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**The Son of David
Prophecy and Promise**

Paul W. Brownlow

**Notes from a Group Study
of the Epistle to the Hebrews**

THE SON OF DAVID - PROPHECY AND PROMISE

[Quotations are from the Revised Version unless otherwise indicated.]

Paul W. Brownlow

The first prophecy in Scripture connecting David and Christ was spoken some 700 years before David was born, by Jacob, father of the nation of Israel, and is to be found in Genesis 49:10:

“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver [KJV] from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be.”

“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah ... ”

A ‘sceptre’ [Hebrew: *shebet*, or *shevet*; Strong #7626] is a ceremonial rod or stick carried by a sovereign as a symbol of rulership, and this appears to be a statement that Israel’s kings would come from the tribe of Judah.

“Nor a lawgiver from between his feet ... ”

Here, the thought expressed in the first line is repeated. The noted 19th-century Bible scholar, E.W. Hengstenberg, explained the phrase, “from between his feet”, as a Hebrew figure of speech, simply meaning “from him” (that is, from Judah).¹

“Until Shiloh come ...”

The name “Shiloh” is perhaps less clear. While used thirty-three times in the Old Testament, only in Genesis 49:10 does the Hebrew word appear in this form, and accordingly, it is the only entry under Strong’s number 7886, where it is translated ‘tranquility’. Smith’s Bible Dictionary translates it ‘peaceable’, or ‘pacific’.²

The other occurrences of ‘Shiloh’ have various Hebrew spellings and are grouped under Strong’s number 7887. They all refer to the place in Canaan, where, after the conquest of the land, the tabernacle of the congregation was set up.

In the 19th century, a school of thought arose which opposed the Messianic interpretation of Genesis 49:10, based largely on the argument that “Shiloh” in that verse should, for uniformity, also apply

to the location in Canaan, and therefore the prophecy must have been fulfilled in Joshua's time. In my opinion, that interpretation ignores the context.

“And unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be ... ”

This would seem to predict the extension of the kingdom to include the Gentiles.

It seems clear that “Shiloh” in Genesis 49:10 is used as a personal epithet, that is, ‘Shiloh’ applies to someone, rather than somewhere; and I think, as we move on, that the evidence will mount up in favour of this interpretation.³

Saul, the first king of Israel

The fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy depended upon Israel being ruled by kings, yet the arrangement later instituted under the Law Covenant made no provision for a human king. God was their king, and scholars describe Israel during that period as a theocracy, which existed until the time of Samuel, the last of Israel's judges.

Eventually, after repeated periods of oppression by neighbouring nations, the people petitioned Samuel to give them a king;

1 Samuel 8:4-7

“Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah: and they said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the people in all that thy say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not be king over them.”

Of course, Genesis 49:10 was not just a prediction that there would be kings over Israel, but that those kings would come from the tribe of Judah. Yet, when God instructed Samuel to concede to the people's demand and anoint a king, he did not select from Judah, but chose Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin.

Saul's fall from grace

Saul made an impressive start, but he was a man who proved to be incapable of deciding where his loyalty should lie, and his disobedience to God's commands led to his rejection by God (1 Samuel 13:13-14; 15:16-26).

1 Samuel 13:13-14

“And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.⁴ But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath appointed him to be prince over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.”

David

David first appears in the pages of scripture in the latter part of Saul's reign, when Samuel was sent by the LORD to Jesse the Bethlehemite, of the tribe of Judah, to anoint one of his sons with the holy oil. Upon arrival, Samuel requested Jesse to present his sons:

1 Samuel 16:6-7

“And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD's anointed is before him. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have rejected him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”

1 Samuel 16:10 13

“And Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and was withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look upon. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him

in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward.”

The contest with Goliath

Although David was young when Samuel first saw him, God’s words, “for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart”, give us some impression of his exceptional character even then, but it is David’s encounter with the Philistine champion, Goliath, which shows us his extraordinary courage and his unshakeable confidence in God. We must bear in mind that David was then still in his teens.

1 Samuel 17:32-37⁵

“And David said to Saul, Let no man’s heart fail him because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth⁶ and he a man of war from his youth. And David said to Saul, Thy servant kept his father’s sheep; and when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, I went after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant smote both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. And David said, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD shall be with thee.”

In the aftermath of his victory over Goliath, and the subsequent rout of the Philistine army, David’s name became known throughout the land, and that it was he whom the LORD had chosen to rule Israel (1 Samuel 25:28-31; 2 Samuel 5:2).

1 Samuel 18:7-8

“And the women sang one to another in their play, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and this saying displeased him: and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom?”

The following day, while David was playing the harp for him, Saul attempted to kill him at close quarters, but David escaped (1 Samuel 18:10-11).

1 Samuel 18:12-16

“And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul. Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him. And when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was [in awe*] of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David; for he went out and came in before them.”
[* KJV: afraid]

After Saul again cast a spear at him while he was playing his harp for the king, David was obliged to flee Jerusalem.

1 Samuel 19:12 through to chapter 27:4 records the saga of Saul’s murderous pursuit of David, with the final chapters leading up to the death of Saul and three of his sons, including David’s closest friend, Jonathan, defending Israel from an attack by the Philistines.

David and his men were in Ziklag, the city given to him by Achish, the son of the king of Gath, when news reached them of Israel’s defeat, and the deaths of Saul and Jonathan. David wept and mourned publicly for them, and composed “the song of the bow”, a touching lamentation for Saul and Jonathan which is recorded in the first chapter of the second book of Samuel.

David becomes king over Judah

Upon consulting the LORD, David was told to return to Hebron in Judah, where he was anointed king over the house of Judah (2 Samuel 2:4). Meanwhile, Saul’s surviving son, Ish-bosheth, had been taken to Mahanaim and made king of Israel by Abner, a relative of Saul and the former captain of his army.

It was not until after the murders, firstly of Abner by Joab, one of David’s nephews, and Ish-bosheth by two of his own retainers, that the way became open for the nation to be reunited under David. Abner’s murder was the result of a private vendetta, and David’s genuine expression of grief and his public mourning for Abner, whom he had known well, affected the people greatly (2 Samuel 3:31-35).

2 Samuel 3:36-37

“And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people. So all the people and all Israel understood that day, that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner.”

The two men who had killed Ish-bosheth brought his severed head to David in expectation of praise, but instead were put to death.

The reunification of Israel

2 Samuel 5:1-5

“Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was thou that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be prince over Israel. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel. David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.”

And thus began the fulfilment of Jacob’s prophecy in Genesis 49:10. David was the second of only three kings who ruled over a united Israel, the others being Saul, and David’s son Solomon, whose eventual fall into idolatry precipitated God’s decision to divide the kingdom (1 Kings 11:1-13). Of the three, only David remained faithful to the LORD all his life.

A pattern for prophecy

God had chosen David to lead His people and had given him victory over his enemies on all sides, and at this point in David’s reign the kingdom of Israel probably presented the most suitable model for prophecies of the future kingdom of Christ. It was stable, united, structured, led by a warrior king who feared the LORD and whom the people loved, who believed in righteousness and justice, who was at the same time a prophet, as well as a gifted poet and musician. These Messianic prophecies ensured that the name of David would be permanently preserved in Israel’s culture and imprinted in the mind of every Israelite.

God's promise to David

2 Samuel 7:12-16

“When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; but my mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.”

(See also 1 Chronicles 17:11-15)

The promise was incorporated into several of the Psalms:

Psalm 89:3-4

“I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant; Thy seed will I establish for ever, And build up thy throne to all generations.”

(Also verses 20, 28, 29, 33-36; 18:49, 50; 78:67-71; 132:11, 12, 17.)

Genesis 49:10

“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver [KJV] from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be.”

With the commencement of David's reign over Israel, sovereignty passed to the tribe of Judah. God's promise ensured the royal succession to David's heirs “until Shiloh come”, an event which, as the promise implied, belonged to the future, beyond David's lifetime.

David's successors

Solomon succeeded David on the throne, but during the reign of Rehoboam, Solomon's son, the kingdom was torn apart by rebellion. David's line continued to rule over Judah and, for a time, the tribe of Benjamin, while Jeroboam, an Ephraimite, became king over the other tribes (1 Kings 11:26-43; 12:1-20; 2 Chronicles 11:5-14).

To counter his people's dependence on the Temple at Jerusalem, Jeroboam set up an idolatrous form of worship at Bethel and Dan, ordaining his own priests to take the place of the Levitical priesthood, who subsequently left their homes and lands and relocated to Judah (1 Kings 12:25-33; 13:33; 2 Chronicles 11:5-14).

While the book of Psalms contains prophecies that relate to Christ, it remained for later prophets to make the association between David's line and the promised Messiah. The first of these was Isaiah:

Isaiah 9:6-7

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with judgement and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts shall perform this.” (marg. ref. Psalm 89:3-4)

Peace

Here the promised Messiah is called, among other titles, “Prince of Peace”. Recall that “Shiloh” in Genesis 49:10 means ‘peaceable’, and here it is said, “Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end ...” (Isaiah 9:7).

‘Peace’ in this context is not simply about social stability or freedom from war. Apart from the peace offerings ordained under the Law, there are several Old Testament prophecies⁸ in which the word clearly indicates peace with God, something which, between Adam's fall from grace and the coming of the Messiah, had been the privilege of an exceptional few. Isaiah prophesied of the atonement work of Christ, which would make reconciliation, that is, peace, possible between God and all men:

Isaiah 53:5-6

“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

The Babylonian captivity

True to prophecy, the sceptre did not depart from Judah, but the temporal kingdom did come to an end. Apart from the six-year reign of the usurper queen Athaliah, David's successors ruled in Jerusalem for over four hundred years. However, as the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel had been lost to false worship and ultimately transported out of their land to distant parts of the Assyrian empire, so idolatry had also become endemic in Judah, fostered by corrupt monarchs. The worst of these was Manasseh, who ruled for fifty-five years and brought a curse upon the nation. Even the extensive reformation carried out by Josiah only postponed the end.

Two of Josiah's sons were deposed consecutively, Jehoahaz by the king of Egypt and then Jehoiakim by the king of Babylon. Jehoiakim's son, Jehoiachin, occupied the throne for only a short time before Nebuchadnezzar took both him and a large company of the nobility, soldiers, and tradespeople to Babylon (2 Kings 24:14-15). Jehoiachin represented the last generation of Davidic kings prior to the Babylonian captivity⁶, and it was from the beginning of his exile that the seventy years were numbered (Ezekiel 1:2).

While David's line would continue "until Shiloh come", it would not be through Jehoiachin, as declared by the prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 22:29-30

"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah."

The throne reserved

The iniquity of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, is alluded to in the following prophecy. God, having withdrawn the right of succession from Jehoiachin's heirs, declares the throne itself vacant until the Messiah should appear.

Ezekiel 21:25-27

"And thou, O deadly wounded one, the prince of Israel, whose day is come, in the time of the iniquity of the end; thus saith the LORD God: Remove the mitre, and take off the crown: this shall be no more the same: exalt that which is low, and abase that which is

high. I will overturn, overturn it: this also shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.”

All the prophets from Moses to Jeremiah had warned Israel of the consequences of turning their backs on the LORD and casting aside the Law, of adopting the practices of the nations around them and worshipping their gods. Over one hundred years earlier, the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel had been transported out of their land and resettled in distant parts of the Assyrian empire; now, a similar fate had befallen Judah.

A relatively small number of the population were taken into exile in Babylon, while the remainder were either killed or scattered abroad when the city and Temple were destroyed by the forces of Nebuchadnezzar.

The prophet Ezekiel lived amongst the captives in Babylon. Despite this adversity, many of those who had gone into exile were not chastened by their experience, preferring to believe that they were being punished for the sins of their fathers. However, the length of their captivity meant that most, if not all, of that generation would die in Babylon. The words of hope that were part of Ezekiel’s prophetic message were intended to foster faith among their children and grandchildren, those who would eventually return to the land, and the generations to come.

Ezekiel 37:21-26

“And say unto them, Thus saith the LORD God: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And my servant David shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgements, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob

my servant, wherein your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, they, and their children, and their children's children, for ever: and David my servant shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them: it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore."

There is only one covenant prophesied in Scripture that is associated with the Messiah and addresses the issue of peace; that is the New Covenant, spoken of in Jeremiah 31.

The obedience of the peoples

Genesis 49:10

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver [KJV] from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be."

Isaiah 11:1,10

"And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit: and it shall come to pass in that day, that the root of Jesse, which standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek; and his resting place shall be glorious."

The tabernacle of David

Amos was a contemporary of Isaiah. His prophecy in Amos chapter 9, verses 11 and 12 would perhaps not have its present significance, had it not been cited in Acts 15 by the apostle James, who made the connection clear between the promise to David and the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul and Barnabas had been sent from Antioch to Jerusalem, to obtain a ruling from the apostles and elders of the church as to whether the Mosaic Law should be imposed on the Gentiles. A council was held and there were advocates for both sides of the question:

Acts 15:13-18

"And after they held their peace, James answered, saying, Brethren, hearken unto me: Symeon hath rehearsed how God first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And

to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After these things I will return, and I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men may seek after the LORD, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who maketh these things known from of old” (ASV).

In my opinion, the first line, “After these things I will return,” should be put aside until the rest of the prophecy has been considered, because it is the setting up of the ‘tabernacle of David’ which determines the time of the prophecy’s fulfilment.

The second thing is context: to what events did James apply the prophecy? We see from verses 7 to 11 that it was provoked by Symeon’s (Peter’s) reference to the beginning of the Gospel ministry to the Gentiles: that, following the apostle’s preaching to Cornelius and his household, the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon Gentile believers. In this way, God had demonstrated that there was no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile; that through faith in Christ both might be reconciled to God. James saw these events as the fulfilment of Amos 9:11-12.

I believe that there are two main connections between the Amos prophecy and the events to which James applied it, which not only define “the tabernacle of David” but also determine the time of its rebuilding.

Firstly, the admission of the Gentiles to God’s favour: this was a landmark in God’s dealings with men and associated in prophecy with the kingship of David’s heir (Romans 15:12). The Amos prophecy connects the restored “tabernacle of David” with the bringing in of the Gentiles; more precisely, the rebuilding of this “tabernacle” is spoken of as a prerequisite for the Gentiles to seek after the Lord.

Consequently, the “tabernacle of David” must relate to God’s arrangement for receiving all men on the basis of faith, an arrangement which is centred on the risen Christ (Romans 4:23-25; 1 Corinthians 15:14). Having therefore equal relevance for Jew and Gentile, the rebuilt “tabernacle of David” had to be in place not only before Peter’s visit to the house of Cornelius, but also prior to events on the day of Pentecost.

Secondly, that to which the outpouring of the Holy Spirit primarily testified: we read in Acts 2:29-36 that God's promise to David concerning an heir to his throne was fulfilled in Christ. Peter said of the resurrected Christ: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ" (verse 36).

David had been the Lord's anointed and sat upon the throne of the Lord (2 Samuel 23:1; 1 Chronicles 29:23). Peter here testified that the throne was now occupied by David's descendant, fulfilling the promise of 2 Samuel 7.

Paul also confirmed Christ's inheritance of the throne of David in Acts 13:34: "And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he hath spoken on this wise, I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David" (cited from Isaiah 55:3).

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was withheld until this phase of God's plan had been executed. Peter again in Acts 2:33: "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

The gifts of the Holy Spirit were tangible proof that Christ had ascended into heaven and was now seated on the right hand of God. (Hebrews 1:3, 8-9).

Returning to Acts 15:16, note the words, "I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen; And I will build again the ruins thereof ...", showing that this was a restoration of something which had existed formerly, and not an innovation. The conclusions are, I believe, unavoidable that:

(i) the "tabernacle of David" is David's kingly line, fallen with the last of the kings of Judah, rebuilt through the enthronement of his descendant, Jesus Christ.

(ii) the rebuilding of the "tabernacle of David" was accomplished in the resurrection and subsequent exaltation of Christ.

Isaiah 16:5

“And a throne shall be established in mercy, and one shall sit thereon in truth, in the tent of David; judging, and seeking judgement, and swift to do righteousness.”

Acts 15:17

“That the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called.”

The difference between these lines and what purports to be the original in Amos 9:12 is quite striking, illustrating the principle that where the Old Testament is cited by the apostles, we need to be guided by their wording and not attempt our own interpretation direct from the Old Testament.

In any case, the version which James quoted makes a clear distinction between “the residue of men” and “all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called”.

This is not, I believe, one of those Hebraic expressions where the same subject is described in two different ways. The “residue of men” and “all the Gentiles” are not the same people. The “residue of men” would appear to be the faithful remnant of Israel (Romans.9:27; 11:5-7); “all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called” are therefore the non-Israelite component of the Church. This is consistent with a contemporary application of Amos’ prophecy by James.

FOOTNOTES

1. E. W. Hengstenberg - *Christology of the Old Testament*; abridged version (Kregel) p. 31.

2. “Until Shiloh come . . .”

Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible, H. B. Hackett ed., Vol. IV, p. 2997; art. Shiloh.

The article gathers a wide variety of scholarly comments on the verse, one of which applies it to the military pre-eminence of the tribe of Judah from the Exodus until the possession of Canaan, “until Shiloh come” referring only to the geographical entity.

3. "And unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be."

E. W. Hengstenberg - *Christology of The Old Testament*; abridged version (Kregel) p. 32:

'The kingdom of the Messiah, in the Old Testament, is not placed in opposition to the theocracy, but appears as a continuation of it (Isa 9:6). As, according to Isaiah, the Prince of Peace sits upon the throne of David and prolongs the duration of David's kingdom for ever; and in Amos (9:11), the fallen tabernacle of David is to be rebuilt by Him; so here the Redeemer, who shall spring from Judah, appears as the Enlarger of his dominion, hitherto limited to a single people, over all nations.'

4. For a discussion of this verse, please see "*The Potter and the Clay*"; P. W. Brownlow, 2002; copies available on request.

5. The Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures compiled during the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C., omits 1 Samuel 17:12-31, which suggests that those verses may have been a later addition. Upon close examination, most of their content is not only superfluous to the narrative but appears to compromise David's motive for fighting Goliath.

The Septuagint also omits 1 Samuel 17:55 to 18:5.

6. Strong #5288: na'ar; (concr.) a boy (as active), from the age of infancy to adolescence.

7. Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim (the father of Jehoiachin), and Zedekiah, who ruled until the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, were brothers, all sons of Josiah.

8. Isaiah 52:7; 54.10; 57:9; 66:12; Jeremiah 29:11; 33:6; Ezekiel 34:25; 37:26; Zechariah 6:13; 9:10.



Notes from a Group Study of the Epistle to the HEBREWS

Hebrews 13:7-16

7. ***Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.***
8. ***Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.***
9. ***Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.***
10. ***We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.***
11. ***For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp.***
12. ***Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.***
13. ***Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.***
14. ***For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.***
15. ***By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.***
16. ***But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.***

In verse 7 “those who have the rule over you” is rendered as “leaders” in the Diaglott and some other versions. Those leaders having spoken the word of God to the Hebrews were the apostles and leaders of the early church. To “remember” them is not only to bring them to mind but also to respect them and their teaching, and follow the example of their faith, because of their good works for Jesus, and for the sake of the example they set by their conduct, as is shown by Hebrews 6:11-12.

The leaders in this verse are identified as those who expounded the word of God to the Hebrews, and it was thought that this could be extended to any Christian who does the same for newcomers to the gospel down through the gospel age. They should show their leadership by teaching from God’s word and by example, so that their intention to serve him, that

is *“the end of their conduct”* is displayed in their behaviour. The translators of the Bible, and those who clarified the understanding of topics from scripture are examples of such leaders, and they and their work deserve respect from believers; giving attention to the truth and not to ritual and tradition from other sources. Just as Jesus’ character is always the same, his teachings were God’s teachings and do not change.

Verse 8 prompted the thought that Jesus was not always the same, being a spirit being in heaven, a human being on earth, and raised to be a spirit being for his ascension into heaven. However, the previous verses are concerned with Christian conduct, and it is in that respect of his sinless nature that Jesus has always been the same. He was always faithful to God and is the leader of all the faithful. He has been and always will be the same in character for every generation, especially in his work and achievements which are for all mankind.

In verse 9 the strange doctrines are contrasted with the word of God (verse 7), and to the Hebrews were mainly the practices of the Old (Law) Covenant, which the Judaising teachers were trying to bring into Christian life. Paul had to speak against them in several congregations during his ministry. The contrast is continued in that *“the heart be established with grace”* that is, the New Covenant, a dispensation of grace, and *“not with meats”*, or *“ceremonial foods”* (NIV), that is, the sacrifices of the old Covenant; because the latter *“have not profited them”*. That is, the Jews who continued to indulge in those ceremonies had gained nothing from them.

Peter and Barnabas misunderstood the matter according to Galatians 2:11-14. Paul referred to the law as *“weak and beggarly elements”* that brought bondage and thus nullified his work for the gospel (Galatians 4:9-11).

Diverse and strange doctrines could include anything that is not part of Jesus’ gospel message, such as the false teachings that have come out of the practices of pagan worship, and not only Judaism.

The comparison of the Old and New Covenants is continued in verses 10 and 11. Under the Old Covenant the priests of the tabernacle were allowed to eat some of the meat of the sacrifices except those made on the day of atonement, when the remainder had to be burnt outside the camp of the Israelites. The scapegoat took the sins of the Israelites away, figuratively, from the camp. The blood of those sacrifices that was

sprinkled on the altar in the holiest place every year has been replaced by Jesus' blood that was shed on the cross outside the city of Jerusalem.

In John chapter 6 Jesus explained how Jesus' flesh and blood made up the New Covenant sacrifice for sins, so that partaking of the bread and wine as symbols of that flesh and blood would bring eternal life. His flesh and blood symbolise the spiritual sustenance that is available to the believer through the New Covenant every day. The high priest of the Old Covenant has been replaced by Jesus, the high priest of the New Covenant, and those of the Aaronic priesthood have no authority to come to the altar of the New Covenant until they accept the terms of that covenant (Hebrews 7:20-28).

To offer their sacrifices of repentance the Israelites had to go to Moses' tent of meeting (Exodus 33:7-9). Jesus was sacrificed outside the camp, and therefore away from everything to do with the Old Covenant for the sake of both Jews and Gentiles, since they are all considered the same with respect to salvation (Galatians 3:28). He was buried in a tomb, a grave or covered place, not burnt, and he was raised from the grave.

The altar in the tabernacle in the Israelite camp has no value any more, so the believer may go to Jesus, the symbolic altar of the New Covenant to make repentance at any place, at any appropriate time. While the Israelites of old were obliged relentlessly to make sacrifices according to the Old Covenant, it is a privilege to be able to ask for forgiveness through the New Covenant, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Verse 12 notes that Jesus suffered outside the gate of Jerusalem, so in verse 13 believers are exhorted to go to him outside the camp, that is, to leave all worldly affairs when seeking the sanctification of his blood. By suffering outside the gate Jesus had God's reproaches from the Israelites fall on him, as set out in Psalm 69:9, and mentioned by Paul in Romans 15:3; so, in a similar manner when the believer goes to Jesus, suffering may also include some of those reproaches. Thus, the believer suffers for the name of Jesus, because of their choice to serve God through him; the suffering is not Jesus' reproaches transferred to us. And by suffering in that way, by the acknowledgement of the merit of Jesus' sacrifice, it brings glory to God, as given in 1 Peter 4:14.

A city represents the centre of civilisation of a region or country, the seat of government and social order, and the city of verse 14 is the city of chapter 11 verse 10 and chapter 12 verse 22. No man-made city, nor

the arrangements that God made with the Israelites, has been lasting or permanent. The believer looks forward to the city to come, which will be the administration of the unshakeable kingdom of chapter 12 verse 28.

In the same way that man has built cities as a testimony to his abilities, most religious organisations have built places for worship as a symbol of the status of their creeds. The Israelites had the temple as a focus for their worship, but the believer of the gospel age has no tangible things nor visible edifice to establish his place in the world. According to 1 Corinthians 3:11-16, Jesus is the foundation of the temple of God, which is made up of God's chosen members of the gospel age church. And that congregation of believers is built up by their faith in God through Jesus' sacrifice, a possession that is far more valuable than tangible things.

In verses 15 and 16 Paul urged the members of that congregation to offer *"the fruit of our lips"* to God, through Jesus as the primary means of making *"the sacrifice of praise"*. Then to do good deeds and to communicate with others by visiting and sharing blessings, even though those actions may require some sacrifice, as a secondary means of praising God. These sacrifices should be voluntary, which is in contrast to the obligations that were required by the Old Covenant.

The sacrifice of praise of verse 15, that is *"the fruit of our lips"* is the offering to God of prayer and hymns. The sacrifices of verse 16 are different and could include giving up some material things and the effort made to get them. Both these sacrifices have nothing to do with the sacrifice for sins, because verses 12 and 26 of chapter 10 establish the point that Jesus offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, and that there remains no further need for a sacrifice for sins. Taking action to do good to others is another form of sacrifice since it demonstrates an intention to please God, as shown by Philippians 4:18 and Ephesians 5:2. According to Psalm 51:16-17, God is not pleased by the burnt offerings themselves but by the demonstration of an obedient and contrite heart.

Hebrews 13:17-29

17. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

- 18. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.**
- 19. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.**
- 20. Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,**
- 21. Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.**
- 22. And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.**
- 23. Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.**
- 24. Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.**
- 25. Grace be with you all. Amen.**

As in verse 7, “*them that have the rule over you*” in verse 17 does not refer to those who rule in a worldly sense, but in a spiritual sense. They are the leaders of the congregation who have the best interest of believers at heart. The Hebrew Christians depended upon the spoken word of truth, since there was no written record of the New Testament during their day. Thus the responsibility of the leaders was then greater than when scripture was available to be read by every believer; as it is today, when it is the responsibility of each individual to discern the truth.

Showing respect to both the leaders and their teaching will make their task easier, since they are accountable to Jesus (verse 12), and showing respect will also be advantageous to the learners as they grow in faith.

In verse 18 Paul asked the Hebrews to pray for those leaders, including himself, because they “*trust*” or “*are sure*” (NIV and RSV) that their duty of delivering the truth has been done honestly.

In verse 19 the expression “*the rather*” is rendered as “*particularly*” in the NIV and as “*more earnestly*” in the Diaglott. It means to give a high priority to offering prayer for him so that he could visit them sooner, and according to verse 23, in the company of Timothy.

In verse 20 Paul wrote of “*the God of peace*” in spite of the persecutions that he suffered throughout his ministry. He did the same in Romans 15:33,

and showed the Philippians that *“the peace of God, which passeth all understanding”* would keep their hearts and minds *“through Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:7). Jesus told the disciples that he would leave them his peace, and the holy spirit as the comforter in John 14:26-27.

At the end of verse 20 Paul mentioned *“the everlasting (correctly, unchanging) covenant”* that was sealed through blood. Since with God there is no variableness or shadow of turning (James 1:17) all his covenants, and promises, would be unchanging, not everlasting. He would not alter any of them.

It is the New Covenant that was ratified by Jesus' blood and the only one that will have everlasting effects in the reconciliation of mankind to the creator, and so the New Covenant is the everlasting covenant.

It may seem from verse 20 that Christ was raised through the blood of the New Covenant. However, from Peter's words in Acts 2:24, death was not able to hold the Lord because he was sinless, and divine justice obliged God to raise him from the grave. The NIV has altered the word order of this verse and it is misleading. By shedding his blood the Lord ratified the New Covenant, purchased the human race and became the great shepherd of the sheep, that is, of those who follow him, and especially his little flock who are assured, through his resurrection, of joint-heirship with him.

At the beginning of verse 21 *“make you perfect”* refers back to the *“God of peace”* at the start of verse 20. It is not the shepherd nor the blood of the covenant that does so. The perfecting work, or equipping, of the Hebrews is an on-going process carried out by God through the New Covenant, and every good work refers to spiritual matters, since the New Covenant is a spiritual covenant. Paul was asking God to produce good works by his spirit, and not necessarily the miraculous holy spirit, but to influence the hearts and minds to think on spiritual, not worldly things.

The perfecting takes place *“though Jesus Christ”*, and for his sake. Without the New Covenant none of this could be done because he is the way; there is no other way to salvation, except through him (Acts 4:12). The acknowledgement of glory at the end of verse 21 is for God, since Jesus told the Jews *“I seek not my own glory”* (John 8:50) thus it also refers back to the start of verse 20.

The “*Amen*” at the end of verse 21 makes it appear that the epistle ends there. It has been suggested that Paul added the last four verses. He beseeched them or appealed to them to “*suffer*” that is, to learn and put into action his words of exhortation, which include the whole of the epistle, because the Hebrews needed thorough instruction about the change from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. He claimed the letter to be of few words, indicating that he could have written more about its subject matter.

From verse 23 it may seem that Timothy was a prisoner with Paul, but this is not recorded elsewhere. He called upon them to salute or to greet their leaders, and all the sanctified ones, or “*all God’s people*” (NIV), that is all those who believe in God through Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:2). “*Those in Italy*” are not necessarily only those in Rome, since Paul was with some brethren at Puteoli on his way to Rome according to Acts 28:13-14. It may be that Paul was with some Italian brethren at the time he wrote the epistle.

The letter concludes with a benediction that grace, the unmerited favour from God, be with the Hebrews, and from that time, also with the readers of the letter down through the gospel age.



THE NEW COVENANT NEWS

The New Covenant News is compiled by an editor responsible to the New Covenant Fellowship. The thoughts expressed do not necessarily represent the understandings of all the members of the group, and readers are requested to heed the words: **“*Prove all things*”** (1 Thessalonians 5:21).



Email: info@newcovenantfellowship.org.au

Website: www.newcovenantfellowship.org.au

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