

Session 3

Hello and welcome back.

The New Testament book, Hebrews, has been an encouragement to Christians for 2000 years. Today we will be exploring Hebrews, chapter eight.

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 ended by reading Chapter 8 v 1 which stated, **“Now the main point of what we are saying is this:...”**

Trust me that we will get to THE MAIN POINT, but first I want to talk you about RULES.

I just finished reading a book titled, 12 Rules for Life by Jordan Peterson.

I am torn because the author confuses me as I try to determine his religious beliefs. At one point I think he is an atheist, at another an agnostic, and still another a Christian. Some of the rules are:

- Never Let Your Children do anything that will make you dislike them. An example is: running around a restaurant screaming and bumping into tables.
- Assume the person you are listening to might know something that you don't. Note: Everyone knows something that you don't know.
- Be precise in your speech. Examples are: "Please take the trash out by 8am" instead of "the trash sure looks full" or "trash day is tomorrow."

Do you have any rules you live by? I have a few:

- Love the lord; love people
- Assume best intentions. Example: You didn't get invited to an event. Assume the host had a very good reason, or that your invitation got lost, or anything you want as long as it "assumes the best of the host." [Hope people do this for you and me.]
- Give people the benefit of the doubt. Note: Everyone can have a bad day, including you and me.
- Give people a second chance. Note: Everyone makes mistakes, including you and me.
- Give people a graceful exit when you can. Example: In my business we draft from people's bank accounts and sometimes we get a non-sufficient funds return. When we talk to the customer rather than saying, "You need to handle your money better" we say, "This is not unusual. Often your deposit doesn't post before the bank's cut-off time. if we move your draft day by one day that should help." This allows the customer to avoid embarrassment.

All of these are about showing love, mercy, and compassion to others.

Today's lesson creates a new life rule and addition for this list.

Last week the author told us about a new priest and the criteria for becoming that priest. In Chapter 7 verses 26-28 the criteria are summarized:

Let's **READ Chapter 7 verses 26-27**

Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. 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.

Q: What are the criteria for this new/better priest?

- Holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.
- Doesn't need to offer sacrifices for himself as he doesn't sin

- Offers one, single sacrifice – once and for all – that is himself as that sacrifice.

So, for the rest of this lesson, imagine you are one of these people. You live in a time and place where priests and sacrifices are well known. In fact, you live next door to a priest who serves in the temple. You hear him yell at his kids, curse when he hits his thumb with a hammer, and you know that he drinks just a little bit too much wine on special occasions.

Now you hear about the criteria for the new priest and you, like Scrooge say, “Humbug” because based on the priests that you know, no priest could meet that criteria.

And, BTW, as a first century Christian you don’t follow the priest anymore anyway.

The only thing concerning you is that earlier in the letter, the author said, “it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand.” (c5v11)

Was he talking about you?

So, you question the author – “**Is there anyone who could be that perfect and become that priest?**”

The author responds to you saying, “Yes, there is, but only one. **READ C7V28**”

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.**

And he continues to elaborate so that you can understand. He says, “Let me help you understand - **READ C8VV1-7**”

“**Now the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest,** who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being.

3 Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer. 4 If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed by the law. 5 They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: “See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.” 6 But **in fact** the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

Q: What was/is the purpose of a priest? To offer gifts and sacrifices. [**READ C9V1-7**]

Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. 2 A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand and the table with its consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. 3 Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, 4 which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron’s staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. 5 Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now.

6 When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. 7 But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a

year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.

Q: Why even have priests? To intercede on our behalf before God. Only they could approach God.

Q: Where did they do this? Where did they “serve?” Tabernacle – sanctuary.

Q: Who built the first tabernacle? Moses

Q: Based on what blueprint? That given to him by God – that was a “copy and shadow of what is in heaven.”

Q: Is there a tabernacle/sanctuary in heaven? Many commentaries say that there is no tabernacle or sanctuary in heaven and that this scripture is not about a physical place. So, here we have a Bible verse, God speaking to us, that specifically tells us that the earthly tabernacle is a copy of the one in heaven, yet a human commentator tells us that’s not so. I think I will have to disagree with the commentary.

Final Q: What does C8 verse 6 mean when it states:

But ***in fact*** the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

It states, “in fact” two things – what are those two things?

- superior ministry compared to human priests
- superior covenant – superior promises (old were land and generations; new is eternal life)

Chapter 8 Verse 7 tells us the reason.

For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.

The problem wasn’t with the covenant itself, but with the people. They couldn’t live up to their end of the covenant.

Q: What was it they were supposed to do that they couldn’t do? Follow the law, be obedient, and love the lord.

You: “Okay, I get it. But I have more questions?”

Author: “Oops. I just realized that we’re out of time. We’ll pick back up with your questions next session.

You: “But, what about the new rule that you said this lesson created for you?”

Author (smiling): “Next week.”