

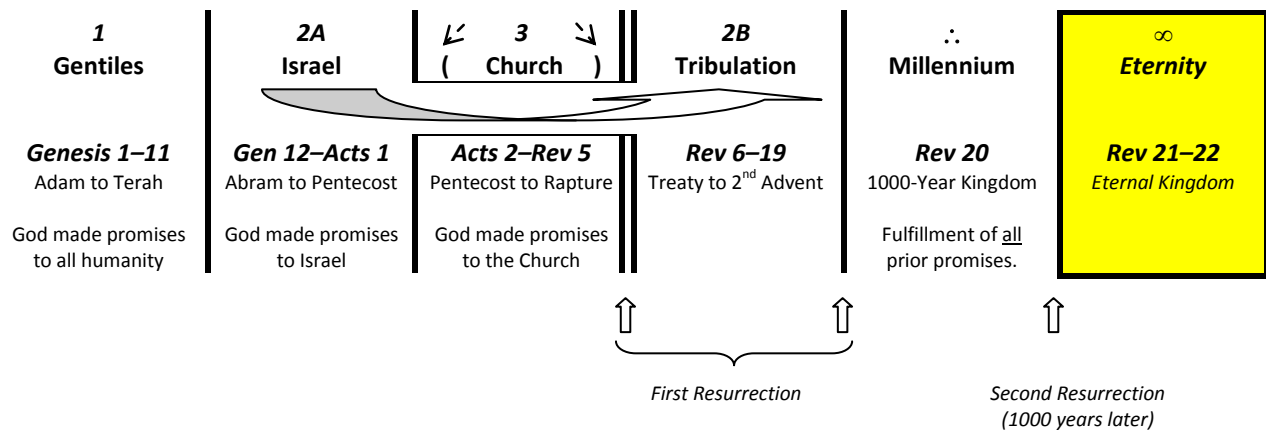
**Five Consequence (Warning) Passages in Hebrews**

Water of Life

Dr. John Niemelä

Message of Life Ministries (John 3:16) [www.mol316.com](http://www.mol316.com)

12 Jul 2013



**RESURRECTION(S) OF BELIEVERS**

Believers (each group in its own order [1 Cor 15:23]) are raised. Each group that died prior to the start of the Millennium (1 Cor 15:23) is raised prior to the Millennium. Thus, Church-Age believers are raised at the pre-tribulation rapture (1 Cor 15:50-53; 1 Thes 4:13-18), but believers from other dispensations are raised at their own times. Though the Bible does not specifically mention it, any believers who die during the Millennium certainly will rise (since resurrection and eternal life are the means of Christ’s total victory over death—1 Cor 15:26). Their resurrection precedes the eternal state.

**EVALUATION(S) OF BELIEVERS**

Various passages (including Rom 14:10-13; 1 Cor 3:11-15; and 2 Cor 5:9-10) speak about the *Bēma* Seat of Christ. He will evaluate how believers conducted their lives, determining level of rewardability/unrewardability for service in the Millennial kingdom. Everyone present at these evaluations will possess everlasting life—which cannot be taken away.

Rev 5:9-10 (in context) shows that the *Bēma* occurs between the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation. The interval before the start of the Tribulation is of unknown duration, but could be quite brief. The *Bēma* happens during that interval.

A number of passages (e.g., Matt 25:1-30) also speak of a similar evaluation for those living in the age of Israel. Of course, Israel’s resurrection is seven-years subsequent to the Rapture, so their evaluation will not be simultaneous with the evaluation of the Church. Certainly, believers of the age of the Gentiles and of the Millennium will also be evaluated. However, that is an inference.

## RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT OF UNBELIEVERS

Rev 20:1-6 discuss the second resurrection (at the end of the Millennium). All who are then in the graves will be resurrected. Cf. Rev 20:11-15 and John 5:28-29. One crucial feature from John 5:28-29 is that “all who are in the graves ... come forth...” Remember, though, the timing of this. It is after the Millennium (cf. Rev 20:5: the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished”). The timing of this is crucial. Believers have already been raised, so they are not among those raised to appear at the Great White Throne. This accounts for the point of John 5:24: believers do not come into judgment [at the Great White Throne]. John 5:24 anticipates 5:28-29, which discuss the Great White Throne.

At the Great White Throne, sin is a non-issue. Jesus has already propitiated the sin of the world (John 1:29; 1 John 2:2; etc.). People’s works will be evaluated at the Great White Throne to see if anyone’s works merited eternal life. No one at the Great White Throne will merit life by their works.

## SUMMARY

Different groups of believers (age of the Gentiles, age of Israel, Church Age, Israel in the Tribulation) will be raised in their own order. In other words, those resurrections are not all simultaneous. Upon resurrection, each group will face an evaluation akin to the Church at the *Bēma* Seat and a comparable evaluation that is described for Israel. Jesus will evaluate how we each conducted ourselves as believers. That evaluation will determine our roles (reward) during the Millennial Kingdom. The people in each case are believers. Their eternal life is secure, even if their life on earth after believing was a total disaster. Note 1 Cor 3:15, where the unrewarded person is described as “suffering loss,” but “saved, as through fire.”

Unbelievers will rise and go to the Great White Throne. Each will be judged to determine if anyone’s works merit eternal life. None will merit life. All will face the second death—a conscious existence in the lake of fire forever.

### CONSEQUENCE PASSAGES IN HEBREWS

The following is an excerpt from the fourth consequence passage (of five) in Hebrews. Heb 10<sup>31</sup> *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* <sup>32</sup> *But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings:* <sup>33</sup> *partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated;* <sup>34</sup> *for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.* <sup>35</sup> *Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.* <sup>36</sup> *For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:* <sup>37</sup> *"For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry.* <sup>38</sup> *Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.*" <sup>39</sup> *But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.*

#### Reformed interpreters incorrectly understand this passage as follows:

The readers had endured (v 32), but

1. if they cast away their confidence (fail to persevere), they will not not have reward (i.e., they will not go to heaven), 10:35
2. if they fail to endure and do God's will (fail to persevere), they will not receive what was promised (e.g., eternal life), 10:36
3. if they fail to live by faith, God has no pleasure (in ones not persevering, because they never really believed, so their soul was never really saved), 10:38-39
4. Therefore, falling into the hands of the living God is fearful for those who only seemed to believe, but whose lives prove otherwise. 10:31

#### Arminian interpreters incorrectly understand this passage as follows:

The readers had endured (v 32), but

1. if they cast away their confidence (fail to persevere), they will not not have reward (i.e., they will not go to heaven), 10:35
2. if they fail to endure and do God's will (fail to persevere), they will not receive what was promised (e.g., eternal life), 10:36
3. if they fail to live by faith, God has no pleasure (in ones not persevering, because they stopped believing, so their soul lose its formerly saved status), 10:38-39
4. Therefore, falling into the hands of the living God is fearful for those who will go to the lake of fire because they stopped believing. 10:31

**Two Red Flags within these nine verses require taking another look. [The argument of the book as a whole conclusively negates both the Reformed and the Arminian approaches].**

1. Keeping their confidence would *have great reward* (v 35). Might this be a *Bēma Seat* issue?
2. V 34 says that the readers already have an enduring possession for themselves in heaven. Would that be a true statement if they themselves might not make it to heaven?

#### Reformed and Arminian interpreters tend to mingle the *Bēma Seat* and the Great White Throne.

Both discount the possibility of a believer having loss, but remaining saved (1 Cor 3:15). Hebrews says that severe loss of rewards is the consequence for believers failing to persevere.

### Hebrews 13:22, The Key to the Book

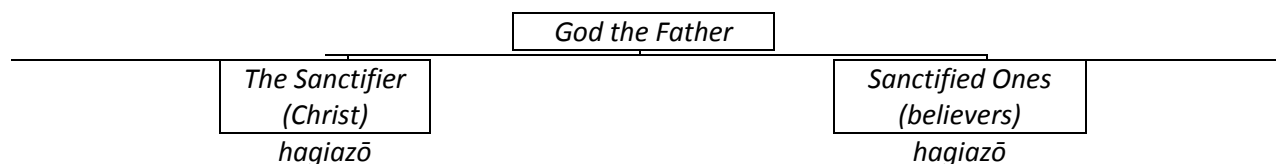
And I exhort you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words.

This verse requires giving attention to four pertinent issues:

1. How does Hebrews define *brethren*?
2. What does the author mean by characterizing his book as a *word of exhortation*?  
(note that he *exhorts* the readers here)
3. Is it the brethren that are exhorted by Hebrews? (*I have written to you*)
4. What does he mean by saying that he has written *in few words* (this is a surprise)?

### The Definition of Brethren in Hebrews (Heb 2:11–3:1)

<sup>2</sup> For both He who sanctifies [*hagiazō*] and those who are being sanctified [*hagiazō*] are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, <sup>12</sup> saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly [of His brethren] I will sing praise to You [Psalm 22:22]." <sup>13</sup> And again: "I will put My trust in Him [Isaiah 12:2, etc.]." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me [Isaiah 8:18]." <sup>14</sup> Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of [the fear of] death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. <sup>16</sup> For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren ... to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, holy (sanctified) [*hagios*] brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus...



The author of Hebrews addresses brethren: people who have God as their Father, because Christ has sanctified them.

Unfortunately, if we leave this issue here, Reformed interpreters will try to argue the point further. Therefore, we need to explore it a little further.

Reformed people often assert that 3:1 equates brethren and partakers, before going to 3:14 (that says that perseverance is requisite to being a partaker).

<sup>3</sup> Therefore, holy (sanctified) [*hagios*] brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus...

<sup>3</sup> For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.

No, the construction in 3:1 does not imply an absolute equation (as the Reformed assert).

A first-grade teacher addresses her students, "Good morning first graders, children." The next year, their teacher addresses them, "Good morning second graders, children." They will be children longer than they remain first graders. Likewise, brethren who are partakers remain brethren, even if they cease being partakers. Heb 3:1 addresses brethren who (at that time) held their confidence steadfastly, but 3:14 (in a consequence passage) warns that failing to hold their confidence steadfastly would mean that they would no longer be partakers. (Severe loss of reward would result).

### The Second Issue in Heb 13:22: the meaning of *the word of exhortation*

And **I exhort** [*parakaleō*] **you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation** [*paraklēsis*], for **I have written to you in few words** (my translation).

Acts 13:14-44 shows that word of exhortation is equivalent to an exhortational sermon:

<sup>14</sup> But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. <sup>15</sup> And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Men and brethren, if you have any **word of exhortation** for the people, say on." <sup>16</sup> Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen... [the sermon is 13:16-41]."

Once Paul's sermon ended, vv 42-43 speak of the response that day. Then v 44 says that a week later, people came to hear the word of God.

<sup>42</sup> So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. <sup>43</sup> Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. <sup>44</sup> On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear **the word of God**.

Note that the author exhorts the readers to bear with his word of exhortation (an exhortational sermon). Interestingly, Reformed writers say that the doctrinal sections of Hebrews were written for believers, but the warning passages were written to unbelievers. However, the author called his entire book a word of exhortation. (I will tighten the argument in the third section). Consider a basic outline of the types of writing in Hebrews.

	<b>DOCTRINE</b>	<b>Number of Verses</b>	<b>PRACTICE</b>	<b>(Warning)</b>	<b>Number of Verses</b>
1.	1:1-14	14	2:1-4	(2:1-4)	4
2.	2:5-3:6	20	3:7-4:13	(3:7-4:11)	26
3.	4:14-5:10	14	5:11-6:20	(5:11-6:20)	24
4.	7:1-10:18	87	10:19-39	(10:19-39)	21
5.	11:1-40	40	12:1-13:25	(12:1-29)	54
		174			129

Hebrews has 303 verses. Wouldn't it be odd, if the author called his whole work exhortational, but directed 56% of it (the non-exhortational 174 verses) to one audience and 44% (the exhortational 129 verses) to another?

**The Third Issue in Heb 13:22: to whom is *the word of exhortation* directed?**

And I exhort you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words.

The author says that he wrote the word of exhortation *to you* (holy brethren). Thus, the book as a whole must exhort the brethren. The Reformed approach to the book does not square with the facts.

**The Fourth Issue in Heb 13:22: why are they to bear with what he wrote briefly?**

And I exhort you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words.

Some have doubted that Heb 13:22 refers to the book as a whole, because 13 chapters does not seem like *in few words*. However, 13:22 itself shows that the author does not regard 13 chapters as a brief book. How so?

The author exhorts the readers to bear with the word of exhortation. Would Paul have urged Philemon to bear with that book (25 verses)? No, it is short. One does not bear with a short book.

The thrust of this can be seen in a paraphrase:

*Brethren, bear with my lengthy (thirteen chapter) word of exhortation, for I have written concisely.*

In other words, the author urges bearing with an admittedly long book, because the author has worked at being concise.

Next week, we will consider the five-consequence passages, demonstrating that the author is not speaking from either a Reformed or an Arminian standpoint. He knows that the readers are believers (holy brethren) who are eternally secure, but warns against defecting back to Judaism (as many Jewish Christians around Israel were doing). He urges them to continue to be rewardable partakers, despite the persecution which that entailed.