to come to him. Then, when Timothy arrives, the two of them will travel to visit these Jewish readers—wherever they are. Again, Jerusalem?

³⁹⁶ ἀσπάσασθε ὅπαντας τοὺς ἡγουμένους ὑμῶν καὶ πάντας τοὺς ἀγίους. ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας – Just as in Romans 16 where Paul exhorts the Roman Gentile Christians to greet the Jewish believers who are returning to Rome and bringing his letter to them, it may be that he is encouraging his current readers to greet their leaders who are returning with this letter, unless Paul is signaling that he is writing this letter mainly to the followers and not the leaders since the former are not following their leaders well and are considering abandoning the gospel of Jesus because of the intense persecution they are enduring.

In addition, the Christians who have traveled from Rome to visit Paul send their greetings to these readers.

³⁹⁷ ἡ χάρις μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν. τ – Here Paul expresses his desire that all these readers experience God’s grace, which the NT declares unequivocally is the bottom line of all understanding regarding how sinful human beings acquire God’s eternal mercy—His unhinderable gracious and independent activity toward them that changes them inwardly and, with understanding the good news of Jesus, frees them from pursuing religious performance (whether Jewish rituals within the Mosaic Covenant or Christian as concluded by believers during the last two thousand years or so) as the basis for the good standing before God.

Instead, God with His grace works in Christians to cause them to believe the truth, obey the truth, and persevere in their belief and obedience in order to qualify for His blessing of entering the eternal Kingdom of God when Jesus returns.