

"HEBREWS, WALK THRU THE NEW TESTAMENT."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for Sermon: Hebrews 1:1-4; 3:3; 7:23-25; 9:15

Introduction.

Wait! What? Why are we starting our walk thru the NT with the book of Hebrews? Why did I skip over the Gospels, Acts and all of Paul's letters? As you read Hebrews were you able to figure out why I am doing this?

Augustine once said: "The New is in the Old concealed, and the Old is in the New revealed." Hebrews is the bridge that connects the Old Testament and the New Testament. It is foundational to understanding the NT. It has been called the fifth Gospel.

Hebrews is the best commentary ever written on the OT, it is God's commentary on the OT. It interprets the history, explains the fulfillment, reveals the purpose behind all the aspects of Jewish worship, showing the significance behind all the ceremonies, feast, and sacrifices.

If you want in fact to understand your Old Testament, Hebrews is a great place to start. Hebrews contains 35 direct quotations from the Old Testament, along with many allusions and references.

Christ is the main point of the Old Testament; it is to Him that the entire sacrificial system points. And there are few places in Scripture that make this point better than the book of Hebrews.

The operative word in Hebrews is "better" and not just better, but the best, superior in every way. Ultimate, supreme.

Book

The title of the letter is: To the Hebrews.

"The Book of Hebrews was written by a Hebrew to other Hebrews (about the Hebrew of all Hebrews), telling the Hebrews to stop acting like Hebrews." It is written specifically for a group of Christians who were about to quit hanging in there and start slipping back

into the rites and rituals of Judaism in order to escape the growing persecution. This letter, then, is an exhortation for those persecuted believers to continue in the grace of Jesus Christ.

They were in a crisis, a crisis of faith. These Jewish converts to Christianity are in grave danger of giving up their faith and return to Judaism.

This is written to second generation Jewish Christians who are flagging, drifting, losing steam, dropping out of the race, going back to their old ways of Judaism.

Their fire is going out. Again and again he exhorts them (and us), calls us to wake up, to pay attention.

Take heed, consider this:

2:1 We must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.

2:3 How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?

3:6 We are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope.

3:12-13 Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called, 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

4:1 While the promise of entering his rest remains, let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach it.

5:11 About this we have much to say which is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

6:1 Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ and go on to maturity.

10:23-24 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.

10:35 Do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised.

12:12-13 Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.

How would you motivate or exhort weary saints to persevere in the face of persecution. The author of Hebrews does it by giving them a high-definition, technicolor, big screen, surround-sound, feature length documentary on the fulfillment of everything OT, 4000 years of promises fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Purpose, theme

The theme of Hebrews is the superiority and finality of Jesus.

The OT is not just an ancient story, something buried in the past. It is the pattern of God's redemptive work. The book of Hebrews paints this picture clearly, drawing from the OT pattern to show its outworking in the person, ministry and work of Jesus.

If we want to persevere in our faith, then we must learn more about Jesus. And to learn more about Jesus, we must understand the Old Testament. That is precisely the purpose of the book of Hebrews.

“The main message of the Bible is that the one true God is displaying his glory primarily in redeeming and restoring his fallen creation by fulfilling his covenant promises and commands through the glorious person and atoning work of Christ.” Erik Thoennes

Let's consider the superiority of Christ in His person and His work, as we move from the OT to the NT, from the shadow to the reality.

I. Superiority of Who Jesus is; Superiority of the Person of Christ (Chapters 1-4:13)

The book of Hebrews is intensely Christ-centered from the opening sentence to the concluding benediction. He is the eternal Son of God, “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.” He is worthy of all worship from all humans and angels.

This all begins with Hebrews 1:1-2, with Christ as the supreme and superior revelation of God.

1:1-3 declares uniqueness and superiority of Jesus.

Hebrews 1:1-3 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Superior to prophets 1:1

The prophets spoke the Word of God, Jesus is the Word of God.

Superior to angels 1:4-16

He created the angels, angels worship Him.

They were messengers, Jesus is the superior messenger with a superior message.

The angels announce God's Word, Jesus is God's final word. He is the gospel.

Superior to Moses 3:1 ff

The builder and owner are supreme over the servant of the house.

Moses could lead the people to the earthly promised land but could not lead them into their unconditional, comprehensive, eternal rest.

Superior to Joshua 4:8

Joshua lead the people into the earthly promised land but also not to eternal rest.

II. Superiority of the Priesthood of Christ (4:14-7)

Superior to Aaron and Levitical priests.

The old priests offered objects different from themselves.

9:26 He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

The priesthood of Jesus is superior to the Old Testament priesthood of Aaron, because only through Jesus do we receive eternal salvation (5:1–9).

Furthermore, Jesus became the permanent and perfect High Priest, going beyond all other priests by offering Himself as a sinless sacrifice on behalf of the sins of human beings (7:24–26; 9:28). The Supreme High Priest offers Himself.

Superior to Melchizedek

Jesus was not a Levite. His was a different priesthood from a different order—the order of Melchizedek who was a priest and king. Christ's priesthood differs from the old in that Christ serves both as High Priest and as King.

Christ is not in the Aaronic line of the Levitical priests. He is eternal, in line with Melchizedek

Jesus is an eternal Son of God and therefore an eternal priest. He is High Priest forever.

The OT priesthood comes to an end with the perfect priestly ministry of Christ, our one and only mediatory with the Father. He puts it to an end because He doesn't die and need to be replaced.

III. Supremacy of Christ's Work (Chapters 8-10:18)

We are shown the supremacy of Christ's saving work, doing once and for all that the OT sacrifices could not do.

Superior to the old covenant

Jesus mediator of a new covenant (9:15)

First Covenant ratified with the blood of animals; the second covenant inaugurated with Christ's blood. The sacrifice in the Old Covenant is ceremonial – it is symbolic and intended to point us to Christ.

Superior to the tabernacle

Jesus is the true Temple, the new place of God. John 1:14, 2:19-21.

Superior to the sacrifices

Jesus' sacrifice is effective and permanent, once and for all.

Jesus is the perfect lamb of God, the perfect substitutionary sacrifice. And He is the perfect, faithful and merciful great High Priest.

He puts an end to the animal sacrifices once and for all.

Christ puts an end to the tabernacle by becoming the true tabernacle. He can come into the Holy of Holies through Him. Christ opened up the Holy of Holies for all who believe in Him and trust Him to come through.

Jesus replaces the earthly shadows and ritual with the true spiritual substance of Himself.

IV. Supremacy of the Life of Christ: A Life Transforming Hope (Chapters 10:19-13)

Faith (10:39-11)

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Faith is characterized by a hope that is rooted in certainty. Hope is the result of faith in a reality we have not yet seen, but you know exists.

Perseverance (12:1-2)

Hebrews is all about perseverance in faith, hope and love through our knowledge of what God has done for us through Jesus Christ.

Hope (12:18-24)

Hope comes from faith in future grace.

Love (13:1)

Whatever the Jewish converts to Christianity were looking back to, whatever seemed attractive to them, was utterly futile, now devoid of any meaning, hope, substance or power. It is a mere shadow, a dim mirror, a faint reflection.

They must be reminded that Judaism has been absolutely emptied of every last vestige of truth and hope. There is nothing in Judaism or any other religion on earth, that can come close to comparing to or challenging the supremacy of Christ, whether on earth or in heaven.

Jesus is the eternal High Priest, who has secured an eternal salvation, an eternal redemption, an eternal inheritance and an eternal relationship with God in an eternal kingdom that cannot be shaken.

Hebrews 9:15 Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

Implications and application.

Here is the application. What gives you the most security? What holds supremacy in your life? Really, what is most important to you, most valuable, most loved? Can you truly say it is Jesus?

What do you think about most, work for the most? What do you wake up thinking about or go to sleep thinking about? Where does He fit in with your family, your spouse, your kids, your job, your retirement, your plans, your stuff?

Are you dull and sluggish spiritually? Are you bored with the Christian life? Are we drifting along or are we pressing forward? And if we are drifting, we are actually slipping backward.

Can you say you have a hunger and thirst for God, for the truth of His Word, for righteousness?

We all face many temptations to avoid troubles in this life by compromising our commitments to Jesus.

The antidote is a better, greater vision of Jesus, who He is and what He has done. Look at Jesus, stand back in awe, marvel at the greatness of who He is and the greatness of what He has done.

Don't be Lot's wife looking back on what you left behind, looking back at the world.

Here is our cause for joy and worship, the author and perfecter of our faith and salvation is seated at the right hand of the throne of God in heaven.

Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore ... let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with *perseverance* the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, *the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*