

PART III

DETERMINING THE THEOLOGY OF THE “ANTAGONIST” AND “PROTAGONIST”

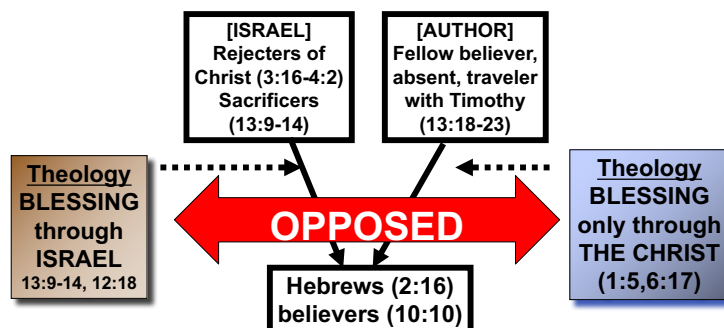
Determining the Opposing Theologies in Epistolary Analysis

As it is absolutely important to identify the good and bad characters in the book, it is next most important to identify their diametrically opposed theology. It is the theology that is directly identified with their character. In other words, everything they do is driven by what they consider to be true about God . . . their theology.

However, there are two parts to the theology. The first is the content of their theology, i.e., their doctrinal position. The second is the source of their theology, which is the validation, or where they obtained their theology, i.e., the source of truth. In this book, both parties will use their common basis of truth, the Hebrew Scriptures.

The opposing content of the theologies is the question of who is it that provides access to the Father. Is it Israel or is it the Christ? Thus, one must either “bless Israel” or “bless Christ” in order to have a full relationship with the Father (appease the wrath of God). It is very important to notice that at this time in history, these two concepts are diametrically opposed. The reason is that Israel has rejected the Christ, thus one cannot embrace both.

Thus, the antagonist, Israel, says that if one is to access God, they must go through the nation of Israel, while the author of Hebrews says that if one is to access God they must go through Jesus the Christ. It is a very serious decision . . . which one is cursed (?) . . . those who follow Israel, or those who follow Jesus the Christ?



Antagonist's (Israel's) Theology: The Nation Israel is the Mediator of Blessing

The issue being, who gives access to the Father, Israel maintains that it, alone, is the means.

Theology of Israel: Israel is the Necessary Mediator of Blessing

Israel had rejected the Messiah and rejected embracing the New Age that was instituted by Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. Thus, they lived in the Old Testament era, feeling the revelation there was the ultimate and there was no more revelation to come. In other words, the kingdom would be brought through their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, especially the sacrifices. No one could access the Father without the Nation Israel. Their base verse was Genesis 12:1-3, which was insured by an oath in Genesis 22:10-12, where they were the national mediator of blessing to God.

Hebrews 6:13-15 references this promise to Israel (Abram), which is an allusion to Genesis 22:16-18 where God insured the promise with an oath.

¹³ For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴ saying, "I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply you." ¹⁵ And thus, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. (Heb. 6:13-15)

¹⁶ and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of His¹¹ enemies. ¹⁸ "And in your Seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." (Gen. 22:16-18)

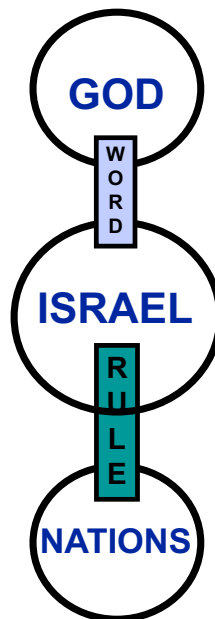
¹¹ The third person singular pronoun is errantly translated as "their" in the NASB, but is literally, "His," referring to Christ.

**“I will bless those who
Bless you and the one
Who curses you
I will curse**

**And in you shall all
The families of the
Earth be blessed”**

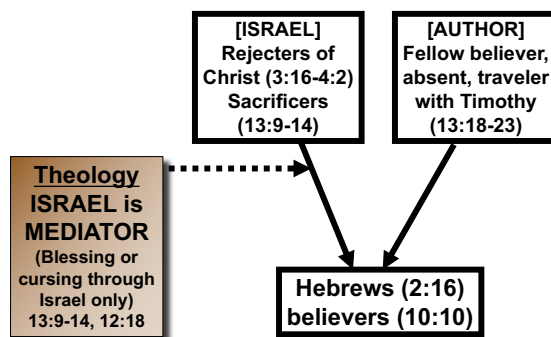
Genesis 12:3

C. Baylis
© 05.07.17



According to Genesis 12:1-3 when Abram was given the promise, Israel was made a nation, and it was through Israel that all men would gain access to God. Israel was saying that they were not under a curse since they were the blessed national mediator of blessing. They averred that the Man they killed, Jesus, was a false prophet. Thus, they reasoned that if anyone called them “cursed” then they themselves were “cursed. So, since these Hebrew believers felt that the One they murdered was actually the Messiah, it was Israel who was under a curse.¹²” Their proof text was Genesis 12:3.

¹² The point of Hebrews 12 and the discipline issue is to point out to the Hebrew believers that they are not under a curse, but are going through the discipline as sons. “Discipline” is defined in Deuteronomy 8 as walking by faith through suffering knowing that the reward of the promise is yet future.



Israel advocated the following (Theology of Israel).

- Keeping the sacrifices appeased the wrath of God (Heb. 10:1-10)
- Keeping the sacrifices (obedience to the Law) kept them under blessing and avoided the curse¹³ for not keeping the Law (Deuteronomy 28).
- Rejecting Israel (saying Israel was cursed) would put themselves under a curse (Genesis 12:3).
- Jesus was not the Messiah but was a false prophet who was justly executed. Thus the believing Hebrews were following a false prophet and thus were under a curse (Deut. 13:1-6)
- Jesus was not present so could not be the conquering Messiah they proposed.

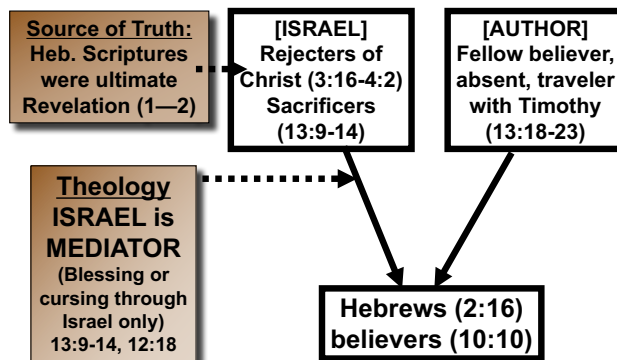
Israel's point was simply that one could not come to God without going through (blessing) them. Since the Hebrew believers had left the nation, they could not come to God (cursed).

Source of Theology (for Israel): The Hebrew Scriptures as Final

Unbelieving Israel held that the Old Testament was the final revelation, and that it did not indicate any fulfillments such as a dying Messiah. The king who was to come, in their theology, was a king who would come and conquer the guilty Gentiles and restore the kingdom to the righteous, deserving, Jews. They did not see themselves as needing an ultimate sacrifice, but

¹³ Hebrews 12:7 explains that the suffering they are going through is not because of being under a curse, but being under discipline as sons. He is using Deuteronomy 8:1-3, where God talks about walking by faith (suffering) until the fulfillment comes.

only a conquering Messiah who justified them as righteous. In other words, the Old Testament was the final authority and did not need any fulfillment. Therefore, any revelation that insisted on a dying Messiah (who replaced their sacrifices), and who was absent, could not be true.



In chapters 1—2, the author debates whether the Old Testament revelation (through angels¹⁴) was greater than that of the final revelation (through the Son of God). The author is pointing out that the Old Testament only led to the revelation of the Son as the fulfillment of the partials of the Old Testament. (In other words, the Old Testament only gave partial revelation waiting for the Son who would fulfill all things.) The Old Testament was part of the narrative plot that moved toward the ultimate kingdom coming in the Son.

(Old Testament – partials, symbols, prophecy)

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

(New Testament- The Son)

¹⁴ The reference to angels was that the Law (see Acts 7:53) was given through angels and now the Son of God has come to give superior revelation.

“... you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.”

² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. . .

(The Son – New Testament)

When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; ⁴ having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

(Angels – Old Testament)

⁵ For to which of the angels did He ever say, "Thou art My Son, Today I have begotten Thee"? And again, "I will be a Father to Him And He shall be a Son to Me"? (Heb. 1:1-5)

Thus, the nation of Israel held that the Hebrew Scriptures were the only revelation and that would be their only source of truth. However, they wrongly asserted that the Old Testament Scriptures never pointed to a final revelation in the Son. (So, in Hebrews 8:7-10, the author points to Jeremiah 31:31-34 which prophesied the very change that came in Jesus, the Christ.)

⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. ⁸ For finding fault with them, He says, "Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, When I will effect a new covenant With the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; ⁹ Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers On the day when I took them by the hand To lead them out of the land of Egypt; For they did not continue in My covenant, And I did not care for them, says the Lord. (Heb. 8:7-10)

Protagonist's (Author's) Theology: The Christ is the Mediator of Blessing

The author's defense falls into several Old Testament Scriptures. He uses Psalm 2 which shows that the Christ was the only access to the Father. Then he uses Psalm 110, that shows that this Christ, this Son, must be sacrificed and then depart the earth to wait at the right hand of the Father until the time at which He returned to crush the enemies who had opposed Him. Since Christ was at the right hand of the Father (absent from earth), the period of time in which these Hebrews lived was still under the dominion of Satan and Rome, and Satan worked through unbelieving Israel. Thus, this period of suffering for a rejected Messiah would continue until He returned to conquer.

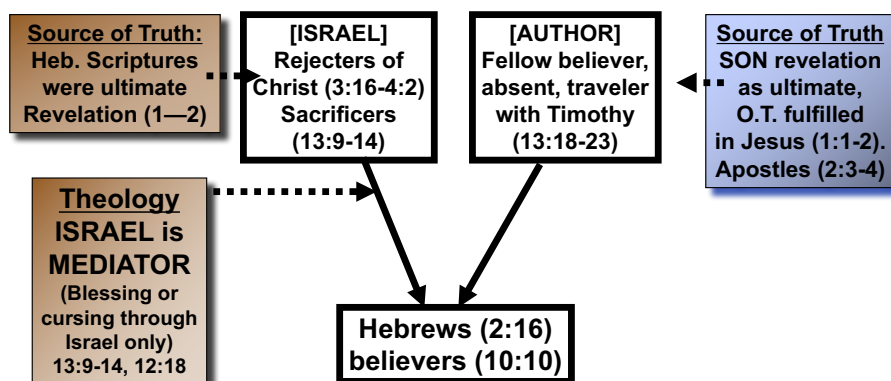
Source of Truth (for Author): The Son Revelation is Fulfillment of Hebrew Scriptures

The author argues that the Son is the fulfillment of what the Hebrew Scriptures anticipated. Thus, the final revelation came through His appearance (1:1-2), which was eye-witnessed by the apostles, and revealed to the readers of Hebrews.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. (Heb. 1:1-2)

After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,⁴ God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. (Heb. 2:3-4)

Thus, the author is also claiming that the Hebrew Scriptures are the source of truth, but that they anticipated the ultimate truth arriving in the Christ, who was the long-awaited Son. Therefore, he claims that the apostles eye-witnessed this fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures and testified to their listeners.



Theology (of Author): Identity with Christ is the Only Access to God

The author will counter their arguments with the Old Testament references that point out that there was never access granted to the Father except through the Son. He was anticipated in the Old Testament (by Abraham’s belief in the Seed, Genesis 15:6, sourced from Genesis 3:15 prophecy of Messiah) and believed in the person of Jesus in the Gospels and following. Thus, while Israel was the national access to the Father, they could only fulfill that part if they embraced their Messiah, since He was the only means by which they could be blessed.

Thus, Israel could only be the mediatorial nation when they embraced the Messiah. He was always the only provision for Israel. When Genesis 12:3 said “in you (Abram),” it meant that the Seed of Messiah was “in Abram.” Thus, it was always the Seed of the Woman (the

Christ) who was the only hope for Israel at any time. Israel would never become the national mediator until they accepted the Seed in them as their Redeemer.

The Jewish believers in the church advocated this theology to Israel.

- The Christ (Jesus) was the means by which Israel would be the national mediator, and He was the message they would take to the Gentiles (Genesis 12:3). Without Him they are not enabled since they have no message of deliverance.
- Israel was under a curse since they had killed the Messiah of God (Psalm 2, Acts 2).
- The Messiah of God was also the High Priest (like Melchizedek, Genesis 14, Psalm 110) who offered Himself as a sacrifice and was to “sit” at the right hand of the Father for a time (this era), waiting until He returned to dominate the world. Thus Psalm 110 explained why the Son had to be absent for a time.
- This period of time the dominion of the King is delayed (Psalm 110). Thus, Satan and the Gentiles, through cursed nation Israel (Isaiah 53) still rules the earth, and thus believers should expect to suffer persecution. They were to follow the Christ and suffer (like Him) and look forward to their own resurrection (like Him).

The author quotes Psalm 2:7 in Hebrews 1:5. It was in that Psalm that the Son was the only access to the Father.

For to which of the angels did He ever say,
“You are My Son; Today I have begotten You”?

In Psalm 2:12, the criteria for access to the Father was the Son. The wrath of God can only be appeased by “kissing the Son.”

“Kiss the Son lest He be angry and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled.”

He quotes Psalm 110 throughout the book to establish that the Son would sit at the right hand of the Father for this period of time, and then He would return and place “all His enemies under His feet.” Clearly if one was an enemy of this Son, then they would be destroyed on His return. Thus Israel, who had rejected the Son, was under a curse until they would come to the Christ.

The author particularly relates this to Israel’s rejection of Moses at Kadesh-Barnea in Numbers 13—14. There Israel rejected their anointed leader in Moses and were rejected by God from entering into the Kingdom (i.e., the rest). Thus, even though they were chosen to be the mediator of blessing, when they rejected their leader they rejected God, and ended up being under a curse. Thus, using Psalm 95, where David summarizes the issues at Kadesh-Barnea, the author points out that Israel of their new age cannot be a blessing until they receive the Messiah they rejected. Therefore, only the Jewish believers have access to the Father since they have received the access through the Son.

The theology of the author is that the Christ, the Son, is the required Mediator of blessing for all, including the Nation, Israel. He fulfilled that function by becoming a Priest like Melchizedek, sacrificing Himself, and ascending to the right hand of the Father (Psalm 110,1,4). Without the High Priesthood of Jesus there is no access for anyone to the Father. Israel will never be the intended national mediator without their Melchizedekian priest, that is, Jesus.

[Refer to the author's dissertation on Melchizedek located in the Library at Dallas Theological Seminary, and accessed for convenience on the website, www.BiblicalStory.org. The Author of Hebrews' Use of Melchizedek from Genesis 14.

