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The Humanity of the Sabbath:
Eschatology of the Sixth Day in Hebrews

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In N. T. Wright's 2018 Gifford lectures, he sought to read Biblical texts through a temple cosmology, Sabbath eschatology, and image anthropology schema.¹ He suggested: "John and Hebrews, two of the greatest theological works of early Christianity, are both full of these themes and will yield up treasure if we recognize this." It was my goal to unearth some of that treasure, and such a task would not be too difficult. When one reads the themes Wright mapped out: "victory over dark forces (Heb 2:14); divine enthronement in the newly built world or house (Heb 1:3, 13; 3:6; 8:1); the role of the human king in both victory and building (Heb 1:1-13); king and God coming to be at 'rest' (Heb 3:7-4:12)" they sound like a description of Hebrews, for myself and the many others whose ears are often attuned to it.

It would be fruitful to explicate all three of these themes in Hebrews, but here I attend primarily to the first: the author's attention to time. Through the pressing eschatology of the letter, especially when viewed through a Sabbath lens, the author sets his readers in the

¹ I was privileged to participate in the Biblical studies seminar organized around these topics during the Spring of 2018. Led by Dr. Wright and Dr. Madhavi Nevader, students, faculty, and guest lecturers spent fifteen weeks contemplating these themes in Israel's Scriptures and texts of the Jewish second temple period.

sixth day. This temporal setting connects powerfully with the author's anthropology as well. He places them in a time that emphasizes the humanity they share with Jesus. Their temporal placement and shared identity emphasizes the rewarding cost of enduring while it is still called today.

Eschatology

The author of Hebrews imparts a heavy sense of urgency throughout his word of exhortation (13:22). Scott Mackie posits Hebrews as an “eschatological ‘exhortation’” due to the fact that “these potent and vivid eschatological convictions . . . are so indissolubly linked to his exhortation.”² According to the author of Hebrews, they are living in a penultimate time; “long ago” (πάλαι, Heb 1:1) has passed away, but their hoped for end has not yet come, so they live in an “in-between” time. Speaking in this temporal matrix provides both great explanatory (“This is why things are challenging right now,” 12:5–11) and exhortative (“Just a little further to go!” 3:12) power for the author. As catalogued here, a reader can see the numerous instances in which he emphasizes the approaching change in time. With this cumulative effect, this temporal insistence propels his message that they have much to look forward to and much to endure, but the wait should not be long.

The eschatological proximity pulses throughout the letter, and begins, actually, with the first sentence. “These days” (τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων) are upon the last, or at the end (1:2).³ A new age is about to

² Scott D. Mackie's work, *Eschatology and Exhortation in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (WUNT 2/223 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007]), emphasizes the importance of kinship confessional language in Hebrews. The citation quoted here comes from p. 1.

³ The word ἡμέρα appears along with ἔσχατος several times in other early Jewish and Christian writings to denote eschatological time (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 4:30;

begin as soon as the current one reaches its end, and only the last of that current one is left. The author keeps that end on the horizon with the citation of Ps 101:26–28 (LXX) in the first chapter’s catena. In praise of the unchanging Lord Creator Son, the psalmist also reminds the hearers that the heavens and the earth will at some point like a garment grow old (παλαιωθήσονται), be changed (ἀλλαγῆσονται), rolled up (ἐλίξεις), and reach the end (ἀπολοῦνται, Heb 1:10–12). A change in the cosmos is coming where the heirs will inherit salvation, and this is about to (μέλλω) happen (1:14). From their present vantage point, the audience of Hebrews cannot, however, quite yet see this sovereignty. Because for them it is not yet that day, it is “today” (σήμερον). “Today if you hear his voice” (3:7), encourage one another each day as long as it is called today (3:13), “Today if you hear his voice” (3:15), God appointed a certain day, “today” when David said (4:7a), “Today if you hear his voice” (4:7c). Now is the day of salvation for there is no guarantee that this day will last much longer. Repeated five times in chs. 3 and 4, as God and God’s Holy Spirit speaks to them,⁴ σήμερον (today) acts as a drumbeat, casting this section of the sermon as one the most urgent. Now is the day of salvation for there is no guarantee that this day will last much longer.

The nearness of the time is so pressing to the author because a decent amount of time has already passed. “Because of the time” this group of believers should have already been teachers (5:12), but they remain immature. If they continue to remain unfruitful, they, like

Josh 24:27; Hos 3:5; Micah 4:1; Isa 2:2; Jer 23:20; 37:24 LXX; Ezek 38:16; Dan 2:28, 45; 10:14; 11:20; Judith 16:7; T. Levi 3.2; Herm. Vis. 2.2.5 [6.5]; 2 Clem. 17.6; Barn. 19.10).

⁴ Ken Schenck’s essay “God Has Spoken: Hebrews’ Theology of the Scriptures,” in *The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology* (ed. Richard Bauckham, et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 321–36, provides a helpful analysis of the overlap between the speech of *theos* and *to pneuma to agion* in Hebrews.

thorns and thistles, would be near the curse, whose end is burning (6:8). Such reckoning has not yet happened; they still have time to show the haste of hope until the end (6:11). Note it is a haste they should have—an urgency (σπουδή) rather than a sluggishness (νωθρός, 6:12)—for they do not have all the time in the world.

The author of Hebrews can also speak of the coming change in the ages as a change in the covenant. Jesus is the pledge (ἔγγυος)⁵ of a New Covenant (7:22). Jeremiah foretold that certain days would arrive when God would complete (συντελέω) a new covenant with Israel and Judah (8:8/Jer 38:31 LXX). The proclamation of the new (8:13, “in saying new” ἐν τῷ λέγειν Καινήν), the guarantee on the new (7:22), the promise of the new (8:6) makes the first old (παλαιόω) and gray (γηράσκω), close to being imperceptible (ἀφανισμός in the revelation of the new (8:13). The author may indicate that the aging covenant will soon cease to exist,⁶

⁵ A hapax in the New Testament, James Thompson summarizes its meaning in the Greco-Roman world: “In legal documents the guarantor (ἔγγυος) supplied a security deposit and took the responsibility for another’s debts. The guarantor was normally a relative or friend who could be trusted” (*Hebrews*, Paideia [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008], 160). F. F. Bruce called attention to the “weightier responsibility” of the guarantor who “is answerable for the fulfillment of the obligation which he guarantees. . . . Jesus guarantees the perpetual fulfilment of the covenant which He mediates, on the manward (sic) side as well as on the Godward side” (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT Rev. Ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990], 151n70). This role is distinct from his mediation of the covenant, so states B. F. Westcott, “He Himself brought about the Covenant; and He is the adequate surety of its endurance” (*The Epistle to the Hebrews* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950], 191). So too Ellingworth suggests the possibility of a temporal distinction between μεσίτης in 8:6; 9:15; 12:24 and ἔγγυος “. . . *mesiths* refers mainly to Christ’s past action in the setting up of the new covenant, and ἔγγυος to his guarantee of it for the future,” but also notes that any systematic distinction it is not completely clear (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], 388–89).

⁶ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), §13.98.

but retention of his “visual” language remains vital to full understanding. In the glorious disclosure of the new, the old will fade from vision, but they presently find themselves in a time of “haziness” where both can be seen, if not clearly.⁷ In the present time, the first still has standing and therefore the way into the holy place is not yet perceptible (9:8–9). It is not yet the time of restoration (9:10). What Jesus has done has fulfilled the ages (9:26), brought the old to its end and inaugurated the new, but the author and his audience are still left waiting for the salvation that he will bring at his appearing (9:28). The law of God has given them the ability to make out the rough outlines of these good things to come (10:1), an impressionistic painting rather than an icon, but a faithful impression nonetheless. It is a major problem, though, if one mistakes the impression for the icon (10:1–4).

Instead, the author wants his readers to understand that Jesus has lifted up the first system and established a second (10:9).⁸ Jesus has made the offering for sin, he has sat down at the right hand of God, but the day has not yet arrived when his enemies are under his feet (10:13). Their confession is still characterized by hope and promise (10:23). The author states that they can all see that the day is drawing near (10:25). The zealous fire is about to devour the adversaries (10:27); God’s repayment and judgment are nigh (10:30). Then he tries a different tactic—a more positive spin—when he says that the reward is still

⁷ Moreover, I find the argument of Barry C. Joslin convincing that the law of the old and the law of the new retain the same referent, yet, “the law has been transformed in Christ, and this transformation involves both its internalization and its fulfillment in the New Covenant” (*Hebrews, Christ, and the Law: The Theology of the Mosaic Law in Hebrews 7:1–10:18*, PBM [Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2008], 134).

⁸ Ellingworth notes that this statement about the Levitical sacrifices is “the strongest negative statement the author has made or will make about the OT cultus” (*Hebrews*, 504).

waiting (10:35), the promise is theirs to attain (10:36). It is just a little while until the one who is coming will come; he will not delay (Heb 10:37).

They live in a time when they cannot see fulfillment clearly.⁹ Like a song with two stanzas in ch. 11, the author draws from the history of Israel to affirm this point. Just as they trust that creation came to be through that which is not seen, Noah trusted even though he could not see the rain (11:7), Abraham trusted even though he could not see the land (11:8), Isaac and Jacob trusted even though they could not see their city (11:10), Sarah trusted even though she could not see her baby (11:11). The chorus is this: they were looking on from a distance (11:13). Stanza two: Abraham trusted even though he had not seen resurrection; Joseph trusted even though he could not yet see the exodus (11:22). Moses trusted even though he could not yet see the reward. Rahab trusted even though she did not yet see deliverance (11:31). The chorus again: they were faithful even though they did not yet attain the promise (11:39). God was looking forward too, to the congregation of Hebrews, to bring perfection for them all (11:40).

For the author and his audience, that perfect end has not yet come. Until it does, they need to keep running, looking in the direction of Jesus (12:2) until they in full sanctification see the Lord (12:14) and come into his grace (12:15). A change of everything that has been made is coming, a shaking of the heavens and the earth, so that only the

⁹ I do not mean to indicate that looking forward to the unseen is the only theme in ch. 11. It is one among many reiterated themes in this encomium to faith. See the treatment of this chapter by Pamela Eisenbaum, *The Christian Heroes of Jewish History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context*, SBLDS 156 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1997) who shows Hebrews's de-emphasis of national concerns or Michael R. Cosby, *The Rhetorical Composition and Function of Hebrews 11: In Light of Example Lists in Antiquity* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1988) who focuses on the rhetoric of this chapter that would encourage the audience.

unshakable will remain (12:27). They are receiving this unshakable kingdom (12:28) and so they are seeking that which is coming (13:14).

I summarize this temporal, eschatological walk through Hebrews in this way: Jesus got something started—he got the end started in fact, with his offering before God—but the new has not yet arrived. Hence, they must wait with active faith until it arrives in full; if they do not, time may run out, the day may turn over, and the author does not want them caught unfaithful.

Sabbath Eschatology

For what then is he hoping? In other words, how does he describe this new time? “There remains for the people of God a *σαββατισμός*” (Heb 4:9).¹⁰ Hence, to confirm Wright’s assumption about Hebrews, yes, the author of this epistle does have a Sabbath eschatology. How, though, does he describe this Sabbath time? I contend that he portrays the Sabbath rest as the completion of the New Covenant. Two passages in Hebrews 4 and 8 are most pertinent with other statements throughout the letter coalescing as support.

In order to understand *σαββατισμός*, I trace the argument back to the beginning of the section. As is his tendency to alternate between exegesis and exhortation,¹¹ 3:7 begins a new exegetical section. In

¹⁰ This particular term does not appear in the New Testament or the Greek Scriptures of Israel. The author aims to describe a time-space in which the people of God “keep Sabbath” as God does, a definition confirmed by similar use in Plutarch (Superst. 3[166A]); Justin (*Dial.* 23.3); Apos. Con. 2.36.2; and Epiphanius Pan. 30.2.2.

¹¹ For an important work on the structure of Hebrews see Albert Vanhoye, *Structure and Message of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, SB 12 (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989); George H. Guthrie, *The Structure of Hebrews: A Text-linguistic Analysis*, NovTSup 73 (Leiden: Brill, 1994); and Cynthia Westfall, *A Discourse Analysis of the Letter to the Hebrews: The Relationship between Form and Meaning*, LNTS 297 (London: T & T Clark, 2005). Although important differences appear in the work of these scholars, each note the importance of attending to the alternating exegetical and

Hebrews 3, by drawing from Ps 95, the author first utilizes God's rest (*κατάπαυσις*) as the term that aptly captures this time. The generation of Israelites who came out from Egypt in the Exodus did not get to enter this rest because while they saw God's works they did not trust in God (3:9–11/Ps 95:8–11). Since God spoke through David after the time of Moses and Joshua, that indicates to the author that Joshua did not grant the rest into which God was inviting the Israelites (4:8).¹² Now that the Hebrews have heard the good news about God, just as the Israelites had (4:2), they too have the chance to enter this *κατάπαυσις*.¹³

exhortational dynamics. Ole Jakob Fildvedt states, "The idea is clearly that the exhortations presuppose the validity of the preceding exposition, and that the exposition is meant to substantiate the exhortations" (*The Identity of God's People and the Paradox of Hebrews*, WUNT 2/400 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015], 48).

¹² Eisenbaum's attention to the supra-national aspect of Hebrews causes her to note that, "... the conquest of Canaan did not achieve that for which it was intended. Joshua led the people into the land because Moses could not; this is his claim to fame as well as the probably reason for his exclusion from Hebrews 11. Joshua as hero is irredeemably tied up with his being a national leader" (*Jewish Heroes*, 172). I will argue, following the lead of David Moffit's work (*Atonement and the Logic of the Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, NovTSup 141 [Leiden: Brill, 2011]), that the author's concern is for Israel's comprehensive inheritance of all creation. It is still a national inheritance, but an unbounded, eschatological one.

¹³ In his treatment of the theme of rest in Hebrews, Jon Laansma sees this development as faithful to ideas latent in the scriptures of Israel: "The Sabbath does serve as a sort of capstone to both creation and the exodus, and Israel's future hopes were expressed largely in images taken from these events. Moreover, the description of the future age in terms of *minucha* and *shalom* would naturally lend itself to sabbatical conceptions." Laansma also claims that through Septuagintal and other Jewish literature developments, by the first century, "The expectation of an eschatological Sabbath is often encountered, albeit in different forms. The future age can itself be called a 'day which is wholly Sabbath and rest,' and the weekly Sabbath itself becomes a symbol of the coming age. The OT rest tradition is also projected into the future, and Ps 95 itself is applied to speculation about the *olam hazah*. More than once the Sabbath and rest tradition converge in these hopes. The sorts of hopes are being repeatedly expressed during the time of the NT." (*"I Will Give You Rest": The "Rest" Motif in the New Testament with Special Reference to Matthew 11 and Hebrews 3-4* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997], 67, 152, emphasis original).

When one does, that person can rest from works just as God does (4:10).

This kind of rest—as portrayed in Hebrews—is not the antithesis of activity. This rest is the *cessation* of work. The author of Hebrews gives evidence of this view along with other Jewish authors.¹⁴ He recognizes that the creation narrative asserts that the works of God happened, came to be (an aorist of γίνομαι) at the foundation of the cosmos, and on the seventh day, God rested from his works of creation.¹⁵ Yet, in the time of the Exodus, and before then as well, God was working again. Hence, the argument suggests that God rested from the work of creation, establishment, and thereby created a time-space of rest, yet God continued to work, however, to inspire belief to draw more people into this rest. God has been doing the same in their own community, with the bringing about (the working?) of signs, wonders, powers and divisions of the Holy Spirit (2:4). Is God at rest now? Yes, in that all the works happened since the beginning of the world (4:3), but there are still enemies to defeat, the enemies of Jesus (Heb 1:13; 10:13).

¹⁴ Such an idea appears in texts from different eras of Jewish thinkers. Previous to Hebrews, 1 Enoch 5 alludes to the finished yet continuing nature of God's work: "His work proceeds and progresses from year to year. And all his work prospers and obeys him, and it does not change; but everything functions in the way in which God has ordered it" (5.2–3). Concerning more contemporary and later eras, Lincoln states, "Judaism had already rejected the crudely anthropomorphic view of Gods' rest that conceived of it as a state of inactivity since the creation. This was not only so in Hellenistic Judaism (cf. Philo, *de Cher.* 86–90; *Leg. All.* 1.5–6) but also in rabbinic Judaism" ("Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," in *From Sabbath to the Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, ed. D. A. Carson [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1999], 203).

¹⁵ ". . . the point would be that 'rest' was the sequel to completed 'works.' This . . . would seem to be the most natural understanding of the current remark in view of the quotation that follows and in view of the paraphrase of the quote in vs.10. where rest is sharply distinguished from works" (Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Hermeneia [Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989], 129).

Certainly, one of these enemies is the devil whose defeat is guaranteed by Jesus's movement through death, but the subjunctive here, "that he might defeat" (*καταργήσῃ*), leaves open the possibility that this defeat, while promised, is not yet secured. Other enemies exist as well, particularly enemies who seemed intent to pull the followers of Jesus off their path. Once God has secured the place of the many children, all the enemies will be under his feet. In the present sixth-day time, God rests from creation but continues to work to redeem creation under divine sovereignty,¹⁶ which is the sovereignty of the all things, including Jesus's followers, securely under the sovereignty of the Son.¹⁷

Once that is done, when there are not more sons to lead (2:10) and no more enemies to defeat, will God be completely at rest? In an essay on these themes in Hebrews, Andrew T. Lincoln states, "The time will come when both God and Jesus will cease from their work of salvation. Only then will God rest and the divine Sabbath take place."¹⁸ This too, I contend, is not complete cessation of activity.¹⁹ To show this, however,

¹⁶ Westcott states the point well: "God Himself had entered into it [rest], though it still remained that His people should share it according to His purpose. Thus the rest was at once in the past and in the future" (*Hebrews*, 97).

¹⁷ An illuminating parallel occurs in the way the author describes the work of Jesus: Jesus is seated and never has to die and defeat death again, but Jesus is waiting for God to put all enemies under his feet. Jesus rests from inauguration of his priestly ministry but continues maintenance which is the work of redemption of those who are approaching God through him (7:25).

¹⁸ Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology," 204.

¹⁹ Jubilees also sees Sabbath as a refraining from work, but full of the activity of "the seventh day, to eat and to drink, and to bless Him who has created all things as He has blessed and sanctified unto Himself a peculiar people above all peoples, and that they should keep Sabbath together with us" (2:21). These commands carry a priestly connotation as well in that they ascend as "a sweet savor acceptable before Him all the days" (2:22). Betsy Halpern-Amaru notes the close association between work proscribed on the Sabbath and activities commanded on the Sabbath, especially

I look to the author's description from Jeremiah of the time of the New Covenant.

Moving then to ch. 8, although the New Covenant discussion lacks the language of seventh, Sabbath, or rest, it includes temporal elements that point toward an end where particular activities cease. The author quotes Jeremiah's prophecy that days are coming, but have not yet arrived, when God will complete a New Covenant (Heb 8:8/Jer 38:31 LXX). After certain days, God will give his laws upon the minds of his covenant people and will write them upon their hearts. God proclaims that they will be in relationship. All will know God so that the activity of teaching will not be necessary. In that time, God will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and God will not remember their sins. When the author cites Jeremiah again (Heb 10:16–17), spoken this time by God's Spirit, to him it signifies that with the establishment of this covenant offering for sins can cease (10:18).

To summarize the citation: the New Covenant is the clear revelation of God's merciful restorative presence with the covenant people. The audience of Hebrews, however, does not find themselves in such a time. The letter as a whole provides evidence that they still need teaching about God. They have not made it to the time in which the work of holding fast (4:14; 10:23), pressing on (12:1), and encouraging can cease (3:13). Their hearts are still susceptible to misunderstanding or rejecting the laws of God (3:12–14). The possibility still lies before them that they might still be unrighteous in such a way, namely by shaming the Son of God (6:6), sinning willfully (10:26), or rejecting their birthright (12:15–17), an affront that God would remember and punish. Jesus, by his sacrifice, has guaranteed that this covenant will

worship (*The Perspective from Mt. Sinai: The Book of Jubilees and Exodus*, Supplements to the Journal of Ancient Judaism 21 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015], 145).

come (7:22). Their conscience *will* be purified (καθαριεῖ, 9:14), but they are not living in the time when the New Covenant has been completed when they, without instruction or mistake, will live as God's people according to God's laws. Since this future time is a time when they are with God and act as God desires, "New Covenant" seems another way to explain the σαββατισμός.

Add to this that the author has yet another way of talking about this Sabbath time; it is as "salvation." The message of Jesus offers them salvation (2:3; 5:9; 6:9; 7:25). The heirs are about to inherit salvation (1:14). They await a revelation of the Messiah a second time for salvation (9:28). If those terms describe the same era then this is not a Sabbath of inactivity. Clearly dead works will have come to an end, and even their possibility will cease once the person enters the seventh day (6:1; 9:14). They will cease from any kind of work that has to do with sin or unrighteousness, either to prevent it or atone from it.²⁰ Good deeds, however, continue (6:10; 10:24; 11:33), those deeds of righteousness and community building, worship, and service, because they will be about the business of knowing God and God's laws, living as saved people.²¹ Σαββατισμός is the New and lasting Covenant, the salvific, active rest of the people of God.

As he writes and they read this letter, neither have entered into the complete salvation of the Sabbath New Covenant time, yet the

²⁰ Jubilees also refers to the Sabbath time as a time when there will be an end a perfection (*synteleia*) of sinners (Jub. 2.24). Similarly, 1 Enoch envisions the final time as a time in which "sin shall no more be heard of forever" but also a time "of goodness and righteousness" (91.17).

²¹ Ole Jakob Filtvedt comments, "This is not adequately described solely in terms of inactivity, a fact which is underlined when Hebrews qualifies the rest as a Sabbath rest (4,9). The Sabbath is a cultic event, through which one partakes in God's own time and rhythm, and celebrates God's presence" (*Creation and Salvation in Hebrews*, ZNW 105 [2015]: 280–303, here 280).

author has said that it is close. It is at this point that a Sabbath eschatology provides a more precise illumination of the author's concept of time. Temporally, according to a Sabbath eschatology scheme, I would argue that the author locates them in the sixth day. They are on the cusp of this time of rest with God. It is close but it has not yet arrived. The temporal schema of Hebrews as informed by Sabbath eschatology I summarize thus: the Sabbath time of salvation in which they will dwell with God and, unencumbered from sin, will live out God's laws as they abide in God's New Covenant, is fast approaching.

The Human Connection

The letter offers further support for this temporal placement because of the letter's emphasis on humanity. Since the author appeals to the seventh day of the creational week, the day before, the sixth day, would carry connotations of God's creation of humans (Gen 1:26–31).²² Those who hear this sermon soon discover that God's creation of humanity is a vital theme in Hebrews. Psalm 8 provides one of his key exegetical texts, which describes humans as the pinnacle of creation, and he brings this Psalm to attention in order to comment upon the humanity of Jesus.²³ Humanity becomes the shared reality between

²² Jubilees, unsurprisingly, views the creation of humans on the sixth day of the week based on the Genesis account. It recounts the creation of the first human in the first week (Jub. 2.14), but for further emphasis, it also describes the taking out of Eve from the side of Adam as taking place on the sixth day, on the second week (Jub. 3.5).

²³ Between a Christological and anthropological reading, I seek to take a both/and approach, as many others have done. Schenck captures the interpretation well: "It would easily fit the train of thought to say that because of Christ, humanity also fulfills the psalm" (Kenneth Schenck, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Hebrews: The Settings of the Sacrifice*, SNTSMS 143 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 57). See also Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY:

Jesus and the audience of Hebrews (2:17; 4:15) qualifying him to be their High Priest (2:17; 5:1, 7) and to give the final effective offering (9:14, 26; 10:10; 13:12).

Hence, the author's focus upon humanity, primarily Jesus's humanity, also includes a particular emphasis upon human mortality. The author of Hebrews does not reveal his interpretation of prelapsarian humanity. In other words, he does not comment on the weighty anthropological question whether mortality was part of the original created human condition or not, but in the present time to be living in the sixth day, to be human, is to be moving toward mortality. Jesus embodies Ps 8 through the suffering of death (2:9). He takes on flesh and blood so that he might die and defeat the power of death (2:14–15). In the days of his flesh, he prays to the one who is able to save him from death (5:7). He endured the cross (12:2). The audience too finds themselves instructed to go out with him (13:13), where death threatens them though they have not yet suffered it (12:4). The author depicts them poised as a sacrifice before the moment of offering (Heb 4:13). On such a day as this, they need to be ready to enter into the same experience of death their Lord willingly entered.

Presently they are living in the last day of the creational week—a sixth day, as it were—when their createdness is especially pertinent. Their humanity provides them a connection with Jesus, the Son of God, their exalted Lord, who is *still* another human like them. Their humanity also provides them, as it did for Jesus, an offering to give. They should be ready, throughout life or up to death, to give themselves as a pleasing sacrifice to God.

Westminster John Knox, 2006), 90; Craig R. Koester, *Hebrews*, AB 36 (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 219–20.

Conclusion

Urgency pervades the tone of Hebrews. The author and those who listen to his address are living in the last days. Interpreting this eschatological trope through the lens of the Sabbath sheds light on Hebrews in several ways. First, Sabbath Eschatology grants precision to the author's temporal scheme. When viewed through a creational week, readers see how close they really are to the end. Second, this prism shows the relationship between several of the author's major emphases: urgency, Sabbath, covenant, and salvation. All are united as he places his readers on the precipice of a divinely restful but active salvation. Finally, Sabbath eschatology highlights the audience's connection with Jesus the Son of Man. As they remain tethered to him, he will advocate for them to complete creation's day and enter creation's rest.