

Jesus, Higher and Better



SAB
PM

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Hebrews 7:7-26; Hebrews 11:1-26.

MEMORY VERSE: “Jesus, then, is the High Priest that meets our needs. He is holy; he has no fault or sin in him; he has been set apart from sinners and raised above the heavens” (Hebrews 7:26, TEV).

IMPORTANT THOUGHT: Jesus' greatness opens the way for the basis of His entire ministry (work) and the blessings we receive from His work.

FEW PEOPLE LIKE SNOBS.¹ Snobs are hard people to deal with. We do not like being around people who think they are so much better than we are. Self-greatness is too hard to deal with.

The book of Hebrews is all about greatness—the greatness of Jesus. But Jesus is not a snob. He will not turn us away.

We will see this week that Jesus' greatness is shown in a way that should pull us to Him in faith and obedience. His greatness is the hope of salvation.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: In what ways does Hebrews picture Jesus as great? Why is Jesus great? What are the results of His greatness, in terms of His life, death, and ministry for our sake? How should we act toward what Jesus has done for us?

*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 26.

¹snobs—people who think and act like they are better than everyone else.

SUN JESUS' GREATNESS.

What does Hebrews tell us about Jesus' greatness?

Hebrews 1:4 _____

Hebrews 3:3 _____

Hebrews 7:26 _____

Hebrews 12:24 _____

Jesus is greater than the angels, Moses, and the high priest. His blood is better than Abel's blood (Genesis 4:4-8). He is higher than the heavens. But Jesus never tried to be better or greater than anyone else while He was on earth.

Compare² what Hebrews says about Jesus with what the Gospels³ say about Him. It is hard to imagine that Hebrews and the Gospels are talking about the same Person. But they are all talking about Jesus.

According to the Gospels, Jesus lived His life simply and humbly. He helped other people before helping Himself. Jesus never boasted He was the greatest, even though He had good reasons to boast.

Compare Jesus' attitude⁴ with much of the attitude in the world today. Self-promotion (self-advertisement) is the reason for many of our actions. How sad, too, that even some Christians boast of their greatness. The same as the disciples, we often discuss the question of who is the greatest among us (Luke 22:24). The same as the Pharisees, we often think we are better than other people (Luke 18:9-12). We compare ourselves to other people. We like to look down upon people who are worse off or "lower" than we are. Then in our minds we end up "superior" (being better) to these other people and believe we have the right to more "important" jobs in the church.

The verses in Hebrews that we looked at today clearly show that Jesus is greater than angels, than Moses, et cetera. But when we look at Jesus' life on earth and how He showed His character, we see how humble He is. The same One who was greater than Moses was the same One who bent to wash the feet of His disciples.



Jesus taught us to be humble.

²compare—show how things are the same.

³Gospels—the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

⁴attitude—how people feel and think about someone or something.

Jesus was greater than all people. But He was a servant of all people. How do we feel when we are faced with His example? How should we feel? What message does the difference between the Jesus of the Gospels and the Jesus of Hebrews teach us?

MON THE REASON FOR JESUS' GREATNESS.

One reason for Jesus' greatness is that He is God and Creator. Hebrews clearly points to His greatness for this reason. But Jesus' greatness does not come from the fact that He is God from eternity⁵ and throughout eternity. Instead, Paul says Jesus is great because He was made "lowly" among people.

What does Hebrews 2:9 teach us about the connection between being "lowly" and great? Also read Philippians 2:4-9.

In Acts 10:36, Peter says that Jesus is Lord of all creation. But in Acts 10:38, he tells us about how the Lord of all creation acted while He was a person: He "went everywhere, doing good and healing all [people] who were under the power of the Devil" (TEV).

This lowliness is real greatness.



Jesus was Lord of all creation. But He went about doing good and healing people.

What other examples in the Bible show that true lowliness and humble service are rewarded with honor and glory?

Joseph in Egypt did his tasks faithfully, both as a slave and as a prisoner. Later, he was promoted to leadership. Moses took care of his father-in-law's sheep. But he still did not have any ambitions to become the leader of Israel. Read Numbers 12:3. David was a shepherd who later became king. Peter quotes the Old Testament when he announces: " 'God opposes⁶ the proud [people] but gives grace to the humble [people]' " (1 Peter 5:5, NRSV; read Proverbs 3:34). Jesus tells us in Luke

⁵eternity—life without end; forever.

⁶opposes—is against.

22:26 that “ ‘the greatest [people] among you must become like [as] the youngest [people], and the leader like one who serves’ ” (NRSV).

Jesus’ lowly service on earth led to His greatness. His greatness led to the greatness of His present work as High Priest in heaven. In Jesus, both greatness of position and greatness of work come together. The readers of Hebrews are encouraged to remain faithful to Jesus. This Jesus is the King. But He serves us in a way nobody else can serve us.

When was the last time you did the work of a servant? What does your answer tell you about yourself?

TUE THE RESULTS OF JESUS’ GREAT MINISTRY (WORK).

What are the results of Jesus’ great position and ministry for us as described in Hebrews?

Hebrews 7:19, 22 _____

Hebrews 8:6 _____

Hebrews 10:34 _____

⁷resurrection—to come back to life after dying.

⁸everlasting—lasting forever; without beginning or end.

Hebrews 11:16, 35 _____

The results of Jesus’ greatness point toward the future. Jesus gives a bright future to His followers. Included in that future is our resurrection.⁷ Our resurrection is different from resurrections in the Bible. People who were resurrected in the Bible returned to life for a short time. Then they died again (Mark 5:21-42; 1 Kings 17:17-21). But our resurrection is to everlasting⁸ life in a world made new.



We will arise to a new life in Jesus, because of His work for us.

The results of Jesus' greatness are in the future. But they help prepare us for eternity. These results influence us here and now. They help us want the Lord to put His law into our hearts and give us the desire to keep His law. They help us want to be the same as Jesus.

What point is Paul making in Hebrews 11:13-16? How does this point fit in with the message of his whole letter to the Hebrews? How does the point of Hebrews 11:13-16 speak to us?

Through Jesus, God has shown wonderful truths to His people. But do we understand these truths in faith, by trusting in the better promises, the better hope, the better country (heaven and the new earth)? Or do we take our eyes off these things and return to where we once were? This was the challenge to the Hebrews. It is the challenge to us, as well.

WED OUR ANSWER TO JESUS' GREATNESS: PART 1.

Jesus is great in all things. The plan of salvation is complete. But there is one thing He does not do. He does not force anyone to obey. He does not force anyone to accept salvation. It is always up to us to accept and obey or not. " 'Choose this day whom you will serve' " (Joshua 24:15, NRSV). Even

after thousands of years, Joshua's command to the Hebrews back then is the same to the Hebrews in Paul's day and to us "Hebrews" today: Choose whom you will serve.

Hebrews talks about Jesus' greatness. But Hebrews talks about other people. What does Hebrews 11:4 say about Abel? What was Abel's "better" sacrifice? Genesis 4:1-8.

Abel is mentioned twice in Hebrews. He honored God in bringing a better sacrifice than Cain's sacrifice (Hebrews 11:4). In Hebrews 12:24, Jesus' blood is compared⁹ to Abel's blood. Abel had a faith relationship with God and is called righteous (holy). In his death, Abel still "speaks." But Jesus' blood speaks of better things. Abel is the first hero of faith in Hebrews 11 and the first martyr.¹⁰ But Jesus is far better than Abel.

Read Hebrews 11:25. What choice did Moses make?

Moses had a clear vision and made the right choices. For him, suffering for Jesus was greater than the treasures of Egypt.

Your life is different from Abel's life and Moses' life. But we still must make the same choices they made. In what ways do we make our

⁹compared—to have shown how things are the same.

¹⁰martyr—a person who has died for what she or he believes.

choices every day? Think about even the small choices.

THU OUR ANSWER TO JESUS' GREATNESS: PART 2.

Yesterday's lesson looked at two examples of people who had to choose between something good and something bad. They chose the better of the two. But many people do not always make the right choice.

What is the point the author is making in Hebrews 12:25? How does this point fit in with the point of the entire letter to the Hebrews?

What point does Hebrews 10:28, 29 make? What lessons are in these verses for us as Seventh-day Adventists?

The answer to Jesus' greatness always will be a choice. Some gladly will accept Him as their Lord. Some people will refuse Him. Some people know who the Lord is and what He has done in their lives but choose against Him anyway. The book of Hebrews is a call to people who know about what Jesus has done for them and to accept His salvation. All through Hebrews we read this same plea: Look at who Jesus is. Look at what He has done for us. Do not turn away from Him.

If people needed to hear that plea in Paul's time, we surely need to hear it today!



Jesus does not force us to follow Him. We must choose to follow Him.

FRI **ADDITIONAL STUDY:** "Jesus was not blind to insults and shame. He felt insults and shame much more deeply than we can feel. His nature was more honorable, pure, and holy than that of the sinners for whom He suffered. He was the King of heaven. He was equal with the Father. He was the Commander of the angels. But He died for us the death that was clothed with insults and shame. O that our prideful¹¹ hearts might understand Jesus' death! O that we might understand the meaning of salvation and try to learn the humbleness and lowliness of Jesus!"—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him*, p. 339.

"Jesus' blood cleanses us from all

¹¹prideful—full of pride.

sin. It speaks better than Abel's blood. Jesus always lives to work for our sake. We need to always remember the cleansing power of Jesus' blood. Jesus' life-cleansing, life-supporting blood is our hope through faith. We need to appreciate more and more the unlimited¹² value of Jesus' blood. His blood speaks for us only as we claim its power by faith. His blood keeps the conscience¹³ clean and at peace with God."—Adapted from Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 947.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Tuesday's lesson showed that the results of Jesus' greatness point to the future. Does this mean we have no social and political responsibilities here and now?
2. What does Jesus' greatness being connected with His "lowliness" teach us about what it means to be a servant-leader? Mark 10:44 will help you with your answer.
3. How can even faithful Christians be caught in the trap of self-greatness? How can we protect ourselves from falling into this trap?

SUMMARY: Jesus' greatest work on earth is His better sacrifice on the cross and His greatest work in heaven as our High Priest. The results of these works for us are a better covenant (agreement), a better hope, a better country (heaven and the new earth), and a better resurrection. We are to accept and obey Him because He has brought about so great a salvation.

¹²unlimited—not having any limits.

¹³conscience—a knowledge or sense of right and wrong with an urge to do right.