



Dear Ladies,

I pray your summer was relaxing and blessed and you are refreshed and ready for a new Bible Study year!

This year we will be studying through the book of Hebrews. A book with its central theme focused on Jesus is *better* than anything else! To be better means to improve or surpass. We could put that phrase over anything or anyone in our lives for Jesus truly surpasses any person or possession. He died for us, saved us, redeemed us and gave us hope. He never leaves us, He never forsakes us. He is all present, all knowing, all sufficient. He is better than the prophets, better than the angels and He's better than the law. Jesus is *the best* and we want to get to know Him better this year!

As Kent Hughes said, "Expanding souls encounter an expanding Christ. Hebrews presents the greatness of Christ as no other New Testament writing does, and it repeatedly demands a response from the reader. Serious study of Hebrews will make us grow and find a bigger Christ."

Let's journey together, growing bigger in Christ and discovering together just how BIG our Jesus really is! I'm excited to begin this journey with you.

Love,

Michelle

LESSON	ASSIGNMENT	DATES Fridays (top dates) Mondays (bottom dates)
No Lesson	Welcome & Introduction	09-29-17 10-02-17
1	Hebrews Chapter 1	10-06-17 10-09-17
2	Hebrews Chapter 2	10-13-17 10-16-17
3	Hebrews Chapter 3	10-20-17 10-23-17
4	Hebrews Chapter 4	10-27-17 10-30-17
5	Hebrews Chapter 5	11-03-17 11-06-17
OFF – NO MEETING	VETERAN’S DAY OBSERVANCE	11-10-17 11-13-17
No Lesson Groups meet in Homes	KOINONIA	11-17-17 11-20-17
OFF - NO MEETING	THANKSGIVING BREAK	11-24-17 THROUGH 12-04-17
OFF - NO MEETING	WOMEN’S CHRISTMAS DINNER WOMEN’S CHRISTMAS DINNER	12-07-17 12-08-17
OFF - NO MEETINGS	CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR’S BREAK	12-15-17 THROUGH 1-01-18
6	Hebrews Chapter 6	1-05-18 1-08-18
7	Hebrews Chapter 7	1-12-18 1-15-18
8	Hebrews Chapter 8	1-19-18 1-22-18
9	Hebrews Chapter 9	1-26-18 1-29-18
10	Hebrews Chapter 10	2-02-18 2-05-18
No Lesson Groups Meet in Homes	KOINONIA	2-09-18 2-12-18

LESSON	ASSIGNMENT	DATES Fridays (top dates) Mondays (bottom dates)
OFF - NO MEETING	PRESIDENTS' DAY	2-16-18 2-19-18
11	Hebrews Chapter 11	2-23-18 2-26-18
12	Hebrews Chapter 12	3-02-18 3-05-18
13	Hebrews Chapter 13	3-09-18 3-12-18
OFF - NO MEETING	LADIE'S RETREAT	3-16-18 3-19-18



This book belongs to:

(name)

(phone number)

Please visit us at calvarywomen.net for Bible study archives, event information and event registrations.

This study was originally written by Kelly Bell from Calvary Chapel Murrieta.

Practical helps for your bible study year:

PERSONAL “BE”-attitudes:

Be determined - Examine your daily schedule then set aside a consistent time and place to do your study.

Be prepared - Gather the materials you’ll need: the Bible (we use NKJV), your workbook, and a pen. Try to get your answers from the bible before going to a commentary. Sometimes another version (NLT, ESV) can help.

Be inspired - Begin each day with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to be your teacher and to illuminate your mind.

Be complete - Read the suggested Bible passages and finish the homework each day. You will get out of this study what you put into it.

Be persistent - Answer the questions as fully as possible. If you are unable to answer a question, move forward to the next question or ask your leader for further insight.

Be consistent - Don’t get discouraged. If you miss a day, you can catch up the next. At the same time, remember there is grace here. Life gets busy sometimes, so do what you can, and come to the group time anyway! You will be blessed!

Be honest - When answering questions, allow the Lord to search your heart and transform your life.

Be blessed - Enjoy your daily study time as He speaks to you through His Word.

SMALL GROUP “BE”-attitudes:

Be prayerful - Pray before you begin your time together.

Be biblical - Keep all answers in line with God’s Word; avoid personal opinions.

Be confidential - Keep all sharing in your small group confidential.

Be respectful - Listen without interrupting. Keep comments on track and to the point, so that all can share. Do not use your group as a platform for politics or solicitations, or personal businesses of any kind. **It is our policy that literature, handouts, business cards, tracts, invites to home parties, etc., are not allowed.**

Be discreet - In some cases, you do not need to share more than is absolutely necessary. Some details about personal issues do not need to be made known.

Be kind - Reply to the comments of others lovingly and courteously.

Be mindful - Remember your group members in prayer throughout the week.



Jesus is Better

Lesson 1 Hebrews Chapter 1

Welcome to our study of Hebrews! I know this is going to be an exciting and challenging adventure! This is such a rich book, full of doctrine, exhortations, and application that is relevant for today. Although there is a lot of controversy and unanswered questions about the author, the recipient, and the time frame in which it was written, there is one thing on which all scholars agree: The theme that runs through the entire book is the supremacy and finality of Christ. Jesus Christ is God's final Word. No other letter focuses as fully on the present greatness of Christ as Hebrews, except for the book of Revelation. Ray Stedman wrote, "Passages in Paul, notably in Ephesians and Colossians, briefly extol His exaltation 'far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come' (Ephesians 1:21), but only in Hebrews is this developed to contrast with the great human leaders of the past (Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Joshua) as well as angelic authorities, leaving Jesus as alone, occupying the place of ultimate authority in the universe. He shares the very throne of God by right and conquest."

Before we begin reading, we'll take a brief look at some of the facts (and suggestions) about a few of the topics that are open to debate. Before you begin, really pray and ask God to give you the wisdom and understanding to take it all in, to think through, digest, and apply all He shows you. This book is rich; this book is deep. The truths in this book can change your life. Is Jesus Christ, God the Son, higher than any angel? Is He the Creator of all? Do you trust in His death on the cross and His resurrection as the full and complete grounds for our salvation, or do you still believe it's about some ritual or good work? Is your life consistent with the new life you have in Christ? Are you taking up your cross daily? Are you looking forward to the return of Jesus as King over all the earth, allowing that to change your perspective on everything? Do you see God's hand in everything that happens around you, including trials and suffering? Are you displaying His character as you live your life? These are some of the questions we will be discussing and wrestling through. I pray that in the next 13 weeks our faith will be stronger, deeper, and more solid. And may we obey the exhortation given by the author in 10:22 which says, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith ..."

Memory Verse for the Week: *"God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son ..." Hebrews 1:1-2a*

First Day – Hebrews 1 Overview

Start working on your memory verse.

We're going to begin today by looking at some ideas of the authorship and the possible recipients of this book. There are many possibilities that have been thrown out over the years, such as Paul, Apollos, Barnabas, and Luke, to name a few. For many years the "church" has traditionally assigned the letter to Paul, but there is very little evidence to support that. The best thing we can do is agree with the third century theologian and scholar by the name of Origen who said, "Who it was that really wrote the Epistle, God only knows". Although "we" don't know who wrote it, it's not really anonymous, because the author was known by the recipients, according to Hebrews 13:18-24.

Who was the author writing to? Most scholars believe that although the author was definitely knowledgeable in Greek, it was specifically written to Hebrews, or Jews, who had been converted to the Christian faith. We'll point out some of the reasons for this belief as we go through the book, but basically, there are many references to the Old Testament writings, the sacrificial system and rituals, and the Jewish view of a covenant. There are also a great deal of comparisons between Judaism and Christianity, as well as no references to Gentile or pagan practices and philosophies. Where did these Jewish people live? That is also up for debate. Although many believe that the author is writing to believers in Jerusalem, more scholars believe it was written to a particular group of believers in Rome (13:24).

What do we know about this book? All scholars agree that the Jewish believers it was written to were in trouble. They were mostly second- generation Christians, and their first leaders had already passed away (13:7). They had professed Christ for a good amount of time (5:12) and had once shown the evidence of a solid faith (10:32-34). But at the time of writing, the readers were dealing with discouragement, lethargy, and fear. Some had given up meeting with other believers (10:25), finding much opposition from their families and friends of the Jewish faith. They were also facing hostility and anger from the Gentile people as well. Their conversion from Judaism to Christianity set them up for persecution, loss of property and privilege, abandonment from families, and possibly the loss of their lives.

The author refers to the price they paid when they made a commitment to Christ, in 10:32-34; and although no one had been killed yet, martyred may soon come, according to Hebrews 12:4. The author feared that these believers would turn from their faith and deny Christ (6:6, 10:29), turning back to Judaism. This letter is full of warnings about it. The author almost pleads with them to stay faithful to the Gospel and not drift away. The consequences of falling away are horrible. He says in 10:31, "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God."

Basically, Hebrews is an exhortation to keep running! Don't give up or give in! Don't drift away (2:1)! Go on to maturity (6:1)! Be diligent to the very end (6:11)! The writer uses various methods to reach his readers: appeals, teaching, and exhortation (warnings)! Twelve times in Hebrews the phrase "let us" is used, followed by an exhortation. In fact, 13:22 tells us the letter was designed

as an exhortation. So the author's purpose, then, is to "present a series of arguments for the superiority of Jesus over all rival claims to allegiance which his readers were feeling and hearing. The author examines these authorities and reveals their inadequacies. None were, in themselves, a false voice. Each was ordained by God and proper in their intended place. But now the final word, the ultimate revelation from God, toward which all other voices had pointed, had come. To this supreme voice the author directs his reader's attention, and ours, by contrasting this final word with past utterances.'" (Ray Stedman) He keeps pointing to the supremacy and primacy of Jesus Christ, God's final Word!

This letter is divided into two parts. Andrew Murray wrote, "In the first part, the doctrinal half (1:1-10:18), we have the glory of the person and work of Christ set forth. In the second part, or practical half (10:19- 13:25), the life that the knowledge of Christ and His salvation will enable us to live is described."

To sum it up, I like the paragraph written in the introduction to Hebrews in my Bible. It says, "The writer of Hebrews exhorts them to 'go on to perfection' (6:1). His appeal is based on the superiority of Christ over the Judaic system. Christ is better than the angels, for they worship Him. He is better than Moses, for He created him. He is better than the Aaronic priesthood, for His sacrifice was once for all time. He is better than the Law, for He mediates a better covenant. In short, there is more to be gained in Christ than to be lost in Judaism. Pressing on in Christ produces tested faith, self-discipline, and a visible love seen in good works." Bottom line — Christ is BETTER!

1. For your assignment today, read through the Book of Hebrews, all 13 chapters. As you read, try to mark the twelve times the phrase **"let us"** is found and write what exhortation it is connected with.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____

10) _____

11) _____

12) _____

Second Day – Hebrews 1:1-3

Write out your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 1:1-13, focusing on verses 1-3. In your own words, explain why the psalmist is discussing the “prophets” of old.

The main idea of this entire letter is that Jesus alone brings men the full revelation of God and that He alone enables us to enter into His very presence. **Prophets were able to speak *for* God, but the Son was able to speak *as* God!**

2. Who is Jesus Christ, according to these verses? List all the descriptions, characteristics, and facts about Him you find.

God spoke in various ways, with various means, over the years. Although there was great diversity in how He spoke in the Old Testament, it was always fragmented. It was God’s Word, relevant and fitting for the people and the time, but fragmented just the same. Kent Hughes writes, “God utilized great devices to instruct His prophets. God spoke to Moses at Sinai in thunder and lightning and with the voice of a trumpet. He whispered to Elijah at Horeb in ‘a still small voice’ (1 Kings 19:12). Ezekiel was informed by visions and Daniel through dreams. God appeared to Abram in human form and to Jacob as an angel. God declared Himself by Law, by warning, by exhortation, by type, by parable. And when God’s seers prophesied, they utilized nearly every method to communicate their message. Amos gave direct oracles from God. Malachi used questions and answers. Ezekiel performed bizarre symbolic acts. Haggai preached sermons. And Zechariah employed mysterious signs. These all dramatically demonstrated God’s loving desire to communicate with His people. It was never hackneyed, never boring, never inscrutable,

never irrelevant. It was always adequate for the time. It was always progressive, revealing more of God and His ways. It was always in continuity with the previous words of God. But in all of this, God's eloquence was never complete. As grand as it was, it was nevertheless fragmentary and lacking. But no more! For in Christ came the ultimate speech of God (2a). Jesus is God's final Word!"

God is not, and has never been, silent. I love what Jeff Snell wrote in his book, Strength For The Journey. He said, "The opening words of Hebrews shatter both ancient and contemporary notions of a God who is silent. The very first phrase of this letter contrasts God with lifeless idols of ancient paganism and modern perceptions of His muteness. Although the first four verses of Hebrews are a single sentence in the original language of the New Testament, the core of this initial statement is **GOD HAS SPOKEN!** The theme of a God-who-speaks brackets the entire Bible. Genesis 1:3 records God creating with a word, and a dominant refrain in the first chapter is, 'And God said.' The second-to-last verse of the Bible contains the risen Christ saying, 'Yes, I am coming soon.' Between these bookends are numerous references to the self-revealing activity of God through His Words. The Old Testament Scriptures contain 3,808 occurrences of the phrases 'The Lord said,' 'The Lord spoke,' and 'The Word of the Lord came. Even this substantial figure barely scratches the surface of God's communication to people in the Old Testament."

"The writer of Hebrews, however, makes it immediately clear that God's instruments of self-revelation are not equal in significance or impact. The text does so by establishing an immediate contrast between the multitude of ways God has revealed Himself in the past and the one ultimate means through which He has made Himself known."

3. The author establishes some contrasts in these first few verses. First, how does he contrast the matter of **WHEN?**
4. How does he contrast the issue of **TO WHOM?**
5. How does he contrast the question of **THROUGH WHOM?**
6. Finally, how does he compare the matter of **HOW MANY WAYS?**
7. List the phrases used from this chapter that describe Jesus as:
 - A. Inheritor:
 - B. Creator:
 - C. Sustainer:

- D. Radiator:
- E. Representor:
- F. Purifier:
- G. Ruler:

8. Which one of the terms above especially ministers to you right now? Why?

The prophets were God's spokesmen, living out their allotted time span, fulfilling their calling. But Jesus is the eternal Son, both the Creator of all things and Heir of all things. Jesus is standing at the end of the future and the beginning of the past. He was not a fragment of the truth; He was, and is, the whole truth.

The phrase "the brightness of His glory" can also be translated the "radiance of His glory." This means the light "which shines forth." We can see Jesus as the radiant light coming from the Father as sunlight emanates from the sun. "Jesus' radiance is derived from the Father, even though He Himself is the light (John 8:12). The Son causes the radiance of the Father to shine forth. John 1:14 says that "We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The Son's radiance, therefore, is an extension of God's glory." (Simon Kistemaker)

The "express image of His person" is another amazing statement. That phrase translates as "exact representation." It can be used to describe minted coins that bear the image of a president. It is a precise reproduction of the original. "The Son, then, is completely the same as the stamp that makes the impression; both exist separately. The Son, who bears the "very stamp" of God's nature, is not the Father but proceeds from the Father and has a separate existence." (Kistemaker) When you look at Jesus, you see exactly what God is like. Christ shares the Father's divine nature, yet They exist separately.

9. Why is this whole section significant? What does it mean to you?

10. God still speaks to us today through His Word. He is not silent. He wants to reveal Himself. Have you listened to Him today?

We'll end here for today. May you be encouraged that Jesus upholds all things by the "Word of His power"!

Third Day – Hebrews 1:4-14

Meditate on your verse. Hide it in your heart today.

1. Read Hebrews 1:4-14. Who is superior, Jesus or the angels? How does Philippians 2:9-11 support this?

In the first section, the author painted us a picture of God revealing Himself through Jesus Christ. Now, in this section, the author "paints a majestic portrait of the One through whom God has revealed Himself." (Snell) C.S. Lewis says that "The one barometer of spiritual growth is a deepening awareness of the majesty of Christ."

Most scholars think that at the time Hebrews was written, the belief that the angels were intermediaries between God and man was on the rise. Many believed that angels bridged the gulf between God and man. Some were trying to reduce Jesus to the status of angels, while others had even begun to worship angels (Colossians 2:18). They had been encouraged to elevate angels to a position that rivaled Christ Himself! Hebrews 2:2 tells us that the people thought angels were "speaking to them" as well. The writer of Hebrews is desperate to show us that Jesus is the superior mediator, and because He is fully God, He is therefore fully able to represent God when functioning as our High Priest!

2. Why is it so important to understand that the angels are NOT mediators between God and man? (see Hebrews 8:6, 12:24, 1 Timothy 2:5)
3. The writer gives many reasons why Jesus is superior to the angels. What reason is given in verses 4-5?

The writer is quoting from Psalm 2, which is specifically applied to Jesus in Revelation 12:5 and 19:15 and to those who share His kingdom reign in Revelation 2:27. (Also, read Luke 1:32, Mark 1:11, and Luke 9:35)

Jesus is called the “firstborn” in verse 6. This doesn’t mean He was the first one created. Because, as we already have seen, He is the Creator not the creation. “Firstborn” is a term of status that reflects Jesus’ position as heir. F.F. Bruce said, “He is called ‘firstborn’ because He exists before all creation, and because all creation is His heritage.” (Colossians 1:5)

4. What are the angels commanded to do in verse 6? What are they called in verse 7? Why is this so significant?

5. How are angels still worshipped, in a sense, today? Are you guilty of this in any way?

In verses 7-14, the author compares the nature of angels to the nature of the Son. He uses some great quotes, showing the authority of the Old Testament.

6. The author quotes Psalm 45 in verses 8-9. This psalm is referred to as a “royal” psalm. What “royal” words does the author use here in Hebrews 1:8-9? Why do you think this is significant?

Ray Stedman explains this well. He says, “Psalm 45 is a wedding song, originally describing a king of Israel, but later understood by rabbis as messianic. The contrast between a royal personage and his servant-companions is the point of the quotation. The king is addressed twice as God; possesses a throne, a scepter and a kingdom; loves righteousness and hates wickedness; has a special anointing of joy; and continues as king forever and ever. No angel can claim these attributes. Here, by contrast, may be a hint of the moral defection of the host of angels who fell with satan. Angels could and did sin, but the Son’s love of righteousness kept Him safe through the most severe temptations. Even those unfallen angels, who also, presumably, love righteousness, do so on the basis of choice, while the Son’s love of righteousness is inherent in His very nature. For this reason God has set Him above His companions.”

7. According to these verses, how long is Jesus' reign?
8. Read Hebrews 1:10-12. The author quotes Psalm 102:25-27. What do these verses mean? What are they saying about Christ and His reign? (The author mentions the same point in Hebrews 13:8.)
9. Read Hebrews 1:13. The author quotes Psalm 110:1, which is the most frequently quoted Old Testament passage in the New Testament. Also, read Colossians 2:15. What point is he making?
10. According to verse 14, what is one purpose of the angels?

Tomorrow we'll take a look at some other things angels do, but for now, the point that the author is making is that angels are servants, but the Son is sovereign! God bless you, ladies!

Fourth Day – Hebrews 1 Review

Write out your verse from memory.

In our chapter we saw what angels are not. Today, let's take a brief look at what they are and what they do. The Hebrew word for angel is "malak" and means messenger. They are divine message-bearers. They have four specific functions. They continuously worship and praise God (Job 38:7, Psalm 103:20, Isaiah 6:1-3). Angels communicate God's message to man (Acts 7:38, 53, Daniel 10:10-15, Matthew 1:19-24). They minister to believers (Psalm 34:7; Psalm 91:11, 12; Acts 5:19; Luke 15:10; 1 Timothy 5:21), and they will be God's agents in the final earthly judgments and Second Coming (Matthew 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; Revelation 19:17 through 20:3-10). They are quite awesome and powerful, but their "significance dwindles in the presence of Christ." (Hughes)

1. How does this chapter remind you of the greatness of God?

2. How should our awareness of the “majesty of Christ” change our lives?

I want to end with a paragraph I actually found in many books, but I will quote from Kent Hughes. He said, “C.S. Lewis memorably portrayed the growing Christian’s experience of an ever-enlarging Christ in his Chronicles of Narnia. Lucy, caught up in her spiritual quest, saw the lion (Aslan ... Christ) shining white and huge in the moonlight. She fell to his side, half-sitting and half-lying between his front paws. He bent forward and touched her nose with his tongue. His warm breath was all around her. She gazed up into the large, wise face.

‘Welcome, child,’ he said.

‘Aslan,’ said Lucy, ‘you’re bigger.’

‘That is because you are older, little one,’ answered he.

‘Not because you are?’

‘I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger.’

“Expanding souls encounter an expanding Christ. Hebrews presents the greatness of Christ as no other New Testament writing does, and it repeatedly demands a response from the reader. Serious study of Hebrews will make us grow and find a bigger Christ.”

Did Christ “get bigger” this week as you studied His Word?



Notes



Jesus is Better

Lesson 2

Hebrews Chapter 2

In last week's lesson, we were reminded that God spoke to His people through very different ways throughout the ages, but Jesus was His final Word. Jesus is superior to the prophets and the angels. Here in chapter 2, we see the author continue with that thought, but at the same time warn them to avoid slipping away from the faith. In chapter 1, we witnessed the majesty of Christ, and here in chapter 2, we see His humanity. Sometimes it's easier to understand and relate to His divinity more than His humanity. I agree with what Max Lucado said in his book, God Came Near. He wrote, "To think of Jesus in all His humanity, well, it seems almost irreverent, doesn't it? It's not something we like to do; it's uncomfortable. It's much easier to keep His humanity out of the incarnation ... He's easier to stomach that way. There is something about keeping Him divine that keeps Him distant, packaged, predictable. But don't do it. For heaven's sake, don't. Let Him be as human as He intended to be. Let Him into the mire and muck of our world. For only if we let Him in can He pull us out."

Memory Verse of the Week: *"Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted." Hebrews 2:17- 18*

First Day – Hebrews 2:1-4

Work on your memory verse. Try writing it on a 3x5 card and putting it on your dashboard.

1. Read Hebrews 2:1-18, focusing on verses 1-4. What is the author warning us about? (This is the first of five major warnings in the book of Hebrews, each designed to prevent a specific form of unbelief.)

The phrase **"drift away"** means "to flow by" or "slip away from." Stedman writes, "It describes the carelessness of the mind which, perhaps occupied by other things, is not aware it is losing ground. Plato used this word to describe something slipping away from memory, and Plutarch of a ring slipped from a finger. Some see it as a nautical term that describes a ship that gets loose from its moorings. The danger highlighted is that of a great loss occurring unnoticed." If we use nautical language, it's a ship whose anchor has broken loose from the ocean floor and is dangerously drifting away.

The writer is warning the early believers to pay more attention to what they know so they don't gradually slip away, denounce the Gospel, and lose its influence on their life.

2. How can we "slip away" from our faith so gradually that we almost don't notice it? What can cause this?

When our anchors get lifted, we are susceptible to undertows! In Mere Christianity C. S. Lewis said, "As a matter of fact, if you examined a hundred people who had lost their faith in Christianity, I wonder how many of them would turn out to have been reasoned out of it by honest argument? Do not most people simply drift away?"

Kent Hughes gives some suggestions of things that can cause drifting. Do any of these describe you?

- A. **Years:** Many who were at one time professing Christians drifted away from their earlier selves. The years have carried them away from their devotion. Many have not disowned Christ, but have drifted far from their earlier faith, and often their children have no interest or knowledge of Christianity.
 - B. **Familiarity with the truth:** For some, the truth becomes too familiar; no longer "dazzles" or intrigues them. They become bored with their faith and desire to "move on."
 - C. **Busyness:** The cares of this life can cause us to be distracted, or can insulate us from the stupendous excellencies of Christ, causing us to begin a daily drift.
 - D. **Opposition:** When we drift because of years, familiarity, or busyness, opposition can easily shipwreck us.
3. Take a moment and look at your life. Have you drifted? Are you still excited and growing in your faith, or have you allowed time to make you drift, or even stand still? Spend time with the Lord and see what He wants you to do about it.

4. How can we be "intentional" about our faith? How can we guard ourselves from drifting?

I read this prayer by Robertson McQuilkin and wanted to share it with you. In "Let Me Go Home Before Dark" he wrote, "I fear the Dark Spectre may come too soon ... or do I mean too late? That I should end before I finish, or finish, but not well. That I should stain Your honor, shame Your

name, grieve Your loving heart. Few, they tell me, finish well ... Lord, let me get home before dark." Lord, help us to finish well.

In verse 1, the writer reminds them to pay attention to what they've heard from the apostles, prophets, and the Son Himself. Now he approaches the subject of angels again.

Angels played some part in the giving of the law. Both Paul (Galatians 3:19) and Stephen (Acts 7:53) acknowledge this. In the midst of all the thunder and lightning that was happening on Sinai, God the Father spoke through an angel who dictated to Moses. (Deuteronomy 33:2 and Psalm 68:17 give a vague reference to this.) But although God spoke through the angel, then through Moses, it was still His Word and still binding. (2:2). In fact, when angels brought a message, you could depend on it being carried out just as was stated, as in Genesis 19 when two angels announced that Sodom would be destroyed! But still, the author doesn't understand how anyone would prefer the ministry of angels, who delivered God's message, and who only helped to mediate the giving of the law, to the salvation available through His Son Jesus! (Hebrews 2:3-4) The angels "brought" the message, but Jesus brought "salvation." "Salvation" is found seven times in Hebrews, more than in any other New Testament book. It refers to the doctrine of redemption in Christ.

The Christian revelation is unique in three ways. The author tells us it was announced by the Lord Jesus Himself (vs 3b), who was the Divine and Incarnate Son. It came directly from Him; therefore, it is unique in **origin**. It is unique in **transmission**. Salvation was "confirmed to us by those who heard Him" (vs 3c). It is unique in **effectiveness**. God the Father testified to it and joins in the witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will (vs 4). The "signs and wonders" pointed to the Almighty Hand of God. Miracles showed the powers of God beyond human ability. What's awesome is that the authority from which the Gospel comes includes all three persons of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

So here's what these verses are saying, in the words of Kent Hughes: "If the word of the law that was mediated by angels was so binding that every infraction was punished, then how much more accountable are those who have the word of salvation direct from Christ's lips, plus the confirmation of eyewitnesses, plus the testimony of signs, miracles, wonders, and gifts? Thus, the weighty question of our text, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?" God was in Christ and in the Gospel, and therefore this message of salvation was to be heeded!

5. According to verse 3, are there consequences for ignoring the Gospel?

Over and over the author warns his readers not to turn away from the Living God (3:12) and writes that it is "dreadful to fall into the hands of the Living God (10:31), for our God is "A Consuming Fire" (12:29). Kistemaker writes, "Neglect of the Word does not appear to be a great sin; yet the writer, by contrasting this sin with the disobedience of people in the Old Testament

era, teaches that ignoring God's Word is a most serious offense. Because God has given us His full revelation in the Old and New Testament, it is impossible for us to escape the consequences of disobedience or neglect."

6. What is your attitude towards the things of God? Do you have a desire for the Word? Do you pray in the Spirit? Are you in awe of His greatness? Are you concerned about drifting away? Remember, He is a jealous God. He wants ALL of you. Does He have it?

Tomorrow we'll move on in our chapter, but for now, spend some time with the Lord. Ask Him to show you if you're drifting at all. And then set your anchor down deep in Him!

Second Day – Hebrews 2:5-9

What's your verse?

1. Read Hebrews 2:5-9. According to verse 5, are angels going to rule the world to come?

What "world" is the author referring to? Most believe that he is speaking about the Messianic kingdom, the kingdom that is coming where Jesus will rule and reign with the redeemed! An entirely new condition will prevail, as Christ, with the saints, will rule in harmony! (Angels have not ruled the universe in the past, and they will not rule in the future.) Man was created to rule with Him, but sin entered the world and messed things up!

2. Remember the one angel who did try to rebel against God and set up his own kingdom? Read Isaiah 14:12-17. What was his name? Explain what happened.

The writer has been trying to comfort and exhort his readers during the difficult times they are facing. Now, in this section, he reminds them what God's intention for man really is. The author quotes from Psalm 8 where David is overwhelmed by the greatness of God. As he was contemplating all that God had done, he began to wonder what God had planned for man, being so small and puny. The entire Psalm speaks of the glory that God gave to man.

3. Hebrews 2:6-8 is quoted from Psalm 8. Read this Psalm and write any other facts or thoughts you find that add additional color to this section. What was God's original purpose for man?

It appears that the Psalmist is astonished at God's intention for man, although it had been spelled out in Genesis 1:26-30. Man is "lower than the angels" in that they have a temporal body which limits them, yet not spiritually or of importance. Snell writes, "Psalm 8 addresses humanity's lofty status as the crown jewel of God's creation. Out of all God's earthly creatures, people were given the responsibility of protecting God's creation and the dignity of reflecting God's image. The Psalmist doesn't just want us to grasp the truth, he wants us to feel his tone. Man was made to have dominion over everything in the world. But, sadly, man does not. Because mankind sinned and fell short of God's intent, however, things changed."

4. What, or who, is our hope, found in verse 9? What does this verse tell us? How was God's original intention accomplished?

It's interesting that for man to be made "slightly lower than the angels" is an amazing thing, yet for Jesus to be made "a little lower than the angels" was the depth of His humiliation. He literally spoke them into existence. But He didn't become an angel; He went lower than that. He became a man.

5. How does verse 9 stress His humanity? (Philippians 2:8-10) How did suffering and death bring Him glory and honor?
6. Who did Jesus do this for? (Romans 5:17, Ephesians 2:6, John 3:16) Does the "grace of God" extend to everyone?

William Barclay says that "In this passage there are three basic ideas. (1) God created man, only a little less than the angels, to have mastery over all things. (2) Man, through his sin, entered into defeat instead of mastery. (3) Into this state of defeat came Jesus Christ in order that by His life and death and glory He might make man what he was meant to be."

The word "taste" in verse 9 means "to partake fully." Jesus tasted death, experiencing it in its full horror and humiliation. "He came under the penalty of sin so He could remove it." (Stedman)

Because He suffered, He is now exalted. Because He subjected Himself to the limitation of humanity, He is now crowned with glory and honor.

7. Jesus made salvation available for everyone. Does this mean that “all people” will be saved? Does this verse teach a universal salvation? (Romans 1:16; 10:8- 11)
8. Read Ephesians 2:8-10 and Romans 6:23. Why is “salvation” called a “gift”? Have you accepted this “gift”? When? (If there’s time, be ready to share about when you “opened your gift”!)

J. Vernon McGee wrote, “Christ’s humiliation accomplished two things: (1) It brought glory and honor to the person of Christ; and (2) it procured man’s salvation by making man’s salvation possible. Christ took humanity to Heaven, and there is not only a Man in glory, but there is a glory in that Man!”

That’s it for today. Take some time to thank the Lord for the free gift of salvation. Thank Him for saving you from hell; thank Him for tasting death for you; thank Him for granting you eternal life!

Third Day – Hebrews 2:10-13

What’s your verse?

All of creation needed a new leader; someone who could restore God’s original design for people and restore the full wonder of Psalm 8. Hebrews 2:10-18 shows us how Jesus became that leader!

1. Read Hebrews 2:10-13. In light of the definitions below, how is Jesus the “Author of our salvation”?

The word **“author”** means “captain, leader, champion, and pioneer.” “It contains the idea of supremacy, personal participation, and originator. He blazed the trail of salvation that we can now follow.” (Hughes)

The word **“perfect”** means “perfectly equipped or qualified” for a task.

2. How does verse 10 tie in with Colossians 1:16-18?
3. Why was the cross most “fitting” for Jesus, and for us? What does that mean?
4. Nestled in the middle of verse 10 is the heart of the Father for His people. What’s the purpose of the cross?

Some commentators point out that there is no reference to the love of God in Hebrews. That may technically be true, but we see God’s heart of love in every chapter. He longed to bring “many sons to glory.” It was love for the human race that drove both the Father and the Son to choose the cross.

In verse 11, “sanctifies” means to “make holy.” The author is saying that both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. He emphasizes “shared humanity”. “Both Christ and the human race come out of one man: Adam. Jesus and all humanity share the same human ancestor. Jesus Christ was 100% homo-sapien, as are all descendants of Adam. But His relationship to humanity was different than that of any other man, because He imparts holiness to those who are in Him, the second Adam. Sin came to all humanity through ‘one man:’ Adam. But righteousness came through the ‘one man:’ Christ (Romans 5:12, 19).” (Hughes) So, He is not ashamed to call us “brothers.”

5. Why does the fact that we have Christ’s nature in us, and the fact that He became fully human, help us to identify with Him?
6. The believers he was writing to were most likely afraid, growing weary, and becoming distant. How do you think being reminded about the depth of Jesus’ love for them would encourage them? How does knowing He will not be ashamed to call us “brethren” minister to us and challenge us to continue on in our faith?

To continue using this family imagery, the author quotes three different Old Testament passages to prove his point. Remember that to his audience, these passages were quite familiar to them.

7. First, in verse 12, he quotes Psalm 22:22. What does he say?

Psalm 22 is considered the “Great Psalm of the cross.” It denotes the humiliation of Christ, including the seven last words of Christ on the cross. But in verse 22, we read His exaltation! It reflects the praise of the Resurrected Lord as He shares with His brothers and sisters the glories of God’s grace. The author then quotes Isaiah twice: 8:17 and 18. Verse 17 reflects the common sense of dependency which children share towards God, and verse 18 shows us the relationship of children as all equally under the care of one Father. All three of these references are showing us that Jesus Christ and Christians are brothers! “These two texts, in their original setting, were part of a prophecy of an event yet 100 years in the future, and beyond this, reached to the coming of the Messiah both in His first and second coming. To apply fragments of such prophecies to the Hebrews’ circumstances may seem strange to us, but this is fully in line with the use of the Old Testament by all the New Testament writers.” (Stedman)

8. The author is reminding them that they have a “shared faith” (vs 12) and a “shared dependence” (vs 13) with Christ. How does this personally encourage you? How does this whole “family imagery” speak to your heart?

I know this chapter is a little difficult. Although a bit hard to understand, the truths are profound and are worth the digging! Hang in there; don’t give up. Continue to pray for understanding and wisdom on how the Holy Spirit wants to apply it to you!

Fourth Day – Hebrews 2:14-18

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Read Hebrews 2:14-18. As a man, Jesus died, partaking of “flesh and blood.” What two things were defeated by His death?
2. Not only was there defeat, there was deliverance. From what?
3. What are some reasons that people tend to fear death?

Because of His death and resurrection, we don't have to fear! He has "rendered the devil inoperative" and "annulled" his power! He was able to die for our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21) and Christ "redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...." (Galatians 3:13).

4. What does Paul say about this in 1 Corinthians 15:55-57 and Romans 8:35-37?

1 Corinthians 15:55-57

Romans 8:35-37

In verses 17-18, the author gives us the first glimpse in this letter of Jesus as our High Priest. He is our mediator, our intercessor, the propitiation (substitute) for our sin. This idea will be developed more fully in 4:14-10:18, so we will address it later in our study. The one thought, though, that is addressed in this text is one we don't want to overlook. It wasn't enough for Jesus to simply associate with us, He had to understand us.

5. Explain the significance of verse 18 in your own words.

6. How can Jesus help YOU when you are tempted? Are you asking for His help?

Jesus knows how strong temptation can be. He personally understands the dynamics of temptation and has emerged victorious over it! William Willimon once said, "When we face temptation, Jesus is able to say 'that reminds Me of the time ...'" Jesus can identify with you. He sympathizes with you; He feels with you, He understands you. And because of that, He can help you. He knows exactly what help we need; and He can give it. It's not the angels He helps, but you and I, the descendants of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16, Galatians 3:29).

7. Are you looking for help in something, or someone, other than Jesus Christ? He is your Merciful and Faithful High Priest. He is your Helper that "bears the scars" of sympathy. Will you trust Him today?



Notes



Jesus is Better

Lesson 3

Hebrews chapter 3

Before we begin, let's take a moment and recall the writer's purpose for writing this letter to the Jewish/Christian believers. He was reminding them that the true revelation of God came through Jesus Christ, and only through Him do we have access to the Father. He begins by showing them that Christ is superior to the prophets, and then proceeds to remind them that Jesus is superior to the angels as well. (Angels surely can't identify with us concerning our needs and weaknesses, but Jesus can!) Now, in chapter 3, he intends to prove that Jesus Christ is superior to Moses, a leader, who, next to Abraham, was greatly revered by the Jews. The Law came through Moses via the Ten Commandments, which were the basis for the entire Jewish religion. William Barclay wrote, "To the Jews it would have been impossible to conceive that anyone ever stood closer to God than Moses did, and yet that is precisely what the writer of Hebrews set out to prove." Truly, Jesus is greater than the greatest!

Memory Verse of the Week: *"For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God." Hebrews 3:4*

First Day – Hebrews 3:1-6

Begin working on your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 3:1-19. Focus on verses 1-6. The word "partakers" means "partners." What are we partakers of?
2. What, or who, is the author asking the reader to consider? What does that mean?

The author asks us to consider Christ, seeing Him as an Apostle and our High Priest. Nowhere else in the New Testament is Jesus called an Apostle, meaning "one who is sent forth or commissioned" or "a messenger." The Latin word for priest is "pontifex," which means "bridge builder." "The priest is the person who builds a bridge between man and God. To do that he must know both man and God. He must be able to speak to God for man and to speak to man for God.

Jesus is the perfect High Priest because He is perfectly man and perfectly God; He can represent man to God and God to man.” (Barclay) The writer will expound on this more fully as he develops his letter.

3. According to verse 2, what did Jesus and Moses have in common? Yet, how were they different?

4. How often do you stop and “consider” Christ? The word “consider” means “observe attentively, fix your thoughts, mark with attention.” It also can mean “to understand fully.” (Also used in Luke 12:24) Do you take time to carefully examine who He is? What happens when you do?

5. What principle is the writer explaining in verses 3-6? Explain the difference between a son and a servant.

Commentators disagree on exactly what the writer means in his use of “house.” Some believe he’s referring to the nation of Israel, while others believe he is talking about the tabernacle. The tabernacle is called “the house of God” 6 times in the Old Testament, and the Temple is called that 43 times. Stedman writes that “Moses is especially connected with the tabernacle as the one who received its design on Mount Sinai and oversaw its building and ritual. If the tabernacle was the symbol of the dwelling place of God in the midst of His people, as will be seen more fully in 3:6, then we may view the phrase “God’s house” as referring both to Israel and the building itself, each standing for the other.” Wiersbe believes that it “refers to the people of God, not a material building.”

Whatever you think, the meaning of verses 3-5 is clear. The builder of the house is more worthy of honor than the house which he builds. The house is only the product of the builder’s skill and wisdom. Therefore, Jesus, who builds all things, is more worthy of honor than Moses, who was simply a servant in that house.

6. In verses 6-7, it's clear that the writer is now saying that the Church is God's house. He brought it into being. Read 1 Peter 4:17, 1 Timothy 3:15, and 1 Peter 2:5. How are we all like "stones"?
7. What happens when one of the "stones" is weak?
8. Are you a weak or strong stone? As part of God's house, are you doing your part? Are you doing your specific job, as well as supporting those around you?
9. According to verse 6, how do we, as believers, show the reality of our faith? (The word "confidence" can be translated as "boldness.")

Of verse 10, Warren Wiersbe writes, "Those who have trusted Christ prove this confession by their steadfastness, confidence, and joyful hope. They are not burdened by the past or threatened by the present, but are living in the 'future tense' as they await the 'blessed hope' of their Lord's return."

10. Are you bold and confident in your faith, or do you doubt and worry? Are you hopeful? Are you living in the future tense? Search your heart on this one.

I pray that you can be a confident, strong, determined, and joyful "stone" in the house of God!

Second Day – Hebrews 3:7-14

What's your memory verse?

It's interesting to note that the writer introduced the quotation in verse 7 from the Old Testament as originating from the "Holy Spirit." The Psalmist was only the mouthpiece of God; God Himself

is the author of Scripture. The writer obviously has a high view of Scripture, seeing it as completely divine.

In Hebrews 3:1-6, the writer shows us a comparison between Jesus and Moses, reminding them that Jesus deserves more honor. Then, without transition, the writer refers back to the Psalms again, quoting Psalm 95:7-11. He goes on to explain his reasoning in verses 12-15. He ends the chapter with some historical examples of the point he's making.

1. Read Hebrews 3:7-14. The writer is quoting Psalm 95:7-11. (Also read Exodus 17:1-7.) Can you explain the incident he is referring to?

2. What do you think the writer means by "today?"

The incident in the desert happened at Meribah and Massah, according to Psalm 95. These two names are literally translated as "rebellion" and "testing or trial." This Psalm begins by describing worship that is acceptable to God, but then closes with a description of the false worship of Israel in the wilderness. They saw themselves as God's flock, yet they held bitterness against Him in their hearts. At the beginning of their 40-year journey, the people of Israel lacked water, which caused them to grumble and complain. God instructed Moses to strike the rock, and water gushed forth. Towards the end of their journey, they complained again because of their thirst. This time, Moses lost his temper and struck the rock twice instead of following the Lord's instructions. Because of that act of rebellion, Moses was not allowed to enter into the Promised Land.

The people of Israel tested God's patience over and over in the 40 years of wandering. (Ten times to be exact, according to Numbers 14:22) Stedman said, "On occasion God sought to make them aware of their ingratitude and rebellion by visiting them with deserved punishment (fire, plagues, quail, and poisonous serpents). But He always offered repentance and recovery. Still, their complaints continued and their hearts gradually hardened until, at Kadesh-Barnea, when God commanded them to enter the land of Canaan and take it for their own, they rebelled and refused to go up. Finally, God spoke in anger and said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known My ways. So I declared an oath in My anger, 'They shall never enter My rest.'"

After 40 years, the Israelites had not learned God's ways or grown in their knowledge of God. This failure to grow is the very danger the writer of Hebrews is warning his readers about. This snapshot in the history of the Jews was to serve as a warning to them. They challenged God's sovereign authority by their rebellion in the wilderness, and He didn't want it to happen again!

3. What did God say they would never enter?

This is the first time the word “rest” is used in Hebrews. This word describes the end of wandering or restlessness. Israel could have had a permanent and safe dwelling place had they trusted God (Deut. 12:9). Although here “rest” literally refers to the Land of Canaan (The Promised Land), “Canaan rest” can also be a symbol of a greater rest available to God’s people in the future.

4. Read Numbers 13 and 14. In your own words, briefly describe what happened and why the Israelites couldn’t enter Canaan.

5. Why was God so angry at them?

One of the key words the writer uses in Hebrews is the word “rest.” (3:11, 18; 4:1; 3-5; 8-11) Wiersbe writes, “The writer mentions two different ‘rests’ found in Old Testament history: (1) God’s Sabbath rest, when He ceased from His Creation activities (Gen. 2:2, Heb. 4:4), and (2) Israel’s rest in Canaan (Deut. 12:9, Josh 21:43-45, Heb. 3:11). But he saw illustrations of the spiritual experiences of believers today in these ‘rest’ illustrations. The Sabbath rest is a picture of our rest in Christ through salvation (Heb. 4:3). The Canaan rest is a picture of our present rest as we claim our inheritance in Christ (Heb. 4:11-13). The first is the rest of salvation; the second is the rest of submission.” We’ll talk more about rest next week in chapter 4.

6. We are all tempted to drift, doubt, or disbelieve. Are you experiencing that right now? Is there an area of your life that you are doubting or disbelieving God’s authority? Has He “proven” Himself over and over, yet you still continue to disbelieve or refuse to trust Him? Why is this so dangerous? What should you do?

7. What does He call this kind of heart in verse 8?

8. What is the writer asking us to do in verses 12-13?

9. How can sin deceive and harden us? Who can it happen to?

It seems to me that the writer knew how often all of us are prone to wander or doubt. He says to encourage each other “daily.” Sin is always deceitful, and we never believe it will take us captive. We must always be on guard, as well as exhort and encourage each other constantly.

10. Is there someone in your life that appears to be wandering in disbelief or doubt or whose heart is becoming harder and harder? What can you do to help?

Let’s end here for now. Spend some time examining your heart. Are you allowing your heart to become hard in any way? If so, bring it to the Lord immediately! Don’t be deceived and think it’s not a big deal!

Third Day – Hebrews 3:15-19

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 3 again.

Someone once said, “The heart of every problem is a problem in the heart.” The people of Israel, with the exception of Moses, Joshua and Caleb, allowed themselves to wander in their heart from God and His Word. They also didn’t believe that God would give them victory in Canaan. Although they were witnesses of the miracles He did in Egypt, they doubted He would, or could, do it again in Canaan. Their hearts were so hard that some of them even wanted to go back to Egypt! Believers are still tempted today to go back, to give up their confession of Christ and go back into the world’s system of compromise and bondage. The author uses the word “brethren” in verse 12. Is he talking about abandoning our faith and being condemned forever? Is he saying that we can lose our salvation? The answer is no; that isn’t what he’s saying. I like what Wiersbe wrote in his commentary on Hebrews: “The emphasis in Hebrews is that true believers have an eternal salvation because they trust a living Savior who constantly interceded for them. But the writer is careful to point out that this confidence is no excuse for sin. God disciplines His children. Remember that Canaan is not a picture of Heaven, but of the believer’s present spiritual inheritance in Christ. Believers who doubt God’s Word and rebel against Him do not miss Heaven, but they do miss out on the blessings of their inheritance today, and they must suffer the chastening of God.”

For me and you, **“today”** means “while life lasts.” While we have the chance, give God the honor and obedience He deserves. Give it all to Him before “your” day is over.

Verses 15-19, again, give us the historical examples of what the writer was talking about in the previous verses. Yesterday we read about their stories in Numbers 13 and 14.

2. William Barclay believes that the author gives some important warnings in this chapter:

A. God makes men an offer. He offered the Israelites the blessings of the Promised Land. What does He offer us?

B. To obtain the blessings of God, two things are necessary: trust and obedience. How does this chapter show us this truth?

C. There is a “limit” to God’s offer. What is it? (hint: vs 13)

Trusting God and believing His promises is not only crucial, it’s necessary. Will you stake your life on His promises? I once read that in any realm of life, success depends on the obedience to the word of an expert. God is our expert on life. Will you depend on and obey Him?

3. Why is it so important to exhort each other daily? Also read 1 Thessalonians 5:11. Why is this concept so important to the church today? It is a “corporate responsibility of the Christian community” to warn believers not to turn away from God, but to be strong! What changes would be possible if we all took this to heart? (Why is this a responsibility and obligation of the Church?)

4. How does Hebrews 3:6 parallel verse 14?

Sometimes the phrase “partakers of Christ” is difficult to understand completely. I like what Andrew Murray wrote in his book Holiest of All. He said, “Just as truly as Christ became a partaker ‘in flesh and blood,’ we become ‘partakers of Christ.’ In partaking with us of flesh and blood, Christ entered into perfect fellowship with us in all we were; our life and our death became His. When we become partakers of Christ, we enter into perfect fellowship with Him in all He was and is; His death and His life become ours. When God set forth His only begotten Son as the only possible way of access to Himself, it meant that He can delight in, or have fellowship with, nothing in which the likeness of His Son is not to be seen.” That’s us, once we’ve surrendered our life to Christ!

5. When Christ became a “partaker” of human nature, He totally identified Himself with us, making it visible for the whole world to see. We are now “partakers of Christ.” Are you so identified with Him that your whole life is marked by it?

“When Christ took on human nature, He left His own state of life, forsook all, and entered into our state of life. How do I become a partaker of Christ? By coming out from my own state of life, forsaking all, giving myself wholly to be possessed of Him and to live His life.”

6. Kistemaker wrote, “The moment will come when God will cease to warn sinful man. When that moment arrives, the day of grace changes into the day of judgment.” What does he mean, and how does our chapter support that?

Andrew Murray said, “There is nothing so hardening as delay. The delay, instead of making the surrender and obedience and faith easy, makes it more difficult. Obedience to the Spirit’s ‘today’ is your only certainty of power and of blessings.”

7. Is the Holy Spirit whispering something to you “today”? Are you listening carefully or are you “putting off” what He’s telling you to do?

Murray goes on to say, “You thought ‘today’ was only meant for a sinner when called to immediate repentance; you did not know that it also means immediate wholehearted submission to all God says each time the believer hears His voice, as well as immediate trustful acceptance of all He gives.” Wow ... that’s a lot to think about. See you tomorrow, ladies!

Fourth Day – Hebrews 3 Review

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Read Hebrews 3:1-19 again. Let’s close our lesson by answering some “general” questions regarding this chapter.

Many scholars discuss the two stages of the Christian. There are those who are carnal and those who are spiritual. There are those who remain babes and those who are full grown; those who

come out of Egypt but then remain in the wilderness of a worldly life; and those who follow the Lord fully, entering into His rest and victory. What stage are you in? Are you like the Israelites in any way? Pray and answer the following questions:

A. Do you often grumble and complain?

B. Do you make your own plans rather than seek God's will?

C. Do you openly express dissatisfaction with what God is doing in your life?

D. Do you rebel against authority or refuse to listen to counsel?

E. Do you refuse to listen to God's voice, or refuse to act in obedience?

F. Do you daily seek to encourage and edify other believers in their faith?

2. What is the most significant thing you learned from this chapter?
3. We are truly blessed to be one of God's daughters, firmly planted in the house of God. End this week's lesson by writing a prayer of thanks to the Lord for allowing us to be "partakers of Christ."

"Let faith be the habit of our soul, the every breath of our life."

Andrew Murray



Notes



Jesus is Better

Lesson 4

Hebrews chapter 4

In our lesson last week, the writer of Hebrews quoted from Psalm 95, speaking of the Israelites who were cursed by God and died in the desert. There is no real break between chapters 3 and 4; the exhortation and admonition of 3:12-15 is simply expanded in 4:1-11. In 4:1 we get our first hint that the promise of rest given to Israel meant much more than simply entering the Promised Land. Is the promise that the Israelites forfeited because of unbelief still available to us today? We will soon find out!

Chapter 4 talks all about rest. I like rest, don't you? Often we think of rest as doing nothing or taking a vacation. In fact, Webster's definition of vacation is "taking a break from work or studies for rest." Or we think of rest as sleeping. Webster also defines sleep as simply "rest." Although our bodies need physical and emotional rest, it doesn't always come with peace. We can be "rested" and yet still be "restless."

In our chapter this week, the rest we will be discussing is a spiritual rest, the rest that only comes through faith in Christ. As I studied and prepared to write this lesson, I found it rather confusing to translate. But although the translation is difficult, it is not hard to understand. If you get confused as you look at each word or verse, take a step backward to get a grasp on the full meaning of the text. Like I said, it's hard to translate, but simple to understand. I will try my best not to make it even more difficult!

I like what Augustine said concerning rest. He said, "Our souls remain restless until they find their rest in Thee." In other words, we have a God-shaped void that God gives us, that only He can fill.

Memory Verse of the Week: *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16*

First Day – Hebrews 4:1-2

Work on your memory verse. Isn't it a great one?

1. Read Hebrews 4:1-16. Let's camp out a bit in verses 1-2. The Israelites were promised God's rest. Is that promise still valid for us today? Or did they "use it up"?

The word “therefore” looks back to the quotations from Psalm 95, as well as forward to those of us who are reading it now. The writer is tying the past and present together. He emphatically uses the example of the wilderness experience so the readers will learn for their own lives what “not” to do. Remember that for 40 years, Joshua and Caleb watched their friends and family die because they were the only two men of faith that had confidence in God’s word and knew that they would one day enter the Promised Land. While the others were feeling grief and sorrow, they could rejoice because they had a confident hope!

2. Kistemaker says that “The message in 4:1 can be summarized in three words: fear, promise, and failure”. What does he mean? How is this true?

The author writes with a heart of a pastor, warning them that, unless they are careful, they could miss it or “fall short” of it. The expression “fall short” is thought to have been taken from the sports arena; it conveys the meaning of being left behind in the race and thus failing to reach the goal. He doesn’t want to see any of them fall into the same sin as those in the wilderness.

3. What sin is he referring to? (3:19 and 4:2)
4. Does he take the sole responsibility in preventing this, according to verse 1?

Kistemaker writes, “To be concerned with one’s own salvation is commendable; to pray for one’s fellow man is praiseworthy; but to strive for the salvation of everyone within the confines of the church is exemplary. We should be constantly looking for spiritual stragglers.”

5. Philip Hughes said, “There is no attitude more dangerous for the church than that of unconcern or complacency.” In regard to the paragraph above, what does he mean?
6. What’s your attitude toward the “spiritual stragglers”? Are you concerned for them? Is your heart grieved when you witness complacency? Do you allow that grief and concern to move you into action?

Although God promised them that “rest”, He was not obligated, in a sense, to fulfill that promise if faith was lacking. Therefore, the promise is conditional to our response in faith.

7. What was preached to both of “them”? Why was it received by one and not by the other? What “key” thing was missing?

Some think it’s odd to say that the same “Gospel” preached to the Israelites in the wilderness is the same which is preached today, the Gospel of Christ. But no distinction is made in the two uses of the “Gospel.” Stedman wrote, “Paul also states in 1 Corinthians 10:3 that ‘They drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.’ This implies an understanding on the part of some, at least, that the event they experienced, the sacrifices they offered, the ritual they fulfilled, were all designed to teach them truth about a Redeemer who was, to the eyes of faith, their ground of atonement with God, though He had not yet appeared in history. Of course these same elements could be experienced mechanically, without faith, and were thus meaningless as far as personal salvation was concerned.”

8. What does Hebrews 11:6 say about this? What does this tell us about the teaching of “universalism,” which means that everyone is already saved by virtue of Christ’s death and that God will reveal that to them at the end, no matter how they lived? (Also read Romans 10:16-17)

The emphasis of verse 2 is on the faith that wasn’t shared. During the entire time the Israelites had the Good News preached to them, they refused to accept it in faith. Their refusal was not a momentary reaction but a continuous rejection of God’s written and spoken Word. God’s promise was fulfilled only in those who accepted His Word in faith, demonstrating a true faith in God. That’s the only way to gain entrance to God’s eternal rest!

Tomorrow we will be looking closer at what kind of “rest” the author is talking about. But for now, let’s look at two truths that William Barclay finds in these verses:

(1) A word, however great, is of no avail unless it becomes integrated into the person who hears it. There are many different kinds of hearing in the world. There is indifferent hearing, disinterested hearing, critical hearing, skeptical hearing, cynical hearing. The hearing that matters is the hearing that listens eagerly, believes, and acts. The promises of God are not merely beautiful pieces of literature; they are promises on which a man is meant to stake his life and dominate his action.

(2) In the first verse the writer bids his people beware lest they miss the promise. The word we have translated beware literally means to fear. This Christian fear is not the fear

which makes a man run away from a task, nor the fear which reduces him to paralyzed inaction; it is the fear which makes him put out every ounce of strength he possess in a great effort not to miss the one thing that is worthwhile.

9. What kind of “hearer” are you? When you read His Word, do you read it and listen eagerly and purposefully, or do you listen with doubt, fear, and lack of trust?

10. Are you using every ounce of strength to pursue the Great Lover of your soul and remain faithful to the end?

Second Day – Hebrews 4:1-10

Hope you’re working on your verse!

1. Read Hebrews 4:1-16. Then go back to verses 1-10. How many times is “rest” mentioned?

2. In verse 3 does the author say we enter His rest now or in the future? What tense does he use?

3. Who exactly enters that rest? (Acts 4:32; 16:31; Romans 10:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:13)

4. The author quotes from Psalm 95 again in verse 3. Why do you think he says it again?

I have read so many explanations of the kind of “rest” that is spoken about in the book of Hebrews that my head is spinning! We know it’s obviously speaking about a “spiritual rest” because it is still offered to us today. If it was simply a literal rest for the Israelites when they got to Canaan, the “rest” would not be offered to you and me. People refer to it as the “Sabbath” rest or the “Canaan” rest, which we briefly discussed last week. Most believe that the “Sabbath” rest is a picture of our present rest as we commit our lives to Christ. The author uses the Old Testament story of Creation to try to express his idea of rest. After the world was created, God began a new period of rest. Genesis 2:2 tells us that at the conclusion of the sixth day, God rested from His work of Creation on the seventh. With the seventh day, the period of God’s rest began. (That doesn’t mean that God was tired or that He’s now idle, because He continues to maintain His creation, as Hebrews 1:3 suggests. He is also continuously active in the work of the redemption

of man. But He ceased in creating.) When we come to Christ by faith and stop trying to “work” our way on our own merit, we get “peace **with** God” (Romans 5:1).

Literally, the “Canaan rest” was the peace they found when they got to the land, but that came from a trust and obedience to His Word. (I don’t believe that all those who died in the wilderness were also eternally lost. That would include Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. But they did miss out on the rest, the blessings God’s inheritance had for them. But many were unbelieving about redemption as well.) To us today, this represents the victory we have in Christ as we “submit” to Him and His Lordship over our lives. By obeying God by faith and claiming our spiritual inheritance, we can have the “peace **of** God” (Phil. 4:6-8) as we experience that Canaan rest. He wants to provide us with a peaceful journey on the way to our ultimate rest. We can have peace even when we encounter perils on our path, as long as we submit and trust Him. “The only way to travel at peace is to travel with the Prince of Peace.” (Jeff Snell)

There is a future rest as well (4:9) that believers will enjoy with God when we enter Heaven, all labors and battles ended for good! (Revelation 14:13). Bottom line ... believers, because of firm faith, enter God’s rest, which is a spiritual state of being in the presence of God. As John Calvin said, “The highest happiness of man is to be united to His God.”

5. The author quotes Psalm 95 again in verse 7. What does he say? When is the time for response?
6. Why is “today” such a word of Hope?
7. Why does the author bring up Joshua in verse 8? (Read Joshua 1:1-9.) What point is the author making?

The name Joshua is equivalent to the name Jesus in the Greek. We know that Moses led the Israelites “out” of Egypt, and Joshua led them “into” the Promised Land where they enjoyed peace and rest from wandering. Jesus leads His people into the presence of God and grants them eternal rest and peace through Him! Jesus leads us into a far better rest than Joshua led Israel into, that’s for sure.

8. Okay. Let's ask some heart questions now. Obviously, the first being, have you entered into His rest and accepted Christ in faith? That's step one. His blessings and the spiritual inheritance we have in Him are only available to those who believe in faith.
9. If you have, you've made your "peace *with* God." Now, are you experiencing the "peace *of* God" that's available to you? Are you pursuing a life of obedience and striving to live in the presence of God? Or are you living your own way and missing all the blessings and rewards God has for you? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the depth of your heart. We can't expect God's blessings if we aren't living according to His Word. It's our choice ...
10. Read Hebrews 4:10. What "works" is the author referring to? Read Ephesians 2:8-10 and explain what the author means in your own words. (Are you still trying to "work" your way into Heaven?)

See you tomorrow, my friends! Praise the Lord for His marvelous and amazing rest!

Third Day – Hebrews 4:10-13

What's your verse?

1. Read Hebrews 4:10-13. What is the author's repeated exhortation? (Also read 2 Peter 1:10)
2. What does the author say about God's Word in verse 12? What does he mean? (How is it living? How is it active?)

3. Why does he bring this up now? How does this verse tie in with the rest of the chapter?

4. Why is God's Word compared to a sword?

The phrase "Word of God" is used at least 39 times in the New Testament, referring to the written or spoken Word of God. It's not only alive, it's active! That means it is "effective and powerful"! The original Greek word uses a word from which we get our word "energy." No one can escape the living and active Word. No one. Just like in the wilderness, today some men choose to obey it, and others refuse to believe it. (1 Cor. 1:18). The Bible is not dead like other letters; It's alive. A double-edged sword was probably the sharpest weapon available at the time. God's Word is sharper than that! It cuts and divides, like the knife of a surgeon. It addresses every aspect of our hearts. Every nook and cranny is open to His scrutiny. Nothing is hidden from God and His Word.

5. How does God's Word expose the motives and attitudes of the heart? (Explain the process as if you were trying to explain it to an unbeliever.)

6. What staggering truth is found in verse 13? (Are there any secrets from Him?) How does that make you feel?

7. Could this be a reason that we stay away from reading the Word? Why do we do that, if He knows it anyway? Do you have any secrets from the Lord? Have you stayed away from the Word, knowing that your motives and attitudes will be revealed, making you responsible to make changes? Have you ever done this?

8. But do we always "know" our true heart? Read Jeremiah 17:9. How does God's Word enable us to see the truth?

9. Why is humility needed to really see the truth?

I like what Wiersbe wrote. He said, “The emphasis is on the power of the Word to penetrate and expose the inner heart of man. The Word is a ‘discerner’ or ‘critic.’ The Israelites criticized God’s Word instead of allowing the Word to judge them. God uses the Word to enable us to see the sin and unbelief in our heart. The Word exposes our hearts and then, if we trust God, the Word enables our hearts to obey God and claim His promises. This experience enables us to be honest with God, to trust His will, and to obey Him.”

10. Are you, or have you been, guilty of criticizing God’s Word? What do you think that means?

Let me end with a quote by Ray Stedman that I love. He said:

“Plainly, Scripture is the only reliable guide we have to function properly as a human in a broken world. Philosophy and psychology give partial insights, based on human experience, but they fall short of what the Word of God can do.”

Amen, Mr. Stedman!

Fourth Day – Hebrews 4:14-16

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. Let’s take a closer look at the last three powerful verses. The first 13 verses of chapter 4 seem to be an introduction to the discussion of Jesus being our High priest, which he introduced in 2:17-18. What did he say about our High Priest in 2:17-18? What does he add now in 4:14-16?

Moses' brother Aaron was the High Priest. The author now contrasts Jesus' position with Aaron's, which was far superior. The difference between them is immeasurable. The term "great" already sets Him above the others. He didn't enter the Holy of Holies once a year and sprinkle blood for the atonement of sins. Jesus actually became the substitute, or the propitiation, Himself. The Great High Priest has brought the supreme sacrifice in offering Himself on the cross on behalf of His people!

2. The Jewish High Priest entered the inner sanctuary of the Temple once a year and stood temporarily in the presence of God. According to verse 14, how is Jesus greater than that?

3. What does the author exhort us to do in these verses?

4. In your own words, explain verse 15. Why is this so extremely significant to you and I?

The readers to whom the author is writing may not have understood the real significance of what he was saying, if they saw Christ as only divine. The writer is making sure they understand that Jesus was fully human as well. Here, and in 2:18, he reminds them that He was tempted as they were. He understood their weaknesses and temptations because He was tempted by Satan. He coped with thirst, hunger, rejection, pain, weariness, and disappointments. B. F. Wescott said, "He has been tempted in every extent and range, in every way. Nothing in human experience is foreign to Him, for He Himself has endured it. Yet, He was without sin."

John Albert Bengel said, "Because of His sinless nature, the mind of the Savior much more acutely perceived the forms of temptation than we who are weak, not only during His earthly ministry but also as His service as the exalted High Priest. He anticipates temptations we are going to face, sympathizes fully with us, and is able to help those who are tempted."

5. Verse 16 is one of the most exciting, spectacular verses in the Bible. What amazing truth does it teach us?

6. How are we invited to approach?

We know that Jesus sits on the right hand of God and has been given full authority in Heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). The sinner who comes to His throne in faith and repentance finds the forgiving grace of Jesus. We can come in confidence, rather than in fear of judgment. He invites us to come freely and boldly, receiving His mercy and compassion in our time of need. He stands ready to help. When we face temptation, He will provide a way out (1 Cor 10:13).

7. Are you in need right now? Are you struggling with the pressures and problems of life? Don't neglect this invitation. Have you gone boldly to His throne for help? Don't seek human help; go for the divine wisdom!

8. What truth, verse, or thought ministered to you the most from this chapter?



Notes



Lesson 5

Hebrews chapter 5

In our chapter this week, the writer of Hebrews continues with the theme of the priesthood. Last week his goal seemed to be to encourage his readers with the knowledge that Christ is our High Priest, and now he continues to develop that thought by offering instruction about the qualifications for that office. We already know that Christ is superior in that position, but now the writer offers his arguments on what makes this true.

Simon J. Kistemaker wrote, "The term 'priest' occurs 31 times in the New Testament, 14 of which appear in Hebrews. The word 'high priest' is featured 123 times in the Gospels, Acts, and Hebrews. The expression does not occur in the Epistles and Revelation. In Hebrews it is used 18 times. In short, it is the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews who develops the doctrine of the priesthood of Christ." I pray the Holy Spirit helps each of us grasp the full meaning and significance of this important doctrine, since it is so crucial to our Christian faith.

Memory Verse of the Week: *"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." Hebrews 5:9*

First Day – Hebrews 5:1-4

Review your memory verse. Would you consider yourself one who "obeys" Him?

1. Read Hebrews 5:1-10, focusing on verses 1-4. Where is the high priest chosen from? Who chooses him?
2. What was the main task of the high priest?

Why did the Jews need a priest? After the fall of Adam and Eve, a gap was created between God and man (Genesis 3). From that point on, a bridge was needed to allow sinful man to approach a holy God. God raised up a group of people called priests to function as the go-between, so to speak. The priests represented the people before God, presenting sacrifices on behalf of the people (Exodus 28:38-44; Leviticus 1-6). On the other hand, they represented God before the

people too. They helped the people learn and apply God's truth (Deut. 17:9, 19:17) and pronounced God's blessings on people (Number 6:23-26). They helped people really understand how God was working in their lives.

Within the priesthood, there was a man known as the high priest. He would enter the Most Holy Place of the tabernacle where God dwelt among His people, on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). He would offer sacrifices to maintain the people's relationship with God.

According to the law of Moses, only Aaron and his descendants were allowed to serve at the altar (Exodus 28-29, Leviticus 8-10, and Numbers 16-18.) A high priest was appointed by God; he did not appoint himself. This office was based on a divine calling (Hebrews 5:4). The priest was the link between man and God. His function was to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people, which had to be offered in the right place by the right person to be acceptable to God. That person had to be human. Sounds silly, but very important. Because his job involved representing people, he had to be a human being. It couldn't be an animal; it couldn't be an angel. God the Father couldn't even do it. This shows us again why Jesus had to be able to fully identify with mankind. Wiersbe said, "The very existence of a priesthood and a system of sacrifices gave evidence that man is estranged from God. It was an act of grace on God's part that He instituted the whole Levitical system. Today, the system is fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus Christ. He is both the sacrifice and the High Priest who ministers to God's people on the basis of His once-for-all offering on the cross." According to our book of Hebrews, this entire system was set up to help us understand the work of Jesus, who ultimately bridged that gap between us and God.

3. According to verse 2, why should the High Priest never lose patience with the sinner? What does he share with the people?
4. The writer clearly points out the weakness of the High Priest, as we also see in Leviticus 9:7 and 16:6, 15-16. Although this high priest is being paralleled to the priesthood of Jesus Christ, how is this specific comparison not equal? (Hebrews 7:27)

On the annual Day of Atonement, the High Priest Aaron entered into the Most Holy Place and performed the following duties, as described in Leviticus 16:

- A. Offered a bull for his own sin offering to atone for his own sin and the sins of his household
- B. Entered the Most Holy Place with incense
- C. Sprinkled the blood of the bull on the atonement cover of the ark

- D. Cast lots over two live goats brought by the people
- E. Killed one of the goats for a sin offering for the nation, and sprinkled its blood inside the Most Holy Place
- F. Placed his hands on the head of the live goat and confessed the sins of the people
- G. Sent the live goat away into the wilderness

This all seems a bit foreign to us, doesn't it? Although the role of the High Priest seemed to be solely ritualistic, Ray Stedman makes an interesting point. He said, "We tend to think of the Levitical priests as engaged only in rituals and sacrifices which were often virtually meaningless to the people. But if we read Leviticus and Deuteronomy carefully, we will see that such priests served in the place of modern psychologists and psychiatrists today. In explaining to the people the purpose of each offering, they would be dealing with problems of fear, insecurity, anxiety, guilt, and shame. Thus they performed an extremely important role in the nation's life." (Perhaps similar to pastors or counselors?) Next to the civil leader, the High Priest held the highest office in the land.

I think it's important to recognize that the high priest identified with the people in their state of sinfulness. After all, they were human too. They had to reflect a balanced and real attitude towards sin. They had to have an accurate view of sin and God in order to represent that to the people. For example, they couldn't withhold reconciliation because of their own judgmental heart, etc. They had to honestly and correctly represent people to God, and God to the people. In the same way, you and I must always take a look at our own heart and conscience before we counsel, advise, or confront others.

- 5. Read Matthew 7:1-5. What does Jesus have to say about this principle? What exactly does He mean?
- 6. Have you ever had someone try to remove your speck while totally missing their own plank? How did it make you feel? Were you able to receive the exhortation or correction? Why or why not?
- 7. Are you trying to point out anyone's "speck" right now? Have you looked for the plank that may be in your own eye, heart, or life? Let the Holy Spirit deal with your heart for a while on this one ...

The high priest was human, chosen from men to minister for men. The position could not be bought, sold, or earned, but was appointed by God. Although the high priest was called by God, Christ's ordination and authority was greater, as we'll see in our section tomorrow. Continue to ask the Spirit to search your heart, making sure you are cleansed and forgiven of your sins today. He desires us to be holy and pure before Him.

Second Day – Hebrews 5:5-8

Spend some time on your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 5:5-8. Beginning in verse 5, the writer compares Christ's priesthood to Aaron's. Although Aaron was called by God, what was different about Christ's calling, according to verses 6 and 7? (John 8:54)

The writer quotes from Psalm 2:7 once again in verse 5. It was first quoted in Hebrews 1:5 to prove that Jesus was superior to angels because He is the Son of God. Now the writer is quoting it again to show that Jesus is the Son of God, yet He is also called and ordained by God to serve as our High Priest. (In Hebrews 4:14, the writer combines the theme of Jesus as the Son of God and our High Priest as well.) The writer is trying to show his readers that Jesus Christ fulfilled all the conditions of the priesthood. He was one of them, fully human. He was appointed by God, chosen for this task. And he will soon describe how Jesus went through bitter and painful experiences as a man, which enabled Him to understand weakness and temptation so He can fully sympathize with us.

2. The writer quotes Psalm 2:7 and immediately links it with Psalm 110:4, quoting the psalmist in verse 6. What does he say?
3. According to verse 6, how long will Jesus' priesthood remain? How is that different than Aaron? Why is that so significant for you and me?

Forever is an exciting word. You know what it means? Yes, you're right. Forever! The writer says that Jesus' Priesthood is "forever" at least 6 times in the book of Hebrews. That's one of the things that make His priesthood unique. While all the other high priests died and had to turn the office over to their successors, Christ will reign as our High Priest forever and ever.

Another thing that makes this priesthood unique from that of Aaron's is that it is from a different order. While the others are from Aaron's order, Christ is from the order of Melchizedek. Who is that?? Melchizedek is an interesting character in Scripture and is only mentioned in two places

in the Old Testament: Genesis 14:17-24 and Psalm 110:4. His name means “King of Righteousness,” and he was also the “King of Salem.” He was both a priest and a king. Hebrews 7 discusses Melchizedek much deeper, so we will wait until then to look at him in depth. But you may be wondering why being of his “order” makes Jesus able to be a high priest forever. The Old Testament does not record Melchizedek’s death at all (Hebrews 7:1-3), so they see his reign as forever. Ultimately, we know he did die because he was a man, but no record is given. Melchizedek becomes a “picture” of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is a high priest forever. We’ll talk more about this in chapter 7. And another important difference is that God appointed Jesus as High Priest prior to His coming to earth. His priesthood is eternal, meaning His priesthood began before His earthly life.

In verses 7-8, the writer continues to discuss the qualifications of the high priest. Our Lord’s ministry here on earth prepared Him for this high priestly ministry.

4. Re-read Hebrews 5:7-8. Also, read Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, and Luke 22:40-46. What incident is the writer of Hebrews describing? What details do you find in the Gospels?

Why did Jesus, the Son of God, have to “learn” obedience? If He is perfect, how could He have to learn anything? Remember that here on earth Jesus lived by faith in the Father’s will. He didn’t need to “learn” anything. But as the Son of God in human flesh, He had to experience what man would experience so He could be our High Priest forever and sympathize with us. He was completely identifying with mankind.

As Jesus was praying in the Garden, many think He was simply burdened by the physical suffering of the Cross ahead. It was much more than that. Jesus was about to be “made” sin and separated from His Father (2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24). He bore on His shoulders the sins of the whole world -- past, present, and future. Can you try to imagine the guiltiest, most shameful feelings you’ve ever had? Feelings of despair over something you’ve done or someone you’ve hurt; feelings that wrench your gut. Imagine Jesus feeling that feeling for every single sin ever committed. Imagine the pain, agony, and heaviness that was weighing on His shoulders, alone. The only time He asked His friends for help and prayer, they fell asleep against a tree. His cry on the cross, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” reflects His complete separation from God.

Of the Garden experience, Stedman writes, “Each of Jesus’ three prayers questioned the necessity for this experience and, each is addressed to the ‘One who could spare Him from death.’ Luke tells us before the third prayer an angel was sent to strengthen Him. His cry to the Father was one of such desperate need that the Father answered Him first by strengthening Him through an angel. But when the angel had finished, the third most terrible experience began. The

author implies that Jesus faced the emotional misery which sin produces: its shame, guilt, and despair. He felt the iron bands of sin's enslaving power. He was oppressed by a sense of hopelessness, total discouragement, and utter defeat. He is anticipating the moment on the cross when He would be forsaken by the Father, since He then would be bearing the sin of the whole world as though it were His own. The very thought of it crushed His heart as in a winepress. No sinner on earth has ever felt the stain and shame of sin as He did. He understood exactly the same feelings we have (in much lesser degree) when we are angry with ourselves and so filled with shame and self-loathing that we cannot believe that God can do anything but hate us for our evil. Jesus knows what that is like. He went the whole way and took the full brunt. We will never pass through a Gethsemane experience as torturous as He did. He saw our sins as His own, and thus fulfilled beyond any other priest's experience the ability to deal gently with other's sins since He was so fully aware of the sense of personal defilement sin leaves."

5. After reading the paragraph above, write your thoughts and/or emotions. (Are you developing a better understanding of the importance of His role as High Priest?)

6. In verse 7, the writer of Hebrews says that Jesus' prayers were heard. But He was still crucified. What, then, was He praying for? (Read Acts 13:30-37)

Wiersbe said it really clearly: "Since He did die on the cross, this could not have been what He was praying about; for if the Father answered, the Son would not have been crucified. He did not pray to be saved from death, but out of death; and God answered His prayer by raising Him from the dead!" (Acts 2:24)

7. In verse 7, the phrase "because of His godly fear" is better translated "reverent submission." How was Jesus submissive to the Father's will?

8. Jesus lived according to God's will, in all ways. How about you? Whose will do you seek after, yours or the Lord's? Is your life characterized by a "true and reverent submission" to the Father's will?

9. How is it possible to pray and seek God's will, yet still miss the boat? (Read James 4:3, Psalm 66:18, Jeremiah 17:9 for examples.)

10. Are you expecting to hear God's voice and direction in some area you're praying about, yet aren't obeying His Word? Allow the Holy Spirit to search your heart. Are you willing to be honest with Him, and yourself?

Third Day – Hebrews 5:9-14

Work on the memory verse. Repeat it to someone today.

We will continue to explore the theme of the priesthood of Christ. It's interesting to note that the theme of Jesus' kingship isn't really discussed much, but the writer of Hebrews gives His priesthood special attention because His purpose is to show Jesus as our mediator (1 Timothy 2:5-6). The writer is an expert of the Scriptures and the only New Testament writer that explains this doctrine. Paul touches on it in Romans 8:34 and 1 Timothy 2:5-6. While Peter and John refer to believers as part of a "royal priesthood," they don't talk about the priesthood of Christ. This fact makes the book of Hebrews a very important one!

1. Read Hebrews 5:9-10. What thought is he repeating from 2:10?

The phrase "been perfected" means to be "made complete." Because He is the sinless Son of God and offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice, He is the author of "eternal salvation." Because of His sufferings on earth, He can be our Heavenly High Priest forever. Kistemaker wrote, "Jesus, made perfect through suffering, leads many sons to glory. Perfection, therefore, must be seen as a completion of the task Jesus had to perform."

2. According to verse 9, who is this "eternal salvation" promised to?

I love what F. F. Bruce wrote, except that it's also sort of scary. When describing the concept of obedience, he said, "The salvation which Jesus has procured, is granted 'unto all them that obey Him!' There is something appropriate in the fact that the salvation which was procured by the obedience of the Redeemer should be made available to the obedience of the redeemed."

3. Read that quote again. Can you explain what he means in your own words?
4. The phrase "all who obey Him" is also translated as "all who trust Him." Obviously, this means much more than lip service. Read Romans 10:8-13. Are you in this category? If the answer is yes, are you living a life of trust and obedience? How important is obedience?
5. Read Hebrews 5:11-14. What is the writer's main point? Why do you think he adds this exhortation or admonition?

The writer seems to have a pastor's heart for his readers, caring deeply about their spiritual state. He has already expressed his fear of them going back to their old ways of legalism and rebellion, as did the children of Israel. He warned them about losing out on the spiritual rest that had been promised to them, and now he confronts them on their spiritual immaturity. He seems to want to explain more, but takes a "time-out" to rebuke them, then jumps back to the point later on in chapter 7.

6. According to verse 11, what kind of "hearers" are they?

In Hebrews 6:12, the word "dull" is translated as slothful, referring to a state of spiritual apathy and laziness.

7. How do you think people can become "dull" hearers? How can drifting, doubt, or laziness play a part?
8. Are you "dull" to spiritual things right now? What should you do?

9. According to verse 12, what did the writer think they should be able to do? Why?

As believers mature, they should be able to share spiritual truths with others. We don't have to be formal "Bible teachers" per se, but able to share His truth at some level. But due to their laziness, they were still acting like newborns in the faith.

10. Okay, here we go. Let's take a look at ourselves. Are you able to share His truth with others, or have you stayed at the newborn stage of your faith? If you have known Christ for a while, have you grown in the wisdom and knowledge of Him?

We're going to finish up this section tomorrow, although some of us may rather stop right now! It's a difficult section to examine ourselves with. Be ready to dig!

Fourth Day – Hebrews 5:11-14

Write out your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 5:11-14 again. Explain the writer's comparison between milk and solid food.

2. How does only living on "milk" keep you "unskilled" in the Scriptures? What does that practically mean?

The solid food, or "meat" of the Scripture, is harder to sink your teeth into. The writer believes that the doctrine of the priesthood of Christ is "meat" that they don't seem to be ready for.

3. In your own studies, do you often stay away from the harder doctrines, or the “meat,” so to speak? Do you dwell on the things that are easier to understand? Are you in danger of becoming dull or staying a newborn?

In verse 14, the writer says that as we grow in the Word, we will learn to use it in our daily life. We will mature, use discernment, and grow in Godliness. The solid food of the Word will teach us to live righteous lives as we apply His Word to our everyday situations. But it's not just about reading it, it's about deciding to apply and obey it. Begin daily by reading the Word and asking yourself: What does it mean? Is there something He's saying that I'm not obeying? Is there some activity or attitude that He wants me to get rid of? Is there an action He wants me to do, or an area He wants me to step out in faith? Are there promises He wants me to cling to? Are there areas of unforgiveness, bitterness, or anger He wants me to confess and deal with? Does He want to take me deeper in my understanding of grace and mercy? Does He want me to get a better understanding of how much He loves me? The list of what we learn from the Word goes on and on.

4. Stedman said, “We need to act on knowledge before any benefit is received.” What do you think he means in the context of this section?

5. Are there any changes you need to make in your own studies and knowledge of the Word to prevent you from becoming a dull hearer? Did the Lord show you anything else about yourself through this section?

***Don't just know “about” Jesus, get to know Jesus Himself!
He is revealed through His Word!***



Notes



Lesson 6

Hebrews chapter 6

Last week we ended our chapter with the writer exhorting his readers to grow up and make some progress in their faith. They had allowed themselves to remain in a state of immaturity by only consuming the “milk” of the Word rather than partaking in solid food. They had become dull of hearing and spiritually lethargic, unable to discern good from evil. The writer continues this thought in chapter 6:1-3 and then moves on to what some consider the most “terrifying warning” in the New Testament. I like what Jeff Snell says about warnings. He wrote, “Warnings are intended to be productive, not pleasant. Let’s view this material from the right perspective, though. In the midst of grave warnings is God’s goodness. Good doctors tell patients what they need to hear, regardless of what they want to hear. Such is the truest expression of concern God could provide.”

He goes on to say, “Biblical truth is not merely provided to help us win trivia games and solve crossword puzzles. God’s truth helps us make the right decisions in everyday life. Hebrews 5:13 reinforces Paul’s idea in 1 Timothy 3:16-17, reminding us that Scripture helps us negotiate the doctrinal and ethical crossroads of life. Without advancing in our faith, however, we lack the framework from which to make such decisions.”

Remember to begin your study every day in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to give you spiritual understanding of the text and wisdom as you seek to apply it. Have a great week. Don’t get frustrated if there are sections you don’t completely understand. We are entering ground in which many have argued the meaning of for years!

Memory Verse of the Week: *“This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil...” Hebrews 6:19*

First Day – Hebrews 6:1-3

Work on your memory verse. Dwell on the truth of it.

1. Read Hebrews 6:1-20. Go back and focus on verses 1-3. The first word we find is “therefore.” What is it “there for”? (Get it?)

As we read through this chapter, remember that verses 1 and 12 really summarize the main message: “Go on to maturity!” (NIV) and “We don’t want you to become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Keep these in mind.

2. What six elementary or basic principles of the faith does the writer list?

A)

B)

C)

D)

E)

F)

The phrase “**let us go on**” can be translated “let us be carried forward.” It also implies action and conveys the idea of actively exerting oneself to make progress. When we first learn to read, we are taught the ABC’s. After we understand them we can move on to harder things such as words, sentences, and paragraphs. You don’t “keep learning” the basics, you use them to go on to better things. This is what the writer is saying. He wanted them to build on what they already knew. The things that he lists as basics, however, give us a good indication of what the early church thought was essential to their faith. The writer doesn’t explain them, but simply outlines them. F.F. Bruce wrote, “The items listed among the elementary teachings are as much Jewish as they are Christian.”

3. Define “repentance.” Why does the writer refer to repentance and faith as our foundation, which they had already laid? (Acts 2:38, 3:19; Mark 1:15)

4. What does verse 1 say to repent from? What does that mean?

We are called to repent from acts that “lead to death.” (Dead works.) Repentance is a change of mind that results in right behavior. It means turning from something that is detrimental to our faith. No longer should we show interest in activities that lead to death or destruction. Sin brings about death, and we are to stay away from it (Romans 5:12, 21; 6:23; 7:11). Repentance must be joined with faith and trust in Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21).

Faith is a prominent theme in Hebrews (I can't wait to get to the heroes of faith listed in chapter 11!). Kistemaker writes, "For the writer, faith constitutes complete trust as demonstrated by Joshua, who because of his faith entered the land that God had promised (4:8). Everyone who puts faith in the Gospel, says the author of Hebrews, enters God's rest (4:2-3)."

"Baptisms and laying on of hands" are the next two items on the list and have to do with "The person's relationship to the local assembly of believers." (Wiersbe) The word he uses for baptism can better be translated as "washings" or "cleansing rites." It's not the word usually used for baptism in the New Testament. Hughes writes that, "The idea here is that the Hebrew church employed the customary Jewish cleansing rites, as well as the Old Testament customs of laying on of hands, to teach the deeper, ultimate significance of Christian baptism and laying on of hands, namely the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13) and also commissioning and empowering for Christian service (Acts 13:1-3)." John Calvin declared that "At the time of the writing of Hebrews, after water baptism and a period of instruction in faith, believers received another rite: that of laying on of hands. This rite was intended as confirmation of their baptism and originated in the times of the apostles." Sometimes it was also used in healings (Acts 28:8).

Let's remind ourselves again that the point the writer is trying to make is that baptism is an initiatory rite and must not be regarded as fulfilling all that a Christian is expected to know or do. The laying on of hands also represents a beginning and not an end.

5. The resurrection of the dead was taught in the Old Testament (Job 19:23-27, Daniel 12:1-3) and the New Testament (Acts 24:14-15). In the New Testament, the Resurrection becomes even more significant. What does John 11:24-25 and Acts 1:22 say about it?

- John 11:24-25
- Acts 1:22

6. What does Paul say in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 about Christ's Resurrection? What does he mean?

7. The last topic on the list was "judgment" and had to do with the future. Read Acts 17:30-31 and 2 Corinthians 5:10. What do they tell us?

- Acts 17:30-31
- 2 Corinthians 5:10

In order for the readers to progress in their faith, God must “permit” it or open the hearts of the people who received the instruction. They would definitely need God’s help.

8. Is your faith progressing? Have you moved beyond the basic fundamentals and “actively exerted” yourself to move forward? I read a quote that said, **“Where there is life, there is growth.”** So, take a look. What do you see? Maybe ask yourself the following questions:

1. *Are you more knowledgeable in your faith than a year ago?*
2. *Do you live more wisely than you did last year?*
3. *Are your ethical and moral decisions based on the truth of Scripture more than they were before?*
4. *Can you relate the Word of God to your daily life more easily than before?*
5. *Is there more fruit growing in your life? Are you growing in holiness and faithfulness?*

That’s a lot to think about. I’m glad you have chosen to “actively exert” yourself by studying the Book of Hebrews with me. We are certainly, painfully growing! 😊

Second Day – Hebrews 6:4-8

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 6:4-8.

Well, this is the section that seems to make everyone nervous. There are varied interpretations of what the writer is trying to say. Is he talking about believers, and if so, does that mean they can lose their salvation? Is he talking about those like Judas, who “appeared” to be a believer but never had an authentic faith? The list of questions goes on and on. Let’s begin by remembering a few things. First, the point of this chapter as well as the whole letter, is to encourage them to move forward towards maturity. Don’t look back, don’t drift, keep on keeping on. This passage is talking about a person reaching a condition where they have no desire to turn back to God. **It is not a matter of God’s willingness to forgive, it is a matter of the person’s willingness to repent.** Also, the term “fall away” has been used in the church to describe a vast amount of spiritual conditions, so it needs to be better defined and perhaps not used so loosely to describe people.

If I may, I would like to quote from Ray Stedman’s commentary on Hebrews on this section, because I appreciate the way he explains it. He wrote, “This solemn warning marks one of the greatest theological battlefields of Scripture. Here the clashing proponents of Calvinism and Arminianism have wheeled and charged, unleashing thunderous volleys of acrimony against one another, only to generate much heat and little profit. The Calvinists, mindful of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints (eternal security), seize upon the words ‘It is impossible ... if they

fall away, to be brought back to repentance.’ ‘These cannot,’ they say, ‘be truly regenerated Christians, no matter how strongly the descriptive phrases of verses 4-5 seem to imply they are, for otherwise they would fall away into incredible apostasy.’ On the other hand, the Arminian forces focus on the descriptive phrases and say, ‘It is impossible to portray true Christians any more powerfully and accurately than is done here; therefore, since they are said to fall away it is clear that regeneration can be lost after it has been obtained.’ A third group of interpreters insist that the question of eternal salvation is not in question here at all, since it is only a matter of urging new Christians on to further understanding of their fellowship with Christ.’ We are helped here by viewing the readers not as a homogenous group who must all be classified in one category or another. Rather, they are most likely a mixed assembly, among whom were many genuine believers needing a degree of prodding to go in their experience of truth. There were also some who professed faith in Christ but who gave no evidence in their behavior or attitudes that they were truly regenerate. Just like in churches today.”

Kistemaker writes, “Theological questions about the genuineness of repentance and faith of people who fall away from Christ remain unanswered. The writer refuses to judge people, instead he warns them not to fall into the same error that the Israelites in the desert committed. He encourages his readers to grow spiritually and continue to obey God’s Word.”

The writer of Hebrews has already observed that disobedient Israelites died in the desert because of unbelief. They had put blood on the doorposts in Egypt and eaten the Passover Lamb; they had left Egypt, consecrated their first-born males to the Lord, and crossed the Red Sea; they could see the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night; they had heard the voice of God from Mount Sinai when God gave them the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19-20). Yet the same Israelites hardened their hearts in unbelief, and because of their disobedience, they fell away from the living God (Hebrews 3:12, 18; 4:6, 11). Apostasy that arises from unbelief results in a hardening of the heart and an inability to repent, according to the writer of Hebrews (3:13, 4:2, 6:6, 10:26, 12:15).

Hughes believes those who fall away are not true believers, but people who appear so. I must say that I agree. Many make a profession of faith and have been received into fellowship with God’s people, but later abandon their faith and even become enemies of Christ (Matthew 7:21-23). The parallel between his readers and the children of Israel in the desert is similar: They were enlightened, or had an “intellectual understanding of God’s redemptive actions.” Although you have to have knowledge to have faith, it doesn’t always indicate that saving faith is present.

They also “shared and tasted” the Heavenly gift, which can be the Holy Spirit (Hebrews 6:4) or Jesus Himself (John 4:10). It could mean that they had shared in the Lord’s Supper or had a working “knowledge” of Jesus. Also, they may have been a partaker of the Spirit by responding for a time to His “drawing power” that intends to lead people to Christ, as in a group setting when the salvation message is given. Many respond, but it doesn’t mean that all who respond have a saving faith. They also may have tasted God’s Word in a sense and were awed by the miracles He performed.

Jesus' parable of the soils show us that there are people who can look a lot like believers, but really aren't (Matthew 13:20). We can also look at people like Simon and Judas (Acts 8:9-24 and John 6:70). I also agree with Hughes that there are so many other Scripture references that support the doctrine of eternal security and the "keeping" of the saints. If you are interested in reading some, here is just a short list of the many: Philippians 1:6, Romans 8:38-39, Romans 8:29-30, 1 Peter 1:4-5, Jude 24-25, 2 Timothy 1:12, Ephesians 4:30, 1 John 2:19, Matthew 24:24, John 6:40, and John 10:27-28.

That was a lot to read, but hopefully made some sense to you. I don't know about you, but I plan to stay as close to Jesus as I can! I don't want to drift away because of unbelief or laziness. And I also praise God that no one can pluck me out of His hands, because I am safe in Him! (John 10:28)

2. How do you think those who fall away "crucify Him again and put Him to shame"?
3. How do verses 7-8 illustrate what the writer is saying in verses 4-6? How is this a warning with hope?
4. Take a few minutes and write your thoughts on this section. What emotions were stirred up?

Third Day – Hebrews 6:9-12

Are you working on your verse?

1. Read Hebrews 6:9-12. It seems like the writer reveals his pastor's heart for his readers. How does he now encourage and reassure them? What does he tenderly call them?

Although there were some readers he was trying to warn, he appears to believe that the majority of them are truly saved and wanted to exhort them to be diligent and patient and build up their confidence.

2. What "works" or "things that accompany salvation" does he commend them on? (Were they past or present works?)

3. The writer believes that a genuine faith will produce works. What does James 2:14-26 tell us about faith and works? What did Jesus say in Matthew 7:16-21?
 - James 2:14-26
 - Matthew 7:16-21
4. “Authentic Christian life produces authentic Christian character.” Explain this quote and describe some character traits and qualities that should accompany a true believer’s life. Please use verses if possible.
5. Does verse 10 relate to you? Are you showing love and helping God’s people? Are you showing them Christ’s sacrificial love? (John 13:34-35) Do you have a “caring” lifestyle towards others? Does this verse encourage or convict you, or both?
6. How would you sum up verses 11-12 in your own words? (Does this quote help explain it? “If your faith fizzles before you finish, it’s because it was faulty from the first!”)
7. We know in context the writer is referring to Abraham (vs 13), but what people in Scripture can you think of who have shown faith and patience and are worthy of imitating?
8. Can you think of any people in your own life that would fit this description that have been examples to you? What have you learned from them?
9. Who is watching you? If you become sluggish, who are you in danger of stumbling or influencing? Can others put you in this category? (Are you “running hard” until the end?)

Fourth Day – Hebrews 6:13-20

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Read Hebrews 6:13-20. What promise did God make to Abraham? (Read Genesis 12:1-3, 13:14-17, 15:4-5, and 22:16-17)
2. From what you know about Abraham, why does the writer use him as an example of patience? Read Genesis 12:4 and 21:5. Did he believe God's promise? How long did he wait? Also, read Romans 4:9-22.

Abraham was 75 years old when he received the promise that God would make him into a great nation in the land He would show him (Genesis 12:1-9). God appeared to him and promised to give the land to Abraham's offspring (12:6-7) and repeated that promise in 13:14-17. Abraham was 86 years old when Ishmael was born, but God told him that Isaac, not Ishmael, was the fulfillment of the promise (17:21, 21:12). Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old (21:5). He waited 25 years for the promise to be fulfilled, and 60 years after the birth of Isaac, Jacob and Esau were born (25:26). God tested Abraham's faith on the mountain region of Moriah by telling him to sacrifice his son Isaac, but did not require it in the end (Genesis 22).

3. Who did God swear by? Why do you think He swore?

God spoke to Abraham in human terms when He addresses him, "I swear by Myself, declares the Lord" (Genesis 22:16-17). God didn't have to swear to guarantee the trustworthiness of His Word; His Word is true, and God will keep His promise. But God adapted Himself to the ways of man and swore by Himself (Exodus 32:13; Psalm 95:11). He is conscious of man's weak faith and wanted to give man added assurance of the complete reliability of His Word. Kistemaker writes, "The writer of Hebrews notes that man always swears by someone greater than himself; however, God has no one to excel Him. Therefore, He swore by Himself. The author constantly makes comparisons in his letter. In this instance, however, he admits, that there was no one greater than God to swear by!" God was obviously pleased with Abraham's act of faith. (Also read James 2:21-22)

4. Abraham is an example of faith, as well as hope. Why do you think the writer of Hebrews chose him in the context of this chapter?

5. Are you beginning to give up hope on a promise that God has given you? How does this section encourage you?
6. What does the phrase “the immutability of His counsel” mean, in verse 17? Who are the “heirs of promise”? (Galatians 3:29)
7. What “huge” and profound truth is taught in verse 18 and echoed in Numbers 23:19 and Titus 1:2?
8. According to verse 18, what should we “take hold” of?

As true heirs of the promise, we take hold of the hope that God offers us. We have fled as refugees and cling to the One who offers new life. God offers hope to us; it’s up to us to accept it and hold on!

9. How do you and I “practically” hold on to hope? How do we appropriate it and accept it by faith?
10. Read Hebrews 6:19-20. How can hope be like an anchor? What does the anchor do when a ship is being battered by waves?
11. Where have you placed your hope? Is it anchored in Jesus Christ? (If not, what will happen when the waves of life start to get rough?) Ask the Holy Spirit to show you if you’ve placed your hope in something, or someone, else.
12. The author changes metaphors, from an anchor to the veil of the Most High. Why was the phrase “enters the Presence behind the veil” so meaningful to them?

Remember that the veil was used to separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place in the tabernacle (Exodus 26:33-35). Only the High Priest could enter on the Day of Atonement. Matthew 27:51 tells us that when Christ died, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Hebrews 10:19-22 tells us that the veil was now Jesus' flesh, who gives us access into God's presence. These readers would be familiar with the significance of the writer's analogy, also associating the inner sanctuary with Heaven itself.

"The writer seems to single out 'hope' and encourages them to make that hope a priority in their lives. He tells them to cultivate hope, pointing to Jesus, the forerunner who has entered Heaven as High Priest and who, by His presence, guarantees them entrance. Hope is anchored in the finished work of Christ, who atoned for the sins of His people. **That is our hope:** That Christ has already entered Heaven on our behalf and stands ready as High Priest to impart comfort, strength, forgiveness, love, joy, and peace to any who flee to Him for refuge in time of trouble. Like an anchor which holds a boat steady in the midst of a storm, He can sustain and steady us when we are battered and beaten by life. He can do this FOREVER because He is of the order of Melchizedek!" (Ray Stedman) We will meet him next week!

13. What impacted or ministered to you the most from this chapter?



Notes



Lesson 7

Hebrews chapter 7

We have already touched on the significance of Jesus being our High Priest. In fact, the author introduced it in 2:17; 3:1; 4:14; and 5:6, 10. Now, in chapter 7, he begins to explain the significance of the quote from Psalm 110:4: "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." Who is this mysterious, seemingly-mystical man, Melchizedek? Why is the "order of Melchizedek" superior to the priesthood of Aaron's? And honestly, why do we care about a man named Melchizedek, who is only mentioned twice in the Bible (Genesis 14:18, Psalm 110:4)? What real significance can there be in a guy who is barely mentioned?

In chapter 7 the writer will attempt to answer these questions and explain to his readers why Christ's priesthood is superior in "order." Stedman said, "The unfolding of the meaning of the Melchizedek priesthood of Jesus is the goal toward which the author has been aiming ever since 2:17, where he first uses the term high priest in reference to Jesus. This chapter establishes Melchizedek's historic identity, his precedence and superiority to the Levitical priesthood, the consequent need for a radical replacement of the law, and the remarkable advantages which the Melchizedek ministry affords."

God had intended to do something new by bringing into history one who would be a priest like Melchizedek, who was a "type" of the ultimate priesthood of Christ. The writer's purpose for his readers is to see that Jesus perfectly fulfilled what was foreshadowed in the Genesis account of Melchizedek. The parallels between Jesus and Melchizedek enable this obscure Old Testament figure to become a human illustration. Through this analogy, several superior aspects of Jesus' priesthood are evident. This was a new, profound truth that had not yet been presented, so try to imagine how exciting and eye-opening it was for them to hear this. Perhaps this will be a new thought for you as well. Make sure you begin in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to capture your thoughts and give you the ability to spiritually grasp the text and the significance of what the author was trying to say, so many years ago. Have fun!

Memory Verse of the Week: *"But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood." Hebrews 7:24*

First Day – Hebrews 7:1-3

Start working on your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 7:1-28, focusing on verses 1-3. As we read our chapter, remember the High Priest was supposed to come from the tribe of Levi, according to the law (Exodus 29, Numbers 18). Also, remember that in the Old Testament, the throne and the altar were separated; you couldn't be a king and a priest. Those who tried were judged by God. But Melchizedek lived prior to the old covenant so he wasn't bound by it. For the readers, these thoughts were all new. Try to imagine yourself as one of them as you read the text; how puzzling and strange this must have been. But how overwhelmingly encouraging as well!

Let's take a closer look at the description of Melchizedek in verses 1-3. What facts are we given? What does his name mean?

2. The words "righteousness" and "peace" are found many times together in Scripture. Read the following verses and note how they're used.

A. Isaiah 32:17

B. Psalm 85:10

C. Psalm 72:7

D. James 3:17-18

E. Hebrews 12:10-11

Melchizedek's titles were also a foreshadow of Christ. We know that Jesus became the ultimate priest-king, fulfilling what was promised through Zechariah regarding the Messiah (Zechariah 6:13). His name, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," will be written both on His robe and thigh when He returns (Revelation 19:16). He is also the "Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6-7) and called the "Righteous" in 1 John 2:1. Jesus is both the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace.

3. Why do peace and righteousness go together? (Can you have peace without righteousness?)
4. When Abraham met Melchizedek, what did Abraham give him? What did Melchizedek give Abraham? What does this tell us about Abraham's opinion of him?

5. What do we know about Melchizedek's family? What are his qualifications in verse 3, which are another foreshadow of Christ?

Because Melchizedek was an actual man, we know he obviously had parents. The writer is simply using a rabbinical method of interpretation of "the silence" to show that his parents, his age, or his death were never mentioned. All Levitical priests were able to trace their genealogies back to Aaron, proving they were from the tribe of Levi. "Pedigree was of paramount importance!" (Jeff Snell) Priests also served limited terms of office; no more than thirty years, yet Scripture shows no beginning or end for Melchizedek. "Melchizedek's sudden appearance and equally sudden disappearance from recorded history awakens within a sensitive reader the notion of eternity. What foreshadowed in Melchizedek's having no beginning or end was fully realized in Christ's eternal priesthood."

Again, this man was a foreshadow of Christ who fulfilled the prophecy of becoming our eternal priest and king. In verse 3 the writer uses the word "like" because of their similarities, but he doesn't try to say that Jesus and Melchizedek are identical. Melchizedek was "king of righteousness" and "king of peace" but he could never make men righteous or give them peace. Jesus "is" righteousness and peace. He also is not from the tribe of Levi. His royal blood line can be traced to Judah (7:14), giving Him no priestly genealogy, yet He will remain our High Priest forever! He is the eternal Son of God. Because He rose again, He lives in the power of an "endless life" (Hebrews 7:16).

So ... this "order" is superior to Aaron's because Aaron couldn't claim to be without genealogy, claim to have an endless ministry, or claim to be both a king and priest.

6. Let's stop for a minute and focus on the fact that Jesus Christ is our "Prince of Peace." He is the essence and sum of all peace; there is no real or lasting peace without Him. Have you taken Him along on your journey through this life? What about your journey through "today"? Are you lacking peace in some situation? How can you get it?

Second Day – Hebrews 7:4-10

What's your memory verse?

1. Read Hebrews 7:4-10. What is the main point of this section?

2. Why do you think it was such a big deal that Abraham gave Melchizedek his tithe?

I know this is a lot of reading, but believe me, it's worth it. We really need to understand why this is all so significant. The Hebrew writer has used the acts of tithing and bestowing blessings to establish the superiority of Melchizedek. Hughes writes, "In the ancient world, paying tithes to another was recognition of the other's superiority and a sign of subjection to that person. Here Abraham was on a personal mountaintop after slaughtering the invading kings. He had proven himself a man of great courage and of considerable capability. In the eyes of the succeeding Jews, he would be considered to be the greatest of men. He was called the friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7), the father of the nation of Israel; the patriarch. But when he met Melchizedek, he recognized his superior greatness and paid him a tenth of the plunder, the choicest spoils of war. This was a calculated recognition by Abraham that he was in the presence of one greater than himself. Our writer expresses proper astonishment: 'Just think how great he was; even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder.'" "The author makes this powerful point, but he realizes that some may diminish it in their minds by saying, 'what's so great about that? Levitical priests collected tithes too!' So, in anticipation, he further argues that the Levites' ability to collect tithes comes from provision made by the law (vs 5-6) and not from any natural superiority. But Melchizedek was different. He 'did not trace his descent from Levi,' and yet, as a figure of immense superiority, he collected tithes not from the people, but from Abraham! The writer then appeals to the common belief that an ancestor 'contains' all his descendants within himself. Thus he argues, 'One might even say that Levi, who collects the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor (vs 9- 10). Even the Levitical priesthood acknowledges the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood, because it paid tithes to Melchizedek in advance."

"Then Abraham bowed and received a blessing from him. What a stupendous act on Abraham's part! Remember God had told Abraham that 'all people on earth will be blessed through you' (Genesis 12:3). Abraham was the supreme "blesser"; all the rest of mankind were "blesses"! But he sees himself as inferior to Melchizedek, who towers above him with mysterious grandeur and receives his blessing."

Melchizedek blessed Abraham, refreshing and strengthening him with bread and wine. Jesus strengthens those who come to His throne of grace for help. Bread and wine are also a symbol for His body and blood in communion. Abraham paid a tithe (ten percent) of all his goods to Melchizedek as an acknowledgment of his position as high priest of The Most High God. So believers are to acknowledge Jesus as the one who bought us with a price and to recognize we are no longer owners of ourselves or all we possess (1 Cor. 6:19-20)" (Ray Stedman)

3. Read Psalm 85:10. What does the psalmist say about righteousness and peace? Who brings these together in Himself? And who do you think He bestows this “kiss” upon?

Think about this: Jesus Christ is our bridegroom, and we (the Church) are considered the “bride of Christ” (Revelation 19:7-10; 21:2, 9). Righteousness and peace have “kissed” in Christ, and it’s “This kiss that the King repeatedly bestows on His bride.” (Hughes) How awesome is that! The Jewish believers would be blown away with this analogy. But it doesn’t stop there. As Melchizedek offered Abraham bread and wine, now Christ, our eternal Melchizedek, offers the same to His church (Matthew 26:26-30, John 6:53-58, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34). His life, His flesh and blood, has secured our righteousness and peace. “And by feeding on Him as our food and drink, we receive sustenance to live as we ought and to bring His healing kiss to a broken world.” (Hughes) Let your mind dwell on that for the rest of the day. What an amazing Savior we serve!

Third Day – Hebrews 7:11-19

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 7:11-19. The writer now compares the insufficiency of Aaron’s priesthood (11-14) to the sufficiency of Melchizedek’s (15-19). Why was it insufficient? What could it “not” do?
2. What could the “old law” not do? Read Hebrews 10:4, 9:9; Galatians 3:21.

If under the old law Aaron’s priesthood had brought about perfect access and nearness to God, it wouldn’t have needed to be replaced. But it couldn’t. It was only meant to be “provisional.” The sacrifices could only “cover” their sins; they couldn’t take them away. No animal could substitute for a human sinner. With all the rituals and sacrifices, they couldn’t obtain a spiritual life or a clean conscience. The priests could not cleanse the soul from sin. Inwardly, the burden of guilt and the stain of sin remained. Only the blood of Christ will “cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God.” (Hebrews 9:14) If this was all true, then what good was the Law?

The Law came from God and had a divine purpose. The Law revealed sin and made man aware of their spiritual state (Romans 7:7,8). Hughes writes, “The Law programmed God’s people

regarding the necessity of the atonement, as seen in the repeated demand of a blood sacrifice. Sin necessitated the shedding of blood. Sin ... blood, sin ... blood. This developed a conditioned reflex regarding the need for atonement. Indeed, the whole system provided a type of Christ, so that John the Baptist would cry out as Jesus passed by, 'Look, the Lamb of God!' (John 1:35). The Law was, in effect, a teacher, as Paul explained in Galatians 3:24. In reality, the Law was an excellent institution. The real problem was man was sinful (Romans 8:3,7)."

3. According to verse 12, if the priesthood changes, what else had to change? Why?

If the law had to change, God was the only one who could change it. After all, He was the one who made it. Centuries after the Law was written, God Himself said through David, "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind: You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110:4) God changed the Law by appointing Jesus as the High Priest in a whole different order and confirmed that change with an oath (Hebrews 7:28). "With the coming of Christ, the priestly order was transformed and transferred. With His once-and-for-all sacrifice, Christ fulfilled the law and made the Levitical priesthood obsolete." (Ceslaus Spicq)

4. What tribe was Jesus from? (Hebrews 7:14, Luke 3:23-38)

5. According to verses 15-16, Jesus didn't become the high priest based on the law or His genealogy, but based on what?

Remember in Hebrews 5:11 the writer tells his reader that the things he wants to share with them are hard to explain? This was exactly what he was talking about. It was hard for the Jewish believers to understand that Jesus fulfilled the Law, ending the need for animal sacrifices. Jesus abolished the need for the Levitical priesthood. But although the Aaronic priesthood was over because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, the priesthood of Christ remains forever! This thought would definitely rock their boat!

6. In verse 19 what does the writer call this change? Why? What does it accomplish?

7. With what we've learned so far, are you getting a clearer picture of why trying to "get" to God any other way than "through Christ" doesn't work? Does it seem like a "slap" in God's face to you when we take our salvation and the cross so lightly? Write your thoughts ...
8. We are now "free from the Law." Does that mean we are now "free to sin"? What does it mean? (Romans 8:1-14)

Let's end here for today. I'm sorry if it seems like we are going over and over the same thing. The Holy Spirit obviously thought it was a vital concept for us to grasp. It shows us the complete significance of what Christ did. I pray that we will understand and appreciate the "better hope" we have in Jesus more and more every day.

Fourth Day – Hebrews 7:20-28

Write out your verse from memory. Did you hide it in your heart?

1. Read Hebrews 7:20-28. True to the writer's style, he introduces a new thought with a word or phrase and then explains it in more depth in the next few chapters. What two new words or thoughts does he introduce in verse 22? What do you think they mean?
2. God swore an oath when he appointed Christ as priest. According to these verses, is it permanent or temporary?

The word "surety" also translates "guarantee" or "one who guarantees that the terms of an agreement will be carried out." The word "covenant" or "testament" is used 21 times in this letter, which shows its obvious importance. We'll look closer at the meaning of covenant in our

next chapter. The exciting point in this verse is that Jesus is our guarantee that all God's promises will be fulfilled! Kistemaker writes, "No promise God has made to us can ever be broken, for Jesus gives us the assurance that His perfection will be our perfection, our bodies will 'be like His glorious body' (Phil. 3:21), and His ascension guarantees our entrance into Heaven (John 14:3)."

3. Why is it so significant that Jesus' priesthood will never change? How does that bring us confidence?

4. According to verse 25, what is Jesus able to do and continue to do?

5. What do the following verses say about this?

A. Hebrews 9:24

B. Romans 8:34

C. Romans 8:26-27

D. John 14:6

Jesus is making intercession for us. Intercession means "to meet, to approach, to appeal, to make petition." We are imperfect, sinful people, and Jesus is perfect and holy. Jesus' contact with the Father is unbroken. His intercession is never-ending. Day by day, hour by hour, He prays for us and stands in the gap for us. He represents us at the throne of God. How does He do that? Hughes

writes, “He, along with the Holy Spirit, takes our feeble prayers, cleans them up, ennobles them, and presents them to the Father. St. Chrysostom, the great fourth century preacher, provides a helpful analogy. A young boy whose father was away on a trip wanted to present his father with something that would please him. His mother sent him to the garden to gather a bouquet of flowers. The little boy gathered a sorry bouquet of weeds as well as flowers. But when his father returned home, he was presented with a beautifully arranged bouquet, for the mother had intervened, removing all the weeds. The prayers of the church --prevailing, acceptable, and faithful -- are not a thing of beauty as they leave the lips of saints. As they start their way Heavenward, they are a mixed bag of weeds with a few stray flowers. When they arrive, however, thanks to the intercession of Christ, they are nothing but beautiful flowers. What blessed, comforting thoughts these are as we, amidst our frailties, pray.” It’s only through Christ that we are able to draw near to God.

Hebrews 7:25 tells us that Jesus can save completely! That means for all time, absolutely, totally, and eternally. The Gospel is the “power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jews, then for the Gentiles (Romans 1:16).” The words are in the present tense, meaning that Jesus didn’t just “save” us when we accepted Christ, but refers to the ongoing experience of being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18). Raymond Brown said, “He saves us, not only in the moment of initial commitment, but day by day and moment by moment, through all time! His perpetual saving work brings about our growing sanctification as we are made ever more like Him.”

6. How does the writer describe Jesus in verse 26?

7. What is the main point of verses 27-28?

8. Because of Jesus we can confidently approach the throne of God. We don’t need any other go-between to come before His presence. Do you understand the access that has been granted you? How will your prayer life change as you fully grasp the freedom of access you have to God’s throne? Are you taking full advantage of the gift of access you have?

9. I know we’ve talked about this, but let me ask you this question again: We know that Jesus is there to help us in our time of need, so ... why do we run to other things or other people?

We can tell that the Jews longed to be in God's presence because of their writings, especially the psalmists. They "longed to see the beauty of the Lord" (27:4), longed to be in His presence as if they had a physical thirst (42:1-2), and their souls felt parched as if they were in a desert (63:1). A day with Him was better than a lifetime spent elsewhere. But they only had a limited access to God, being under the Old Covenant and Law. But you and I have perfect access to Him through Christ. The veil has been torn, giving us access to the Holy of Holies. Yet, are we passionate about being with Him? Do we long and thirst for Him? We have so many reasons to love Him, yet do we? Are we "aching" to be in His presence?

Spend time in His presence now. Give Him thanks for all He has done for you, praise Him for who He is, rejoice in what He's going to do. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with a hunger and thirst for righteousness. As you draw near to Him, He WILL draw near to you. That's a promise you can hold on to. (James 4:8). We have a guarantee!

Let's rejoice together in the complete and perfect salvation we have through an amazing and perfect Savior and High Priest, Jesus Christ!



Notes



Jesus is Better

Lesson 8

Hebrews chapter 8

In chapter 7:22 we were introduced to the word “covenant” for the first time in this book. Now, in chapter 8 the writer expounds on that word, explaining what it means and the importance of this “New Covenant” that you and I have the privilege of enjoying. I want to warn you about something before we go any further. When you first read this chapter, you might think it’s boring or redundant. You might be tempted to just skim it, thinking you already understand its significance. Well, ladies, I’m here to say, “Don’t do it!” As we look a little deeper into what the New Covenant is all about and what privileges and blessings we have as a result of it, believe me, you will be blown away! I certainly was. I actually was brought to tears as I began, once again, to understand more fully what the writer was so desperately trying to get across to his readers. It’s so easy to take for granted the spiritual privileges that Christ has made available to us. We can become unappreciative or lack a sense of gratitude and thankfulness. As we study this week, I challenge you to allow the Holy Spirit to open your heart to all He has for you and rekindle a passion that can so easily fade. Don’t give in to the temptation to just answer the questions quickly and half-heartedly. Let Him dig deep into your soul. So ... are you ready?

Memory Verse of the Week: *“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.”*
Hebrews 8:6

First Day – Hebrews 8:1-2

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 8:1-13. Reread verses 1-6. The writer has been talking a lot about Jesus as our High Priest, and now he reminds his readers of another function/role that Christ embodies. What is it? (vs 6)
2. What is Christ’s position, according to verse 1?
3. What is the significance of this?

4. What title does the writer give God the Father?

The writer is showing us that since Christ is superior, the covenant that He ministers must also be superior. He reminds us that Jesus is morally superior in verse 1 by obviously referring back to His qualifications in 7:22-28. Our text tells us that Jesus was “seated” at the right hand of God, which is extremely significant. He is seated because His work is completed, as we heard Him triumphantly cry from the cross, “It is finished.” (John 19:30). Kistemaker wrote, “Sitting was often a mark of honor or authority in the ancient world: a king sat to receive his subjects, a court to give judgment, and a teacher to teach.” Wiersbe wrote, “There were no chairs in the Old Testament tabernacle because the work of the priests was never finished. Each repeated sacrifice was only a reminder that none of the sacrifices ever provided a finished salvation. The blood of animals did not wash away our sin or cleanse the guilty conscience; it only covered sin until that day when Jesus Christ died to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).”

5. “Where” is Christ seated, according to verse 1? (Colossians 3:1) Why is that significant as well?

Many verses describe God as being seated on His throne (Revelation 4:2, 10; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:10), and Jesus, who shares His throne (Revelation 1:4-5; 3:21; 7:15-17; 12:5), sitting on His right hand.

6. Verse 1 is a fulfillment of Psalm 110:1, which the writer quoted back in Hebrews 1:13. What was the prophecy and how was it fulfilled?

7. Looking at verse 1 again, what wording does the writer use to show us that Christ was exalted?

8. According to verse 2, what is Jesus doing in the sanctuary? (Do you remember what the word “minister” means?)

The fact that Jesus is sitting down doesn’t mean He wasn’t active. He “serves” in the sanctuary. Serving is part of His divine being and character. He serves on our behalf.

9. How does the fact that “Jesus is serving on your behalf” make you feel? What emotion does that stir within you?

10. What is the sanctuary and the true tabernacle (vs 2)?

The writer has been consistent in his style of writing. In our chapter, he throws out the term tabernacle but explains it in the next chapter. For now, we need to understand that the tabernacle and the sanctuary are basically the same. “The true tabernacle has been set up by the Lord. What he means is that God gave Moses a copy of the tabernacle which the Lord God showed him (Exodus 25:9, 40). The copy was on earth; the true tabernacle is in Heaven. Does Scripture mention a tabernacle in Heaven? Yes, Isaiah says that he saw ‘the Lord seated on the throne, high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the temple’ (Isaiah 6:1). The sanctuary has not been erected by man, but by God. God would never have set it up if He had not appointed Christ to serve in the tabernacle. After His atoning work was accomplished, Jesus entered God’s sanctuary and there represents the interests of all His people. From God’s tabernacle flow blessings that surpass any blessings from the Levitical sacrificial system.” (Kistemaker)

11. There is a lot of great stuff packed into these first two verses. Write your thoughts...

See you tomorrow, ladies. Meditate on the awesome truth that Jesus is serving us right now, continually making intercession for us no interruptions, no pauses... continually serving....

Second Day – Hebrews 8:3-6

What’s your memory verse?

1. Read Hebrews 8:1-6 again. In your own words, what is the writer saying in verses 3-4? (Also, read 9:24-28)

Because Jesus is the High Priest, He must offer gifts and sacrifices, in God’s appointed places (Deuteronomy 12:13-14), which is in the sanctuary. Christ is in Heaven, so, obviously, His

sanctuary is also in Heaven. He offered Himself “once and for all” (Hebrews 9:24-28), so He is our living sacrifice in Heaven! The tabernacle and temple were imitations or copies of the true sanctuary, with limitations. The word “copy” refers to substance, and the word “shadow” means a “reflection of the Heavenly original.” Jesus serves in the “real” tabernacle, in the presence of God!

2. In verse 3 the writer says that Jesus has “something” to offer. According to 9:14, what is that “something”?
3. Jeff Snell describes the New Covenant (vs6) as a “free upgrade in our relationship with God.” What do you think he means?
4. How was Moses the “mediator” of the old covenant? (Galatians 3:19-20, Exodus 20:19)
5. Read Hebrews 8:6-7. The old covenant wasn’t wrong or bad; it just wasn’t perfect. It was flawed. But the problem wasn’t with the Law; it was with our sinful natures, for by ourselves we couldn’t keep God’s Law, because it couldn’t change the human heart. (Romans 7:12; Hebrews 7:19) Why, do you think, was the law made to have “fault”?
6. What was the new covenant “established” on, according to verse 6?
7. I’ve heard it said that some people “like to use the new covenant as the means of their salvation, yet choose to live under the old covenant for their sanctification, while expecting others to do the same.” What does that mean? How is that dangerous?

8. Does living under the freedom of the “new covenant” give us a license to sin? Are we now “free from observing the law?” (Read Galatians 5:1, 13-14; 1 Peter 2:15-17, and 1 Corinthians 8 for help.) Why is this principle so important, especially in light of what we learned in Hebrews 3 about being “partakers of Christ’s nature”? (If we’re free, what are we free from?)
9. Can you give a present-day example of the above scenario?
10. Take a minute and examine your own life. Are you rejoicing in the freedom you have in Christ, yet abusing that freedom in some area, sinning yourself or causing others to sin?

That’s it for today. God bless you, ladies!

Third Day – Hebrews 8:7-13

Are you working on your verse?

1. Read Hebrews 8:7-13. What is the writer’s “logical” argument for the establishing of the New Covenant, in verse 7?

With his usual style, the writer now quotes the Old Testament, specifically Jeremiah 31:31-34. It must have been really important because he partially quotes it again in 10:16-17. It was a direct quotation from God in the first person. Hughes writes, “The quotation dates back over 600 years to Josiah’s reign, when after the rediscovery of the Law, a national time of repentance, and a public covenant to keep the Law, Israel failed again. In the midst of this dark failure, God promised a New Covenant, not conditional like the old, but unconditional, totally dependent upon the work of God.”

2. How many times is the phrase “I will” used in this section?

Remember that the old covenant was dependent on man’s faithfulness. It was about the Israelites “obeying God’s Word” (Exodus 24:3), which we know they broke over and over again.

The New Covenant emphasizes God's "I will." It doesn't depend on man's faithfulness to God but on God's faithful promise to man. God says "I will" on behalf of those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.

3. The first "new" promise the writer brings to our attention is an "inner" understanding of the truth and an inner change, rather than simply an external one. What verse supports that? (Also, read 2 Corinthians 3)

The Old Covenant couldn't fulfill the conditions of the law or give them the power to obey. That can only be done through the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:1-4). After we accept Christ under the New Covenant, we are "new creatures" in Christ and have a new nature (2 Corinthians 5:17). We also now experience the inner struggle between our flesh and the Spirit that Paul talks about in Romans 7:15-19. We have a new understanding of both good and evil. We've changed inside.

4. The next "better promise" is that we can have an intimate relationship with God. We are now part of the family and can know Him directly and deeply. How does verse 11 show us that?
5. According to verse 12, what is the third "better promise" of the New Covenant? How is it the basis of the other two?

We know that the old law only "covered" man's sins, awaiting and pointing to the true forgiveness through Christ's death. So now under the New Covenant, we have complete forgiveness available to us. Verse 12 tells us that He will "remember our sins no more." That phrase means to "not hold them against us." He deals with us on the basis of grace and mercy instead of law and merit. It is a legal term. Once God forgives us, it is settled once and for all. When God sees us, He sees Jesus' payment for our sin, and because the debt has been paid, the debt is forgotten. He treats us like we never did it. How can that be? Because He treated Christ as though He had done it.

6. So, how are our sins forgiven? Read 1 John 1:9.

7. Because we are forgiven, we are called to forgive others. What do these verses say about that?

A. Ephesians 4:32

B. Matthew 6:11-15

C. Matthew 18:21-22

8. Is there someone in your life that God has called you to forgive and you're holding on to it? According to these verses, what do you need to do? (How serious an offense is it to hold on to bitterness and refuse to give the gift of forgiveness to others?)

9. Maybe the person who wronged you has never asked for your forgiveness. What should you do? What does Psalm 86:5 tell us about God's nature? (How is that our example?)

10. Have you wronged or sinned against someone? Is there someone you need to go to and ask forgiveness from? Will you do that this week? What's holding you back?

I will admit, I don't like this topic. I tend to be a grudge-holder, which I hate about myself. What about you? I almost didn't even want to write these words because I knew I would have to do some heart-work. I pray that each of us will allow the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and give us an honest assessment of its state. Unforgiveness will hinder our fellowship with God. I don't want that, do you?

Fourth Day – Hebrews 8:13

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Read Hebrews 8:1-13. What is the writer's point in verse 13?

2. Does the writer mean that the Ten Commandments are done away with? What does Jesus say about that in Matthew 5:17-18?

When the New Covenant takes effect, there's no reason to rely on the old one. Verse 13 tells us that the law's work is finished when a man or woman comes to Christ. The Law couldn't make them perfect, but they can now come to the One who can! We no longer need the "condemning" work of the law (Romans 8:1). Now the Holy Spirit is the one who reveals sin to us and brings us to a place of repentance and restoration.

The old covenant was made by God with the nation of Israel and was written on stone tablets; the new is established with the believer in Christ and is written on their hearts.

3. Do you think you fully appreciate the spiritual blessings that you've received through this New Covenant with Christ?
4. Let's think back to verse 2 where we see Jesus "serving" in the tabernacle. Was Jesus a servant here on earth as well? Read John 13:1-20. It's a very familiar story to most of us. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you read it with "new eyes." Pick out some verses or phrases that specifically minister to you.
5. What attitude is needed to be a true servant of others? Why?
6. Do you think you are following Christ's example of service? Do you put the needs of others before yourself? Do you consistently humble yourself to serve others, or is that an area of struggle for you?

William Barclay reminds us that by taking His seat at the “right hand of the throne of majesty in the Heavens, it was final proof of His glory. But it was also proof of His service.”

I love this paragraph by Barclay because it is very thought-provoking. As you read through it, pray and ponder all that he’s saying.

“Jesus never looked on majesty as something to be selfishly enjoyed. One of the greatest Roman Emperors was Marcus Aurelius; as an administrator he was unsurpassed. He died at age 59, having worked himself to death in the services of his people. He was one of the Stoic Saints. When chosen to succeed in due time to the imperial power, his biographer Capitolinus tells us, ‘He was appalled rather than overjoyed, and when he was told to move to the private house of Hadrian, the Emperor, it was with reluctance that he departed from his mother’s villa. And when the members of the household asked him why he was sorry to receive the royal adoption, he enumerated to them the toils which sovereignty involved.’ Marcus Aurelius saw kingship in terms of service and not of majesty.

Jesus is the unique example of divine majesty and divine service combined. He knew that He had been given His supreme position, not jealousy to guard it in splendid isolation, but rather to enable others to attain to it and to share it. In Him the supreme majesty and the supreme service met.”

7. In your own words, explain the point Barclay is making.

8. Are you a leader of any sort? Are you more concerned with “leading” or “serving”? Do you think you have a good balance of both?

9. Of this chapter, Andrew Murray said, “A Heavenly sanctuary and a Heavenly High Priest ask for a Heavenly Christian and a Heavenly Heart.” What do you think that means? Do you have a “heavenly heart”?



Notes



Jesus is Better

Lesson 9

Hebrews chapter 9

Blood. Yes, you read that right. This chapter is about blood. The writer is now going to emphasize to his readers the importance of blood in the cleansing process. It's an interesting concept because we all know that a blood stain is almost impossible to remove. But it's blood that makes us clean. When Christ died in our place, purity became possible, because His blood washed away the stain of our sin. That's the central message or theme of this chapter: that Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice once and for all. The writer compares the two sanctuaries to show us what makes the new superior to the old and why blood was needed.

William Barclay provides us with a beautiful introduction to the chapter. He wrote, "The writer of Hebrews has been using the idea that in the world we have only pale copies of what is truly real. The worship that men can offer is only a ghost-like shadow of the real worship which Jesus, the real High Priest, alone can offer. But even as he thinks of that, his mind goes back to the Tabernacle (the *Tabernacle*, remember, not the *Temple*). Lovingly he remembers its beauty; lovingly he lingers on its priceless possessions. And the thought in his mind is this – all of the loveliness of the Tabernacle was only a shadow of reality, how surpassingly lovely the reality must be. He does not tell us of the Tabernacle in detail; he only alludes to certain of its treasures. This was all he needed to do because his readers knew its glories and had them printed on their memories. But we do not know them; therefore, let us see what the beauty of the earthly Tabernacle was like, always remembering that it was only a pale copy of reality."

In Hebrews 8:5 the writer brings up the Tabernacle that Moses was told to build, and now he goes on to show us the connection between the covenant and the Tabernacle.

Again, the important thing to remember as you read this chapter is that everything about the building and its furniture was meant as a teaching tool. It was all symbolic, pointing, once again, to the True High Priest, who brought about the New Covenant, and ministers in a superior sanctuary!

Memory Verse of the Week: *"So Christ was offered only once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."*
Hebrews 9:28

First Day – Hebrews 9 Overview

Start working on your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 9:1-28. With his usual style, the writer uses comparisons to make a point. What facts does he use to compare the following:

Old Covenant's Sanctuary

New Covenant's Sanctuary

Old Covenant's Sacrifice

New Covenant's Sacrifice

Second Day – Hebrews 9:1-5

Review your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 9:1-5. Whose idea was it to build the Tabernacle, as well as how to furnish it? (See Exodus 25:8-9)
2. Compare the adjective used in 9:2 to describe the sanctuary (or the Tabernacle) to the adjective used to describe it in 9:11.

The next few verses will give us an idea where the cleansing process would take place for the people of Israel. There were various washings, offerings, and sacrifices designed to keep their ceremonial purity intact, keeping them in a right relationship with God. But on one day a year, the Day of Atonement, the High Priest entered an area that was restricted to everyone else, known as the Most Holy Place. That's where the High Priest would offer the sacrifice of animal blood to purify the people.

Hughes writes, "The Tabernacle was a portable, tent-like shrine that was always situated at the geographical heart of Israel, with all the tribes camped around it in designated, orderly formation. Approaching the Tabernacle, one first would see the white linen walls of the Court of the

Tabernacle, which formed an enclosure 150 feet long and 75 feet wide. The uniform whiteness of the enclosure's walls broadcast the holiness of its function. When a worshipper entered the courtyard, he was immediately in front of the altar of Burnt Offering, a large bronze altar with a horn at each of its four corners to which offerings could be tied. This was as far as the layman could come, and it is the place where he laid his hands on the head of the sin offering (Leviticus 1:4). Behind the altar and a little to the right stood the bronze laver, a washbasin for the exclusive use of the priests, which, if neglected, imperiled their lives (Exodus 30:20,21).

"Directly behind the laver was the Tabernacle, a flat-roofed, oblong tent 15 feet in height and width and 45 feet long. It was covered with three layers. The first consisted of gorgeous woven tapestries of blue, purple, and scarlet yarns and linen, which was then overlaid with two layers of animal skins. Inside, the Tabernacle was divided into two rooms by an ornate veil woven of the same colors, along with gold, and embroidered with cherubim. The veil was supported by four golden columns set on silver bases. The first outer room was called the Holy Place and the second inner compartment was the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies."

3. Hopefully, that description helps you picture the Tabernacle a little bit. What does the writer say is in the first room, according to verse 2?

4. Read Exodus 25:31-40 and 27:20-21 and describe the Lampstand.

5. All the furnishings were prophetic of Christ. What do you think the Lampstand signifies? Read John 1:4-5, 8:12, Matthew 5:14-16, and Philippians 2:14-15.

6. The table (vs. 2) is also called the "table of showbread" or the "table of the Presence". Read Exodus 25:23-30 and Leviticus 24:5-9. Briefly give the description of the table, including who could eat there and what they ate. What is this to remind the Israelites of?

7. What was this prophetic of? Read John 6:35, 48-51. What sustains us?

8. According to verses 3-5, what is in the “second” room, or the Holy of Holies?

The exact location of the “golden altar of incense” is debatable. It was made to burn incense, and God had instructed Moses to “put the altar in front of the curtain that is before the Ark of the Testimony” (Exodus 30:6). But here the writer says that the altar was with the ark in the Most Holy Place. Every morning and every evening Aaron or one of his male descendants had to burn incense on the altar (Exodus 30:7-8), so it had to be outside of the Holy of Holies. There are various explanations given which seem to contradict each other. While the location is puzzling, the prophetic significance is not. Hughes writes, “The incense prophesies of the ultimate prayers offered by Christ, our High Priest, in the presence of God.” (Psalm 141:2, Romans 8:33-34).

9. What is the “Ark of the Covenant”? Read Exodus 25:10-22.

The Ark of the covenant was the throne of God in the Tabernacle. It represented the dwelling place of God, visible in the Shekinah (glowing light) which rested between the cherubim atop the mercy seat. On the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the High Priest took a basin of blood from the goat which had been sacrificed on that day and sprinkled it on the mercy seat for his own sins and the sins of the people (Lev. 16). The blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat to cover the tables of Law within the Ark. God did not look at the broken Law; He looked at the blood. Christ is our “mercy seat” (1 John 2:2, Romans 3:25). But His blood does not just cover sin; it takes away sin.” (Wiersbe)

The Ark contained the golden pot of manna (Exodus 16:32-34), Aaron’s rod (Numbers 17:8-10), and the tablets of the Law (Exodus 32:15, Deuteronomy 10:4,5).

The manna would remind Israel of God’s loving care for them in the wilderness, the rod of Aaron would remind them of the Levitical priesthood that God had ordained (more important than any human provision), and the tablets would speak of the holy character which God’s people must continually measure themselves against. These speak of God’s love, His redemption, and His holiness.

10. Stedman says that the above three “find their counterpart in Christian experience.” What does that mean?

I hope you have a little better picture of what’s inside the Tabernacle and what it’s symbolic of. Hopefully, you can do some more research on your own. Even though the writer of Hebrews didn’t need to spend too much time on it because they all understood it (vs 5), we certainly do. We need to understand the deeper significance of what he’s saying so we can connect all the dots! See you tomorrow, ladies!

Third Day – Hebrews 9:6-10

What’s your memory verse?

In our lesson last week, we read about the mercy seat, which was the gold plate that covered the Ark of the Covenant. It was on this plate that the blood of the atonement was sprinkled and the sins of the people were “propitiated”. Hughes writes, “Romans 3:25 tells us that Christ was ‘displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood.’ Likewise, 1 John 2:2 proclaims, ‘and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins.’ The mercy seat symbolized Christ’s work. Moreover, Jesus fleshed out the contents of the Ark. He perfectly fulfilled the stone tablets of the Law (Deut. 10:5 Matthew 5:17). Aaron’s staff that budded when it confirmed him as the High Priest (Numbers 17:1-11) is fully flowered in Christ’s priesthood. And the manna again speaks of Him who is the ultimate Bread of Life (Exodus 16:33-34; John 6:35). The ‘Cherubim of Glory’ perpetually looked down in wonder as they knelt at the mercy seat with their wings arched and touching overhead.” What a glorious sight!

1. Read Hebrews 9:6-10. Every day the priests performed their duties in the Tabernacle, which included tending to the lamps, stoking coal on the altar of incense, and exchanging the loaves of bread. But how often could the High Priest enter the second room, or the Holy of Holies?
2. We see how there was “limited access” to God under the Old Covenant. There was also “limited efficacy,” which means “effectiveness” or “ability”. What verse reflects that and why?

3. What happened to sins that were committed purposefully? What does Numbers 15:22-31 say about that?

We know that David premeditated his sin with Bathsheba, so what, then, could he do with his sin? Was he forever guilty? Again, in his eloquent way, Hughes writes, “The system simply did not provide a remedy. This is what Psalm 51 is all about. David knew he was a sinner and confessed it. He also knew there was no sacrifice he could bring (Psalm 51:16). So, what could he do? Only one thing – come to God with a contrite heart and throw himself on God’s mercy: ‘The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise (vs 17).’ This is how David was forgiven and saved. Thus, we see that the spiritually informed in the Old Testament came to understand that their only hope was a repentant heart and God’s grace and mercy. Ultimately, salvation rested on the blood of Christ. The spiritual limitations of the old system went even deeper. Because the sins of ignorance could only be forgiven, no one could have a completely clear conscience.”

4. How do verses 9-10 show us that the old system was external and superficial? (Also, compare the two uses of the word “time”.)
5. According to verse 11, how is the New Covenant’s sanctuary superior to the old? (Compare Hebrews 9:24)

Now we get to the issue of blood. It’s thought that during the thousand-plus years of the Old Covenant, there were more than a million animal sacrifices. That’s a lot of blood! During Passover, an actual trough was constructed from the Temple down into the Kidron Valley for the disposal of blood, a sacrificial plumbing system. Ugh!! Why so much blood? there was one main reason: to teach that sin demands the shedding of blood. Although it’s not the blood itself that atones for the sins, it shows us that sin both brings and demands death. All the Israelites knew that sin brings death.

As consistent with his style, the writer throws out a term and then comes back to repeat it and reveal its full significance. Here in chapter 9, he introduces the theme of the High Priest’s entering the Most Holy Place in 9:7; he expands on it in 9:11-12; and he summarizes it in 9:25.

6. From the verses in the above paragraph, list all that is said about the blood of Christ. How is the sacrifice under the New Covenant superior?

7. The writer uses the phrase “the good things to come.” He doesn’t explain exactly what he means. What are some things he could be referring to?
8. According to verse 12, what was the purpose for Christ’s sacrificial death?
9. According to verse 13, what did the blood of the sacrificed animals do for them?
10. In contrast to that, what does verse 14 say the blood of Christ does? (Compare 9:23)

The Israelites only had animals to offer in sacrifices, which they had to repeat over and over. Christ offered only one sacrifice – not an animal, but Himself – and He did it once for all. This type of cleansing is not only an outward, temporary cleansing, but eternal redemption! We no longer have to follow rituals, but enjoy access to the presence of the Living God!

11. Are there any types of rules or rituals you follow that you feel make you “better” or more acceptable to God? Is there something that you think is needed other than “repentance” to be forgiven of your sins? (How does that downplay Christ’s death on the cross?)

Let’s end here for today. Spend some time in prayer, thanking Him for being our “once-and-for-all” sacrifice. You, O Lord, are worthy of all honor, glory, and praise!

Fourth Day – Hebrews 9:15-28

Write out your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 9:15-22. In verse 15, what point that he introduced in 8:6 is he now expounding? (What does it mean? How was it established?)

Because of the blood of animals sacrificed to atone for man's transgressions sanctified him outwardly, inwardly man still struggled with a guilty conscience. The first covenant, therefore, needed to be replaced.

2. In verses 16-17, the writer moves from using "religious" words to legal terms. Can you explain what he means, and how it relates to our context?

I hope you don't read this before you answer the question above! 😊 Anyway, the writer points out that the death of the writer of the will validates or activates the will. The implication he is making is that the maker of the covenant is God, who also has made a will. Christ is not the maker of a covenant or a will, but functions as a mediator and a guarantor. Christ sees that the conditions of the covenant, or will, are met and the promises are honored. Jesus died to fulfill these conditions, validating the will and testament so that we may "receive the promised eternal inheritance." (9:15) And to top it off, in this case, we "heirs" receive an eternal inheritance and live with Him forever!

3. In verses 18-22, how many times is the word "blood" used? Why is blood so important? Note specifically verse 22, along with Leviticus 17:11.
4. Compare Exodus 24:1-8, which our writer quotes in Hebrews 9:20, with the words of Christ in Matthew 26:28. Describe and compare the connection between the two.
5. Read Hebrews 9:23-28. We know the New Covenant is far superior to the Old. According to verse 24, how does the blood of Jesus grant us better "representation" before the Father?
6. How do these verses show us the New Covenant offers a "better hope"? (Which verses specifically?)

7. How many times is the word “appear” found in verses 24-28? Notice the three different tenses of the word, which summarizes the Lord’s work. Fill in the blanks from the text:

A. Christ has appeared to _____. (vs 26)

B. Christ is appearing to _____. (vs 24)

C. One day, Christ will appear to _____. (vs 28)

8. How many times is the word “once” used in this chapter? Why is this significant?

9. Read verse 24 again. As usual, the writer throws out a topic and will further expound on it in the next chapter. Why do you think the writer makes the statement here? How does it tie in?

The writer ends this chapter with the promise of Christ’s return! He is not coming to remove sin as a High Priest, but to bring salvation and glory to those who eagerly await Him! He is coming again as King and priest! The early church never forgot the promise of the Second Coming, and we shouldn’t either! We look forward to His return, and the hope of His coming should have a purifying effect on us! We are His bride, readying ourselves for His arrival! (Matthew 25:1-13).

10. As we think of His return, we must ask ourselves the question: How should we live as we wait? What do the following verses say about this?

A. 2 Peter 3:11-14

B. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-22

11. What specifically spoke to your heart in this chapter? Has the Lord shown you any changes He’d like you to make as a result?



Notes



Jesus is Better

Lesson 10

Hebrews chapter 10

In our lesson this week, the writer seeks to give his readers even more Scriptural proof that Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice. He confirms and reiterates the truths that he has presented to us, as well as presenting some additional proofs. Chapter 10 is a pivotal chapter. Basically, the book of Hebrews can be broken down into two sections. Hebrews chapter 1 through 10:18 is the dogmatic, or theology, section, and 10:19 through 13:25 is the practical section. Section 1 is packed full of teaching, adding just a few exhortations, while section 2 emphasizes exhortation with a small amount of teaching.

The theme of our chapter is that Jesus is the “better” sacrifice. Chapter 10 has been given a variety of titles, such as “Jesus, The Ultimate Sacrifice,” “Enduring Effectiveness,” “Let Us Go On!”, and “The Only True Sacrifice.” As you read through the chapter, ask the Holy Spirit to give you a creative title that would not only reflect the main point, but help you remember it as well. Make sure you begin with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to give you the ability to understand the text and the wisdom to know how to apply it.

Memory Verse of the Week: *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.” Hebrews 10:23*

First Day – Hebrews 10:1-10

Work on your memory verse. Are you holding on to hope?

1. Read Hebrews 10:1-18. Focus on verses 1-4. The author builds on a few thoughts he has already presented. Do you remember what those are?
2. How is the law only a “shadow” of the good things to come? What does he mean?

When used as a noun, the word “shadow” means “the dim representation of the real thing.” The law was a shadow indicating that Christ was soon to appear. The sacrificial system was temporary, unable to accomplish anything permanent.

3. According to these verses, what makes Jesus the “better sacrifice”?
4. How does the repetition of the animal sacrifices reveal the system’s weakness?

For many of the Jews, the ritual of offering sacrifices to God became a mechanical deed or an empty ritual. (Not all, but many) Animal sacrifices were substitutes, used to cover sins, rather than cleanse the sinner. The animals that were offered were unwilling and inadequate substitutes for humans made in the image of God. Bottom line, though, was that God’s approved way to deal with sin in one’s life was that a life be laid down. Every dying animal meant a life brought to an end. Sin was serious. Unless the sin could be removed, the sinner must die. To save the sinner from death, a substitute must be found. Jesus became that substitute.

Kistemaker wrote, “Although God had instituted these practices so that man would not have to offer his own life, they were only substitutes. The writers of the Old Testament Scriptures voice God’s dissatisfaction with the sacrificial system. They write that the significance of a sacrifice to God ought to be found not in the animal that was offered but in the worshipper’s heart that was broken and contrite (1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 40:6; 50:8-10; 51: 16-17; Isaiah 1:10-12; Jeremiah 7:21-23; Hosea 6:6; Amos 5:21-23).”

God isn’t satisfied with a sacrifice that comes to Him without a broken and contrite heart. He simply wants trust and obedience to His will.

5. Read Hebrews 10:5-10. The writer uses a quote from Psalm 40:6-8 to describe the substitute. The words are directly ascribed to Jesus, referring to His birth. Was He a willing or unwilling sacrifice?

The writer uses this Davidic quote, but it becomes Messianic in this context. In verses 8-10, he gives a brief commentary on verses 5-8, explaining the quote and why he used it. God was not pleased by “offerings and sacrifices” alone, but desired genuine, devoted service. He desired obedience then, and He desires obedience now.

6. Read 1 Samuel 15:22. What delights the Lord?

Also, read Romans 12:1-2. According to Hebrews 11:4, what made Abel’s sacrifice better than Cain’s?

7. How many times is the word “will” used in this chapter? Why is this so significant?

Christ was deliberate in following the will of the Father. Even though He knew the pain and suffering that He would endure, He still chose to obey. The will of God was central in Christ’s life, so the writer tries to exhort His readers to make that same commitment. What really pleases God? Unfaltering trust and obedience from His kids.

8. Let’s stop and ask ourselves the obvious question. Are we deliberate and passionate about doing God’s will? What about when we know there will be pain or suffering involved? What if it would be the “unpopular” choice?

9. According to verse 10, it’s by His will that we are sanctified, or “made holy,” through the offering of Christ’s body. What do you think he means?

The word holy means “set apart.” We have been “set apart” from this world of sin. Used as a verb in this context, “have been” means “at any given moment, someone acted on our behalf to sanctify us, and we have become pure.” We know that “someone” is Jesus Christ. This is the only place in this book where the writer mentions the “bodily” sacrifice of Jesus. Many think it’s used here to emphasize the reality of His physical death, reminding the readers that Jesus physically came to do God’s will, offering His body as a sacrifice.

10. How does this section relate to us, personally? We don’t sacrifice animals anymore, but how can we still be guilty of bringing gifts or offerings that aren’t pleasing to Him? Are you ever guilty of this?

11. Is there a decision in your life that needs to be made? Are you trying to figure out how to handle a specific situation? How much time have you spent seeking the Lord’s heart, counsel, and will? Have you been paying more attention to the “pros and cons” list than what the Word of God has to say? Take the time to ask the Lord for His direction and guidance. He will never lead you astray!

That’s all for today. May we follow in Christ’s footsteps and deliberately choose to follow God’s will. See you tomorrow, ladies!

Second Day – Hebrews 10:11-18

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 10:11-18. What is the main point?
2. Read verses 11 and 12 again and write a contrast/comparison between the two.
3. Go back and read Hebrews 9:1-5. Was there a chair in the tabernacle? Why is that significant?
4. Jesus “sat” down. Why is that significant?
5. The writer quotes Psalm 110:1. According to verses 13-14, what was He waiting for? What does that mean? (Read 1 Corinthians 15:26 for help.)

Jesus finished His redemptive work and abolished the Levitical priesthood. His sacrifice broke the power of sin. Christ entered Heaven and took the seat of honor, next to the Father. Again, He is the priest that fulfilled His mission to remove sin and the King who conquered sin and death.

Kistemaker wrote, “Since the time of His ascension, Christ has been ‘waiting for the moment when His enemies will be made His footstool.’ He waits for the appropriate time, much the same as a farmer waits for the land to yield its produce in harvest season (James 5:7; also see Heb. 11:10). His enemies are all those who oppose Christ’s dominion, authority, and power. ‘The last enemy to be destroyed is death.’ (1 Cor. 15:26). Christ waits for the final destruction of His enemies.”

6. Have you ever wondered what it’s like for Christ to know the suffering His children face and the evil in the world, while He “waits” for the appointed time?

7. Read Romans 8:31-39. Do we have to fear death? Why or why not?
8. Somehow it brings me comfort to know that Christ is waiting for the “appointed time.” I like the fact that someone is in control of what’s happening in this world. It’s no coincidence or “happenstance.” There will be things that happen in my life “at the appointed time”; no sooner or no later. What are your thoughts about this? Does it bring you comfort?
9. What word in verse 14 tells us that sanctification is a “process”?
10. The writer quotes Jeremiah 31:33-34 in verses 16-18. According to verse 15, who does the writer attribute these words to?

The writer quotes from Jeremiah to help them understand that the new covenant has begun. Under God’s new covenant, He puts His laws in their hearts and writes them on their minds. Stedman says, “Verse 16 highlights the new understanding of morality which regeneration brings” (1 John 5:20).

11. What does the writer remind them of in verse 17? And because of that truth, what conclusion does he come to in verse 18?

The believers in the Old Testament understood God’s forgiveness and grace, but the new thought brought out in verse 17 is that He remembers their sins no more. Through the sacrifice of Christ, God will forgive the believer’s sins, and will never recall them.

B. F. Westcott lists three consequences of sin: “debt which requires forgiveness, bondage which requires redemption, alienation which requires reconciliation.” When we are set free from the slavery of sin, we can receive the gift of eternal life. (John 17:3)

12. Which part of this section specifically ministers or speaks to you? Maybe that Christ’s work is finished? Maybe that He has an appointed time? Maybe that He doesn’t recall your sins? Maybe that He has conquered death? Think about it. Those are all amazing truths!

Third Day – Hebrews 10:19-25

Spend some time meditating on your memory verse. How is it speaking to you?

1. Read Hebrews 10:19-25. The writer seems to do a quick review before he moves on. What two things do we “have,” according to verses 19-21?
2. Because of what we “have,” what three things are we exhorted to do, according to verses 21-25?
3. Besides coming to His throne with confidence, what else must we have?

In Old Testament days, the people had to be washed and cleansed before they “met with God.” They had to prepare themselves. We, too, are called to prepare ourselves. A true and sincere heart describes a person who is honest, genuine, without guile or deceit. They are dependable and committed. When our hearts are sincere, our faith is “evident in full assurance.” Doubt or insincerity keeps us from approaching God. “Doubt insults, whereas faith exalts.” (Kistemaker) Our hearts are sprinkled with the blood of Christ to cleanse our guilty conscience. The ability to “draw near” to God is a privilege that every believer has.

4. How do you prepare yourself before you “draw near” to God? Do you ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart and reveal any sin so you can ask for forgiveness? Or do you skip that step? Why do you think we need to “prepare” ourselves?
5. Do you see the triad of faith, hope, and love in this section? How do they relate to each other?
6. According to verse 23, what do we have hope in? What specific promise do you think the writer is talking about?

7. Our third exhortation is found in verse 24. We are told to “consider” one another. What does that mean? What does Matthew 22:37-39 and Romans 13:8-10 say about that?
8. Are you a selfish person? Do you generally “consider” yourself or others? (Why is it hard to “stir up love and good works” if you are thinking about yourself?)
9. It appears that some of the believers he was writing to were not diligently attending worship services. Why, do you think, does the writer put this under the category of “considering one another”?
10. Does the writer focus on what the believer “gets” or “gives” in the worship service? Why? How can attending stir up good works? (Is it simply attending or is it more than that?)

Corporate worship is vital to a believer. Kistemaker writes, “One of the first indications of a lack of love toward God and our neighbor is for a Christian to stay away from the worship services. He forsakes the communal obligations of attending these meetings and displays the symptoms of selfishness and self-centeredness.” Stedman wrote, “Corporate worship is not an option for the Christian; it’s a necessity.” Wiersbe writes, “Fellowship with God must never become selfish. We must also fellowship with other Christians in the local assembly. Faithfulness in church attendance encourages others and provokes them to love and good works.” I read this interesting quote, “When a believer attends a worship service, he expresses his love for Jesus. He realizes that Jesus, the head of the church, is present at the service and desires his presence.

To say it somewhat differently, the head of the church cannot function without the body, The believer is part of the body of Christ, which Christ presents ‘to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.’” (Ephesians 5:27)

11. What are your thoughts on the paragraph above?

12. Are you faithful in church fellowship or are you more of a “hit-and-miss” kind of girl? What should you do about it?

13. According to verse 25, what is our motivation to “stir” each other up?

Let’s end here for today. Great exhortations, aren’t they? Faith, hope, and love. It always seems to boil down to those three words, doesn’t it?

Fourth Day – Hebrews 10:26-31

Write your verse by memory.

1. Read Hebrews 10:26-31, where the writer gives us another warning. What is the warning, and how is it the opposite of the exhortation given in 10:19-25?

Sinning willfully or deliberately is the key in this section. There is a definite distinction between committing sins intentionally and unintentionally. He’s not talking about the believer who falls or stumbles into sin suddenly and then finds forgiveness in God’s mercy and grace. “It’s not the falterings of a new Christian still learning to walk in the Spirit. He’s talking about those who know the truth but have turned against God and deliberately reject Christ and what He did on the cross. It’s choosing to live for self behind a Christian veneer and refusing to be delivered from sin’s reign by the past sacrifice and present high priest ministry of Jesus. It is not continual sinning from ignorance as many church members manifest, but occurs after full enlightenment.” (Stedman) There is no more sacrifice left for their sins. The writer knew that the greater the knowledge, the greater the sin. If under the Old Law, apostasy was bad, it had to be even worse now that Christ had come.

2. If there is no more “sacrifice of sin” left for them, what would happen to them?

The word “fearful” is found only three times in the New Testament, and all are found in the book of Hebrews. It’s translated “dreadful, fearful, and terrifying.” All three times it’s used are in reference to meeting God. Although the writer believes he ought to proclaim the good news of the Gospel -- including the call to repentance, the assurance of forgiveness, and the profound message of reconciliation between God and man -- he would be remiss if he didn’t warn the people of the consequences of turning away from the living God. One of the themes repeated in the book of Hebrews is the warning of drifting away and turning back.

Only God can see into the hearts of people and know where they stand. “God is not a power to trifle with, for He can do what we cannot do, namely, read hearts. He can be ruthless if it is necessary to waken those sinners to the evil results they are embracing. That ruthlessness is a hidden blessing when the heart is unaware that it is ignoring the death of Jesus as the only adequate sacrifice for sin. Behind His severity is mercy towards those destroying themselves in unbelief. God lovingly seeks to waken them to what they are doing before they reach that stage of heart-hardening which deliberately rejects Christ. Beyond that point lies the unpardonable sin.” (Stedman)

3. In verse 29, the writer points out that those who reject God reject three things. What phrases does he use to illustrate that?

A. The person of Christ:

B. The work of Christ:

C. The person of the Holy Spirit:

4. In verses 32-34, the writer now changes his focus to praise. He does not expect them to be in the category he was just talking about. What does he commend them for?

His readers had once been willing to suffer, having a great confidence and hope. But they were in danger of turning back to their old religion. He now reminds them in verses 35-39 that their actions had shown true faith and urges them to keep persevering to the end. Troubled times calls for a renewed confidence, which is what the writer is hoping to stir up in them.

5. Read 10:35-39. The writer quotes from Habakkuk 2:3-4 to remind them of Christ's return. How should this motivate them to endure till the end?

The word "faith" in verse 38 brings us back to the theme of Hebrews. The term "by faith" is used often. We are not only saved from our sin by faith, we are also called to "live by faith." We'll discuss this more in the next few chapters.

6. Read verse 39. How does he contrast "them" and "us"?
7. Write your thoughts on this chapter. How has it encouraged you? Scared you? Shocked you? Challenged you?

Are you in a place right now where you are willingly living in some kind of sin? Have you chosen to turn from Him, while hiding behind some type of Christian veneer? I pray this chapter is a wake-up call to you. I also pray that this chapter serves as a reminder to all of us about the seriousness of sin. We are called to live and walk by faith, and our life should reflect that. I pray we will always strive to draw near to God with a "true heart" and stay clear of the temptation of sin.



Notes



Jesus is Better

Lesson 11

Hebrews chapter 11

Well, we've finally arrived at one of my all-time favorite chapters in the New Testament. Hebrews chapter 11 has been called the "Walk of Faith," "Heroes of Faith," and the "Hall of Faith." In chapter 10:37-38 the writer quotes Habakkuk 2:3-4, which says, "the just shall live by faith." This chapter is a summary, or a sermon, of what that means. The writer gives us some very vivid pictures of faith being lived out in the lives of people. Living by faith involves an active, courageous trust in God. "It means recognizing that the invaluable is often invisible. It means obeying God, whose voice can be heard even though His face cannot be seen." (Snell)

As we go through this chapter, we probably won't be able to spend as much time as you want on each Bible character or story. Since we can't do a whole lesson on each person, make sure you take the extra time needed to look further into any of the lives that we discuss this week. I pray that each character will challenge and strengthen you as you examine your own faith. Do you think you're in anyone's "Heroes of Faith" list?

Memory Verse of the Week: *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."*
Hebrews 11:6

First Day – Hebrews 11:1-7

Work on your memory verse. It's one of my favorites!

1. Read Hebrews 11:1-40. Then go back and read verses 1-3 again. How does the writer describe, or define, faith? Can you explain it in your own words?

The word "substance" can also be defined as "being sure of" or "to stand under, to support." The verse would then read, "Faith is being sure of what we hope for." The word "evidence" means "certainty or conviction." Faith is assurance and certainty. Wiersbe wrote, "Faith is to a Christian what a foundation is to a house: It gives confidence and assurance that he will stand. When a believer has faith, it is God's way of giving him confidence and assurance that what is promised will be experienced."

The writer seems to be contrasting faith with the sin of unbelief that he has been warning them about in the previous chapters. All the people in this chapter that he commends have placed their undivided and complete confidence in God. Faith is holding on to the promises of God, depending on His Word, and staying faithful and true to the one, true, Living God!

2. What did the faith of the “elders” or the “forefathers” gain from God?
3. Jeff Snell wrote, *“Living by faith means recognizing that the invaluable is often invisible. It means obeying God, whose voice can be heard even though His face cannot be seen.”* What does he mean?

Regarding verse 3, Wayne Jackson wrote, “Faith is rational. By faith we understand that the universe is not self-existent; it was designed by the Creator.” Faith involves trusting our Maker. The writer now gives us some models of men and women who have lived a life of faith. I pray we would be challenged by each “hero of faith.” Today we will learn about Abel, Enoch, and Noah.

4. Read Hebrews 11:4-7. Read the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4:1-15 and give a brief summary. According to verse 4, why was Abel’s sacrifice more acceptable? What word is used to describe Abel? (Also, read Matthew 23:35)
5. Cain is often described as someone who was religious, but not righteous. What does that mean? (Which one describes you?)

Many explanations have been given to explain why Abel’s sacrifice was “better, greater, or more important” than Cain’s. The writer simply tells us that Abel’s offering was given with a true heart of faith, whereas Cain’s was not. Abel’s faith allowed him to be considered “righteous.” Bruce wrote, “Sacrifice is acceptable to God not for its material content, but in so far as it is the outward expression of a devoted and obedient heart.” This reminds us how important it is to have a right attitude toward God as we offer Him our love and service.

6. When you give your time or money as an offering or sacrifice to God, is it always acceptable? Is it usually given out of love and devotion or guilt and compulsion?

7. Read Hebrews 11:5-6, along with Genesis 5:21-24. Why did Enoch get to go to Heaven without physically dying? Who else got to do that? (2 Kings 2:11)
8. According to verse 6, what must we have in order to please God? Why? What are we promised if we diligently seek Him?

Stedman wrote, "It is impossible through human reasoning or scientific searching to find God. Faith in God's self-revelation is essential. Faith means turning from human wisdom to God's revelation and walking in daily obedience to it until it leads to a fellowship which death cannot interrupt!" This is what we learn from the example of Enoch!

9. In verse 7 why is Noah used as an example of faith, especially in regard to seeing the invisible?

Noah is the first person to be called "righteous" in the Scriptures (Genesis 6:9). Noah's example of persistent, obedient, and enduring faith is an amazing example to us all.

10. How can the story of Noah be an encouragement to you in a present situation?

That's it for today. I'm excited because we get to meet some great people tomorrow. Don't forget that without faith, it is impossible to please Him!

Second Day – Hebrews 11:8-19

What's your memory verse?

1. Read Hebrews 11:1-40, concentrating on verses 8-19. The writer picks out a few "highlights" of Abraham's life and comments on them. Why did he choose these events and what was the writer's point?

2. Why is the phrase “not knowing” the key in this section? (What didn’t he know?)
3. Read Genesis 12:1-4. Did Abraham respond immediately to the Lord’s command? What does this tell us?
4. Did Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob ever get to see God’s promise of inheriting the land fulfilled in their time?
5. What did they keep their eyes on? Did they believe God’s promises?

“Abraham received God’s promise that he would be the heir of a place God would give him. That place was the land of Canaan. Abraham traveled from Haran to Canaan, leaving his relationships behind in Paddan Aram. He lived in the southern part of Canaan in a tent. He remained an alien and, in a sense, an outsider who had little in common with the local population. That Abraham lived in a tent indicated that he was a wandering herdsman who possessed countless animals but no land. Yet God had promised the land to Isaac and to Jacob. For three generations the heirs of the land lived in faith with a promise. Not until the twelve tribes of Israel entered the land under the leadership of Joshua were they able to claim the promise and make their land their own. His stay may have been temporary, but his faith was enduring.” Abraham was a pilgrim and a stranger on this earth.

6. Although Abraham lived in a tent, he looked forward to a different kind of dwelling place, a permanent one. How is it described? Where is it?
7. Read Genesis 18:1-15. What other details are given about when Sarah was promised a child? Why is she listed here in this “faith” chapter?

8. Read Genesis 22:1-19 and briefly describe this story about Isaac. Why did it take so much faith on Abraham's part to do what he did?

Each of these examples of faith given in this chapter has one thing in common: each one is unusual. It is not the normal reaction ordinarily expected of those who face these situations. "Faith makes people act differently than others." (Stedman) Abraham even trusted God when He promised him a child. Romans 4:19 says, "Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead ... and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God."

These people believed God when they didn't understand how things could happen. They expected God to fulfill His promises even if they never saw them fulfilled. They all showed unwavering obedience and trust. He told Abraham that he would be an heir, and he never saw it happen. He promised him he would have many descendants, when he didn't even have a son. He promised him a son when he was too old. He told him to sacrifice Isaac, who was the only one in which the promise could be fulfilled. Abraham obeyed anyway, believing that God could do anything, even raise Isaac from the dead, if He wanted to.

9. Has God ever asked you to leave something safe or familiar, or go somewhere you didn't want to go, or do something that made no sense? How did you respond? (Has God ever asked you to do something that seemed to contradict what He's already told you?)

10. How quick are you to respond when God speaks to you about something? How completely do you obey when you don't understand, or like, what God is doing? (Is that happening right now?)

11. Are your eyes focused on the Heavenly city that awaits us? Abraham longed for home, knowing that Heaven was the ultimate destination of his journey. Are you keeping your eyes on the promises of the future? Have you received and embraced the promises? How do the promises of the future help you live your life in the present?

12. Last question. "In an amazing display of faith, he reasoned that God was God enough to achieve His promise without contradicting His command." What does that mean? (Do you believe that "God is God enough"?)

I am so humbled by the man Abraham. He wasn't perfect, but he definitely knew his God, believed his God, and trusted his God. How about you?

Third Day – Hebrews 11:20-31

Continue to work on your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 11:1-40. Go back and read verses 20-31. What characters do we meet?

Abraham's son, grandson, and great grandson are all listed as heroes of faith. They exhibited their faith in God by believing the promise that God had given Abraham, looking to the future and believing the invisible. All three died without having entered the Promised Land. Isaac was a nomad: Jacob was an exile in Egypt, and although Joseph was great, he was still in a strange land. But they never doubted that God's Word would come true, because He would never break a promise. These three men died faithful and hopeful men.

In Genesis 26:4, God gave the same blessing to Isaac that He gave to Abraham. And Isaac, in turn, repeated this promise almost word for word, to his son Jacob (Genesis 28:3-4), who then pronounced the blessing on his sons, Joseph being one. (Genesis 48:1,21). The writer, however, doesn't choose to mention the time that Jacob blessed his own son Joseph, but instead recalls when he blessed Joseph's sons.

2. Here we have four generations of faith. Not perfect, but men who were committed to God and His Word. If you are a mom, are you passing your faith and trust in God on to your children? Have you made that your number one goal and purpose as a mom? Why is this so important?
3. Why do you think Joseph wanted his bones buried in Canaan rather than Egypt? Read Genesis 50:24-25, Exodus 13:19, and Joshua 24:32. Who brought up his Bones, and where was he buried? Why do you think that Joseph, after all the amazing things he did, was put in this chapter because he wanted them to move his bones?
4. Read Hebrews 11:23-29. Why were Moses' parents listed? Why did this take faith? (Exodus 2:1-10) If you are a parent, how does this encourage you?
5. Read Exodus 2:11-15, 10:28, 12:21-28, and 14:13-31. In your own words briefly explain the reasons that Moses was named in this chapter. Why did it take faith to do what he did?
6. According to verse 26, what did Moses think was more important than riches? Did he care more about earthly glory or the people of God? How did his perspective strengthen his faith? Is your heart set on the "riches of this world" or the Heavenly reward that is promised to you?

God rewards true faith; that's a promise. Vance Havner wrote, "Moses chose the imperishable, saw the invisible, and did the impossible." Wiersbe said, "Faith brings us out, takes us through, and brings us in."

The writer of Hebrews passes over the 40-year journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. Remember that he already told us what God thought about their unbelief in chapters 3 and 4. Remember, all those over 20 except Joshua and Caleb died in the desert. Our writer now takes us to a time when the fighting is done by their sons and daughters!

7. Read Hebrews 11:30-31 and Joshua chapters 2 and 6 to learn the story of the walls of Jericho and the harlot, Rahab. After you read it, answer the following questions:

- a. Briefly describe how the walls fell down.
- b. Why is Joshua's faith commended? How did he show faith?
- c. How is the story of Jericho a reminder that with God, nothing is impossible? Are you facing a gigantic wall? How does this encourage you?
- d. How did Rahab show faith in God?
- e. What did she say in Joshua 2:11? Why did God see this simple confession as a sign of faith?
- f. Because of her faith, God put her in a privileged position. Read Ruth 4:21 and Matthew 1:4-6. Who did she marry and have as a son? Whose bloodline was she in?
- g. How does the story of Rahab show us that faith knows no barriers? (Remember, she was a pagan, a prostitute, and a woman!)

I love both of these stories so much! Joshua and the Israelites simply put their faith in God when the situation looked impossible. I'm not sure I would have been able to do what they did. God is so loving that He not only chose a prostitute for the job, but He placed her in the genealogy of His Son. Wow. That's really all I can say. Wow. See you tomorrow.

Fourth Day – Hebrews 11:32-40

Write out your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 11:32-40. The writer seems to let his mind wander for a minute and remember all the different stories of faithful people. Why can't he expound on all of them?
2. In verses 32-34 the writer lists the names of Gideon (Judges 6 and 7), Barak (Judges 4 and 5), Samson (Judges 13-16), Jephthah (Judges 11 and 12), David (1 Samuel 16:1-13), Samuel (1 Samuel 1), and the prophets. Choose one of these men and read their story. Briefly tell their story and explain why the writer would place them in the hall of faith. Have fun!
3. From verses 33-34 list some of the phrases the writer uses to describe the actions of some faithful people. (Can you think of any men or women that he might be talking about?)

As the writer threw out many phrases, the readers probably knew whom he was talking about. They were very familiar with the history of their people. Barclay writes, "The word used for 'subdued or mastering' kingdoms is what Josephus, the Jewish historian, used of David. The phrase used for 'worked righteousness' is the description of David in 2 Samuel 8:15. The expression used for 'stopping the mouths of lions' is that used of Daniel in Daniel 6:18, 23. The phrase about 'quenching the violence of fire' goes straight back to the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in Daniel 3:19-28. To speak about 'escaping the edge of the sword' was to direct men's thoughts to the way in which Elijah escaped threatened assassination in 1 Kings 19:1 and Elisha in 2 Kings 6:31. The trumpet call about being 'strong in warfare' and routing the ranks of the aliens would immediately make men think of the unforgettable glories of the Maccabean days."

4. In verse 35b through verse 38, there is a definite shift. Can you tell what it is? What are some of the phrases the writer uses to describe what others endured for their faith?

The writer moves from specific to more general occurrences. These horrible practices were, sadly, very common for Jews who became followers of Christ. Nowhere in Scripture does it talk about anyone being “sawed in two,” but tradition tells us that Isaiah was cut in half with a wooden saw, during the reign of Manasseh. It’s important to see that not all these heroes were delivered from death. God dealt differently with them than He did with Moses, Gideon, or David. Scripture shows us that many were not delivered from their horrible circumstances, yet God honored their faith. It’s a shame when people who have not been “delivered” or “healed” from their pain or circumstance are looked at as though it is their fault because of their “lack of faith.” What would these men, who were tortured and killed for their faith in Christ, have to say about that? Please, never make that mistake or judgment on another. That’s in God’s court.

5. Read verses 39-40. He commends these heroes of faith and now includes his readers in his exhortation. What will the Old Testaments believers and we, the New Testament believers, inherit together? How is he trying to show the unity that we share?

We know that the word “better” relates to the “fulfillment in Jesus Christ.” The Old Testament believers looked forward to this fulfillment, and we look back on the fulfilled and accomplished work of Christ. We are one in faith! They only had “fragments” of God’s revelation, while we have God’s full revelation in Christ. Do we truly understand what we have?

6. How does this chapter encourage you? Humble you? Challenge you?

7. Is there someone in your life whose faith you admire? Why?

8. Are you lacking faith in an area of your life? What are you going to do about it? How can you increase your faith?

9. This chapter is a great reminder to us that real faith is active rather than passive. As a review, after each name list the word from the text that shows us the “action” their faith produced.
 - a. Abel: offered (*example*)
 - b. Enoch:
 - c. Noah:
 - d. Abraham:
 - e. Sarah:
 - f. Abraham (vs 17):
 - g. Isaac:
 - h. Jacob:
 - i. Joseph:
 - j. Moses:
 - k. Rahab:

I wish we could spend all year just on this chapter. I’ve done my best to walk us through it in a week, but I fear that I have failed miserably! There is so much more to say, so much more to learn. Go deeper in areas that you felt God speaking to your heart. Find out more about these “heroes” and how their lives can be examples to us. Don’t stop here. Listen and learn from each one!

***“A small spark of light led them to Heaven;
when the Sun of Righteousness shines over us,
with what pretense can we excuse ourselves
if we still cleave to the earth?”***

John Calvin



Notes



Jesus is Better

Lesson 12

Hebrews chapter 12

In chapter 11 we had the privilege of meeting some of the great heroes of the faith. Hopefully, they all were a great encouragement to you. Now, in chapter 12 he continues to try to motivate and challenge his weary readers to continue to persevere in their faith. He reminds them of the faithful believers of the past, in hopes that they will be inspired to continue in the present! Persecution and hard times were in the near future, and they faced a significant amount of pressure from their Jewish friends and family. They wondered why the Jewish faith wasn't good enough anymore or why they would turn away from the faith of their nation. Some were losing jobs and were not welcome in the same circles. The writer seeks to strengthen their faith and remind them that through these hard times, they needed to look to Jesus, the fulfillment of God's promise to His people.

I love how the writer begins this chapter by using athletic terms. That's something I can relate to. Athletics were popular at the time, so his readers were familiar with athletic terminology. I pray that this chapter fires you up to run "your" race the best you can. Make sure you're running "your" race and not someone else's.

Memory Verse of the Week: *"Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:11*

First Day – Hebrews 12:1-3

Work on our memory verse. It's an important one to remember.

1. Read Hebrews 12:1-29. Now go back to verses 1-3. What is the "therefore"?
2. What are we surrounded by? What do you think that means? Who are they?

Picture the setting as a foot race in a big arena, with witnesses, or spectators, filling the stadium seats. The “cloud of witnesses” are the great spiritual athletes of the past, members of the Hall of Faith. They aren’t actually there but are witnesses in the sense that their lives were examples of a persevering faith that still cries out today, like the faith of Abel, “Still speaking, even though he is dead.” (11:4) These witnesses are all nodding their heads and waving their arms to encourage us, as if they were saying, “You can do it! We did, and so can you!”

3. What is the first thing we’re told to do in verse 1? Why?

The word “weight” means “hindrance.” He tells us to lay aside everything that hinders us, like athletes that strip off their warm-up clothes before a race. The clothes are heavy and will weigh him down, and he wants to be as light as he can while he runs. But hindrances aren’t always “bad” things, just things that are keeping us from doing our best. It’s not always about laying aside the bad for good; sometimes we lay aside good for the best. Hindrances aren’t always sinful in themselves but can become sin if they hinder our race. Kenneth Taylor paraphrased this verse and wrote, “Let us strip off anything that slows us down or holds us back, and especially the sins that wrap themselves so tightly around our feet and trip us up.”

4. What kinds of things threaten to hinder “your” particular race? (Is it being hindered?) What do you need to “lay aside”?

5. What does “sin” do, according to verse 1? What sin easily entangles you?

All of us struggle with different sins, which, I believe, is the reason the writer simply referred to it as “sin,” expecting us to fill in our own blank. Some fight sensuality, while others battle with envy, jealousy, or pride. Some may have a temper, while others have a hard time being honest. All of these sins can entangle us and slow us down.

6. How are we to run the race He sets before us? How is Jesus an example of this?

7. Why do you think the writer didn't put Jesus in the Hall of Faith chapter? How is He different?
8. What helped Jesus endure the cross? (This is the only time the writer mentions the word "cross." I wonder why...)

In suffering, Jesus demonstrated His faith in God, and in obedience He sustained the anguish of death on the cross. He endured the cross to set people free, and He triumphed when He sat down at God's right hand. Hughes wrote, "He accomplished His task on earth, assuming His place in Heaven, and now assures the believer of divine assistance in the race marked out for him."

9. In the ancient world, the phrase "growing weary and discouraged in your soul" referred to the exhausted collapse of a runner. What does the writer tell his readers to do if they find themselves in this exhausted state? Why?

In verse the writer is basically telling them to compare their lives with Christ's and be reminded of all that Jesus had to endure. They needed to stop looking back at their old faith and across at each other and look to Jesus, the one who can help them endure their race.

10. Where should we be "looking"? What happens when you look back in a race? What happens when we compare our lives, or our races, to someone else's?
11. Where have you been "looking"? Are you looking back at something? Are you comparing yourself to a friend? Are you envious of someone else's race, wondering why theirs is easier than yours? Be honest with yourself and allow the Holy Spirits to adjust your "gaze."

We're all individuals, running a specific race the Lord put before us. We all have our own obstacles, hindrances, and problems. We also have our own talents and giftings. It's important that we focus on Jesus and run our own race. He is our inspiration; He is our hope. Let's "consider" Him when we face hard things, knowing that because Jesus endured, we can too. He will give us the strength.

That's all for today, ladies. Do you have your running shoes on? Are you focused and steady? Are your eyes set on Jesus?

Second Day – Hebrews 12:4-11

What's your memory verse? How does it speak to you?

1. Read Hebrews 12:1-29. Now, let's take a closer look at verses 4-11. How does verse 4 tie the previous section in with this one?

Verse 4 is funny to me. I read various explanations of what the writer was trying to say. There are some who think he was trying to tell them that they should resist sin to the point of death. The possibility of persecution was a reality, and if Christ Himself endured persecution, why wouldn't His followers? I tend to agree with Kent Hughes' theory. Because he was admonishing them to stay strong, using Christ as their example, Hughes writes, "He begins with a soft reproach, reminding them that life is not as bad as some may suppose." Jesus, along with many of the heroes of faith, had died for His faith, and his readers knew nothing of that kind of persecution, at least as of yet. He goes on to say that it's as if the writer is saying, "Cut the melodrama. I don't see any dead bodies lying around!"

The key word in this section is "chastening." It's a Greek word that means "to instruct or teach as one would a child," or "to correct or punish." Hughes writes, "Broadly, it signifies much of what we would think of as discipline for the purpose of education. We experience God's education through hardship or affliction."

When we are suffering or experiencing hard times, we often feel like God doesn't love us. In these next few verses, the writer is trying to show them that it's just the opposite. Discipline stems from the Father's heart of love.

2. In verse 5 we find another mild rebuke. What does he say to his readers?

The writer quotes Proverbs 3:11-12, which should have been a very familiar passage to them. They can't be encouraged by what they don't know, showing us again why it's so important to study the Word. The word "despise" in verse 5 also means "make light." And the word "discouraged" is translated "overwhelmed."

3. Read verse 5, substituting the words above. Does this make more sense? What two extremes does he say to avoid, and why?

4. According to this section, why does God discipline us? What examples does he use to prove this truth? (Note how many times the words “children” and “sons” are used.)
5. How does discipline teach us? (How does discipline teach your children?) If we were never disciplined, what could happen?

John Calvin wrote, “God’s discipline takes three distinct forms, namely, corrective discipline, preventative discipline, and educational discipline.” You won’t necessarily find these specifically “named” in Scripture, but it’s a very interesting observation.

6. How do you think the following characters are examples of:

A. Corrective Discipline: David (Psalm 119:67-71, Psalm 51)

B. Preventative Discipline: Paul (2 Corinthians 12:7-8)

C. Educational Discipline: Job (Job 42:4-6)

God never makes mistakes in His discipline or chastisement. He has one goal, which is to make us more like Him (Leviticus 19:2, Matthew 5:48, 1 Peter 1:15-16). We are partakers of His divine nature, and as He chastens us, we will partake even more. He wants us to share in His holiness.

7. According to verse 11, what is the result of discipline? Why?

I noticed a word in verse 11 that I’ve never seen before. The writer talks about those who have been “trained” by discipline. He uses an athletic term again to remind them they are engaged in a race that needs continual training.

8. How are we “trained” by discipline?
9. What is your first reaction when adversity strikes? Is it joy? How can this section encourage you?
10. Are you being chastised by the Lord right now? Are you fighting it or accepting it as discipline from God? Are the difficulties distracting you from Christ, causing you to slow down in your race, or are they causing you to focus on Christ and run with endurance?

Have a good run, ladies!

Third Day – Hebrews 12:12-17

Are you hiding your verse in your heart?

The writer has been reminding his readers that their spiritual life is like a long-distance run. Although it’s hard and at times they might want to quit, they need to hang in there. “Though we may ‘hit the wall’ many times, we are called to ‘tough it out,’ realizing that the hardships we endure are disciplines that enable us to share in God’s holiness.” (Hughes)

1. Read Hebrews 12:1-29, then go back to 12-17. So, what is the “therefore”? How does it connect these two sections?
2. How do verses 12 and 13 tie in both the race analogy and our spiritual walk? (Our writer is sounding a bit like a coach now!)

The writer uses a familiar saying to exhort them to be strong. (Isaiah 35:3-4, Job 4:3-4). He then quotes from Proverbs 4:26. The word “strengthen” comes from the word that we get our English word for “orthopedic” from. Basically, he’s telling them to “straighten up” and get those arms pumping and those feet moving!

I love what he says in verse 13. When he says to “make straight paths” for your feet, he’s again using an athletic analogy. Before a race, the runners would examine the track or course to make sure there weren’t any obstacles or any type of unevenness that would make them fall or twist an ankle. They wanted the path level. But notice it wasn’t only for themselves, but for others in the race.

3. Besides themselves, who did they want to make the path straight for, according to verse 13? Why? Why is that so significant?

Many runners encourage each other during their race. I can remember many times when I was weary and didn’t feel like I could keep running, someone would come alongside me and give me words of encouragement! Other times, people on the sideline would notice that you were fading and start shouting and cheering to motivate you to keep running. I specifically remember one race that the spectators would look up your number in the program and start yelling for you by name. Never underestimate the power of encouragement in a person’s life. We are not only called to finish, but to finish together!

4. Not only are we called to “finish well,” but to help others finish their race as well. How well are you doing at encouraging others, especially when they’re tired and struggling? Are you watching out for others or only focusing on yourself? Are you “making the path straight” for those behind you that may be handicapped or struggling in some way?

The book of Hebrews has many exhortations and reminders of the importance of helping each other. (3:13; 4:1, 11; 6:11; 10:25). Now, he instructs them on what they should be “running after.”

5. What does he tell them to pursue in verse 14? Also, read Romans 12:18, 14:19, and Ephesians 4:3. Why is this so important?

The word “pursue” means to “chase after one’s enemies aggressively.” The writer links together the pursuit of peace with the pursuit of holiness. To finish well, says the writer, we must make every effort to pursue peace with all men and be holy.” Peace and holiness are two sides of the same coin.

6. Answer the following questions:

A. How can conflict within the church bring disgrace to God?

B. How can conflict with an unbeliever be a stumbling block to them?

C. Are you in a conflict with someone? How aggressively are you “pursuing peace”?

7. Now the writer turns from telling them what to “do” and admonishes them on what “not” to do. What warnings does he give in verses 15-17?

8. What do you think it means to “fall short of the grace of God”? How do the sins of verses 15-17 rob of us God’s enabling grace?

God’s grace is always available to us, but we often fail to depend on His grace. When we fall into sin, God’s grace is available, Paul says, in Romans 5:20. John Blanchard wrote, “For daily need there is daily grace; for sudden need there is sudden grace; for overwhelming need, there is overwhelming grace.” But what can cause someone to fall short, or fall behind, in grace? Unconfessed sin, neglect of God’s Word, and staying out of fellowship can cause us to drift, doubt, and turn from God. Notice that the writer says it is ‘our’ responsibility to keep this from happening to people, as best we can. ‘Look diligently’ also means ‘see to it,’ which carries the idea of oversight.” We are called to care for each other!

9. The writer tells us to avoid sexual immorality and godlessness, using Esau for his example. How does he describe Esau in verses 16 and 17? (Read the story of Esau in Genesis 25:24-34 and chapter 27)

Esau was not interested in the things of God. He had no regard for God's blessings and promise which he, as the first-born, would receive. "He despised his birthright and displayed utter indifference to the spiritual promises God had given to his grandfather, Abraham, and to his father, Isaac. (See Genesis 25:32). His only concern was for temporal matters. He refused to follow in the footsteps of his forefathers, and thus his name is omitted from the list of heroes of faith." (Kistemaker) Esau had purposely rejected God, and his heart was hardened against him. Although he cried, he showed no repentance, only anger towards his brother. He wasn't sorry for what he did; he simply was mad he missed the blessing.

Simply, the writer is telling us to avoid sexual immorality and godlessness. They will stop us dead in our tracks and keep us from finishing well.

10. Let me ask the obvious questions: Are any of the things he is warning his readers about present in your life? Do you have a lack of peace? Are you living a holy life or a godless one, showing indifference to the things of God? Do you have a root of bitterness in your heart that's causing trouble? Are you currently involved in any sexual immorality? And last but not least, how actively are you watching out for others who are struggling? Search your heart on this one. It's a lot to think about.

Fourth Day – Hebrews 12:18-24

Write out your verse from memory.

1. Read Hebrews 12:1-29. Reread verses 18-24. Because the readers were being taunted for their new faith and accused of leaving the heritage they had in Abraham and Moses, the writer chooses to contrast where they had been to where they are now. He does this by comparing Mount Sinai and Mount Zion.
2. How does he describe Mount Sinai in 18-21? (Read Exodus 19 and 20:18-21 for the story.) What were the people getting a glimpse of?

Under the old Covenant, God wasn't approachable in the same way. On Mount Sinai, the people got a sense of God's holiness, majesty, and power, giving them a fear of Him. This fear was supposed to keep them from sinning. Although the people heard the voice of God, they failed to let His Words penetrate their hearts and minds. Mount Sinai represented doom and death, but Mount Zion portrayed life and joy! Both mountains, though, reveal the true God. He is a consuming fire and a consuming love.

3. Read verses 22-24. In verse 22 the writer says, "But you," again reminding them to keep going forward in Christ, rather than turning back. What does he say about Mount Zion? What seven realities do we "come to" when we choose Mount Zion?

"Zion is the highest elevation in the city of Jerusalem. As a fortress it was fiercely defended by the Jebusites, who were defeated at last by David. In time the fortress, including the surrounding area, was called the city of David; but poets and prophets used the name Zion and designated it God's dwelling place." (Kistemaker) The writer calls it Heavenly to show us that the Zion he's talking about is where God dwells with all His saints (Revelation 14:1; 21:2).

4. Read Hebrews 11:25-29. What warning does he give us? ("They" are the Israelites)

5. The writer quotes Haggai 2:6 in verse 26. God shook the earth when He gave the Ten Commandments. When will He shake it again? Read Isaiah 13:13, 65:17; 2 Peter 3:10; and Revelation 21:1.
6. What does the writer mean by the things “that cannot be shaken”? What lasts forever? (Daniel 7:14-18)

If we’re holding on to the things of this world, we’re in for a rude awakening when all things are “shaken” and none of it remains. What a serious admonition to help us stay focused and running strong. We want to be part of the things that remain!

7. Since we are receiving the kingdom that can’t be shaken, how should we respond, according to verses 28-29?
8. And verse 29 tells us why we serve and worship Him with reverence. What does the writer call God? How does this tie the two “mounts” together?

Hughes wrote, “When we come to worship, we must keep both mountains in view -- the approachable Zion with its consuming love and the unapproachable Sinai with its consuming fire -- and then come in reverent boldness.”

9. Can you explain the above quote? Does it describe how you approach God?
10. From this chapter, what specifically spoke to your heart?

I’m sorry that we “raced” through the last two sections. (Get it? Raced...) It sure was another full and rich chapter. Spend some more time on the points that really interested you. May you be blessed as you study His Word!



Notes



Jesus is Better

Lesson 13

Hebrews chapter 13

Here we are, lesson 13. I can't believe we've already come to the end. I pray that you've grown personally as much as I have. Learning about the role of Jesus as our High Priest, according to the order of Melchizedek, is more than life-changing. I can't begin to describe the effect this book has had on me. Things I thought I knew, I found out I hadn't even come close to fully understanding. I can't wait to go to Israel again next year and learn even more. Why not save your money and join us?

The first part of Hebrews was mainly theological, and the last three chapters are more practical. Some say it moves from exposition to exhortation or from doctrine to duty. At first, it seems like chapter 13 is full of nonrelated exhortations, but as you read more carefully, you'll see how they all go together. In chapter 11 the writer gave his readers many examples of faith, and then in chapter 12 he encouraged them to run the race that God had put before them. Now, in chapter 13 he presents the evidences of faith that should be present in their lives if they're walking and living by faith. In his introduction to this chapter, Kent Hughes wrote, "So the question that our text answers is this: understanding that God is both the consuming fire of Mount Sinai and the consuming love of Mount Zion, how ought we to live – especially in the church?"

Memory Verse of the Week: *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Hebrews 13:8*

First Day – Hebrews 13:1-6

Work on your memory verse. This should be an easy one to remember!

1. Read Hebrews 13:1-25. Reread verses 1-6. What are we commanded to do in verse 1?

What do these verses say about that?

A. Romans 12:10

B. John 13:35

C. 1 John 3:14

D. 1 John 4:19-21

E. 1 Peter 1:22

2. How is love expressed in verse 2?

What do these verses say about that?

A. Romans 12:13

B. 1 Peter 4:9

C. 1 Timothy 3:2

Not only does the writer exhort his readers to love the brethren, he reminds them that they should be loving strangers as well. And who knows, they may have an angel in their midst. Most likely they were very familiar with the story of Abraham entertaining angels in Genesis 18 and really understood what he was talking about.

3. Why is hospitality such an important thing for us to show toward believers AND unbelievers? Are you given to hospitality? Is showing hospitality easy or difficult for you? What can you do to help grow in this area?

4. Who does he tell his readers to show concern and have empathy for in verse 3? Why?

I'm not sure if he's talking about prisoners in general or believers who had been imprisoned for their faith. Scholars are split on that. Visiting prisoners was a common practice at the time. Prisoners usually depended on friends and relatives to provide food and clothing. When I visited a Haitian prison, it was quite similar to that. If someone didn't bring you food, you didn't eat. Bottom line, prisoners needed to be remembered. They were also called to show empathy for those being mistreated. The suffering and mistreatment of people is universal. You and I have that same calling today.

5. All of the exhortations found in verses 1-3 fulfill what great commandment? Read Matthew 22:39.
6. Are you purposely setting out to love others as yourself? Do you show compassion for those who are mistreated? What about those whom you dislike? Do you love your enemies? Are you an "empathetic" person?
7. Read verses 4-6. The writer moves from the social sphere to the more personal relationship of husband and wife. What does he tell us about marriage?

In the Greek, the phrase literally meant "Marriage should be honored by all" or even more literally, "Let marriage be precious to all of you." Marriage is ordained by God (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:6) and a sacred institution. Purity within marriage is essential, shown by his comment, "the bed undefiled." The word "bed" is speaking about their sexual relationship, meaning that it is an 'altar', so to speak, where a pure offering of a couple's life is made to each other and to God." (Hughes)

8. Who will God judge, according to verse 4? Why are they a threat to a pure marriage?

I want to read you a paragraph by Kent Hughes on this verse. He wrote, "This means that everyone, ostensible Christians and non-Christians alike, will be judged for adultery (extramarital relations) and sexual immorality (other illicit sexual relations, including perversions). Further, those who have taken up adulterous lifestyles and remain unrepentant will suffer ultimate

judgment and damnation, for despite their insistence that they are 'Christians,' they are self-deceived. God's Word is terrifyingly clear. (1 Cor. 6:9-10, Ephesians 5:5-6, 1 Thess. 4:3-7, Revelation 21:8). All who are living in serial adultery or fornication and are unrepentant are under God's wrath and ultimate judgment regardless of what they assert about a salvation experience. The judgment God metes out has both a future and present reality. In the future, the unbelieving sensualists will stand before the Great White Throne and be judged accordingly (Revelation 20:11), and the Christians will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ where their works will be judged (2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.)"

9. In verses 5-6 he now talks about their relationship with money and "things." What is his exhortation to us? Define the word "covetousness." Contrast covetousness with contentment.

10. The writer quotes Psalm 118:6 in verse 6. Why? How does it relate to verse 5?

Money and things can never satisfy a person's heart. Money and riches will pass away, but God will never leave us! We can't serve God and serve money, Jesus said in Matthew 6:24. Possessions often "possess" us. Ecclesiastes 5:10 says, "Whoever loves money never has enough money; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income." Many can take everything away from you, but no one can take God. John Knox once said, "A man with God is always in the majority."

11. We'll end with this question. Do you have a love for money? Is your life characterized by covetousness or contentment? Pray about it ...

Second Day – Hebrews 13:7-16

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 13:1-25. Reread verses 7-16. What does the writer say about "those who rule over you" or lead you?

Most scholars think that the writer is calling them to remember leaders of their past that had probably already died. The verb "remember" means "call back to mind that which you know about a person." He may have been referring to the apostles, but more likely he was talking about previous heroes of faith and church leaders that had been instrumental in building up their faith.

The writer believed it was important to carefully observe how they lived their lives and the outcome of their faith. He tells them to look at their lives beginning to end and then imitate their faith. The writer has been concerned with the topic of finishing well, and here it gives us another motivation to do so. Leaders come and go, but these leaders' lives pointed to Jesus Christ and were worth remembering. This clearly reminds us that what we do in this life matters; we always influence people, either for good or bad.

2. Are you living your life in a way that is worth remembering? Can others "carefully" observe your life and desire to imitate your faith? Who are you influencing, and are you influencing them for Christ?

In verse 7, the writer reminds them again that Jesus won't change. This may very well be the most "preached on" text of the book of Hebrews. Again, leaders come and go, but Jesus remains the same, and He is the center of our faith. I've never really thought of this, but the sequence that the writer uses is significant. Hughes wrote, "Yesterday Jesus offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save Him from death (5:7). Today He is the high priest before the Father who is able to sympathize with our weakness because He has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. (4:15). And forever this same Jesus always lives to intercede for them (7:25). Our priest is eternally the same and eternally contemporary."

3. Write your thoughts on verse 8. How does it minister to you more, now that we've studied Hebrews?

Because Christ doesn't change, neither do His doctrines. He warns them not to allow strange doctrines to lead them astray.

4. In verse 9 he warns them not to believe that following their old dietary laws would in any way make them more "spiritual." What do these verses say about this topic?

A. Romans 14:16-17

B. 1 Corinthians 8:8

If we believe that somehow we will become better or stronger Christians because of a special diet, we have absolutely no understanding of grace. Spirituality, then, becomes about self and

works. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes said, "Food goes into the stomach for the strengthening of the body; but only grace strengthens the heart, that is, the vital center of man's being and personality and source of his conduct and character."

5. Have you ever believed that eating certain food would make you holy? Why?

In verse 10 the writer refers to the believer's "altar." He is symbolically speaking about Jesus Himself and His work on the cross. Under the New Covenant, our altar is Jesus Christ, for it is through Him that we offer our spiritual sacrifices to God (Hebrews 13:5, 1 Peter 2:5). The writer's goal in verse 10 seems to be to show the superiority of Christ's work to that of the Aaronic priesthood.

6. The book of Hebrews is very repetitive. In your own words, what is the writer saying in verses 10-14? What point is he trying to make again?

Although the blood of the sacrificial animals was used inside the sanctuary, the animals' bodies were left outside. Outside the city gate of Jerusalem, Jesus paid the price for our sins. By shedding His blood, Jesus forgave our sins and made us holy or sanctified. By doing this He fulfilled the laws concerning the removal of sin on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:26-28). Because Jesus is our atoning sacrifice, we need to "go to Him, outside the camp" and bear the disgrace He bore. His cross was standing outside the camp so the whole world could not only see, but have access to the Father if they come to Him, our once-and-for-all sacrifice. As we wait, we aren't seeking the things of this world, but we're waiting for the New City Jerusalem to come, our Heavenly home.

7. Believers are no longer required to offer animal sacrifices to gain access to the Father. What sacrifices and offerings are we called to bring (vs 15 -16)? Also read Romans 12:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, and 1 Peter 2:5.
8. Have you ever thought of "doing good and sharing" as sacrifices to the Lord? What exactly does that mean? How are they sacrifices?

9. Do you daily bring the Father thanks and praise? Are you offering Him a dedicated life of obedience? Are you “continually” confessing the name of Christ and giving Him thanks? Are you doing good?
10. How do you do works to “please the Father,” without them becoming works of the flesh?
11. Did anything specifically speak to your heart in this section?

We'll end here for today. See you tomorrow, ladies.

Third Day – Hebrews 13:17-25

Work on your verse. Hide that one in your heart!

It's strange that believers need to be reminded to do good, isn't it? It should be a way of life for us, but sadly, it's not. We can't just “talk” the talk, we must “walk” the walk as well. God obviously wants us to praise Him with our lips and our life. Today I read that if you take the letters G-O-O-D, you can rearrange them to say GO DO! That's pretty cool!

1. Read Hebrews 13:1-25; then focus on verses 17-25. What does the writer say about how they should relate to their leaders? Why?
2. If you are accountable to your leaders, who are your leaders accountable to? Who are they responsible to?

Leaders are called to keep watch over their flock of believers. With great spiritual responsibility comes great accountability and judgment (James 3:1). The leaders have a big responsibility to “shepherd” the people well. Like all of us, they will give an account to the Lord on how well they obeyed His Word and did their job. A lot of pain can come with this responsibility, but also lots of “joy.” (vs 17)

3. Does this mean we are to obey them, no matter what they say, all the time? How would you explain what the writer means?

4. Today, if your pastor had to give an account of your soul to the Lord, would he be able to do it with joy? Are you a pleasure to lead or a pain?
5. Let's look at verse 17 in another way. Are you a leader in any way? (Maybe a parent? teacher? small group leader?) How well are you "leading"? Are you doing your best, knowing that you will give an account to the Lord of how you are doing?
6. Why do you think the writer puts this statement in right now?

The writer's exhortation to these believers was probably not very well received. I imagine there was some mounting tension, wouldn't you think? Those who were opposed to Christ and His teachings probably desired nothing more than for these believers to go back to their old faith. Perhaps that's why he asks for prayer in verse 18.

7. The writer has a clear conscience, trying to live as honorably as he can. Could you make that statement? Are you confident that you are doing your best to live honorably?
8. What seems to be his biggest request in verse 19?

I wish we knew where the writer was, don't you? That sure would help everything make more sense. But we do know this: The writer desires prayer. All leaders covet the prayers of those they are leading. Are you praying diligently for your leaders? If we desire power in our lives and our churches, we must pray. Hughes wrote, "How different the modern church would be if the majority of its people prayed for its pastors and lay leadership." How true!

The writer now brings his letter to an end with a beautiful benediction. Read verses 20-25 again, letting the words sink deep into your heart. First he calls upon them to pray for him, then he bestows this beautiful prayer upon them.

9. Why do you think the writer chooses to use the title, "God of all peace"?

10. Before the writer gets to the actual prayer request, he reminds them of a few great truths. What are they?

11. What title does he give Jesus? (John 10:14-15). Why is that title so fitting?

12. What's his request in verse 21? ("Equip" means "to perfect" or "to make good.")

The writer reminds us that we have a foundation of God's peace, His eternal covenant, and the risen Great Shepherd. This God can certainly equip us with everything we need and enables us to accomplish His will. This Great Shepherd of our soul takes amazing care of us.

We're going to end here for today. Tomorrow we'll review his benediction again and then do a brief overview of the book. I can't believe we're almost done ...

Fourth Day – Hebrews 13:20-25

Write your verse from memory.

1. Read Hebrews 13:1-25. Relook at verses 20-25. What does he ask his readers to do in verse 22? Why?
2. Wiersbe writes that, "The benediction seems to gather together the major themes of Hebrews: peace, the Resurrected Christ, the blood, the covenant, spiritual perfection (maturity), and God's work in the believer." Can you list (in order) the phrases he uses to describe each?

The writer introduces Timothy and brings greetings to them from those in Italy. Timothy's relation to this group of people is unknown, as well as exactly why he talks about the people in Italy. Was he in Italy, or were believers from Italy with him? No one can really fully explain these personal references, but they really don't matter, in light of the purpose of the book. Let's take a little time now and look back through the 13 weeks of study and remind ourselves of some important things the Lord spoke to us.

3. In a brief summary, can you state the main theme or thought of the book of Hebrews?

4. After looking back over the chapters and lessons, answer the following questions:

A. How were you **challenged** by this book?

B. How were you **encouraged** by this book?

C. How were you **changed** by this book?

I guess this is good-bye, my friends. I pray that you would hide the book of Hebrews in your heart and continually be reminded of the superiority of the New Covenant and its blessings.

*And may He make you
"complete in every good work to do His will,
working in you what is well-pleasing in His sight,
through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever!"*



Notes