



The Book of Hebrews: A Preview and Key Verses

Oct 1, 2023

Holy Text: Hebrews 1:1-3

- Today, we embark upon a LORD's Day *expository preaching* study of the Book of Hebrews.

Why is this Important?

“Expository Preaching is the communication of a biblical concept, derived from and transmitted through a historical, grammatical, and literary study of a passage in its context, which the Holy Spirit first applies to the personality and experience of the preacher, then through him to his hearers.” (*Biblical Preaching* by Haddon Robinson)

Distinctives of Expository Preaching:

1. The Text drives the sermon; the preacher's ideas aren't the point.
2. As a result, God sets the agenda for the church.
3. “What did this mean to them” is the first interpretive question asked. (Context)
4. Preaching/Teaching in books instead of bits!
5. Ultimately, God is the subject; Soli Deo Gloria!

Five Why's (From Preaching by John MacArthur)

1. Expository Preaching expresses exactly the will of God, allowing God to speak and not man.
2. Expository Preaching retains the thoughts and intents of the Holy Spirit.
3. Expository Preaching frees the preacher to proclaim all the revelation of God, producing a ministry of wholeness and integrity.
4. Expository preaching promotes biblical literacy, yielding rich knowledge of redemptive truths.
5. Expository preaching transforms the preacher, leading to transformed congregations.

General Themes of Hebrews

- Hebrews is, in our opinion, one of the most theologically rich epistles in the New Testament, possibly only superseded by Romans.
- This is particularly true as it relates to its Christology, or its presentation of the Doctrine of Christ.
- Indeed, in his excellent book, *Journey Through the Bible*¹, Scott Brown says:

“The book of Hebrews shows us that a superior Savior brought a superior covenant resulting in a superior life. Throughout the letter, the author constantly argues for the supremacy of Christ over all things. This concept is present in every chapter and it is summarized in a very clear statement in Hebrews 8:1: “This is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.”

- Hebrews was most likely written to a Hebrew or Jewish audience, many of which were struggling to adapt to this new “Way.” (Acts 9:2, 19:9, 19:23, 22:4, 24:14)
- Hebrews makes its case for Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament types and shadows and clearly presents Him as the Savior/Messiah, and the ultimate Priest.

¹ <https://churchandfamilylife.com/products/60d216cc47738a0534abf66f>

- Additionally, Hebrews is a clash of worldviews and a fierce apologetic for Christ! As such, this Holy Epistle teaches us how to exegete many Old Testament passages and rightly view the New Covenant.
- Critically (especially in our cultural context), one of the themes that runs through Hebrews is “the lesser is fulfilled by the greater.” This is true with respect to the Old Covenant and Christ, but is also true in our lives. God’s call is always to come out of one way of living and into another, more wonderful Way. This isn’t always easy however. Hebrews offers us much encouragement.
- In Hebrews, we’ll explore many areas of biblical doctrine:
 1. The Doctrine of God
 2. Christology and Typology
 3. Atonement and Propitiation
 4. Angelology
 5. Salvation and False Conversion (Apostasy)
 6. The Worship of God
 7. Perseverance and Steadfastness
 8. Living by Faith
 9. God’s Love through Discipline
 10. Boldness in Life and Christian Witness
 11. Ecclesiology: Love for and service to the Church
- Hebrews also calls for courage in the face of whatever might come as a result of our obedience:

***Hebrews 10:19-22 (KJV)** Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, **20** By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; **21** And having an high priest over the house of God; **22** Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

Author

Unknown. William MacDonald writes:

Hebrews is anonymous, even though some earlier editions of the KJV printed Paul's name as part of the heading of the book. The early Eastern Church (Dionysius and Clement, both of Alexandria) suggested Paul as author. After much doubting, this view came to prevail from Athanasius onward, so that the West finally agreed. Few today, however, would maintain Pauline authorship. Origen agreed that the contents were Pauline, and there are some Pauline touches in it, but the style in the original is very different from Paul's. (This does not rule out Pauline authorship, because a literary genius can alter his style.)

For some reason the Lord has seen fit to keep the author unknown. One suggestion is that Paul did write it but purposely veiled his authorship due to Jewish prejudice against him. While this is possible, the ancient words of Origen have never been bettered: “But who wrote the Epistle God alone knows for certain.”

Date

- Internal evidence shows that Hebrews appears to have been written prior to 70AD. Why? Because it refers to a standing Temple and a present and active Levitical priesthood; the Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70AD.

Hebrews 5:1 (KJV) For every high priest taken from among men **is** ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

Hebrews 8:3 (KJV) For every high priest **is** ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

Hebrews 9:25 (KJV) Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest **entereth** into the holy place every year with blood of others;

Hebrews 10:11 (KJV) And every priest **standeth** daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

Why Hebrews is so Relevant to Right NOW!

This is a long read, but we think, worth our time. From William MacDonald's excellent *Believer's Bible Commentary*²:

In a general way, Hebrews deals with the tremendous struggle involved in leaving one religious system for another. There is the violent wrenching of old ties, the stresses and tensions of alienation, and the formidable pressures exerted on the renegade to return.

But in this Epistle the problem was not just a question of leaving an old system for a new one of equal value. Rather it was a matter of leaving Judaism for Christ, and as the writer shows, this involved leaving shadows for the substance, ritual for reality, the prior for the ultimate, the temporary for the permanent—in short, the good for the best.

The problem also involved leaving the popular for the unpopular, the majority for the minority, and the oppressors for the oppressed. And this precipitated many serious problems.

The Letter was written to people of Jewish background. These Hebrews had heard the gospel preached by the apostles and others during the early days of the church, and had seen the mighty miracles of the Holy Spirit which confirmed the message. They had responded to the good news in one of three ways:

- Some believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and were genuinely converted.
- Some professed to become Christians, were baptized, and took their place in the local assemblies. However, they had never been born again by the Holy Spirit of God.
- Others flatly rejected the message of salvation.

² *Bible Believer's Commentary*, William MacDonald, 1995.

Our Epistle deals with the first two classes—truly saved Hebrews and those who had nothing but an outward veneer of Christianity.

Now when a Jew left the faith of his forefathers, he was looked on as a turncoat and an apostate (meshummed), and was often punished with one or more of the following:

- Disinheritance by his family.
- Excommunication from the congregation of Israel.
- Loss of employment.
- Dispossession.
- Mental harassment and physical torture.
- Public mockery.
- Imprisonment.
- Martyrdom.

Of course, there was always the escape route. If he would renounce Christ and return to Judaism, he would be spared from further persecution. As we read between the lines of this Letter, we can detect some of the strong arguments used to persuade him to return to Judaism:

- The rich heritage of the prophets.
- The prominent ministry of angels in the history of God's ancient people.
- Association with the illustrious lawgiver Moses.
- National ties with the brilliant military commander Joshua.
- The glory of the Aaronic priesthood.
- The sacred sanctuary where God chose to dwell among His people.
- The covenant of the law given by God through Moses.
- The divinely appointed furniture in the sanctuary, and the magnificent veil.
- The services in the sanctuary, and especially the ritual on the great Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur, the most important day in the Jewish calendar).

We can almost hear the first-century Jews presenting all these glories of their ancient, ritualistic religion, then asking with a sneer, “And what do you Christians have? We have all this. What do you have? Nothing but a simple upper room, a table, and some bread and wine on the table! Do you mean to say that you have left all this for that?”

The Epistle to the Hebrews is really an answer to the question, “What do you have?” In a word the answer is Christ. In Him we have:

- One who is greater than the prophets.
- One who is greater than the angels.

- One who is greater than Moses.
- One who is greater than Joshua.
- One whose priesthood is superior to that of Aaron.
- One who serves in a better sanctuary.
- One who has introduced a better covenant.
- One who is the antitype of the typical furniture and veil.
- One whose once-for-all offering of Himself for sin is superior to the repeated sacrifices of bulls and goats.

Just as the stars fade from view in the greater glory of the sun, so the types and shadows of Judaism pale into insignificance before the greater glory of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus.

Yet there was still the problem of persecution. Those who professed to be followers of the Lord Jesus faced bitter, fanatical opposition. For true believers this could lead to the peril of discouragement and despair. They therefore needed to be encouraged to have faith in the promises of God. They needed endurance in view of the coming reward.

For those who were only nominal Christians, there was the danger of apostasy. After professing to receive Christ, they might utterly renounce Him and return to ritualistic religion. This was tantamount to trampling on the Son of God, profaning His blood, and insulting the Holy Spirit. For this willful sin there was no repentance or forgiveness. Against this sin there are repeated warnings in the Letter to the Hebrews. In [Heb 2:1](#) it is described as drifting away from the message of Christ. In [Heb 3:7-19](#) it is the sin of rebellion or of hardening the heart. In [Heb 6:6](#) it is falling away or committing apostasy. In [Heb 10:25](#) it is the forsaking the assembling ... together. In [Heb 10:26](#) it is the willfulness or deliberate sin. In [Heb 12:16](#) it is spoken of as selling one's birthright for a single meal. Finally in [Heb 12:25](#) it is called a refusal to hear the One who is speaking from Heaven. But all these warnings are directed against different aspects of the same sin—the sin of apostasy.

The message of Hebrews is as timely today as it was in the first century of the church. We need to be constantly reminded of the eternal privileges and blessings that are ours in Christ. We need encouragement to endure in spite of opposition and difficulties, and all professing believers need to be warned against reverting to ceremonial religion after having tasted and seen that the Lord is good.

Setting the Stage of Hebrews from Hebrews 1:1-3:

1. There exists the being of God. We will take much time to explore His wonders! (v.1)
2. God condescended to speak to His creatures through prophets! (v.1)
3. We are in the last days, that is, the final days before the return of Christ! (v.2)
4. God has spoken in these last days by His Son, Jesus Christ! (v.2)
5. God made everything through His Son and has given Him all things! (v.2)

6. Christ is God the Son! This is a statement of His deity! (v.3)
7. Christ upholds all things! (v.3)
8. Christ alone purged our sins! (v.3)
9. Christ's propitiatory work is finished; He "sat down" at the right hand of God! (v.3)

Other Key Verses in Hebrews:

Hebrews 2:9-10 (KJV) *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. 10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

Hebrews 2:18 (KJV) *For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*

Hebrews 3:12-14 (KJV) *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13 But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;*

Hebrews 4:9-12 (KJV) *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. 10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. 11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. 12 For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Hebrews 7:25-28 (KJV) *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. 26 For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; 27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. 28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.*

Hebrews 8:6 (KJV) *But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.*

Hebrews 9:12 (KJV) *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

Hebrews 10:25-27 (KJV) *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. 26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.*

Hebrews 11:6 (KJV) *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

Hebrews 12:1-2 (KJV) Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, **2** Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 13:8 (KJV) Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.

Overall Goals for CRC from this Study:

1. To grow in our knowledge of God and the Superiority of Christ!
2. To better understand the Gospel of Christ!
3. To grow in our love for and awe of Christ!
4. To walk more humbly before Christ!
5. To increase our boldness in sharing Christ!
6. To walk in practical Holiness unto the glory of Christ!
7. To be willing to leave all to gain Christ!

Preparation and Applications

1. Read/listen to Hebrews
2. Read/listen to Leviticus
3. Hebrews both calls for action and encourages believers to stand firm in the truth. Prepare your heart for both.
4. Ask the LORD, "Is there anything from my old life I'm ignorantly or pridefully holding onto? Is there anything keeping me from Thee?"

Final Thought from the last words of the Book:

Hebrews 13:22-25 (KJV) And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words. **23** Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. **24** Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you. **25** Grace be with you all. Amen.

Hebrews is an exhortation; it is meant to be an encouragement and a comfort. May the LORD do such in us over the many months we study this epistle, if He tarries.

Amen.