

HEBREWS CHAPTER 10

[VI] THE NEW ORDER SUPERSEDED THE OLD ORDER (8:1 - 10:18).

1. The old order sanctuary, priesthood and covenant contrasted with the new (8:1-7).
2. The old covenant definitely superseded by the new covenant (8:8-13).
3. The sanctuary under the old covenant was inadequate and temporary (9:1-5).
4. The sacrifices under the old covenant were inadequate and temporary (9:6-10).
(not able to clear the inward conscience, because they are outward ceremonial regulations)
5. The sacrifice of Christ is perfect in nature and eternal in effect (9:11-14).
6. Christ is the Testator (Guarantor) and the Executor (Mediator) of the new covenant (9:15-22).
7. The sacrifice of Christ was a perfect sacrifice that is perpetually effective (9:23-28).

8. The old order was a shadow of the new reality (10:1-4).

10:1. “For the law (ο νομος) having a shadow (σκιαν εχων)(Participle present active) of the good (things) to come (των μελλοντων αγαθων)(participle present active), not ‘itself the very image’ (ουτην την εικονα) ‘of the things’ or ‘the matters that are done’ (των πραγματων), ‘can never’ (ουδεποτε δυναται) ‘with the same sacrifices’ (ταις αυταις θυσιας) year by year (κατ’ ενιαυτον), which they ‘offer’ (προσφερουσιν)(indicative present active) (The present tense points to the continually repeated sacrifices) ‘continually’ (εις το διηνεκες), ‘make perfect’ or ‘to complete’ or ‘to bring to the goal’ (τελειωσαι<τελειωω)(infinitive aorist active) the (people) that draw near (τους προσερχομενους) (participle present medium).”

The ‘shadow’ (the law) refers to the outline cast by the object which is the reality. The ‘image’ (Christ, the fulfilment of the law) is the real object which casts the shadow. Both Paul and the writer of Hebrews speak of the law as ‘a shadow’ (Col 2:17). Paul has in mind the regulations about ‘special times’ (sabbath, new moon) and ‘special actions’ (food laws) and the writer to the Hebrews has in mind the regulations about ‘special people’ (priests) and ‘special actions’ (sacrifices). Both do not regard the shadow as ‘a copy’ (Plato), but as ‘a foreshadowing’, ‘a pointing forward’ to the reality. The ‘image’ is not simply a replica, but the very thing made visible. Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15) and Christians should become conformed to the visible image of the Son of God (Rom 8:29; cf. 2 Cor 3:18; Col 3:10).

‘The good things to come’ (9:11) are the unrepeatable perfect sacrifice of Christ, his present never-ending High Priestly ministry, the eternal redemption and the uninhibited access to worship the living God, which he effected - the perfection which the old order of the law was incapable of supplying! Because in the old order the sacrifices (on the Day of Atonement) had to be repeated year by year, they show that they did not accomplish what the perfect sacrifice of Christ accomplished!

10:2. “Else or ‘for if it were otherwise’ (επει)(the clause is to be read as a question) ‘would they not have ceased’ (ουκ αν επαυσαντο<παυομαι)(indicative aorist medium) to be offered? Because ‘the worshippers’ (τους λατρευοντας), ‘having been cleansed’ (απαξ κεκαθαρισμενους<καθαριζω)(participle perfect passive), ‘would have had no more’ (μηδεμιαν<μηδεις εχειν ετι) ‘consciousness’ (το συνειδησιν) ‘of sins’ (αμαρτιων)”.

The implication of this question is that the sacrificial ritual was still practised in the temple at Jerusalem and that the letter to the Hebrews was written before 70 A.D.

If the old sacrificial order had possessed true cleansing efficacy (thus really cleansing the conscience), then the worshippers would have enjoyed unrestricted communion with God. However, *it is the presence of sin in the conscience that hinders entering the presence of God* (Ps 66:18). The perfect tense means that Christians in the new order have been cleansed once for all! ‘A person who has had a bath (λελουμενος)(participle perfect medium or passive) needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean” (Jn 13:10). Christ made no distinction between Gentile and Jewish believers when he cleansed (καθαρισας)(participle aorist active) both their hearts by faith (Act 15:9). After living in gross sin, some Corinthians were washed (απελουσασθε)(indicative aorist medium)(1 Cor 6:11). *True inward cleansing, as accomplished by Christ’s sacrifice, is permanently effective and therefore unrepeatable. But cleansing that does not require repetition was unknown to the Levitical law.*

10:3. “But in those (sacrifices) there is ‘a calling to mind’ or ‘a remembrance’ or ‘a reminder’ (αναμνησις) made of sins year by year”.

With people the remembrance of sin may involve repentance from them (Dt 9:7) or it may involve persistence in sin (Ezek 23:19). But with God the remembrance of sin always involves appropriate action, sometimes pardoning sin (viewed as ‘not remembering sin anymore’, Ps 25:7), but usually punishing sin (1 Ki 17:18; Rev 16:19).

The pardoning 'year by year' under the old covenant on the Day of Atonement cannot convey the same peace of conscience as a pardon 'once for all' (8:12). Under the old order there was only an annual removal of sins. *Absolute wiping out of sins from the divine record was unknown to the Levitical law.*

10:4. "For it is impossible that the blood of 'bulls' (ταυρων) and 'goats' (τραγων) should 'take away' or 'remove' (αφαρειν<αφαρειω)(infinitive present active)(The present tense points to a continual action and emphasizes that which is always true) sins".

As long as people's ideas of God and forgiveness were bound up with a sacrificial system, like in Israel and among some Gentile nations, the imperfect spiritual condition would continue. *Spiritual and moral defilement cannot be removed by material means.* David already acknowledged that in Psalm 51:10-12,16-17. Also the relative easy adaptation of the Jews in the Palestinian synagogue to the new conditions after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 A.D. shows that they had also grasped the principle of the insufficiency of animal sacrifices.

9. The new order is the reality (10:5-10).

10:5-7. 5. Therefore, when Christ came (εισερχομενος)(participle present medium) into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice' (θυσιαν)(bloody sacrifices) and 'offering' (προσφοραν)(non-bloody offerings, like the meal offering) you did not 'desire' (ηθελησας<θελω)(indicative aorist active), but a 'body' (σωμα) you 'prepared' (κατηρτισω)(indicative aorist medium) for me; 6. with 'burnt offerings' (ολοκαυτωματα) and 'sin offerings' (περι αμαρτιας) you were not 'pleased' (ευδοκησας)(indicative aorist active). 7. Then I said: 'I have come' or 'I am present' (ηκω)(indicative present active, with meaning of a perfect) - in the roll of the book (εν κεφαλιδι βιβλιου) it is 'written' (γεγραπται <γραφω) (indicative perfect passive)(The perfect signifies the legal binding authority of a document) about me - to do (ποιησαι)(infinitive aorist active)(The infinitive expresses the purpose of his coming) your 'will' (θελημα), O God."

This biblical statement is found in Psalm 40:6-8. This prophecy could not refer to David, because David did offer sacrifices. Therefore it must refer to the future King David, the Messiah (cf. Ps 16:10; cf. Act 2:31).

i) The Hebrew text says, "My ears you have pierced" (Ps 40:6). The 'ears' may have been interpreted by the Greek translator as a symbol of obedience (cf. Isa 50:4-5), because they were the organ of receiving God's divine will and the 'body' was considered to be the organ of fulfilling that divine will.

ii) The Greek text says. "A body you prepared for me" (Ps 40:6 and Heb 10:5). It is not based on a corrupt or variant reading, but is rather an interpretative paraphrase of the Hebrew text. The Greek translator regarded the Hebrew words as an instance of 'a part for the whole', that is, the digging or hollowing out of the ears is part of the total work of fashioning a human body. God prepared the body of the speaker and the speaker gave his body back to God as a living sacrifice to be employed in obedient service to him.

iii) *Wholehearted obedience* is in both explanations the real sacrifice that God desires! The Old Testament sacrifices had religious worth only in so far as they were the tangible expression of a devoted and obedient heart. *In themselves, these sacrifices had no real value* (1 Sam 15:22-23; Ps 51:16-17; Prov 15:8; 21:3; Isa 1:13-15; 66:3; Jer 7:22-23; Hos 6:6; Mic 6:6-8; Hag 2:14; Mk 12:33).

The writer's contrast is not between sacrifice and obedience, but between the involuntary sacrifice of dumb animals and sacrifice into which obedience enters - the sacrifice of a rational and spiritual being, which is not passive in death, but in dying makes the will of God its own.

The writer regards the incarnation of the Son of God ("when he comes into the world") as an act of submission to God's will and as an anticipation of Christ's supreme submission to God's will in his sacrificial death.

'The roll of the book' is a reference to the written law of God. The speaker (Christ) recognized that God wrote about him in the law and that this was God's prescription for him (cf. Mk 14:49; Lk 24:25-27,44; Jn 5:39; Act 13:27-37). *The life and death of Jesus Christ would be the active counterpart of the written law. The will of God that is written in the law would be equally manifested in his obedience. It was God the Father's will, but it was also God the Son's spontaneous choice.* Therefore his undertaking and fulfilling the Father's will was a sacrifice utterly acceptable to God.

10:8-9. 9. "Higher up or 'in the former part of the quotation' (ανωτερον) he said: Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them - although the law required them to be made - . 9. 'Then' or 'immediately thereafter' (τοτε) he said: Here I am, I have come to do your will. He 'sets aside' or 'abolishes' (αναρει<αναρειω)(indicative present active) 'the first' (το πρωτον) to 'place' or to 'establish' (στηση <στημι)(subjunctive aorist active) 'the second' (το δευτερον)."

In the words of Psalm 40 the writer sees the announcement of the abrogation of the old sacrificial order and the announcement (prophecy) of the establishment of the new order in Christ. God says that he takes no pleasure in the sacrifices prescribed by the ancient cultic law of Israel and that these will be superseded by a new order, inaugurated by Christ's perfect obedience to the will of God. The formulation of the new covenant in Hebrews 8 include the provision

that God's law will henceforth be engraved in his people's hearts, that his people will personally know him and that he will not bring their sins into remembrance.

10:10. "And by that will we 'have been made holy' or 'sanctified' or 'set apart' (ηγιασμενοι)(participle perfect passive)(The perfect emphasises the completed state or condition) through the 'sacrifice' (προσφορα) of the body of Jesus Christ 'once for all' (εφαπαξ)"

By fulfilling God's will by offering his body as an atonement for sins, Jesus Christ 'sanctified' his people, that is, he set them apart from the rest of the world to belong to God and to live for God. Their inward cleansing made them fit for the presence of God, so that henceforth they can offer him acceptable worship.

The atonement explains the incarnation: God took on the human nature in Jesus Christ in order to put away sins. Whether the writer speaks of 'the body' or 'the blood' of Christ, he means 'the incarnate life' of Christ, yielded to God in obedience maintained up to the point of death. (This is different and much more than evil people that give their lives to an evil cause).

So 'perfect' was his sacrifice that no repetition of it is either necessary or possible: it was offered 'once for all'. And so 'perfect' is the sanctification that it also is as unrepeatable as the sacrifice that effected it.

10. The new order has an enthroned high priest (10:11-18).

(who made a perfect sacrifice of atonement for sins for those people who are now continually being sanctified)

10:11-12. 11. "On the one hand (μεν) every priest 'stands' (εστηκεν<ιστημι)(indicative perfect active) 'day after day' (καθ ημεραν) 'ministering' or 'to perform religious service' (λειτουργων)(participle present active) and 'often' (NIV again and again)(πολλακις) '*offering*' (προσφερων)(participle present active) the same sacrifices, which 'never' (ουδεποτε) 'can' (δυναται) (indicative present medium) 'take away' (περιελειν<περιαιρω)(infinitive aorist active) sins." 12. But 'on the other hand' (δε) 'this' (high priest, Christ)(ουτος) '*having offered*' (προσενεγκας<προσφρω)(participle aorist active) 'one' (μιαν) sacrifice on behalf of sins 'for ever' or 'continually, unbroken, perpetually' (εις το διηνεκες), 'sat down' (εκαθισεν)(indicative aorist active) on the right hand of God."

The writer draws the full significance of Psalm 110:4. The Old Testament priests never sat down in the sanctuary. They remained standing throughout the whole performance of their sacred duties. This is a token that they were never finished with their sacrifices. These sacrifices had to be repeated 'year after year' (10:1) and 'day after day' (10:11). Whether these sacrifices were yearly or daily, not one of them could remove the sin or cleanse the conscience with permanent effect.

In contrast, when Christ had completed his one perfect sacrifice, he sat down. This is a token that no further sacrifice was required, necessary or possible. *A seated priest is the guarantee of a finished work and an accepted sacrifice!* His continual ministry at the right hand of God is intercession on the basis of the once for all sacrifice presented to God and accepted by God.

Here lies the origin of a great difference in theology between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches.

i) The Greek text. The aorist participle 'having offered' (προσενεγκας)(10:12) stands in sharp contrast to the present participle 'offering' (προσφερων)(10:11).

ii) The Latin text. Latin has no perfect participle active (except in deponent verbs) and therefore used the present participle 'offerens' as the rendering of both these Greek forms. The Latin Vulgate translates Hebrews 10:12: "Christ *offers continually* his one sacrifice on behalf of sins" instead of "Christ *having offered for ever* one sacrifice on behalf of sins. This becomes the theological basis for the daily 'mass'.

The Latin Vulgate makes the same mistake in Hebrews 1:3: "*He makes purification of sins*" (purgationem peccatorum faciens)(present participle) instead of "*he made purification of sins*" (καθαρισμον των αμαρτιων ποιησαμενος) (participle aorist medium). This translation facilitated the Roman Catholic view that during his present heavenly session Christ continues to make purification for sins.

The 'for ever' is best taken with the preceding clause: his one sacrifice was for ever effective.

10:13. "Henceforth (all the remaining time till the end of this present world)(το λοιπον) 'expecting' (εκδεχομενος) (participle present medium) till his enemies 'be made the 'footstool' (υποποδιον) of his feet."

In the light of the solemn warning in Hebrews 10:26-31 this may be an implied warning to his readers not to let themselves be numbered among the enemies of the exalted Christ by falling away from Christ, but to rather "to hold firmly to the end the confidence they had at first" (3:14).

While the writer to the Hebrews connects this to the mediatorial ministry of the high priest (Christ), Paul connects it to the mediatorial ministry of the king (Christ) in 1 Corinthians 15:25-26).

10:14. “Because by one offering (sacrifice)(προσφορά) he has ‘perfected’ (τετελειωκεν)(indicative perfect active) ‘for ever’ (εις το διηνεκες) ‘the people being sanctified’ (τους αγιαζομενους)(participle present passive)”. The perfect tense indicates a one time event with a continuing result which is completed in the continual process depicted by the participle.

Probably most of the early converts to Christ, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, had been accustomed to a form of worship in which animals were sacrificed again and again. These sacrifices could at best only purify people in a ceremonial sense, but never in a moral or spiritual sense. These continual sacrifices were rendered obsolete by the one perfect sacrifice of Christ.

Hebrews 10:10 says that Christians have been sanctified (perfect participle) by the one sacrifice of Christ. The emphasis is laid on the unrepeatable nature of the death of Christ as the sacrifice by which they ‘have been set apart once for all time’ for worship and service of God. Hebrews 2:11 and 10:14 says that Christians are being sanctified (present participle). The emphasis is laid on the fact that they are now ‘for ever or continually God’s set apart ones’.

Hebrews 10:10 also says that Christians have been perfected (perfect tense) for ever. This perfection is expressed in the words of Jeremiah 31:31-34. This means that they are genuinely born again!

10:15-18. 15. “The Holy Spirit also ‘testifies’ (μαρτυρει)(indicative present active) to us about this. ‘After’ (μετα) he ‘had said’ (ειρηκεναι<λεγω)(infinitive perfect active): 16. ‘This is the covenant that I ‘will make’ (διαθησομαι <διατιθημι)(indicative future medium) with them after those days, says the Lord: I will ‘put’ (διδου<διδωμι)(participle present active) my laws on their ‘heart’ (καρδιας), and I will ‘write’ (επιγραψω)(indicative future active) them on their ‘mind’ (διανοιαν)’. 17. And their ‘sins’ (αμαρτιων) and their ‘iniquities’ (ανομιων) will I ‘remember’ (μνησθησομαι<μνησκω)(indicative future passive) ‘by no means still’ (ου μη επι)”. 18. Now where ‘forgiveness’ (αφεσις) of these (is), there is ‘no longer’ (ουκετι) ‘offering’ (προσφορά) for sins.

The words spoken by the prophets in the Old Testament are the words of the Spirit of Christ (1 Pet 1:10-12; cf. Heb 8:8; 10:15). For the writer of Hebrews the truth of one kind of testimony required confirmation by another, in this case, by the testimony of the Scriptures. The testimony of the Scripture is the testimony of God.

The perfection of Christians is expressed in:

i) The implanting of God’s laws in the heart and mind, that is, true knowledge of God’s will and the will and power to carry them out.

ii) The assurance that their sins have been wiped out from God’s record and that they will never be brought up in evidence against them (cf. Jn 5:24).

Both these things the old order could never provide. It could only remind people again and again that they were sinners in need of permanent atonement. Repeated remembrance went together with repeated sacrifices. In contrast, the irrevocable erasing of sins from the divine record implies that no further sin-offering is called for. This confirms the finality of the sacrifice of Christ.

In Hebrews 8, Jeremiah 31:31-34 was quoted to prove the obsolescence of the old order.

In Hebrews 10, Jeremiah 31:31-34 is quoted to establish the permanence of the new order (the era of perfection).

God has spoken in his Son and he has no word to speak beyond Christ!

[VII] UNDERSTANDING WHAT IS CHRISTIAN FAITH (10:19 - 12:29)

1. Christian faith involves bold confidence towards God and stimulating provocation towards Christians (10:19-25).

10:19. Therefore, brothers, having ‘confidence’ or ‘boldness’ (παρρησιαν) ‘for the entrance’ or to ‘enter’ (εις την εισοδον) the sanctuary (των αγιων)(meaning the Most Holy Place) by the blood of Jesus.

The ‘boldness’ of New Testament believers is contrasted with the restrictions of the Old Testament high priests to enter the Most Holy Place! This is valid for all Christians and every time they choose! Christians are exhorted to exercise their right and privilege. In Hebrews 4:16 they may draw near on the basis of knowing that Christ, who experienced all their trials and temptations, is a *merciful* high priest. In Hebrews 10:19 they may draw near on the basis that they know that the entrance remains open for his people to follow him in.

10:20. (the entrance which) he ‘dedicated’ or ‘inaugurated’ (ενεκαίνισεν)(indicative aorist active) for us, a ‘fresh’ (freshly slaughtered, that retains its freshness and cannot grow old) or ‘new’ (προσφατον) and living (ζωσαν)(participle present active) way through the ‘veil’ or ‘that which falls down’ (καταπετασματος) - this is his flesh (body)

The cross dedicated or inaugurated both the new covenant (9:18) and the new temple (10:20). The new way is affirming John 14:6: “I am the only Way to God the Father” (cf. Rom 5:2; Eph 2:18; 3:12; 1 Pet 2:4f; 3:18).

The veil in the Old Testament temple hid the glory of God on the one side and kept the need of people on the other side. The tearing of the veil when Jesus was crucified is symbolic that God is now unveiled to us and the way to God is thrown wide open. Jesus is the Mediator, the umpire, because he can lay his hands on both because he shares the nature of both. The writer looked on the veil as symbolising the human life of Jesus, which he presented to God when he suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring us to God (1 Pet 3:18).

10:21. and having a great high priest over the household of God (τον οικον του θεου)

The household of God is the community of God’s people (cf. 3:6).

10:22. let us draw near (προσερχομεθα)(subjunctive present medium) with a true heart in ‘full assurance’ or ‘fullness of faith’ (εν πληροφορια πιστεως), having the hearts sprinkled (περαντισμενοι)(participle perfect passive) from an evil conscience, and having the body washed (λελουμενοι)(participle perfect passive) with pure water (υδατι καθαρω),

Access to God is no longer fenced off by the conditions of the Old Testament law. Every person may approach God through Jesus Christ and the atonement for sin he procured. They may do this in full assurance, which faith in Christ begets (cf. 11:6). Only those who have experienced the cleansing procured by the blood of Jesus Christ can have such a sincere heart and full assurance to approach God without fear and in complete assurance that they will not be turned away, but welcomed.

i) The sprinkling of the heart denotes *the inward and spiritual cleansing*. The writer has in mind the New Testament counterpart of the Old Testament ritual of cleansing with the water for impurity, the water prepared with the ashes of the red heifer (cf. 9:13-14). People may and can only enter the presence of God by the blood of Jesus Christ! The cleansing of the conscience removes the barrier that prevented their free access. Spiritual nearness to God is impossible for a polluted conscience.

ii) The washing of the body denotes *the outward application of water as the visible sign and seal of the inward and spiritual cleansing*. Just as in 1 Peter 3:21, the baptismal water is not intended to remove bodily impurity but to express a pledge to God from a clear conscience.

iii) The ‘heart’ and the ‘body’ together are a symbol of the cleansing (rebirth) of the entire personality. The sprinkling and the washing are denoted by perfect participles, which show that they are once-for-all and unrepeatable acts with abiding effects. They indicate a completed state or condition, which is already possessed.

10:23. let us hold fast (κατεχομεν)(subjunctive present active) the confession (ομολογια) of hope ‘unswervingly’ or ‘not leaning’ κλινη), for faithful is he who promised (ο επαγγελιαμενος)(participle aorist medium):

God’s promise will never fail. If the confession wavers it is because the confessors waver. The Christian hope need never waver.

10:24. and let us consider (κατανοωμεν)(subjunctive present active) one another to ‘provoke’ or ‘stimulate’ or ‘incite’ (εις παροξυσμον) unto love and good works;

Christian faith and hope and witness will flourish more vigorously in an atmosphere of Christian fellowship. In 1 Corinthians 13:5, *love is not provoked* in the sense that it does not allow difficult people or difficult circumstances to cause it to become irritated. But in Hebrews 10:24 *love is provoked* in the sense that Christians stimulate one another to loving relationships and good deeds.

10:25. not ‘forsaking’ (εγκαταλειποντες)(participle present active) our ‘meeting together’ (την επισυναγωγην)(The present tense in the word indicates the continued responsibility, the regular meetings), as the custom of some (is), but exhorting (παρακαλουντες)(participle present active) (one another); and so much the more, as you see the day ‘drawing near’ (εγγιζουσαν<εγγιζω)(participle present active).

The word ‘meeting together’ (την επισυναγωγην) is a compound of the word ‘synagogue’ and ‘in addition to’.

i) The writer would like to see these Jewish Christians “go outside the camp and bear the disgrace of Christ” (13:13) and thus separate themselves from the Jewish synagogue meetings. But if they could not yet do that, to at least attend the

special Jewish Christian meetings on Sundays *in addition to the Jewish synagogue meetings* on Saturdays. They are exhorted not to stay away from the specific Christian meetings.

ii) The writer would like to see these Jewish Christians attend the wider Christian meetings together with the Gentile Christians *in addition to the Jewish Christian house fellowship meetings*. They are exhorted not to detach themselves from the larger body of Gentile Christians in the world!

The reasons why some people withdrew from the Christian fellowships are:

i) Some people imagined that they could secure the holy contents and blessings of Christianity in the same way as in the heathen mystery religions (Isis with Horus and Magna Mater) and then withdraw. Once they had the ticket to heaven they could withdraw.

ii) Some people got detached because of laziness and weariness.

iii) Some people felt superior and thought they could dispense with the spiritual help of others.

iv) Some were scared away by the threats of the authorities and shunned public attendance of worship in order to avoid being recognised as Christians.

v) Some may have been weakened when they realised that the second coming was not going to happen soon.

Before A.D. 70 those Christians who remembered and took seriously the prophecy of Jesus about the destruction of the temple (John 2, Matthew 24) were scarcely in a position to keep this event distinct from the second coming of Christ. Only after A.D. 70 was it possible to understand the two periods of time to which Jesus referred to in Matthew 24:1-41. In Matthew 24:3 the disciples asked, "When will the temple be destroyed?" and "What is the sign of the second coming, that is, the end of the age?" The writer of Hebrews probably wrote this letter before A.D. 70 and therefore wrote, "As you see the Day approaching" (10:25). The readers with discernment could already 'see' the signs of the impending end of Jerusalem and the temple (The Roman legions were besieging the city).

Nevertheless, for the writer of this letter, as for the other New Testament writers, the 'Day' is primarily the day of the second coming of Christ. The period between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ is called 'the end time', 'the last days' and 'the last hour'. Whatever the duration of this period may be, for faith "the time is near (at hand)" (Rev 1:3).

How can the tension between the eschatological and historical existence of faith be retained over a period of time? By walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:25), because the Spirit is the pledge and firstfruits of the heritage which Christians will inherit at the second coming (Rom 8:23; Eph 1:13-14).

2. Christian faith involves taking the warning (4th) about the wilful sin of apostasy seriously (10:26-31).

10:26-29. 26. For if we 'keep on sinning' (αμαρτανοντων)(participle present active) 'wilfully' (εκουσιως) after we have received 'the knowledge of the truth' (επιγνωσιν αλεθειας), there 'remains' (απολειπεται)(indicative present passive) no more a sacrifice for sins. 27. but a certain 'fearful' (φοβερα) expectation of judgement, and a 'raging fire' (ζηλος πυρος)(cf. Isa 26:11) that will 'consume' or 'eat' (εσθειν<εσθιω)(infinitive present active) 'the enemies' or 'adversaries' (υπεναντιος) of God. 28. Anyone who 'rejected' or 'set aside' (αθετησας<αθετεω)(participle present active) the law of Moses 'died' (αποθνησκει)(indicative present active) without mercy on (the testimony of) two or three witnesses. 29. By 'how much worse' or 'more severely' (ποσω χειρονος) a 'punishment' (τιμωριας), do you think (δοκειτε)(indicative present active), will he 'be judged worthy' (αξιωθησεται)(indicative future passive) who has 'trampled under foot' or 'stomp upon' (καταπατησας)(participle aorist active) the Son of God, who has 'treated as an unholy thing' (κοινων ηγησαμενος)(participle aorist medium) the blood of the covenant that 'sanctified' or 'set apart for divine use' (ηγιασθη<αγιαζω)(indicative aorist passive) him, and who has 'arrogantly insulted' or 'treated with utter contempt' (εσυβρισας)(participle aorist active) the Spirit of grace?

The phrase 'knowledge of the truth' occurs in John (John 8:32; 1 Jn 2:21; 2 Jn 1) and Pastoral Letters (1 Tim 2:4; 4:3; 2 Tim 2:25; 3:7; Tit 1:1). The knowledge of the truth certainly included 'faith in Jesus Christ'. Whether this was *historical or salvation faith* is not answered.

The fact that this person '*keeps on sinning*' proofs that this person does not really (personally) know Jesus Christ or has not been born again (1 Jn 3:6-9)! The fact that this person *continues 'wilfully' or 'deliberately' to sin* proofs that this is the same issue as "turning away from the living God" (3:12) and "falling away" (6:4-8).

i) In Hebrews 3:12,14, the person is 'an Israelite brother', one who has a share in the covenant privileges of the people of God. He shared the Old Testament shadowy or imperfect illumination and the New Testament more perfect illumination by Jesus Christ (John 1:9), which does not necessarily mean that he was born again. His problem is "his evil heart and unbelief" (3:12). The text proofs that "he does not persevere" (3:14; cf. Mt 10:22; 24:13; Rev 2:10; 1 Cor 9:24-27).

ii) In Hebrews 6:4-8, the person is a Jewish Christian, one who has a share in the covenant privileges of the people of God. He shared in the enlightenment of the gospel and received baptism as a sign that he understood the light of the gospel; he experienced the spiritual blessings, which as a whole are signified and sealed in the Lord's Supper; he received the laying on of hands as a sign that he experienced the reality, presence and power of the Holy Spirit (without

necessarily being born again by the Holy Spirit, cf. Simon whose heart was not right and therefore had no share in this ministry of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:9-24); he experienced the goodness of the bible message (in the church) and the power of miracles as a sign that the new age or new order had begun. His problem is that “he does not produce a crop useful to God, but produces thorns and thistles and is in danger of being cursed” (6:7-8). The test proofs that “he does not bear good fruit” (6:7-8; cf. Mt 12:33-37; Jn 2:14-23).

iii) In Hebrews 10:26-31, the person “received the knowledge of the truth” (but like some Pharisees is not set free, Jn 8:31-32). His problem was that “he deliberately continues to sin” (10:26) and thereby proofs that he does not know Christ and is not born again (1 Jn 3:6-9). The test proofs that “he tramples on the Son of God, treats the blood of the covenant that set him apart from other people in this world as common or unholy animal blood and that he insults the Holy Spirit that has shown him so much grace” (10:29).

Perseverance and bearing good fruit and continuing to confess Christ are NOT the *conditions* for salvation, but the *fruits* of salvation: they proof genuine faith and salvation.

The different convictions about ‘sinning wilfully’ in Christian history.

i) In the Early Christian Church it was commonly inferred from this passage and other passages that forgiveness of all kinds of sins, whether inadvertent or deliberate, after a person has been baptised was ruled out. In about A.D. 150 Hermas wrote a book at Rome, ‘The Shepherd’. First a woman and then an angel in the form a shepherd appeared to Hermas with revelations and instructions: 5 visions, 12 instructions and 10 parables. The message is mainly that the Church had become worldly and must do penance. Penance is possible only once! Hermas was a small businessman and not a theologian and wrote in Greek. He taught that baptism in the name of Christ wiped out all previous sins and that baptised persons who kept the law of Christ consistently need not fear the last judgement. But anyone who sinned once after baptism could, after due repentance, receive forgiveness once more, and be assured of ultimate salvation if he did not fall again!

ii) Tertullian (A.D. 190) condemned even ‘the one concession’ (of committing a sin after baptism) of Hermas.

iii) The Codex Sinaiticus (4th century A.D.) contains this book.

iv) The Roman Catholic Church extended the one concession of Hermas and changed it into ‘the institution of penance’ (one of the 7 sacraments). Every baptised person is required periodically (minimum once a year) to seek from a priest, by confession and penance, absolution for sins committed up to date. (However, such an institution differs little from the Old Testament institution of the Day of Atonement in which remembrance of sins was made once a year, 10:3).

v) The writer of Hebrews instead urges Christians to avail themselves continuously of the intercessory offices of their enthroned High Priest, Christ, who appears in God’s presence on their behalf by virtue of his once for all perfect sacrifice!

10:30-31. 30. For we ‘know’ (οἶδαμεν) him who said: “It is mine to ‘revenge’ (εκδικησις); I will ‘repay’ (ανταποδοσω<ανταποδιδωμι) (indicative future active)(Dt 32:35).” And again: “The Lord will ‘judge’ (κρινει) (indicative future active) his people (Dt 32:36). 31. It is ‘a dreadful thing’ (φοβερος) to ‘fall’ (εμπεσειν<εμπιπτω) (infinitive aorist active) into the hands of the Living God.

These are two quotations from the Song of Moses (Dt 32). This Song furnished the early Christian Church with testimonies regarding the unbelief of the Jews. Cf. Rom 10:19 (Dt 32:19), 1 Cor 10:20 (Dt 32:22), Phil 2:15 (Dt 32:5). God will execute judgement on behalf of believers, vindicating their just cause against their enemies. But God will also execute judgement against his people when they forsake his covenant. The privileges which Israel enjoyed as God’s covenant people meant that their responsibilities were the greater and the retribution would be the more severe in their case if they gave themselves up to unrighteousness (Amos 3:2).

The writer of Hebrews is deeply aware of God’s awesome holiness and majesty. The primary application of verse 31 is to the covenant people of God. Isaiah 33:14-15, “The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: “Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?” He who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion and keeps his hand from accepting bribes, who stops his ears against plots of murder and shuts his eyes against contemplating evil.”

3. Christian faith involves the call to perseverance in doing God’s will (10:32-39).

10:32-34. 32. ‘Remember’ (ανμυνησκεισθε)(imperative present medium) those earlier days after you ‘had received the light’ or ‘had been enlightened’ (φωτισθεντες)(participle aorist passive), when you ‘stood your ground’ or endured’ (υπεμεινατε<υπομενω)(indicative aorist active) in ‘a great contest in the face of suffering’ (πολλην αθλησιν παθηματων). 33. Sometimes you were ‘publicly exposed to’ or ‘brought upon the stage’ or ‘held up to derision’ (θεατριζομενοι)(participle present passive)(cf. ‘θεατρον’ 1 Cor 4:9) ‘insult and persecution or pressure’ (ονειδισμοις τε και θλιψεσιν); at other times you ‘stood side by side’ or ‘became sharers or partakers’ (κοινωνοι γεννηθεντες)(participle aorist passive) with those who were so ‘treated’ (των αναστρεφομενων)(participle present medium). 34. You ‘sympathised’ (συνεπαθησατε)(indicative aorist active) with those in ‘prison’ (δεσμιος), and ‘joyfully accepted’ (προσεδεξασθε<προσδεχομαι)(indicative aorist medium) ‘the confiscation’ (την αρπαγην) of

your 'property' (των υπαρχοντων), because you knew that you yourselves had 'better and lasting possessions' (εχειν κρεισσονα υπαρξιν και μενουσαν)".

Like the solemn warning in Hebrews 6:4-8 is immediately followed by words of reassurance and encouragement (6:9-12), so the solemn warning in Hebrews 10:26-31 is immediately followed by words of reassurance and encouragement (10:32-34). The writer does not wish to discourage his readers, but to spur them on so that they will emerge victoriously from the present growing test of their faith.

The Hebrews had undergone persecution, but none of them had thus far suffered martyrdom, like Stephen in A.D. 33 under the Greek speaking Jews (Act 8:1ff) or like James in A.D. 44 under Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:2) or like James the Just in A.D. 62 under the instigation of the high priest Annas II (Josephus 'Antiquities'. 20:200) or like the Roman Christians in A.D. 64 under Nero's persecutions. Tacitus wrote, "Their death was a matter of sport: they were covered in wild beasts' skins and torn to pieces by dogs; or were fastened to crosses and set on fire in order to serve as torches by night when daylight failed (Tacitus, Annals 15:44) or like Roman Christians after A.D. 64 that were martyred to death (cf. 12:4). After the outbreak of the Jewish revolt against Rome in A.D. 66, the Jewish communities of many cities throughout Syria and Palestine were the victims of riot and massacre (Josephus, War 2:457ff) and Jewish Christians would in no way be exempt from such assaults.

But in A.D. 41 emperor Claudius imposed certain restrictions on the Jewish colony in Rome. They were not banished but forbidden to gather in accordance with their ancestral way of life (Dio Cassius, Histories 60:6). They were later expelled because "they were constantly indulging in riots at the instigation of Chrestus" (Suetonius, Claudius 25:4). Christianity had recently been introduced to Rome, probably via the Jewish colony (cf. Acts 2:10). A Jewish couple, Priscilla and Aquila, had left Rome and settled in Corinth, where Paul met them in A.D. 50 (Act 18:1-4). A large scale eviction of this nature would inevitably have been attended by widespread looting by the city proletariat, together with many other kinds of insults and indignities. The Jews who had become Christians suffered the additional indignities at the hands of the synagogue authorities. We believe that the events in Rome in A.D. 49 could probably be referred to here. Those who had not been personally exposed to suffering showed their solidarity with those who were directly attacked, and so shared the public scorn. Throughout the whole period of Christian persecution by the Roman authorities, prisoners had to be fed and cared for by other Christians or they would die. Thus, visiting Christian prisoners and feeding them was a regular, but dangerous Christian charity (cf. Mt 25:36). But these Jewish Christians could say farewell to their earthly possessions, because they kept their eyes on the eternal inheritance.

10:35-38. 35. So 'do not throw away' (αποβαλητε)(subjunctive aorist active) your 'confidence' or 'boldness' (παρρησια); it 'will be richly rewarded' (εχει μεγαλην μισθαποδοσιαν). 36. You 'need to persevere' or 'have patience' (υπομονης εχετε χειραν) so that when you 'have done' (ποιησαντες)(participle aorist active) the will of God, you will 'receive' (κομισησθε>κομιζομαι)(subjunctive aorist medium) 'what he has promised' (την επαγγελιαν). 37. For in just a very little while, "He who is coming (ο ερχομενος) 'will come' (ηξει<ηκω) (indicative future active) and not 'delay' (χρονισει<χρονιζω)(indicative future active). 38. But my 'righteous one' (ο δικαιος) 'will live by faith' (εκ πιστεως ζησεται)(indicative future medium). And if he 'shrinks back' or 'withdraws' (υποστειληται)(subjunctive aorist medium), I will not 'be pleased' (ευδοκει)(indicative present active) with him." 39. But we are not of those 'who shrink back' or 'are shrinking' or 'are withdrawing' or 'are timid' (εσμεν υποστολη) 'in order to be destroyed' or 'unto perdition' (εις απωλειαν), but of those who 'believe' (πιστεως) in order to possess the soul' or 'unto the saving of the soul' (εις περιποιησιν ψυχης).

'Confidence or boldness' is the forthrightness of their language and actions that spring from an inner conviction and confidence in their heart and life.

'Perseverance' or 'patience' is to remain loyal and not give up doing what is right in God's eyes.

i) The Hebrew text of Habakkuk 2:3-4 says, "Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him, but the righteous shall live by his faith". Let the righteous one wait in faith, because the oppressor (the Chaldeans) with his devious plans shall be judged at God's appointed time.

ii) The Greek text of Habakkuk 2:3-4 says, "If he draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him, but my righteous one will live by faith". If the deliverer (the righteous one, Messiah) who is expected to vindicate the righteous and put down the oppressor shrinks back, he is not God's chosen agent.

iii) The writer to the Hebrews applies the prophecy to the second coming of Christ. "The Messiah is coming and the righteous Christian lives by faith, even when he is tempted to wonder whether Christ would ever return. This is a warning that God's displeasure would rest on anyone who draws back and yields to the temptation to relapse from his Christian faith into Judaism. If he perseveres in his Christian faith he will gain his life. But if he shrinks back into Judaism he will prove himself reprobate.

The writer is confident that he himself and the Hebrews believers are not among those who shrink back and are lost, but are people who maintain their Christian faith and are saved.