

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 319 – November 15th – Hebrews 12:14-29

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 Edgcumbe	<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

Verse 14

Εἰρήνην διώκετε μετὰ πάντων, καὶ τὸν ἁγιασμόν, οὐ χωρὶς οὐδεὶς ὄψεται τὸν κύριον, εἰρήνη, ης f peace
διῶκω seek after, pursue, follow

Marks the eagerness and constancy of the pursuit. Cf. Ps. 34:14; 1 Peter 3:11; Rom 12:18.

ἁγιασμός, ου m sanctification, holiness

Cf. 1 Peter 1:15f. The Christian seeks peace with all alike, but he seeks holiness also, and this cannot be sacrificed for that." Westcott

χωρὶς see v.8

οὐδεὶς, οὐδεμία, οὐδέν no one, nothing
ὄψεται fut midd dep, 3 s ὄραω see,
observe, perceive

Cf. Mt 5:8. Westcott thinks that the reference is to seeing "Christ, for whose return in glory believers wait." Cf. 1 Jn 3:2f.

Verse 15

ἐπισκοποῦντες μὴ τις ὑστερῶν ἀπὸ τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ, μὴ τις ῥίζα πικρίας ἄνω φύουσα ἐνοχλῆ καὶ δι' αὐτῆς μιανθῶσιν πολλοί,
ἐπισκοπεῶ see to it, take care; oversee

"The word ἐπισκοποῦντες expresses the careful regard of those who occupy a position of responsibility... Each Christian shares in this in due degree." Westcott

τις, τὶ acc τινά, τὶ gen τινός dat τινί enclitic pronoun and adj anyone, anything
ὑστερεῶ lack, fall short of

"The idea seems to be that of falling behind, not keeping pace with the movement of divine grace which meets and stirs the progress of the Christian." Westcott.

χάρις, ιτος f grace
ρίζα, ης f root, source
πικρία, ας f bitterness, spite, bitter feeling
ἄνω adv above; up, upwards
φυῶ grow, come up
ἐνοχλεῶ trouble, cause trouble

"The image is taken from Deut 29:17f... The root is personal ... and not doctrinal: a pernicious man and not a pernicious opinion." Westcott

μιανθῶσιν Verb, aor pass subj, 3 pl μιανῶ defile, contaminate

"The implication is that one embittered and rebellious person in their midst can have a disastrous effect on the community as a whole, so that *the many are defiled* – just as one noxious root can poison a whole crop." Hughes.

Verse 16

μὴ τις πόρνος ἢ βέβηλος ὡς Ἡσαῦ, ὃς ἀντὶ βρώσεως μιᾶς ἀπέδετο τὰ πρωτοτόκια ἑαυτοῦ.

πορνος, ου m man who practices sexual immorality

ἢ or

βεβηλος, ου vile, godless, irreligious

Westcott thinks that Esau is cited as an example of a βέβηλος but not of a πορνος. He thinks that πορνος is to be understood in its literal sense and not of an idolater. The two words focus on moral quality in the person themselves and in their attitude towards God. βέβηλος "describes a character which recognises nothing as higher than earth: for whom there is nothing sacred: no divine reverence for the unseen." However, Hughes says, "It is much more natural to understand both adjectives as referring to Esau. It has been pointed out ... that Esau's act in taking two foreign women as wives, who 'made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah,' must have been regarded by his parents as immoral and tantamount of the commission of fornication (Gen 26:34f.; 27:46)." Hughes.

ἀντι prep with gen for, in place of

βρωσις, εως f food, a meal

εἷς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνός, μιᾶς, ἑνός one, single

ἀπέδετο Verb, aor midd indic, 3 s ἀποδιδῶμι give, give back; midd sell

πρωτοτοκια, ων n birthright, rights
belonging to the firstborn son

Cf. Gen 25:33f. "These Hebrew Christians will be guilty of a much greater act of profanity if, disheartened by the difficulties of the contest, they barter not an earthly but a heavenly birthright for a short period of worldly ease and prosperity." Hughes.

Verse 17

ἴστε γὰρ ὅτι καὶ μετέπειτα θέλων κληρονομήσαι τὴν εὐλογίαν ἀπεδοκιμάσθη, μετανοίας γὰρ τόπον οὐχ εὔρεν, καίπερ μετὰ δακρῶν ἐκζητήσας αὐτήν.

ἴστε Verb, indic or imperat 2 pl οἶδα
know, understand
μετεπειτα afterwards
θελω wish, will
κληρονομεω receive, gain possession of,
inherit
εὐλογία, ας f blessing, praise
ἀπεδοκιμάσθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s
ἀποδοκιμάζω reject
μετανοια, ας f repentance, change of
heart
τοπος, ου m place, opportunity

"A place of repentance' is an opportunity for changing a former decision." Westcott

εὕρισκω find, discover
καίπερ though, although
δακρυον, ου n tear (as in weeping)
ἐκζητεω seek or search diligently

The αὐτήν refers to εὐλογίαν

Verses 18-29

"This section forms a solemn close to the main argument of the Epistle. It offers a striking picture of the characteristics of the two Covenants summed up in the words 'terror' and 'grace'; and at the same time, in harmony with the whole current of thought, it emphasises the truth that the greater privileges bring greater responsibility. The section falls into two parts:
a) The contrast of the position of the Christian with that of the Israelites at the giving of the Law (18-24); and
b) The duties of the Christian which flow from this position (25-29)." Westcott

Verse 18

Οὐ γὰρ προσελήλυθατε ψηλαφωμένῳ καὶ κεκαυμένῳ πυρὶ καὶ γνόφῳ καὶ ζόφῳ καὶ θυέλλῃ

προσεληλύθατε Verb, perf act indic, 2 pl
προσερχομαι come or go to
ψηλαφωω touch, feel (pass ptc able to be touched)

A number of MSS include the word ὄρει (mountain) after ψηλαφωμένῳ.

κεκαυμένῳ Verb, perf pass ptc, m & n dat s
καίω light, burn; pass be lit, burn
πυρ, ος n fire
γνοφος, ου m darkness

Cf. Deut 4:11; 5:22; Ex 19:16ff.

ζοφος, ου m gloom, darkness
θυελλα, ης f wind storm, whirlwind

Verse 19

καὶ σάλπιγγος ἤχῳ καὶ φωνῇ ῥημάτων, ἧς οἱ ἀκούσαντες παρητήσαντο μὴ προστεθῆναι αὐτοῖς λόγον·

σαλπιξ, ιγγος f trumpet; trumpet blast
ἦχος, ου m sound, noise

Cf Ex 19:16; 20:18.

ῥημα, ατος n word

Cf. Deut 4:12.

παρητήσαντο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 pl
παραίτεομαι ask for, request, beg
προστεθῆναι Verb, aor pass infin προστιθημι
add, add to

Cf. Ex 20:19 also Dt 5:25-27.

Verse 20

οὐκ ἔφερον γὰρ τὸ διαστελλόμενον· Κἂν θηρίον θίγῃ τοῦ ὄρους, λιθοβοληθήσεται·

φερω bring, carry, bear
διαστελλομαι order, command
καν (και ἐαν) even if, and if, even
θηριον, ου n animal, beast, wild animal
θίγῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s θιγγανω touch

Cf. Ex 19:12

ὄρος, ους n mountain, hill
λιθοβοληθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3 s
λιθοβολεω stone, throw stones at

Verse 21

καί, οὕτω φοβερὸν ἦν τὸ φανταζόμενον, Μωϋσῆς εἶπεν· Ἐκφοβός εἰμι καὶ ἔντρομος.

"The fear which was felt by the people was felt also by the Lawgiver himself." Westcott

οὕτως and οὕτω adv. thus, in this way
φοβερος, α, ον fearful, terrifying
φανταζομαι appear (το φανταζομενον the sight or spectacle)

Occurs nowhere else in the NT

ἐκφοβος, ον frightened, terrified
ἐντρομος, ον trembling, full of fear

"Similar words are used by Moses in connexion with the worshipping of the golden calf, Deut 9:19; but it is hardly possible that the writer of the Epistle transferred these directly to the scene of the giving of the Law when the fear was due to circumstances essentially different. It is more likely that he refers to some familiar tradition in which the feelings of Moses were described in these terms." Westcott. This was certainly Moses' reaction earlier at the 'burning' bush (Ex 3:6).

Verse 22

ἀλλὰ προσελήλυθατε Σιών ὄρει καὶ πόλει θεοῦ ζῶντος, Ἰερουσαλὴμ ἐπουρανίῳ, καὶ μυριάσιν ἀγγέλων, πανηγύρει

On the contrast between Sinai and the heavenly Jerusalem, cf. Gal 4:25f.

προσεληλύθατε see v.18

"Ye are not brought face to face with any representation of the terrors of Sinai; but ye are even now still standing in a heavenly presence, not material but spiritual, not manifested in elemental powers but in living hosts, not finding expression in threatening commands but in means of reconciliation, inspiring not fear but hope. Yet, it is implied that the awfulness of the position is not less but greater than that of the Israelites." Westcott

ὄρος, οὐς n mountain, hill

The καὶ here has the force 'even'.

πολις, εὼς f city, town

ζῶ live, be alive

"In the spiritual reality, Mount Zion represents the strong divine foundation of the new Order, while the City of the Living God represents the social structure in which the Order is embodied. God – Who is a Living God – does not dwell alone, but surrounded by His people." Westcott.

"The author's assertion, *But you have come to Mount Zion, etc.*, is in itself indicative of his confidence that a genuine work of the gospel has been experienced among those to whom he is writing, however much some of them may be in danger of falling away into apostasy." Hughes.

ἐπουρανίος, οὐς heavenly, celestial
μυρίας, ἀδος f group of ten thousand,
myriad, countless thousands

πανηγυρίς, εὼς f festal gathering, joyful
gathering

"The word πανηγυρίς, which was used of the great national assemblies and sacred games of the Greeks ... occurs here only in the NT ... The suggestion is that of the common joy of a great race." Westcott

There is much debate as to whether the word belongs with what precedes ('thousands of angels in joyful assembly' NIV), or with what follows ('the general assembly and church of the firstborn' AV). Hughes, who favours the former, writes, "The eternal Son, who, to procure our redemption, 'for a little while was made lower than the angels,' is now 'crowned with glory and honour,' high above all angels (2:9). Before him, in the heavenly city, 'myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,' that is to say, an *innumerable* company, of angels adore him by singing: 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing' (Rev 5:11f.). This scene of joyful praise and celebration in the heavenly Jerusalem is what is meant by their being *in festal gathering*."

Verse 23

καὶ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων ἀπογεγραμμένων ἐν οὐρανοῖς, καὶ κριτῇ θεῷ πάντων, καὶ πνεύμασι δικαίων τετελειωμένων,

ἐκκλησία, ας f congregation, church

Cf. the description of the Israelites assembled at Sinai as ἐκκλησία (Acts 7:38; Dt 4:10; 9:10; 18:16).

πρωτοτοκος, ον first-born, first

Note the plural. "They are spoken of as 'firstborn,' enjoying the privileges not only of sons but of firstborn sons ... Perhaps there is still some faint reminiscence of the reckless sacrifice of his birthright (v.16 πρωτοτοκια) by Esau." Westcott. Also recalls that God spoke of Israel as his firstborn son, Ex 4:22f.

ἀπογεγραμμένων Verb, perf pass ptc, gen pl
ἀπογραφῶ register, enrol

Cf. Ex 32:32f.; Ps 64:28; Lk 10:20; Phil 4:3.
The perfect tense signifies indelible action.

οὐρανός, ον m heaven

κριτής, ον m judge

δικαίος, α, ον righteous, just

τετελειωμένων Verb, perf pass ptc, gen pl
τελειῶ make perfect

"The judgement ... has been in part triumphantly accomplished." Westcott.
Ὁν τελειοῦσθαι cf. 2:18; 7:11; 10:14.

Verse 24

καὶ διαθήκης νέας μεσίτη Ἰησοῦ, καὶ αἵματι ῥαντισμοῦ κρείττον λαλοῦντι παρὰ τὸν Ἄβελ.

διαθήκη, ης covenant

νεός, α, ον new, fresh, young

"This is the only place in which διαθηκη νεα occurs in the NT ... The Covenant is spoken of as νεα in regard to its recent establishment, and not as καινη in regard of its character." Westcott

μεσιτης, ου m mediator, intermediary
 αίμα, ατος f blood
 ραντισμος, ου m sprinkling
 κρειττον and κρεισσον adv. better
 λαλουντι Verb, pres act ptc, m dat s λαλεω
 speak

"The voice of 'the blood of Jesus' is doubly contrasted with the voice of the blood of Abel. That, appealing to God, called for vengeance, and making itself heard in the heart of Cain, brought despair; but the blood of Christ pleads with God for forgiveness and speaks peace to man." Westcott

Verses 25-29

John Brown considers chapter 13 to be a kind of post-script to the main body of the letter which concludes with chapter 12. From this perspective he writes, "The Epistle commences with the declaration that the Gospel is the completed revelation of the divine will respecting the salvation of men, – a revelation not made by man or angel, but by the Only-begotten of God; and it closes with a solemn exhortation to beware of treating such a revelation in a manner unworthy of its character, as the ultimate manifestation of the word of God, made by that Eternal Word of life who was in the beginning with the Father, and who has declared Him unto man. The first and the last paragraphs of the Epistle, properly so called, bind together as it were, all the intervening statements, illustrations and arguments. 'God, who at sundry times spoke to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son.' 'See, then, that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.'"

Verse 25

Βλέπετε μη παραιτήσησθε τον λαλουντα· ει γαρ εκεινος ουκ εξεφυγον επι γης παραιτησαμενοι τον χρηματιζοντα, πολυ μλλον ημεις οι τον απ' ουρανων αποστρεφομενοι·

βλεπω see, beware of, see to it
 παραιτήσησθε Verb, aor midd dep subj, 2 pl
 παραιτεομαι see v.19.

Note the present participle λαλουντα. He who spoke in the Son (1:2) still speaks in him.

εκεινος, η, ο demonstrative adj. that, those
 εξεφυγον Verb, aor act indic, 1 s & 3 pl
 εκφευγω escape
 γη, γης f earth, land

Qualifies the whole phrase, while "the corresponding phrase απ ουρανων expresses only the position of the revealer and not of those to whom the revelation is given." Westcott.

χρηματιζω warn, direct

"The long sufferings in the wilderness witnessed to the punishment of that unbelief which made the people rescued from Egypt unfit and unwilling to hold converse with God." Westcott.

μαλλον adv more; rather
 ουρανος, ου m heaven
 αποστρεφω turn away; midd (and aor pass)
 turn away from, refuse, reject

Suggests that such turning away had already commenced.

Verse 26

ου η φωνη την γην εσαλευσεν τότε, νυν δε επιγγελται λεγων· "Ετι απαξ εγω σεισω ου μονον την γην αλλα και τον ουρανόν.

σαλεωω shake, disturb

Cf Ex 19:18

τοτε then, at that time
 επιγγελται Verb, perf midd (deponent) & pass indic, 3s επαγγελομαι promise

"The prophecy of Haggai (2:6ff, 21ff.) deals with two main subjects, the superior glory of the second temple in spite of its apparent poverty: the permanent sovereignty of the house of David in spite of its apparent weakness. The prophet looks forward from the feeble beginnings of the new spiritual and national life to that final manifestation of the majesty of the kingdom of God in which the discipline begun on Sinai is to have an end. He naturally recalls in thought the phenomena which accompanied the giving of the law; and foreshadows a correspondence between the circumstances of the first and last scenes in divine revelation. That which was local and preparatory at Sinai is seen in the consummation to be universal." Westcott

ετι still, yet
 απαξ once, once for all time
 σειωω shake
 μονον adv only, alone

Verse 27

το δε "Ετι απαξ δηλοι των σαλευομενων μεταθεσιν ως πεποιημενων, ινα μεινη τα μη σαλευομενα.

το δε "Ετι απαξ "The words, 'Yet once more ...'

δηλοι Verb, pres act indic, 3 s δηλωω make clear, indicate

μεταθεσις, εως f removal, change
 πεποιημένων Verb, perf pass ptc, gen pl
 ποιεω
 μενω remain, stay, abide

"... all that stands undisturbed in the present trial. The 'shaking' is looked upon as already taking place." Westcott suggests that the reference is to the beginnings of the fall of Jerusalem.

"The purpose of this ultimate shaking is 'in order that what cannot be shaken may remain.' For the people of God, who belong to the order of things which are unshakable, the removal of all that is insecure and imperfect is something to be eagerly anticipated; for this final shaking of both heaven and earth is necessary for the purging and eradication from the universe of all that is hostile to God and his will, for establishment of all that, being in harmony with the divine mind, is permanent, and for the inauguration of the new heaven and the new earth, that is, the renewal as 'changed' creation, in which all God's purposes in creation are brought to everlasting fulfilment at the consummation of the redemption procured in and by Christ (Rev 21:1ff; 2 Peter 3:10-13); and this will take place with the return of Christ in glory and majesty (Rev 19:11ff.)...
 "Among those things which are shaken are the sacrifices of the old levitical system and the impermanent order of things instituted through the mediation of Moses, which have been surpassed and superseded by the one perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our great High Priest. This unique sacrifice, unshakable in its efficacy, is itself the foundation of that unblemished new order that abides forever (Rev 5:11ff.; 7:13ff.). Our author is concerned lest those to whom he is writing should forsake the unshakable realities of the gospel for the outmoded system they have professed to abandon." Hughes

Verse 28

διὸ βασιλείαν ἀσάλευτον παραλαμβάνοντες
 ἔχωμεν χάριν, δι' ἧς λατρεύομεν εὐαρέστως
 τῷ θεῷ μετὰ εὐλαβείας καὶ δέους,

διο therefore, for this reason

"The thought of the 'Kingdom' lies in the second part of Haggai's prophecy, which the quotation naturally suggested to the readers." Westcott
 The Kingdom is "an ordered and harmonious society governed by him who is the Sovereign Lord of all (Rev 19:16)." Hughes.

ἀσαλευτος, ον immovable; unshakable
 παραλαμβανω take, receive, accept
 χαρις, ιτος f grace; thanks, gratitude

"The use of the phrase *χαριν ἔχειν* elsewhere in the NT is strongly in favour of the sense 'let us feel and shew *thankfulness* to God': Lk 17:9; 1 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 1:3." Westcott.

Gratitude is the heart's response to the Gospel: 2 Cor 9:15; Eph 5:20; Col 3:17; 1 Thess 5:18.

λατρευω serve, worship

Cf. Rom 12:1.

εὐαρέστως in an acceptable way

In NT always used in connection with relationship to God.

εὐλαβεια, ας f godly fear, reverence
 δεος, ους n awe, godly fear

Does not occur elsewhere in the NT.

Verse 29

καὶ γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν πῦρ καταναλίσκων

πυρ, ος n fire

καταναλισκω consume, devour

The God of Zion is one and the same with the God of Sinai. "He purifies by burning up all that is base in those who serve Him, and all that is unfit to abide in His Presence: Mal 3:2f; Mal 4:1." Westcott. Cf. Dt 4:24.