

## Hebrews: Exchanging the Old for the New

Pray!

Good morning and welcome to our next study. We are going to be studying the Book of Hebrews for the next 2 months. As we study the text, I pray that your faith will be strengthened, as we see God's plan for salvation, as revealed in the Old Testament, brought to completion through the life and death of Christ.

- Have you ever wondered why the Jews had such a hard time accepting Jesus as the Messiah?
- Do you fully understand why Jesus had to become a man and die a physical death to be able to save us from our sin?
- Does your faith ever waver? Causing you to drift back into previous secular ways of thinking and living?

Well these are only a few of the questions we will be exploring as we study this letter to the Hebrews. My primary purpose for today is to give you an introduction to the book and an appreciation for what was going on in the minds of the original readers. To fully understand this book we must be disciplined to first think as the original readers did. Then we can apply it to our lives according to our way of thinking.

-- Let's look at some major themes

Hebrew's presents Jesus as the awaited Savior, the true Son of God, and argues that

### **1. Jesus is superior to everything that was established in the Old Testament, both the people and the practices.**

Jesus is presented as superior to the angels, all of the Jewish leaders including Abraham, Moses, and Joshua. He is greater than Aaron and the Old Testament priesthood and is a far better mediator for us. The author first systematically proves to his readers that Christ is superior to all.

How many of you need to be convinced that Jesus is better than angels or Moses?

*None of you.* As gentiles, we do not need to let go of a Jewish past in order to embrace Christ. But for the original readers, that is exactly what they were struggling with. They were Jews that had accepted Christ but were wavering in their new faith. They were ready to revert back to their familiar ways. The author rebukes them and challenges them to stand firm in their faith in Christ.

Perhaps that is why it is so difficult today to convert Jehovah's witness, Mormons, and native Americans. They all have a belief system that they have to give up in order to accept Christ as their Savior. Giving up the old can be more difficult than accepting the new. That is where these readers of Hebrews are at.

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Another major theme in Hebrews relates to the Law and the sacrificial system.

Last summer, we looked at the three kinds of Law. Does anyone remember them?

1. Moral Law- the 10 Commandments.
2. Civil Law- rules for daily living.
3. Ceremonial Law- rules pertaining to the worship of God.

Hebrews speaks extensively about the Ceremonial Law and the sacrificial system and how

## **2. Jesus is worthy of being the final sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins.**

We will study that extensively, especially in chapter 10, but let's look briefly at how Christ fulfilled the sacrificial system.

### **Read Hebrews 10:8-10**

God established an unchanging principle with the giving of the Law. He drew the line between a Holy God and sinful man. He said that the punishment for sin is death. Something must die as a penalty for the sins of man. In the Old Testament sacrificial system, an animal could be the substitute. Although it could not fully satisfy God, it did serve to temporarily cover the sin. It also pointed towards a perfect sacrifice to come later. In New Testament sacrificial system, Jesus must be the substitute and is capable of fully appeasing God's anger over sin.

You see, **the sacrificial system is still in place today. But the subject of the sacrifice has changed from animals to Jesus. And there in lies the problems for the original readers of Hebrews.**

**It was not the *concept* of substitutionary atonement that they struggled with, but rather the *subject*.**

They fully understood that the purpose of the sacrifice was to pay the price for their sin. They knew that "without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins." That is something we learned from Hebrews 9:22, but they had been practicing this their whole life.

**Hebrews presents the argument that through faith, Christ's death on the cross can be credited to our account and no further sacrifices are needed.** No more blood needed to be shed. That is what they began to doubt.

We do not know why they were struggling in their faith and drifting back to their Jewish roots, but it is clear from the letter that they were.

All we know as Christians is the instant forgiveness of sins through confession, because of the saving grace of Jesus Christ. But for the Jew, they followed a very cumbersome, daily, process in order to stand forgiven before God. It was no small thing and was engrained into the very fabric of their life.

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I would like to explain what I call "The Parable of the Tooth Brushers". It will help you identify with what it might have been like for the Jews to lay aside the only system they had ever known and begin to rely on a new system they had just learned about. See if you can find the parallels to our topic.

### **3. "The Parable of the Tooth Brushers"**

### The Old System

All of your life you have been taught that it is necessary to brush your teeth. When you were young your parents brushed them for you, but as you got older you learned how to brush for yourself and it became your choice if you would brush or not. The dentist instructed you how to brush- up and down, back and forth, and in circular patterns. You were taught to brush, not for five seconds, but for two minutes. You were taught to brush once in the morning and once at night, not just once a week or when ever you think of it.

You were hopefully taught that flossing your teeth is also important to prevent cavities. Flossing between each tooth is tedious and time consuming, but if you do it your teeth and gums stay healthy. It does take some effort every day to remove the plaque and yuk from our teeth, but if we follow these rules of hygiene there is a reward- you stay in good standing with the head dentist, (and no drilling and filling). Once we develop these habits they are easy to follow and part of our daily routine. In fact, by this time it is harder to break the habit than to keep it.

### The New System

Now a person with authority in tooth care introduces a new way to prevent cavities and tooth decay. He has many clinical trials and a following of people that will testify to his method. They have demonstrated the effectiveness of this new system and want you to exchange the old system for this new one. They explain that the new system is much simpler to understand and follow. All you must do is 1) admit that your teeth will decay if you do nothing 2) Have faith that the new tooth care system will work and give up your old ways 3) Brush your teeth with this new toothpaste one time, once and for all.

I want you to chose from three options as to what you think you would do.

1. Would you not do it at all and keep with the tried and true old system?
2. Would you do it without having any doubts and never look back?
3. Would you do it, but then later think about brushing your teeth and floss sometimes, just to make sure you are covered both ways.

Let's see a show of hands for each group.

Let's pay special attention to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> groups and see what influences could make them doubt their decision. Let's just say that you are the only one in your family to put your faith in this new way of preventing cavities. You go home and throw away your toothbrush. At first you gloat over the poor souls in your family that are still brushing and flossing; "Still following the old way of doing it, huh?" But over time they question whether you are sure that stuff is still working. How can you be so sure they ask? How does it work anyway? You have no good answer. You walk by the tooth care isle and begin to miss the bubblegum flavor toothpaste you used to use. You look at all the other people buying tooth care products and begin to wonder why they don't trust the new once and for all toothpaste.

What in the world does this have to do with Hebrews? If there is one key to understanding Hebrews, it is to remember that these new Christian's were struggling with giving up their old

religious system and embracing this new way of Christ. The Jews were raised to follow the very strict sacrifice system and had put their trust in that system. Now Jesus comes along and tells them that this system is no longer needed and that Jesus was the final sacrifice needed for the forgiveness of sins. Even though many people did have faith in Jesus and this new message, many struggled over time to truly trust Jesus and completely leave their old beliefs behind.

Let's look at the three groups listed above.

1) Who were the people that rejected the good news of Jesus and kept up their previous practices? Pharisees, Sadducees, and people that continued on in the Jewish faith.

2) There were some that believed in Jesus. To see both groups, let's **read John 11:45-54**.

3) These are the ones receiving this letter that truly believed and then doubted. Many of the topics of the Bible were written to address wrong teaching or practices. We can see what the wrong beliefs were by what the Bible says against them.

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There is one more major theme in Hebrews. It is the superiority of faith. Especially in the last three chapters, the author encourages us to grow in Christian maturity and hold to our faith with endurance, just like many of the Old Testament heroes.

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So to summarize, if we had to write a purpose statement for this letter, it would be:

**To prevent Jewish Christians from returning to Judaism, by proving Jesus superior to all.**

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Let's spend the remaining few minutes discussing authorship, destination, and timing.

The author of Hebrews is not known. Some suggest Paul because of "Pauline" teaching used in the letter. But the polished Greek style of the letter differs greatly from Paul's usual style. Paul acknowledged his authorship in all of his other letters. And there are other reasons. Other likely authors include many of the men that Paul mentored and trained in the faith. Barnabas, Appolos, Silus, and Phillip. Luke and Priscilla have also been suggested. But there are equally strong arguments against each of these as well. It is simply unknown.

Most reference books believe the letter was sent to Rome to encourage Jews that converted to Christianity. There was persecution of Christians there from Jews and pagan Gentiles.

And finally, the letter is believed to have been written before 70 A.D., when the Roman's destroyed the temple in Jerusalem. Jews have ceased to follow the sacrificial system since that time. The author certainly would have mentioned the temple's destruction in the letter, as it was a necessary part of Jewish religion.

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Hebrews is a book that builds our faith in Jesus as the one and only way to become righteous in God's eye. There is much to learn in this letter. Please join me in reading ahead from week to week. Next week we will look at Hebrews chapter 1 and 2 through verse 5.

Any questions?

## Week 1- Hebrews: Overview- The Superiority of Christ, Exchanging the Old for the New

1. Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_ to everything that was established in the Old Testament, both the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_.

-Jesus is superior to: Angels, Abraham, Moses, and Joshua  
Aaron and the Old Testament priesthood

2. Jesus is worthy of being the \_\_\_\_\_ for the forgiveness of sins.  
Hebrews 10:1-18

- Hebrews 9:22b “without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.”

- The sacrificial system is still in place today. But the \_\_\_\_\_ of the sacrifice has changed from animals to Jesus. There lies the problem for the original readers.

- It was not the *concept* of substitutionary \_\_\_\_\_ that they struggled with, but rather the *subject*.

-Hebrews presents the argument that through faith, Christ’s death on the cross can be credited to our account and no further sacrifices are needed.

3. “The Parable of the Tooth Brushers”

-The Jews had to give up their Old ways, and embrace the new ways of Christ.

-There is no turning back now that they chose Christ.

4. Another major theme: The superiority of faith.

-The author encourages us to grow in Christian maturity and hold to our faith with endurance, just like many of the Old Testament heroes.

5. Purpose:

**To prevent Jewish Christians from returning to Judaism, by proving Jesus superior to all.**

6. Authorship: Unknown: Possibly Paul, Barnabus, Appolos, Silus, Phillip, Luke and Pricilla.

-All have pro’s and con’s of accepting them.

7. Destination: Hebrew Christian’s, likely living in Rome.

8. Date written: before 70 A.D. and the destruction of the temple.

*(Please study Hebrews 1-2:4 for next week’s lesson.)*

Week 2- Hebrews 1-2:4

Let's start by briefly reviewing the purpose of the letter to the Hebrews.  
Who will share with us? To keep them from returning to Judaism

What was his means of doing that?

*To prove Christ is superior to all and worthy of their following*

Remember the theme of letting go of the old and accepting the new. Or trading the old for the new in some cases. Trading the old leaders for Jesus, the prophets and angels as messengers- for Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The old covenant for the new covenant. The animals shed blood for Jesus' shed blood.

By faith, Jesus can become the substitute for everything the Old Testament provided.

Turn with me to Hebrews chapter 1, as we ask ourselves **What am I doing to ensure that Christ is and remains first in my life?**

**Read Vs. 1- 4**

In vs 1-2a, which statement would the Hebrews easily agree with and which one might they be struggling with? They agree with the 1<sup>st</sup>, struggle with the second.

The author opens with conformation of the old way God communicated with his people, then uses the term "last days" to signify a new era and new way of communicating with His people - directly through the words and actions of Jesus. He will spend the rest of the letter proving this point.

He wastes no time in backing up this statement and transitioning to his first main point that Jesus is greater than the angels.

In verses 3 and 4 what three truths are stated about Jesus ?

1. That Jesus is the exact representation of God,
2. That by Jesus' word all things are sustained,
3. Jesus sat down at the right hand of God in Heaven after providing purification for sins.

To be compete in our study, we must discuss the following question: Why would Jews have held angels in such high regard, that the writer would have to prove that Jesus is greater than them?

*Because they were often the messengers of God's word. There may have been other reasons that we are not aware of to why these Jew's, now Christians, were holding angels higher than Jesus.*

*To the Jew, the angels were a well established creation of God. They guarded the gates at the Garden of Eden, angels announced Isaac's birth and stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac, an angel prepared the way for them to enter the Promised Land, an*

*angel closed the mouth of lions for Daniel, and the list goes on. The angel could be trusted and was God's messenger to the Jews.*

*Why might have these Messianic Jews held Jesus in low regard? He was a man, a lowly carpenter, not a Godly being. He had been in the spotlight for only a short period of time. There was no history to establish him as someone special in the eyes of the Jews. Turn to Matthew 13:53-58.*

### **Read Matthew 13:53-58 (#2)**

Do you see how the doubt could begin to creep in?

**Turn to Ephesians 1:18-23 (#3)** *I want you to share how this verse could also support Jesus being greater than the angels. Right hand in the heavenly realm.*

This brings us to our first summary point.

**We must constantly cling to the truths of Jesus in order to strengthen our faith.**

**Let's Read Heb. 1:5-13** For the substance of his argument.

What does the author use to prove his case? God's word

*Why would that be especially affective with the audience he is speaking with? They knew and placed great value in Scripture. The writer uses Old Testament Scripture to drive the point home that Jesus is the Son of God, he is to be worshiped by angels (vs. 6), and then finishes with statements of Christ's superiority. He is making a compelling argument for Christ greater than the angels and everything else as well.*

Does that give you a more complete concept of who Jesus is and the power that he holds?

If a letter was written to an American church today, what would they see us placing in higher regard than Jesus? Wealth, great music and preaching (performance), independence, self-sufficiency.

If you saw a friend getting too much into these things what Scripture would you use to show them a better way? Mt. 6:19-24 (#4)

**We must hold Christ above all things, even well established things of our times.**

And finally let's look at verse 14.

### **Read Heb 1:14**

Does that fit our cultures understanding of an angel? No, angels are though to help everyone

## **Chapter 2**

As we begin to look at chapter two, we see a pattern that will be repeated throughout this book. The author effectively shows the supremacy of Christ and as he did in chapter 1; than makes a personal and direct plea to his readers to avoid apostasy. Now what does apostasy mean? The renunciation of a religious or political belief or allegiance. In this case, turn back from their new Christian beliefs and return to Judaism.

## Let's read vs.1

How can you apply this broad statement specifically to your life today?

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**Let's Read Vs. 2:2-4** and then we will go back and break it down.

The first question we must ask ourselves is "What message is the author referring to?"

*Does anyone know? The Ten Commandments, which we know was held as the highest authority by the Jews. It took some cross reference and study to determine this.*

*Did the original readers have to ask that question or would they have known? Would have known. This is one of those gaps that Richard spoke about in November. Through research we can find out what they would have known through cultural and historic experience.*

There is no Old Testament reference of angels being involved in the giving of the Commandments.

**Listen to Exodus 31:18** says "When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God."

The Jews, however, certainly believed that the law was put into effect by the angels as stated twice in Steven's speech to the Sanhedrin, and also in Galatians and here in Heb. 2:2. We do not know what role they played, but listen to these verses as evidence that angels did play a role.

**Acts 7:38** He was in the assembly in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers: and he received living words to pass on to us."

**Acts 7:53** "--you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it."

**Galatians 3:19-20** "What then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come. The law was put into effect through angels by a mediator. A mediator, however, does not represent just one party; but God is one."

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Let me paraphrase vs. 1-3a to help clarify its meaning because the language is difficult.

**Keep focused on what you have been taught so that you do not turn back. Because the 10 Commandments were binding, and we were punished for breaking them, we will never escape their judgment, unless we continue to trust this great salvation we have been given through Christ.**

The author was exhorting them to stick with their decision to follow Christ. Realize that there is no other way to get around not perfectly following the law. They needed to press on in their new faith and follow the new system of forgiveness through Christ.

What challenges your faith and causes you to slip back into selfish living?

Maybe the following proofs will help you in your faith as well. Notice the use of the trinity in his defense.

**Let's re-read 2:3b-4**

What four evidences are used to validate Christ?

1. *Jesus claimed to be God*
2. *Others witnessed Jesus and attested to His Deity*
3. *God performed miracles through Christ*
4. *Spiritual gifts given to believers by the Holy Spirit*

**We must not allow anything to cause us to question his salvation.**

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Why was it important to use many evidences to prove this point? Is there a biblical principle to support that? *You need two or more witnesses to prove a person guilty.*

*Deuteronomy 19:15 states "One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony on two or three witnesses." (Also 1 Timothy 5:19)*

*The author knows that his readers are aware of this rule and he provides multiple witnesses to prove that Christ is "guilty", if you will, of being the way to salvation. See how he uses the beliefs that he knows his readers have as a way to prove his point. Look for other ways in Hebrews that the author refers to the Old Testament teachings that he knows his readers value, as a way to show Jesus as God in these last days.*

For the original readers, the author proved that Jesus is greater than the angels. This supports the overall theme of the book to present Jesus superior to all. For us, our lesson is a strong warning, as it was to the original reader, **Do not let anything in your life rise above Christ.** We must refresh our faith and draw closer to Christ on a daily basis. Or risk gradually sliding further away from Christ and his promised salvation.

## Week 2 - Hebrews 1-2:4 - Jesus Superior to the Angels

1. The author explains that in these “last days” God communicates to us through the words and actions of Jesus. He then defends this point throughout the letter.

### **What am I doing to ensure that Christ is and remains first in my life?**

2. What three truths are stated about Jesus (vs.1-4)?
  1. That Jesus is the exact \_\_\_\_\_ of God,
  2. That by Jesus’ \_\_\_\_\_ all things are sustained,
  3. Jesus sat down at the right hand of God in \_\_\_\_\_ after providing \_\_\_\_\_ for our sins.
3. Why would Jews have held angels in such high regard, that the writer would have to prove that Jesus is greater than them? \_\_\_\_\_  
*Why did they hold Jesus in low regard? \_\_\_\_\_*

### **We must constantly cling to the truths of Jesus in order to strengthen our faith.**

4. What does the author use to prove his case that Jesus is greater than angels? \_\_\_\_\_  
*Why was this an effective way to present his case? \_\_\_\_\_*

### **We must hold Christ above all things, even well established things of our times.**

5. What is the “message from angels” in 2:3 referring to? \_\_\_\_\_  
*Read Exodus 31:18, Acts 7:38&53, Galatians 3:19-20*
6. Hebrews 2:1-3a paraphrased: Keep focused on what you have been taught so that you do not turn back. Because the 10 Commandments were binding, and we were punished for breaking them, we will never escape their judgment, unless we continue to trust this great salvation we have been given through Christ.  
*-The author was exhorting them to stick with their decision to follow Christ.  
Realize that there is no other way to get around not perfectly following the law.  
  
- What challenges your faith and causes you to slip back into selfish living?*
7. In vs. 2:3b-4 What four evidences are used to validate Christ?
  1. Jesus claimed to be \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Others witnessed Jesus and attested to His \_\_\_\_\_
  3. God performed \_\_\_\_\_ through Christ
  4. \_\_\_\_\_ were given to believers by the Holy Spirit

Why was it important to use many evidences to prove this point? \_\_\_\_\_

**We must not allow anything to cause us to question his salvation.**

***(Please study Hebrews 2:5-18 for the next two week's.)***

### **Week 3-** Hebrews 2:5-18 Why did our Savior have to become human?

As we continue in chapter 2 we clearly see the theme of this book presented again.

**The author continues to establish the credibility of Christ.**

Please don't miss that as it is a major theme in the book. The readers are doubting Christ. The author writes in a systematic way to re-present Christ as superior to all. He again uses Old Testament Scriptures to validate that Christ was capable of being our Savior.

Before we read our text I would like to give a quiz. Please write on the back of the outline four reasons why **Jesus had to become human to be our Savior**. I don't want you to be tempted to look for the answers on the outline, so use the back. I will give you some time.

These are your pre-conceived ideas about this topic, and they may be right. But, do we want to read the text to prove ourselves right, or read to the text to see what it says about this topic?

We must remember that it is not our own pre-conceived ideas the author was writing to correct. It was the doubting faith of the Hebrew Christians that needed correcting. Last week we looked at why they may have held Jesus in low regard.

Were they doubting his humanity or his deity? *They were doubting his deity and struggling to understand why God had to become a man and live as both on earth. People today also struggle to understand that same thing.*

Have you ever heard anyone say "I do not believe Jesus ever lived on earth?" *NO, no one denies his human existence, not even atheists. What every one else but Christians do deny is that Jesus is simultaneously fully God and fully human. This lesson is critical for you to understand because you may have the opportunity to answer the following question of a non-believer or someone new in their faith. **Why did our Savior have to become human?***

That is the Big Idea for today. That is what the author is re-teaching the original readers and us in this section. I wrote the big idea as a question because the author was teaching in response to the readers question as to why did the Savior need to be human and not an angel. This also serves a foundation for deeper truths revealed later in this letter.

Let's **Read 2:5-18**, I hope you have pre-read it this week and together we will identify 4 main points before we move on. In this lesson I am being very upfront with the Big Idea and what I believe are the complements. I want to help you put into practice what Pastor Richard taught us about gleaning the main idea from the text.

Let's look at these four points on your handout and read just the verses that develop these main points.

Why did our Savior have to become human?

1. Because that was God's plan. (vs. 5, 8)
2. So Jesus could suffer a physical death and pay for the sins of everyone. (Vs. 9,14-15)

3. So he could identify with the people he is saving. (vs. 11, 13b, 14, 18)

4. In order to become a merciful and faithful high priest. (vs. 17)

Are there other main points that you feel I missed?

Let's read vs. 5-9 again and look at the points in more detail

**1. God planned for Jesus to become human.** That alone is reason enough. God could have planned the way to salvation in many different ways. But this is how he chose to do it.

He first establishes that it was Jesus, and not angels, that God subjected the world to come. If he can prove from the Old Testament that Jesus was prophesied to become the ultimate authority then the issue of the angels goes away. Notice the transition in the text away from angels and towards Jesus as God's appointed ruler.

Remember he is also proving that the man they knew as Jesus, truly was the awaited Messiah and therefore worthy of being their Savior. The readers were not doubting God's plan of the Messiah to come, they were doubting that Jesus was God's fulfillment of his plan, or the Messiah.

Turn to **Psalm 8** to see the context of vs. 6-8.

David praises God as creator and then clearly shows that Jesus, the son of man, is the one that God had always intended to rule over all of creation (vs. 6). He shows that it was God's plan to place everything under the authority of Jesus.

Read 2: 8b-9

What does it mean that Jesus "was made a little lower than the angels"? *He was in the form of a human.*

The author acknowledges the apparent contradiction between the Psalm that says Jesus is placed as the highest authority over creation and the reality of the readers that do not see Jesus visibly ruling over the earth. This could make some people doubt the credibility of Jesus. But they would have to be poorly trained in God's word and plan.

Why don't we see everything subject to him?

*In John 18:36 Jesus said "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."*

When will we see everything subject to Christ? *When he returns.*

*In Matthew 26:63 Caiaphas asked Jesus if he was the Christ, the Son of God and Jesus replied in vs. 64: "Yes, it is as you say. But I say to all of you: in the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."*

Please turn with me to Acts 3:11-26 for a parallel passage. Peter speaks to Jewish onlookers after they see him and John heal a crippled beggar. He presents a similar case for Christ as the author of Hebrews presents to his doubting Jewish listeners. This is meant to also help you pull main points from the text. Listen for the common threads between the two passages.

## Read Acts 3:11-26

Let's look at some of the common threads.

1. vs 13 *God glorified his servant Jesus*
2. vs. 16 *He shows Jesus' deity by his authority over sickness which parallels Hebrews reference to authority over all things.*
3. vs. 18 *He uses Old Testament prophesy to give credibility to Jesus and his suffering*
4. vs. 21 *Jesus must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything*

And there will be more as we continue reading in Hebrews. The consistency of Scripture is amazing.

So back to the Hebrews text and verse 9. **Read vs.2: 9**

Remember our big idea. Why did our Savior have to become human? Our second complement is:

### **2. So Jesus could suffer a physical death and pay for the sins of everyone. (Vs. 9,14-15)**

Can an angel or God the father suffer a physical death? *No. God had set up the system so that physical blood had to be shed for the forgiveness of sin. Hebrews 9:22 says "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleaned with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."*

In the old system the shed blood could be an animal according to the Levical law. But in this new system, the shed blood had to be that of Christ. That is simply how God set the system up. When I taught this summer we studied the sacrificial system to lay a foundation and to better be able to connect the Old Testament with the New Testament.

In our culture, nearly everyone has heard of Jesus. But, unless they were taught by the church, they do not understand why Jesus had to die on the cross. I have to explain this all the time when I teach in the Fremont County Jail one a month with prison fellowship. They will acknowledge that Jesus died on a cross, and again most people do not doubt that historical account. But they will have no understanding of why that was necessary for the forgiveness of our sins. Nor do they know how that affects them personally.

They don't see that it was God's plan, not the Jews and the Romans. They have not heard John 10:18 where Jesus says "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own accord. I have the authority to lay it down and the authority to take it up again. This command I received from my father." They think death on the cross happened to Jesus. They do not understand, but we know that he willingly died to fulfill God's plan and implement this new system of forgiveness.

Listen to **Hebrew's 9:11-14**

We must connect those dots for people. I see the light bulbs turning on in their minds when they understand that it was God's plan for the Savior to become human and why Jesus had to die a physical death for our sins to be forgiven. That is what the book of Hebrews explains so well.

I would encourage you to include these details when you are sharing the Gospel or discipling a new believer. It provides some context and allows for a deeper understanding of God and his ways. It shows God's ways to be logical and may lay to rest some doubts that they may have.

Spend some time this week praising God for this plan and thanking Jesus for suffering a physical death so that he could take our place in the judgment seat.

Next week we will continue to look at this passage and discuss the last two complements as week focus on verses 10-18. Please read them ahead of time.

The author continues to establish the credibility of Christ.

**Quiz:** Why did our Savior (Jesus) have to become human?

*Write 4 answers on the back so you aren't tempted to cheat by looking at the answers below.*

**Big Idea-** Why did our Savior have to become human?

### Complements

1. Because that was God's plan. (vs. 5, 8)
2. So Jesus could suffer a physical death and pay for the sins of everyone. (vs. 9,14-15)
3. So He could identify with the people He is saving. (vs. 11, 13b, 14, 18)
4. In order to become a merciful and faithful high priest. (vs. 17)

1. Because that was God's plan. (vs.5, 8)

-God had always intended Jesus to rule over all of creation. (Psalm 8: 6)

-The readers were not doubting God's plan of the Messiah to come, they were doubting that this man named Jesus was the Messiah, or God's fulfillment of the plan.

Parallel passage - Acts 3:11-26

What common threads do you see in Acts that are also found in Hebrews 2:5-9?

1. vs. 13 God glorified his servant Jesus
2. vs. 16 He shows Jesus' deity by his authority over sickness  
which parallels Hebrews reference to authority over all things.
3. vs. 18 He uses Old Testament prophesy to give credibility to Jesus and his suffering
4. vs. 21 Jesus must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything

2. So Jesus could suffer a physical death and pay for the sins of everyone. (Vs. 9,14-15)

-God set up the system so that physical blood had to be shed for the forgiveness of sin.

-Hebrews 9:22 says *"In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleaned with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."*

-Hebrews 9: 14 says *"How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!"*

***(Please study Hebrews 2:10-18 for next week.)***

## Week 4- Hebrews 2:5 (10)-18 Why did our Savior have to become human? Part 2

Last week we focused on Hebrews 2:5-10 with the bigger context of the section being vs5-18. We identified the Big Idea of this section as a question the author needed to answer for the doubting Jews.

Why did our Savior have to become human? And we identified four compliments, the first two of which we covered last week and the last two we will cover this week. Let's review.

### Complements

1. Because that was God's plan. (vs. 5, 8)
2. So Jesus could suffer a physical death and pay for the sins of everyone. (vs. 9,14-15)
3. So He could identify with the people He is saving. (vs. 11, 13b, 14, 18)
4. In order to become a merciful and faithful high priest. (vs. 17)

We will also see later in the book that these complements actually serve as the Bid Idea in future sections of the text. They are used initially to show why Jesus had to become human and then are developed in more detail later in the letter.

**Read Hebrews 2:5-18** to capture the purpose of this whole section and see again how we arrived at the complements.

We now begin to focus on the 3<sup>rd</sup> reason Jesus had to become human.

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### **3. So He could identify with the people He is saving.**

#### **Read Heb. 2:10**

Let's focus on the 4<sup>th</sup> part of that complex sentence. Jesus was made perfect through suffering. Suffering is the means to the end. It is how Jesus becomes perfect. Now, a question we must asked of the text:

*Wasn't he perfect before he suffered? He was without error. But in this case the word perfect means to be brought to completion, or able to fulfill it's full purpose. Guys if you tided the perfect looking fly, an exact replica of the larva you were trying to copy, and left it at home in a display case - would it really be the perfect fly? No, it is only perfect if it completes it's purpose to catch fish.*

*Yes, Jesus was flawless and sinless, but until he suffered and died he had not fulfilled his potential or purpose. He needed to have death in common with the ones he was dying for. Remember they are not questioning the deity of the Messiah, but rather the need for humanity in the Messiah. The physical suffering and death of Jesus allows him to identify with us in a way the Father and angels cannot.*

#### **Read Heb. 2:11**

Turn to **Mark 3:31-35** to see who Jesus considered his family.

What are some times when you remember Jesus' connecting with people on an intimate level?  
*Death of Lazarus (John 11), Upper Room (Jn. 15:14-17) and countless other times.*

He then backs up his point in verse 11 by using Old Testament Scripture in vs.'s **Read 12&13.**

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**Read Heb. 2:14-16**

From vs. 14&15, what two things were accomplished by Jesus' death? *1) He destroyed the devil, (1 John 3:8) 2) He freed the Jews from their fear of death and judgment. They relied on obeying the law and the sacrificial system to keep them in good standing with God. Jesus gave them and gives us 100% assurance that we are forgiven forever through Jesus' death on the cross. We are freed from being a slave to the law.*

**Read Romans 8:1- 4** with special notice to verse 3

The law was powerless to save man kind. But Jesus as a human, did have the power to save us from our sins. Righteousness could once be obtained by following the law, but can now be obtained by faith in Jesus' death on the cross. The Jews were freed from serving the law and can now live according to the Spirit. The author is encouraging them, and us, to embrace this new freedom and have peace in their lives because of it.

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Regarding vs. 16, "For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants."

If Jesus were ministering to angels he could have remained a heavenly being. But to minister to people he needed to be a person. He can identify with us because he has experience as a human, something that God the Father does not have.

If you were going sky diving, would you rather have an instructor that has had hundreds of jumps or one that has never jumped, even if both are qualified to teach? *The one with actual experience right.*

Let's also consider vs. 18 as it closely links to Jesus' ability to identify with those he is saving.

**Read Heb. 2:18**

When did Jesus suffer during a temptation? *Hunger when tempted by Satan*

You can call on Jesus with confidence when you are being tempted, because he can identify with you and help you because he has been there himself.

**Read 1 Corinthians 10:13**

This is a promise from God about temptation. This is a good Scripture memory verse.

**Heb. 4:15-16** says: "For we do not have a high priest how is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one that has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was

without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

Jesus can identify with us in our time of need. Are you calling on him during those times, or do you hide from him in those times?

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Verse 17 introduces us to the 4<sup>th</sup> reason our Savior had to become human.

#### **4. In order to become a merciful and faithful high priest. (vs. 17)**

We will again look closer at Jesus as the Great High Priest in future chapters, but let's begin to see Jesus in this light by

#### **Reading Hebrews 2:17**

God's plan has always called for a mediator to go between the sinful people and himself. This mediator has always been the High Priest. First it was Aaron and his sons, but now it is Jesus who is the High Priest. It was, and is, God's plan to always have the High Priest make atonement for the sins of the people. That is why Jesus had to become human. So he could serve as the Great High Priest forever and keep this system in place.

Let's be sure we all understand this word atonement before we move on. It literally means “at-one-ment” or in unity with one another speaking of the relationship between man and God. Nearly all translations use the word atonement in the OT but the NIV also uses it in the New Testament. But there is a deeper meaning to this word that other translations bring out by using Greek based words in the N.T.

KJV uses the Greek verb reconciliation (*katallasso*) instead of atonement. Meaning that man's relationship with God is restored when God invites man back from their sinful condition because of the penalty that Jesus has paid on the cross for their sins.

The NKJV and New American Standard Bible use the term propitiation (*hilasmos*) instead of atonement. Propitiation means to satisfy God's wrath for sin. In other words, enough of a penalty is paid that God will be appeased to the point of applying grace rather than punishment towards sin. God accepts Jesus' death on the cross as sufficient penalty for man's sins and considers man righteous in his eyes.

Whatever word is used, they all describe the process by which God shows mercy to sinners, because of the sacrificial death of Jesus.

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Turn with me to Leviticus and we will start in chapter 9:1-11 to review how the High Priest administered the sacrificial system to restore the broken relationship between man and God.

#### **Read Leviticus 9:1-11**

This describes the daily duties of the high priest performed in “making up for” the sins they and the people committed. Lev. 16:32-34 describes the duties of the high priest during the annual Day of Atonement.

**Read Lev. 16:32-34**

We must study and review what it meant for Jesus to become a high priest. Unlike us, the original readers of this letter would have automatically associated all of these duties with the mention of the high priest in verse 17. The high priest was synonymous with making atonement, reconciliation, and propitiation for the sins of the people. Jesus would do this by sacrificing his own body to forever satisfy God’s wrath for sin, and restore our relationship with him.

We have seen an introduction of things to be discussed in greater detail. I hope that you have come to appreciate how Jesus’ close relationships on earth better equipped him to be our mediator and that you clearly see that Christ is the fulfillment of the Old Testament priesthood and served as sufficient punishment for the forgiveness of our sins.

This lesson gives depth and meat to our understanding of Jesus and a fuller appreciation for God’s plan for salvation and Jesus’ obedience in carrying it through to completion.

Next week study Heb 3: 1-6 as we will have you break it down part by part.

Week 4- Hebrews 2:5(10)-18 Why did our Savior have to become human?  
Part 2

**Big Idea-** Why did our Savior have to become human?

**Complements**

1. Because that was God's plan. (vs. 5, 8)
2. So Jesus could suffer a physical death and pay for the sins of everyone. (vs. 9,14-15)
3. So He could identify with the people He is saving. (vs. 11, 13b, 14, 18)
4. In order to become a merciful and faithful high priest. (vs. 17)

3. So he could identify with the people he is saving. (vs. 11, 13b, 14, 18)

- Jesus was made perfect (meaning \_\_\_\_\_) through suffering.
- Jesus considers those that do \_\_\_\_\_ to be a part of his family. (Mark 3:31-35)
- Jesus had many intimate relationships with people.
- Jesus has experience as a human, something that God the Father does not.(Heb. 2:18)  
Read 1 Corinthians 10:13

*“For we do not have a high priest how is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one that has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.” Hebrews 4:15-16*

4. In order to become a merciful and faithful high priest. (vs. 17)

- God's plan was to always have a high priest be the \_\_\_\_\_ between man & God.
- The high priest was synonymous with making atonement, reconciliation, and propitiation for the sins of the people.

- at-one-ment - literally “at-one” or in unity with one another.
- reconciliation - man's relationship with God is restored.
- propitiation - to satisfy God's wrath (angered need for punishment) for sin.

Whatever word is used, they all describe the process by which God shows mercy to sinners, because of the sacrificial death of Jesus.

Jesus could make atonement by sacrificing his own body to forever satisfy God's wrath.

*(Please study Hebrews 3:1-6 for next week.)*

## Week 5- Hebrews 3:1-6 Hey, What's the Big Idea?

The last two weeks I clearly identified the big idea and four compliments found in chapter 2:5-18. This week we are going to read the first 6 verses of chapter 3 together and then you are going to get into groups of about 5 and determine 5 different components of this passage. List the verse and a summary of the Intro, Big Idea, Compliments, Illustrations, and Conclusion. This will help you improve your skills at separating the main point of the passage from supporting material. Hebrews is written very systematically and repeats a pattern of making a point and then proving it to be true.

Let's **read Hebrews 3:1-6** Follow along on your hand out. Do not turn to your Bible because the subtitle will bias your response.

Now get into groups, dig into the passage and fill out the work sheet on your hand out. I gave you the answer for the introduction so we are all starting in unity.

.....Group time

O.K- Let's look at verse one closer and make some observations about this introduction.

How does the author get their attention? *He reminds them that they were called by God*

What does he ask them to do in response to this calling? *Fix their thoughts on Jesus*

The author knows the readers may be asking: Why should we focus on Jesus, what makes him so special? How does the author answer this unspoken question- still in verse 1? *He is an apostle and high priest. He shows how Jesus represents both the Christian and the Jew. Jesus is an apostle (which was the highest human authority to Christians) and high priest (which is the highest human authority to the Jew).*

What is the main point of the entire letter?

To prevent Jewish Christians from returning to Judaism, by proving Jesus superior to all.

Can he prevent their backsliding without convincing them that Jesus is superior to all and worthy of their following? *No, that is the crux of the argument. He must first prove Jesus worthy and then challenge them to return to their faith in Christ.*

Let's read vs. 2 and see where you placed it? *First complement even though it is stated before the main idea.*

***Moses and Jesus were both faithful in their calling to serve God.***

*The author is always complimentary of the old system. He does not put it down, as that would turn the readers away. He starts by bringing Jesus to the same level as their hero Moses by stating they were both faithful in their service. That is the purpose of this statement.*

What about verse 3a? **Read it.**

*That is the Big Idea!!! **Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses.** That is what he needs to prove to the readers to return them to faith in Jesus. Let's see how he proves it.*

**Read verse 3b-4.** Where did you classify verse 3b and 4? *Illustration. This illustration applied more to their culture than to ours. They placed more value in the builder than the finished product. Our culture is the opposite. We only care about who bought the house. That is who we give compliments to, not the contractor. But the author portrays God with greater value as the builder and his people with less value as the house.*

Let's move to verses 5-6. **Read vs. 3:5-6**

How did you classify it and what is the main point? *Complement- **Jesus played a more important role than Moses.***

*Moses was a servant **in** God's house, Vs. 6 -Jesus was a son over God's house.*

The author affirms Moses' ministry in serving God, or the owner of the house, but shows that Jesus played a more important role, and is therefore worthy of greater honor. He equates Moses to a hired servant and Jesus to the son who oversees the operation of his father's house. Again, this is an illustration that they surely identified with in their culture.

And finally, verse 6b says: **Read vs 6b**

This serves as the *conclusion*. What did you have for the summary statement?

***In order to remain in him, they must hold onto their courage, and hope in Jesus.***

The author challenges them to get back on track and follow him. Why did he choose the words courage and hope? Why did they need to stay courageous? *They were facing persecution and cowering back to following the old Jewish ways. It **took** courage to embrace Christ and **takes** courage to remain in him forever.*

What hope had they boasted about as early Christians? *Salvation, not through animal sacrifices, but through faith in Jesus.*

Get back into your groups and take the remaining time to discuss the following questions.

When does it take courage to be a Christian in today's culture? *Making biblical choices in entertainment, how we spend money, identifying absolutes of right and wrong and living by them.*

Do **you** boast about your hope in Christ? When or why not?

Is "not boasting" an indication that there are higher priorities in your life?

Is not boasting a sign that you are drifting away from Christ?

Does our current Christian culture allow us to be comfortable with sharing our faith in a quite conservative way?

Week 5- Hebrews 3:1-6

Hey, What’s the Big idea?

Hebrews 3:1-6 – NIV- “ 1 Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. 2 He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God’s house. 3a Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, 3b just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. 4 For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. 5 Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house, testifying to what would be said in the future. 6a But Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house. 6b And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.”

Identify the following verses as Intro, Bid Idea, 2 Complements, Illustration, or Conclusion. Then summarize each point. Let me know when you have your big idea.

Vs. 1- Intro / \_\_\_\_\_

Vs. 2- \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Vs. 3a \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Vs. 3b-4 \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Vs.5-6a \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Vs.6b \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Get back into your groups and discuss the following questions.

When does it take courage to be a Christian in today’s culture?

Do *you* boast about your hope in Christ? When or why not?

Is “not boasting” an indication that there are higher priorities in your life?

Is not boasting a sign that you are drifting away from Christ?

Does our current Christian culture allow us to be comfortable with sharing our faith in a quite conservative way?

***(Please study Hebrews 3:7-19 for next week.)***

How close are you to loosing your faith?

What major thing could happen in your life to make you loose faith in God?

Perhaps the death of your whole family in a car crash?

A terminal illness that you have prayed against and got no results?

Something in the church happens and you turn away from God?

We would all like to think that our faith is bomb proof and would not be shaken by any of these devastating events. But seemingly solid Christians have gone from believer to doubter in a short period of time.

Or maybe for you it would be a slow fade. If you started to miss church for a few weeks and slowly spent more and more time with non- Christians. Chased a few dreams you had been suppressing. And then you stopped reading your Bible. How long would it take for you to question whether you really needed God?

Some of you would have very strong cases as to why unbelief could not happen to you. Years of service to the church, a deep commitment to prayer and reading the Bible, many personal encounters with Jesus. A legacy of Christian parents, grandparents, etc. So do all of these things really protect us from unbelief?

How did the doubting Hebrew Christians come to question their faith in Jesus? They too had the Holy Spirit. It appears that they had a strong measure of faith in the beginning. Why was that faith not developed and strengthened? Had they suffered a sudden event to shake their faith? Or was it the slow fade... that was moving them away from Christ? We do not know the details of the symptoms, but let’s follow the author’s train of thought in revealing the solution.

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Turn with me to **Psalm 95:7c-11** which is also Heb. 3:7-11 but more descriptive.

So what happened at Meribah and Massah? The readers likely knew what terrible things happened to their forefathers in the desert. We covered this last summer, but let’s review.

*Was the faith of the Jews that were miraculously led out of Egypt “bomb proof”? No, They too had a great resume of following God for years... until things got tough in the desert. They too had a great commitment to prayer and Scripture, they had seen God work miracles in their lives in proportions far greater than we have. Their family lineage was long with devout Jews.*

Last summer we looked at the Israelites in Egypt and identified 3 faith building lessons that God taught the Jews.

1. God’s word came true when he delivered them from slavery in Egypt and began moving them towards the Promised Land.

2. God was glorified as he led them by cloud and orchestrated the parting of the Red Sea and the great escape.

3. God then made it clear to them that he would be their provider/rescuer while in the desert.

All of these trials were designed to build their faith in God so that when they faced more trials in the desert they would be prepared to trust God.

Despite these intentional faith build lessons by God, their faith failed them under trial.

Chapters 16 and 17 of Exodus tell of the many times in the desert when the people doubted God's provision regarding water and food. They should have pulled from the storehouse of faith that they had developed while leaving Egypt and handled the desert trials with ease. But they didn't.

Why do you think the author retells this story? *He reminds them of what disaster unbelief and rebellion had caused their forefathers in the past.*

*It is an attempt to motivate them in their new faith and prevent another group of people from losing favor with God due to unbelief. I like the word unbelief to describe this because it does signify the undoing of their belief. Disbelief implies that they do not believe, where unbelief shows that they did believe but do not anymore.*

Would someone share a time when their faith was severely strained and how they worked through that time to restore their faith in God?

As modern day Christians, what keeps your faith strong in difficult times?

Discussion... *The reality that it is not all about me, God has a bigger plan.*

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Let's turn to Hebrews and listen to the exhortation from verses **vs. 3:12-14**

We are going to focus on vs. 12 today and come back next week and focus on vs. 13-14 and then through 19.

Vs. 12 commands each person to reflect on their own spiritual condition. **Read vs. 12**

I am going to give you 2 minutes right now to answer this question...

**Are you allowing a sinful unbelieving heart to turn you away from the living God?**

Some more questions-

Are you at the beginning of a slow fade? .....

Are there, or have there been, any small doubts that have begun to drive a wedge between you and God?

Please share with us.....Pause...Discussion

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People do leave the church, and unfortunately we have had that happen recently. At times people seemingly turn from God as well. Could something happen *to you personally* in our church that would make you withdraw from us and/or God?

Examples might be a breach of trust, a broken relationship between you and another member of the church, a fellow Christian speaking truth into your life, and you being offended and unwilling to accept that word and make a change in your life. And the list goes on of why people leave churches due to personal conflicts.

Maybe this has happened to you on a small scale were you emotionally withdrew for a limited time or maybe you have left another church under these circumstances and that is how you landed at E-Free. There is a wide range of responses.

As Richard has said many times in the past. Trails either make you better... or they make you bitter. What will the next trail in your life do to you?

### **Turn to James 1:1-8**

James says that trials test our ..... faith \_\_\_\_\_ ?

And the testing of our faith develops what.... perseverance \_\_\_\_ ?

And perseverance helps us to what ....become mature and complete, not lacking anything?

How can our attitude about trials shape our faith?

### **Our attitude can either work to build our faith or erode our faith.**

If we run from trials, or cry out to God to save us from trials, our faith will not grow stronger. It is only through working through the trial with God that our spiritual muscles are developed.

We will come back to these verses in James later next week as we look at verse 14. But let's wrap up today's lesson.

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We know that our position in Christ is secure, meaning we cannot lose our salvation once we have accepted Christ as our Savior. But we also know of people, the recipients of this letter for example, who have, or nearly have, lost their faith in Jesus and have turned away from him. You might know someone that was a strong believer and now seems to be tossed by the waves of life without their anchor in Christ.

It can happen to the best of us. The Israelites lost faith in the midst of the desert trials. The disciples lost faith in Christ and went back to fishing because they saw no further purpose in spreading the news of a King who had been crucified. The new Hebrew Christians were doubting their faith in Christ.

So how can you ensure that you will finish your walk with faith like those described in Hebrews 11, rather than those that we just spoke of? Well come back next week as we look to answer that question.

But this week I want you to consider what you are doing on a daily basis to make your faith “Bomb Proof”.

Week 6- Hebrews 3:7-14      Is Your Faith “Bomb Proof”?

How close are you to losing your faith?

Could a tragedy or situation in the church lead you away from Christ?

Could many small things cause you to slowly fade away from Christ?

***Are you relying on your resume of years of service,  
Bible study, and prayer, etc. to protect you from unbelief?***

Heb.3: 7-11    God’s chosen people lost faith in God in the desert. God had provided “Faith Building Lessons” as they left Egypt, but they did not draw from them in their time of doubt.

These times served as a reminder to the doubting Hebrews of what disaster unbelief and rebellion had caused their forefathers in the past.

Heb.3:12 ***Are you allowing a sinful unbelieving heart to turn you away from the living God?***

Could something happen ***to you personally*** in our church that would make you withdraw from us and/or God?

Will your next trial in your life make you better or bitter?

James 1:1-8

James says that trials test our \_\_\_\_\_?

And the testing of our faith develops \_\_\_\_\_?

And perseverance helps us to become \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
not lacking \_\_\_\_\_?

How can our attitude about trials shape our faith?

***Our attitude can either work to build our faith or erode our faith.***

This week consider what you are doing on a daily basis to make your faith “Bomb Proof”.

Next week we will consider your answers and help you to finish your walk with faith like those described in Hebrews 11.

***(Please study Hebrews 3:12-19 for next week.)***

## Week 7- Hebrews 3:12-19      Making Your Faith “Bomb Proof”

Last week we concluded that although our salvation is secure in Christ, believers in the past and present have lost their faith in Jesus and turned away from God. We saw the Israelites doubting in the desert, the disciples return to fishing after the crucifixion, and the new Hebrew Christians, to whom this letter was written, fading away from Christ. We also know people that have turned from Christ in our present day.

Last week I asked you to consider what you are doing on a daily basis to make your faith “Bomb Proof”. I would like to ask a few of you to share your reflections on that question.

### Discussion

Those are all great answers. Let’s turn to our Hebrews text and see what the author would have us do.

### **Read Hebrews 3:12-14**

Vs. 12 calls us to examine our faith and be sure we are not allowing a sinful unbelieving heart to turn us from God.

Vs. 13 then commands each person to encourage one another daily. And specifically, so that none of our hearts will be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.

**Encouraging one another to keep trusting Jesus, even in tough times,  
may help to restore the faith of a struggling believer.**

**Hebrews 10:23-25** has a similar message. Listen.

Are you actively involved in supporting other Christians in their walk?

Are you engaged in personal intimate relationships with other believers and therefore positioned to speak truthfully and counter act sins deceitful message?

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**Read Vs. 14** It tells us that for us to truly share in Christ we must have the confidence in him now, that we did when we first believed.

What can erode our confidence in Christ? *Trials and hardships*

### Discussion

***Enduring*** hardships and struggles will make us finish as strongly as we started. We are not to allow the situations in our life to dictate how we feel about God or how much faith we have in him.

**Let’s Read Matthew 13:18-23** which is the Parable of the Four Soils. Listen for the reasons people fall away ...long term...from living for God.

Some fail to bring their faith to completion because of misunderstanding the Gospel, others though they receive it with joy, do not finish strong because when trouble or persecution come, they fall away due to a lack of spiritual depth, and others are pulled away by the worries of life and the deceitfulness of wealth.

But the one that has saving faith is the one that hears the word and understands it.

The key point in understanding the word is of course, God's leading, but also accepting the centrality of Christ into our lives.

All of us have a unique testimony in coming to faith in Christ. But we all have the same testimony, the Bible, as to why Christ is worthy of our faith. Christ was as worthy of our faith the first day we believed as he is today and forever more. Christ is the constant, we are the variable.

There are times when the circumstances of life and the deceit of the devil cause us to doubt, but if we return to our first love, as the Ephesian church was commanded to do in Revelation 2, we can always be confident in our savior no matter what our earthly circumstances are.

Our primary action in making our faith bomb proof is:

**Always remain focused on Christ.**

We must actively work to keep our faith strong. We must rekindle the passion we had when we first embraced Christ and started our new life. Christian's will disappoint you, life will disappoint you, but if your perspective is right- God never will.

As Americans our expectations from life are high; Nothing but the best for us. But as Christians, our expectations should be even higher. Not for the good things in life, but for the good things in Christ. Faith, hope, love, and peace to top the list. We can expect to find these for ourselves if we hold firmly to the end the faith we once had. These are priceless in our world today. Because of a lack of these basic needs, our society invents ways of making us happy- trying to fill the void left by a lack of these spiritual foods.

If people that experienced the parting of the Red Sea and the great escape from Egypt lost faith, we too can loose faith. But if we continually shift our focus away from ourselves and our circumstances, and onto Jesus, we will keep our faith strong.

**We must work hard at building our faith and making it even stronger  
and more active than it was in the beginning.**

**Listen to James 1:12** "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him."

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Transition

Hebrews 3:14 tells us to "hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first", but does not give us any details as to how to do that. I offered a few suggestions and there are certainly more offered elsewhere in the Scripture.

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But turn with me to 1 Corinthians 10 as we look at this parallel passage that gives us similar instruction as to how to avoid the sins of the Jewish forefathers. These details help us to stay focused on Christ and stand firm in our faith.

### **Read 1 Cor. 10:1-13**

The first 5 verses serve to link the current readers with the Jewish forefathers through the bond of Christ.

Verses 6 and 11 exhort us to heed warning, and challenge us to be careful not to fall as they did; A very similar statement as the author of Hebrews.

Now look specifically at the first part of vs.'s 7-10 for four things that will keep us from setting our hearts on evil things, just as they did. In other words, 4 things that we should not do if we want to remain focused on Jesus. What are they?

Vs. 7 Do not be idolaters

Vs. 8 Do not commit sexual immorality

Vs. 9 Do not test the Lord

Vs. 10 Do not grumble

These are all examples of ways that the Israelites got off track and did not finish strong. We too can avoid these things as we walk with God. We can stay focused on God and avoid a sinful unbelieving heart which could lead to the destruction of our faith.

Vs. 12 says "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall."

It is a warning to those that are strong. Those that are serving God well. Be careful church. We can give into sin at a moments notice. We are not sin proof... but we are not on this journey alone either. Look at the redemption in verse 13.

Who does Paul say is faithful? *God, not us right*

Who will provide a way out so we can stand up under your temptation? *God*

We have a role to play in avoiding sin. God also plays a role in protecting us from more temptation than we can handle, and he provides an exit to every sinful situation.

Rejoice in the grace of your Lord. Have peace with him and your security as his son or daughter forever. But recognize that as humans our faith can be fragile at times. We can revert back to old ways of handling trials or conflicts or sinful temptations.

**These two sections of Scripture call us to be proactive in building our faith,  
not reactive in repairing it once it is broken.**

We can build a strong foundation of faith by:

1. Reflecting on our own faith, and being sure we are not allowing a sinful and unbelieving heart to turn us away from the living God.

2. Encouraging others to trust Jesus even in difficult times.

3. Remaining focused on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

Ultimately, we must trust Christ to be the supplier of our faith, but we can surely play a role in how our faith affects our life and the lives of those around us.

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Before we conclude, let's read the rest of Hebrews chapter 3. The author begins to transition to the next topic. We will cover the Sabbath's Day rest next week. But the author shows that those that doubted God in the desert were punished. It is as if the author is asking the readers if they too want to be punished for their unbelief.

The author uses positive re-enforcement by encouraging the readers to remain faithful. But also uses negative re-enforcement by making them revisit the sins of their forefathers in an effort to almost scare them back to faith. A dose of reality can be a good motivator.

**Read Hebrews 3:15-19**



## Week 8 –Hebrews 4:1-11

### Have you fallen short of resting in God?

That is a question posed by the author in Chapter 4. Today we are going to study this question. It is a deep and complex topic. It in fact has layers of meaning that we must peel back to get to the center of the matter. It was not a simple text to understand even after many readings. I hope to pull out the main points and leave the detailed study of each verse to you as individuals if you are so inspired.

Let's read the text together and then pull out the main points.

#### **Read Heb. 4:1-11**

We must first identify what rest the author is referring to.

It would be easy to assume from this section that the Promised Land was the extent of God's rest. The end of chapter 3 speaks of those that died in the desert, due to unbelief, as being shut out of God's rest. Chapter 4 also speaks of that time. But there must be more to it since vs. 1 tells us that the promise of God's rest still stands. And goes on to warn us not to miss God's rest.

So what is God's rest for the believer? *God's rest for the Christian is finding peace in our lives by trusting Jesus to forgive our sins and restoring us to good standing with God. I believe that is what the author so badly wants the doubting Hebrew Christians to understand.*

#### **Rest (or peace) is a prize we receive through our faith in Jesus.**

That so clearly fits with the bigger theme of the letter. The letter encourages them to have faith and hope in the promised of Christ. He calls, us and them, to be as faithful in the end as you where in the beginning. When we do that, we win the full extent of God's prize. We receive both aspects of his rest.

The prize of God's eternal rest is given at the moment of salvation and held in a guaranteed account for us until our moment of death or the Lord's return. We can not experience this rest until either of those times come.

The prize of God's earthly rest (or what we would call peace) is continually offered by the Holy Spirit and can be withdrawn, or claimed, by the believer throughout his or her life on earth. The amount of peace that is experienced varies depending on each person's reliance on Christ.

Now this is a bit of a word picture to describe this, but it is illustrating the fact that:

**God's rest is guaranteed to the believer in heaven, and also available to the believer on earth.**

Let's first talk about our heavenly rest. What things are you looking forward to resting from in heaven? *Worries, Ministry, Work, Sickness, Pleasing People*

How can thinking of our heavenly rest be a good strategy for finding rest on earth? *Gives hope*

Who among you would not immediately claim this rest once we enter heaven? NO ONE

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Is it possible to live as a believer on earth and not claim the peace of God in your life? yes

I am sure there are some that are claiming God's peace daily and others that need to grow in that area. So I'd like to get you into groups and see if we can work together as one body to raise our level of peace in our collective lives. Let me summarize a few more points and then you will discuss some questions that are on your handout.

Who remembers from last week some of the things that could rob our faith, and therefore our peace on earth?

*Trials, doubt, the lure of wealth, worries of the world, etc.*

These same things rob our peace because they turn us away from the hope we have in Jesus. Without faith we can not have peace. And peace is the rest we have on earth while we await our eternal rest in heaven.

**We must continually claim the prize of rest (or peace) in our lives.**

Peace in our lives is much like faith in our lives. It is variable. Just as we must work to keep our faith strong, we must work to keep our focus on Jesus and the peace that he offers us here on earth.

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Another topic raised in this passage is that of the Sabbath Day rest. Let's re-read **vs. 9-11**

The author connects the Sabbath rest that God modeled in creation with the physical rest that we as believers are to enter into. It says that those that have entered God's rest, meaning are saved, will also rest physically from their work just like God did. So there then is this final gift of physical rest that comes from following God.

Vs. 11 says that we should make "every effort" to enter that rest so that no one will fall due to disobedience. And he again references the failures of the Jews from the past.

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Alright, let's get into groups of 5 or 6 and let you teach each other some practical ways of ensuring you are claiming God's rest, or peace, on a daily basis. Spend some time discussing the questions on your handout. I have put them in the same order as our discussion but if there is a section you would like to discuss first in your group you can feel free to change order.

Group time.

Conclusion

**Rest (or peace) is a prize we receive through our faith in Jesus.**

It is two fold.

1. The prize of God's eternal rest is given at the moment of salvation and held in a guaranteed account for us until our death or the Lord's return.
2. The prize of God's earthly rest (or what we would call peace) is continually offered by the Holy Spirit and can be claimed by the believer throughout his or her life on earth.

God's rest is \_\_\_\_\_ to the believer in heaven,  
and also \_\_\_\_\_ to the believer on earth.

**We must continually claim the prize of rest (or peace) in our lives.**

We must work to keep our focus on Jesus and the peace that he offers us here on earth.

Questions for group discussion:

Heavenly Rest

1. How much time do you spend considering how good things will be for us in heaven?
2. How will our heavenly rest be different than our earthly rest?

Earthly Rest

1. How is faith different than peace?
2. What characteristics are exhibited by someone that has peace in their life?
3. What is one area of life that you struggle to have peace in?  
What suggestions do the other group members have for improving that?

Sabbath's Day Rest

1. Do you trust God that "resting" on Sunday is profitable for you to do?
2. Other than coming to church, for you personally, how is Sunday different from Saturday?
3. How are you teaching your children to treat Sunday differently than the other days?
4. Name one thing you will change about Sundays?