

## Through the Bible at 30,000 Feet

Hebrews | Jesus is Better

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### INTRO: *The Enneagram Personality Test*

- After you take the test, it gives you a number between 1 and 9, and that number represents your basic personality type.
- I am a **number 7** which, according to the Enneagram Institute, means that one of my very **basic desires** is “*to be satisfied and content.*” And my **key motivations** include the desire “*to maintain freedom and happiness, to avoid missing out on worthwhile experience, to stay excited and occupied...*”<sup>1</sup>
- So, my **natural tendency** is to look for satisfaction and contentment and happiness in the things of this world: e.g., *experiences, relationships, possessions.*

Truthfully, this is a hauntingly accurate description of my entire life!

- At one point during my **college years**, I realized that I was simultaneously involved in the (1) college **choir**, (2) intramural **basketball**, (3) intramural **volleyball**, (4) a massive **musical** production, (5) co-leading our dorm **Bible Study**, (6) **editor** of the sport section of the college newspaper, (7) playing music in a Christian band called **WeakSide**, (8) leading music on Friday nights at a college worship event, (9) in a dating relationship, (10) spending as much time as I could with my roommate, (11) and taking **21 credits**...
- **Why?** Because I was looking for happiness and contentment and satisfaction... and I kept thinking I could find it in the things around me.

And I have struggled with this impulse my entire life.

If you have ever struggled with looking for happiness & fulfillment in the things of this world, Hebrews has a powerful message for you, and the message is that **Jesus is better**.

- *Knowing Jesus is **better** than the best relationship you have ever had.*
- *Walking with Jesus is **better** than the most exhilarating experience you could imagine.*
- *Having Jesus is **better** than having all of the possessions your heart has ever craved.*

Somebody posed the question (on the internet) this past week: “**Would you rather have \$1 Trillion dollars or 10 minutes with Jesus?**” What would you choose? The majority of those who answered said they would take the money. And it reminds me of a famous quote by **C.S. Lewis** in his book, *The Weight of Glory*.

*“We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.enneagraminstitute.com/type-7>

There is Jeremiah, filling his schedule with 10,000 things because he cannot imagine what it means to find his happiness in Jesus.

There are all the people choosing wealth over Jesus because they cannot imagine what it means to find their deepest satisfaction in Jesus.

The **message of Hebrews** is that **Jesus is better** than *anything* in your past, *anything* in your present, and *everything* in your future.

- The author of this book looks at some of the most impressive people, the most exalted creatures, the most powerful experiences, the most sacred places in the history of God's people, and then shows how **Jesus is better than all these things**.

## CONTEXT

As we have mentioned numerous times during this series through the NT, Christianity is still very new to the scene of world history. The book of Hebrews was **probably written in the AD 60's**, which means that the global church is barely 30 years old.

Though many of the Jews (also call *Israelites*, also called **Hebrews**) have converted from Judaism to Christianity, it has not been easy for them. Over these past three decades, they have faced all kinds of persecution for their faith in the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated,  
you endured a great struggle with sufferings:  
partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches, and tribulations,  
and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated;  
for you had compassion on me in my chains,  
and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods,  
knowing that you have **a better** and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.

~ *Hebrews 10:32–34*

While Judaism was protected under Roman Law, Christianity was not protected. The Senate pronounced Christianity to be an “*illegal superstition*.”<sup>2</sup> So, if these Hebrews wanted to **avoid** suffering, tribulation, chains, and the plundering of their goods, there seemed to be **an obvious solution**: *walk away from Christ*. And this is exactly what some of them seemed to doing (e.g., **Heb 10:25**). They were “*forsaking the church*” (**10:25**), “*casting away their confidence*” (**10:35**), and going back into the safety and familiarity of their old religion.

And so, the author of this letter writes this letter to the Hebrews to keep them from “*departing from the living God*” (**3:12**).<sup>3</sup> And **his argument** is that **Jesus is better**: *Jesus is better than everything you have left behind in Judaism, and He is worth whatever hardship you will face in the future*.

- His ways are better than your *Jewish traditions*. His laws are better than *the laws of Moses*. His word is better than *the word of prophets*. His promises are better than *the promises of the old covenant*. The hope He offers is better than *the hope in the Old Testament*.
- Jesus is better than *comfort*. He is better than *safety*. He is better than *financial security*. He is better than your *home*. He is better than your *reputation*. You can point to anything in your life and say, “**Jesus is better**.”

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/bria-13-4-b-religious-tolerance-and-persecution-in-the-roman-empire>

<sup>3</sup> See also 2:1; 6:4–6; 10:29; 12:15–24.

## OUTLINE

### 1. Jesus speaks a better word.

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days **spoken to us by His Son**, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.<sup>4</sup>

~ *Hebrews 1:1–2*

Throughout the OT, God spoke to His people in all kinds of different ways.

- He spoke to Moses on the mountain in thunder and lightning | Gen 19:16–25
- He spoke to Elijah in “a still small voice” | 1 Kings 19:12
- He spoke to Ezekiel in visions. He spoke to Daniel in dreams | Ezek 1:1–4; Dan 7:1
- He spoke through angelic messengers, prophets, donkeys. | Num 22:28

Throughout the OT, God was using **many different ways** of communicating truth and life and hope and direction to His people. And His communication was powerful... and personal... and creative... and dramatic, but then (*in the most miraculous event in the history of the universe*) the Creator of the world became a man, and He spoke to us face to face!<sup>5</sup>

The God who spoke the universe into existence became a human being. He walked in our shoes. He endured our hardships. He experienced our temptations. He cried our tears. As Jesus speaks to us, it is **the voice of God in the flesh!**

This is like the difference between receiving an email or a text message or a phone call or a postcard from your best friend and having them show up in person. It was wonderful to get the email or the phone call, but it’s so much better to hear their voice in person.

This world was created *by* Jesus,<sup>6</sup> and it was created *for* Jesus;<sup>7</sup> and now He has come to speak to us in the flesh.

So...

- **to the Hebrews:** why would you go looking for messages from prophets or angels or visions or dreams or experiences when the Son of God, Creator of the Universe, has communicated God to us in the flesh?
- **to us:** why would we go looking for truth and meaning and direction from prophets or heavenly messengers or experiences when God has spoken to us through His Son?
  - The **Mormons** have built their entire religion around the messages that Joseph Smith claimed to receive from a vision ... but the message of Jesus is ***better than visions***.
  - The **Muslims** have built their religion around the messages that Muhamad claimed to hear from the angel Gabriel ... but the message of Jesus is ***better than angels***.
  - **Americans** have built their lives on the message of pop culture and social media and political posts and newspaper headlines ... but ***the message of Jesus is better***.

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<sup>4</sup> The heavens and the foundation of the earth are the work of Jesus. All things were made by Him and for Him (**Heb 2:10**). The universe was “framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things where are visible” (**Heb 11:3**).

<sup>5</sup> See John 1:1–4, 14.

<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 1:10; cf. John 1:1–3.

<sup>7</sup> Hebrews 2:10.

## 2. Jesus provides a better relationship with God

### **Illustration:** *visiting people in jail*

I remember the first time I visited a young man in jail...

- I waited for the guard to come get me, and then I followed the guard to a meeting room.
- First, they had to see if the prisoner was willing to talk to me.
- Then they escorted him into the room next door – where we were separated by a window.
- I was able to talk with him, but it was a phone for a limited period of time (while the guards monitored our conversation).

This is a bit like the relationship that God had with His people in the Old Testament (i.e., the *Old Covenant*, the *old system*). In the Old Covenant, God's people had a veiled, separated, mediated, conditional relationship with God.

### **Their relationship with God involved...**

- *traveling* to a particular place (the tabernacle or the temple)
- *bringing* a specific animal that would be sacrificed to God for a variety of reasons
  - These sacrifices were performed by a priest on behalf of the people...

▪ <i>Burnt offerings</i>	Lev 1
▪ <i>Grain offerings</i>	Lev 2
▪ <i>Peace offerings</i>	Lev 3
▪ <i>Guilt offerings</i>	Lev 4
▪ <i>Sin offerings</i> <sup>8</sup>	Lev 5

- Once a year, on **the Day of Atonement** (*Lev 16:34*), the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies (*the most sacred room in the tabernacle/temple*) which was separated from the rest of the tabernacle/temple by a huge veil. In this sacred room, he would burn incense and sprinkle the blood of a sacrificial animal on the mercy seat over the Ark of the Covenant to atone for his own sins and the sins of the people.<sup>9</sup>

All of these sacrifices were pointing forward to the work that Jesus would accomplish on the cross!

Therefore He is also able to **save to the uttermost** those who come to God through Him,  
Since **He always lives to make intercession for them**.

For such a High Priest was fitting for us,  
who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become **higher than the heavens**;  
who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices,  
first for His own sins, and then for the people's,  
for this He did **once for all** when **He offered up Himself**.  
~ *Hebrews 7:25–27*

But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come,  
with the **greater and more perfect tabernacle** not made with hand, that is, not of this creation.  
Not with the blood of goats and calves, but **with His own blood**  
He entered the Most Holy Place **once for all**, having obtained *eternal redemption*.  
~ *Hebrews 9:11–12*

<sup>8</sup> This included both unintentional sins (Lev 4:13, 22, 27) and seemingly intentional sins (5:1–6).

<sup>9</sup> “*The veil and the elaborate rituals undertaken by the priest were a reminder that man could not carelessly or irreverently enter God’s awesome presence. Before the high priest entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, he had to wash himself, put on special clothing, bring burning incense to let the smoke cover his eyes from a direct view of God, and bring sacrificial blood with him to make atonement for sins (Exodus 28; Hebrews 9:7).*”

And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices,  
which can never take away sins.

But this Man, after He had offered **one sacrifice** for sins **forever**,  
sat down at the right hand of God...

~ Hebrews 10:11–12

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,  
by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,  
and having a High Priest over the house of God,  
let us draw near with a true heart in **full assurance of faith**...

~ Hebrews 10:19–22

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens,  
Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses,  
but was in **all points tempted as we are, yet without sin**.

Let us therefore **come boldly** to the throne of grace,<sup>10</sup>  
that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

~ Hebrews 4:14–16

Everything in the OT was “the copy and shadow” of what Jesus was going to accomplish (8:5)

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

The **THEME** throughout Hebrews is that Jesus provides a better relationship with God.<sup>11</sup>

- All our sins are covered in His blood.
- All our guilt has been taken away (put outside the camp).
- The wall (curtain, veil) that separated us from God was torn in two.
- Our fellowship has been completely restored.
- We can enter into His presence (anywhere, anytime) with boldness:
  - confident in our salvation
  - confident that God loves us & accepts us & receives us & delights to see us

## CONCLUSION

Hebrews 12:1 says that our OT history is **surrounded** (περικείμενον) by men and women who lived and died believing that God had something better for them this world could ever offer;<sup>12</sup> and that “something better” is Jesus.

**Looking unto Jesus**, that author and finisher of our faith,  
who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross,  
despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

~ Hebrews 12:2

Keep your eyes on Jesus (on what He has *said* & on what He has *done*); because Jesus is better!

<sup>10</sup> “There is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God” (Heb 7:19).

<sup>11</sup> This is infinitely better than the confessional-mediated, eucharistic-transubstantiation-sacrificial, works-based relationship of **Roman Catholicism**. And it is better than the works-based religions of the **Jehovah’s Witnesses** and the **Mormonism** and **Islam** and...

<sup>12</sup> See Hebrews 11:1–40.