

Session 2

Hello and welcome back.

The New Testament book, Hebrews, has been an encouragement to Christians for 2000 years. Thanks for joining me as we explore Hebrews, chapters six today.

First – a reminder of the background on Hebrews.

written about 70 years after Christ's death and resurrection. Written to First century Christians who came from Jewish backgrounds.

Written because these first century Christians were discouraged. Christ has been gone for more than 50 years and some Christians are losing hope. Their entire history and almost certainly all family are Jewish; many sects spinning off teaching “Christ” but in ways that are only half-true; **Christians are being persecuted throughout the roman empire from Rome to Jerusalem so “remaining Jewish” could protect them from persecution.**

Judaism, the religion of their birth, was not a second-rate religion. It was divinely designed, expressing true devotion and worship of God. **And, it was familiar and convenient.** Many of those who accepted Christ still longed for Judaism’s familiar routines and lived a kind of hybrid faith. The commandments, rituals, celebrations, and the promises described by God’s prophets revealed the way to forgiveness and salvation.

Are current day Christians similar to those first century Christians? The events of the last year, as well as the persecution of Christians outside the U.S. and the scorn of Christians within the U.S. are enough to make the weakhearted fall into doubt and despair, instead of being steadfast in faith.

Gist of this letter:

Jesus is better. Christ is supreme and completely sufficient for salvation. He is the perfect revelation and reflection of God, the complete sacrifice for sin, the compassionate and understanding mediator, and the only way to eternal life.

Christ is my only security in a changing world.

Last video session we spent time discussing Jesus’ role as High Priest, and his “duties” of salvation and intercession.

We spent time discussing the differences between Jewish priesthood in Order of Aaron Order, and Jesus’ priesthood in Order of Melchizedek.

There are BIG differences.

Q: What difference? One human – with beginning and end, making daily (repetitive) sacrifices for himself and Israel, only approaching God once per year in the Holy of Holies. The other – Christ, without beginning or end, making sacrifice once only for all mankind (not himself since he had never sinned), and approaching God daily as he sits at his right hand, interceding for us.

Chapter 4 verse 16 tells us there is one sacrifice which created our **right to “approach Gods throne with confidence.”**

That difference was huge to the Christians reading this letter 2000 years ago and is equally huge for us as we can boldly encounter God on his throne because of Christ. But apparently some people had a hard time believing this, or maybe they just needed continual reminders and encouragement.

Q: Do you know anyone like this who hears the truth, yet has a hard time believing? Are you like this? It’s not unusual to have doubts about God, salvation, sin, etc. but these shouldn’t be a constant part of a believer’s life.

I knew a guy who had lots of questions about the Bible. He professed that he was a Christian but had never read the Bible. Many Christians have never read the Bible, and without ever reading it are still confident in their faith. But his questions made me wonder if he was unsure of his faith or was worried about someone else. Many of his questions were about “others” such as small children, mentally handicapped, those who commit suicide, other religions, ... and were posed in such a way that it seemed he was either (a) trying to decide if God is just, or (b) try to decide if there is a way for everyone to get to heaven.

Concerning to me was that he would quote the Bible incorrectly. He’d say the Bible talks about loving one’s neighbor and that we should show our love by sharing from our abundance. He’d say, the Bible says, ““From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.”

I’d have to tell him, that I think he’s meaning to quote Luke 12:48 which is the only verse close to what he just said. Luke 12:48 is “From everyone who has been given much, much will be required;...”

His quote was actually from Karl Marx in the Communist Manifesto.

Ultimately, I tried to direct us back to scripture and what we “know” instead of theoretical discussions that we may never resolve. I don’t know whether God has some special plan for infants, or handicapped, or Jewish rabbis. What I do know is that God has made it abundantly clear about what committed followers of Jesus Christ can expect.

The author of the letter to the Hebrews had to deal with people who struggled understanding/believing what they were being taught. **READ with me Chapter 5, verses 11-14**

11 We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because **you no longer try** to understand. 12 In fact, though **by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!**

13 Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Q: What would you do next? You have a group of people who are discouraged, but you realize that they are part of the problem. They’ve stopped trying. I think I’d say, “I’m done. Do what you want. You are adults and I ain’t yo’ daddy.” **What would you do next?**

Our author didn’t stop with the chapter break at the end of chapter 5. He continued right into chapter 6. Let’s see what he says next. **READ C6V1 – 3**

6 **Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity**, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, 2 instruction about cleansing rites, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 **And God permitting, we will do so.**

So, he didn't give up on them.

Q: How would you characterize what he just did? Encouragement? Seems like he said, "You've learned you're A, B, C's and now I'm going to teach you to read."

He continues by reminding them of "**The Certainty of God's Promise.**" **READ 6:13-20**

13 When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, 14 saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants." 15 And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.

16 People swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. 17 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. 18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope set before us may be greatly encouraged. 19 **We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.** It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Two unchangeable things: God's promise and God's nature. He never breaks a promise. He is truth, therefore cannot lie.

Re-read v18 this way (paraphrased), "God confirmed his promise with an oath so that we who are saved may be GREATLY encouraged!"

Then, he returns the message he wants to drive home – Jesus (as high priest) has already done – once and for all – what only the high priest can do – enter the Holy of Holies and make atonement for our sins.

They are further reminded of this as we **READ c7v27-28** (which we read last session – deserves reading again)

27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. 28 For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; **but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son**, who has been made **perfect forever**.

The author doesn't stop there. He then tells them in Chapter 8 verse 1, "Now the main point of what we are saying is this:..."

What is the "main point?" We will explore that in our next session.

SUMMARY

God made us a promise. God does not lie. Jesus is the Son of God, the High Priest, eternal. Our “source of eternal salvation” and **Jesus is eternally interceding for me**. Knowing that I am to be a mature Christian, not one easily swayed by fear, anxiety, or the arguments of men. Stand firm, as I **“have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.”**

Again I want to close with the John Piper quote:

“The Bible was not written as a self-help book, or a guide to our mental health. Though you may find help from it, the Bible was written to explain to us about the **massive holiness of God.**”