Observations on the Book of Hebrews[[1]](#footnote-1)

Observation Paper for BI5500 Hermeneutics

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1 Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, **2**and of instruction about washings,the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. **3**And this we will do if God permits. **4**For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, **5**and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, **6**and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. **7**For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. **8**But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

**9**Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. **10**For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. **11**And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, **12**so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Things to Observe[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Repetition of words** – Look for words and phrases that repeat

God – 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10

**Contrasts** – Look for ideas, individual, and/or items that are contrasted with each other. Look for differences.

None

**Comparisons** – Look for ideas, individuals, and/or items that are compared with each other. Look for similarities.

7-8 Paul compares a healthy crop to one that bears thorns and thistles

**Lists** – Anytime the text mentions more than two items, identify them as a list.

1-2 go on to maturity not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings,the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

**Cause and effect** – Look for cause-and-effect relationships.

None

**Figures of speech** – Identify expressions that convey an image, using words in a sense other than the normal sense.

7- land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it.

8- If it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless… cursed…end is to be burned.

**Conjunctions** – Notice terms that join units, like “and,” “but,” “for.” Note what they are connecting.

1- and (connecting leaving elementary doctrine to maturity)

1- and (dead works and faith)

2- and (Connects the previous statement to the next list)

2-and (finishes the list by connecting eternal judgment to it)

3- and (connects the previous list to what we should do if God allows)

4- and (Connects the heavenly gift with the sharing of the Holy Spirit)

5- and (Holy Spirit with tasting the good news of the word)

5-and (Connects the good news of the words with the powers of the age to come)

6-and (powers of the age to come and those who have fallen away)

7- and (Connects rain falling on land to a crop)

8- but (bridge from a healthy crop to thorns and thistles)

8- and (connects worthless and near to being cursed)

8- and (connects cursed to being burnt)

10- and (God seeing will not overlook your work as well as not overlook the love he has shown)

11- and (Connects serving the saints with his desire for each one of us)

12- and (connects faith and patience)

12-that (full assurance of hope is what we should focus on to avoid being sluggish)

12- but (don’t be sluggish be imitators of those who inherit the promise)

**Verbs** – Note whether a verb is past, present, or future; active or passive; and the like.

1 – leave (present, active, participle), laying (past, active, participle)

2 – laying (past, active, participle)

4 – have tasted (past, active, participle), have once been enlightened (past, passive, indicative), have shared (past, active, participle)

5 – have tasted (past, active, participle)

6 – have fallen (past, passive, indicative), to restore (present, active, participle), to repentance (present, active, participle)

7 – has drunk (past, active, participle), receives (present, passive, indicative)

10 – to overlook (present, active, participle), have shown (past, active, participle), serving (present, active, participle)

11 – to have (present, active, participle)

12 – inherit (future, passive, indicative)

**Pronouns** – Identify the antecedent for each pronoun.

1 – us (Christians)

2 – we (Christians), those (Christians who have turned away)

6 – them, they, their own (Christians who have turned away), him (Christ)

7 – Those ()

9 – we, yet, your (Christians)

10 – your, you (Fellow believers) his (Christ)

11 – we (author, believers)

12 – you, those (fellow believers)

**Questions and answers** – Note if the text is built on a question-and-answer format.

None

**Dialogue** – Note if the text includes dialogue. Identify who is speaking and to whom.

None

**Means** – Note if a sentence indicates that something was done by means of someone/something (answers “how?”). Usually you can insert the phrase “by means of” in the sentence.

None

**Purpose/result statements** – These are more specific type of “means,” often telling why. Purpose and result are similar and sometimes indistinguishable. In a purpose statement, you usually can insert the phrase “in order that.” In a result clause, you usually can insert the phrase “so that.”

None

**General to specific and specific to general** – Find the general statements that are followed by specific examples or applications of the general. Also find specific statements that are summarized by a general one.

None

**Conditional clauses** – A clause can present the condition by which some action or consequence will result. Often such statements use and “if…then” framework (although in English the “then” is often left out).

None

**Actions/roles of God** – Identify actions that the text ascribes to God.

3 – God permitting

6 – Son of God

**Actions/roles of people** – Identify actions or roles that the text ascribes to people or encourages people to do/be.

6 – holding him up to contempt

**Emotional terms** – Does the passage use terms that have emotional energy, like kinship words (“father,” “son”) or words like “pleading”?

9 - “beloved”

**Tone of the passage** – What is the overall tone of the passage: happy, sad, encouraging, and so on?

The author is urging believers to step into maturity and leave behind the elementary doctrine of Christ, there is a sense of urgency that turns into sincere encouragement.

**Connections to other paragraphs and episodes** – How does this passage connect to the one that precedes it and the on that follows it?

No,

**Shifts in the story/pivots** – Is the passage being used as a key to understanding a dramatic shift in the story?

No

**Interchange** – Does the passage shift back and forth between two scenes or characters?

No

**Chiasm** – Does the passage have any chiastic arrangements, such as a-b-c-d-c’-b’-a’?

No

**Inclusio** – Does the passage open and close with similar statements or events?

No

1. The MacArthur Study Bible, English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, Grasping God’s Word (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 103-104. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)