

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 4

Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13

- The pastor exhorts his listeners not to harden their hearts when they hear God's voice.
- He quotes Psalm 95 and applies it to them in two different ways
 - Moralistic – He asks them not to harden their hearts in the same way as those who perished in the wilderness
 - Salvation historical –The promise of entering into God's rest still stands today, so don't harden your hearts and enter into God's rest by believing and obeying God
- God's word is still alive and active today, even the Old Testament. God speaks today, and his promises still stand today.

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**

The Priesthood of God

In today’s session, the author starts to focus on the theme of the priesthood of Jesus, after giving short snippets of it in 1:3-4 and 2:17-18. Priesthood is not a topic that we think about much, but it is one of the central roles that Jesus plays. It is so important that the author of Hebrews devotes chapter 5 to 10 to talking about Jesus’ role as priest. Even in the Old Testament, we tend to ignore the roles of the priest, but there is an entire book dedicated to the work and role of the priests. One of the most important persons in the priesthood is the high priest, who will enter into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement to make atonement for the sins of the people.

Just like the high priest in the Old Testament, Jesus is also our priest. However, he is a priest of a completely different order. As we come to learn about Jesus’ priesthood, we must not forget that the author has established Jesus as the divine Son of God, who is greater than the angels (Heb 1), greater than Moses (Heb 2 – 3) and also provides a greater rest than Joshua (Heb 3 – 4). So, this priesthood is not merely a human one, but one that is occupied by the divine Son himself.

Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10

¹⁴Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, ^p Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. ¹⁵For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

5 Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. ³This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. ⁴And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.

⁵In the same way, Christ did not take on himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him,

“You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.” ^h

⁶And he says in another place,

“You are a priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek.” ^j

⁷During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered ⁹and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him ¹⁰and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek. ¹

The High Priesthood of Jesus

The Conclusion and Beginning

4:14-16 – “...we have a great high priest...”

¹ [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Heb 4:14–5:10.

Our short passage, therefore, serves as the conclusion to one section and the introduction to the next, the great central exposition of the high priesthood of Christ. It thus functions as an important ‘overlapping transition’.²

4:15 – What similarities does this high priest share with us mankind and what is different about him?

4:14, 16 – Double exhortation

The Priesthood

4:14-16 – By referring to Jesus as the “high priest” who has “ascended into heaven”, it connects and serves as the introduction to the two main sections that will come in 5:1 – 7:28 (the Son’s appointment as priest), and 8:3 – 10:18 (the superior offering of this priest).

5:1-3 and 7:26-28 – Similarities

5:1-4	7:26-28

What literary function is this?

5:1-4 – Priesthood in the Old Testament (cf. Numbers 18:1-7)

Who can become the priests and what are they to do?

² Peter T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, Mich. : Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 179.

5:2 – “...deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray...”

5:3 – “...offer sacrifices...”

The Day of Atonement – Leviticus 16

What is striking about the Day of Atonement?

5:4 – “...called by God...”

Two qualifications of any high priest

Christ as High Priest

5:5-6 – God appoints Christ as high priest

Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4

Difference Christ’s priesthood and Old Testament priesthood

The reappearance of Psalm 2:7 recalls the argument of 1:1-13 with 'its emphasis on the absolute supremacy of the Son and the salvation he came to provide', and draws attention to the significance of Christ's enthronement and the manifestation of his Sonship through resurrection-ascension. The function of Psalm 110:4 is to show that Jesus was directly called to the priesthood by God. This text will be picked up again and again to substantiate the argument on scriptural grounds that Jesus is a heavenly high priest whose priesthood is everlasting. By his welding together these two texts, the author has demonstrated the vital connection between Jesus as Son and as high priest for the Christology of Hebrews. He who is the perfect Son of God from the beginning becomes the perfect high priest for his people.³

5:7 – Jesus as priest on earth

"...save him from death..."

5:8 – Learning obedience as the Son

He who was and is the perfect Son of God from eternity learned obedience by what he suffered so that he might become the perfect high priest for his people. Our author is making an important salvation-historical statement about Jesus and his work. At the same time, he is presenting Jesus as a profound exemplar, the significance of which is powerful for the community and believers generally. That Jesus learned by suffering, even though he was the Son of God, could shape the way they (and we) should view our current circumstances. In his gracious purposes God is bringing many 'sons and daughters' to glory (2:10), and, like Jesus the Son, they, along with others, are being tested. 'Recognizing God brought Jesus out of suffering to glory assures them that God will also bring glory to his other sons and daughters who persevere'.⁴

³ O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 196–97.

⁴ O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, 201.

5:9-10 – Source of eternal salvation

Jesus, Our Great Appointed High Priest

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is our high priest before God. He is not only a high priest, but a *great* high priest – a fact that the author emphasises by pointing out that he ascended to heaven and that he is without sin. Because of that, we can approach the throne of God with confidence. We can do this not because of how great we are, but because of who is representing us before God. Unlike the high priest of the Old Testament, he did not have to offer sacrifices for himself – he is without sin.

The pastor also hints at the fact that Jesus is part of a completely different order of high priest compared to the OT priesthood. He is not only a high priest, he is the *great* high priest, and he is the great high priest *forever* (5:6). In fact, it was God himself who appointed Jesus as our high priest, in the order of Melchizedek. This is something that the pastor will continue to elaborate more in Chapter 7. However, even though he is the Son, Jesus still had to learn obedience through what he suffered (his life and his crucifixion), but because of that, he became the source of eternal salvation to everyone who obeys him. His suffering “perfected” him in his role as high priest because it is then that he can represent us before God.

Homework

Read through Hebrews 5:1 – 7:28. Read 5:11 – 6:20.

Hebrews 6:4-6 is often debated about its meaning with regards to salvation in Christ. Is the pastor indicating that those who have been saved are able to lose their salvation? Or is the pastor talking about those who never had salvation in the first place? What do you think? Try to justify your answer based on what you have read in Hebrews thus far.

Read Genesis 12:1-7, 15:1-17, 17:1-27. What are some elements of God’s promises to Abraham in those passages?

Bibliography

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