



HEBREWS

STUDY GUIDE



THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

The book of Hebrews is unique in the New Testament. It is an unusual letter. It does not tell us who is writing. It does not tell us to whom it is written. Its content assumes a deep knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures and it assumes knowledge of Jesus the Messiah. Is it a letter? Some say it reads more like a sermon because it moves from explaining deep scriptural truth to exhorting its audience toward those truths.

The truth is . . . Hebrews is a masterpiece. The author has picked up on the threads of Israel's story and weaves them into a tapestry that delivers a message to the people of God— Jesus is the exact imprint of God, the radiance of His glory, a greater Law, a new and better Priest, the one and only sacrifice whose blood opens the way to the ultimate Promised Land. If you knew someone who could give directions to get there, would you not pay attention? What would be the risks if you didn't?

Together, let us take heed the book of Hebrews.

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SESSION ONE

¹Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

⁵For to which of the angels did God ever say,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”?

Or again,

“I will be to him a father,
and he shall be to me a son”?

⁶And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says,

“Let all God’s angels worship him.”

⁷Of the angels he says,

“He makes his angels winds,
and his ministers a flame of fire.”

HEBREWS 1:1-14

⁸But of the Son he says,

“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,
the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.

⁹You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”

¹⁰And,

“You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning,

and the heavens are the work of your hands;

¹¹ they will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment,

¹² like a robe you will roll them up,
like a garment they will be changed.

But you are the same,
and your years will have no end.”

¹³And to which of the angels has he ever said,

“Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?

¹⁴Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake
of those who are to inherit salvation?



INTRODUCTION

Sometimes, we are slow to connect the dots, but once things slide into their proper places, everything makes more sense. Have you had that experience? The author of Hebrews begins this letter by connecting Old Testament dots to reveal the reality of Jesus Christ. Who He is, what He's done, and why it matters is demonstrated through callbacks to the Old Testament writings. Taking time to read through the passages referenced in Hebrews will help expand the fuller idea behind what is being conveyed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. God has spoken to us. What are some of the ways God communicates with people in the Bible? (Exodus 3:1-6; 1 Samuel 3:1-10; Psalm 19:1-4; 2 Timothy 3:14-17) How does God speak to us today? How have you experienced this in your walk with Him?
2. There are many details shared about the Son in this passage. Choose one or two that are most surprising, comforting, or confusing to you. What do they reveal about who Jesus is and what He has done? (John 1:1-18; Colossians 1:15-20)
3. What does “purification for sins” entail in this context? How might the second part of verse 3 connect to the ideas of holiness and atonement from our introduction to Hebrews in Leviticus? (Leviticus 16, 17:11) How would you describe this requirement to someone else?
4. Read Psalm 2:7-9 and define what you think ‘begotten’ means. In Acts 13:29-39, the Apostle Paul refers to Jesus using the same psalm. Now read 2 Samuel 7:1-16. While the word can mean “born” is that what is meant in these passages?
5. Hebrews 1:6, 7, and 14 describe angels. What does the author want us to understand about them?

6. Hebrews 1:8, 9, and 13 describe the Son. Read Psalm 45:6-9 and Psalm 110:1-2 that sit behind these verses. What do thrones, scepters, and anointed have in common?
7. What titles (“names”) does Hebrews 1:8-10 give to the Son by reference? What is the author saying about the Son’s identity?
8. Why do you think the author chooses to contrast God’s message delivered through prophets and angels with Jesus? What challenges might the letter’s original audience have been facing? Do we face similar challenges today?
9. Hebrews describes angels as servants who worship God and serve those who will inherit salvation (vv. 6, 14). How is this role different from the Son’s position and authority? Why could it be significant that the angels are called to worship Him? (Psalm 103:20-21; Psalm 148:1-5; Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:13,14)
10. Where else in the Bible do we see Jesus presented as God? (Psalm 46:6,7; John 1:1-18; John 20:26-29; Colossians 1:15-20; Philippians 2:5-11)



The supreme divinity of Christ is laid out in this passage by demonstrating He is above the angels and all of creation. Everything created is perishing and wearing out, yet He remains forever. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. His divine nature is what sets Him above everything else.

The Son is the same yesterday, today and forever. While the spirit of the age swirls around us and the tides of culture are continually shifting, there may be temptation to be tossed back and forth. When you are met by the uncertainties of the day, a difficult circumstance, injustice, remember that these things are not permanent. Like a robe, Jesus will roll everything up. Like a garment, they will be changed.

Those who put their faith in the superior, righteous Son of God are to inherit salvation. That is good news for us, but not just for us. By introducing others to the Rock that endures and prevails against the storms, we can offer our security and certainty to those around us made weary and exhausted by the changing cultural weather. Introduce them to your steady and unchanging Jesus, the Son of God, that they might know Him and place their faith in Him, too. Pray for opportunities and courage to share the Source of your salvation with those that need to hear it. This week, give yourself over to the Son afresh. With glad hearts praise Him for His glory, nature, and power, forever.

SESSION TWO

¹Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ²For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, ⁴while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

⁵For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking.

HEBREWS 2:1-9

⁶It has been testified somewhere,

“What is man, that you are mindful of him,
or the son of man, that you care for him?

⁷You made him for a little while lower than the angels;
you have crowned him with glory and honor,

⁸putting everything in subjection under his feet.”

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. ⁹But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

INTRODUCTION

The book of Hebrews contains a pattern of explanation then exhortation (or warning). This passage begins with the word ‘therefore,’ indicating that the case made in the previous passage requires a conclusion. Christ’s unchanging and eternal supremacy over the angels, and all of creation, has been made clear. Therefore, how should we respond? Heeding the author’s weight and warning placed on the importance of our response to that question is wise.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Consider the word “drift.” Is this a sudden or gradual action? Do humans drift towards holiness or towards sin? What examples from Scripture can you share of others drifting in their faith? Do you have a personal experience of drifting and returning in your walk with the Lord?
2. We are sinners and deserve “just retribution,” but those who call on Jesus have “escaped.” What does it mean to “neglect such a great salvation” in the context so far?
3. What was the reliable message “declared by angels” in verse two? (Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19)
4. While not stated, there is a second declaration being made that the author wants his audience to compare to the first. He assumes his audience knows both. What is the author’s logic in the comparison? Also, what is the third declaration (or witness) and by whom?
5. In the history of the Israelites, what might be an example of “just retribution”? Do you have any personal examples of just or unjust retribution? How does the idea of just retribution reconcile with your understanding of God’s holiness?

6. Read Genesis 1:26-30. How does this passage relate to Hebrews 2:5-8?
7. Read Psalm 8, which is quoted in verses 6, 7. Considering where the Book of Psalms is in the Bible, who is the Psalm about?
8. Is Hebrews 2:8-9 about humans, Jesus, or both? Explain your logic from the passage.
9. Are there things you feel are “outside His control”? What is the extent of God’s control or sovereignty over creation from your perspective?
10. Are there areas, people, ideas you should surrender from your control into His? If you have given up control of something because of your faith, what does that process look like?

As failed image-bearers, we need the Perfect Human. Jesus is crowned with glory and honor for doing what no other man in all of history could do. He lived a sinless life, taking God's just retribution against all of mankind on Himself. By the grace of God's will, Jesus, the Lamb that took away the sin of the world, died in our place. John 15:13 tells us that "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." And Jesus willed to do this. He has atoned for us, making us clean before God with His own life and blood.

The appeal of this passage is that the declared salvation of Christ, given witness through miracles of God, is better: How shall we escape the punishment of God's righteous judgement, if we neglect such a great salvation? To neglect, ignore, carelessly disregard; is this how we receive the most precious gift? Pray not. Adam and Eve fell by neglecting God's good command. The Israelites who received the reliable message of the Law, like Adam and Eve, were exiled due to their disobedience. History shows us that, apart from Jesus Christ, we are doomed to repeat the same error.

This is a warning to us individually and to followers of Christ collectively. **How will you pay closer attention to Jesus and guard against drifting this week?** Perhaps you will choose to spend more time with the Lord in prayer, in His Word, in praise and

SESSION THREE

¹⁰For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, ¹²saying,

“I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”

¹³And again,
“I will put my trust in him.”

And again,
“Behold, I and the children God has given me.”

HEBREWS 2:10-18

¹⁴Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¹⁶For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

INTRODUCTION

Up to this point we have seen Christ's divinity, and Christ introduced as the perfect image-bearer of Psalm 8. Now the author lays out just how incredibly important it is that God would condescend to become flesh so that man would know Him better. Who can speak to your pain more powerfully than someone who has experienced it? We may try to put ourselves in the shoes of others, but Jesus has been in our shoes, he has walked in our place.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who received “glory” in Hebrews 2:9 from last session? Who receives “glory” in Hebrews 2:10 here? How are these connected?
2. How is Jesus made perfect through suffering? Perfect in what way? Is it talking about moral perfection or something else? (1 Peter 2:21-23; Romans 5:18-19; Revelation 5:9)
3. What is sanctification in the Bible? Share examples from your own life.
4. Read Psalm 22 and Isaiah 8:13-18. How might the author’s reference to these passages show why Jesus is not ashamed to call His people brothers?
5. How does this passage expand your understanding of the importance of Christ’s incarnation? Why is it crucial to Christians that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man?
6. Where does fear come from? How is ‘fear’ in this passage similar to or different from the “fear of the Lord” described in Proverbs? (Matthew 10:28; Romans 6:5-11; 1 Corinthians 15)

7. What is the role of a high priest in the Tabernacle or Temple?
(Leviticus 16) What does it mean to be merciful and faithful in this role?
8. In this session's text, the author points out different effects of Christ's saving work. List as many as you can find.
9. The greek word for "propitiation" is similar to the word in the Greek translation of the word "atonement" in Leviticus. From our Leviticus series, what is the purpose of atonement?
10. Why does God's holiness require propitiation for the sins of people?
(Genesis 2:16-17; Leviticus 10:10, 11) Has this requirement changed with the revelation of Jesus? If so, how?
11. Jesus is called the Founder of salvation (v. 10), Brother (v. 11), and High Priest (v. 17) in this passage. What do these names mean to you? Which is more familiar to you when approaching Him in prayer?

Our passage encourages us that, “because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.” Through His sinless life He teaches us to rely on the Father and turn to Him when temptation threatens to overcome us. Recall the scene on the Mount of Olives, before His betrayal, as Jesus instructs those disciples with Him to “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” He goes on to model this for them, and us, as He prays for Himself, “‘Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done.’ And there appeared to Him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.”

We may find ourselves falling short of our best intention to resist temptation in our own strength, rather than turning to our Father in Heaven, allowing the Holy Spirit to guide and teach us, and remembering the example of the Firstborn Son. When we do this, suffering is not removed, but we can be assured deliverance will come, ultimately and forever, it will come.

God is for us, His angels, “sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation,” will strengthen us, and faithful believers are here to walk beside us. As Proverbs 17:17 tells us, “A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.” **Who are your brothers in times of temptation and suffering?** For the Christian, it is not a matter of ‘if’ you’ll suffer, rather ‘when.’

Take time this week to evaluate how well your spiritual disciplines are preparing you for inevitable temptation and suffering, connect with your fellow believers to help build one another up. If today you find yourself overcome by the storm, call on the Lord, call on your pastors, call on your brothers and sisters. Let us all pray to follow Jesus more earnestly.

SESSION FOUR

¹Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, ²who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. ³For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself.

HEBREWS 3:1-6

⁴(For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) ⁵Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

INTRODUCTION

In a Hebrew household, the name Moses was central to the faith. So many of the stories in Torah, the instruction or teaching of Israel, had his name indelibly written on them. Essentially, he was one of the most positive characters in the history of Israel. So, in a book named “Hebrews” there is no doubt that the author would have to somehow speak of such a pivotal player, but how would his good example be brought into his reasoning?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you wanted to convince someone of something good or “better,” what would you do? Use a hamburger as an example.
2. The author of Hebrews calls his audience “holy brothers.” How is that different than simply calling them brothers?
3. Considering our short series on Leviticus where we discussed “holiness,” what would this inclusion of “holy” seem to imply?
4. Consider an audience of people saturated in Jewish scriptures. Who are the top three characters in the Old Testament and why would you put them in that category?

5. Recall important stories about Moses. What are the highlights?
6. Read Deuteronomy 18:15-18, and describe what is meant by prophecy. Here in Hebrews 3:5, what does the author mean by saying Moses testified to things to be spoken later?
7. How is Jesus specifically being compared to Moses? How is it similar to the comparison to angels previously in Hebrews?
8. At the end of Hebrews 3:3, there is a comparison between a house and the builder of the house. What are the implications of this as applied to Moses and Jesus? Read Numbers 12:5-8.
9. The term “house” is used seven times in these handful of verses. What might that term mean to a Hebrew audience?

First angels, now Moses. This author is pushing his Hebrew audience to consider some of the foundational narratives in the Hebrew scriptures. Moses, who spoke with God face-to-face, is the one who brought the people Torah. We have to recognize the immensity of saying Jesus is greater than Moses. Like a quake with its epicenter directly under foot, the deliverer of the Law has been relegated to secondary status. But in a sense, the Israelites knew this. Moses was not able to enter the Promised Land. The author makes it clear that the difference is between the servant of the house and the One who builds it, just like a servant does not have the same weight as a Son.

This is the point, isn't it. Jesus the Messiah is like a new and better Moses, "faithful over God's house as a son" and we are His house. We are His house. No longer the house of Israel or the house of Judah or the House of (fill in the blank). Every house is built by God and we will find out later that the author of Hebrews will state that "we have a great priest over the house of God."

If we, like the audience of Hebrews, share in a heavenly calling, how are we revealing that calling? To what do we hold fast in confidence and hope? Are these worthy things?

SESSION FIVE

⁷Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

“Today, if you hear his voice,

⁸do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,

⁹where your fathers put me to the test
and saw my works for forty years.

¹⁰Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart;
they have not known my ways.’

¹¹As I swore in my wrath,
‘They shall not enter my rest.’ ”

¹²Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil,
unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living
God. ¹³But exhort one another every day, as long as it is

HEBREWS 3:7-19

called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. ¹⁵As it is said,

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”

¹⁶For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses? ¹⁷And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes the Bible refers to earlier Bible text that refers to even older texts. As you can already recognize, this happens a lot in Hebrews, sometimes twice as done here. The author is reminding his Hebrew audience of their checkered history. He wants them to imagine what brought them to this moment and to avoid previous pitfalls. More to the point, he wants them to recognize what can bring them through in the present? Actually, not 'what', but rather Who?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The first line says, “The Holy Spirit says” as he quotes a psalm from the Old Testament. What do you think he means? Now read Isaiah 59:21; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16.
2. Read Psalm 95:7-11 that is quoted here in Hebrews. What is the story that the psalm is referring to? Where is the original story that it refers to in the Bible? (HINT: look for the small superscript letters next to words for cross-referenced verses)
3. Earlier in Hebrews 2:1, the warning was about “drifting away.” Here the warning is about “falling away.” Compare the two warnings.
4. In the warning, the words “evil” and “unbelieving heart” are linked. What is the opposite? What activity does the author indicate will help?

5. How would you define “exhort one another” in Hebrews 3:13? How would you do it? Describe a time when you either succeeded or failed at doing so.
6. What is meant by the "deceitfulness of sin"? Read Jeremiah 17:9-10; Matthew 13:22; John 8:42-44; Ephesians 4:20-24.
7. The question about those who heard and rebelled in Hebrews 3:16 being “all those who left Egypt led by Moses” evokes a memory full of failure and anguish for any Israelite. Why would the author do this? What is his point of bringing up “leaving Egypt” and “Moses” specifically?
8. Why is hearing about God’s great salvation not enough? How is the author using Moses and the wilderness wandering as an example?
9. Have you ever told the story about God’s salvation in Jesus (i.e. spoke the gospel message) and received a lukewarm or negative response? Describe what happened.

What does it take to trust? The example provided is the Israelites saved from pharaoh in Egypt. They were saved by the mighty hand of God. They heard the very voice of their God calling from the devouring fire on the top of Sinai. But even with all of those supernatural proofs not only of God's power, but His care for them, they failed to trust.

Warnings like this are sprinkled throughout the book of Hebrews. Deceitfulness of sin. Rebellion. Disobedience. Unbelief. This was the disease that plagued Israel in the wilderness and we are no different. What will it take to change our hearts? Clearly, One greater than Moses. One who can permanently usher in God's rest.

But the question is, do we trust Him? What are the barriers to such trust? What do we trust more? What is our ultimate trust built upon? It's probably time to reorder our priorities.

SESSION SIX

¹Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. ²For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. ³For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said,

“As I swore in my wrath,
‘They shall not enter my rest,’ ”

although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” ⁵And again in this passage he said,

“They shall not enter my rest.”

⁶Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷again he appoints a certain day,

HEBREWS 4:1-13

“Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts.”

⁸For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. ⁹So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, ¹⁰for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. ¹¹Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. ¹²For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

INTRODUCTION

There is an idea that began last session and carries forward. The words you will hear as you read this section are “enter” and “rest.” So, what is the rest that needs to be entered? What does it mean to enter rest? Whose rest? From Moses to Joshua, the author of Hebrews continues to tease out Old Testament themes, this time focusing on the idea of God’s rest and the Promised Land.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When you receive a “promise” what gives that promise value?
2. What is the good news that came to them and to us (in v. 2) as the author is indicating? What is the “good news” in the Hebrew scriptures and how does it relate to “rest” and “faith”?
3. After reading Psalm 95, define the “rest” that the psalm is referring to? What does “rest” refer to in the broadest sense in Hebrews (see v. 4)? How does the psalmist describe coming into that rest?
4. Read Numbers 14:5-9, 20-24. In what ways did the Israelites in the wilderness fail to be united by faith? How might you determine if you are united by faith with those who listen or those in rebellion, like the wilderness generation?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-14. Paul gives several examples of Israel in the wilderness as warnings. How do they compare to the text here in Hebrews?

6. The word “day” and “today” seem to have temporal flexibility. Based upon the author’s argument in verses 3-10, what “day” are we in? Is there a difference between David’s “today” and the “today” when people are reading the letter? How is this an exhortation?
7. Go back and read Hebrews 1:1-3. How does Jesus relate to the “rest” so important to this session? How does He relate to the “word” here in Hebrews 4:12?
8. The author of Hebrews says “let us...strive to enter that rest.” What does this striving look like for a Christian? What is required? How is it different from striving for our salvation as if we can tip the scales of justice in our favor?
9. Read Matthew 11:28-30. A yoke is what was attached to a beast of burden. Does it sound like a word picture that requires no effort? Where is our effort to be directed?
10. How do you feel about being “naked and exposed” before God? Read Genesis 2:25 with Genesis 3:7. How does God respond to Adam and Eve’s nakedness in each instance?

God has spoken to us through His Son. Spoken. Words are spoken. The Son is the living, active Word of God that pierces our heart like a surgeon's scalpel, exposing our motivations and intentions. By surrendering our self-centered disobedience and unbelief, we trust in the promise of God, His rest. We rest in the Lord.

Throughout this passage, the author reveals that disobedience is a refusal to trust God's promise of rest. This hardening of heart is what kept humanity wandering from His rest in Eden. It is the reason Joshua's leadership into the Promised Land did not give them complete rest. It is the reason the word "today" from David's psalm (and the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 3:7) still includes this day, right now. God on the seventh day rested and He invites us into that rest.

What are you still trying to accomplish in your own strength, timing, will? Are you hiding in unfaithfulness? Do you not know that you lay bare before the living, active Word of God, who knows you completely and loves you perfectly? Come to Him. Allow the Great Physician to remove every infection of unbelief and misplaced reliance with surgical precision. Be sanctified by His transforming power, trust His promise, and enter into His rest.

SESSION SEVEN

¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

^{5:1} For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³Because of this he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sins just as he does for those of the people. ⁴And no one takes this honor for himself, but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

HEBREWS 4:14-5:10

⁵So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;

⁶as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever,
after the order of Melchizedek.”

⁷In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered. ⁹And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

INTRODUCTION

In the Book of Exodus and Leviticus, Moses carries out God's appointment of the Levitical priesthood as God commanded starting with his brother Aaron. He is less than perfect, and his sons prove to be just as broken. Human frailty from the Garden continues into the tabernacle where priests serve, before the footstool of God. But in God's mercy, they are given means to atone for themselves and others so they could remain in God's presence. The author of Hebrews tells us that God has resolved this frailty by appointing Christ, His Son, to the role of High Priest forever.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Once again we are exhorted “let us hold fast,” this time to “our confession.” We will understand more of this as we go, but what would you say the “confession” is from reading Hebrews up to this point?
2. Not necessarily focusing on Judaism or Christianity, how would you define “priest” generally? What do they do?
3. Connect Hebrews 2:9, 14, 17-18 with Hebrews 4:15. What are these passages communicating about Jesus and humanity?
4. Read Hebrews 2:17 and 3:1. Describe what is said about Christ in these previous passages that label him as Priest.
5. When talking about a throne and a priest, what image might come to mind for an Israelite? (1 Samuel 4:4; 1 Chronicles 28:2; Psalm 99:1-5; Isaiah 66:1). What other royal imagery has been associated to Jesus so far in Hebrews?

6. Why can we draw near to the throne of grace with confidence? What is the logic of verse 16? For an unclean and sinful people, are the requirements for drawing near to a holy God through Christ the same or different?
7. Read Leviticus 16:6, 11 as they relate to Hebrews 5:2-3. How was the high priest involved in the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16?
8. High priests are called to serve by God, chosen and appointed. Is that a distinction made for high priests alone or, perhaps, a requirement of all endeavoring to serve the Lord with their lives even today? How do you discern the difference between serving by your own choosing versus the Lord's?
9. Read Genesis 14:18-24. Who is Melchizedek?
10. Considering Jesus as divine, perfect image-bearer, and High priest, are there any cautions that come to mind in neglecting either His divinity or humanity? How might this balance shape your attitude toward the Son?

A priest is a human that mediates between the divine and other humans. Jesus, our Great High Priest, is both divine and human. The perfect mediator. We do not have a Savior who is “unable to sympathize with our weakness,” who was “tempted as we are, yet without sin.” He understands our frailty. While the earthly High Priest must offer “gifts and sacrifices” for others and himself, Jesus offers prayers and supplications. The earthly High Priest goes behind the veil to serve at God’s footstool. Jesus, the Royal Son and Priest passes through the heavenly veil to the actual throne. The throne of grace. Do you recognize the gift he offered? Do you see what it cost? He laid His life down, so we could be reconciled to the Father.

The Apostle Peter declares 1 Peter 2:9 that Christians, “are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” The grace we have received was never meant to end with us. We receive grace to give grace. When we look at another person’s failings and sins, we are, in some ways, looking at ourselves in a mirror. We see our own weakness that requires a high priest to intercede before a holy God. None of us can enter His rest on our own merit. We all desperately need a High Priest to step into the heavenly sanctuary on our behalf, offering the once and for all atonement for our sins, and restoring us to our right standing as clean before God.

How will you “with confidence draw near to the throne of grace” to “receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need”? Come boldly, restored by His sacrificial blood, and remember to extend that same grace drawn from deep heavenly wells to the fellow sinner standing beside you.

SESSION EIGHT

¹¹About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, ¹³for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. ¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.

HEBREWS 5:11-6:3

^{6:1} Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ²and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³And this we will do if God permits.

INTRODUCTION

The author of Hebrews indicates that there is much more to share on the matter of the Melchizedek priesthood and Jesus Christ, however his audience doesn't appear ready to receive it. He turns his attention now to the stunted maturity of faith he observes. Like any teacher who wants to see change in his audience, the author of Hebrews challenges them by telling them they are not ready. The exhortation assumes a desire for them to rise above, to be ready, and progress in maturity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When someone says “you aren’t ready” what typically happens in your heart? Or do you remember a time when you were young and someone said to you “stop being a baby”? Explain.
2. What does it mean to be dull of hearing? Compare this charge against who ought to be teachers with Israel's teachers as addressed by Jesus in Matthew 23:25-28. Who is free from the responsibility to teach in the eyes of the Lord?
3. Read Matthew 5:48. What has been a big theme so far in Hebrews relating to Jesus’ humanity? (Hebrews 2:10; 5:9). How might this be related to the negative and positive exhortations here? Is Jesus’ message the same or different from the charge put to the audience in our Hebrews passage? How so?
4. What are the “basic principles” and “elementary doctrine” the author believes his hearers should know? (there are three pairs in Hebrews 6:1-2) Is he saying these are no longer necessary or something different? Is it clear whether these principles are Jewish or Christian?
5. In what ways might Leviticus 10:10 bring clarity to this passage?

Consider also the place where a Israelite priest works, the Tabernacle, God's holiness, and the danger that presents for the sinful or ritually unclean, those things stained with death?

6. How would you explain repentance from dead works and faith toward God?
7. Where do you find instructions about washings in the Bible? Where did those washings take place?
8. Recall the details of the Day of Atonement. How might spiritual maturity mirror the physical progression of proximity to God's holiness in the rituals of that day?
9. Read Matthew 7:24-27. How does Jesus make a similar point to His audience?

For any great building, a foundation is required. The author pauses to challenge his audience to stop playing around in the mud and actually start to build upon the foundation they have been graciously given. If they don't strive toward maturity, they can't possibly learn the beauties of scripture in order to pass them on. And, if Jesus was perfected for His vocation through suffering, should His followers not grow in a similar fashion? The fact is, building is hard work.

The Great Commission instructs us to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20a) You must be a disciple before you can make a disciple.

Ask the Lord to show you a clear picture of your own spiritual maturity in light of this passage. **Are you splashing in the shallows even though you have been in the faith for decades? Do you need a mature Christian to help you? Should you be helping someone else grow?**

None are finished with this work until, “He who began a good work in you brings it to completion in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:6)

SESSION NINE

⁴For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. ⁷For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸But if it bears

HEBREWS 6:4-12

thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

⁹Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation.

¹⁰For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. ¹¹And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹²so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those

INTRODUCTION

This isn't the first place such a warning has been given. Don't drift. Don't fall away. Listen to the Good News. Don't be like the wilderness generation. Don't be babies. Be mature. Progress in your faith. This session's warning presents a hypothetical of what happens when one neglects, resists, or rejects the Son and His work on their behalf, and it is terrifying. The author does not leave us there though.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. List all of the benefits in verses 4-5. Why might he use the word 'tasted' twice in these descriptions? How have you tasted these things in your walk with the Lord or do you eat regularly?
2. Does the author's picture comparing two watered lands in verses 7-8 help with your understanding of verses 4-6? How so? Who is fruitful in the Parable of the Sower? (Matthew 13:18-23)
3. Read Deuteronomy 29:18-28. How might this picture from the Old Testament compare to Hebrews 6:4-8?
4. Read Hebrews 6:8 in light of Genesis 1:28; 2:3; 5:1-2 and then 3:17-19. What is God's desire and how does the second land reference contradict it?
5. What does the author mean when saying it is impossible to be restored again to repentance? Think through the logic and consider our Levitical discussions about sacrifices at the Tabernacle.

6. Which other warning passages in the Bible give you pause when considering the sincerity of your own profession of faith in Jesus Christ? (Matthew 7:21-23; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:10)
7. A shift happens in verse 9, from warning to promise. How does this encourage you? Which details most directly address any doubts stirred up about your own salvation in Christ?
8. What promises in the Bible reassure you of your genuine faith and eternal standing before God in Christ? Share with the group. (John 3:16; 5:24; 10:27-29; Romans 8:28-30; Philippians 1:6; others)
9. How can we show earnestness to have full hope until the end? Does this mean our works are required for our salvation? Why or why not? (Matthew 7:20; James 2:26)
10. Who are you imitating as you live out your faith? Are there people in your circle that set an example of Christ that you aspire to emulate? (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Extremely jarring words. If Jesus' crucifixion is the once for all sacrifice, how could we ask for His precious blood to be spent again by holding Him up to contempt? Outrageous! But, for some theological systems, this warning is like fitting a square peg in a round hole. Is it really possible for someone not to be restored to repentance? The Bible includes a story where those who experienced His salvation firsthand, His chosen people, are told they will not inherit the Promised Land (Numbers 14:20-32). We also have words from apostles like James:

"My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." James 5:19-20

In the Parable of Two Sons in Luke 15:11-32, one son seems faithful and the other does not, but the parable ends with the unfaithful son brought in while the faithful son refuses to return to the Father. Very soon you will read in Hebrews "Consequently, [Jesus] is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25)

There is tension. God's justice and mercy belong together but this is hard to understand at times. Trusting Jesus means having the courage to trust these hard bits of the Bible rather than trying to fit them into a theological system. **So, we pray together that we would not drift, or fall away, or Heaven-forbid, be careless about the blood wrought at the Cross. And we pray the same for others who seem far away from Jesus.** Ask the Lord to help us all clearly taste and see both His justice and His mercy, and find our way back to their Great High Priest and Brother, Jesus.

SESSION TEN

¹³For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” ¹⁵And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. ¹⁶For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have

HEBREWS 6:13-20

fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. ¹⁹We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ²⁰where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

INTRODUCTION

With one hand on the Holy Bible, someone standing in court swears to “tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” For some this is lip service and not an oath or promise made in sincerity with fear of the Lord, but when God, Creator of all creation makes a promise, oath, or a covenant who can He swear by, but Himself? What a curious display of His character for our benefit, certainly not his own.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The previous session readers are told to be “imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Why might he follow this by directing attention to this promise made to Abraham? Did Abraham live to see the promise fulfilled? (Genesis 22:16-18)
2. Why is Abraham described as patiently waiting to receive the promise? What details can you share about things that transpired in the life of Abraham between the promise and the birth of Isaac? (Genesis 15-21) How does his “patient waiting” compare with your own?
3. Oaths were a significant part of the ancient world. They had legal bearing. Read Genesis 26:26-33; Exodus 22:10-14; Numbers 30:1-2; Matthew 23:16-22. How might the oath here in verses 16-18 have convinced them?
4. What are the two unchangeable things noted in verse 18, and why do you think so?
5. Which attributes of God are highlighted in this passage? (Hebrews 1:10-12)

6. What is “the inner place behind the curtain” referenced in verse 19? How could this imagery relate to the Leviticus series material on the Tabernacle? What is “the hope that enters?”
7. What is the role of a high priest? How is the order of Melchizedek different from the Levitical priesthood? Why is Jesus called a forerunner? (Genesis 14:18-20; Leviticus 16)
8. What is the practical purpose of an anchor? How does the metaphor in verse 19 apply to our souls?
9. Read the warnings and promises in Hebrews 6:4-20 (last session and this session) altogether. Many say Hebrews reads like a sermon. Why would the author put warnings and promises together like this?
10. Reviewing everything we’ve covered thus far in the book of Hebrews, which personal takeaway can you share with your group? If you’ve seen the Lord move in your heart, in your life, or in those around you as a result of your time in Hebrews, praise the Lord and invite your group into that testimony by briefly sharing those details.

When someone promises you something, your receipt of that promise depends on the trustworthiness and power of the one who made the promise in the first place. Imagine that promise is an anchor. As you sail toward the shore of your final destination, seeing the shore within reach, it is time to cast out the anchor to hold you close to that shore. When the winds of disbelief or self-interest buffet your vessel as you wait to enter that shore, will the anchor hold? This is the hope the author of Hebrews wants us to take hold of. This is why he has used language of “drifting away.”

The new High Priest goes to the “inner place behind the curtain.” This is the place in the tabernacle where, once per year, the old High Priest went behind the veil in a cloud of incense so he would not die. He would approach the presence of God at the mercy seat with blood to atone for himself and the nation. But this new High Priest is different. He is more like the priest Abraham met. He holds our hope like an anchor holds a ship at the shore of promise. So, if God does not lie, if He does not change, then trusting Him is perfectly secure. His Promise. His Oath. His Priest. He offers His Word.

What are the reasons we don't trust in Jesus as our anchor? It's time to connect with a Christian friend who knows you well in order to dig up where our unbelief is rooted. Is it pleasure? Is it the love of a particular person? Is it performance or achievement of some sort? When you make one of these your life's anchor you may realize that you have cast your anchor at a shore that provides nothing but fruitlessness and folly.

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