

Introduction to the Book of Hebrews



With its many references to the Old Testament and its unique sermonic style, few books in the Bible are as rich in content and theme as the book of Hebrews. This is the first epistle that we have studied this year. Keep in mind that we have shifted from a “biographical” style (Mark & Acts), into a “letter” style. Here are a few important details:

Author:

Aha! The authorship of Hebrews has been widely debated for centuries, and I won't attempt to solve the riddle here. Though such names as Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Apollos, Phillip, Luke, Priscilla, and Aquila have been mentioned, there is no clear support for any claim. We know that the author was a preacher, since the book is composed in sermonic form, and we know that he was intimately familiar with the OT sacrificial systems. With that in mind, we trust God to use this book in our hearts, no matter whom the Spirit inspired.

Background & Setting:

Again, this topic is widely debated. Although we don't know (for certain) who this book was written to, or where they were located, we do know that they were Jewish (hence the name *Hebrews*), and that they were persecuted (10:32-39; 12:4). The recipients in mind were most likely exiled Jews, in need of the hope that this letter provides.

Themes:

The book of Hebrews is written in order to contrast the former sacrificial systems, with the much more perfect and complete sacrifice of Jesus Christ. There are many ramifications of this, but the theme should be understood to mean that the person, work, and sacrifice of Jesus make everything better. Jesus is better.

Think about it:

As you read through the book of Hebrews, here are a few things to pay careful attention to:

1. Look for the magnificence of the Person of Jesus as He is wonderfully presented in these pages.
2. Understand that through Jesus we now have direct access to God.
3. Don't ever take your position in Christ for granted.
4. Take heed against the danger of drifting from what you have heard.

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Date: Friday, March 1

Passage: Hebrews 1

1. Right away, the author alludes to the past, in order to remind us that the present, through Jesus, is better

(vv. 1-2)

2. What do you learn about Jesus in verses 1 through 3? There should be at least several that you can list.

3. Hebrews 1 spends much time emphasizing the fact that Jesus is better than the angels. To our minds, this may be a confusing emphasis, but not to the Hebrews. Jewish thought was obsessed with the study of angels. Which verses say something about Jesus being better than angels?

4. I want us to allow this passage to be meditative, and to fill us with absolute wonder. Jesus is better than anything that the world has ever known, and you have Him. He is better than the angels. He is the first born (v. 6). He has an eternal rule (vv. 8-9). He is the eternal creator (vv. 10-13). He rules with God (v. 13). You have Jesus. What does that mean to you today?

God has spoken to you by His Son, Jesus, the *better* one. Spend some time in quiet contemplation over that magnificent truth. Let the ramifications of how privileged you are wash over your unworthy, graced soul. Life today in light of the fact that you have Jesus, and He is *better*.



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Date: Saturday, March 2

Passage: Proverbs 16; Review Acts 25-26

1. What does Proverbs 16:1 tell you about God's sovereignty despite your best-laid plans for future life success?

2. In verse 5, a specific sin is singled out as an abomination to the Lord? What sin is it? Why do you think so many of us struggle with this sin?

3. Speech is a huge subject of Proverbs 16. Which verses talk about speech? What is one way that these verses convicted you?

4. Look back at your notes on Acts 25. In one sentence, describe how you can use this chapter to live for Jesus this week.

5. Look back at your notes on Acts 26. In one sentence, describe how you can use this chapter to live for Jesus this week.



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Date: Sunday, March 3

Passage: Proverbs 17; Review Acts 27-28 & Heb. 1

1. What does Proverbs 17:10 mean? How do you respond to rebuke?

2. Have you ever been around a Christian who struggles to have a "joyful heart?" Proverbs 17:22 says that it's a good medicine! Do you think people would characterize you by your countenance as joyful or not? Why or why not?

3. Look back at Acts 27. Do you bring blessing everywhere you go like Paul did? Why or why not?

4. Remember what Paul knew about his God in Acts 28 that caused him to just relax after getting bit by a snake? How can that truth help you this week?

5. Jesus is better, according to Hebrews 1. What does that mean to you?



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Date: Monday, March 4

Passage: Hebrews 2

1. Hebrews' author indicates that the readers must constrain themselves to the truths of the gospel lest they drift away (v. 1). When are some times in your life when you find it easy to drift? How does preaching the gospel to yourself cause you to stay strong?

2. In Hebrews 2:5-18, the preacher concerns himself with proving that Jesus is the author of salvation. Why do you think he does this?

3. Jesus experienced the same things that you experience now (v. 14). What a magnificent truth! Think about your life. What is one specific trial that you are glad to know that Jesus has felt before?

4. The ultimate display of the humility of Jesus was in the fact that He was willing to undergo true temptation (v. 18). Why is that so humbling? What does verse 18 say was the purpose of his temptation?

5. Jesus underwent all of these things for you! How does that cause you to view Him today?



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Date: Tuesday, March 5

Passage: Hebrews 3

1. The author continues to build on the core theme of the superiority of Jesus by establishing His superiority to Moses (vv. 1-6). This would have been a HUGE deal to a Jewish audience! Why would this have been a big deal?

2. The picture of Israel's rest as they entered into the Promised Land is used as motivation for the people of God in verses 7-19. At salvation, we enter into a spiritual rest in the Lord that will be culminated when we see Jesus. What is the one thing that serves as a major roadblock to God's rest (v. 8). How can that manifest itself in your life?

3. Within the body of Christ, we are commanded to "exhort" each other (v. 13). This means that we should build each other up by holding each other accountable and challenging one another when we fall. Who are you currently "exhorting?" What's the benefit of such a relationship? If you're not "exhorting" anyone, why not?

4. What is the root cause of a hardened heart (v. 19)? How does unbelief tend to creep into your mind? How can you avoid it?

"Father, we long to enter into the full rest that we have even now begun to experience through your salvation. Please keep us strong against unbelief. Help us to possess tender hearts and to engage in actively exhorting one another, even if it's uncomfortable."



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Date: Wednesday, March 6

Passage: Hebrews 4

1. Mere knowledge is not enough to offer salvation to any man. Salvation is through faith alone (v. 2). Knowledge tells us about Jesus, while faith unites us to Jesus. That's hard for people to understand. Why is it hard for people to transition from knowledge to faith?

2. Verses 11-13 emphasize the responsibility that comes with hearing the Word of God. If you've been exposed to it, you are responsible for it. Look back over your life. Have you been exposed to a lot or a little of the Word? How responsible are you? Are you currently living that responsibility?

3. I hope you never tire of Hebrews 4:15-16. You can approach Jesus with confidence, because He has been where you are. In your own words, describe what that means to you as a child of this Great High Priest.

"With confidence I now draw nigh and Father, Abba Father cry" – C. Wesley



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Date: Thursday, March 7

Passage: Hebrews 5

1. We already have been taught that Jesus is better than the angels, and He is better than Moses. Next, the writer makes the point that He is better than the priests. Why? Because the priests had to offer continual sacrifice for their own sins (v. 3), while Jesus was a perfect sacrifice, requiring no sacrifice for personal sin (v. 9). What does this tell you about His qualifications to save you?

2. When the author says that Jesus “learned obedience (v. 8),” he’s not saying that Jesus was disobedient, so he needed to learn how to be obedient. In the same way that Jesus is qualified because he was tempted as we are, He is qualified because He humbled Himself through obedience like we must. Can you think of any ways in which Jesus “learned obedience?” What is the ultimate way?

3. The condition of the audience hearing this message is not good! They have become “dull of hearing (v. 11),” and they’ve failed to progress in spiritual maturation (vv. 12-14). Do you see a consistent personal pattern of progression in spiritual maturity in your life?

4. How are Christians made mature? Through “constant practice (v. 14).” Do you constantly practice your faith? Are you spending time with the Lord in order to mature to be like Jesus? Why or why not? How can you improve?



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Date: Friday, March 8

Passage: Hebrews 6

1. In verses 1-3, the author is encouraging the audience to turn away from superficial repentance. Many of the Jews would try to “change their ways” by practicing an external form of religion that did nothing to change the heart. How easy it is to slip into that pattern! What are some forms of superficial repentance that you find yourself committing?

2. Those who “taste of the heavenly calling (v. 4),” are the ones who, as mentioned last chapter, have knowledge about Jesus, but not a heart of belief. These are those who have a full knowledge of Christ, and yet they have rejected him with full understanding of what they are doing (v. 6). This ultimately renders the crucifixion of Jesus worthless. Can you think of anyone who has heard about Jesus and willfully rejected Him? Who? Write their names down and pray for them right now!

3. God’s promises are sure (vv. 13-20)! He has never failed anyone who has come to Him by faith, and He will never fail you. Do you have any specific promises of God that you love to hold on to? What are they?

4. We have Jesus as the anchor of our soul (v. 19). There’s no better stability than that, friend! How can you take that truth from a head knowledge to a heart knowledge today?



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Date: Saturday, March 9

Passage: Proverbs 18; Review Hebrews 2-3

1. Read Proverbs 18:2. What does that mean to you when you consider how often you express your opinion? Do you struggle with talking before you think? What does that make you according to this verse?

2. This chapter has a lot to say about the tongue. In the chart below, write a verse reference about the tongue, as well as a way that that verse specifically applies to your life.

Reference:	Application:

3. As you look at Hebrews 2, and consider the fact that Jesus has experienced all of the things that you will or have experienced, how does that encourage & challenge you this week?

4. What one truth challenged you the most from Hebrews 3? Why?



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Date: Sunday, March 10

Passage: Proverbs 19; Review Hebrews 4-6

1. *"It is a glory to overlook an offense (v. 11)."* Man, that's tough to do! Especially when you feel like you've been wronged or hurt! Why do you think that's so tough to do? What has Christ done for you that should motivate you to overlook someone's wrong to you?

2. According to verse 20, why should you listen to advice and instruction? Is this an easy or a hard thing to do? Are you very good at it?

3. Consider Jesus as your sympathetic High Priest again from Hebrews 4. In one sentence, write what that means to you.

4. In what ways have you become "dull of hearing (Heb. 5:11)?" How can you strive to avoid this pitfall?

5. Avoid superficial repentance (Heb. 6). Don't be a Pharisee! What is real repentance vs. superficial repentance?



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Date: Monday, March 11

Passage: Hebrews 7

Let's be honest: Hebrews 7 is a difficult passage to interpret. Commentators have spilled a lot of ink in regards to the true identification of Melchizedek. Amidst all of the confusion, this much is clear: Melchizedek was a unique priest with no familial claim to the priesthood, but a stamp of blessing from God. And Jesus is better than Melchizedek. Hebrews 7 was written to convince a Jewish audience that Jesus is better than the entire Old Testament!

1. What, according to verse 22, makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant? (Hint: look at the verses right before verse 22).

2. How does Hebrew's author describe our High Priest in verse 26?

3. Why, according to verse 27, does Jesus, the Greatest High Priest, not need to offer daily sacrifices for sins?

4. I know this chapter can be confusing, but let's make it practical. Put yourself in the position of the believers receiving this letter. You know the horror and sorrow of having to offer daily sacrifices that can never really take away sins. Now, you're hearing about a Great High Priest who can make all of those customs END FOREVER. What would your reaction be? Guys, if Jesus never came, you would be hopeless! Worship the one who is better than the Old Covenant today!



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Date: Tuesday, March 12

Passage: Hebrews 8

1. The concept driven home in chapter 7 is continued here with remarkable ferocity. I love the beginning of this chapter. *“Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest (v. 1).”* So the author introduces a hypothetical priest in chapter 7, and in chapter 8 he says, *“Listen guys, we have that priest, and His name is Jesus! You have access to that priest. What’s your reaction to that?”*

2. According to the text, where is your Great High Priest right now (v. 1)? What is significant about that location?

3. In verses 8-12, the author quotes from the New Covenant, which is found in Jeremiah 31. One of the key features of this covenant is that the law of God is no longer externalized, but *“written on their hearts (v. 10).”* This means that our relationship with Jesus is not by works, but it is an intimate, internal covenant. Is your relationship with Jesus internal, or merely external? If it’s external, you may not be participating in the New Covenant yet!

4. What happens to the Old Covenant when the new one comes (v. 13)? Why does this happen? Aren’t you thankful?!?

Take some time today to thank Jesus, your Great High Priest and minister of the New Covenant. Thank Him for offering your sacrifice once and for all. Thank Him for annihilating the Old Covenant. Thank Him for writing His law on your hearts. Thank Him because He is better.



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Date: Wednesday, March 13

Passage: Hebrews 9

Hebrews 9 deals with the once and for all sacrifice that Jesus made on behalf of your sin by explaining the Old Testament sacrifices (vv. 1-10), and then contrasting that sacrificial system with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (vv. 11-28).

1. Look at verse 14. What is the ultimate reason that Christ offered His sacrifice for you? How faithful are you in serving God because of His great salvation?
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2. Did you know that Jesus' blood was absolutely necessary? He couldn't have died for our sins by drowning or any other means. Verse 22 says that in order for our sins to be forgiven, blood had to be shed. Why do you think that is?
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3. On the Day of Atonement, the people eagerly waited for the high priest to appear in order to know that his sacrifice had been accepted on behalf of their sins. In the same way, Christians eagerly look for the second coming of Jesus (v. 28), as a final confirmation that God's wrath on behalf of our sins has been completely satisfied. Are you "eagerly waiting" for that day? Why or why not?
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The sacrifice of Jesus was necessary in order to mediate the new and better covenant. His blood had to be shed in order to pay recompense for the sins that we have committed. Christian, do you eagerly wait for his return? Is there within you a desire to see Him coming again and know that God's wrath has been appeased? Jesus, come quickly!



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Date: Thursday, March 14

Passage: Hebrews 10

There is much in this passage for us to consider. The author instructs us that Christ's sacrifice took place once and for all (vv. 1-18), and he spends the rest of the chapter telling us that as a result of that sacrifice, we can have complete confidence in our faith (vv. 19-39).

1. Look at verse 1 in contrast to verse 14. Why could the old sacrifices not make anyone perfect? Why is the sacrifice of Jesus able to perfect those who come to Him by faith?

2. In verse 9, Jesus is quoted as saying that He has come to do the Father's will. Do you realize that He willingly submitted Himself to the will of the Father, no matter how much pain it would cause Him? What does that tell you about His love for you?

3. The author exhorts the people to "hold fast" to their confession (v. 23). Why do you think this can be hard from time to time? What motivation does the author give to keep on holding fast?

4. Is it okay to keep sinning after we accept Jesus' once and for all sacrifice? Why or why not? What verse shows you that?

This wonderful chapter is closed with a great reminder to persevere in the face of tribulation. I love verse 39: *"We are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls. (ESV)"* Don't shrink back today, cling to the sacrifice of Jesus and persevere!



Date: Thursday, March 14

Passage: Hebrews 10

There is much in this passage for us to consider. The author instructs us that Christ's sacrifice took place once and for all (vv. 1-18), and he spends the rest of the chapter telling us that as a result of that sacrifice, we can have complete confidence in our faith (vv. 19-39).

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Date: Friday, March 15

Passage: Hebrews II

I. Hebrews II is the classic "Hall of Faith" in the New Testament. Take a moment to read through the chapter.

Next, find the examples of faith listed by the author and write their name in the left column, and a short synopsis of their faith in the right column.

Name	Example of Faith

2. These are all tremendous examples. Which one impacts you the most and why?

"We will stand as children of the promise. We will fix our eyes on Him our soul's reward. 'Til the race is finished and the work is done – we'll walk **by faith** and not by sight." – K.

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Date: Saturday, March 16

Passage: Proverbs 20; Review Hebrews 7-8

1. What does verse 3 say is the condition of the wise man towards strife (or needless fighting)? Why do you think that is? What is your condition towards this temptation?

2. There are many verses in this chapter having to do with laziness and procrastination versus industrious living. What is one particular area in your life where you are tempted towards laziness? What can you do to make strides to defeat that temptation?

3. What does verse 20 tell you about the serious nature of your relationship with your parents?

4. According to Hebrews 7, Jesus offered up a sacrifice once and for all for you that still atones for your sins today! What is one specific way in which you can use your life to thank Him for His sacrifice today?

5. Are Christians today ministers of the New or the Old Covenant? Where does the law now abide according to Hebrews 8?



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Date: Sunday, March 17

Passage: Proverbs 21; Review Hebrews 9-11

1. In a world in which Christians seem to think that it's fashionable to bash governmental authorities, what does Proverbs 21:1 tell you about where they get their power? How should this impact the way that you speak about them?

2. Proverbs 21:31 should be an encouragement to any of you with important tests or events coming up soon. You can prepare, but who ultimately exercises control over the results?

3. Look back at your notes from Hebrews 9. What one key thought impacted you the most as we studied that chapter?

4. There's tons of stuff in Hebrews 10! Tell me in one sentence how you plan to apply it's truths to your life this week.

5. As you consider the examples in Hebrews 11, why do you think that it's so tough for Christians to walk by faith? In other words, why aren't there more names in the Hall of Faith? How can you strive to walk by faith this coming week?



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Date: Monday, March 18

Passage: Hebrews 12

1. According to verse 1, what should we do as a result of the motivation that we receive from the great witnesses that surround us? What are some weights, or sins, that you know you must get rid of in order to run the race with patience?

2. Why does God discipline His children (vv. 5-11)? Have you ever experienced His discipline? What does this tell you about the God that you serve?

3. Do you remember Israel's encounter with God on Mt. Sinai in the Old Testament? The author alludes to that encounter as he closes out this chapter in verses 18-25. His point? Jesus is greater than Mt. Sinai. What verse proves that Jesus is greater than Israel's encounter on Mt. Sinai?

4. What should the reaction of the people of God be when they hear God's voice and realize that Jesus is the mediator of a much greater covenant (v. 28)?

5. What are some ways that you can practically worship Jesus with your life today, in full realization of the fact that He is better?



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Date: Thursday, March 19

Passage: Hebrews 13

1. There are several quick exhortations given by the author in this concluding chapter. Love others (v. 1), show hospitality (v. 2), pray for the suffering (v. 3), stay sexually pure (v.4), don't fall in love with money (v. 5), follow godly leaders (v. 7), reject false teaching (v. 9), bear the reproach of Christ (v. 13), obey your authorities (v. 17), and pray (v. 18). Quite the list! Out of all of those, which is the most difficult for you? Why? How can you pray for victory?

2. Verse 12 gives us the reason for Jesus' suffering. What is that reason? What does it mean?

3. "Bearing His reproach" in verse 13, means being willing to identify with His death even though it will cost you something. Why do you think you have such a hard time making your faith public? What should motivate you, according to the text, to identify with Jesus?

4. Hebrews has been an incredible journey. Rich theology mixed with practical observations has made this book a true joy. In one sentence, summarize what God has taught you the most through this book.

If the author of Hebrews is willing to spend so much time arguing that Jesus is better, don't you think you should live like He is?



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