

Hebrews

1:1. “through the prophets.” The Greek here represents a Hebrew idiom (represented in Greek by the instrumental dative) and means, “through” the prophets (Buchanan, *Anchor Bible*).

1:2. God gave from to the Ages to come through Christ. See *One God & One Lord*.

1:5. Quoted from Ps. 2:7 and 2 Sam 7:14.

1:6. Quoted from Deut. 32:43.

“again brings...into the world.” This is a referral to Jesus 2nd birth, his resurrection from the dead (Cp. NASB).

“pay him homage.” See note on Matt. 2:2.

1:7. Quoted from Ps. 104:4. The point of this verse is to elevate the son. The angels of God are swift as the wind, strong as a fire, but they pay homage to the son (verse 6). We went with “destructive as” because that is what fire does—burn things up and destroy them. The “feel” of the verse is that angels are beings whom we should hold in awe.

“flaming fire” The Greek reads “flame of fire,” but this is the figure of speech *antemeria*, (see Bullinger).

1:8, 9. Jesus is a “god” in the oriental sense. See *One God & One Lord*. Quoted from Ps. 45:6, 7.

1:10-12. Quoted from Ps. 102:25-27.

1:13. Quoted from Ps. 110:1.

2:4. This verse is a parenthesis, expanding on the fact that not only have others people confirmed what was spoken by the Lord (verse 3), but God himself has also borne witness by signs and wonders to what the Lord said.

2:6-8. For “little,” see v. 9. Quoted from Ps. 8:4-6.

2:9. A major question involves the word “little,” which can refer to time “for a little while,” as per our translation, the NASB and the RSV; Cp. *Tyndale New Testament Commentary: Hebrews* (Inter-Varsity Press, Leicester, England, 1994), pp.85 and 86. “Little” can also refer adjectivally to “a little lower,” as it does in most translations.

The context, as usual, determines the meaning. Trinitarians say that Jesus was made “a little lower than angels,” but of course imply that as “God in the flesh” was still very different from the rest of mankind. This argument is inconsistent, at best. If Jesus was “God in the flesh, fully God and fully human” then he was not “a little lower than the angels,” even if he acted like it by acting human. On the other hand, if the kenotic Trinitarians are correct, and Jesus “emptied” himself of his godhood while on earth, then Jesus was not made “a little lower than angels” at all, he was in fact made just like the rest of mankind. We believe that the context in the next 8 verses show that Jesus was “made like his brothers in every way” (Heb. 2:17). He was “fully human” in the usual sense of the word. Jesus was fully human, and lower than the angels “for a little while,” which turned out to be the duration of his earthly life, about 30 years. The fact that Jesus was “for a little while made lower than the angels” speaks both to God’s purpose and destiny for Christ, and the facts of the case. God did not destine Christ to be lower than the angels for long, and because of his obedience even to suffering and death, he was not.

Some might argue that Jesus was made positionally “a little lower than angels,” but this would not be the case. Even on earth Jesus was the king of kings, certainly something the angels knew, even if many humans did not.

“in place of everyone.” From the Greek preposition *huper* (#5228 ὑπέρ). See Romans 5:6 commentary on “in place of the ungodly... for... in our place.”

2:12. Quoted from Ps. 22:22.

2:13. Quoted from Isaiah 8:17, 18.

3:2. “made” (See Rotherham; Lenski).

“in all his house.” Moses was faithful in all of God’s house. The “his” refers to God.

3:7. Quoted from Ps. 95:7

“if you hear his voice” The verb “hear” is second person, plural, subjunctive. It may be that God will not speak to us and therefore we will not hear His voice. But if He does speak to us, then we should not harden our hearts as the Israelites did in the desert.

3:8. Quoted from Ps. 95:8.

3:9. Quoted from Ps. 95:9, 10a. The NT breaks the verse differently than the OT.

3:10. Quoted from Ps. 95:10.

3:11. Quoted from Ps. 95:11.

3:15. Quoted from Ps. 95:7, 8.

3:16. There is a question about whether or not the text should read “*was it* not all” as if all did rebel, or “not all” as if all did not. But the meaning clearly seems to be as we have it (Cp. Lenski). “But” is *alla* of emphasis.

4:3. Quoted from Ps. 95:11.

4:4. Quoted from Gen. 2:2.

4:5. Quoted from Ps. 95:11.

4:7. Quoted from Ps. 95:7, 8.

“after so long a time.” David wrote that the people of God should not “harden their hearts” as they did at Meribah and Massah.

4:12. “considerations and intentions.” The mind “considers” then it forms a conclusion.

4:16. “open and honest speech.” The Greek word is *parrhesia* (#3954 παρρησία). Although some translations, including the KJV, have “boldly” or “boldness,” in this context, which is a person coming before a powerful ruler, the English word “boldness” gives the wrong impression. *Parrahesia* was used of the Greeks in the marketplace who were called upon to speak about political issues with complete openness. It was to speak one’s mind, or say what one will, so perhaps “straightforwardness,” “candor,” “openness,” or “frankness” would be good translations (Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament*). As it can be imagined, being totally open and honest about one’s ideas and feelings to a ruler was quite rare in the ancient world. It could get one in serious trouble (note what happened to John the Baptist when he confronted Herod). No one would speak with *parrhesia* (openness and honesty) about Jesus because they were afraid of the Jewish rulers (John 7:13). Because complete openness of speech required confidence and even boldness, it can be translated that way also, and is in other verses. However, to translate it “boldness” here misses the point. The verse is not saying to be “bold” before God, as if we could swagger into His throne room and make demands on Him based upon our “rights.” Rather it is saying that we can be completely honest with Him, and lay our hearts out before Him knowing that we will find mercy and grace to help us. Because in certain contexts speaking openly required great boldness, “boldness” can be a good translation of *parrhesia* (cp. Acts 4:13).

5:5. Quoted from Ps. 2:7.

5:6. Quoted from Ps. 110:4.

5:8. This sentence is the figure of speech *parembole*, a type of parenthesis, which is complete in itself (Cp. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*). The context flows perfectly without the *parembole*, but it adds to the context.

5:11. “Concerning which:” The *peri hou* can be masculine or neuter. In this case, neuter carries the day because the discussion is about the comparison between Christ and Melchizedek, not only about Melchizedek the person. These Jews, who once were considering a Messiah, had become dull, and so the relation between Melchizedek and Christ would be hard to explain or expound.

5:12. “*kai*” = indeed (Brown, Comfort, *Interlinear*);

“obligated.” The Greek is *opheilo* (#3784 ὀφείλω) = “1. To be indebted to someone in a financial sense; 2. To be under obligation to meet certain social or moral expectations” (BDAG). Mankind has a moral obligation to God to use his talents to further the kingdom. In this case, the hearers had heard long enough to be teachers of the subject, but had stayed so long in disbelief, doubt and hesitation that they needed someone to teach them again.

The beginning of the sayings of God would be the OT. These Jews needed a proper teaching on the first principles of what God has said, beginning in the OT.

“Indeed.” We feel that the *kai* is emphatic, making the same point that it made in the opening of the verse. The RSV and NRSV have the sense, but attain it by ignoring the *kai* altogether.

6:1. “Fundamentals.” Technically, “beginnings,” as per 5:12, but since the beginnings of Christ might seem like his conception and birth instead of the beginning principles, we have gone with “fundamentals.”

6:8. Land that produces thorns and thistles was burned so the weeds would have less chance of reproducing.

6:14. Quoted from Gen. 22:17.

6:16. This is a difficult verse to translate because of the various phrases in the Greek that can be placed in different positions. This accounts for the differences in the English translations, which all seem to say the same thing in slightly different ways. A strictly literal rendition of the Greek is so awkward that it is hard to understand. The point of the verse is that people swear by things greater than themselves, and when an oath is given for confirmation, (such as “I swear by God”) that brings an end to the dispute. The Greek, not in the order of the Greek text, could be structured as follows:

καὶ	αὐτοῖς	ὁ ὄρκος	εἰς βεβαίωσιν	πέρας	πάσης	ἀντιλογίας
and	for them	the oath	[given]	for confirmation	[is]	an end of every dispute

6:17. “more convincingly.” The Greek is more literally, “more abundantly,” but in the context of convincing people of His intentions, “more convincingly” is a good translation (cp. ESV, NRSV).

“he guaranteed it.” The Greek word is *mesiteuo* (#3315 μεσιτεύω), and means to act as a mediator, or peacemaker, or to guarantee (BDAG).

6:18. “two immutable things.” The promise, and then the oath that confirmed the promise.

This verse has been translated in a large number of ways, in part due to the large number of phrases that can be moved into different alignments with each other. We feel

that the way the Greek text has the phrases gives us significant insight into what God is trying to tell us. One of the major differences in the translations revolves around the verb “to flee” (often translated “who have fled”) and how it relates to the phrase about the hope. Compare the ESV, “we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope,” with the NASB, “we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us.” The NASB and similar versions have us fleeing for refuge in the hope, while the ESV has us fleeing for refuge, but leave open the questions, “Flee from what,” and “what is the refuge?” We feel that these questions are answered in the context if the verse is translated in the natural word order of the Greek text, as the NASB and REV has done. We flee for refuge (which can also be translated, “found refuge,” (Lenski; BDAG lexicon) in our hope.

The chapter has been speaking of the destruction of the wicked, and the hope of the righteous (cp. vs. 8, 11). But the hope with its promises (v. 12; which is the hope in its fullness, including rewards for the faithful) is not always easy to maintain, especially in the light of the earthly persecution we endure. We must have faith and longsuffering (v. 12) to firmly hold it. Therefore it helps to know that the hope is not a “maybe,” but rather a sure thing, so sure, in fact, that God swore to it by not one, but two “unchangeable” things. And why did God swear by those things? “In order that...we may have strong encouragement.” The sad truth is that many who at one time in their life find refuge in our wonderful future hope, lose their confidence in it and abandon it, even sometimes returning to hopelessness. But we have no need to abandon our hope, no matter how difficult our lives are, because it is sure; after all, God guaranteed its coming with two immutable things.

6:19. “Entering” is the word, but it is usually people who enter. The anchor is “sure and steadfast” because it grips something, in this case, it grips the work of God that is even in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. Thus it is more helpful to say the anchor is “extending” into the inner part.” It is the anchor that extends, see Lenski.

7:3. “for all time.” The Greek is *dienekes* (#1336 διηνεκής), meaning “uninterrupted,” “continually.” The word occurs four times, only in Hebrews (7:3; 10:1, 12, and 14).

7:8. “in the one case...in the other case” The Greek *hode* (#5602 ὧδε) is an adverb, which usually means “here” “a position or point that is relatively near, *here*; and also, “a reference to a present event, object, or circumstance; in this case, at this point, on this occasion, under these circumstances” (BDAG).

7:15. “in the same way as Melchizedek.” This seems clearly to be the meaning of the Greek in this verse. See BDAG lexicon. “Likeness” is more literal, but misses the point here. Jesus’ priesthood was conferred by God “in the same way as” Melchizedek’s was.

7:17. Quoted from Ps. 110:4.

7:21. Quoted from Ps. 110:4.

7:22. “covenant.” The Greek word is *diatheke* (#1242 διαθήκη). This word was used in the Septuagint over 250 times as the translation of the Hebrew word *berith*, covenant. A covenant was usually an agreement between two or more parties, and the Greek word can have that meaning (cp. Kittel; *Theological Dictionary*). There are theologians who say that a covenant with God was one sided, and that is why *diatheke*, which was most often understood to be the will of one person (such as a last will and testament) was used to translate *berith*. However, although there are one-sided covenants, that was the exception, not the rule. In fact, the “Old Covenant” was clearly an agreement between God and the

people (Exod. 24:5-8), with the people agreeing to obey God and follow His commands. The Greek word *diatheke* was translated as *testamentum* in the Latin Versions, and our English word “testament” comes from that Latin root.

8:5. Quoted from Exod. 25:40.

“divinely warned.” From *chrematizo* (#5537 χρηματίζω). The word has the connotations of *divine instruction* and/or *warning*. The context makes it clear that here warning is the stronger meaning—and, interestingly, in all other instances of the word in the book of Hebrews (11:7, 12:25). For more on this word, see note on “divinely instructed” in Matthew 2:12.

8:8-12. Quoted from Jer. 31:31-34.

8:13. Quoted from Jer. 31:31

9:8. “the Holy Spirit,” literally, “the Spirit, the Holy *one*...” This refers to God, who was the one who established the Tabernacle and its rituals.

The way into the Holy Place. Literally, “the way [road] of the Holy Place,” a genitive of relation. The High Priest would take a path (not a specific path, but the path he would walk” through the Tabernacle court, through the first curtain and into the Holy Place, through the second curtain and into the Holy of Holies (or Most Holy Place; Exod. 26:33, 34) where the ark of the covenant was kept. The “road of the Holy Place” was not revealed to those standing outside the Tabernacle. What went on behind the curtain was not clear to them.

9:14. “without blemish.” See note on Ephesians 1:4.

9:20. Quoted from Exod. 24:8.

10:5-7. Quoted from Ps. 40:6-8.

10:8. Quoted from Ps. 40:6

10:9. Quoted from Ps. 40:7, 8.

10:10. “By that will.” By the same will of God of verse 9 that had Christ offered for a sacrifice, we have been sanctified.

10:16, 17. Quoted from Jer. 31:33, 34

10:20. “newly made.” The Greek is *prospatos* (#4372 πρόσφατος), and originally meant “freshly killed.” By the time of the New Testament it had the everyday meaning of “newly made.” However, given the context of this section of Hebrews, the choice of *prospatos* should not be missed. The way into the presence of God was indeed freshly made. Furthermore, it was because Jesus was “freshly killed.” It needs to be pointed out that “newly made” is not in contrast to an old way that had been around awhile. Before Jesus’ death made entrance to God available for everyone (symbolized by the tearing of the Temple veil which separated God from the people), people did not have open access to God. The overtones of the death of Christ are very much in the verse, because Jesus Christ both died (was freshly killed) and had risen from the dead in order to make the way to God available.

10:21. “great priest.” *Great* is from *megas* (#3173 μέγας), which does not mean “great” in the sense of *wonderful*, or “doing a good job,” rather, it refers to “being relatively superior in importance.” Thus some versions render the phrase, “great high priest” (HCSB; NJB; KJV).

10:22. This is a clear reference to what was required of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement in order for him to enter into the Holy of Holies. He had to have his body washed with water (Lev. 16:4, 24), and then he sprinkled the atonement cover and in

front of the atonement cover (Lev. 16:14, 15) and thus made atonement for himself and all Israel (Lev. 16:17).

11:23. “a well-pleasing child *to God*.” This is referring to the record in Exodus 2. The word “well-pleasing” is from *asteios* (#791 ἀστεῖος), which in the New Testament occurs only here and in Acts 7:20. In the LXX it has the connotation of physical beauty and charm (Lust-Eynikel-Hauspie). The words “to God” are added from the wording in Acts 7:20. It is not that they saw their child was good looking—what parent wouldn’t think that?—or worse, that God cared about how “well bred” (BDAG) Moses was. Rather, the connotation is that the child was something special. As the NIV captures with their translation: “they saw he was no ordinary child.”

10:24. “provoke.” The Greek is *paroxusmos* (#3948 παροξυσμός). See note in Acts 15:39.

10:30. Quoted from Deut. 32:35, 36.

10:37. This verse is quoted from Habakkuk 2:3.

“(How little! How little!)” This is the figure of speech *interjectio* (interjection), which is a form of parenthesis in which an exclamation, whose sense is dependant upon the context, is thrown into the sentence. It is also the figure *epizeuxis* (duplication), a repetition of the same word in the same sense for emphasis. The Greek text reads *micron hoson hoson*, which would literally be translated, “a little, how very! How very!” We get our English “micron” from the Greek *micron* (little). Bullinger translates *hoson hoson* as “How little, how little,” picking up “little” as part of the meaning of the word in this context (Figures, p. 198). Rotherham does something similar and translates the verse, “For yet a little while, how short! How short! The Coming One will be here....” The point should be well taken. To those who are suffering trials in life, Jesus seems to be in heaven for a very long time, but compared to the eternity we will spend with him, our suffering, and his not coming yet, is “How little! How little!”

“the coming one will come.” This is the figure of speech *polyptoton* (many inflections. Bullinger; *Figures*).

10:38. Quoted from Habakkuk 2:4.

11:2. The great men and women of faith were commended by God in His Word, by others, and also their deeds were recorded in the books of heaven.

11:5. “Moved” = “to convey from one place to another, *put in another place, transfer*” (BDAG). Referring to Gen 5:24.

11:7. “divinely warned.” See note on Hebrews 8:5.

11:12. Quoted from Gen. 22:17.

11:17. “tested.” See Matthew 4:1 note on “tempted.”

11:18. Quoted from Gen 21:12.

11:19. “out from amongst the dead.” See Romans 4:24. Wuest: “out from amongst the dead.”

11:21. “each of the sons of Joseph.” Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, and the record is in Genesis 48. He adopted them as his own, (Gen. 48:5), which is why the two tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, were reckoned among the 12 tribes of Israel.

“bowed in worship.” See note on Matthew 2:2.

“over the top of his staff.” A reference to Gen. 47:31. The word *proskuneo* can mean to prostrate oneself on the ground, but that would have been too difficult for Jacob at his age and physical condition, so he bowed while leaning over his staff. Some

versions, such as the NASB, supply “leaning,” (“*leaning* upon his staff”) and that was what Jacob was doing, but it does not have to be supplied for the verse to make sense.

The book of Hebrews clears up a problem for us. The Hebrew text of Genesis 47:31, as it is currently pointed, says that Jacob leaned on his “bed,” but the LXX says “staff.” Since the unpointed Hebrew text can read “staff” if pointed differently, and the LXX reads “staff,” and the NT clearly reads “staff,” that is apparently the true record.

11:39. “having been commended.” The Greek is *martureo* (#3140 μαρτυρέω), and it is an aorist passive participle. As an active verb, *martureo* means, to bear witness to, or to be a witness. However, in the passive voice it means that someone bears witness of you. Also, the word often has the connotation of a good witness, or good testimony, as it does here. The reference is to the record of people’s lives that is being kept in heaven, and these people have a good report that has been entered into God’s books. This is a good example of why the reader has to have a wide scope of the teachings of Scripture and the biblical culture to clearly understand what the verse is speaking about. One scholar loosely translated the Greek word in this context as “having had their names entered on the record” (F.F. Bruce, *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistle to the Hebrews*).

12:1. “easily entangles.” The Greek is *euperistatos* (#2139 εὑπερίστατος). It only occurs here, and Robertson (Word Pictures) notes that there are probably a dozen ways to translate it. Here we have a word that only occurs one time and can be translated many different ways. Note the variations in translation: “clings so closely” (ESV); “so easily beset” (KJV); “so easily entangles” (NASB); “so prone to be ensnared” (God’s New Covenant); “easily hampering” (Lensiki); “the sin which controls (us) so tightly” (Louw Nida Lexicon); “so readily (deftly and cleverly) clings to and entangles us” (Amplified). The context of the verse is that of a runner who needs to set aside everything that would slow him down. Thus he sets aside every weight. He also sets aside sin, which like the long robes that people wore, were taken off by the Greco-Roman runners. If left on, the robes would readily (even cleverly) cling to the runner and surround and entangle them, hindering them. This is exactly what sin does in the life of a believer. In this case, one could be tempted to conflate the translation as the Amplified Version does, but we have felt it best to go with “easily entangles.”

“let us also run.” Hebrews 12:1 begins with an initial *kai umeis* (“and us” or “us also”) that connects the modern day believers to the great cloud of witnesses mentioned in chapter eleven. The *kai umeis* goes with the verb of the sentence, let us also run, and not with the participles “having” witnesses or “throwing” off sin. The point is, since these great men and women of faith persevered even though they have not yet received the promises (11:39), *let us also* run with perseverance to the finish line where we will be “made perfect” together (11:40). The point is not “we also have a great cloud of witnesses” (as though the saints in chapter eleven had great witnesses too), nor is it “let us also throw off sin” (as though the context of chapter eleven was about how the saints threw off sin, so we should too). Rather, the author is urging us also to run with perseverance as these great witnesses ran. Surprisingly, most of our versions get this wrong. The ESV, NASB, NRSV, NJB, and ASV make the latter mistake, and the KJV and HCSB make the former.

12:2. “finisher” (see Lenski); “the faith” (Greek text and see Lenski); “enduring” because of the similar “endurance” in verse 1.

12:5, 6. Quoted from Prov. 3:11, 12.

12:15. “exercising oversight, lest anyone is dropping away.” (Cp. Wuest; Lenski). “be defiled” the subjunctive is covered by the “lest.”

12:20. Quoted from Exod. 19:12, 13.

12:21. Quoted from Deut. 9:19.

12:24. Although the blood of Abel’s sacrifice still speaks to us today (Heb. 11:4) is it nothing compared to Jesus’ blood.

“sprinkled blood.” This is the figure of speech *Antimeria* (Bullinger, Figures). The Greek reads, “blood of sprinkling” moving the adjective into a nominative position for emphasis.

12:25. “divinely warned.” See note on Hebrews 8:5.

12:26. Quoted from Haggai 2:6.

12:28. “be grateful.” One of the times that grace is used of gratefulness or thankfulness (Vincent’s *Word Studies*).

13:1. “brotherly affection.” The Greek is *philadelphia* (#5360 φιλαδελφία), a compound Greek word made up of *philos* (a strong liking, a friendship; see note on John 21:15) and *adelphos* (#80 ἀδελφός), which means “brother.” It is the strong bond of friendship that exists between brothers.

13:5. Quoted from Deut. 31:6.

13:6. Quoted from Ps. 118:6.

13:9. “for it is good that the heart be established by grace, not by *ceremonial* foods.” The ritual sacrifices and ritual meals of the Law caused some people to set and establish their heart before God by whether or not they did all the sacrifices correctly, and not due to the love, mercy and grace in their lives. It is easy to get caught up in religious practices and miss the real heart of God.

13:20. “out from among the dead *ones*.” See Romans 4:24. Wuest: “up out from among the dead.”

“in connection with.” This verse is saying that when God led Christ out from among the dead, he did it in connection, or association, with the blood of the eternal covenant. The dative phrase *en haimati* (“in/with the blood”) cannot be understood as instrumental or means, which would make God using the blood as the means to raise up the Son. (Cp. Lenski).