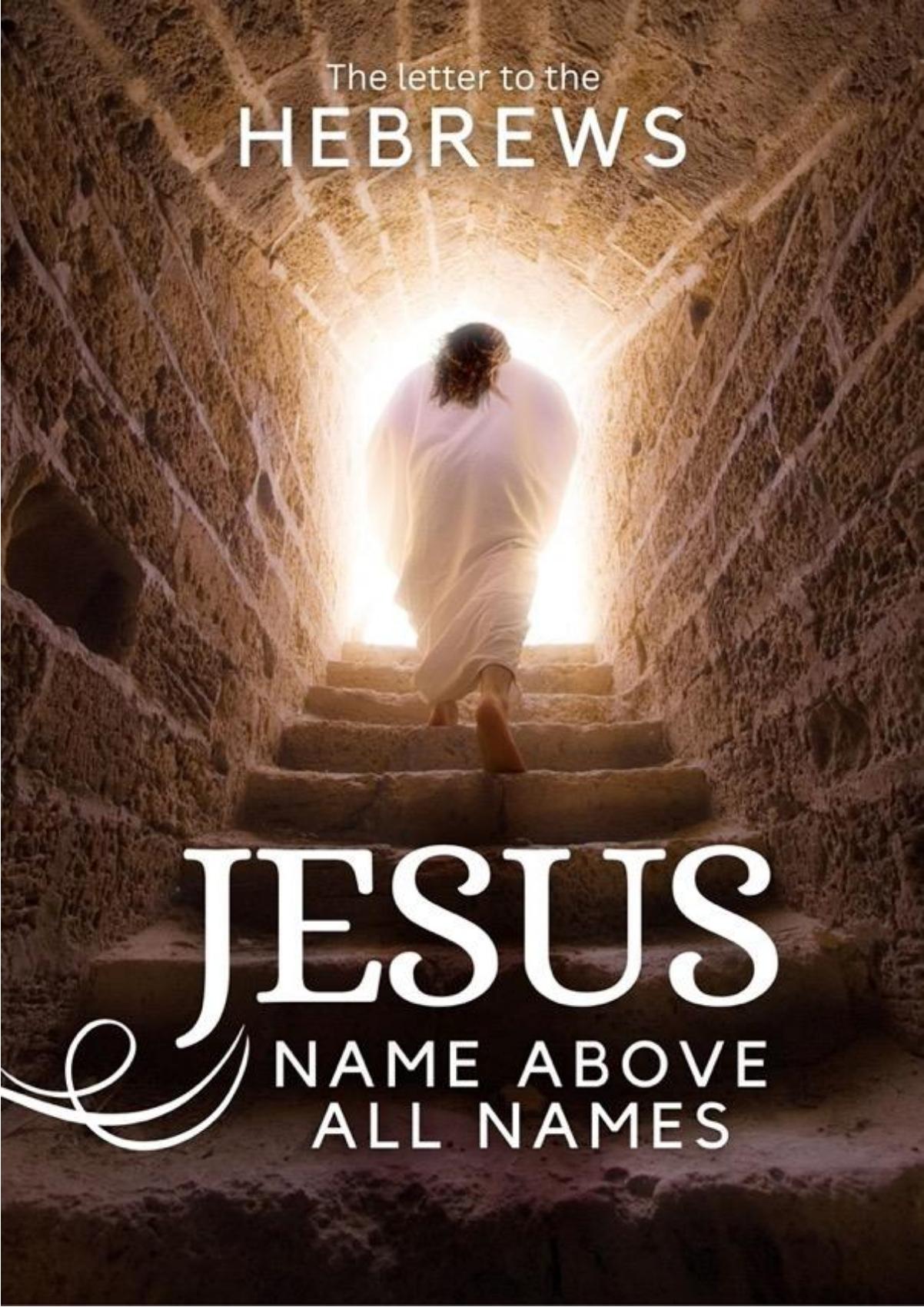


The letter to the
HEBREWS



JESUS
NAME ABOVE
ALL NAMES

Term 3 2023 Bible Studies



STUDIES IN HEBREWS

"Jesus: Name Above all Names"

INTRODUCTION *to the Studies*

Welcome to Hebrews. It is a long letter by New Testament standards, though by no means the longest. It seems it could have been much longer, according to the author himself, who assures us at the end (13:22) that *'in fact I have written to you quite briefly.'*

For our purposes, it has been divided into thirteen 'sections' (not always coinciding with the 13 chapters), some of which are fairly large. As a consequence, these studies (as well as the sermons) each cover a lot of material, and it is not expected that you will have time in your group to deal with everything raised in the passage. When meeting with your group, you may need to choose which questions you want to spend time on, and which ones you can skip over (or even leave out). You may be disappointed that the preacher does not answer (or even deal with) all your questions on the passage. You may need to use some of the weeks we have away from the series to make up some ground. There is deliberately more material in each study than most groups will satisfactorily cover in a single meeting. Please feel free to be selective, according to the needs of your group.

Please also note that there are no Leaders' Notes to accompany these studies. Leaders should prepare carefully – and it wouldn't hurt if group members did likewise – and consult whatever resources you may have available. Greg Holmes will be able to offer helpful advice in relation to commentaries and on-line resources available. If the answer to a question is not obvious, share your thoughts about what you think it means – and constantly pray that God's Spirit will work in you and your group to *'guide you into all the truth'*, as Jesus assured us he will do (John 16:13). And if you are still unsure, check with someone else you trust (eg, the preacher dealing with the passage you are unsure about).

May God bless us and enrich us, as we commit to this series on Hebrews.

BACKGROUND *to the Letter*

It is clear from the dominant themes of the letter to the Hebrews that it was written primarily to Jewish converts to Christianity in the early years of the impact of the gospel on first century middle eastern culture. The letter was more than likely completed prior to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70AD, because it would be expected, given the arguments of the author so consistently built around the Old Testament notions of temple sacrifice and worship, that there would have been some mention of its destruction if it had already taken place.

There is also no mention of the author's name, though for much of church history it was known as 'The Letter of Paul to the Hebrews', almost certainly because Paul is otherwise the most prolific of the New Testament letter writers. However, for the past few centuries, it has been widely recognised that the style, the language and the specific emphases of this letter are very unlike Paul – although there are no contradictions between the teachings of Paul and the content of Hebrews.

It has been suggested (first by Tertullian around 200AD) that the author could have been Barnabas, who rose quickly to prominence in the early Christian church. He was a Jew, of the priestly tribe of Levi (Acts 4:36), and was closely associated with Paul in Antioch, being sent with him on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3). Another possibility is Apollos (first suggested by Martin Luther), also a highly respected Jewish Christian, described by Luke as '*a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures,*' (Acts 18:24) and also associated with Paul at Corinth.

Although we'll never know who wrote the letter, there is little doubt as to the current context of those to whom it was written. There is much in the letters of Paul that reflects the tensions facing the new Christian communities finding their feet in the context of a religious world steeped in Judaism – after all, the earliest Christian leaders were Jewish believers, to whom Jesus' three years of mission had been primarily directed (Matthew 15:24). But Paul, as we know, calling himself the '*apostle to the Gentiles*' (Romans 11:13, Galatians 2:8), taught the emerging churches across Asia-Minor to resist the appeal of the Judaisers. who were adamant that all new Christians, Jews and Gentiles alike, had to also

commit to the religious practices of the Jews in order for their faith and practice to be genuine. Paul claimed that Christian freedom, won by the death and resurrection of Jesus, meant the Jewish customs no longer applied to this new covenant of God with his people.

It seems that while it was easier for Gentile Christians to accept this new teaching, there was greater resistance amongst those who were Jews. Their customs were ingrained, their religion had always been more external (ritual, liturgy, sacrifices, strict temple worship, etc) than internal (spiritual, relational, God-connected), and it was harder to turn away from all they had previously known – especially as it was God-given, from of old. It is understandable why new Christians, converted from Judaism, would have wanted to do their best to merge their new understanding of the gospel of Jesus with their old ways of Jewish ritual and sacrificial worship.

The letter to the Hebrews was written specifically to address this issue for these Jewish Christians, struggling with understanding how much had now changed with the fulfilment achieved by Jesus, confused by the arguments of the Judaisers, and no doubt suffering persecution from those who remained true to their Jewish past. The author goes to considerable lengths to show the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus as the revealer and mediator of God's grace, using the Old Testament scriptures as his starting point (these scriptures would have been even more familiar to his first readers than they are to us today). He develops a number of themes (as we'll see) to consistently point to Jesus as the full and final revelation of God to humanity, superior to angels, to Moses, to the Aaronic priesthood, to the sacrificial system – in fact to all that has preceded him. From all of this we can (and should) learn, as so much of it can help our understanding of how Jesus has fulfilled God's plan for his people and his world, but that does not mean it continues to be the appropriate way to express our relationship with God.

RESPONSE – *it's up to us!*

But it is not just about gaining knowledge – understanding more about how the Old Testament has been fulfilled by the coming of the new (and lasting) covenant in Jesus – but also about what that means for us in how we respond to these eternal truths. There are many exhortations – *'pay the most careful attention'* (2:1); *'fix your thoughts on Jesus'* (3:1); *'let us be careful'* (4:1); *'be taken forward to maturity'* (6:1); *'do not throw away your confidence'* (10:35) – these will remind us constantly that as we read, learn, understand and grow, there is a response for us to make, so that we may be able to live with confidence, perseverance and persistence, convinced that the things we are taught from this letter will enable us to stand firm in our own circumstances of life, community and relationship, as we seek to stand for Jesus – name above all names!

Rod Harding
July, 2023



STUDIES IN HEBREWS

"Jesus: Name Above all Names"

Study 1 Hebrews 1:1-14

Jesus: Radiance of God's Glory

Warm Up

1. In what ways are you similar to one or other of your parents? What particular character traits, or special abilities, have you inherited from either or both of them?

Bible Study

1. According to verse 1, what was the function of the Old Testament prophets? In what ways was the function of Jesus similar and/or different to that of the prophets (vs 2-3)?
2. What do you understand by the terms '*in the past*' (v.1) and '*in these last days*' (v.2)? Are we still in the 'last days'?
3. Carefully read the description of Jesus in the first sentence of verse 3. What is the difference between '*radiance*' and '*exact representation*'? How do these two very similar yet different descriptions build on each other to highlight the ultimate superiority of Jesus?

4. In verses 2 and 3, what is said about the relationship of Jesus and the creation? What is his position in relation to the creation?
5. In the same verses, what is said about Jesus and his relationship with God? In what way has God '*spoken to us by his Son*'?
6. Again from vs 2-3, what do we learn about Jesus and his relationship with humanity? What is the significance of saying that '*he sat down*' (v.3 ... compare 10:11-14)?
7. What could you deduce from reading Deuteronomy 33:2-4, Acts 7:53 and Galatians 3:19 about the significance of angels in relation to the Mosaic law? Could this be an explanation as to why the author is at such pains (vs 4-14) to show that Jesus is superior to angels?
8. Stand back a little, and try to gain a 'big picture' of the author's argument in verses 4-14. What is said about angels? What is said about Jesus? How does verse 14 summarise the whole argument?

Discussion

1. When did Jesus become more than just a name to you?
2. How does it help the Christian that God has spoken '*at many times and in various ways*'? Why not just one way?
3. What difference does it make to you that Jesus is the '*radiance of God's glory*', rather than another prophet, or an angel?



STUDIES IN HEBREWS

"Jesus: Name Above all Names"

Study 2

Hebrews 2:1-18

Jesus: Crowned with Glory and Honour

Warm Up

1. In what context do you find it hard to pay attention ... for example, listening to lectures or sermons, talking with your spouse, reading on the train, etc? What makes it hard for you?

Bible Study

1. Read verses 1-4. What might happen if we fail to pay attention to these matters? What does it mean, to '*drift away*' (v.1)?
2. What was the '*message spoken through angels*' (v.2, see Acts 7:53, Galatians 3:19), and what is the '*great salvation*' referred to in verse 3 (see 1:3-4)? What is greater, the law or the gospel? How do you know?
3. The centerpiece of verses 5-9 is the quotation from Psalm 8:4-6. According to the Psalm, to whom is the world subjected? How is this 'rule' not yet complete or universal (v.8)?
4. In comparing humanity with angels, how is it that we are both lower and higher? What is here suggested as the ultimate destiny of humanity?

5. In what way was Jesus made lower than the angels, and what did it take for Jesus to be elevated above them (vs 9-10)? How does Jesus fulfil the destiny of humankind?
6. With whom did Jesus identify – humans or angels (vs 11-14)? Why was it necessary for him to be a man and not an angel (vs 14-16)?
7. Of what encouragement is it to you, that you are called '*family*' or '*brother or sister*' to Jesus (vs 11-13)?
8. Jesus is referred to as '*a merciful and faithful high priest*' (v.17). What are the key roles of the priest which are important here (vs 17-18), and how does Jesus fulfil them?

Discussion

1. Do you know people who have 'drifted away' from the faith? Have you ever had any experience like that? What caused it, and what evidences for faith helped to bring you back?
2. How do the accomplishments and example of Jesus detailed in this chapter encourage you to hold fast to the faith, so you do not drift away?
3. Jesus is described in chapter 2 as '*the pioneer of salvation*' (v.10), a '*brother*' (vs11-12) and '*high priest*' (v.17). Which of these descriptions means the most to you right now, and why?



STUDIES IN HEBREWS

"Jesus: Name Above all Names"

Study 3 Hebrews 3:1 – 4:13

Jesus: His Work Finished

Warm Up

1. When your work is finished (the end of a day, the completion of a project, the start of a holiday, etc), what are the ways you relax and find rest? Do you enjoy resting?

Bible Study

1. Read Hebrews 3:1-6. What are some of the important parts of chapter 2 that form the background to the '*Therefore*' of verse 1 (see 2:1-2; 9; 14-15; etc)?
2. What aspects of Jesus' life and ministry are highlighted by the two different titles contained in verse 1 ... '*apostle*' and '*high priest*'?
3. To whom is Jesus being compared in these verses? In what ways are Jesus and Moses similar, and in what ways is Jesus seen as greater than Moses? Why do you think it is important to the author to show that Jesus is greater than Moses?
4. Read Numbers 14, as background to Psalm 95:7-11, quoted and referred to by the author in 3:7-19. What was the result for the people of God under Moses when they displayed a '*sinful, unbelieving heart*' (v.12)?

5. What does the warning of verses 12-14 add to the exhortations already given in 2:1-3 and 3:1? How does the series of questions and answers in verses 16-19 illustrate the significance of verse 14?
6. Hebrews 4:1 and 11 form 'bookends' to the argument contained between them (vs 1-11). What do you understand as the main thrust of that argument? What is the '*rest*' that is here referred to, and why is it so important to enter it?
7. What are the two main keys to ensuring entry into this '*rest*' (v.2 and vs 6 & 11)?
8. How is the word of God '*alive and active*' or '*penetrating and dividing*' like a '*double-edged sword*' (vs 12-13)? Does this ring true with your experience?

Discussion

1. What has been one of the most rebellious times of your life? What resulted from it? Who or what helped to bring you back?
2. How do people harden their hearts towards God today? Do you know someone whose heart seems to be just too hard? What can you do, as an individual or as a group, to help the softening process for this person?
3. What is your initial reaction to 4:13? How does that truth make you feel? Do you find it comforting, challenging, scary, etc? Why?



STUDIES IN HEBREWS

"Jesus: Name Above all Names"

Study 4 Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10

Jesus: Source of Salvation

Warm Up

1. Share a time when you were forgiven – a time when you fully appreciated that you didn't deserve forgiveness and yet it was freely given, possibly even at significant cost (personal or otherwise) to the forgiver.
2. What passage or story in the Bible most powerfully communicates the meaning and significance of forgiveness for you?

Bible Study

1. What distinguishes Jesus from ordinary Jewish priests (4:15)?
2. Because Christians have a sympathetic yet sinless high priest, we can confidently approach God to obtain mercy and grace (4:16). How would these two things be especially important to believers living under severe stress?

3. What other evidence can you think of elsewhere in scripture of Jesus being appointed by God (5:1-6)? Why is it significant that he be appointed by God?
4. Why can Jesus' sacrifice be "*once for all*" (7:27), whereas the Jewish priests had to keep on making fresh sacrifices both for themselves and for the people?
5. Read about Melchizedek in Genesis 14 (Salem is Jerusalem). Why is he such a significant "type" (who foreshadows or prefigures) for Jesus (5:6,10)?
6. Hebrews quotes from the Psalms – what titles does the Father give Jesus (Psalm 2:6 & 7 and 110:4)?
7. Though Jesus was the eternal Son of God, he nevertheless '*learned obedience from what he suffered*' (5:8). This does not imply that before his suffering he was tainted by the sin of disobedience. Yet how did suffering unto death teach Jesus to know obedience in a way he couldn't have otherwise?
8. '*Made perfect*' (5:9). The basic idea of this word involves bringing a person to the goal fixed by God (cf Romans 12:2). It is used of Jesus in the sense of completing the qualification course for becoming an eternal high priest. Why was obedience amid suffering part of Jesus' qualification course for becoming our high priest (compare 4:15 and 5:2)?

9. As an eternal high priest, Christ achieved eternal atonement and salvation (5:9). Why is this salvation available only to those who ‘*obey him*’?

Discussion

1. What aspect of the passage seems most personally relevant to you?
2. In this passage there are three verses which have words that are directed to us:
Let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.’ (4:14)
‘Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence . . . ’
(4:16)
‘(Jesus) became the source of salvation for all who obey him . . . ’
(5:9)
Share how one of more of them is significant to you personally at this time.
3. Discuss anything you note in this passage that could be significant for the way we share the gospel with others, both individually and as a church.



STUDIES IN HEBREWS

"Jesus: Name Above all Names"

Study 5 Hebrews 5:11 – 6:20

Jesus: Anchor for the Soul

Warm Up

1. What are some of your best memories of school? Are the good memories associated with primary school, when you were learning the 'basics', or with secondary school, when the learning was more complex and difficult?

Bible Study

1. Read Hebrews 5:11 – 6:4. What is it that the author wants to explain further (5:8-10), and why does he hesitate (5:11)?
2. What is conveyed in the contrast between '*milk*' and '*solid food*' (v.12 ... see also 1 Cor 3:1-2)? What type of spiritual food is better for Christians?
3. The author lists six things he considers as '*milk*', or '*elementary teachings*' (6:1-2). Discuss each of these, and decide whether or not you agree with his opinion about their 'elementary' nature?
4. Read Hebrews 6:4-8 ... one of the most severe warnings in the whole of the scriptures. Read carefully through all the experiences that are claimed for those who are under discussion in verses 4 & 5. Do these experiences necessarily describe a Christian person?
5. What makes it '*impossible*' for such a person, if they '*have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance*' (vs 4-6)? How does the plain

sense of these verses compare and/or contrast with other scriptures, such as John 5:24; 6:37; 10:27-30; Romans 8:1, etc?

6. How does the simple illustration from nature contained in verses 7-8 help us to understand what the author is saying in this whole section? What is the same about the *'land'* in each verse, and what is different?
7. Read Hebrews 6:9-20. What is the author's confidence *'of better things'* in the case of his readers based on (vs 9-10)? What will it take for them to make their hope sure (vs 11-12)?
8. Read Genesis 22:15-18. By who or what is God's promise sworn (v.16)? What significance does the author of Hebrews attach to that swearing (Heb 6:13, 16-17)? What are the *'two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie'* (v.18)? Why?
9. *'We have this hope as an anchor for the soul,'* (v.19). What is *'this hope'* we have, which can give us such confidence, in spite of the seriousness of the warning of verses 4-6 (vs 19-20)?

Discussion

1. Why is it important to keep growing as a Christian? How can we keep ensuring that we are moving from *'milk'* to *'solid food'* in our spiritual diet?
2. Do you know anyone like those described in 6:4-6? Do you think it is impossible for them to repent again, and to return to God? Why, or why not? In practical, rather than theological, terms, what makes it so hard for them?
3. In what area(s) is it hard for you to trust God? Why? How can God's faithfulness to his past promises act as an anchor for your soul today?

**STUDIES IN HEBREWS****"Jesus: Name Above all Names"**

Study 6 Hebrews 7:1-28

Jesus: A Priest Forever

Warm Up

1. When you were a child, who were some of your favourite heroes (or super-heroes)? What made them 'heroes' for you?

Bible Study

1. Read Hebrews 7:1-10. From the first three verses, what do you learn about who Melchizedek was, and what can you say happened between him and Abraham?
2. Now read Genesis 14:18-20 (and a little more of the chapter, if you want to check on more of the context). Apart from Psalm 110 (also quoted in Hebrews 7), there is no other mention of Melchizedek in the Old Testament. Does this add any information to what you already know from Hebrews 7?
3. Who was the greater, Melchizedek or Abraham? How many reasons to support your answer can you discern from 7:4-10? To whom was the tithe (the tenth) expected to be paid (see Numbers 18:21-24 and also 1 Samuel 8:10-11, 15-17)?
4. Read Hebrews 7:11-28. What was one of the major weaknesses of the Levitical priesthood (v.11)? How is this 'problem' addressed by the change in the priesthood which the author describes (see vs 15-17)? What is effected by this change, and therefore what is the '*better hope*' (vs 18-19)? How can we achieve '*perfection*'?

5. Hebrews 7:17 and 21 both quote from Psalm 110:4 (and Psalm 110 is one of the Psalms most often-quoted in the New Testament). What is the significance given to the oath '*sworn*' by God in Psalm 110:4 (vs 20-22)?
6. Another contrast between the 'old' and the 'new' is introduced in verses 23-25. Why is it important that '*Jesus lives forever*' (v.24)? What difference does this make for you?
7. What is it about the priesthood of Jesus which '*meets our needs*' (v.26)? What makes this so superior to the earlier version of the priesthood (vs 26-27)?
8. Look carefully at verse 28 ... the last verse in chapter 7. How does this verse summarise all of the main arguments contained in verses 11-27, and discussed in questions 4-7?

Discussion

1. In what areas of your life do you sometimes attempt to achieve perfection? Is this any different to life under the Levitical system? How successful have you been?
2. How secure do you feel in having Jesus as your high priest? If it is true, that Jesus '*meets our needs*', how can we better rely on this reality in the daily practice of our lives?
3. If our walk with God actually did require us to be perfect, what emotion would dominate your life ... false pride, or true despair? Which of these would be better? What is the good news of this passage in relation to both those possibilities?



STUDIES IN HEBREWS

"Jesus: Name Above all Names"

Study 7 Hebrews 8:1-13

Jesus: A Superior Covenant

Warm Up

1. By the year 2030, what current 'necessities' do you think will be obsolete? What is something you wish was obsolete right now? Why?

Bible Study

1. What is the '*main point*' that the author is making at this stage of the letter (8:1-2; compare with 7:26-28)? Note also the similarities with the introduction to the whole letter (1:3). Who (according to this '*main point*') is Jesus?
2. What is indicated about the contrast between the two sanctuaries ... '*the true tabernacle*' (v.2) and the '*copy and shadow*' (v.5)? Given the careful instructions Moses had to follow (v.5), why was his sanctuary so inferior?
3. What is regarded as the main role of a high priest (v.3)? If Jesus is to be regarded as the 'High Priest', how has he fulfilled this role (see 7:27)? How does the '*once for all*' of 7:27 relate to the continuous sense of '*serves*' in 8:2?
4. The Levitical (Old Testament) priesthood was '*prescribed by the law*' (8:4). What was so different about the priesthood of Jesus (eg, '*if he were on earth, he would not be a priest*', v.4), and why is the author so convinced Jesus' priesthood is so superior (v.6, 7:26-28)?

5. The '*main point*' switches from priesthood to covenant (vs 6-13). Why was a new covenant necessary (v.7)? Where did the problem with the old one lie?
6. Verses 8-12 are an almost exact quotation from Jeremiah 31:31-34. Look back at Jeremiah 31, and see the context in which these words were first written ... 31:1; 3-4; 8-9;12-14; 23-25; etc. What does this suggest about God and his covenant with his people?
7. What was the old covenant that was administered by the priests (Exodus 19:5-8; 20:1-8)? What was the new covenant, mediated by Jesus (vs 10-12)? Why was a new covenant necessary (vs 7-9)?
8. What are the four promises contained in the new covenant, and mentioned here in vs 10-12? What is it about these promises which makes the first covenant '*obsolete*' (v.13)?

Discussion

1. When you reflect on the four promises of the new covenant, which 'promise' seems to be most important for you, and brings you the most joy right now?
2. The old covenant ended up focusing on people's ability (or inability) to measure up to God's demands? Is there still something of that in your relationship with God? How can we better experience the reality of the '*once for all*' sacrifice of Jesus for us?
3. How difficult is it for you to believe that God '*will remember [your] sins no more*' (v.12)? Why are we so slow to forgive ourselves ... and others? Would it make a difference if we could really experience God's forgiveness for ourselves?



STUDIES IN HEBREWS

"Jesus: Name Above all Names"

Study 8 Hebrews 9:1-28

Jesus: The Better Sacrifice

Warm Up

1. In your childhood home, where or what was the 'holy of holies' ... the room you were forbidden to enter, of the object you were not allowed to touch?

OR

2. What event or experience have you gone through once, but never want to go through again?

Bible Study

1. Read Hebrews 9:1-10. From the first five verses, what do you picture about the earthly sanctuary, and each of its key elements? What is the difference between the '*Holy Place*' and the '*Most Holy Place*'?
2. The author says '*we cannot discuss these things in detail now*' (v.5) ... but if you'd like to, refer to Exodus chapters 25-31 and 35-40. Why was it better for the author not to discuss this detail?
3. Verses 6-10 describe the ministries which occurred in each '*room*' of the sanctuary. What were these ministries designed to show, and/or illustrate?
4. What was it that did *not* happen under these old regulations? Why were the '*gifts and sacrifices ... not able to clear the conscience of the worshipper*'? (v.9)?

5. Read verses 11-15. How does the activity of the priesthood of Jesus described here (vs 11-12) differ from that of the Levitical priesthood described earlier (vs 6-7) ... the place, the means and the number of times offered?
6. What kind of cleansing do the two sacrificial systems provide (vs 13-14)? Why does Christ's sacrifice have the more significant and everlasting result?
7. How is the mediation of Christ like a '*ransom*' (v.15)? Who is being ransomed, and to whom or what are they hostage? What is the ransom price?
8. Read verses 16-28. Why was the use of blood in the first covenant so important (vs 16-22 ... note especially v.22)?
9. How has the death of Jesus (the shedding of his blood) so completely fulfilled the '*copies*' which were the old covenant system? What makes him the '*better sacrifice*' (vs 23-28)?

Discussion

1. Is there anything about the old tabernacle form of worship that you find appealing? What is it, and why does it appeal to you? Would it be helpful (to you) to modify our forms of corporate worship today to include some of these elements?
2. How do you clear your conscience, and keep it clear?
3. How do you feel about the use of blood in establishing God's covenants with humanity? How can you explain this to twenty-first century non-Christian westerners?



STUDIES IN HEBREWS

"Jesus: Name Above all Names"

Study 9 Hebrews 10:1-18

Jesus: Reality, not Shadow

Warm Up

1. What repetitious activity (like cleaning the bathroom, or mowing the lawn) do you dislike most, and why? Is there any activity you have to repeat often that you really enjoy?

Bible Study

1. Why is '*the law*' insufficient (v.1, see Galatians 3:19-25)? Knowing how a shadow is formed, how is '*the law ... only a shadow*' of the reality? What IS the reality?
2. How does the repetition of the sacrifices (v.1) demonstrate that the law cannot bring perfection (v.2)? What was one positive function of those annual sacrifices (v.3)?
3. Why can't animal sacrifices take away human sin (v.4 ... see also 9:13-14)?
4. The author puts Psalm 40:6-8 (vs 5-8) onto the lips of Jesus ('*when Christ came into the world, he said ...*', v.5). How does he use the Psalm to explain how Jesus (the 'reality') has replaced the shadow (vs 8-10). What things were rejected? What has replaced them?

5. How is the obedience of Jesus connected to our holiness (v.10)?
6. List the contrasts between the old sacrificial system and the new, found in verses 11-14. If you had a choice, which of the two would you prefer, and why?
7. In what sense are Christians already made '*perfect*' (or holy) while still in the process of being made '*holy*' (or perfect ... v.14)?
8. In verses 15-18, quoting again from Jeremiah 31:33-34 (see Hebrews 8:10-12), how does the author sum up and conclude his argument that the old sacrificial system has been completely replaced by Jesus?

Discussion

1. In spite of all we've been reading and studying from Hebrews over recent weeks, and again today, how much of your time do you spend with a vague (or even strong) sense of guilt, shame or worthlessness? How does this passage speak directly to those feelings?
2. Do you live your life as if you are already made perfect, or as if you are still in the process of holiness (v.14)? Why? In what way(s) might God be calling you to practise greater holiness?
3. What is the best bit of 'news' conveyed to you in this passage? How will that make a difference to your life? How can you share that 'news' with others you know?



STUDIES IN HEBREWS

"Jesus: Name Above all Names"

Study 10 Hebrews 10:19-39

Jesus: The Hope we Profess

Warm Up

1. What is an activity currently in your life in which you feel you have to persevere, even if it's not enjoyable, just because it has to be done? How do you feel when it is finished?

Bible Study

1. Read Hebrews 10:19-25. To what does the *'therefore'* of verse 19 refer? How do verses 19-21 summarise just about all of 9:11 – 10:18?
2. Reflect on the symbolism in the comparison of the *'curtain'* (see Mark 15:37-38) with Jesus' body (v.20)? What impact does this imagery have on you?
3. Consider each of the three exhortations of verses 22-25.
 - i) What allows us to *'draw near to God'*? What are the four *'conditions'* given here (v.22)?
 - ii) What encourages us to *'hold unswervingly to the hope we profess'* (v.23)? What is the implication of *'unswervingly'*? What (or who) is this hope?

iii) What are the suggested ways we can '*spur one another on*' (vs 24-25)? Is there any extra significance to you because of the '*Day approaching*'?

4. Read verses 26-31. Compare this passage with Hebrews 6:4-6. What is similar and what is different in these two sections? Which of the two warnings has more impact on you? Why?
5. Numbers 15:27-31 highlights the background to the '*deliberately*' of verse 26. Does this help to explain the severity of this warning?
6. Deuteronomy 17:6-7 provides context for verse 28. What are the reasons for claiming that punishment deserves to be more severe now than in Old Testament times (v.29)?
7. Read Deuteronomy 32:35-36, quoted in verse 30. What could make '*falling into the hands of the living God*' be so '*dreadful*' (v.31)?
8. Read verses 32-39. The author appeals to their memories of '*earlier days*' (v.32). What is reflected here about those days in verses 32-34? What does it suggest about the context in which these first century Christians were living?

9. What do you think could be the '*better and lasting possessions*' referred to (v.34)? Quickly look up Matthew 6:19-21, Romans 8:18, 1 Peter 1:3-5. Can you think of other references?

10. The author quotes (a little loosely) Habakkuk 2:3-4 (vs 37-38). How does this OT reference assist the call to perseverance (v.36)? Why is it important to persevere?

11. How does the use of contrasting words emphasise this summarising exhortation (v.39)?

Discussion

1. What do you think is the connection between verses 19-25 and verses 26-31? Why would the author follow up his three-fold appeal to godliness with such a severe warning of sinfulness?

2. Do you know someone like those described in verses 26-31? Can you, without using names, explain the circumstances? How can we engage with and pray for any we know and love?

3. What do you remember about your own '*earlier days*'? Has there been any 'shrinking back' for you? What especially challenges and/or encourages you from this passage?



STUDIES IN HEBREWS

"Jesus: Name Above all Names"

Study 11 Hebrews 11:1-40

Jesus: Faith Makes Perfect

Warm Up

1. How do you respond to 'heroes'? Are you inspired? Or are there some that you love to hate?
2. How would you describe 'faith'?

Bible Study

Read Hebrews 11. There are nine people specifically commended for their faith by name:

- 1 Abel (see Gen. 4:1-15); 2 Enoch (Gen. 5:21);
- 3 Noah (Gen. 6:9 - 7:24); 4 Abraham (Gen. 12:1-5; 15:1-6; 22:1-18);
- 5 Isaac (Gen. 27:27-29); 6 Jacob (Gen. 48:1:, 8-22);
- 7 Joseph (Gen 50:24-25); 8 Moses (Ex. 1:16, 22; 2:1-15; Ex. 12:21-23); and 9 Rahab (Josh. 2; 6:22-25).

Take a couple of minutes to look up any you are not familiar with. Pick two or three of these and answer the following questions:

1. How did faith play a part in their life?
2. Who or what did they trust in? How did this affect the way they acted? How does this compare to any other people mentioned in their story?
3. Pick one of the events described in their life. How might it have turned out differently without faith?

The author of Hebrews makes a point of the fact that *'all these people were still living by faith when they died'* (v.13; see also vs 39-40).

4. Why is this important (see especially v.40)?
5. What is the *'something better'* of v.40? In what way is it better?

As we've seen previously (Study 4), the word translated *'perfect'* in verse 40 means something like 'complete' or 'fulfilled according to its purpose'. You may wish to check this out in other places where it is used in Hebrews – eg, 2:10; 5:9; 7:19, 28; 9:9 (translated as *'clear'* in the NIV, but it is the same Greek word); 10:1, 14; and 12:23.

6. How then was the faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, etc, imperfect?
7. How does Christ make them – and us – perfect?

Discussion

1. In what ways can you identify with the people mentioned in Hebrews 11? How are you different?
2. What does 'faith' mean for you personally? How does faith in Jesus change the way you think, speak, act and live? How should it?
3. How is God calling you to trust him today? Take some time to pray, either by yourself or as a group, about these things. Pray as specifically as you can – so instead of praying that you will trust God in your studies or in your relationships, pray for his help in next week's exam or for the healing of relationship with your boss, etc.



STUDIES IN HEBREWS

"Jesus: Name Above all Names"

Study 12 Hebrews 12:1-29

Jesus: Pioneer and Perfecter

Warm Up

1. Share a time when you felt that the Lord had taught you something through a difficult or challenging experience.
2. Discuss the way the way you think discipline and disciple are related.

Bible Study

1. The longer section of which Chapter 12 is a part really goes back to chapter 10. Read 10:37-8. How does it relate to Chapter 11, and hence to Chapter 12 (see question 2)?
2. Verses 1-3 connects back to Chapter 11 (and to Chapter 10 as in question 1). What is the significance of the '*Therefore*'?
3. What is our inspiration in running the race with perseverance (vs 2-3)?
4. Jesus' motivation for enduring the cross and its shame was '*the joy set before him*' (v.2). What joy is set before you that can motivate you to endure and persevere (cf. Romans 8:18-23; 2 Corinthians 4:17, and also Hebrews 12:22-24)?
5. For what purposes does the Father discipline believers (vs 4-9)? What does discipline produce in the life of a believer (vs 10-12)?

- 6 In a situation where some of the believers were struggling to hold on, and all were under pressure from neighbors and co-workers, why would an exhortation to *'live in peace with everyone'* (v.14) be appropriate?
7. How were the Hebrew recipients of this letter tempted to be like Esau (vs 16-17)?
- 8 Contrast what the author says about the old covenant (vs 18-21) and the new (vs 22-24). What are the main differences? What is the emphasis of *'you have come'*, repeated three times in verses 22-24?
9. After the future shaking occurs, what will remain? What is it that *'cannot be shaken'* (vs 27-28)?
10. Why do you think the author brings this section to a close with the quotation from Deuteronomy 4:24, *'for our "God is a consuming fire"'* (v.29)?

Discussion

1. Practically speaking, what do you think it means to *'fix our eyes'* on Jesus (v.2)?
2. Are there any situations which cause you to *'grow weary and lose heart'* (v.3)? How do you push through?
3. Have you experienced times of *'discipline'* from God? If you'd like to, share your experience, and the outcome for you.
4. Is there a *'bitter root'* in your heart that could defile you and others (vs 14-16)? How should we respond to an awareness of them (cf. question 7 above)?



STUDIES IN HEBREWS

"Jesus: Name Above all Names"

Study 13 Hebrews 13:1-25

Jesus: Shepherd of the Sheep

Warm Up

1. How many times do you say goodbye to friends as they leave, or end the phone call? Is that also when either you or they bring up many things that have gone previously unmentioned?

Bible Study

1. Read Hebrews 13:1-19, a series of instructions across a wide range of matters relevant to those living in the Christian community receiving this letter – and also relevant to us.
 - i) '*Keep on loving*' (v.1). Why is this important to mention first (see John 13:34-35)?
 - ii) '*Show hospitality to strangers*' (v.2). Have you tried this? What was the outcome?
 - iii) '*Remember those in prison*' (v.3). This is very likely connected to 10:32-34 – who might '*those in prison*' represent to us today?
 - iv) '*Marriage should be honoured*' (v.4). We think marriage is under attack in our culture – maybe it always has been. Why do we need to honour marriage highly?

- v) *'Keep ... free from the love of money'* (v.5). Is it possible to *'be content'* in a materialistic culture? How do Deut 31:6 and Psalm 118:6 & 7 help us to *'be content'* (vs 5-6)?
- vi) *'Remember your leaders'* (v.7). The language suggests past leaders, now dead (eg, 6:12). Who are the *'leaders'* you remember?
- vii) *'Jesus Christ is the same ...'* (v.8). How do you think this statement connects with the previous one regarding past leaders?
- viii) *'Do not be carried away by ... strange teachings'* (vs 9-10). While this most likely refers to Judaisers promoting a return to Jewish ceremonial customs, what could it refer to in our context? What is the *'altar'* (v.10) which has moved us beyond Judaism?
- ix) *'Outside the camp'* (vs 11-14). See Lev 16:27 – bodies of sacrificed animals were burned outside the camp, representing the removal of sin. How does this help to explain the comparison with Jesus – and with us (v.13)? Where is *'the city that is to come'* (v.14)?
- x) *'A sacrifice of praise'* (vs 15-16). What is the nature of such sacrifices (v.16)?

xi) *'Have confidence in your leaders'* (v.17). This clearly refers to current leaders. What is a very practical benefit of respecting those who are leaders in our church?

xii) *'Pray for us'* (vs 18-19). Why is prayer important? What does it have to do with *'clear conscience'* and *'honourable life'*? Could we support each other better in prayer?

2. Read verses 20-21, the final words of the letter – almost! What is *'the eternal covenant'* (see Is 55:3, Jer 32:40)? Why is Jesus referred to as the *'great Shepherd of the sheep'* (see Ps 23; Ezek 34:11-16, 23; John 14:11, 14, 27)? Is there any difference between *'doing his will'* and *'what is pleasing to him'* (see Rom 12:1-2)?

3 After all we've learnt and reflected on as we've studied this letter, why is it appropriate to end with the words, *'through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.'* (v.21)?

4. Read to the end. Aren't you glad the author only wrote *'quite briefly'* (v.22)?

Discussion

1. Share your reactions with the group about reaching the end of this series – and pray together, that we may apply our learning to our lives and relationships as we continue to follow Jesus.



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