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INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Self-Offering of Jesus in Hebrews: When and Where, and What

This thesis argues that, according to Hebrews' specialized use of sacrificial terms and concepts, Jesus' death is not when and where he offers himself, but it is what he offers. The first half of this statement is denied by many modern scholars who argue that Jesus' self-offering begins and ends on the cross. By contrast, among the relatively small number who affirm that Jesus offers himself in the tabernacle in heaven, none has as yet argued that Jesus' death – that is, the saving work Jesus' death accomplished – constitutes the sacrificial material that Jesus presents to God in heaven.

This thesis will therefore conduct both a broad and a narrow conversation, answering first a formal question, then a material one. In the broad conversation that constitutes Part I I will argue that, as high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, Jesus offers himself to God in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle in heaven, after his bodily resurrection and ascension. I will argue this point in dialogue with a wide range of scholarly answers to the “formal” question, “When and where does Jesus offer himself?” In the narrow conversation that follows in Part II, I will take for granted my answer to the formal question, and will answer a twofold material one: “What role does Jesus' death play in Hebrews' soteriology as a whole, and specifically within Jesus' high-priestly self-offering?” Hence by “formal” I mean the way Hebrews sequences events and aligns terms; by “material” I mean the role Jesus' death plays in Hebrews' soteriology as a whole and specifically in Jesus' self-offering. The formal question addresses when and where Jesus offers himself; the material question addresses what role his death plays in that offering.

In the narrow conversation about the material question, my primary dialogue partners will be those who affirm, as I do, that Jesus

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offers himself in heaven. Does this affirmation require the conclusion that, for Hebrews, Jesus' death is not "atoning"? Does it even necessarily require that, in Hebrews' use of Yom Kippur and Levitical sacrifice more broadly, Jesus' death on the cross is not a focal point of atonement? I will argue that neither inference is necessary, and in fact neither is drawn by Hebrews. Put positively, Hebrews indicates that what Jesus' death achieved is in fact what he gives to God in heaven. What Jesus offers God in heaven is the life he gave in death.

Those familiar with the peculiar world of Hebrews scholarship will recognize that a major impetus for this thesis is the influential, powerfully argued 2011 monograph of David Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*.¹ However, this thesis is not simply a response to Moffitt. For one thing, Moffitt approaches Jesus' heavenly offering in Hebrews through the side door of Jesus' bodily resurrection. Thereby Moffitt makes a fresh, innovative contribution. Yet he simply does not attempt the task of engaging directly with the full range of scholarly views about when and where Jesus offers himself. By contrast, I aim to enter this debate through the front door. That is, I inductively inquire after the issues that inform judgments about when and where Jesus offers himself, and exegetically argue a stance on each. As the taxonomy in the next section illustrates, I ask how scholars correlate three variables in determining when and where Jesus offers himself: his death, entrance to heaven, and self-offering. As a result, I identify five views on the question, with four decisive issues that distinguish each view from the others. In other words, I suggest that the issues raised by Moffitt's argument for a heavenly offering call for more systematic treatment in active engagement with a wider breadth of scholarship.

Further, asserting that Jesus offers himself in heaven necessarily raises crucial questions about his death. As Benjamin Ribbens observes, "The great difficulty with a heavenly sanctuary and cult is to determine how they relate to Christ's earthly ministry and suffering."² Franz Laub puts the question of Jesus' death pointedly: "This raises one of the most controversial issues in this context: in view of this sort of 'spatial' understanding of the cultic terminology of Hebrews in general, what salvific significance still belongs to

¹ Moffitt 2011. ² Ribbens 2016:132.

Jesus' crucifixion?"³ Finally, Georg Gäbel raises the question from the opposite angle, beginning from the position, which he rejects, that Hebrews figures Jesus' death as an atoning sacrifice: "If his death on earth is understood as an atoning sacrifice, how then does his high priestly work in heaven relate to this? Determining the relationship between the life and death of Christ on earth and his heavenly work sets the decisive course for each interpretation of Hebrews."⁴ Hence, in Part II I offer an account of the relationship between Jesus' death and heavenly offering that is more detailed than any yet offered by an advocate of a heavenly self-offering, bar one. That one is Gäbel, who has made the fullest case to date for locating Jesus' self-offering in heaven, and whose treatment of the relation of Christ's death to his heavenly self-offering I will both extend and critique.

What is at stake in this debate about where and when Jesus offers himself, and what role his death plays in that offering? First, as asserted by Gäbel in the previous quotation, this issue serves as a kind of hermeneutical watershed for one's entire reading of Hebrews. How one relates Jesus' death on earth to his priestly work in heaven will shape – and be shaped by – a whole range of critical issues in interpreting the letter, and will bear decisively on one's exegesis of the letter's central expository section (5:1–10:18). Second, at stake is how similar to and different from the rest of the New Testament – especially Paul – Hebrews is, and in what ways. It is widely recognized, of course, that Hebrews alone in the New Testament describes Jesus' saving act as that of a high priest offering himself as the sacrificial victim. But how exactly does this cultic construal of the Christ-event differ from the rest of the New Testament? Is this priestly sacrifice simply a conceptual gloss on the event of Jesus' death? Or does it instead offer a soteriological elaboration of Jesus' entrance into heaven that is unique in the New Testament? We will return to such questions in Chapter 6. In the rest of this introduction,

³ Laub 1991:67, "Damit ist eine der umstrittensten Fragen in diesem Zusammenhang aufgeworfen: Welche Heilsbedeutung kommt bei einem so gearteten 'räumlichen' Verständnis der Kultterminologie des Hebr überhaupt noch dem Kreuzestod Jesu zu?"

⁴ Gäbel 2006:3–4, "Wird sein Sterben auf Erden als sühnender Opfertod verstanden, wie verhält sich dann sein hohepriesterliches Wirken im Himmel dazu? Mit der Verhältnisbestimmung von Leben und Sterben Christi auf Erden und seinem himmlischen Wirken erfolgt die entscheidende Weichenstellung für jede Hebr-Interpretation."

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I will offer a brief survey of literature, discuss two material questions that arise in the wake of the formal one, lay methodological groundwork, and preview the argument.

1.2 When and Where Did Jesus Offer Himself? A Taxonomy of Five Views

To pinpoint the time and place of Jesus' self-offering in Hebrews, one must correlate three variables: Jesus' death, entrance to heaven, and self-offering. Here I briefly sketch something of how Hebrews discusses each, before offering a taxonomy of five ways scholars have put them together.⁵ First, regarding Jesus' death, it is too rarely observed that, while Hebrews often mentions or alludes to Jesus' death, it never explicitly identifies Jesus' death as his "sacrifice" or "offering."⁶ Apart from 9:28, the only time Hebrews alludes to Jesus' death within its overarching Levitical framework is 13:12, which correlates the cross not with sacrificial slaughter but with the post-requisite disposal of corpses at the conclusion of the Yom Kippur rite.⁷ Second, Hebrews repeatedly asserts that Jesus entered heaven, specifically the true sanctuary there (6:19–20; 9:11–12, 24; cf. 8:1–2). Yet the timing and mode of Christ's entrance to heaven are debated. Third, Hebrews frequently says Jesus offered himself, or his body, without explicitly stating when and where this happened (7:27; 9:14, 25; 10:10, 14; cf. 8:3–4). Closely related to these explicit "self-offering" passages are those that say Christ entered heaven by means of his own blood (9:11–12; cf. 9:25; 10:19), and that he offered a "sacrifice" (θυσία, 9:26; 10:12). Finally, other passages that construe Christ's saving work in cultic terms similarly leave time and place referents implicit (1:3; 2:17; 13:12). Hence these three variables include one event (Jesus' death); one item that, as we will see, some

⁵ The following summarizes, and sometimes repeats selections of, Jamieson 2017.

⁶ For someone who does observe this, see Davies 1968:387, "Where Christ's death is the subject of a passage (2:9–14; 5:7–10; 6:6; 9:15; 12:2; 13:11–13) προσφέρω and such words do not appear." Jesus' death is explicitly mentioned only in 2:9, 2:14, and 9:15. Mention of Jesus' "suffering" likely includes a reference to his death in 2:10, 5:8, 9:26, and 13:12; 12:2 says he "endured the cross." As I will argue in Sections 2.3 and 5.4, in the phrase "having been offered once to bear the sins of many" in 9:28, the second half alludes to the servant's death in Isa 53:12 LXX, which means the first half, "having been offered," alludes to Christ's death.

⁷ For discussion of 9:28 in relation to where and when Christ offers himself, see Section 2.3 ("Self-Offering on Earth in Hebrews 9:26 and 9:28?") and Section 5.4 ("Jesus' Death as Sacrificial Victim and Sin-Bearing Servant (Heb 9:28)").

Table 1.1 *Summary of Views 1–5*

View 1: Jesus' self-offering begins and ends on the cross. His earthly self-offering precedes his entrance into the heavenly sanctuary.
View 2: Jesus' self-offering is an earthly event with heavenly significance. His self-offering on the cross is metaphorically described as his entrance into the heavenly sanctuary.
View 3: Jesus' self-offering begins with his death and culminates in his immediately subsequent spiritual exaltation to the heavenly sanctuary.
View 4: Jesus' self-offering begins with his death and culminates in his post-resurrection entrance into the heavenly sanctuary.
View 5: Jesus offers himself at his post-resurrection entrance into the heavenly sanctuary.

Table 1.2 *Taxonomy of Views 1–5*

Distinguishing Interpretive Decision	View 1	View 2	View 3	View 4	View 5
Jesus' self-offering begins and ends on the cross	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Jesus' "entry" into heaven metaphorically describes the cross	No	Yes	No	No	No
Jesus' exaltation is spiritual ascension, not bodily resurrection	Either	Either	Yes	No	No
Jesus offers himself in heaven, not on the cross	No	No	No	No	Yes

take as an event and some as a metaphor (entrance to heaven); and one cultic concept that may or may not designate a distinct event ("self-offering"). Table 1.1 summarizes five ways scholars align these three variables. Table 1.2 offers a taxonomy that registers how each view answers four questions that, taken together, distinguish each view from the others.⁸ These five views are admittedly pure types; some scholars' positions elude the consistency at which my taxonomy aims.

⁸ Many recent works address some of the relevant issues, but do not answer enough of the decisive questions for their views to be located in my taxonomy. These include Johnsson 1973; Hurst 1990; Lehne 1990; Dunnill 1992; Johnson 2001; Gelardini 2007; Rascher 2007; Allen 2008; McCruden 2008; Jipp 2010; Stewart 2010; Easter 2014; Peeler 2014; Filtvedt 2015b; and Dyer 2017.

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View 1: Jesus' Self-Offering Precedes His Entrance to Heaven

Many scholars argue that Jesus' self-offering begins and ends on the cross.⁹ Hence Jesus' singular, completed, earthly self-offering precedes his entrance into heaven. According to this view, all of Hebrews' statements about Jesus offering himself, his body, and his blood describe his death on the cross. Some scholars advocating this view identify Jesus' self-offering with his death on the basis of the assertion in 9:25–26 that Jesus' unrepeatable suffering was necessary for his singular offering, and the comparison in 9:27–28 between the universal human fate of dying once and Christ's fate of being offered once.¹⁰ The interpretive decision that distinguishes this view from Views 3–5 (a version of which is implicit in View 2) is the conviction that, in using the Day of Atonement as a model for the work of Christ, the author deliberately alters the sequence of events. As Hebrews narrates the Levitical Day of Atonement, the high priest enters the Holy of Holies with blood *in order to make* his offering there (see προσφέρει, “offers,” in 9:7). By contrast, on View 1 Jesus enters the Holy of Holies in heaven *having already made* his offering on the cross. So F. F. Bruce, in a frequently cited comment,

There have been expositors who, pressing the analogy of the Day of Atonement beyond the limits observed by our author, have argued that the expiatory work of Christ was not completed on the cross . . . But while it was necessary under the old covenant for the sacrificial blood first to be shed in the court and then to be brought into the holy of holies, no such division of our Lord's sacrifice into two phases is envisaged

⁹ Owen 1991:277, 280–81, 301; Westcott 1903:199, 217, 263, 275–76; Moffatt 1924:123–24; Spicq 1953:257–58, 268–70; Stott 1962; Vanhoye 1965:24–26; Vanhoye 1996:333–34; Hay 1973:145, 149, 151; Hughes 1973:207–12; Loader 1981:185–92, 199, 201; Young 1981:206, 208–9; Braun 1984:28–29, 71, 270; Rissi 1987:72–73; Bénétreau 1989a; Bénétreau 1989b:53; Bénétreau 1990:89–90, 93; Bruce 1990:31–33, 213–14; Lane 1991:2.223, 2.234, 2.247, 2.249; Lindars 1991:81, 84–86, 93, 94; Weiss 1991:464–68, 488–89; Isaacs 1992:103–4, 108, 145, 202, 209; Ellingworth 1993:74, 102, 448, 474; Schunack 1994:224–31; Schunack 2002:18, 120–25; Kleinig 1999:132; Cockerill 2001:185–89, 197; Cockerill 2012:394–95, 416; Stökl ben Ezra 2003:181, 188–89; Fuhrmann 2007:200–3, 220–26; Telscher 2007:255–60; Joslin 2008:230–32; Allen 2010:486–89; Philip 2011:56; Richardson 2012:29–45, 47; Kuma 2012:273–74, 282; Small 2014:204, 224, 252–53; Compton 2015a:150 n. 231; Compton 2015b; Schreiner 2015:238 n. 375, 244, 268, 285; Moret 2016:299–300; Church 2017:283, 386, 416–21.

¹⁰ E.g. Loader 1981:185–86; Richardson 2012:39–40.

under the new covenant. When on the cross he offered up his life to God as a sacrifice for his people's sin, he accomplished in reality what Aaron and his successors performed in type by the twofold act of slaying the victim and presenting its blood in the holy of holies.¹¹

On this reading, Jesus' entrance into heaven is an act distinct from his death, but it is not a sacrificial act. For View 1, Jesus' self-offering begins and ends on the cross.

View 2: Jesus' Earthly Self-Offering Is Described as His Heavenly Entrance

Other scholars argue that Hebrews' references to Jesus entering heaven (6:19–20; 9:12, 24) metaphorically describe his self-offering, which occurs in his death on the cross.¹² View 2 shares with View 1 the conviction that Jesus' self-offering takes place on the cross. But View 2 observes how closely Hebrews connects Jesus' offering with his entrance to heaven. For instance, while the high priests yearly entered the inner sanctum, Jesus entered its heavenly counterpart only once, because he needed to offer himself only once (9:24–26; cf. 9:7, 11–14). Sometimes aided by a Middle Platonic construal of Hebrews' cosmology, proponents of View 2 conclude that these descriptions of Jesus' entrance to heaven do not describe an event distinct from Jesus' death. Instead, these statements use spatial, cosmological terms metaphorically to describe the heavenly value or quality of Jesus' death. Harold Attridge, for instance, argues that in Hebrews, “language of cosmic transcendence is ultimately a way of speaking about human interiority.”¹³ For Attridge, 9:14 indicates that Jesus' earthly self-offering simultaneously took place “in a spiritual realm.”¹⁴ Based on this entire schema, Attridge concludes, “Christ's sacrificial death is not an act distinct from his entry into God's presence.”¹⁵ Similarly, Franz Laub argues that the heavenly “tent” in Hebrews is not a spatial designation, but instead designates

¹¹ Bruce 1990:213–14; Loader 1981:189; Young 1981:208–9; Lane 1991:2.223, 2.249; Lindars 1991:94; Ellingworth 1993:474; Stökl ben Ezra 2003:189; Cockerill 2012:394.

¹² Calvin 1963:106; Luck 1963:211; Laub 1980:168–72, 185–220; Thompson 1982:107–8, 147–48; Thompson 2008:186 (though see further under View 3); Attridge 1989:27, 146–47, 251, 262–64; Asumang 2008:116–17; Hermann 2013:305, 316, 319, 326.

¹³ Attridge 1989:262.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 251.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 264.

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the Christ-event.¹⁶ The distinctive judgment of View 2 is not necessarily that “entrance” passages have no spatial referent at all, since these authors affirm that Christ relocates to heaven after his death. But what is crucial for View 2 is that all such statements in Hebrews are indeed metaphorical in the sense that they ascribe heavenly value to an earthly event. For View 2, Hebrews’ apparent assertions that Jesus offered himself in heaven refer not to an event distinct from Jesus’ death but to its heavenly significance.

View 3: Jesus’ Self-Offering Consists in His Death
 and Subsequent Spiritual Entrance

Third, some argue that Jesus’ self-offering consists in his death and his immediately subsequent spiritual – that is, disembodied – entrance to heaven.¹⁷ View 3 takes shape when four elements are combined. First, View 3 shares with Views 1–2 the conviction that “self-offering” passages designate Christ’s death. Second, View 3 observes that the way Hebrews draws on Ps 110:1 seems to set Christ’s sacrifice and subsequent session in an immediate temporal sequence. After offering a single sacrifice for sins, Christ sat down at God’s right hand (10:12; cf. 1:3). Third, View 3 takes Hebrews’ relative silence about Jesus’ resurrection to indicate that the author construes Jesus’ exaltation as spiritual translation rather than bodily resurrection and ascent. Fourth, unlike View 2, View 3 ascribes to Jesus’ exaltation its own decisive soteriological significance as the culmination of his self-offering. For View 3, Christ’s self-offering begins on the cross, but it does not end there. For instance, Erich Grässer calls Jesus’ exaltation, which immediately follows his death, the “entscheidende Heilsereignis.”¹⁸ For Grässer, “Good Friday and Ascension Day together form the great Day of Atonement of Christianity.”¹⁹ For View 3 Christ’s translation to the heavenly sanctuary is a constitutive element in his self-offering, whereas a consistent View 2, like View 1, restricts Christ’s self-offering to the cross alone.

¹⁶ Laub 1980:189.

¹⁷ Jeremias 1949:198–99; Hofius 1970b:181 n. 359; Grässer 1990:64–65, 245; Grässer 1993:148; Barth 1992:153–54; Rose 1994:330; Knöppler 2001:195–200; Eisele 2003:388–89; Stegemann and Stegemann 2005:14, 19; Backhaus 2009a:70, 87–88, 317–18; Backhaus 2009b:205, 207 n. 28; Rowland and Morray-Jones 2009:171–72; Ounsworth 2012:164, 171.

¹⁸ Grässer 1990:65. ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 245; cf. Backhaus 2009a:87–88.

A key division between Views 2 and 3 is what their proponents mean by Jesus' "death." View 2 holds that Jesus' (metaphorical) entrance to heaven took place *while he was dying* on the cross. By contrast View 3 argues that Jesus entered heaven, as a spirit, *when he died* on the cross – that is, at his moment of expiration. Yet Views 2 and 3 sometimes combine.²⁰ For instance, View 3 does not rule out Jesus' suffering on the cross having a heavenly significance, and proponents of View 2 often construe Christ's exaltation as spiritual translation rather than bodily resurrection and ascent.

View 4: Jesus' Self-Offering Consists in His Death and Subsequent Embodied Entrance

View 4 argues that Christ's self-offering consists in his death and his subsequent embodied entrance into the heavenly sanctuary.²¹ Like View 3, View 4 sees Christ's self-offering as a process, a single sacrificial script, spanning earth and heaven: Christ's death enacts the slaughter of the victim, and his entry to the heavenly sanctuary corresponds to the Levitical priest's "offering" of blood in the Holy of Holies. Contra View 1, for View 4 Jesus' sacrifice does not begin and end on the cross; instead, it begins on the cross and culminates with his self-presentation to God in heaven. In contrast to View 3, View 4 holds that Christ was resurrected bodily. However, for many proponents of View 4, Hebrews' affirmation of Christ's bodily resurrection is more assumed than argued.

The use of the phrase "sacrificial script" to describe this view likely originates with Richard Nelson, who says that "the cross was the first component in a larger sacrificial script."²² He explains,

²⁰ See esp. Thompson 1982:107–8, 147–48; Thompson 2008:186.

²¹ Delitzsch 1887:14, 27–29, 81–82, 88–89; Cody 1960:168–202, esp. 174–75; Michel 1966:281, 292–93, 312; Scholer 1991:159–76; Chester 1991:61, 65–66; Pursiful 1993:66–72; Guthrie 1994:106, 122–23, 127; Guthrie 1998:29, 49, 191, 195, 309–16; Guthrie 2007:970, 973; deSilva 2000:305, 313; deSilva 2006:298, 305–12; Koester 2001:109, 117, 411, 414–15 (though see Moffitt 2011:12–14 for tensions regarding resurrection); Nelson 2003:254–56 (though he straddles the line with View 3); Johnson 2006:20, 52, 71–72, 139, 222, 233; Mackie 2007:95–98, 158–59, 169–70, 175–82 (though p. 181 is ambiguous on resurrection); Mackie 2011:78; Cortez 2008:324–413, e.g., 359–62 (though Cortez sees covenant inauguration, not Yom Kippur, as Hebrews' central framework); Cervera i Vallis 2009:479, 485, 492–93, 497; Moore 2015:177, 185–86, 198–99, 218–19.

²² Nelson 2003:254.

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His willing death was the first phase of a complex priestly action that continued in his ascension through the heavenly realms and entrance with blood into the heavenly sanctuary. It concluded with a decisive act of purification and being seated beside God's throne, where Christ can continually intercede for his followers. The cross was no mere prologue to, or presupposition for, Christ's priestly work in heaven, but an essential first element in his multi-stage act of sacrificial offering. Suffering, entrance, offering, and sacrifice are firmly bracketed together in 9:25–26.²³

According to Nelson, "The point of Christ's passage through the heavens is not the journey itself but its goal, his entrance with blood as high priest into the heavenly sanctuary. This, too, is a liturgical act, a component of his sacrifice."²⁴

While View 4's differences from Views 1–3 are straightforward, its differences from View 5 are more subtle. The chief difference is this: View 4 argues that, as both high priest and victim, Christ "offers himself" on the cross, whereas for View 5, strictly speaking, Christ "offers himself" only in the tabernacle in heaven. So Nelson on 10:10, "His death was an offering of his body."²⁵ Similarly, Nicholas Moore identifies the cross as the sacrificial "altar" of 13:10, and Aelred Cody calls the cross a "priestly sacrifice."²⁶ By contrast, View 5 holds that Christ was only appointed high priest at or after his resurrection, and therefore was only qualified to offer himself in the heavenly sanctuary, after dying and rising again. Proponents of View 4, however, tend to see Christ as already appointed high priest during his earthly career, or officially becoming high priest in his self-offering on the cross, or acting as high priest on earth before being confirmed in office at his exaltation.²⁷ Hence, while View 4 answers "no" to each of the taxonomy's four distinguishing decisions, it is not a negative position but a complex one. Against Views 1–3, View 4 affirms that Christ's self-offering unfolds over the sequence of his death, resurrection, and entrance to heaven. Against View 5, View 4 argues that Christ already officiated as high priest during his death, and hence his death itself can be described as a high-priestly self-offering.

²³ *Ibid.*, 255. ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 256.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 255; cf. Koester 2001:440; Mackie 2007:169.

²⁶ Moore 2015:218–19; Cody 1960:174.

²⁷ So, respectively, Cody 1960:107, 177; Mackie 2007:213–14; Cortez 2008:317–22.