

Notes on Hebrews

Hebrews is about Jesus, as is the whole Bible and particularly the New Testament. Hebrews demonstrates that Jesus fulfils and surpasses the Old Testament (covenant) and as the author does so he issues exhortations and warnings in the light of all that Jesus Christ is.

In chapter one Jesus is portrayed as the revelation of God—his clear way of speaking now to humanity. Jesus is the heir of all things, the one through whom the universe was made, the radiance of God's glory, and the exact representation of God's being. Moreover, everything is sustained by Jesus' word, he has provided purification for sins and is sitting at the right hand of God. Even more startlingly, the writer of Hebrews shows God addressing Jesus as God, through one of the Messianic Psalms. As such Jesus is demonstrably greater than angels.

In chapter 2, verse one, we have the word, "Therefore..." - a word that punctuates the letter. We might paraphrase it, "As a result of what I have just shown you about Jesus, now, do this!" - or in this case, "Pay attention! Don't neglect the salvation that Jesus presents."

Chapter two follows chapter one's picture of the divinity of Jesus and its series of Old Testament quotes with a reference to Psalm 8 and the assertion that Jesus was also fully human and not only able to sympathise with our human condition, but also able to atone for the sins of humanity.

Chapter 3:1 starts again with the word, "Therefore... fix your eyes on Jesus." 3:7 Begins "So..." (similar to "therefore") "...do not harden your hearts," which leads into the warnings and exposition of Psalm 95.

Psalm 95 is really a central warning in the whole letter. In the light of all that Jesus has done, don't lose faith and drift away into disobedience. Learn from the Old Testament Scriptures, learn from and be encouraged by the great ones of Faith who have gone before you and above all learn from Jesus Christ himself! Remain steadfast, faithful and obedient to the end!

You can see the various ways in which Jesus fulfils and superseded the Old Covenant on the following page, but as you read Hebrews, notice the response that the writer is looking for in his readers at each point.* The "so"s and "therefore"s are the clues. For example, 2:1, 4:6, 4:11, 4:14, 4:16, 6:1, 7:11, 10:35 and 13:15.

*A useful exercise when reading Hebrews is to jot down all the things the writer encourages his readers to do, and not do, throughout the letter, and to see how those exhortations link up with what the writer has told us about Jesus. For example:-

In 4:14-16: *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, is followed by, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. And (since [implied]) we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses,... Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence...*

A Brief Summary of Hebrews. John West 2021

Largely revolves around Psalm 95. Don't give up! Jesus offers better than the OT. (Here's a reason to know the OT!)

Ch	Better Than...	Other About Jesus	Other Teaching	Exhortation	OT Reference
1	Jesus than Angels	God spoken by Son Radiance of God Exact representation Sustains all Provides purification			
2		Made below angels Fully human Now crowned Tasted death for all		Don't drift away How shall we escape...	
3	Jesus than Moses			Persevere	Psalm 95 Rebellious Israel
4	Better "Rest"	Great High Priest Tempted w/o sin	Sabbath Rest Word of God	Hold Firm Approach w. confidence	Sabbath Israel Wilderness Joshua Promised Land
5	Aaronic Priesthood	As High Priest Order of Melchizedek		Crave "solid food"	Melchizedek
6	Aaronic Priesthood	Order of Melchizedek	Other Teaching	Move forward Don't be unproductive	Promise to Abraham Temple Curtain
7	Jesus than OT Priesthood Better Covenant	Like Melchizedek Intercedes			Melchizedek & Abraham
8	Better Priesthood Better Covenant Better Promises		The New Covenant foretold		Jer 31:31-34 Ex 19:5-6 Sinai Covenant
9	Better Sacrifice	Died as a once-for-all Sacrifice, a ransom for sin			Tabernacle Most Holy Place Ex 25 Blood Sacrifice
10	Better Access to God Better Promises	Once-for-all Sacrifice	Law is a shadow Danger of Judgment	Persevere Meet together Encourage each other Go confidently to God	Law
11	Better understanding of the promises		Nature of Faith	Examples to follow	Numerous OT Saints
12	Better "spilled blood" Better Foundation	Suffered outside the city to make people holy	Hardship as Discipline Live in peace Be holy You are at Zion	Throw off weights Eyes on Jesus Don't lose heart Don't be like Esau	Esau & Jacob Blood sprinkling
13				Keep loving Honour marriage Respect Leaders Praise Pray etc	