

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 Greater Melchizedekian High Priest
8	Hebrews 8:1-13	Jesus, The Greater High Priest of the New Covenant
9	Hebrews 9:1-22	Jesus' Sacrifice at the Greater Tabernacle
10	Hebrews 9:23 - 10:39	Drawing Near to God Because of Jesus' Greater 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 9

Hebrews 9:1-22

- The pastor reiterates the many steps that the priests had to take in order to perform the sacrifices in the earthly tabernacle in the Old Testament.
- Nearly everything in the tabernacle required blood to cleanse, as without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness.
- Our high priest, Jesus Christ, went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle – the presence of God.
- His one sacrifice took away the sins of many, without needing to repeat the sacrifices.

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
- *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 Greater High Priest in the order of Melchizedek
 - Hebrews 8:1-13 – Jesus is the Greater High Priest of the New Covenant
 - Hebrews 9:1-22 – Jesus’ Sacrifice at the Greater Tabernacle
 - Hebrews 9:23 – 10:18 – Jesus’ Greater Sacrifice in the True Tabernacle in the New Covenant
 - Hebrews 10:19-39 – 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

Jesus’ Sacrifice Once for All

In Hebrews 8 – 10, we saw that there were three “movements” made by the pastor. In each movement, the pastor elaborates at different lengths regarding the tabernacle, sacrifice, and covenant. The first movement is 8:1-13. The second is from 9:1-22. In this session, we will be looking at the third movement – 9:23 – 10:19 – and the last exhortation section (10:19-39) before the climax of the sermon in Hebrews 11.

In this section, the pastor has the longest discussion on the nature of Christ’s sacrifice and the finality that it brings compared to the sacrifices of animals. He compares the repetitive nature of the Old Testament sacrifices to the sacrifice of Christ. This is the culmination of the pastor’s discourse on the priesthood of Christ. The sacrifice of this high priest in the heavenly tabernacle is the perfect sacrifice that all other sacrifices were anticipating. The finality and culmination of all of God’s work is in Christ and this is what the pastor has been highlighting throughout. God’s final word is in Christ. The true Son of God is Christ himself. God’s perfect rest is found in Christ. The greater and perfect high priest is Christ himself. The final sacrifice is Christ himself. Hebrews is a thoroughly Christ-centred and Christ glorifying book.

Therefore, because of all these things that the pastor has just laid out, we draw near to God (10:22ff). This is where he once again calls his hearers to persevere in their faith and to hold

unswervingly to the hope that we have in Christ. We are not to do this by ourselves, but rather we do it together as a covenant community of believers (10:23-25).

Hebrews 9:23 – 10:39

²³ It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. ²⁵ Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. ²⁶ Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷ Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Christ's Sacrifice Once for All

10 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. ² Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. ³ But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. ⁴ It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

⁵ Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said:

“Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,
but a body you prepared for me;

⁶ with burnt offerings and sin offerings
you were not pleased.

⁷ Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—
I have come to do your will, my God.’ ” ²

⁸ First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them”—though they were offered in accordance with the law.

⁹ Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

¹¹ Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. ¹⁴ For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

¹⁵ The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says:

¹⁶ “This is the covenant I will make with them
after that time, says the Lord.

I will put my laws in their hearts,
and I will write them on their minds.”ⁿ

¹⁷ Then he adds:

“Their sins and lawless acts
I will remember no more.”^o

¹⁸ And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary.

A Call to Persevere in Faith

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

²⁶ If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, ²⁷but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. ²⁸Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,”^q and again, “The Lord will judge his people.”^r ³¹It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

³² Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering. ³³Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. ³⁴You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. ³⁵So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.

³⁶ You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. ³⁷For,

“In just a little while,
he who is coming will come
and will not delay.”^f

³⁸ And,

“But my righteous one will live by faith.
And I take no pleasure
in the one who shrinks back.”^h

³⁹ But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved. ¹

Homework

As you read through Hebrews 1:1 – 10:39, what were some recurring themes that you noticed? What were some themes that were particularly helpful and encouraging to you?

How has attending this class helped you understand the book of Hebrews thus far?

Entering into Heaven Itself

9:23-26 – “But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

“copies of the heavenly things”

v24 – the sanctuary that Christ entered

v25-26 – Jesus is unlike the high priest entering into the Most Holy Place

“culmination of the ages” (cf. Heb 1:1)

9:27-28 – “...people are destined to die once and after that to face judgement...”

¹ [*The New International Version*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Heb 9:23–10:39.

v28 – the second coming of Christ

“...bring salvation to those who are waiting...”

The All-Sufficient Sacrifice of Christ

10:1-4 – “...it can never...make perfect those who dear near to worship.”

“only a shadow”

v3-4 – Annual reminder of sins

10:5-10 – “He sets aside the first to establish the second.”

v5 – When did Christ quote Psalm 40:6-8?

“we have been made holy”

10:11-18 – “...he sat down at the right hand of God...”

v11 – daily sacrifices but sins are never taken away

v12 – this priest sat down

“enemies to be made his footstool” (cf. Ps 110:1, 1 Co. 15:25)

“...made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”

The pastor has long anticipated his use of “release” in this concluding statement to encompass all that God has done in Christ to free humanity from sin. He ended the second movement of his symphony by saying that there was no “release” without the shedding of blood (9:22). He then made it clear that animal “blood” could not “take away” sin (10:4). Christ alone has provided the “release that makes all other sacrifices superfluous. The pastor’s hearers have now heard his symphony in praise and explanation of Christ’s sacrifice. It is by this sacrifice that the eternal Son has taken his seat forever at God’s right hand as the only High Priest able to bring God’s people into the divine presence. They now know why they should follow those introductory exhortations of 4:14-16 to hold firm and to draw near through this High Priest. In light of this deepened understanding the pastor will renew those exhortations with greater detail and urgency in the following verses (10:19-25). He will follow them with proportionately dire warnings lest they turn away from this High Priest seated at God’s right hand (10:26-31) in order that his hearers might maintain their place (10:32-39) among the faithful people of God (11:1-40)²

The Call to Persevere

10:19-25 – “...let us draw near to God...”

v19-20 – Since we have....

Let us

Let us

Let us

10:26-31 – “How much more...”

Strong warning

² Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Eerdmans, 2012), 459–60.

“...trampled the Son of God underfoot...”

An insult to the Trinity

10:32-39

v32-34 – Description of the Hebrews’ suffering and persecution

v36-39 – Persevere so that you will receive what God promised

“...to those who have faith and are saved...”

The pastor forges three links in the chain that joins the people of faith (11:1 – 12:29) to Christ their High Priest (4:14 – 10:18) – link one, vv. 19-25; link two, vv. 26-31; and link three, vv. 32-39. The first two “links” have close ties with the preceding description of Christ’s high priesthood; the third introduces the history of the faithful that follows. In 10:19-25 the pastor urges his hearers to draw near to God through Christ’s high-priestly provision in order to persevere in faithfulness. In 10:26-31 he warns them against joining those who repudiate Christ’s high-priestly work and suffer the dire consequences of their repudiation. Both of these “links” access the work of Christ in order to encourage the type of faithful endurance introduced in 10:32-39. In this final “link” the pastor assures his hearers that they are not like the apostates whom he has just described in 10:26-31 (cf. 3:7-19); they belong to the people of faith whom he will now describe in 11:1-40.³

The Once-for-All Sacrifice of Christ

The pastor brings his discussion of Christ’s high priesthood to its climax by focusing on the nature of his sacrifice. Unlike the old sacrificial system under the earthly tabernacle, Christ did not have to suffer many times. With the sacrifice of Christ, he sat down at the right hand of God. His work of purification is done (cf. Heb 1:4). The priests in the Old Testament had to keep offering sacrifices year after year,

³ Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 460–61.

because the blood of bulls and goats do not take away sins. In fact, they are the Israelite's annual reminder of their sins. But with Jesus Christ, he entered into heaven itself, and presented his own sacrificed body to God. It was one sacrifice for all time.

Therefore, because of this sacrifice, the pastor once again urges his hearers to persevere in their faith. They are to draw near to God because of this new and living way opened by Christ. They are to hold unwaveringly to the hope that they profess and they are to spur one another on toward love and good deeds. It is a communal effort from the people of God to persevere in our faith. We do not give up meeting together. In fact, as a local church, we meet weekly to encourage one another, and more importantly, as Psalm 95 says, we come and hear the voice of God through his Word.

Because of the greatness and finality of the work of Christ, there are serious consequences if anyone deliberately keeps on sinning. That is why the pastor is so insistent that his hearers persevere in their faith. Christians are those who have faith and are saved. He has mentioned faith a few times throughout his sermon, but this is where he will start to elaborate on the nature of faith itself as we go on to Hebrews 11 in our next session.

The third movement, 9:23 – 10:18, brings this grand symphony to its finale. The pastor expounds the full significance of God's promises. He plays all three themes – sanctuary, sacrifice, and covenant – in a crescendoing major key. Against the counterpoint of the old he expounds the grand superiority of the new. The pastor succinctly describes the true nature of the sanctuary entered by Christ (9:23-24) and the essence of the New Covenant's provision (10:15-18). The theme of sacrifice, so muted in the first movement, swells to overwhelming predominance – three verses in the first movement (8:3-5), five in the second (9:11-15), eighteen (9:25-10:14) in this the third.⁴

Homework

Read Hebrews 11. As you read the chapter, think about how you would divide the chapter.

What are some important Old Testament figures that the pastor focuses on?

Why do you think he focuses on those figures?

What do you think is the purpose of this chapter? What do you think the pastor is trying to accomplish?

Bibliography

Cockerill, Gareth Lee. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*. Eerdmans, 2012.

⁴ Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 412–13.