

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 317 – November 13th – Hebrews 11:17-31

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Hebrews

Bruce, FF	<i>The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964
Guthrie, Donald	<i>Hebrews</i> (Tyndale Commentary), IVP, Leicester, 1983
Hughes, Philip Edgcombe	<i>A Commentary on The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1977
Westcott, BF	<i>The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Macmillan, London, 1889

Hebrews 11:17-19

"The greatness of Abraham's Faith was shewn by the fact that he was ready to sacrifice his only son, though it had been before declared that the fulfilment of the promise which he had received was to come through him. His obedience therefore included the conviction of some signal and incomprehensible work of God whose promise could not fail." Westcott

Verse 17

Πίστει προσενήνοχεν Ἀβραάμ τὸν Ἰσαὰκ πειραζόμενος, καὶ τὸν μονογενῆ προσέφερεν ὁ τὰς ἐπαγγελίας ἀναδεξάμενος,
προσενήνοχεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s
προσφερω offer, present

Note the use of the perfect followed by the imperfect. Westcott comments, "The first verb expresses the permanent result of the offering completed by Abraham in will, the second his actual readiness in preparing the sacrifice which was not literally carried into effect." Faith is generally tested when it seems that circumstances run counter to the promises of God (cf. James 1:12). However, Abraham's faith was tested by a *command* of God that seemed to run counter to the promise.

πειραζω test, put to the test, tempt
μονογενῆς, ες only, unique

One cannot help but hear an echo of the use of μονογενῆς of Christ in Jn 1:14,18; 3:16,18; 1 John 4:9 – though it is also used of an only child in Luke 7:12. Hughes comments, "Not that Abraham was the begetter of no other sons, for he was the father of Ishmael by Hagar and was to be the father of other sons by Keturah; yet there was but one son of the covenant, namely Isaac, who, contrary to human possibility, but in accordance with the power of the promise, was born to Sarah. Within the perspective of God's infallible purposes he was the only son."

ἐπαγγελια, ας f see v.13

ἀναδεξάμενος Verb, aor midd dep ptc, m nom
s ἀναδεχομαι receive, welcome

Verse 18

πρὸς ὃν ἐλαλήθη ὅτι Ἐν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεται σοὶ σπέρμα,

πρὸς ὃν ἐλαλήθη Westcott says that this can be understood in one of two ways:

- i) 'he to whom it was said' i.e. of Abraham;
- ii) 'him in reference to whom it was said', i.e. of Isaac.

"The latter rendering is against the structure of the sentence; though it is in itself possible."

ἐλαλήθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s λαλεω
speak

κληθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s καλεω
σπερμα, τος n seed, offspring

Cf. Gen 21:12.

Verse 19

λογισάμενος ὅτι καὶ ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγείρειν δυνατὸς ὁ θεός· ὅθεν αὐτὸν καὶ ἐν παραβολῇ ἐκομίσατο.

λογισάμενος Verb, aor midd dep ptc, m nom
s λογιζομαι reckon

νεκρος, α, ον dead

ἐγείρω raise

δυνατος, η, ον powerful, able

Cf. Gen 22:5 for the implied conviction.

ὅθεν where, from where

παραβολη, ης f parable, comparison,
proverb

ἐκομίσατο Verb, aor midd indic, 3 s κομιζω
midd receive, get back

"So dramatic was the sequence of events that it was as though Isaac really had died and had been raised to life again." Hughes.

Westcott suggests that Abraham's faith was grounded in the fact that Isaac's birth was a receiving of what was promised in the face of death (cf. Rom 4:19).

Hughes includes part of Beza's dramatic verse on this incident, written in 1550.

Verse 20

Πίστει καὶ περὶ μελλόντων εὐλόγησεν Ἰσαὰκ τὸν Ἰακώβ καὶ τὸν Ἡσαΐ.

μελλω (ptc. without infin) coming, future
εὐλογεω speak well of, bless

Cf. Gen 27. Note that the younger son, Jacob, is mentioned before the elder. Isaac's blessings reflect the promise of God.

Verse 21

πίστει Ἰακώβ ἀποθνήσκων ἕκαστον τῶν υἱῶν Ἰωσήφ εὐλόγησεν, καὶ προσεκύνησεν ἐπὶ τὸ ἄκρον τῆς ῥάβδου αὐτοῦ.

ἀποθνήσκω die, face death
ἕκαστος, η, ον each

Cf. Gen 48:2ff. In each of these instances, the theme is obedience to the divine choice.

προσκυνεω worship, fall down and
worship, fall at another's feet

These words echo an earlier passage in Genesis 47:31. Hughes says that the two incidents of blessing and worship, performed by Jacob from his death bed, are here brought forward as examples of his faith.

ἄκρον, ου n extreme limits, tip
ῥάβδος, ου f stick, rod, sceptre

Westcott says that ῥάβδος "follows the text of the LXX which renders a different pointing of the original from that adopted by the Massorettes and by other Greek translations" which have 'bed' (ἡβδου) rather than 'staff' (ῥαβδος). (The LXX predates the work of the Massorettes by some nine centuries.)

Verse 22

πίστει Ἰωσήφ τελευτῶν περὶ τῆς ἐξόδου τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἐμνημόνευσεν, καὶ περὶ τῶν ὀστέων αὐτοῦ ἐνετείλατο.

τελευταω die

Joseph's words reflect the promise of God (Gen 15:13-16) and are therefore an expression of faith. In the request concerning his bones, Joseph expresses the fact that he has an interest in the land of promise – that land rather than Egypt is his country or homeland. The writer's purpose here is to encourage the Hebrew Christians to whom he was writing, to go on in faith to the end – even to death – looking to the sure promise of God beyond.

ἐξοδος, ου f departure, death

Occurs in Lk 9:31 of Christ, and 2 Peter 1:15 of Peter.

μνημονευω make mention of

ὀστεον, ου and ὀστουν, ου n bone
ἐνετείλατο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s
ἐντελλομαι command, give orders

The fulfilment of this command is recorded in Ex 13:19; Josh 24:32.

Verse 23

Πίστει Μωϋσῆς γεννηθεὶς ἐκρύβη τρίμηνον ὑπὸ τῶν πατέρων αὐτοῦ, διότι εἶδον ἄστειον τὸ παιδίον καὶ οὐκ ἐφοβήθησαν τὸ διάταγμα τοῦ βασιλέως.

γενναω pass be born
ἐκρύβη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s κρυπτω
hide, conceal

τριμηνον, ου n (a period of) three months
πατηρ, πατρος m father

The plural use in the sense of 'parents'

διότι because, for
εἶδον Verb, aor act ind, 1s & 3pl ὁραω see,
perceive

ἄστειος, α, ον pleasing, beautiful

Occurs in LXX at Ex 2:2 (cf Acts 7:20).

παιδίον, ου n child
φοβεομαι fear, be afraid of
διαταγμα, τος n order, decree

A word occurring here only in the NT.

βασιλευς, εως m king

"In 3:2ff. above our author draws a comparison between Moses and Christ in terms of the faithfulness of each... But even the events of Moses' infancy foreshadow the experience of him who is greater than Moses (Heb 3:3), for the life of the infant Jesus was threatened by the edict of a despotic monarch ordering the slaughter of all male children under the age of two years, and by their faith and obedience Joseph and Mary were enabled to preserve the child by taking refuge in the very country where Moses was preserved (Mt 2:13ff.)." Hughes.

Verse 24

πίστει Μωϋσῆς μέγας γενόμενος ἠρνήσατο λέγεσθαι υἱὸς θυγατρὸς Φαραώ,

μεγας, μεγαλη, μεγα large, great
γενόμενος Verb, aor ptc, m nom s γινομαι
ἠρνήσατο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s
ἄρνεομαι deny, disown, renounce,
refuse

θυγατηρ, τρος f daughter

Hughes notes that "the divine purposes were served equally, given the differing circumstances, by Joseph's remaining in high office and by Moses' renunciation of that privilege. Joseph was God's man to preserve the little band of his kinsfolk in Egypt. Moses was God's man to lead the people of Israel from Egypt to Canaan."

Verse 25

μᾶλλον ἐλόμενος συγκακουχεῖσθαι τῷ λαῷ τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ πρόσκαιρον ἔχειν ἀμαρτίας ἀπόλαυσιν,

μαλλον more; rather, instead
ἐλόμενος Verb, aor midd ptc, m nom s
αἰρεομαι choose, prefer, decide
συγκακουχεομαι share hardship with,
suffer with

Found here only in the NT

λαος, ου m people, a people
ἢ or, than
προσκαιρος, ον temporary, not lasting
ἀμαρτια, ας f sin
ἀπολαυσις, εως f enjoyment

Verse 26

μείζονα πλοῦτον ἠγησάμενος τῶν Αἰγύπτου θησαυρῶν τὸν ὀνειδισμόν τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἀπέβλεπεν γὰρ εἰς τὴν μισθαποδοσίαν.

μειζων, ον and μειζοτερος, α, ον greater,
greatest
πλουτος, ον m & n riches, wealth
ἠγησάμενος Verb, aor midd dep ptc, m nom s
ἠγεομαι think, regard, consider
θησαυρος, ου m treasure store
ὀνειδισμος, ου m reproach, disgrace,
shame

The term του χριστου *could* refer to Israel as the anointed of God (cf. Ps 28:8; Hab 3:13). In this sense, Moses preferred to identify himself with Israel and with the reward (inheritance) God had promised to Israel. However, in context, the reference seems to be to Christ. Perhaps there is a deliberate play on words: Moses' identification with Israel was identification with Christ – as the servant songs of Isaiah move from a corporate reference to focus on a particular individual. Westcott says, "*The reproach of Christ* is the reproach which belongs to Him who is the appointed envoy of God to a rebellious world. This reproach, which was endured in the highest degree by Christ Jesus (Rom 15:3) was endured also by those who in any degree prefigured or represented Him."

ἀποβλεπω keep one's eyes on, give one's attention to

Occurs here only in the NT. Means looking away from one object to focus upon another.

μισθαποδοσια, ας f reward

On looking for reward, cf. 2 Cor 4:17f; Heb 12:2; Matt 5:11.

Verse 27

πίσται κατέλιπεν Αἴγυπτον, μὴ φοβηθεὶς τὸν θυμὸν τοῦ βασιλέως, τὸν γὰρ ἀόρατον ὡς ὄρων ἐκαρτέρησεν.

κατέλιπεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s καταλειπω
leave, leave behind

Calvin and Owen both argue strongly that the leaving of Egypt spoken of here is not that of Moses fleeing after killing the Egyptian, but the Exodus. Hughes disagrees, as does the NEB which translates, "By faith he left Egypt, and not because he feared the king's anger." Hughes says that Moses knew that 'his hour had not yet come' and therefore withdrew from threat (cf. Jn 7:30; 8:20,59; 10:31-39). "The governing impulse of his flight from Egypt was faith, not fear."

φοβηθεὶς Verb, aor pass dep ptc, m nom s
φοβεομαι see v.23

θυμος, ου m anger, rage, fury
ἀορατος, ον unseen, invisible
ὄραω see v.13

Cf. v.1

καρτερω endure, persevere

Occurs here only in the NT.

Westcott says that "The idea of καρτερειν is complementary to the ideas of ὑπομενειν (10:32) and μακροθυμειν (6:15). The Christian has not only to bear his burdens in the conflicts of life, and to wait for the fulfilment of the promise which seems so strangely delayed: he must also bear himself valiantly and do his work with might through the Spirit (1 Cor 16:13; Eph 3:16)."

Verse 28

πίσται πεποίηκεν τὸ πάσχα καὶ τὴν πρόσχυσιν τοῦ αἵματος, ἵνα μὴ ὁ ὀλοθρευὼν τὰ πρωτότοκα θίγη αὐτῶν.

πασχα n Passover, Passover
πρόσχυσις, εως f sprinkling (of blood)

Cf. Ex 12:7, 22f.

The word is not found in the LXX or elsewhere in the NT. The cognate verb is commonly used in the LXX of the sprinkling of blood on the altar.

αἷμα, ατος f blood

ὀλοθρευω destroy

πρωτοτοκος, ον first-born, first

θίγη Verb, aor act subj, 3 s θιγγανω touch

Verse 29

Πίστει διέβησαν τὴν Ἐρυθρὰν Θάλασσαν ὡς
διὰ ξηρᾶς γῆς, ἧς πείραν λαβόντες οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι
κατεπόθησαν.

διέβησαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl διαβαίνω
cross, cross over

The focus shifts to the faith of the people.

ἐρυθρός, α, ον red

θάλασσα, ης f sea

ξηρός, α, ον dry

πειρά, ας f attempt (λαμβάνω π. attempt)

κατεπόθησαν Verb, aor pass indic, 3 pl

καταπίνω swallow, swallow up

That which saved them destroyed their pursuers, just as "the waters of the flood which bore up the ark and those sheltering in it were at the same time the waters which destroyed all who had scornfully rejected the preaching of Noah. Thus the gospel is to one 'a fragrance from death to death,' but to another 'a fragrance from life to life' (2 Cor 2:16); Christ is set for the fall as well as for the rising of many (Lk 2:34); he is the chosen cornerstone, so that 'he who believes in him will not be put to shame,' whereas to the unbeliever he becomes a rock of stumbling (1 Pet 2:6-8; Isa 28:16; 8:14f.). The crucial importance of faith could hardly be more dramatically emphasised than by the opposite fortunes of the Israelites and the Egyptians at the Red Sea." Hughes.

Verse 30

πίστει τὰ τεῖχη Ἱεριχῶ ἔπεσαν κυκλωθέντα ἐπὶ
ἑπτὰ ἡμέρας.

τεῖχος, οὐς n wall

ἔπεσαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl πιπῶ fall,
fall down

κυκλωθέντα Verb, aor pass ptc, n nom/acc pl
κυκλοῶ surround, march round

ἑπτὰ seven

Faith in God's appointed means of battle engages the power of God for the casting down of strongholds. Spicq comments of faith that it, "is not concerned with means; it achieves its objective because God intervenes for its vindication."

Verse 31

πίστει Ῥαὰβ ἡ πόρνη οὐ συναπόλετο τοῖς
ἀπειθήσασιν, δεξαμένη τοὺς κατασκόπους μετ'
εἰρήνης.

πορνή, ης f prostitute

"The list of the champions of Faith whose victories are specifically noticed is closed by a woman and a gentile and an outcast."
Westcott. Cf. Jas 2:25 also Mt 21:31f.

συναπόλετο Verb, aor midd indic, 3 s

συναπολλῶμαι perish with, be put to
death with

ἀπειθήσασιν Verb, aor act ptc, dat pl

ἀπειθεῶ disobey, be an unbeliever

δεξαμένη Verb, aor midd dep ptc, f acc s

δεχομαι receive, accept, welcome

κατασκοπος, ου m spy

εἰρήνη, ης f peace