

Hebrews and General Epistles

- World view of Hebrews
- Christology of Hebrews
- Salvation in Hebrews
- General Epistles

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World View of Hebrews

- World view seems to combine Jewish and Greco-Roman elements.
 - Often connected with the type of Hellenistic Judaism found in Alexandria.
 - Jewish thought influenced by Platonism, Philo.
 - David deSilva - understand it by means of Greco-Roman institution of patronage.
 - The worldview is more Jewish (eschatological) than Greek (Platonic).

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World View of Hebrews

- Twofold dualism (G. E. Ladd):
 - Heavenly/earthly - chapter 8-9
 - Earthly sanctuary is copy and shadow of heavenly.
 - Both must be purified.
 - Present age/age to come (already/not yet)
 - “These last days” (1:2); the “end of the age” (9:26).
 - The Day of the Lord is approaching (10:25).
 - Coming age, time of the new order (2:5, 8; 9:10).
 - Two ages connected by Kingdom of God idea.

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World View of Hebrews

- Concept of faith is eschatological.
 - Heb. 11:1 - the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.
 - Often interpreted as 2 different things: hope for coming redemption, assurance of (Platonic?) heavenly realities.
 - But may be parallelism: things **not yet** seen.
 - Closely related to hope.

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World View of Hebrews

- Deals explicitly with old and new covenants.
- Jesus instituted new covenant (8:8-12).
 - Old and new as promise and fulfillment.
 - Use of typology to express this relationship.
 - Shadow vs. substance (10:1).
- Old covenant was faulty (8:7).
 - Can’t deal permanently with sin (10:4).
 - Requires endless sacrifices.
 - Serves to remind people of sin (10:1-3).

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World View of Hebrews

- New covenant better than old (7:22).
 - Based on better promises (8:6).
 - Based on better sacrifice (9:14, 23).
 - Instituted by better mediator (8:6).
 - Creates a new heart in people (8:13; 10:9).
- Old covenant is obsolete and has been abolished (8:13; 10:9).

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Christology of Hebrews

- Very rich Christology.
- Clear teaching on Jesus' humanity.
 - Made like us in every way (2:17).
 - Suffered as human being (5:7).
 - Learned obedience as human being (5:8).
 - Tempted in all ways as we are (4:15).
 - Because he was tempted, he can help those who are tempted (2:18).
 - Called an apostle (3:1) - i.e., one sent by God.

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Christology of Hebrews

- Explicit teaching on Jesus' divinity.
 - Mediator and sustainer of creation (1:2-3).
 - Preeminent agent of God's revelation (1:2).
 - Reflects God's glory and is true image of his nature (1:3).
 - Unique son of God (1:2) who came into the world, suggesting preexistence (10:5).
 - Angels worship him (1:6).
 - Exalted and interceding for us (1:3-4; 7:25).

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Christology of Hebrews

- Image of Jesus as high priest unique to Hebrews. What does it mean?

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Christology of Hebrews

- Some similarities with human priesthood.
 - Chosen by God (5:5).
 - Had to be human to serve as high priest (2:17-18).
 - Presented a sacrifice to God on behalf of the people (8:3).

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Christology of Hebrews

- Some differences from human priesthood.
 - Sinless; didn't sacrifice for himself (4:15; 7:27).
 - Both high priest and sinless sacrifice (9:14).
 - Sacrifice was once for all (7:27; 10:10).
 - Sat down at God's right hand (10:12).
 - Obtained eternal redemption (9:12).
 - Permanent priesthood; he lives forever (7:23).
 - Priest-king like Melchizedek (6:20; 7:3, 16-17).

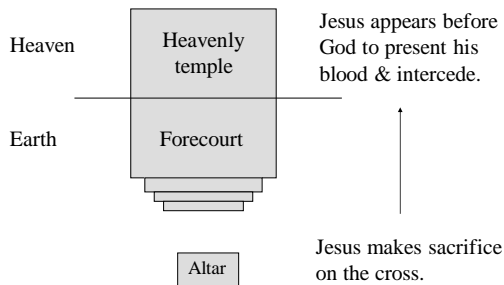
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Christology of Hebrews

- O. Cullmann: this is the most complete Christological image in the NT.
 - Covers all of Christ's work.
 - Image of earth as the vestibule or outer court of heaven, which is the sanctuary.
 - Priest makes sacrifice, enters sanctuary to present it, then comes back outside to proclaim to people that sacrifice has been accepted.
 - Jesus' ministry fits this model...

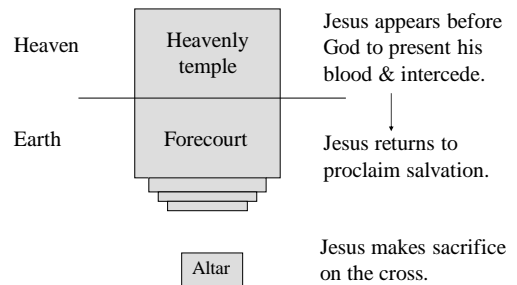
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Christology of Hebrews



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Christology of Hebrews



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Christology of Hebrews

- Two distinctive terms for Christ:
 - *Archegos* - pioneer, champion (2:10; 12:2).
 - Climax of “faith hall of fame” in chapter 11.
 - Acts as our champion (like David), leads us into the promised land (like Joshua).
 - *Prodromos* - forerunner (6:20).
 - Goes ahead of us and secures the way.
 - Enters presence of God and guarantees access of those who follow him.
 - Cullmann: like Paul’s idea of “firstborn from the dead.”

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Christology of Hebrews

- Doesn’t give detailed theory of atonement.
 - Died “for everyone” (2:9).
 - Bore the sins “of many” (9:28).
 - Sacrificial imagery; OT background (9:26).
 - Defeated Satan and freed his captives (2:14).

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Salvation in Hebrews

- Distinctive soteriology (see handout).
- Overarching idea = approaching God.
 - Opposite is turning away or withdrawing.
 - Horizontal = pilgrimage of faith toward eschatological goal.
 - Vertical = entering the sanctuary.

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Salvation in Hebrews

- Priesthood of all believers is implied.
 - Chapter 10 Day of Atonement imagery.
 - Access to presence of God.
 - We have an altar (13:10); can offer acceptable worship (12:28); can offer sacrifices of praise and good works (13:15-16).

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Salvation in Hebrews

- Sanctification is important concept.
 - Identity: set apart for God (10:10, 29; 13:12).
 - Vocation: we must pursue (12:14).
- Perfection has same range as sanctification.
 - Jesus makes us perfect forever (10:14).
 - We're to go on toward perfection (6:1).

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Salvation in Hebrews

- Receive salvation by repentance & faith (6:1).
- Connection between faith and obedience.
 - Jesus learned obedience and became the source of salvation for those who obey him (5:8-9).
 - See importance of perseverance in chapter 11.
 - Faith is laying hold of the promises of God and acting on them (Ladd).
 - Obedience needed to inherit promises (10:36).

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Salvation in Hebrews

- Hebrews warns against apostasy.
 - Strong warnings about falling away (2:1, 3; 3:12-14; 6:4-8; 10:26-31).
 - People who showed all the evidence of Christian commitment denying the faith under persecution.
 - If people deliberately reject the salvation in Christ, there is no hope for them.

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Salvation in Hebrews

- What aspects of the theology of Hebrews would be helpful to you in your setting?
- What aspects might be difficult or problematic or particularly challenging?

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General Epistles

- Also called “catholic” (universal) epistles.
- Most addressed to the universal church.
- Includes James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; Jude.
- A few distinctives...

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General Epistles

- Theology of James?

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General Epistles

- Theology of 1 and 2 Peter?

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General Epistles

- Theology of Jude?

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General Epistles

- Johannine epistles
 - Dualistic language
 - Christology
 - Eternal life
 - Nature of Christian life, especially sin and love
 - Assurance and discernment (“This is how you know...”)
 - Similar themes in Gospel of John

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