

JESUS IS BETTER

An In-Depth Study of Hebrews

Course Outline

<u>Week</u>	<u>Passage</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Hebrews 1:1-4	Introduction to Hebrews, God's Final Word in His Son
2	Hebrews 1:5 – 2:4	Jesus is Greater Than the Angels
3	Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6	Jesus' Sonship is Greater than Moses' Servanthood
4	Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13	Jesus' Rest is Better than Joshua's Rest
5	Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10	Jesus, Our Great Appointed High Priest
6	Hebrews 5:11 – 6:20	Exhortation to Persevere in Light of God's Promises
7	Hebrews 7:1-28	Jesus, The Better High Priest in the Order of Melchizedek
8	Hebrews 8:1-13	Jesus, The Greater High Priest of the New Covenant
9	Hebrews 9:1-28	Jesus' Sacrifice is Greater than the Temple's
10	Hebrews 10:1-39	Persevere On In Light of Jesus' Sacrifice
11	Hebrews 11:1-40	The Faith of the Ancients in Action
12	Hebrews 12:1-29	Running the Race with Perseverance
13	Hebrews 13:1-25	Concluding Words

Recap from Session 3

Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6

- This exalted Son of God shared in our humanity so that by his death he can free us from our slavery to our fear of death.
- He is fully human in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, making atonement for our sins.
- Moses was faithful as a servant over God's household, but Jesus is the Son over God's household, therefore he is worthy of greater honour than Moses
- Because of all that, we are to fix our thoughts on Jesus, acknowledging him as our apostle and high priest.

Structure of Hebrews

- **Hebrews 1:1-4 – God has Spoken to Us in a Son Who is also High Priest**
- **Hebrews 1:5 – 4:13 – Jesus’ Greater Sonship**
 - Hebrews 1:5 – 2:4 – Jesus is Greater than the Angels
 - Hebrews 2:5 – 3:6 – Jesus’ Sonship is Greater than Moses’ Servanthood
 - Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13 – Jesus’ Rest is Better than Joshua’s Rest (this session)
- **Transition Passage - Hebrews 4:14-16 – Jesus, the Son of God who is also High Priest**
- **Hebrews 5:1 – 10:39 – Jesus’ Greater Priesthood**
 - Hebrews 5:1 – 6:20 – Exhortation to Persevere in light of Jesus’ Priesthood
 - Hebrews 7:1-28 – Jesus is the Better High Priest in the order of Melchizedek
 - Hebrews 8:1-13 – Jesus is the Greater High Priest of the New Covenant
 - Hebrews 9:1-28 – Jesus’ Sacrifice is Greater than the Temple’s
 - Hebrews 10:1-39 – Persevere in light of Jesus’ Sacrifice
- **Hebrews 11 – Perseverance by Faith of the Ancients**
- **Hebrews 12:1-3 – Fix our Eyes Upon Jesus**
 - Hebrews 12:4-17 – Endure God’s Discipline as Sons
 - Hebrews 12:18-28 – We Have Come to a Better Mountain
- **Hebrews 13:1-25 – Concluding Exhortations**

Entering God’s Rest

In our last session, we saw that Jesus tasted death for everyone, so that he is not ashamed to call those who believe in him brothers and sisters. That is why Jesus had to be made like them, fully human in every way, so that he can be our faithful high priest in service to God. The author then exhorts his readers to fix our thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.

In this session, the author continues to exhort his readers in Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13. However, this time he uses a particular psalm to call his readers to hold firm to their original conviction. We shall see how he applies this particular psalm to his readers in two different ways. Understanding how the author does that teaches us how to read and apply the Old Testament for ourselves. It is also in this section that we will have a look at one of the Bible verses that is often taken and used out of context.

Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13

⁷ So, as the Holy Spirit says:

“Today, if you hear his voice,
⁸ do not harden your hearts
as you did in the rebellion,
during the time of testing in the wilderness,
⁹ where your ancestors tested and tried me,
though for forty years they saw what I did.
¹⁰ That is why I was angry with that generation;
I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray,
and they have not known my ways.’
¹¹ So I declared on oath in my anger,
‘They shall never enter my rest.’ ” ^k

¹² See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. ¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end. ¹⁵ As has just been said:

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

¹⁶ Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? ¹⁷ And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies perished in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? ¹⁹ So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

4 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. ² For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed. ^x ³ Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,

“So I declared on oath in my anger,
‘They shall never enter my rest.’ ” ^y

And yet his works have been finished since the creation of the world. ⁴ For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: “On the seventh day God rested from all his works.” ^z ⁵ And again in the passage above he says, “They shall never enter my rest.”

⁶ Therefore since it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience, ⁷ God again set a certain day, calling it “Today.” This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted:

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

⁸For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. ⁹There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, ^f just as God did from his. ¹¹Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.

¹²For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. ¹³Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. ¹

God's Rest

There is a prominent theme that the pastor focuses upon in this section – entering into God's rest. This theme of "God's rest" is taken from Psalm 95, and the pastor quotes Psalm 95 extensively. We will explore the theme of "rest" in a later section. It is important that we read Psalm 95 for ourselves and understand the context and content of the psalm. Once we have examined Psalm 95 for ourselves, it helps us to understand the passage in our session today.

Psalm 95

Context

Who?

When? (cf. Joshua 21:43-44)

Content

v1-7a

v7b-11

¹ [*The New International Version*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Heb 3:7–4:13.

Applying Psalm 95

3:12 – “See to it...that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.”

3:13 – “But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today” ...”

3:14 – “We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.”

3:15-19

In what way is the pastor taking Psalm 95 and applying it to his listeners? (cf. 1 Cor. 10:6, 11)

The Promise Still Stands

4:1 – “Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands...”

- Psalm 95
- Genesis 2:1-3
- Hebrews 3 – 4
- Exodus 20:8-11
- Joshua 21:43-44
- Matthew 11:28-30

The Theme of “Rest” Through Salvation History



- God's Rest
- The Sabbath Rest
- The Rest in the Promised Land
- The "Rest" in Psalm 95 – The Promise Still Stands!

The rest to which Psalm 95 referred cannot have been the land of Canaan occupied by the Israelites of the second generation who entered it under the leadership of Joshua. Those addressed in the psalm were already living in Canaan, as their ancestors had been for generations.²

- Jesus' Rest
- Entering into God's Rest

Sabbatismos stresses festivity and joy, expressed in worship and praise of God, and is in line with Hebrews' picture of the future 'festive gathering' (12:22) in the heavenly Jerusalem...The author [intends] to spell out the fact that life for the people of God (both Old Testament saints and New Testament believers) in his resting place will be 'an eternal, festive Sabbath celebration.'³

² Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich. : Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 169.

³ O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 171.

4:1 – “...let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.”

4:2 – “For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed.”

4:3-5 – God’s rest

4:6-10 – “...There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;”

4:11 – “Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest...”

How is the pastor applying Psalm 95 to his listeners?

The Word of God – Active and Alive Today

4:12-13 – “For the word of God is alive and active...”

Entering into God's Rest

The author of Hebrews exhorts his readers to persevere on in their faith by quoting and applying Psalm 95 to them. He first applies it in a moralistic way, i.e. do not follow their disobedient example. The Old Testament account were written to us as examples for us to follow or to learn from (cf. 1 Cor 10:6, 11). Throughout the narrative of the Old Testament history, there have been good and bad examples of our faith. A good example might be that despite Goliath's overwhelming size and intimidation, David trusted God to protect him in his battle against Goliath. We are to have faith like David's. An example of disobedience to God would be Solomon's example in his life in his many wives and concubines who led him astray. (cf. 1 Kings 11:1-13)

However, in Hebrews 4:1-11, he views Psalm 95 in a salvation historical way. Even though the Israelites had already received God's rest by being in the Promised Land, God still warns his people through David not to harden their hearts, so that they can enter God's rest. The author notices this and reasoned then that it still remains for people to enter God's rest *today* (Heb 4:6, 9). There is a progression of the "rest" theme that started all the way back in creation in Genesis, which ultimately finds its fulfilment in Jesus.

This helps us to see how God's word is living and active today. We can read the Old Testament and learn from their mistakes. We can also read the Old Testament and see where we fit into the history of salvation. God still speaks to us today, and so we should not harden our hearts when we hear his voice. In Hebrews 3:7, we see that God's voice today is heard through his word ("...as the Holy Spirit says..."). Let us not neglect God's word, and through reading God's word, we can persevere on in our faith and enter into God's rest. Today, if we hear his voice, do not harden our hearts. Listen to God!

Homework

Read Hebrews 4:14 – 7:28. As you read through Hebrews 5:1 – 7:28, highlight and mark any imperatives in the text. What patterns can you see?

What are some recurring passages or themes so far that you can see in Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10?

What were some of the functions or roles of the priest in the Old Testament?

Bibliography

O'Brien, Peter T. *The Letter to the Hebrews*. Grand Rapids, Mich. : Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010.