

Jesus and the Book of Hebrews



READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hebrews 1:1, 2; Hebrews 2:3; Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 10:22, 23.

MEMORY VERSE: “Jesus Christ¹ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8, NRSV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: The book of Hebrews was written to help faithful people who were tempted to fall away from God. Today's Christians face the same temptation. For this reason, Hebrews is important for us too.

HEBREWS WAS WRITTEN MORE LIKE A SERMON THAN A LETTER. Hebrews points tired New Testament believers to Jesus' work on earth and His work in heaven. Hebrews shows Jesus doing different kinds of work. Each kind of work helps us understand the salvation God offers to the world through Jesus. Jesus' different kinds of work give us this simple but important message: Do not give up!

This week we will take our first look at the interesting book of Hebrews.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: Who wrote the book of Hebrews? To whom was the book written? What problems was it dealing with? How do these problems compare² with our situation? What kinds of work are given to Jesus in the book? And what do these kinds of work teach us about salvation?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 5.

¹Jesus Christ—another name for Jesus.

²compare—show how things are the same.

SUN FROM WHOM AND TO WHOM?

The first few verses of Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, James, and 1 Peter tell who wrote these books. The book of Hebrews, however, does not tell us who wrote it. Some proof does point to Paul as the author of Hebrews. Some proof does *not* point to Paul as the author. Ellen White names Paul as the author of Hebrews. This quarter’s lessons also will say that Paul wrote Hebrews.

To whom was the author writing? That knowledge helps us to understand *why* the book of Hebrews was written. Hebrews emphasizes the Old Testament. Hebrews suggests that Paul believed the readers knew something about Old Testament history and the Old Testament sanctuary.

What parts of Old Testament history and theology³ do the following verses in Hebrews show?

- 1. Hebrews 1:1 _____

- 2. Hebrews 1:5 _____

- 3. Hebrews 5:6 _____

- 4. Hebrews 7:1 _____

- 5. Hebrews 9:1 _____

³theology—the study of God; the study of God’s truths.

6. Hebrews 10:1-4 _____



“In the past God . . . spoke in many ways through the prophets” (Hebrews 1:1, TEV).

Hebrews discusses a lot about the Old Testament sanctuary system, the priesthood, Hebrew history, and the Hebrew Bible. Many Bible experts agree that this shows that the original readers of Hebrews were Jewish Christians.

Paul was writing a letter of warning to people who “knew their Bibles.” What message does this send to people who think Bible knowledge is enough for salvation?

MON THE LETTER’S MESSAGE.

Yesterday, we learned that Paul was probably writing to Jews who be-

lieved in Jesus. What was Paul saying to them?

These people were in danger of leaving Christianity and returning to Judaism.⁴ They were losing faith in the Second Coming, because they thought Jesus should have come back already. As time went on, these people were forgetting the great truths of the gospel. Does this sound familiar?

Paul's words are a warning and advice. Summarize below the important message of each warning and advice. What do all the verses have in common?

Hebrews 2:1-4 _____

Hebrews 3:7-14:13 _____

Hebrews 5:11-6:8 _____

Hebrews 10:26-39 _____

Hebrews 12:1-29 _____

Hebrews 13:1-17 _____

⁴Judaism—the Jewish religion.

⁵unbelief—not believing.

⁶disobedience—not obeying.

⁷un-Christian—not Christian.

⁸eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

These warnings and advice show what the problems were when Paul wrote Hebrews. The problems were: (1) to refuse or to lose salvation, (2) to leave true preaching and New Testament teaching, (3) to miss God's rest by unbelief⁵ or disobedience,⁶ (4) to become tired of God and to sin on purpose, and (5) to live an un-Christian⁷ life. So Paul pointed out who Jesus was, what He had done, and what He was doing for them now. Their spiritual problem was a threat to their eternal⁸ future.

Think about Paul's warnings and advice to the early Hebrew Christians. Why are his warnings and advice good for us?



Are you losing faith in the great truths of the Bible?

TUE THE BRIGHTNESS OF JESUS' GLORY.

“In the past God spoke to our ancestors⁹ many times and in many ways through the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us through his Son [Jesus]. He [Jesus] is the one through whom God created the universe, the one whom God has chosen to possess [own] all things at the end” (Hebrews 1:1, 2, TEV).

Paul says that with Jesus, a new time period has come. In the beginning of his letter, Paul presents Jesus in His different roles (kind of work).

What are these roles? Hebrews 1:1-4.

God the Father is the center of attention in Hebrews 1:1, 2. But in the middle of verse 2, Paul moves to Jesus. Jesus is Creator and Sustainer (Supporter of life) (Hebrews 1:2, 3). Then suddenly He becomes the Savior.

What words talk about the Cross in Hebrews 1:1-4? What hope and promise are found in those words?

Hebrews begins with Jesus as Creator. Then it quickly moves to His work as our Savior. Connected to His work as our Savior is His work as our High Priest in heaven. Jesus’ work as our High Priest is an important part of Hebrews. Jesus “sat down in heaven

at the right side of God, the Supreme Ruler” (Hebrews 1:3, TEV). This shows that Jesus went to heaven after His work on earth was finished. He began His work in the sanctuary as our High Priest when He reached heaven.

The first four verses of Hebrews are full of meaning. After praying and thinking about these verses, write what they mean in your own words. Share with the class what you have written.

WED GOD WITH MANY PURPOSES.

Jesus does not go away after Hebrews 1:1-4. Who He is, what He has done, and what He is now doing are themes that appear often throughout the book. After each of these verses, write down the names and/or work Jesus is given.

Hebrews 1:5-10 _____

Hebrews 2:10, 17 _____

Hebrews 3:1 _____

Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 5:6, 9, 10 _____

⁹ancestors—relatives who lived before you; people in a family who lived in the past.

Hebrews 6:20; Hebrews 7:22 _____

Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 10:10 _____

Hebrews 12:2; Hebrews 13:20 _____

These verses give us a very positive picture of Jesus. He is God. But He has turned toward us. He has made our salvation sure. He serves as our Mediator.¹⁰ He is the One who will bring us to the final goal.

We get everything from Jesus. It is no surprise that Paul asked the Hebrews and asks us now, “How, then, shall we escape if we pay no attention to such a great salvation?” (Hebrews 2:3, TEV).

“No greater gift can be given to us than the one that is given by Jesus. . . . To neglect the priceless¹¹ treasure of salvation means the eternal ruin of your soul. The danger of neglecting Jesus’ gift is measured by the greatness of salvation. God has used His greatest power. God has done everything in His love to develop the plan of salvation for us. God has shown His character in the goodness, mercy,¹² and love of the Cross to save guilty and rebellious people. God missed nothing in providing for our salvation. If sinners remain uncaring¹³ to the goodness of God, if they neglect so great a salvation . . .

¹⁰Mediator—Jesus works to make peace between God and us. He is our Lawyer in the heavenly court.

¹¹priceless—when something is so valuable, there can be no way to pay for it.

¹²mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

¹³uncaring—not caring.

¹⁴sympathy—to share another person’s sorrow and trouble.

nothing can be done to touch their hard hearts.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places*, p. 37.

Look at Jesus’ different names. Which names touch your heart the most? Why? What do these names tell us about Jesus?

THU “SO GREAT A HIGH PRIEST.”

“Our High Priest is not one who cannot feel sympathy¹⁴ for our weaknesses. On the contrary [instead], we have a High Priest who was tempted in every way we are, but did not sin” (Hebrews 4:15, TEV).



**Jesus was tempted as we are.
But He did not sin.**

Hebrews 4:14, 16 and Hebrews 10:19-23 use almost the same words. How are these words important? What are they warning us to do? What reasons do they give for us to obey their warnings?

In Hebrews 4:14, 16, we read (1) “Let us hold fast our confession”¹⁵ (RSV) and (2) “Let us then with confidence [faith; trust] draw near [come close] to the throne of grace” (RSV). In Hebrews 10:22, 23, we find almost the same commands, but in different order: (1) “Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance [confidence] of faith” (NIV) and (2) “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering [weakening]” (RSV).

In both Hebrews 4 and Hebrews 10, the message is the same: Hang (hold) on to your faith in Jesus.

This message is important for us too. Jesus has died for us. The Cross is the most important point of history. The Cross is the most important part of our future. Jesus serves as our High Priest.



The Cross is the most important point in history. The Cross is the most important point of your future.

He is working in heaven for us. We have confidence and assurance (hope), because He now stands in heaven in our place. He knows what it is to be tempted by sin (Hebrews 4:15). He knows how it feels to be human, to be tempted, to be hungry, to be tired, to be attacked, forgotten, and to face death, because, as a human, He experienced all these things.

So Hebrews calls us to come closer to God and to receive mercy, grace, and help from Jesus, who can relate to us. The way to the throne of God is now open through Jesus! God is our Father. We are His children (Hebrews 12:7-9). Jesus died once for all of us. Jesus’ death for us is all we need. We just have to accept His death for us.

Hebrews 10:22, 23 may be the summary of the book. With Hebrews 4:14-16, Hebrews 10:22, 23 may present the goal of Hebrews: Do not give up on Jesus! The best has come. Jesus has fulfilled the Old Testament sanctuary symbols.

Think carefully about Hebrews 4:15. What does it mean to you that our heavenly High Priest experienced life on earth as a person?

FRI **ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*,¹⁶ pp. 614, 615.

“Avoid every question about Jesus as a person that can cause misunderstanding.¹⁷ . . . In talking about Jesus as a

¹⁵confession—to say you believe in Jesus.

¹⁶evangelism—the spreading of the gospel to the world.

¹⁷misunderstanding—understanding something in the wrong way.

person, you need to be very careful, or people may interpret your words to mean more than your words suggest. You could make people misunderstand Jesus' work as a human and as God. Jesus' birth was a miracle of God. . . .

"We should never give people the impression that Jesus has been subjected to, or involved in, sin. Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are tempted. But He never sinned. This is a mystery we cannot understand. Jesus could be tempted in all points like as we are, but was without sin. That Jesus came to earth as a human will always be a mystery. That which has been shown is for us and for our children. But let all of us be warned from thinking about making Jesus just a person, the same as we are." —Adapted from Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1128, 1129.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Without getting into arguments about Jesus' nature, why is it so

important to us that He lived on earth as a person? What does Jesus as a human offer to us?

2. Sometimes Jesus is pictured as strict. Other times, Jesus is pictured as Someone who is patient, loving, merciful,¹⁸ and who excuses every lifestyle.¹⁹ Both pictures give a false picture of the real Jesus in the Bible. How can we make sure to understand Jesus and to show Him as correctly as possible?
3. Hebrews 1:1, 2 talks about God speaking to us. What are the different ways God speaks to us?

SUMMARY: Paul was concerned about the backsliding of some Jewish people who believed in Jesus. He reminded them of Jesus' ministry (work) and death. He told them about His work as High Priest in heaven. All of Jesus' different kinds of work should have given the Jewish believers faith and courage.

¹⁸merciful—full of kindness we do not deserve.

¹⁹lifestyle—the way a person lives.