

The Kingdom Hope in Hebrews – A Commentary

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The Believer's "Hope" in Hebrews

The book of Hebrews was written to Jewish believers. Most commentators understand the central purpose of the book to be encouragement to persevere in the Faith. Apparently, some Jewish believers had been persuaded to abandon Christ and return to rabbinical Judaism. But, merely exhorting Jewish believers to persevere does nothing to motivate them to do so. The motivation for perseverance, which Paul repeatedly laid out before the reader, was the ancient HOPE of Israel and the patriarchs.

Hebrews 6:17-20

17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath,

18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.

19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,

20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

That "anchor of the soul," the thing that gave the early Jewish Christians "hope," is completely missed by virtually all modern commentators! It was the hope of the Messianic Kingdom, including the hope of the promises in the Abrahamic, New, and Davidic Covenants, to which the writer repeatedly referred. This theme is so prevalent in Hebrews, one wonders how so many can miss it.

The Failure of Modern Theological Systems

The sad fact is that theological bias has blinded the modern Christian to the real hope so prominent in Hebrews. This is true of the two major theological camps, Dispensationalism and Covenant (Amillennial) Theology, which account for the majority of modern Christians. While Dispensationalists admit the truth of a future Messianic Kingdom, their theology severs Jewish Christians of this dispensation from the hope of Israel and the Patriarchs. Dispensationalists look at Hebrews through a colored lens that blocks out any connection between the Jewish believer and his Jewish heritage. In their thinking, Jewish believers have been severed from their connection to "Israel" and are now part of the "Church." The Jewish Christian, in dispensational theology, has the same "heavenly hope" as the Gentile believer is alleged to have. In

seeking to maintain their dichotomy between God's plan for Israel and His plan for the Church, they have effectively turned the Jewish Christian into a Gentile, and severed him from the hope of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David.

Those who embrace Covenant Theology (Amillennialists, including Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant), have completely dismissed the Jewish hope of a Messianic Kingdom on earth as a false hope. They think the Jews wrongly took the Old Testament prophecies literally. Like Dispensationalists, they think the hope of the Jewish Christian is the same celestial hope they allege for Gentile Christians. Neither Dispensationalists nor Amillennialists can afford to admit that the Jewish Christian's hope is the literal fulfillment of Israel's covenants, and the promised Messianic Kingdom on earth, without fatally undermining their entire systems. This article will show that the ONLY hope held out for the Jewish believer in Hebrews is the earthly Messianic Kingdom, the ultimate and **literal** fulfillment of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants. That being the case, both Dispensationalism and Amillennialism, with their "heavenly destiny" for the redeemed, become untenable.

Authorship

The Pauline authorship of Hebrews is disputed by some. But the general consensus of the early Church was that its author was Paul, and the Greek transcription was Luke's. The theology is definitely Pauline. But the Greek style and grammar is superior to Paul's, on a par with Luke and Acts. Our position is that Hebrews is the work of Paul, perhaps dictated by him and written by Luke his companion. For the purposes of this article, we will assume Pauline authorship. But, the issue of authorship will not have any real bearing on the conclusions drawn in this article.

The Rabbinical Style of Teaching in Hebrews

One of the reasons Hebrews is so misunderstood is the failure to recognize the rabbinical style of teaching in Hebrews. Paul routinely cited short excerpts of Scripture from the Old Testament, without expounding them, in order to bring an entire Old Testament passage to bear on his argument. The Jewish hearers, who were well versed in these Scriptures, immediately knew the context and content of the entire passage, and viewed the teaching of Hebrews in light of those Old Testament passages referenced within it. Properly interpreting the book of Hebrews absolutely demands that one have knowledge of the Old Testament passages from which the many quotes were drawn. We must understand why Paul used particular citations of Scripture in his arguments, and what these citations would necessarily mean to the Jewish reader who was intimately familiar with the quoted excerpts and their contexts. This style is also seen in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and to a lesser degree in some of his other Epistles.

But it dominates the book of Hebrews, since the intended audience was Jewish believers who were used to this style of teaching.

The Old Testament Text

New Testament writers frequently, but not always, quoted from the Greek Old Testament called the Septuagint (LXX). This Greek translation differs significantly in several places from the Hebrew text. The use of the Septuagint is most pronounced in Hebrews where virtually every quote comes from the LXX. Paul even based some of his critical points on specific words or sentences in the LXX that do not appear in the Hebrew text we have today. For this reason, we will be using the LXX when illustrating the contexts from which these citations are derived.

Hebrews Chapter 1 – Christ the King, the Hope of the Davidic Covenant

The first chapter deals with the superiority of Christ to the angels. This superiority is demonstrated by the prophecies of His coming Kingdom, and Christ's destiny to rule the nations as King.

*5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: **“You are My Son, today I have begotten You”**? And again: **“I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son”**?*

*6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: **“Let all the angels of God worship Him.”***

In these two verses, Paul brings to bear three separate Old Testament prophecies. These three quotations (in bold) may not appear on the surface to emphasize Christ's Kingdom. But, to Paul's Jewish readers, all three have the very same emphasis, the Davidic Covenant, the Messianic King and His Kingdom.

The first, *“You are my Son, today I have begotten You,”* is a prophecy from Psalm 2. Here is the context which Paul brings to bear on his point. *“But **I have been made King by him on Sion his holy mountain, declaring the ordinance of the Lord: the Lord said to me, ‘Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the ends of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces as a potter’s vessel’.**”* (Psalm 2:6-9 LXX).

This statement of David's, which on the surface appears to refer to David himself, is in reality also a prophecy of Christ, the everlasting King of the seed of David, reigning upon this earth. That His reign is future is clear from verse 9, *“Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt dash them in pieces as a potter’s vessel.”* This passage is alluded to in Revelation 19, placing it after the second coming of Christ, (Rev. 19:14-15). Paul then

immediately quoted a second prophecy related to the Davidic Covenant, and the Messianic King. “*And it shall come to pass when thy days shall be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy bowels, and **I will establish his kingdom.** He shall build me a house, and I will set up his throne for ever. **I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son:** and my mercy will I not withdraw from him, as I withdrew it from them that were before thee. And I will establish him in my house and in his kingdom for ever; and his throne shall be set up for ever” (1 Chron. 17:11-14 LXX). This statement appears to be a prophecy of Solomon. Yet, like the previous prophecy, it is also prophetic of Christ, the everlasting King of the seed of David.*

The third quote, “*Let all the angels of God worship Him,*” is not found in our Hebrew Bible. It is, however, contained in the Septuagint Greek translation (LXX) Paul used as the basis for all his Old Testament quotations in Hebrews. This quote comes from the last verse in the Song of Moses recorded in Deut. 32. It refers to Christ's triumph over the enemies of Israel, when He sets up His Kingdom. “*Rejoice, ye heavens, with him, **and let all the angels of God worship him;** rejoice ye Gentiles, with his people, and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in him; **for he will avenge the blood of his sons, and he will render vengeance, and recompense justice to his enemies, and will reward them that hate him; and the Lord shall purge the land of his people.**” (Deut. 32:43 LXX). Paul continues:*

7 *And of the angels He says: “Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.”*

8 *But to the Son He says: “**Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom.**”*

9 *You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”*

Psalm 104:4 (LXX) was quoted by Paul, referring to the role of the angels. He then contrasted this with a quote of Psalm 45:6-7, another prophecy of Christ. Once again, an examination of the context of this quote reveals another prophecy of the reigning King of Israel. “*Thou art more beautiful than the sons of men: grace has been shed forth on thy lips: therefore God has blessed thee for ever. Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O Mighty One, in thy comeliness, and in thy beauty; and bend thy bow, and prosper, **and reign,** because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall guide thee wonderfully. Thy weapons are sharpened, Mighty One, **(the nations shall fall under thee)** they are in the heart of the king's enemies. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of **thy kingdom** is a sceptre of righteousness. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, thy God, has anointed thee with the oil of gladness beyond thy fellows.” (Psalm 45:2-7 LXX). Notice Paul clearly stated that this prophecy was spoken to “the Son.” (“But **to the Son** He says;*

'Your throne, O God, is forever'..."). Paul interpreted Psalm 45 to be a prophecy of Christ's rule, His "Throne." He then added another prophetic Psalm.

10 And: "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands.

11 They will perish, but You remain; and they will all grow old like a garment;

12 Like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be **changed**. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail."

This citation is from Psalm 102. "In the beginning thou, O Lord, didst lay the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. The children of thy servants shall dwell securely, and their seed shall prosper for ever"(Psalm 102:25-28 LXX). This passage refers to the transformation of the creation, the heaven and earth shall be "changed." Yet, Israel will dwell securely in Christ's Kingdom.

Finally, Paul quoted Psalm 110:1, a prophecy of Christ's present place, at the Father's side waiting for His Kingdom to be established.

13 But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, **till I make Your enemies Your footstool**"?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

Again, the context is clearly the anticipation of the coming Kingdom. "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, **until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send out a rod of power for thee out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. With thee is dominion in the day of thy power**, in the splendours of thy saints: I have begotten thee from the womb before the morning" (Psalm 110:1-3 LXX). Christ's being seated at the Father's right hand is not His reigning over His enemies. It is a time of waiting for His reign to begin "in the day of Thy power," after His enemies have been made His footstool. In the mean time, He says to the Son, "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Clearly, then, the reign of Christ is after His time of being seated at the Father's side in heaven. By quoting this Psalm, Paul has clearly placed Christ's reign in the future, not the present as amillennialists claim. This Kingdom on earth is the hope of believers, "in the splendours of thy saints," not heaven. The emphasis of chapter 1 has clearly been the superiority of the Davidic King, Jesus the Messiah, over the angels. The quotations Paul brought to bear on his topic all refer to His coming Kingdom on the earth as the hope of the saints.

Hebrews Chapter 2 – “The World to Come”

Chapter 1 began by pointing out that “in these last days,” God has spoken to Israel by His Son (as opposed to his former communication through Moses and the prophets). Chapter 2 begins with essentially the same point, “*How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.*” (v. 3). He warned them not to drift away from the things Jesus and His Apostles have taught. Then true to the theme in chapter 1, Paul again contrasted Christ's rule as King in “the world to come” with the role of the angels.

*5 For He has not put **the world to come, of which we speak**, in subjection to angels.*

If there was any doubt by amillennialists, that the Kingdom repeatedly referenced in the previous chapter, is future (not during this age), this statement settles all doubt. All of the previous Old Testament prophecies that Paul has cited concern “the world to come.” The Greek word translated “world” is not “αιον” (age) but “ουκουμενε” (land, inhabited earth). Literally, Paul wrote: “...*the land, the coming one, about which we are speaking.*” There is no question Paul was referring to the coming Messianic Kingdom, in which the whole world will be subdued under the rule of Jesus Christ and His saints. Amillennialists and dispensationalists ought to pay attention to the fact that Hebrews constantly holds up the future Kingdom of Christ on earth as the hope and inheritance of the saints. It is not heaven. That concept was borrowed from Gnosticism. It did not originate in either the Old or New Testaments.

At this point in his discourse, Paul added another important component. In verse 6, He brought the saints into the equation, and their role in the coming Kingdom.

6 But one testified in a certain place, saying: “What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him?”

7 You have made him a little lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands.

*8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet.” For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. **But now we do not yet see all things put under him.***

This is a quote from Psalm 8:4-6 (LXX). In context, it refers to God's ultimate plan for mankind, to rule over His creation. This was God's ideal. But, Paul then says, “*But now we do not yet see all things put under him,*” meaning, man is not yet fulfilling this role for which he was designed. The fulfillment of this will occur when the saints rule the world with Christ. But first, the saints needed to be “brought to glory” and to “salvation” through the suffering of their “Captain,” as Paul explained in the next two verses.

9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Christ, who is the King, and His saints who will reign with Him, are all “of one.” They are His “brethren,” and will share in His glory and Kingdom. Paul continues:

11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

12 saying: “I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”

Notice the context of this quote, which is also the Messianic Kingdom. ***“I will declare thy name to my brethren: in the midst of the church will I sing praise to thee. Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye seed of Jacob, glorify him: let all the seed of Israel fear him. For he has not despised nor been angry at the supplication of the poor; nor turned away his face from me; but when I cried to him, he heard me. My praise is of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him. The poor shall eat and be satisfied; and they shall praise the Lord that seek him: their heart shall live for ever. All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him. For the kingdom is the Lord’s; and he is the governor of the nations.”*** (Psalm 22:22-28 LXX).

Psalm 22 is well known as a prophecy of the sufferings of Christ. Verses 1-21 describe the crucifixion. Yet, beginning with verse 22, the scene changes to the victory of Christ as King of Israel! It is at this very point in the Psalm, where it turns from Christ's sufferings to His Kingly reign, that Paul began his quote. This is quite fitting, since Paul's point was that Jesus had to “taste death” for His people first, before they could fulfill their destiny and reign with Him over the creation. That He will sing “in the midst of the assembly” (ἐκκλησιας) with His people refers to His rejoicing with His people in His Kingdom. Finally, Paul brought to bear two more passages.

13 And again: “I will put My trust in Him.” And again: “Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.”

Both quotes come from Isaiah 8:17-18. The first, “I will put my trust in Him,” is missing from the Hebrew Bible, but appears in the LXX. The context is a prophecy of Christ's first coming, and gathering out of Israel a faithful remnant of disciples.

Paul was implying that his Jewish readers are among the “children whom God has given” to Christ. They have put their trust in Him. And Paul wished for them to persevere so that they may in the end be a part of the “assembly,” the “brethren” among whom Christ will sing, when “the Kingdom is the Lord’s.” (Psalm 22:22-28).

Hebrews Chapters 3&4 – The Land Inheritance, the Hope of the Abrahamic Covenant

We will deal with chapters 3-4 together, since throughout both chapters, Paul expounded upon a single Old Testament text, Psalm 95:8-11. Let's consider this Psalm first, and then see how Paul explained its significance for his Jewish readers.

Psalm 95:8-11 LXX (94:8-11)

8 Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, according to the day of irritation in the wilderness:

9 where your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works.

10 Forty years was I grieved with this generation, and said, They do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.

*11 So I swear in my wrath, **They shall not enter into my rest.***

This Psalm was an exhortation to Israel, not to follow the example of their forefathers “today,” while God was speaking to His people Israel. The negative example David used was the “rebellion” in the wilderness. The consequence of that rebellion was that Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years, until a whole generation died off. Only their children went into the land that God promised to Abraham. Paul turned to Psalm 95, using this passage as both a warning and a future promise for his Jewish Christian brothers.

Hebrews 3

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

“Today, if you will hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, 9 Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. 10 Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.’ 11 So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’”

12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;

13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,

15 while it is said:

- “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”*
- 16 *For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?*
- 17 *Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?*
- 18 *And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?*
- 19 *So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*

Paul interpreted the first word, “today,” as referring to a time still present, the day when opportunity to hear God's voice was still open for the Jewish people. “Today” simply meant before judgment falls. In these verses, Paul's focus was on not hardening one's heart when hearing God's call. And, like David, he used the example of the Israelites at Kadesh Barnea for a warning. However, in chapter 4, Paul went on to draw a most interesting conclusion from this Psalm regarding the future hope of Israel.

Hebrews 4

- 1 *Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.*

Paul drew a fascinating inference from Psalm 95. Since this Psalm was a warning from God, “**Today**, if you hear His voice harden not your hearts,” and since Israel failed at Kadesh Barnea to enter into **His rest** (possession of the Land promised to Abraham), Paul inferred that there is a future promise of entering “His rest” implied in this prophetic warning for Israel in this Psalm. In other words, in Psalm 95, the Holy Spirit was speaking of another (future) opportunity for Israel to enter **His rest**, since they failed to do so at Kadesh Barnea. In the following verses, Paul explained his reasoning in drawing this inference.

- 2 *For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.*
- 3 *For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: “So I swore in My wrath, **they shall not enter My rest**,” although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.*
- 4 *For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: “And **God rested on the seventh day** from all His works”;*

Paul was not speaking here of Israel simply achieving a generic “rest” from her enemies in the promised land under Joshua. Paul's emphasis was on entering **God's “rest”**, something quite beyond merely having rest from one's enemies. He got this idea

directly from Psalm 95, where David wrote, “they shall not enter **MY rest**.” Notice in verse 3 Paul stated that “we who have believed do enter **that rest**.” That “rest” is the permanent rest Israel hoped to achieve in the promised land, the ultimate realization of the inheritance promise to Abraham. But they failed to do so because of unbelief. “We,” (Paul and Jewish believers) are the ones who will realize the hope Israel failed to realize of entering **His rest**, which is the inheritance promised to Abraham and his seed.

Notice in verse 2 Paul said that both “we” and “they” (Israel at Kadesh Barnea) had been preached the same message, “...the gospel was preached to us as well as to them.” The word “gospel” simply means “good message,” and refers to the promise of the land inheritance. It is significant that Paul clearly stated that both Israel at Kadesh Barnea, and Paul’s Jewish-Christian readers, had heard the same “good message,” and could potentially enter the very same “rest.” Yet, Israel had formerly disbelieved the message, and was barred from God’s “rest.” Paul’s point is clear. The future hope of his readers was exactly the same as the hope of Israel at Kadesh Barnea, the permanent inheritance of the “promised land.” Paul then cited Genesis 2:2, where Moses spoke of God’s rest - the seventh day. He tied this in with “My rest” in Psalm 95. Notice:

5 and again in this place: “They shall not enter My rest.”

*6 Since therefore it remains that some must enter **it**, and those to whom **it** was first preached did not enter because of disobedience,*

The “it” that some must enter is the “promised land,” the inheritance that God promised to Abraham and his seed (see Gen. 15:13-21). This was the “good message” preached to Israel under Moses, who led them to the land. But they rejected the message in unbelief at Kadesh Barnea. Israel in the Old Testament did not enter into God’s rest promised to Abraham and His seed in Gen. 15:13-21, because of their unbelief. Paul concluded, in verse 6, that **the very same promise of the land inheritance** is still yet to be realized by himself and the rest of believing Israel. He returned to Psalm 95 to continue his reasoning.

7 again He designates a certain day, saying in David, “Today,” after such a long time, as it has been said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.”

*8 **For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.***

*9 **There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.***

10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

*11 **Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.***

When Paul wrote, *“‘Today’ after such a long time,”* he meant that the prophetic warning written by David in Psalm 95 for “today,” was written “such a long time” after the rebellion in the wilderness. Yet, this prophetic warning, *“if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts,”* implied to Paul another opportunity for Israel to enter into God’s rest, which Israel had failed to enter. In other words, centuries after Israel failed to enter God’s rest, God was going to give them a second opportunity to do so. This time, He exhorted them not to make the same mistake their forefathers made at Kadesh Barnea. Paul then made this amazing statement: *“For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.”* Paul has actually inferred “another day” from this Psalm. He has stated essentially that the temporary “rest” Israel received through Joshua was not God’s rest. It was not the ultimate fulfillment of the promise God made to Abraham. His conclusion? Simply that God’s Sabbath rest for His people is yet future. And Jewish believers must persevere, after hearing God’s voice. They must not harden their hearts like their forefathers did. Otherwise, they too will fail to enter God’s rest.

In verse 9, the Greek word is *“σαββατισμος”* (Sabbath rest). God rested on the seventh day. And Israel’s hope is to enter His “Sabbath rest.” While Israel in the Old Testament looked for this “rest,” they did not achieve it under Joshua. It remains still as the hope of Israel. That “Sabbath rest” is the same Kingdom of Christ Paul repeatedly spoke of in the first two chapters. Paul has clearly called the Millennium, “the Sabbath Rest” and “God’s Rest.”

I must not fail to point out the support in this passage for an idea that was almost unanimously held by the earliest Church Fathers. That is, Christ would return to establish His Kingdom at the end of six thousand years. The “Millennium” was viewed as the “Sabbath Rest” by several of the Early Church Fathers, based upon the same kind of thinking Paul displayed here, tying in the future hope of Christ’s Kingdom with God’s Sabbath rest at the creation. While this passage surely does not overtly state this theory, it certainly seems to imply it. And one could easily infer that this theory was indeed Apostolic, and both Paul and his Jewish-Christian readers were familiar with it. We do know that this theory was contemporary in some Jewish circles in Paul’s day. And his words here seem to presuppose that it is correct.

In chapter 2, Paul established (from Psalm 22) the necessity of Christ’s redeeming Israel before they could reign with Him in His coming Kingdom. In the remainder of chapter 4 and all of chapter 5, he developed this idea further, showing Jesus’ current role as High Priest. There is one final point amillennialists ought to note, however. In contrast to Christ’s Kingly role which is always future in Hebrews, His priestly role is viewed as present (Heb 4:14-15, & 5:9-10).

Hebrews Chapter 6 – The Promise to Abraham is Our Hope

The first part of chapter 6 deals again with perseverance, and the consequences for those who turn back in unbelief (like those at Kadesh Barnea). Paul then exhorted his Jewish brethren to follow the example of those who have persevered in faith, and who will in the end inherit the Abrahamic promises. (Later, in chapter 11, Paul gave a long list of these “people of faith” whom he tells his readers to imitate). Only those who persevere in this hope will inherit the Abrahamic promises.

Hebrews 6:11-20

11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,

*12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience **inherit the promises.***

*13 For when **God made a promise to Abraham** [lit. Greek. “when God was promising to Abraham], because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,*

14 saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.”

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute.

17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath,

*18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, **we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.***

*19 **This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil,***

20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

This passage requires that we have an understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant. We learn from Genesis 12:1-3 of God's initial promise to Abraham. It consisted of two major things. First, that He would make from Abraham's seed a great nation. Secondly, that He would give to Abraham and his offspring the land of Canaan, from Egypt's Nile river to Iraq's Euphrates river, as an everlasting possession (Gen. 15:18-21). Israel has never possessed all this land. And certainly, the parts they did possess they have not kept permanently. Nor have they ever had a sustained peace in the land.

In verses 11-12, Paul exhorted his Jewish readers to persevere along with the former men of faith, in placing their hope in the future fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, the future inheritance of the Land, the “Sabbath Rest,” mentioned in chapter 4.

Paul then reminded his readers that God not only made this covenant with Abraham, but afterwards, He swore an oath to Abraham that He would bring this to pass for Abraham and his descendants. In verse 14, Paul quoted from Genesis 22. This is the passage where Abraham's faith in God's promise was put to the test. After partially fulfilling His promise to Abraham, by giving him a son in his old age, God commanded Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to Him. You know the story. Abraham followed God's instructions to the point where God stopped him at the last moment. Then, after offering the ram instead of his son, God spoke to Abraham out of heaven again the following words:

Gen. 22:16-18 LXX

18 I have sworn by myself, says the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and on my account hast not spared thy beloved son,

17 surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is by the shore of the sea, and thy seed shall inherit the cities of their enemies.

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast hearkened to my voice.

God had formerly given Abraham a promise, that He would give him a son in his old age, that this son would become a great nation, and that **He would give to Abraham and his offspring the land for an everlasting inheritance**. But, after testing Abraham's faith, God swore an oath to Abraham, reaffirming the original promise. In Heb. 6:15, Paul pointed out that it was after Abraham endured (that is, he persevered in his faith by offering Isaac), that God **swore the oath** to him. Paul stated plainly that it was at this point that Abraham "obtained the promise." In other words, had Abraham failed to persevere in faith, and had drawn back from offering Isaac as a sacrifice, he may not have obtained the promise. Of course, God foreknew that Abraham would persevere, and so made the original promise with confidence.

In verse 16, Paul pointed out why God confirmed the original Abrahamic promise with an oath, "*determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath.*" That is, the reason God swore the oath to Abraham, after he persevered in faith, was for the benefit of the Jewish people — the "heirs of promise." And what did God intend to demonstrate? It was "the immutability [unchangeableness] of His counsel." That is, God **absolutely will** fulfill the promise He made to Abraham in its entirety. God has staked His credibility on this one thing, the complete fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. If God does not do so, down to the smallest detail, then He is a liar, and cannot be trusted. And that includes His giving

Abraham and his descendants the land He promised in Gen. 15:18-21, and reiterated with His oath, as an everlasting inheritance.

Paul then brought the fulfillment of the promise home for his readers. *“By two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of **the hope set before us.**”* The “two immutable things” are the original promise to Abraham, and the confirming oath God swore to Abraham after he persevered in faith. Those two things provide “the hope set before us” (Paul and his Jewish readers). In this passage Paul has placed the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, including the everlasting land inheritance, as the hope of both himself and his Jewish readers. It was this hope that provided a “strong consolation” for the Jewish believer who had “fled for refuge” (away from their homeland) from the persecution. It is this hope that Paul wrote in vs. 19 was his “anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.” Paul's hope was not to be whisked away to heaven, as the Gnostics and Greek philosophy imagined, but to have an everlasting inheritance in the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Hebrews Chapter 7 – Uniting the Abrahamic Hope with the Davidic Hope

In chapter 7, Paul turned his attention to a fascinating man whom Abraham encountered, Melchisedec, “King of Salem” and “Priest of God.” This encounter is recorded in Genesis 14. In this encounter, Melchisedec blessed Abraham, the one who had the covenants and promises, and Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec. Paul viewed this blessing as more confirmation of the Abrahamic promises. He then suggested that Melchisedec was in fact a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. In this way, Paul showed to his Jewish readers that the promise is so secure, it was even confirmed by Jesus Christ Himself, face to face with Abraham! (See also John 8:56-59).

Paul then turned to Psalm 110, which prophesied of an eternal Priest, not of the order of Aaron under the Law of Moses, but “according to the order of Melchisedec.” Yet, this “Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedec” is more than just a Priest, he is the Priest - King, as the context shows.

Psalm 110 LXX (109)

1 The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

2 The Lord shall send out a rod of power for thee out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

3 With thee is dominion in the day of thy power, in the splendours of thy saints: I have begotten thee from the womb before the morning.

4 *The Lord sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.*

5 *The Lord at thy right hand has dashed in pieces kings in the day of his wrath.*

6 *He shall judge among the nations, he shall fill up the number of corpses, he shall crush the heads of many on the earth.*

7 *He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head.*

In Hebrews 7, Paul has once again not only held up Jesus Christ as the Savior and Priest of His people, but also as the King who will rule the nations. It is through this Priest - King that Israel can have hope of receiving the everlasting inheritance in His coming Kingdom. Paul has, in a brilliant move using Psalm 110, tied together the Abrahamic Covenant with the Davidic Covenant described in the first two chapters. Psalm 110 is clearly a part of the Davidic Covenant, referring to the King of David's seed who would rule Israel forever. Yet, this Davidic promise included the statement that this King is also "Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec," the one who met Abraham, blessed him, and thereby confirmed the Covenant God made to Abraham. Therefore, the fulfillment of God's Covenant to Abraham is to come through the eternal King of David's seed, who is in fact Jesus Christ (cf. Isa. 9:6-7 & Luke 1:28-33).

Paul was not the first to make the connection between the Davidic promise of an eternal King, and the Abrahamic Covenant. Luke recorded the prophecy of Zacharias about his son, John the Baptist, immediately after his birth.

Luke 1:67-79

67 *Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:*

68 *"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people,*

69 *And has raised up **a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David,***

70 *As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began,*

71 ***That we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us,***

72 *To perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant,*

73 ***The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:***

74 ***To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear,***

75 *In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.*

76 *And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,*

77 *To give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of their sins,*

78 Through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;

79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Notice in both of these prophecies, the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant is tied to the coming of the Davidic King. Also, notice that Zacharias made specific reference to the "oath" God swore to Abraham after he persevered in faith. That oath, as we saw from Genesis 22, concerned the everlasting land inheritance. And Zacharias clearly alluded to that as well in verses 74-75. That the Abrahamic land inheritance would be realized through the Davidic King is a foundational truth contained both in the Old Testament prophecies, and in the Gospels. Paul has simply repeated it for his Jewish brethren, pointing them toward this hope and encouraging them to persevere in the Faith in order to assure their participation in the realization of this hope.

Hebrews Chapter 8 – The Hope of the New Covenant

Beginning with chapter 8, Paul turned his attention to the New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah. True to Pauline theology as articulated in Galatians, he showed the temporary place served by the Law of Moses (Old Covenant), and its being superseded by the New Covenant prophesied by Jeremiah. The problem that evidently led to the writing of this Epistle was the turning back of some Jewish believers to Judaism, and the Law of Moses. So, Paul next sought to illustrate three things:

- the temporary nature of the Law of Moses, and that it was destined to be superseded by the New Covenant
- the New Covenant has come being instituted by Christ, making the Old Covenant obsolete
- the New Covenant is far superior to the Old Covenant.

Hebrews 8

1 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,

2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

Paul still had in mind his text from Psalm 110. The "High Priest" is Jesus Christ, "a priest forever after the order of Melchisedec," (v. 4). He is currently seated at the right hand of the Father, as the same Psalm said, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," (v. 1). Paul here began to focus in on Jesus Christ's present ministry in heaven, during this period of waiting until His enemies are made His footstool. In verses 3-5, he showed that the Tabernacle, and the rituals according to

the Law, served as merely earthly illustrations of the true priesthood, and the true Temple in heaven, of which the earthly tabernacle was merely a copy. In verse 2 above, he contrasted Christ's Priestly ministry in the "true tabernacle which the Lord erected" with the earthly tabernacle that Moses erected. The superiority of the "true tabernacle" is obvious over the one erected in the wilderness.

Paul continued, showing the "more excellent ministry" that Jesus Christ has, as the Priest according to the order of Melchisedec, over the Aaronic priesthood under the Law. And this new priesthood comes through the "New Covenant" prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

8 Because finding fault with them, He says:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah--

9 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

11 None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.

12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

13 In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

Here again, Paul used the LXX. There is a textual variation between the Hebrew and LXX in verse 10. "Laws" is plural in the LXX but singular in the Hebrew text. For this reason, many suppose that "Law" (Heb - Torah) refers to His putting the Law of Moses in their hearts, making the New Covenant merely an internalizing of the Old Covenant. But, here Paul once again cites the LXX's plural "laws," referring to the individual laws contained in this New Covenant, which is "not according to" the Law given at Mt. Sinai. These are, of course, the commandments of Jesus Christ. In verse 6, Paul left no doubt that this New Covenant had already been inaugurated by Christ. "He has (perfect tense) obtained a more excellent ministry." And, "He is (present tense) also the Mediator of a better

covenant." In verse 8, God found fault with Israel, because they did not keep the Mosaic Covenant. So, He prophesied through Jeremiah the New Covenant.

There is much debate today, particularly amongst Dispensationalists, as to whether the New Covenant has actually come. The New Covenant is connected to the land inheritance in some Old Testament prophecies. Because of this, Dispensationalists see the need to isolate the New Covenant from the "Church Age." Also, it was prophesied for "*the house of Israel and the house of Judah,*" something incompatible with Dispensationalism's segregation of the "Church" from "Israel." Yet, Paul left no doubt that the New Covenant had come. This is also confirmed in several other passages (cf. Luke 22:20, 1 Cor. 11:25, 2 Cor. 3:6, Heb. 9:15).

Yet, a careful examination of Jeremiah's prophecy quoted by Paul, shows that it has not been fulfilled in its entirety. Yes, Jesus has put His laws in the hearts of those Jews who believed on Him (cf. Rom. 2:28-29, 2 Cor. 3:2-6). But, Jeremiah also said, "*they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.*" This part of the prophecy concerns the day when "all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26-29). So, even with the coming of the New Covenant, there is a future hope for which Paul's readers looked, when "*all Israel shall be saved.*" When God "*will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.*"

Hebrews Chapter 9 – The Superiority of the New Covenant over the Law of Moses

Paul next contrasted the priestly rituals under the Law of Moses with the heavenly Priestly ministry of Christ under the New Covenant.

Hebrews 9

11 But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

12 Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

The New Covenant Priesthood is as far superior to the Old Covenant priesthood as the heavenly Temple is to the earthly tabernacle. Keep in mind that this Priesthood of Christ under the New Covenant is that very "*Priesthood according to the order of Melchisedec*" which Paul took from Psalm 110. Remember in that Psalm, the Priest ministers on behalf of Israel during the time when "*The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*" (Psalm 110:1 LXX). This priesthood anticipates the remainder of the prophetic Psalm, His kingly reign. So, Paul then expressed the same idea in the following verses.

24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;
 25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another--
 26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.
 27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,
 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. **To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.**

This is a repetition of Paul's theme in chapter 2. Before God's people could reign with Him, before man could fulfill his destiny to have the whole creation in subjection unto him, he had to be redeemed. Now, for those who are redeemed, and "apart from sin," who "look for Him," He will appear for the completion of their salvation, (which is the resurrection and reigning with Him in that eternal inheritance). Once again, the hope held out for Paul's Jewish readers is the hope of Abraham and the Patriarchs.

Hebrews Chapter 10 – The End Result of the New Covenant is the “Sabbath Rest”

In verses 1-25, Paul continued illustrating the temporary nature of the Old Covenant, and the superiority of the New Covenant. In verses 26-31 he gave a stern warning against falling away from the Faith of the New Covenant, and its permanent consequences. He argued that if the consequences of apostasy under the Law were severe (a whole generation of Israelites died in the wilderness), the consequences of apostasy under the New Covenant are much more severe (being eternal damnation). Finally, he encouraged his Jewish readers once again to persevere in the Faith so that they may inherit the promise to the Patriarchs.

Hebrews 10

35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.

36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, **you may receive the promise:**

37 ***For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry.***

“The promise” (singular), referring to the “Sabbath Rest” God promised Abraham, is only for those who persevere in the Faith of the New Covenant.

Hebrews Chapter 11 – The Persistent Faith Necessary to Enter the Land Inheritance

Chapter 11 is well known as the Hall of Faith. In this chapter Paul set out to hold up the great men of God from ancient times as the models of the kind of faith that perseveres. As usual, he turns to the Septuagint for support.

Hebrews 11

6 *But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that **He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.***

The last clause of this verse is a citation of Psalm 9:10 LXX. Again, we need to bring to bear the whole context from which this quote was drawn.

Psalm 9 LXX

7 *but the Lord endures for ever: he has prepared his throne for judgment.*

8 *And he will judge the world in righteousness, he will judge the nations in uprightness.*

9 *The Lord also is become a refuge for the poor, a seasonable help, in affliction.*

10 *And let them that know thy name hope in thee: for thou, **O Lord, hast not failed them that diligently seek thee.***

11 *Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Sion: declare his dealings among the nations.*

As usual, Paul's quotation comes from a prophecy of Christ's victory over the nations in His coming Kingdom. The "reward" for those who diligently seek the Lord is His coming Kingdom, the realization of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants.

Paul next went through a list of great men of faith. But, of particular interest to our study are his comments about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the heirs of the original promise God made to Abraham. Before we proceed, it should be pointed out that the same promise God swore to Abraham and confirmed by an oath (including the land inheritance), He also swore to Isaac, and to Isaac's son, Jacob, whom God renamed, Israel. (cf. Gen. 17:19,21, 26:1-5, 28:12-15, 50:24). All three of these men lived in the land of Canaan, but none of them realized the everlasting inheritance of that land while they were alive. **Their inheritance of the promised land awaits the resurrection.**

Hebrews 11

8 *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go **out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance.** And he went out, not knowing where he was going.*

9 *By faith **he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country,** dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of **the same promise;***

10 *for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

Paul's point here was that the three patriarchs of Israel, to whom God personally swore to give the land as a permanent inheritance, did not themselves receive the fulfillment of the promise while still alive. Yes, they lived in the "land of promise," but "by faith" as foreigners and strangers. It did not belong to them at the time. And it certainly was not yet their everlasting inheritance, as God had sworn to them. These men were

awaiting something “by faith” that was much more than what they had. They looked for a city built by God.

Many commentators wrench this statement out of context and from the historical promise God actually made to these men. They interpret it as some sort of celestial hope. Nothing could be further from the truth! The “city” for which the Patriarchs looked was NOT in heaven. It was the city of Jerusalem, aka, Sion, to be built in the land in which they live as strangers and foreigners. It would be “the city of the Great King!” Paul was not alluding to some city in heaven. Abraham never heard of such a city. How then could he look for such a thing? Rather, Paul was alluding to the real hope of the Patriarchs, when God would fulfill His specific promise made to them. It is described by David in Psalm 48.

Psalm 48 LXX (47)

1 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in his holy mountain.

2 The city of the great King is well planted on the mountains of Sion, with the joy of the whole earth, on the sides of the north.

3 God is known in her palaces, when he undertakes to help her.

4 For, behold the kings of the earth were assembled, they came together.

5 They saw, and so they wondered: they were troubled, they were moved.

6 Trembling took hold on them: there were the pangs as of a woman in travail.

7 Thou wilt break the ships of Tharsis with a vehement wind.

8 As we have heard, so have we also seen, in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God has founded it for ever.

This is the city for which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob looked. In verse 8, Paul said that **they went to live in the place they would afterward receive for an inheritance.** They lived in Canaan, dwelling in tents. That was the place of their inheritance. They did not look for a city somewhere else, a city in heaven! Such an idea would have been completely foreign to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! They looked forward to a TIME when that very place in which they lived as foreigners would belong to them, and in which the Lord Himself would establish “the city of the Great King.”

This raises the question, however, of how Abraham could have known of, and looked for, this Jerusalem spoken of by David and Isaiah, the “City of God,” the “City of the Great King.” For the answer to that question, we need only refer back to chapter 7, where Paul described Abraham’s meeting with Melchisedec, “Priest of the Most High God.” This mysterious character was considered by Paul to be far superior to Abraham. So much so, that he was “made like unto the Son of God,” and his priesthood remains

continually. Paul actually stated in so many words that the appearance of Melchisedec to Abraham was in fact the “Son of God,” who is both “King of Righteousness” and the “**King of Salem**,” (Salem being the ancient name for Jerusalem). Melchisedec blessed Abraham, and brought “bread and wine” to Abraham when he blessed him. It is no coincidence that Jesus, “the priest forever after the order of Melchisedec,” in His first priestly act in the flesh, took bread and wine at the last supper, saying, “this is My body” and “this is my blood.” That the “King of Salem” met with Abraham, and blessed him, implies that Abraham was aware of this “Salem” and also aware of who this person really was. Why? Because as Paul states, Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec. He goes so far as to say that the whole Aaronic priesthood, who were figuratively in the loins of father Abraham, paid tithes to this man through Abraham’s act. The point was clearly that the whole nation of Israel was in effect bowing down to this man whose name means, “King of Righteousness” and who was the “King of Salem.” Could Abraham have known all this, and not known about the “City of the Great King” (formerly “Salem” and later “Jerusalem”)? Hardly! Abraham “looked for a city, whose builder and maker is God” because he looked for the day when the Divine “King of Righteousness” would reign as “the King of Salem” (“Salem” literally means “peace,” and “Jerusalem” literally means “city of peace”). Abraham awaited the city of Peace, because he awaited the return of Melchisedec, the Priest – King. Paul continued as follows:

*13 These all died in faith, **not having received the promises**, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that **they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth**.*

Unfortunately, the Amillennial bias of the translators has colored the translation of verse 13. And Dispensationalists do not object either, because to translate it correctly would upset both systems. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not “strangers and pilgrims” on planet earth. They were strangers and pilgrims on the LAND, the very land that God promised them as an everlasting inheritance. The Greek word is “γης” which literally means the soil, the land. By translating this “earth,” the sense is given that the Patriarchs were seeking to get off this planet and fly away to heaven. Nonsense! Such an idea is totally foreign to the Old Testament promises, and foreign to the context of Hebrews. How could they look for an inheritance in heaven, when the text plainly says **they lived in tents as strangers and pilgrims in the very land of their future inheritance**? Did they live in tents as pilgrims in heaven? Hardly! They lived in the land of Canaan. And they looked forward to the time when God would fulfill His promise to Abraham, and they would afterward receive all the land as an everlasting inheritance.

14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.

15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.

16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

The word translated “homeland” in verse 14 literally means a place to call home. They were not seeking some other place to call home. They were seeking to call the place in which they dwelled as foreigners, their “homeland,” according to the promise of God. He went on in verse 15 to say that if they had been unhappy living as strangers and foreigners in their future homeland, they could have gone back to the land Abraham left, Ur of the Chaldees (Iraq). But, instead they stayed there, living in tents, because they were awaiting the fulfillment of the promise. They desired a “better country” one that is “heavenly.” The adjective “heavenly” does not indicate a location, but the source of both the promise and its ultimate fulfillment. It is “heavenly” because the promise was from heaven, and the source of its fulfillment will also be from heaven, as opposed to something natural and earthly.

The “better country” in verse 16 is sometimes misunderstood as being “better” than the land in which they were dwelling (Canaan). But, a closer look at the text shows that “better” contrasts their future hope with the land Abraham LEFT, Ur of the Chaldees. Ur was a prosperous place. Yet, Abraham chose to leave that land behind, and go and live out the rest of his days in the deserts of Canaan, because he was seeking the “better homeland” that God promised to him. Paul wrote, “God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them,” (that is, Sion, the city of the Great King, which will be the capitol of the promised land, and of the whole world).

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,

40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

This statement by Paul cements the idea that the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, with its everlasting inheritance in the land of Canaan, was the hope of Paul and the Jewish Christians. Why did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob not receive their inheritance while they were still alive dwelling in Canaan in tents? Paul answered that question. While Abraham looked for a “better” home, when the land in which he lived as a foreigner would be his eternal inheritance, Paul’s readers also needed a “better” inheritance beyond living in the present land of Israel. God delayed the fulfillment to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because He wanted to include Paul’s readers I the promises!

Hebrews Chapter 12 – The Grand Finale!

The first part of chapter 12 deals once again with exhortations toward perseverance. The “cloud of witnesses” mentioned in the “Hall of Faith” in chapter 11 were portrayed by Paul as watching from the grandstands as the current runners in the Olympic race persevered to finish their course. He again warned them of the consequences of quitting the race, using Esau as his example. Esau was the firstborn of Isaac. His was the birthright. He was the one to whom the Abrahamic Covenant would have been fulfilled. But, Esau despised his birthright, and sold it to his brother for a bowl of soup. Paul let that be a warning to his Jewish audience. If they do not prize their birthright through the New Covenant, their fate may be the same as Esau. Sure, he was sorry afterwards. But he could not get it back even with many tears. What an awesome warning! (cf. Heb. 6:4-8 & Heb. 10:23-31).

Finally, Paul contrasted the awesome display, when God came down out of heaven upon Mt. Sinai to give Israel the Law, with the yet future day when Christ will come down out of heaven to overthrow the kingdoms of the world, and set up His everlasting Kingdom on the earth.

Hebrews 12

18 For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest,

19 and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore.

20 (For they could not endure what was commanded: “And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.”

21 And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.”)

*22 **But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,***

*23 **to the general assembly and church of the firstborn** who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,*

24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

In Exodus 19, God came down upon Mt. Sinai. His coming was accompanied by thick darkness, by fire and smoke, by His own awesome voice, and the blaring sound of the trumpet. The sight and sound was so awesome, all Israel trembled in fear of the Lord. Paul and his readers were not there that day to witness this awesome event, when God gave Israel His Law. They will be present, however, when this happens again. Christ is coming down from heaven to the Mt. of Olives (Zech. 14:4-5). The sun and moon will be

darkened (Matt. 24:29-31). He will come with a shout (1 Thess. 4:16), and with the sound of the last trumpet (1 Cor. 15:52 & Zech. 9:14). Paul wrote, “but, you are come to Mount Zion and the city of the living God.” This is again a quote from Psalm 48.

Psalm 48 LXX (47)

- 1 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in his holy mountain.
- 2 The city of the great King is well planted on the mountains of Sion, with the joy of the whole earth, on the sides of the north.
- 3 God is known in her palaces, when he undertakes to help her.
- 4 For, behold the kings of the earth were assembled, they came together.
- 5 They saw, and so they wondered: they were troubled, they were moved.
- 6 Trembling took hold on them: there were the pangs as of a woman in travail.
- 7 Thou wilt break the ships of Tharsis with a vehement wind.
- 8 As we have heard, so have we also seen, in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God: God has founded it for ever.

Paul called Jerusalem “heavenly Jerusalem,” not because it is in heaven, but to distinguish it from the present city of Jerusalem, built by man. It is that city, “whose builder and maker is God,” for which Paul and his Jewish brethren looked. That is, the city of Jerusalem as described in Isaiah 65-66.

Isaiah 65

- 17 ¶ For there shall be a new heaven and a new earth: and they shall not at all remember the former, neither shall they at all come into their mind.
- 18 But they shall find in her joy and exultation; for, behold, **I make Jerusalem a rejoicing, and my people a joy.**
- 19 And **I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and will be glad in my people: and there shall no more be heard in her the voice of weeping, or the voice of crying.**
- 20 Neither shall there be there **any more** a child that dies untimely, or an old man who shall not complete his time: for the youth shall be a hundred years old, and **the sinner** who dies at a hundred years shall also be accursed:
- 21 and **they shall build houses**, and themselves shall dwell in them; **and they shall plant vineyards**, and themselves shall eat the fruit thereof.
- 22 They shall by no means build, and others inhabit; and they shall by no means plant, and others eat: for as the days of the tree of life shall be the days of my people, they shall long enjoy the fruits of their labours.
- 23 My chosen shall not toil in vain, neither shall they beget children to be cursed; for they are a seed blessed of God, and their offspring with them.
- 24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will hearken to them; while they are yet speaking, I will say, What is it?

25 Then wolves and lambs shall feed together, and the lion shall eat chaff like the ox, and the serpent earth as bread. They shall not injure nor destroy in my holy mountain, saith the Lord.

This is the thing for which Paul and his readers hoped and must persevere in the Faith. It is not heaven. It is the present city of Jerusalem restored by God, and made glorious. But, notice what Paul said next. Not only were they to come to this restored Jerusalem, the “city of God,” but also to “an innumerable company of angels,” and to “the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven,” and to “God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect.” There is no question that Paul was referencing Isaiah 65-66 (LXX). The phrase, “general assembly” is a direct quote from Isaiah 66:10. Below is the passage Paul had in view here.

Isaiah 66 LXX

5 ¶ Hear the words of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; speak ye, our brethren, to them that hate you and abominate you, that the name of the Lord may be glorified, and may appear their joy; but they shall be ashamed.

6 A voice of a cry from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord rendering recompence to his adversaries.

7 Before she that travailed brought forth, before the travail-pain came on, she escaped it and brought forth a male.

8 Who has heard such a thing? and who has seen after this manner? Has the earth travailed in one day? or has even a nation been born at once, that Sion has travailed, and brought forth her children?

9 But I have raised this expectation, yet thou hast not remembered me, saith the Lord: behold, have not I made the bearing and barren woman? saith thy God.

*10 **Rejoice, O Jerusalem, and all ye that love her hold in her a general assembly:** rejoice greatly with her, all that now mourn over her:*

11 that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breast of her consolation; that ye may milk out, and delight yourselves with the influx of her glory.

12 For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I turn toward them as a river of peace, and as a torrent bringing upon them in a flood the glory of the Gentiles: their children shall be borne upon the shoulders, and comforted on the knees.

*13 As if his mother should comfort one, so will I also comfort you; **and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem.***

14 And ye shall see, and your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall thrive like grass: and the hand of the Lord shall be known to them that fear him, and he shall threaten the disobedient.

*15 ¶ **For, behold, the Lord will come as fire, and his chariots as a storm, to render his vengeance with wrath, and his rebuke with a flame of fire.***

16 For with the fire of the Lord all the earth shall be judged, and all flesh with his sword: many shall be slain by the Lord.

17 They that sanctify themselves and purify themselves in the gardens, and eat swine's flesh in the porches, and the abominations, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord.

18 And I know their works and their imagination. **I am going to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory.**

19 And I will leave a sign upon them, and **I will send forth them that have escaped of them to the nations**, to Tharsis, and Phud, and Lud, and Mosoch, and to Thobel, and to Greece, and to the isles afar off, to those who have not heard my name, nor seen my glory; **and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.**

20 And they shall bring your brethren out of all nations for a gift to the Lord with horses, and chariots, in litters drawn by mules with awnings, **to the holy city Jerusalem**, said the Lord, as though the children of Israel should bring their sacrifices to me with psalms into the house of the Lord.

21 And I will take of them priests and Levites, saith the Lord.

22 For as **the new heaven and the new earth**, which I make, remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name continue.

23 And it shall come to pass from month to month, and from sabbath to sabbath, that **all flesh shall come to worship before me in Jerusalem**, saith the Lord.

24 And they shall go forth, and see the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched; and they shall be a spectacle to all flesh.

In verse 10, the “general assembly” (πανηγυρει) is exactly what Paul referred to in Hebrews 12:23. The only two places this Greek word appears in the Bible are Isaiah 66:10 (LXX) and Hebrews 12:23. It is the grand assembly of the saints in Jerusalem upon the return of Christ. The wicked are excluded. Notice in this passage God will separate the wicked from the just. The wicked will not be able to stand in the congregation of the righteous (Psalm 1:5). The “general assembly of the congregation of the firstborn who are registered in heaven,” is the believing remnant of Israel.

“Firstborn” (πρωτοτοκων) is plural, (lit. “the general assembly of the congregation of firstborn ones”). It does not refer to Christ, but to the saints of Israel (cf. Ex. 4:22).

So, what about the “innumerable company of angels?” They are also mentioned in this passage. The Greek word translated “angels” is αγγελων, which simply means “messengers.” In verse 19 of Isaiah 66, God will send out a large company of “messengers” to proclaim His message (αναγγελω – the verb form of αγγελων) to those who have never heard of his fame, to all the Gentile nations. And they will bring

to the city of God the rest of the Jews scattered throughout the world. Now let's let Paul continue with his final warning, and appeal to prophecy.

25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,

26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven."

*27 Now this, "Yet once more," indicates **the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.***

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Our amillennial brethren ought to ponder this passage carefully. The earth is not going to be totally destroyed. It is going to be "shaken" so that everything that is not of God will collapse, and only what is true and just will remain. That is, the earth will be purged by fire. The last words in verse 29 refer back to Isaiah 66:15-16, & 24.

Lastly, Paul appealed to the prophet Haggai. The book of Haggai was written after the Babylonian captivity, when the Jews returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple, as recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. Nebuchadnezzar had sacked Jerusalem in 586BC, destroying Solomon's Temple. Some of the elder Jews, those who were alive seventy years earlier and seen Solomon's Temple, were very disappointed with the much more humble structure being built by Zerubabel and the workman under his command on the former site of Solomon's Temple. The foundation for the rebuilt Temple was much smaller. And the materials at their disposal to complete the Temple were much more mundane than the huge amounts of gold, silver, and other precious materials Solomon used. This led to great discouragement among the Jewish people, particularly the older men, and all those working on the massive project. This is the historical setting for the prophecy in chapter two, which Paul quotes in Hebrews 12. In order to encourage the workmen, and Zerubbabel their leader and chief builder, God spoke to Israel through Haggai the prophet about the future plans God had for His Temple in Jerusalem. That is, one day that Temple in Jerusalem would far excel even Solomon's Temple. This would occur when God shakes the heaven and earth, and brings judgment upon all the heathen nations. This is the prophecy that Paul chose to cite in Hebrews 12, in reference to the future hope of his Jewish Christian readers. Our hope includes the Temple in the restored Jerusalem.

Haggai 2:1-9 & 20-22 LXX

1 ¶ In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the Lord spoke by Aggaeus the prophet, saying,

2 Speak now to Zorobabel the son of Salathiel, of the tribe of Juda, and to Jesus the son of Josedec, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, saying,

3 Who is there of you that saw this house in her former glory? and how do ye now look upon it, as it were nothing before your eyes?

4 Yet now be strong, O Zorobabel, saith the Lord; and strengthen thyself, O Jesus the high priest, the son of Josedec; and let all the people of the land strengthen themselves, saith the Lord, and work, for I am with you, saith the Lord Almighty;

5 and my Spirit remains in the midst of you; be of good courage.

6 For thus saith the Lord Almighty; **Yet once I will shake the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;**

7 **and I will shake all nations, and the choice portions of all the nations shall come: and**

I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord Almighty.

8 Mine is the silver, and mine the gold, saith the Lord Almighty.

9 **For the glory of this house shall be great, the latter more than the former, saith the Lord Almighty; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord Almighty, even peace of soul for a possession to every one that builds, to raise up this temple. ...**

20 And the word of the Lord came the second time to Aggaeus the prophet, on the four and twentieth day of the month, saying,

21 Speak to Zorobabel the son of Salathiel, of the tribe of Juda, saying, **I shake the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;**

22 **and I will overthrow the thrones of kings, and I will destroy the power of the kings of the nations; and I will overthrow chariots and riders; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword striving against his brother.**

The central focus of this passage is the final Temple in Jerusalem, which will far surpass even Solomon's Temple in its greatness. It is the Kingdom Temple. It will be constructed when Christ returns to overthrow "the power of the kings of the nations (εθνος - Gentiles)." This great "shaking" is the great tribulation and the Day of the Lord, when Christ returns to overthrow the Kingdoms of this world, and establish His glorious Kingdom. Only what cannot be shaken will remain, according to Paul. He then made this revealing statement: "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire." The "kingdom" for which Paul and his Jewish readers awaited was the one prophesied by Haggai, when "I will fill this house with glory, saith

the Lord Almighty. Mine is the silver, and mine the gold, saith the Lord Almighty. For the glory of this house shall be great, the latter more than the former, saith the Lord Almighty: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord Almighty."

Conclusion

What more can be said? The proof is overwhelming that the hope Paul held out for himself and the Jewish believers was the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, and Davidic Covenant, as well as many other Old Testament prophecies of Christ's Kingdom. There is no cosmic destiny for the Jewish believer, as both Dispensationalists and Amillennialists suppose. The Abrahamic promises of an eternal inheritance in the promised land are to be realized through Christ, both by His atonement (redeeming His people so they can reign with Him), and by His taking the Throne of David, overthrowing the kingdoms of this world, and establishing His everlasting Kingdom in the "City of God" on Mt. Sion, making the Temple in Jerusalem the "house of prayer for all nations." Amillennialists and the dispensationalists must manipulate the text of Hebrews into all kinds of contortions in order to maintain their cosmic destiny. And they must completely ignore the multitude of Old Testament passages quoted by Paul in support of all of his points.

So what about the Gentiles? Paul did not deal with this question in the book of Hebrews. His intended audience was the Jewish Christian. But, he did deal extensively with this topic in his companion Epistle, Galatians, where he made many similar points, and specifically included the Gentiles in "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promises."

It is time for Christians to abandon perverted theology, the result of Augustine's adoption of the Gnostic's allegorical interpretation and Greek philosophy, and return to the pristine Faith of the Apostles and early Church. Interpret Scripture as it was intended, from the perspective of the Jewish Church and the Jewish Apostles. Away with the pagan concept of flying away to some mystical abode in the heavens.