

# Theology Unto Doxology: New Covenant Worship in Hebrews

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## INTRODUCTION

From the opening sentence of the sermon to the Hebrews, we can see that something is different. There has been a change—a change that is so great and so fundamental, that it requires a complete reorientation of how the people of God approach him in worship. Everything related to the worship of Yahweh has been affected by Christ, a line of reasoning that the writer of Hebrews carefully unfolds in a cascading argument of point after point, drawing his readers to an inevitable conclusion and to an inevitable choice: would they choose to return to the old covenant, with its limited and anticipatory cultus, or would they go with Christ “outside the camp, bearing his reproach,” and thus stake their claim as well as their lives and their eternal salvation on what this new priest has accomplished? Is he indeed able to “save forever those who draw near to God through him, by faith” (7:25; 11:1-16)? If so, it amounts to a complete reorientation of the worship of God’s New Covenant people.

Indeed, that is precisely the point that the writer of Hebrews makes. Through a complex and integrated argument rooted in the Old Testament (OT), he, as David Peterson asserts, “presents the most complete and fully

integrated theology of worship in the New Testament.”<sup>1</sup> As such, this sermon is “truly essential reading for those who would establish a Christian theology of worship.”<sup>2</sup> No other New Testament (NT) book says more about Christ’s role as the high priest, mediator, and sacrifice. There are no more imperfect and sinful priests who themselves need atonement. There is now one perfect High Priest. He does not offer animals for sin; He has become the perfect sacrifice for sin, never to be repeated. As our high priest, he always intercedes for his New Covenant people and reorients our worship of God.

Further, no other biblical book says as much about the New Covenant. Hebrews explains the coming of the New and the departure of the Old more than any other. The OT had foretold the fact that one day the God would bring a New Covenant in place of the Old. Covenants are God’s way of relating to His people, and the New Covenant that was promised through Jeremiah (Jer 31:31-34) is here. Jesus said that His blood is “the blood of the new covenant.” Hebrews refers to it as the “eternal covenant,” since it cannot be rescinded (13:20).

As a result, New Covenant worship is therefore to be an overflow of what his people know and accept by faith to be true. *In short, the main point is that Hebrews’ theology of New Covenant worship can be distilled into one simple phrase: Theology unto Doxology.*

In the following pages, I will consider a few key “doxa-centric” passages, Hebrews 12:28-29, and especially 13:1-6 and 15-16. Each centers on the New Covenant believer’s doxological response and what acceptable worship actually is. But first, it behooves us to summarize what leads the writer of Hebrews to the particular point of the believer’s worshipful application of truth. As is the pattern throughout the canon of Scripture, theology and sound doctrine must *precede* and therefore *ground*, doxology—which our response to what God has done for us in Christ. Otherwise our worship is pagan and decidedly not an “acceptable service of worship” (12:28-29).

## **THEOLOGICAL SUMMARY**

The writer begins by announcing that just as God spoke long ago through the prophets, he has now spoken to us in his Son, his perfect representative (1:1-4). God’s Son is superior to the angels and all prophets, the greatest of which was Moses. It was through angels that Moses’ revelation was mediated,

yet the new revelation in Christ is superior to that. Therefore, we should all take care to listen to Him (1:5-13; 2:1-4). Christ came to earth and for a time was positionally lower than the angels (2:5-9; cf. Psalm 8), and in doing so suffered “so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone” (2:9). He became a merciful and faithful high priest who is “not ashamed to call them brothers” and who can uniquely aid his people since he knows the suffering of temptation, yet not the accomplishment of sin (2:10-18).

Next, whereas Moses was a servant to God, Jesus is the Son of God and is the supreme example of faithfulness to God (3:1-6). This is immediately contrasted to the OT wandering wilderness generation, who were cursed to die outside of the Promised Land because although they saw the mighty works of God, they did not believe (3:7-19; Psalm 95). Therefore, we all are to be careful that this same kind of unbelieving heart does not exist in any of us (3:12-14) lest we too not attain to what God as promised, namely, the promised rest of God (4:1-13). Those who truly believe will endure to the end and by faith receive the promised rest of God. Therefore, we must hold fast our confession of faith in Christ. We may draw near to God and seek grace and help since we have a merciful and faithful high priest in the person of Christ who sympathizes with our weaknesses.

Hebrews 5:1-10:18 begins by noting the superior compassion and qualifications of Jesus Christ, who is a priestly mediator between God and His people. His priesthood is better than the OT Levitical priesthood. God had forecasted in the OT (Psalm 110:4) that there would be another priesthood, that of the order of Melchizedek (5:1-10). Yet before the writer of Hebrews can say all he wants to say about Melchizedek, he first exhorts them at length to consider their present state and to warn them again (5:11-6:20). They have been believers long enough that they should be teachers by that time, but since they have become spiritually lethargic and lazy, they have to go back and recap the basics (5:11-6:3). Such a spiritual step backwards elicits one of the strongest warnings from the author: if they abandon Christ, there is no other place to turn. There is no “Plan B.” Those that have “ears to hear” will hear and heed the warning (6:4-9). The writer of Hebrews immediately mitigates such difficult words by expressing his confidence in them and his desires for them (6:9-12) and reminds them of God’s promise as the basis of Christian hope (6:13-20).

Following the necessary exhortation of 5:11-6:20, the pastor is ready to explain his main point: “we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the

right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven” (8:1). The new priest is not a Levitical priest, but Melchizedekian. He is one without beginning or end, superior in every way to the Old Covenant’s priesthood. Since there is a transformation of Old Covenant priesthood (7:1-10), there is a transformation of the Old Covenant Law as well. Apart from Christ, the Law made nothing perfect due to its being external and weak (7:15-19). The Law of God was “over” them, and not “in” them, a problem that is remedied in the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34).<sup>3</sup> What is needed is a new and eternal covenant mediated by a new and eternal priest (7:11-28).

As such, the writer of Hebrews quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34 in full (8:8-12) and announces that the promised New Covenant of Jeremiah 31 has begun. Since there is a New Covenant, the Old Covenant is obsolete (8:13). For the writer of Hebrews, the New Covenant promised two essential “better promises” (8:6): the internalization of God’s laws and forgiveness of sin (8:10-12). In contrast to the way of the Old Covenant people who always broke the Law and did not believe God (recall 3:7-19), the New Covenant people would be a forgiven and believing people marked by worshipful obedience from the heart. These two acts are accomplished by God and God alone and are so essential that He repeats them in summary form at the end of this large section in 10:16-17.

But how can these better promises be realized? How can God grant these New Covenant blessings? Answer: by inaugurating the promised New Covenant. Therefore, in 9:1-10:18 the writer of Hebrews unpacks how Jeremiah 31 has been fulfilled in the work of Christ. The ideas of law, tabernacle, and blood sacrifice are all part of what it means to be in a covenant relationship with God. Therefore, the writer of Hebrews explains that Christ is both the high priest and the sacrifice at the same time. Blood is *required*, since without it there can be no forgiveness (9:22). In contrast to the repeated annual Yom Kippur sacrifices (Lev 16), Christ’s sacrifice is only to be offered once, since the blood of Christ is sufficient to take away sin permanently. Christ is the preeminent example of one who obeys the will of God, since he offered his own body as a sacrifice for sin. He was raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of God where he sits down, in contrast to the Old Covenant priests who could never sit because their work was never finished (10:11-14).

In light of all that God has done in Christ (as explained in 7:1-10:18), the New Covenant believers should respond a certain way; this is reflected

in a life of joyful, worshipful obedience. As such, the writer of Hebrews returns to exhortation for the rest of the letter. In 10:19-12:29 the author compels them to love, encourage, and meet with one another (10:19-25), utters another significant warning to them against turning away (10:26-31), and admonishes them towards endurance, since this is their greatest need (10:32-39). What they need is to live by faith (Hab 2:4), like so many that have come before them did. Therefore, since faith is what marks believers in every age, the writer of Hebrews challenges them with examples of OT believers who endured in faith (11:1-40). Many of them lost their lives, and most faced persecution of some kind due to their unshakable faith in God. Let us follow their example, fix our eyes on Jesus, and lay aside all stumbling blocks and every sin that entangles us from running the race of faith set before all of God's covenant people (12:1-3). In doing so, there will be trials as well as the loving discipline of God the Father. Such discipline is proof that we are children of God (12:4-17). As the children of God, we are heirs of an eternal kingdom (12:18-24) that is unshakable. Therefore, the writer of Hebrews issues one final warning not to reject God's word, but rather to show gratitude with reverence and awe to the one God who is a consuming fire (12:25-29).

Therefore, we may summarize to this point by saying that we have a new High Priest, we have a new covenant mediator, we have a new covenant cultus (see esp. Heb 9) centered around the blood, not of animals, but of Jesus our eternal High Priest, ("blood" is used 14 times in Heb 9-10 alone<sup>4</sup>). The New Covenant people therefore have access to God through Christ, and though we may still live as sojourners in these latter days, the eternal city of the heavenly Jerusalem is certain.

*This is the theology that drives us to doxology—to which we will now turn.*

## **DOXOLOGY**

As with the rest of the NT, "worship" is not something we do simply as we gather on the Lord's day. It certainly includes that, but the writer of Hebrews envisions New Covenant worship as a description of our entire lives, fueled by and grounded in the theological truth of Christ's accomplished work. All of worship is Christo-centric and Christo-telic, beginning in Heb 1:6, when God commands the angels to render homage to the Son. Peterson rightly

notes, “The way we share on earth in the homage of the angels is not in some cultic activity but in the life of faith and obedience to Christ and his message.”<sup>5</sup> While Christ is the object of worship, Hebrews is clear that more is in view, namely, that Jesus Christ is the *means* by which New Covenant believers render acceptable worship. This is seen most clearly in Hebrews 12:28-29, and 13:1-17.

### **Hebrews 12:28-29**

Given what Christ has done, as well as his ongoing priestly ministry at the right hand of the Father, we are summoned into the presence of God without fear, the ceremonial curtain having been removed at the cross. With cleansed consciences (9:11-14), believers can now render worship and service to God with reverence and awe, with grateful hearts (12:28). Our New Covenant reality is an already-but-not-yet, as we have received the “unshakable kingdom,” yet we are still pilgrims walking by faith on a faith journey towards the heavenly Jerusalem.

Yet this gift is not one-sided; it provokes a response from the people of faith. We are to “show gratitude” (ἔχωμεν χάριν) as part of our worshipful response. Indeed, such a posture of thanksgiving and gratitude *must* accompany such a privilege. And with gratitude, we are to render to God “acceptable service with reverence and awe, since our God is an all-consuming fire” (28c–29). The term rendered “offer service” (λατρεύωμεν) is found in 8:5, 9:9, 10:2, and 13:10 is a cultic term, used in 9:14 “to describe the aim of Christ’s cleansing of the worshippers’ conscience.”<sup>6</sup> This indicates that even in the New Covenant, there are still sacrifices to be offered, this time by all believers, a point that is made specific later in 13:15-16. Believers are to offer service to God that is acceptable and pleasing (εὐαρέστως τῷ θεῷ), offered with reverence and awe. We offer sacrifices and service to God, since he is to be reverentially feared. This exhortation is grounded by the next phrase, “for God is a consuming fire” (γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν πῦρ καταναλίσκων).

In 12:29, the reference to God being a “consuming fire” is frequently a reference to judgment (Is 33:14; Wis 16:16; Ps. Sol 15:4; Matt 24:41; 2 Thess 1:7; 1 Cor 3:13,15; 2 Pet 3:7), and this metaphor of God being a consuming fire comes from Deuteronomy 4:24. In the Deuteronomy passage, verse 24 concludes a section in which Moses warns the people against idolatry *in the context of worship*.<sup>7</sup> This is significant for our purposes today,

since the exhortation in Heb 12:28-29 to respond to God with gratitude and acceptable service also comes in the context of a warning about right worship. In other words, the same warning against idolatrous worship given to the exodus generation is applied to New Covenant believers: if God is to be worshipped, he must be worshipped with gratefulness, reverence, and awe.<sup>8</sup> All other worship is idolatry and subject to the consuming fire of God. As Schreiner notes, it is “through such gratefulness that believers serve God in a way that pleases him ... it is a humble gratefulness, a gratefulness mixed with holy fear ... a joy that is sweetened by a sense of awe.”<sup>9</sup> Like the Old Covenant exodus generation, New Covenant believers are on the verge of entering the land—the heavenly city—and must be warned of what happens to those who fail to persevere in faith and obedience.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, Attridge concludes, “In the context of such worship, the unshakable kingdom is present ... (and) forms a conceptual link with the call to sanctification (12:14), and introduces the central topic of the concluding section of paraenesis,”<sup>11</sup> chapter 13:1-17. This serves to underscore my point that *theology fuels doxology*. Our understanding of who God is and what he has done for us in Christ (as well as that which awaits us) grounds and fuels our grateful response of a life of worship. This is unpacked in the verses that follow.

### **Hebrews 13:1-17**

While it is true that Hebrews 13 functions as an epilogue, it fits well with what comes before and expands on the kind of service and worship that is acceptable to God (12:28-29). Verses 1-6 focus on what it means to show love and hospitality in vv. 1-3, as well as on one’s personal behavior of sexual purity, and generosity in vv. 4-6. Verses 7 and 17 open and close this section with a command to remember those faithful leaders who have died (recalling Heb 11), and obey their present leaders, while the intervening verses of 9-16 exhort them to live lives of sacrifice in keeping with the new altar of the New Covenant rather than returning to the Old. Again, in keeping with the thesis of this essay, worship in Hebrews is an entire way of life; it is “doxological perseverance” and a living out of the New Covenant promise of the “law written on our minds and engraved on our hearts” (8:10-12; 10:15-17).<sup>12</sup> It is “theology unto doxology.”

Chapter 13 points us in the right direction concerning how the New Covenant believer lives this life of worship.<sup>13</sup> Attridge states, “In the context of

such worship, the unshakable kingdom is present ... (and) forms a conceptual link with the call to sanctification (12:14), and introduces the central topic of the concluding section of paraenesis,<sup>14</sup> chapter 13:1-17. While chapter 13 is not exhaustive, it does give us solid ground for discerning what the New Covenant life of doxology is all about.<sup>15</sup> Cockerill notes, “Those who live this life truly ‘serve’ God by approaching him with praise and the obedience of good works”<sup>16</sup> as described in chapter 13.

First, New Covenant believers are marked by “brotherly love.” The imperative is to “let brotherly love continue” (Ἡ φιλαδελφία μενέτω), and forms the basis not only for the next five verses, but also sets the tone for all of chapter 13.<sup>17</sup> This is a kind of love that is distinctly Christian and familial, and grounds the following admonitions. Further, this is not an occasional act of familial love, but an ongoing habit,<sup>18</sup> the verb being a present imperative.

Verses 2-3 express what this brotherly love looks like. Believers are “**not to forget** to show hospitality to strangers” (v.2, τῆς φιλοξενίας **μὴ ἐπιλανθάνεσθε**)<sup>19</sup> and are to “**remember** those who are in prison” (v.3, **μυμήσκεσθε** τῶν δεσμίων). Showing hospitality to strangers is a general command but might specifically refer to hosting fellow believers as they traveled. In this time, it was common for believers and church leaders to travel, and the practice of hospitality was both common and expected (cp. 2-3 John). The reference to “entertaining angels” recalls both Abraham (Gen 18:1-15) and Lot (Gen 19:1-22) who did just that without knowing the exact identity of these “strangers.” This kind of hospitality “is no begrudging offer of kindness, but a generous sharing of what one has.”<sup>20</sup>

Those in prison (v.3) are likely there due to their faith in Christ, and recalls 10:34a, when the readers “showed sympathy to the prisoners.” Given the conditions of first century prisons, “remembering the prisoners” is a summons to provide for their physical needs, since prisons were under little obligation to do so. Prison life in the first century was deplorable,<sup>21</sup> and those who visited imprisoned believers risked incarceration themselves. Still, a life of doxology and gratefulness to God, rooted in the knowledge of Christ’s own sacrifice for them ought to compel the readers to do so without concern for their own safety. For as the pastor reminds them in v.6, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” citing Psalm 118:6. Jesus commanded the same thing in Matt 25:35-36, “I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me;

I was in prison, and you came to Me.” The brotherly love that they are to show sacrifices for all who are in the household of faith, those in prison, those brothers in sisters who are in need, and all who are suffering mistreatment. In doing so, it brings the justice and blessing of the unshakable kingdom to those most in need of it.

Whereas verses 2-3 describe what brotherly love looks like, verses 4-5 prohibits the kind of actions that violate brotherly love. The “doxological life” is to be marked by love and good deeds, and thus not to be characterized by sexual immorality or the love of money. Marriage is to be held in honor, and in contrast to the pagan culture, the marriage bed is to be undefiled. Sexual immorality and adultery will be judged by God, the consuming fire, and is a violation of the command to love found in 13:1.

Likewise, greed and the love of money are in direct contrast to the kind of love that is to mark those who live a life of worship to God. As David Allen notes, “An inordinate concern for one’s possessions can supplant care for those in the Christian family and foreigners.”<sup>22</sup> Why is such greed forbidden? Once again, the writer grounds his command in God’s truth, for God has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”<sup>23</sup> To be sure, a life of doxology and anticipation of the unshakable kingdom finds its rest in the love and care of God, who is faithful to meet all of one’s needs. As such, contentment with one’s spouse sexually and one’s income financially are further doxological expressions that mark the New Covenant worshiper. Cockerill has summarized verses 4-6 well when he writes, “Those who ignore the heavenly City and pursue the things of this life are often characterized by both [sexual immorality and the love of money]. Thus, it was natural for the pastor to move from concern for sexual purity to warning against the love of money.”<sup>24</sup> Such is in contrast to the command to love in v.1, and is therefore in contrast to a lifestyle of worship. It is because of what God has done in Christ that the worshiper can assert by faith that “the Lord is my helper” (Ps 118:6, v.6).

Verses 7-17 exhort the readers to imitate and obey their spiritual leaders (an inclusion, vv. 7, 17), and to “identify with Christ in his suffering and to offer the sacrifices of praise and good works.”<sup>25</sup> While there is much to mine here, I want to focus on verses 10 and then 15-16 given they specifically use the terminology of New Covenant worship.

Verse 10 refers to an “altar,” which some have argued is a reference to the Eucharist (especially Roman Catholic interpreters), while others see this

as referring to a sacrificial altar located in the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>26</sup> I find both of these options unpersuasive and instead suggest that the “altar” is the writer’s shorthand way of referring to the accomplished work of Christ on the cross.<sup>27</sup> *This entirely reorients the worship of God in the New Covenant.* For in the New Covenant era, such Old Covenant sacrifices brought to the altar are of no value. Rather, what pleases God is a life of grateful obedience, brotherly love, sexual purity, humble sacrifice and generosity – in short, a life of doxology that is rooted in the doctrinal truth—theology—of what God has accomplished for us in Christ.

Of course, verses 15-16 add another component to our understanding of New Covenant worship. This life of doxology is marked by, and indeed *must* be marked by, “sacrifices of praise to God.” This, of course, is the pattern of the whole Bible, since expressions of one’s gratefulness and thankfulness to God consistently redound unto praise from Genesis to Revelation. Thus, there is continuity in the midst of discontinuity.<sup>28</sup> Verse 15 says, “*Through Him [therefore] let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise, that is, fruit of lips that confess his name.*”<sup>29</sup> Once again, the writer includes himself by way of a hortatory subjunctive, here expressing continuous, habitual aspect via usage of the present tense.<sup>30</sup> The genitive *ainéseōs* (αἰνέσεως) rendered “of praise” in most English translations, is likely exegetical<sup>31</sup> (“sacrifice that is/consists of praise”). Wallace refers to this as a genitive of apposition, and many have agreed. A hard distinction between an exegetical genitive and genitive of apposition is not necessary, since either fit the context and the pastor’s meaning is clear: the sacrifice *is* the praise offered to God through Christ by the New Covenant people of God.

Further, the concept of specifically praising “the divine name of God” (Yahweh) is common in the OT.<sup>32</sup> (For example, see 1 Chron 16:35; 29:13; Neh 9:5; Ps 7:17; 9:2; 18:49; 22:22; 30:4; 61:8; 66:2; 69:30; 74:21 [ct. v. 18]; 99:3; 100:4<sup>33</sup>; 102:21; 106:47<sup>34</sup>; 113:1; 135:1, 3; 145:1, 2, 21; 140:13<sup>35</sup>; 148:5, 13; and essentially every usage of “hallelujah” (הַלְלוּ יְהוָה) in the Psalter, since it means “praise the name of the God of Israel = Yah/Yahweh”). In the background of Hebrews 13:15 likely stands the fellowship offering of Leviticus 7:11-21, as well as Psalm 50:14 and 23, where the covenant people are commanded by Yahweh to “offer a sacrifice of praise.”

In short, for these first century Jewish Christians to be exhorted to confess/profess God’s name as an act of praise<sup>36</sup> would have evoked a common

practice. Though an ancient practice, in these “latter days” (1:2) such a sacrifice has been “transposed into a higher, Christological key” since this sacrifice of worship “to his name” (τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ) is made through Christ (δι’ αὐτοῦ).<sup>37</sup> It is a sacrifice “to God,” professing “his name” in praise as the “fruit” of one’s lips, likely borrowing the expression from Hosea 14:3. As previously noted, professing the name of YHWH (ὁμολογούντων τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ) as an act of corporate worship was common in the OT, and is commanded in verse 15, albeit amplified given the new eternal High Priest through whom this sacrifice of praise is made.

This pattern of priestly mediation for acceptable sacrifice was established under the Old Covenant and has now come to its Christotelic end, as explained in Hebrews 1–12. As Cockerill notes, now, at the end of the sermon, “if the ... hearers remain unmoved after this powerful, long-prepared-for appeal, he has nothing more to say.”<sup>38</sup> The “sacrifice of praise”<sup>39</sup> from the redeemed community of believers is a key component of acceptable sacrifice of worship that New Covenant believers ought now render through Jesus.<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, “at every crucial point in his argument the pastor has directed his hearers to focus their attention on the exalted, all-sufficient Son of Psalm 110:1, and 4, to enter [God’s] presence *through him* (1:13; 4:14-16; 8:1-2; 10:19-25; 12:1-3).<sup>41</sup> And I assert that here it is no different. Worship is “acceptable” because it is offered through Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, our High Priest who intercedes for us, the mediator of our worship to God. It is theology unto doxology. The writer directs the minds of his readers to what is true about Christ, and because of what is true, he exhorts them to a life of worship.

Finally, in verse 16, the writer comes full circle back to the beginning of chapter 13,<sup>42</sup> adding that along with such sacrifices of praise, acceptable New Covenant worship also consists in good works, and sharing what one has. In 13:1-6, he explained how good works are a form of “acceptable worship, with reverence and awe” (12:28-29). These are the kinds of sacrifices that are pleasing to God. As Attridge states, “Having a share in Christ’s altar means finally to follow him on the road of suffering, to worship God through sacrifices of praise, and to devote oneself to loving service of other members of the covenant community.”<sup>43</sup>

## CONCLUSION

All of life in the New Covenant is to be worship. Our lives become a continuous outpouring of sacrifice to God, a kind of “doxological living” that is our response to God. It is marked by joyful praise as we sing and recite God’s truth in our liturgy, as well as joyful living characterized by the love of others, generosity, purity, and obedience to God. All of life becomes a sacrifice of worship to God, made acceptable through Christ, since Jesus is the epicenter of New Covenant worship. As Harold Best asserts, the believer’s New Covenant worship means “living continuously in love toward God, toward other people and toward oneself in a richly fitted vocabulary of work, service, and obedience, knowing that with such sacrifices God is pleased.”<sup>44</sup> The writer of Hebrews would agree. New Covenant worship is the daily overflow that comes from knowing God and believing what he has accomplished for us in Christ; *it is theology unto doxology.*

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1. David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1992), 228.
  2. Peterson, *Engaging*, 253.
  3. For a full discussion on the transformation of the Law, see Barry C. Joslin, *Hebrews, Christ, and the Law* (Carlisle, England: Paternoster, 2009), esp. 141–72; 208–223. See also David Allen, *Hebrews* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2010), 420–22; 447–56.
  4. “At first, sight, it is puzzling to see how Hebrews lumps together the daily sacrifices of Judaism, the annual Day of Atonement sacrifices, the sacrifices inaugurating the Sinai covenant, and allusions to the red heifer ceremony. What all these sacrifices have in common, however, is the single point of blood: ‘blood provides the medium of drawing near to God’” (Peterson, *Engaging*, 236; cf. W. G. Johnsson, “Defilement and Purgation in the Book of Hebrews,” PhD diss. [Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University, 1973], 228).
  5. Peterson, *Engaging*, 237.
  6. Harold Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 383, cf. fn 71.
  7. Note the context of Deuteronomy 4:24, 15 “Therefore watch yourselves very carefully. Since you saw no form on the day that the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, 16 beware lest you act corruptly by making a carved image for yourselves, in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, 17 the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, 18 the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth. 19 And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.”
  8. In fact, the whole context of Hebrews 12:18–29 has Deut 4:9–24 in the background, where the people are reminded of what they have seen on the holy mountain, that shook with God’s presence, with “darkness, clouds, and thick gloom” when the people drew near (Deut 4:11). God declared his covenant with them, to *perform his statutes and commandments* (4:13–14), and then solemnly warned them against creating idols for themselves. They saw no form on the mountain that day (4:15), and the order of idols they are not to make in 4:15–19 is actually creation in reverse (I owed this insight to my colleague, Dr. Adam Howell). It is as if Moses is saying that idolatry is a reversal and undoing of what God has been doing since the creation of the world. This helps us to understand the nature of acceptable worship in

- the New Covenant – it is grounded by the statement of fact that our “God is a consuming fire” (Deut 4:24; Heb 12:29). See also Exodus 24:16-17.
9. Thomas R. Schreiner, *Hebrews* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2015), 407.
  10. *Ibid.*
  11. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 383.
  12. This is fueled by the Christo-centric theology that marks the book from its opening sentence and is our “doxological response” to what God has done in Christ. It is our response, in faith, to the definitive word that God has spoken in his Son.
  13. Acceptable worship is one’s participation in the promised unshakable kingdom of God. See Peterson, *Engaging*, 242.
  14. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 383.
  15. Any other response to the word spoken in God’s Son makes one subject to the warnings of chs. 2, 3, 6, 10, and 12.
  16. Gareth Lee Cockerill, *Hebrews* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 672.
  17. *Ibid.*, 678–79.
  18. *Ibid.*, 679.
  19. Cf. Judges 6:11f., 13:3f., Tob 3:17; 5:4-16; 12:1-20.
  20. *Ibid.*, 680.
  21. D. Allen, *Hebrews*, 608; Craig Koester, *Hebrews* (AB vol. 36a; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 564.
  22. D. Allen, *Hebrews*, 610.
  23. As most scholars note, this is not an exact OT quotation, but likely comes from Gen 28:15; Deut 31:5,6,8; Josh 1:5; 1 Chron 28:20.
  24. Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 684.
  25. *Ibid.*, 676.
  26. See esp. D. Allen for a good summary of these views (*Hebrews*, 615-16).
  27. Allen suggests this is a use of synecdoche, the part (altar) to reference the whole (Christ’s finished work of atonement). *Hebrews*, 616.
  28. Type to antitype, shadow to fulfillment, anticipation unto fulfillment, temporary to eternal, etc.
  29. Δι’ αὐτοῦ [οὖν] ἀναφέρωμεν θυσίαν αἰνέσεως διὰ παντὸς τῷ θεῷ, τοῦτ’ ἐστὶν καρπὸν χειλέων ὁμολογούντων τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ, (Heb 13:15).
  30. Recall Heb 7:27, where the writer teaches that Jesus offered up himself *once*, but here, New Covenant worshipers are to offer up praise *continually*.
  31. See Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 95-101.
  32. Attridge agrees. *Hebrews*, 400-01.
  33. This example is interesting in that it uses a cognate of the same verb (ἐξομολογείσθε αὐτῷ αἰνεῖτε τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ (Ps 99:4 LXX).
  34. ἐξομολογήσασθαι τῷ ὀνόματι τῷ ἁγίῳ σου (Ps 105:47 LXX).
  35. ἐξομολογήσονται τῷ ὀνόματι σου (Ps 139:14 LXX).
  36. BDAG, s.v. “ὁμολογέω.” Note, the only other use of this verb is in 11:13, Κατὰ πίστιν ἀπέθανον οὗτοι πάντες, μὴ λαβόντες τὰς ἐπαγγελίας ἀλλὰ πόρρωθεν αὐτὰς ἰδόντες καὶ ἀσπασάμενοι καὶ ὁμολογήσαντες ὅτι ξένοι καὶ παρεπίδημοὶ εἰσὶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. “These all died in faith, having not received the promised things but having seen and welcomed them at a distance, and having professed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.” Note the cognate noun in 3:1; 4:14; and 10:23.
  37. In contrast to verse 11: the sacrifices of animals whose blood is brought into the holy places as a sacrifice for sin, which is offered through the high priest (διὰ τοῦ ἀρχιερέως).
  38. Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 702.
  39. See Lev 7:12 (τῆς θυσίας τῆς αἰνέσεως (Lev 7:12 LXX). The closest parallel in the LXX to καρπὸν χειλέων is found in Hosea 14:3, καὶ ἀνταποδώσομεν καρπὸν χειλέων ἡμῶν. See also 2Ch 29:31, “Then Hezekiah said, ‘Now *that* you have consecrated yourselves to the LORD, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the house of the LORD.’ And the assembly brought sacrifices and thank offerings, and all those who were willing *brought* burnt offerings,” (2Ch 29:31 NASU).
  40. It is worth noting that during the decade AD 60-70, likely when Hebrews was written, there was a substantial Jewish nationalism present, that ultimately fuel rebellion against Rome, and subsequently, the demise of Jerusalem. As Allen notes, such Jewish nationalism “likely brought pressure to bear on Jewish-Christians to identify with the homeland against the ever-growing Roman threat,” (D. Allen, *Hebrews*, 622).
  41. Cockerill, *Hebrews*, 701.

42. "Do not forget" specifically recalls 13:2, where the command is identical, μή ἐπιλανθάνεσθε. 2PI Pres Mid/Pass Impvtv.
43. Attridge, *Hebrews*, 391.
44. Harold M. Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 42.