



**FLOURISH  
BIBLE STUDY**

# HEBREWS

LEADER'S GUIDE



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## WEEK 1: GREATER THAN EVERYTHING

HEBREWS 1:1-14

### ✦ NO ONE GREATER (1:1-4)

1. Using the “God Has Spoken” chart below, note from verses 1–2 how God’s way of revealing himself changed from “long ago” (v. 1) to “these last days” (v. 2).

**Answer:** Before Christ came, the Lord spoke through the prophets. Jesus is the fulfillment of all those prophets proclaimed.

2. We’re told in verse 3 that the Son is “the exact imprint” of God’s nature. What do you think this means?

**Answer:** The son is exactly the same in his substance. All attributes and abilities of God the Father are true of God the Son.

3. What do we learn in this passage about the Son’s involvement in creation and his ongoing role in sustaining it?

**Answer:** The Son created the world, and now he sustains what he created by his power.

4. The last verse in this section, verse 4, sets the stage for the rest of chapter 1. What does he tell us in this verse?

**Answer:** Jesus Christ is far superior to angels. Being God’s Son is far superior because it implies a close, intimate relationship and shared likeness, and also the right to inherit from the Father. So his position is one of authority.

### ✦ A GREATER SON AND KING (1:5-13)

5. From these Old Testament passages, our author wants his friends to recognize Jesus’s superiority. In what ways is Jesus’s superiority evident in verses 5–6?

**Answer:** The Father-Son relationship is displayed again, and his superiority to angels is evident in that the angels worship him.

6. These Old Testament quotations come from passages that celebrate the coronation of Israel’s great King David. By citing them, what is the author telling his readers about Jesus Christ?

**Answer:** That Jesus Christ is not only the foretold king descended from David, but is far greater than David. His kingship is perfect, and therefore he is due all glory and honor.



7. The winds and flames of fire point to the glorious splendor of angels—they are magnificent creatures! But the Son is more glorious. In verses 8–9, what is it about the Son that makes him more glorious than the angels?

**Answer:** Jesus’s kingdom is eternal—it is forever and ever. In addition, he reigns in perfect righteousness.

8. In what way do verses 10–12 set Jesus apart from—and as far superior to—the angels?

**Answer:** He is the creator, whereas the angels were created by him. Jesus does not wear out or change but remains the same from before creation and throughout eternity.

9. In verse 13 we have one more Old Testament quote, this one from Psalm 110:1, which showcases the attributes of God’s anointed king. While the psalm was originally written by Israel’s King David, he wrote about the Messiah, King Jesus who was to come. The Hebrews author draws a lot from this psalm, and we will encounter it again in our study. Because of its importance in Hebrews, read all seven verses of Psalm 110, and then list the things you see in the psalm that show why Jesus is set far above angels.

**Answer:** He sits at the right hand of God, conquers enemies, is worshiped and glorified by his people, does not change his mind, is an eternal priest, executes judgment, and conquers his enemies.

#### ✦ GREATER THAN ALL THE ANGELS (1:14)

10. From verse 14, what function has God assigned the angels, and whom do they serve?

**Answer:** They are ministering spirits, and they are sent by God to serve believers.

11. How is the description of angels in verse 14 made clearer from these episodes in Acts?

**Answer:** *Acts 5:17–21:* the angels freed the apostles from prison so that the apostles could go on and teach the gospel in the temple. *Acts 8:26–31:* The angel of the Lord directed Philip to go south so that he could meet the Ethiopian eunuch and share the gospel with him. *Acts 12:6–11:* an angel rescued Peter from Herod.



## WEEK 2: THE DANGER OF DRIFT

HEBREWS 2:1-18

### ✦ PAY ATTENTION! (2:1-4)

1. The writer urges his readers to “pay much closer attention” to God’s word concerning salvation (v. 1). These words begin the first of five warnings in Hebrews. There are certainly practical ways to pay attention, but paying attention is primarily a heart issue. Identify some everyday things that can distract our attention from Christ.

**Answer:** Personal answers.

2. The sea played a vital role in ancient society. Sea navigation was crucial not only for travel but also for business purposes. No doubt hearing the words “drift away” brought to those readers’ minds an untended boat unanchored and drifting from safe harbor. What do you think it means to “drift away” from the gospel, which is the point the author is making?

**Answer:** Drifting away can happen if we are careless about obedience to God’s Word. Drifting can also happen if we try to live the Christian life independently, not participating in a local church. And drift can happen if we don’t maintain fellowship with God in his Word and through prayer. Like drifting away at sea, it often takes time for us to recognize what is happening and how far away we are from where we intend to be! You might want to share this quote from D.A. Carson: “People do not drift toward holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward disobedience and call it freedom.”

3. How was the gospel revealed (vv. 3–4), and what do you see in these verses that points to why the gospel message is superior to the message that came through angels in the Old Testament?

**Answer:** It was declared by God himself, Jesus Christ, to those who heard it. It is better than the message given in the Old Testament because it is not mediated through prophets/angels, and it is complete. The Old Testament prophets saw the Messiah only from a distance. Their prophecies and judgments were only part of the picture. Through Christ, we now have the full, complete, and clear picture of salvation. All that the prophets have said through the Old Testament comes into focus in the New Testament.



#### ✦ LOW TO HIGH (2:5–9)

4. Read Psalm 8, paying close attention to verses 3–6, and then answer the following questions about the psalm:

**Answer:** *What amazes the psalmist in Psalm 8:3–4, and why?* He is astonished that the God who can create something so vast and marvelous as the night sky can also be aware of a single human, and not only that, but actually care for him. God’s greatness does not cause him to overlook any single person or detail within his created universe. *Although human beings were created with a “lower” status than angels, what advantage does Psalm 8:5 reveal that humans have been given?* We are crowned with glory and honor—we are given a kingly role. Like Adam in the garden, we are tasked with ruling over the rest of the created order. This is because we are made in his image and inherit his kingliness. *How does Genesis 1:26–28 help us understand verse 6 of the psalm?* When Adam and Eve were created, they were set over creation. Although the fall altered our relationship with creation, the mandate to rule over it still remains because it is intrinsic to our design and created purpose.

5. We can’t see the full picture yet, as our author tells us in Hebrews 2:8, but everything necessary has been accomplished. According to Hebrews 2:9, how did Jesus fulfill God’s original intentions, thereby making the promises of Psalm 8—rule and glory and honor—possible for us to share in?

**Answer:** Christ suffered death on behalf of all Christians. By becoming incarnate (“made lower than the angels”) and dying a sinner’s death (although he was sinless), we are saved. It was God’s plan to send his son as a substitute so that we all may be able to be “crowned with glory and honor,” raised to glory forever, in eternity, sharing in Jesus’s kingship.

#### ✦ FAMILY TIES (2:10–18)

6. What are we told about God the Father in verse 10?

**Answer:** We are told that everything in existence was came *from* the Father and is ultimately *for* the Father. Christ’s suffering is attributed here to the Father. When the author writes that Jesus was made “perfect” through suffering, he means “complete”; in other words, Jesus completed the mission he came to accomplish.

7. In verses 11–13 the author looks again to the Old Testament (Psalm 22:22 and Isaiah 8:18) to show how genuine believers are actually God’s family, even though they are sinners. What do we learn in verses 11–13 about how Jesus views his people?

**Answer:** Some scholars think “one source” is the Father, while others say it’s Jesus. Either way, the point is that we are united to Christ by faith so closely that we share



a family resemblance. The prophet Isaiah is quoted in verse 13, where he connects himself with all true believers. The point of the quote is to show that Jesus does likewise.

8. Jot down what you learn in verses 14 and 15 about the power of sin, the power of the devil, and the power of Jesus's death:

**Answer:** *The power of sin:* sin brings death. *The power of the devil:* we're told here that the devil is the power behind sin and the death it produces. *The power of Jesus's death:* Jesus's death conquered the power of the devil and freed us from his clutches. Were it not for this, we'd have great reason to fear because we have no power of our own over sin or death.

9. How does verse 17 drive home to us why it was necessary for the Son of God to become a man?

**Answer:** A priest, as a representative head of the people, needed to resemble or be like the people he is representing in order to suffer in their place. Because the Son experienced what humans experience, he understands us—he is merciful toward us.

10. In the old covenant, God accepted the blood of sacrificed animals as propitiation (payment or atonement) for sins. As you consider verses 16–18, why was the propitiation of Jesus better than animal blood?

**Answer:** It's better because he became one of us in every way except for sin. Because he took on human nature, he can relate to us with mercy and understanding and offer very real help in our fallen condition. No animal sacrifice could accomplish this.

11. Our author points out how Jesus's suffering qualified him to help his people when they are tempted. As you think about the situation of the first recipients of the letter, what sort of temptations are likely in mind here?

**Answer:** They were likely tempted to abandon their faith in the face of persecution and the costliness of walking faithfully with Christ.



## WEEK 3: TODAY IS THE DAY

HEBREWS 3:1–4:16

### ✦ FAITHFUL OVER GOD'S HOUSE (3:1–6)

1. The opening word, “therefore,” links us back to the final few verses of chapter 2. As you look at 2:17–18, what encouragement is the author seeking to provide when he instructs his readers to “consider Jesus.”?

**Answer:** The author is seeking to encourage the readers to dwell on Christ as our merciful and faithful high priest—a priest that considers us brothers, was tempted as we are, suffered, and made propitiation for the sins of the people.

2. The word “house” appears multiple times in these six verses. As you look at these verses, what place is held by each of the following in God’s house?

**Answer:** *Moses:* servant (v. 5); *Jesus:* Christ builds the house, and faithfully oversees it as God’s son (vv. 3, 6); *Christian believers:* we make up the house (v. 6).

3. What caution is given to believers in 3:6?

**Answer:** We prove that we are part of his house by faith.

### ✦ HARDENED HEARTS (3:7–11)

4. Our author attributes the words of the psalm to the Holy Spirit, the Lord himself. What do these Spirit-given words reveal about God and his perspective on Israel’s behavior?

**Answer:** The Lord was provoked and his wrath was stirred by their hardness of heart and unbelief.

5. We see the word “test” two times in this passage. In verse 8, Israel is tested in the wilderness, and in verse 9, Israel put God to the test. What do you think is meant by “test” in each case?

**Answer:** *God tests Israel* (v. 8): God put Israel to the test in the wilderness in order to expose what they truly believed and whether they would remain loyal to God in the midst of trial. *Israel tests God* (v. 9): The Israelites tried God’s patience when they doubted his power, presence, and goodness and when they grumbled after being freed from slavery in Egypt.



✦ **GUARD YOUR HEART! (3:12-19)**

6. How does the author urge his readers to guard themselves against Israel's failure in verses 12-14?

**Answer:** V. 12: he urges readers to be alert and watchful for unbelief in their hearts, unbelief being an evil that causes people to fall away from God. This means that we ought to regularly take stock of our own hearts and pray that the Lord will reveal our unbelief and help us believe (Mark 9:24). V. 13: As a community, we are to mutually care for one another daily to safeguard each other from being "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." If we are constantly faced with what is true about God, ourselves, and the church, we are less likely to believe the lies of the devil. V. 14: We are to remain confident in the gospel promises so that we can share in the blessings that Christ has given us through our union with him. We ought to meditate on the truth of Scripture, remind ourselves what we believe, and remember what God has done.

7. The author's warning includes the danger of being "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (v. 13). Why do you think he describes sin as "deceitful"?

**Answer:** Sin overpromises and underdelivers. It seeks to fill needs and desires that only God can sufficiently and permanently fill. When we begin to believe these lies, our hearts become hardened toward God. We only have to look back to the garden of Eden to understand that the way of sin and the devil is half truths and twisted words. Unchecked, the lies wear us down, dull our minds, and curb our conscience until we are far from God.

8. The author reminds his readers in verse 16 that those who rebelled were the very ones who had experienced God's miraculous deliverance from Egypt. What is this reminder meant to make them see?

**Answer:** The author is highlighting the illogical nature of rebellion against the Lord. Even though Israel had just witnessed their miraculous salvation, they quickly turned away and doubted God's saving power. It's a warning to those reading the letter not to repeat this pattern of unbelief.

9. Ultimately, Israel failed to enter God's rest, the promised land, because of unbelief (v. 19). Look back through this passage and note the attitudes and actions that the author links to unbelief.

**Answer:** v. 12: an evil, unbelieving heart; v. 13: hearts hardened by sin, which deceives; vv. 16-19: rebellion/disobedience to God's word.



#### ✦ THE PROMISE OF REST (4:1-5)

10. What words, phrases, or ideas are repeated in verses 1-5?

**Answer:** *Rest:* “enter . . . his rest” (vv. 1, 3, 5); “God rested” (v. 4). *Work(s):* “his works were finished” (v. 3); “rested on the seventh day from all his works” (v. 4).

11. As you consider the author’s words in 4:1-2, why does he feel compelled to issue such a strong warning to people who have already professed faith?

**Answer:** The promise of rest extended to the Israelites is the same promise of rest that we have been given, a promise for an eternal sabbath rest in heaven. If we believe and our hearts are not hardened toward God and the gospel, we will enter this eternal rest (heaven and the new heavens and earth).

12. The message of good news is framed as “rest” in this passage. Why do you think this word is a good way to describe the good news of the gospel—that Jesus died on the cross to save sinners?

**Answer:** When Christ died on the cross, he completed the work necessary for sinners to enter eternal rest (John 17:4, 19:30). Christ was able to fulfill all the commands of the law so that we can rest through faith, by grace. The good news of the gospel is that we exchange our sin, debt, guilt, shame, and burden for the rest that Christ has earned through his death on the cross (Matthew 11:28-30).

#### ✦ TODAY IS THE DAY (4:6-13)

13. We’ve learned that unbelief was the reason Israel failed to enter God’s rest. How is unbelief classified here in verse 6?

**Answer:** Unbelief is described as disobedience.

14. As you think back to the circumstances that motivated the writing of this letter, as well as the circumstances of the Israelites in the wilderness, what do you think the author means when he urges his readers to “strive” to exercise their faith in verse 11?

**Answer:** They are to hold fast to their faith and guard against unbelief. Striving to this end involves trusting God to keep his promises in the face of troublesome circumstances, waiting for God’s timings, and immersing ourselves in Christian community.

15. What do you learn about God’s word in verse 12, whether spoken, like in the days of Moses and the prophets, or written in Scripture?

**Answer:** God’s word has divine power. It exposes our thoughts and motives and true spiritual condition.



#### ✦ OUR SYMPATHIZING SAVIOR (4:14-16)

16. We noted earlier that the Old Testament priests served as mediators between God and Israel. Jesus now fills that role in a way that none of those earlier priests could do. What do you see here that sets Jesus apart from those Old Testament priests?

**Answer:** He has “passed through the heavens” and is “the Son of God” (v. 14). In addition, he is able to “sympathize with our weaknesses” because he “has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (v. 15).

17. How does Jesus’s priesthood enable us to come to God, and what can we expect to receive when we do?

**Answer:** We are able to draw near to God in full expectation of receiving mercy and grace, whatever our need. We can confidently pray, knowing that the Lord is mindful of us and will respond to us in love and kindness.

### WEEK 4: THE DANGER OF APATHY

HEBREWS 5:1-6:20

#### ✦ THE SOURCE OF SALVATION (5:1-10)

1. Note everything you learn in verses 1-4 about Old Testament high priests.

**Answer:** They were appointed to their role. They served as mediators for sinners before God. They offered sacrifices for sins. As sinners themselves, they could relate to those for whom they mediated. Every priest had to offer sacrifices for his own sins too.

2. For each of the Old Testament priestly traits you noted in question 1, what similarities or differences are given for Jesus’s priesthood in verses 5-10?

**Answer:** Jesus was appointed to his priestly role by God. He offered himself as the sacrifice for sins, but not his own sins. The “order” of his priesthood was not the line of Aaron; rather, it was patterned after the mysterious Melchizedek.

3. Old Testament high priests could relate to sinners by virtue of their own human weakness. What makes Jesus even more able to relate to sinners?

**Answer:** He experienced the full range of what it means to be human. He faced temptations and never once sinned, so his experience of temptation is way more



extreme than that of the Aaronic priests, who, because they were sinners, often stopped temptation by giving into it.

✦ **MOVE PAST MILK (5:11-14)**

4. What do you think it means to be “dull of hearing”?

**Answer:** Their discouragement has numbed their spiritual sensitivity to God and his promises.

5. The author uses “milk” and “solid food” as metaphors—word pictures—to get his point across. What is he communicating with his metaphors?

**Answer:** The hearers have become like spiritual infants. They need simple foods and simple truths to digest since they have failed to advance beyond the spiritual basics. Those who are mature are capable of eating more complex foods and complex truths that build on prior understanding.

✦ **GROW UP-OR ELSE! (6:1-8)**

6. In order to progress, Christ followers must move beyond the basics of the faith. What goal is in view here?

**Answer:** The goal is spiritual maturity. Maturity can be recognized through the fruit of the Spirit in our lives (love, joy, peace, etc., see Gal. 5:22–23).

7. What happens to such apostates, and what reason is given for this consequence?

**Answer:** Those who have participated in Christian fellowship and have been exposed to known the gospel message yet deliberately and continuously reject it will, in time, are so hardened that they have no inclination to turn to the Lord for salvation.

8. Explain what the author is saying through the farming imagery he uses in verses 7–8.

**Answer:** The farming imagery illustrates that as Christians live in close personal fellowship with Christ and one another, they produce a crop that is useful (are able to bless God through their work in serving the church), and therefore receive a blessing from God. Conversely, those who fall away, despite the “rain” that watered them, produce worthlessness and are destroyed.

✦ **BETTER THINGS (6:9-12)**

9. Why is the author confident that such encouragement is warranted here?

**Answer:** The author notes the good works, love, and service of the saints that he is



addressing (v. 10). Like Jesus notes in his teaching in Matthew 7:16–20, no diseased tree can bear good fruits.

10. What encouragement does he offer in verse 11 to those who might be wavering, and what reason does he give for this in verse 12?

**Answer:** Earnestness or zeal remains strong as we live out the truths of God’s Word in Christian community, and ongoing zeal fuels hope in God’s promises. It’s also the way to avoid what he warns about in verse 12—spiritual carelessness that dulls zeal.

✦ **PROMISES ASSURED (6:13–20)**

11. Read Genesis 22:1–18. How does this story shed light on why the author of Hebrews uses Abraham to illustrate the nature of mature, persevering faith?

**Answer:** Abraham grew into maturity over the course of his life, as evidenced by his obedience to God’s commands and his belief that God would provide. He was willing to obey the Lord and sacrifice his only son—the son that the Lord had promised him and that he had waited for. He told Isaac, “God will provide for himself the lamb” (Genesis 22:8), and the Lord provided (v. 13). His obedience and trust were evidence of his faith.

12. Our author wraps up this interlude—this exhortation to persevere in faith—with a final encouragement. How do you see this in 6:18–20?

**Answer:** Our hope is based in the unchangeable character of the Lord—we can trust him because of the oaths that he has sworn to us and because “it is impossible for God to lie” (v. 18). Our inheritance, which was promised to Abraham and secured by Christ, is assured and trustworthy. We have evidence of this truth because Christ has gone before us as a forerunner. This hope holds us like an anchor holds a ship and keeps us from wandering off course or being tossed and turned by the trials and suffering we face as we wait for our glorious future. We also know this hope is secure because Christ keeps it secure for us.



## WEEK 5: BETTER IN EVERY WAY

HEBREWS 7:1–8:13

### ✦ MYSTERIOUS MELCHIZEDEK (7:1–10)

1. These opening verses of chapter 7 are a brief recap of Genesis 14:17–20, where Abraham returns from battle and encounters this figure Melchizedek. Note what you learn about him from both Genesis 14:17–20 and Hebrews 7:1–3.

**Answer:** Melchizedek was a king as well as a priest (Genesis 14:18). Melchizedek blessed Abraham and God (vv. 19–20). Melchizedek received rather than gave a tithe (v. 20—see more on this in the answer to question 2). His name means “king of righteousness” (from the Hebrew words *melek*, meaning “king,” and *tsedeq*, meaning “righteousness”). The city he ruled was Salem, which means “peace.” Melchizedek is without father, mother or genealogy (v. 3), meaning that there were no records of his parentage. The point of this is to show that his priesthood is atypical—Israel’s priests were all descended from Aaron, but not Melchizedek. And he foreshadowed Christ’s priesthood in that there was no end to it. Christ’s is eternal. Melchizedek’s was simply not recorded, and however long he actually served, it would have ended upon his death. The facts of his life as known by God’s people were meant to point to Christ.

2. The Jews viewed Abraham as one of the greatest figures in their history, the premiere patriarch! And Abraham’s very own descendants, beginning with his great-grandson Levi, were given the special honor of serving as priests for God’s people. In light of Abraham’s greatness, what is surprising about verses 4–10?

**Answer:** Melchizedek was higher in honor than Abraham. Abraham tithed through Melchizedek and received blessing from him, meaning he viewed Melchizedek as an intermediary between him and God (vv. 4–6). The text further explains that Melchizedek is, without a doubt, superior because he was the one receiving the tithe and giving the blessing, whereas Abraham was inferior because he was the one giving the tithe (v. 8). Hebrews 6:13–15 commended Abraham, but now we see that as great as he was, he is considered inferior to Melchizedek.

3. Summarize your impressions of Melchizedek from Hebrews 7:1–10.

**Answer:** Melchizedek (although mysterious) was both a priest and a king, and was an early mediator between man and God. Abraham trusted him with his tithe and received blessings from him. He points us to Christ, the perfect kingly mediator. There are many Old Testament priests and many Old Testament kings, but Melchizedek is unique because he fulfilled both of those roles before they were truly



established positions in Israel (note that in 1 Samuel 13:8–15, King Saul is punished by Samuel for acting like a priest when he offered up a burnt sacrifice).

#### ✦ A BETTER PRIEST (7:11–21)

4. What do these verses tell us about the old-covenant system—both the law and the priesthood?

**Answer:** It was imperfect and incomplete, and therefore, a better covenant and a better priest was necessary. The author’s argument is that if the old-covenant system was sufficient, Levitical priests would have been able to serve God’s people perfectly and would have provided what was necessary for salvation (v. 11).

Jesus is “the one of whom these things are spoken” (v. 13). What makes his priesthood different from what was required of priests?

**Answer:** He came from the tribe of Judah, not Levi (“not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent” v. 16), and is an eternal priest rather than a temporary priest.

5. What qualified Jesus to be our great high priest?

**Answer:** He was qualified through his “indestructible life” rather than through his “legal requirement concerning bodily descent,” in other words, belonging to the tribe of Levi (v. 16).

6. What “better hope” (v. 19) did Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross provide that the law never could?

**Answer:** We are able to place our hope of our salvation and future in the completed work of Christ. His sacrifice covered all our sin for all time, so we, unlike those who lived under the old covenant, don’t ever have to sacrifice to enjoy the benefits of God’s covenant. This is the new covenant, which replaced the old one. This hope is better because it is assured and secured.

#### ✦ A BETTER COVENANT (7:22–28)

7. In the chart that follows, note all the differences between the old-covenant Levitical priests and our great high priest Jesus:

**Answer:** answers contained in the chart passages

8. In your own words, summarize from verse 25 the three great blessings we receive through Christ our great high priest:



**Answer:** 1. We are saved completely. 2. We are able to draw near to God through Christ. 3. Christ intercedes for us.

✦ **A BETTER SANCTUARY (8:1-6)**

9. In these verses, how does Christ differ from the old-covenant priests:

**Answer:** *Where he serves:* in heaven— “seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man” (vv.1-2). *How he serves:* By offering up himself as a gift and sacrifice (vv. 3-4, see also 9:12-14, 25-26).

10. Old-covenant priests were required to offer sacrifices on behalf of God’s people. How did Jesus Christ fit this priestly qualification?

**Answer:** Old-covenant priests had to have something to offer as a sacrifice. Christ offered himself. Everything about his priesthood was superior because it brought about the fulfillment of greater promises.

✦ **A BETTER COVENANT (8:7-13)**

11. How does the new covenant differ from the old covenant in how God relates to his people?

**Answer:** We can know God and his law personally because instead of being carved on stone tablets or spoken through prophets, the law of God is within our minds and hearts through our union with Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Because Christ made the full and final sacrifice, he rendered the old-covenant system obsolete (no more sacrifices needed!). Through Christ alone God shows his people mercy.

**WEEK 6: HOW MUCH MORE . . .**

HEBREWS 9:1-28

✦ **REFLECTIONS OF A HOLY GOD (9:1-10)**

1. Described in verses 1-5 is the tent, or tabernacle, and its furnishings. The tabernacle symbolized God’s presence with his people. In the tabernacle diagram below, indicate where each item belongs. (The golden altar of incense was actually in the first section, the Holy Place, just outside the curtain that divided sections 1 and 2. Our author didn’t make a mistake! His wording here is just a bit tricky.)



**Answer:** First section, (Holy Place): lampstand, table, the bread of the presence, and the golden altar of incense; second section (the Most Holy Place): the ark of the covenant, which contained a golden urn holding manna, Aaron's staff, and the tablets of the covenant and was decorated with cherubim.

2. How did the duties of the regular priests differ from those of the high priest?

**Answer:** The priests regularly performed ritual duties in the holy place; however, the high priest once a year entered into the Most Holy Place to sacrifice for his own sins and the sins of God's people.

3. We see in verses 6–10 that the setup of the tabernacle and the duties of the priests were designed to reveal the reality of life for sinners who break God's covenant. What deep human need was exposed through these rituals?

**Answer:** Sin inhibits our access into the presence of a holy God. Only the high priest could enter, and then only once per year, and the sacrifices necessary beforehand were elaborate.

#### ✦ HOW MUCH MORE . . . (9:11–14)

4. In verses 11–14 we see why Jesus Christ is rightly designated the great high priest.

**Answer:** *How did Christ's sacrifice differ from the sacrifices offered by the old-covenant priests?* He sacrificed his own blood (rather than the blood of goats, bulls, and calves), and his sacrifice secured eternal redemption (rather than temporary purification).

*What did Christ's sacrifice accomplish for God's people?* Christ's sacrifice secured eternal redemption (v. 12), and thus allows us to serve the living God (v. 14).

5. How was each person of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—involved in Christ's sacrifice for sinners?

**Answer:** *Father:* Accepted the offering ("offered himself without blemish to God" v. 14). *Son:* Presented his own life as an offering to God ("Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered *himself*" v. 14). *Holy Spirit:* was the means by which Christ was able to offer himself to God the Father ("Christ, who *through the Holy Spirit* offer himself without blemish to God" v. 14)

#### ✦ BLOOD THAT ACTUALLY SAVES (9:15–22)

6. What was made possible in these verses only by Christ's death, and how is that illustrated in verses 16–17?

**Answer:** Our salvation, our "promised eternal inheritance" was made possible and secured through Christ's substitutionary death in our place—he died the death that



we deserve. The author uses the example of a will in verses 16–17 to illustrate this transaction. When someone dies, whatever they own is given to the living parties that are stipulated in the will. This transfer of property, wealth, and rights occurs only when the original owner has died. In the same way, the inheritance we now possessed was given over to us when Christ died on our behalf.

7. We've seen the word blood numerous times in chapter 9. Just as the new covenant was established by blood, so was the old one, which we see in the author's reflections here from Exodus 24:3–8. What did the blood symbolize in both covenants?

**Answer:** In both covenants, blood symbolizes atonement and cleansing. When covenants were created, including the Old Testament covenant, they were ratified by the parties walking in between two halves of a slaughtered animals. In essence, this was stating that if either party broke the covenant that they had made, they ought to be slaughtered as the animal had been slaughtered (Romans 6:23). It was a visual reminder of the seriousness of oath breaking. In Genesis 15, when God makes a covenant with Abraham, the Lord and not Abraham passes between the two halves of the animals—the punishment would fall solely on him if the covenant was broken. Later, in Exodus, when Moses is ritually formalizing the Sinai covenant (the Ten Commandments), the blood of these sacrificed animals is sprinkled on the altar, book of the law, the people (and symbolically their descendants), the tent, and the vessels of worship after the people heard the law read and agreed to follow it (Exodus 24:3, 7). Moses then stated, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words,” (Ex 24:8). The blood of the covenant was a visual representation of participation of the covenant. In the new covenant, the blood of Christ was sufficient to atone for covenant breaking. Since the wages of sin is death, someone had to die as payment for breaking the law. We can now look to the blood of Christ as the necessary payment made on our behalf for breaking the oath.

8. According to Leviticus 17:11, why was blood effective in the ways God prescribed?

**Answer:** Blood is effective to satisfy the covenant's demands because without blood, there is no life. The blood serves as a ransom payment.

#### ✦ **ONCE FOR ALL (9:23–28)**

9. Why do you think that the high priest had to repeat his sacrificial offering every year, whereas Jesus's sacrifice was needed only once, never to be repeated?

**Answer:** The yearly sacrificial offerings by the priest never truly and completely removed the stain of sin, and they themselves were sinful. Jesus's sacrifice, however, was perfect and sufficient since he was sinless.



10. “Once” and “once for all” appear repeatedly in verses 23–28. The high priest went once a year into the Most Holy Place, and Jesus came to sacrifice himself for sin just once. What else in this passage is noted as being a single, one-time occurrence?

**Answer:** People only die once (v. 27).

11. This is a good time to remember that our pastor-author is writing to struggling believers. How does he encourage them in verse 28 to persevere in their faith?

**Answer:** The author reminds the struggling believers that Christ will definitely return for them!

## WEEK 7: HOLDING FAST TO OUR HOPE

HEBREWS 10:1–39

### ✦ A SHADOW OF GOOD THINGS (10:1–4)

1. How are worshipers described in verse 1?

**Answer:** Imperfect. The author is making the case that since the yearly sacrifices imperfect, those who made the sacrifices were imperfect as a result.

2. The all-important Day of Atonement is clearly in mind again in verses 1–4. We remember that on this day, once a year, the high priest took sacrificial blood into the Most Holy Place, the inner chamber of the tabernacle, to atone for his sins and the sins of God’s people. According to verses 3–4, what resulted from this annual occurrence?

**Answer:** The yearly ritual slaughter of animals on the Day of Atonement was meant as a visual reminder of the seriousness and grotesque nature of our sin as well as the need for a better, perfect, and final sacrifice.

### ✦ GOD’S WILL (10:5–10)

3. Read David’s words in Psalm 40:6–8. How does his wording help us understand what God wants most from his people—something that Jesus demonstrated so perfectly?

**Answer:** God desires obedience that isn’t just going through the motions, from duty or obligation. Obedience that pleases him is from the heart.



#### ✦ OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW (10:11-18)

4. The old-covenant priests had to stand to offer sacrifices on a daily basis. How is that contrasted with Christ and his sacrifice in verses 11–12?

**Answer:** Priests were never freed from the need to stand because the need for sacrifices was never done, but Christ's one-time sacrifice enabled him to sit, a position that indicates completion. No more sacrifices are needed.

5. Notice the verb tenses in verse 14: "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." What do these verb tenses show us about why we continue to struggle with sin even though our eternal destiny is sure?

**Answer:** Our eternal destiny was set by Christ's sacrifice, which is what the author means by "has perfected." Theologians call this "definitive sanctification," which means we've been permanently set apart for God. Even so, our transformation into Christlikeness is a process worked in us through the indwelling Holy Spirit, a process we are called to cooperate with. This is called "progressive sanctification."

6. Next, in verses 15–18, we find the long-ago promise of the new covenant from Jeremiah 31:33–34 (although it's clear here in Hebrews that the Holy Spirit inspired the prophet's words). What in verse 16 makes the new covenant so different from the old one?

**Answer:** Under the old covenant, the law was written on stone tablets, but under the new covenant, the law is written in human hearts (see also 2 Corinthians 3:3). We are promised that in the new covenant, the Holy Spirit within us transforms and sanctifies us so that we are able to know God's law, obey God's law, and therefore please God.

7. According to verse 18, why does the new covenant that Christ ushered in make the old covenant obsolete?

**Answer:** Since Christ fulfilled the law for us by living a perfect life and then dying a sinner's death on our behalf, there's simply no more need for what the law required. God gave the old-covenant law to reveal his holy requirements and provided the sacrificial system as a means for covenant breakers to experience covenant blessings. But its ultimate ineffectiveness merely pointed to the need for a better covenant.

#### ✦ A NEW WAY OF LIFE (10:19-25)

8. Jesus our great high priest has abolished the need for continual sacrifices for sin and has ushered in a "new and living way" (v. 20). How did this change the way God's people can approach him?



**Answer:** We can approach him with confidence, knowing that Christ has provided access for us. Our confidence is no longer in our ability, feelings, or perception of ourselves, but instead in the completed and finished work of Christ Jesus.

9. Being sprinkled by the blood sacrifice of our great high priest, we can now draw near to God with a washed conscience. Why do you think a guilty conscience is a hindrance to drawing near to God?

**Answer:** We feel the guilt of our sin, never more so than before the presence of a holy God! Guilt can make us ashamed to approach God in prayer and shy to participate in the gathering of the church. The remedy is to look at Jesus and how his righteousness covers us rather than at ourselves or our guilt. Because of Christ—in and through Christ—we are welcomed into God’s presence even though we are still tainted by sin.

10. The believers who first received this sermon-letter had been tempted to shrink back in fear, and the faith of some was faltering. Our author exhorts them to hold onto the hope that comes through Jesus. How do we put this into practice in verses 24–25?

**Answer:** We make an effort to encourage our brothers and sisters in Christ and to motivate one another to persevere in our faith when tempted and tested. The only way we can do this is to gather regularly with other believers.

#### ✦ GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT GOD’S WRATH (10:26–31)

11. What is shown in verse 29 that makes this particular sin so heinous?

**Answer:** Underlying it is a rejection of Christ’s sacrifice and God’s grace. It is to hold the gospel in contempt.

12. It was bad enough when the old covenant was willfully violated, he says in verse 28. God sternly judged those violators. What reason is given in verse 30 for why it is so much worse to reject the new covenant that Christ initiated by his death?

**Answer:** It is worse because we know God—on this side of Christ’s death we have a fuller and more complete understanding of God than the Israelites did under the old covenant.

#### ✦ CONFIDENCE REWARDED (10:32–39)

13. The experience of persecution was nothing new for these wavering Christians. Why do you think this reminder of earlier days would be an effective means of encouraging them now?



**Answer:** It will make them question themselves—why are they wavering now, when they have walked longer with the Lord and know him better? God has preserved them thus far, and he will not fail them now.

14. What are these believers lacking, which has wreaked havoc on their confidence?

**Answer:** The lacked endurance (v. 36).

15. With a quote from Habakkuk 2:3–4, our author reminds his friends that living by faith is aligned with righteousness in God’s eyes, but the opposite is also true: God is displeased with the one who “shrinks back” (v. 38). What does the author do in verse 39 to come alongside his friends and strengthen the encouragement he’s been providing them?

**Answer:** He reminds them of their true identity—they belong to Christ, who preserves them by faith.

## WEEK 8: PORTRAITS OF FAITH

HEBREWS 11:1–11:40

### ✦ FAITH DEFINED (11:1–2)

1. What do you think is meant by “assurance” and “conviction” in this definition of faith?

**Answer:** A settled, unshakable belief that what is promised will come to pass.

2. The stage is set in verse 2 for everything that follows in chapter 11. What sort of “commendation” do you think our author is holding out here?

**Answer:** The fact that scripture records the faithful actions of these Old Testament figures is a commendation to their faith (rather than any other attribute they possess). Through their faithful actions and unwavering belief, they demonstrated that God can be trusted and that faith is rewarded.

### ✦ THE NECESSITY OF FAITH (11:3–7)

3. Skeptics argue that there’s no way the universe and all of creation came about in a literal six-day period, as we’re told in Genesis 1–2. Over the centuries, alternate theories have been suggested. Setting all this aside, what perspective on creation is rooted in faith, according to verse 3?

**Answer:** That God created the world and everything in it, not from preexisting



material but through his word—both the word of his mouth and the Word, his Son (Col. 1:16).

4. Next comes Noah. How is his faith evidenced in verse 7?

**Answer:** His faith in God was evidenced by his building of the ark long before the evidence of a flood appeared. He placed his faith in what God said (the unseen) rather than his perception of the circumstances (what was seen).

5. We've been told that Jesus's sacrifice was designed by God to enable his people to draw near to him. How does verse 6 show us the part we play in enjoying this amazing privilege?

**Answer:** Our part is to exercise faith. How could we approach something that we do not believe exists? Why would we approach something that we do not believe exists? Therefore, belief in God's existence and goodness, no matter how weak and fragile, is necessary.

#### ✦ FAITH TAKES GOD AT HIS WORD (11:8-12)

6. Our author highlights portions of Abraham's life to show us particular ways that he demonstrated faith. What do you note about Abraham's faith in verses 8-12?

**Answer:** He followed God's call when he didn't know where it would lead him. And he believed God's promise that God would bless him with his very own son through which a dynasty would come.

#### ✦ FAITH BELIEVES GOD'S PROMISES (11:13-16)

7. With faith in God's promises, Abraham structured his life as the Lord directed, even though he and his immediate descendants never reached the promised land. What kept their faith from wavering when these promises weren't realized?

**Answer:** Faith enabled them to recognize that their citizenship resided with God in eternity, not here on earth. They trusted God's promises, so they were able to look beyond their earthly lives to the better life that awaited them.

#### ✦ FAITH RECEIVES BLESSING (11:17-22)

8. Even lacking the full details of these episodes, we can see that the faith of each patriarch was oriented toward the future. Why was that a mark of their faith?

**Answer:** Through faith they made decisions based on unseen, future fulfillment of the promises that God had made to bless their offspring. The future is unseen, but that does not make it any less certain than the past.



#### ✦ FAITH CONQUERS FEAR (11:23–28)

9. Notice how many times our author prefaces his examples with the phrase “By faith . . .” How do you see faith demonstrated each time the phrase is used?

**Answer:** V. 23: Moses’ parents chose to fear God and trust his special purposes for their child rather than the king’s edict. They hid their son at great risk and chose to trust that God would protect him and them. Vv. 24–28: Moses chose to leave the temporary safety, privilege, and wealth of the Egyptian royal household and join himself to God’s people. V. 28: Moses then demonstrates faith by trusting God’s announcement of judgment and obeying God rather than relying on his perception of circumstances. His faith worked to save their lives, just as Noah’s had.

10. What connection can you make from these verses between faith and fear?

**Answer:** Faith means fearing God rather than earthly dangers. Faith overrides lesser fears and correctly orders our fears.

#### ✦ FAITH SEES DISPLAYS OF GOD’S POWER (11:29–31)

11. The people we see in verses 29–31 are noted for doing things that involved great risk. How does the author show in each case that the Lord viewed these actions as steps of faith?

**Answer:** They were willing to step out in costly obedience without knowing the outcome. Those with true faith don’t act only when safety is guaranteed but when they trust God’s goodness toward them no matter the outcome God brings about.

#### ✦ FAITH FOCUSES FORWARD (11:32–40)

12. The Bible is unapologetically honest about the sins and shortcomings of Israel’s leaders, including some who appear in verse 32. For that reason, we might wonder how these individuals make the cut and appear in this “heroes of faith” list. What does their inclusion here tell us?

**Answer:** God looks on the heart and therefore is the only one who knows genuine belief. We can’t always tell, but God can. And all genuine believers are a work in progress!

13. Earlier in this list of the faithful, we were encouraged by how the Lord rewarded faith with miracles and powerful deliverances. That’s not the case in verses 35–38. What lesson does this teach us about faith?

**Answer:** Faith is always rewarded, but not always in ways we expect or initially



hope for. One day, however—sometimes sooner, sometimes later—we will see that however God works through our faith has been the best way.

14. Surely those martyrs were blessed for their faith in ways we don't know, even though they "did not receive what was promised" (v. 39). The author is pointing out that they never saw the full unfolding of God's plan of redemption in the coming of Christ. What do we learn from verse 40 about God's intention in this regard?

**Answer:** Although they hoped in a Messiah that they never saw and we hope in a Messiah that is testified to in Scripture, we both will be made perfect at the end of all things. Together we will inherit the blessings won by Christ on the cross.

## WEEK 9: RUNNING OUR RACE

HEBREWS 12:1-29

### ✦ LOOK TO JESUS (12:1-2)

1. In addition to rejecting sin, our pastor-author calls believers to "lay aside every weight." What do you think he means by the "weight" we must set aside?
2. Endurance is possible when we fix our eyes on Jesus, focusing especially on how he lived his earthly life. In verse 2 we get a picture. What did Jesus experience as he faced the cross? And what enabled him to endure it?

**Answer:** *What did Jesus experience as he faced the cross?:* Jesus had to endure great suffering and shame on the cross. *What enabled him to endure it?:* He focused ahead, on the joy that awaited.

### ✦ DISCIPLINED IN LOVE (12:3-11)

3. Our author begins with a quote from Proverbs 3:11-12 to shape our perspective on suffering. How does he argue his case in verses 7-10?
4. What is God's purpose in all Christian suffering?

**Answer:** He argues that God is acting as a father toward his children. Fathers discipline their children in love, to teach and shape them for adulthood. In the same way, God disciplines us to make us holy and transform us to reflect our Savior.



**Answer:** To enable his people to know peace and righteousness. The suffering caused by God's discipline is worth the sanctification that it produces.

5. What attitude do you think is necessary to be “trained” by God's discipline?

**Answer:** A humble, soft heart that doesn't turn away from God in anger or bitterness but instead recognizes that our suffering is meant for our ultimate blessing. The Holy Spirit helps us, enabling us to recognize God's good hand in our lives and thus making us eager and willing to endure the pain of discipline.

✦ **DISCIPLINED FOR GOOD (12:12-17)**

6. An important aspect of spiritual training is removing impediments from our lives. What do you think it means to “make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed” (v. 13)?

**Answer:** Making straight the paths for our feet means to be wise in how we conduct our lives, to develop habits and routines that promote godliness. This could look like changing how we drive to work, implementing settings on our phones, or even avoiding spending time with certain people to avoid sin. It also includes regular Bible reading, church participation, and actively loving fellow believers. The Christian life is not just about killing sin, but also about pursuing holiness.

7. Verses 14–16 involve training practices carried out in the fellowship of God's people. The pursuit of peace and holiness are key to building up both ourselves and our fellow believers. Bitterness, on the other hand, tears down. What is bitterness, and how do you think a “root of bitterness springs up”?

**Answer:** Bitterness is entrenched resentment over disappointment about people or circumstances. It's the opposite of contentment. Roots of bitterness spring up when we allow discontentment to fester rather than entrusting our circumstances into God's hands to work out in his perfect way and time.

✦ **DISCIPLINED FOR ENDURANCE (12:18-24)**

8. As you read over Hebrews 12:18–24, how would you summarize the difference between God on Mount Sinai and God in the heavenly Jerusalem, and what makes the two experiences so different?

**Answer:** God on Mount Sinai was approachable, but deadly—a “blazing fire” who was terrifying to behold. Apart from the intercession of Christ, God's wrath is all sinners will see. God is a judge with a law to uphold and consequences to measure out justly. God in the heavenly Jerusalem is seen as awe-inspiring and majestic because, having been united to Christ and made perfect in him, God's just wrath



has been forever removed from his people. Through Christ, we are under the new covenant (grace and mercy). Those who are not covered by the blood of Christ and therefore under the new covenant sit at the foot of Mount Sinai, beholden to terrifying judgment.

✦ **DON'T REFUSE HIM! (12:25-29)**

9. Our author's friends must hold fast to their faith in the midst of suffering, and they must disregard temptations that can take hold during hard seasons. What specific temptation is warned against in verse 25, and who issues this warning?

**Answer:** The gospel is held out to us from Christ himself through God's Word. The Israelites in the wilderness rejected God's instructions, refusing to heed his warning about unbelief. We are warned here to embrace Christ by faith, not fall away through unbelief.

10. God's presence shook Mount Sinai back in Moses's day, but at the end of the ages, the whole earth will shake. What is the purpose for this final shaking?

**Answer:** Everything tainted by man's fall into sin will be permanently removed so that what remains is true, righteous, and beautiful.

11. What exhortation does the author give to his frightened friends, and what hope is wrapped up in it?

**Answer:** Those who embrace Christ do not have to be afraid. The hope we have in him for our future is assured, iron-clad, and unshakable. We cannot lose our inheritance nor our citizenship in the eternal kingdom that we even now participate in.

**WEEK 10: NEVER FORSAKEN**

HEBREWS 13:1-25

✦ **LOVE IN ACTION (13:1-6)**

1. First on this list of practical ways to love is hospitality. In ancient Near Eastern culture, showing hospitality was a big deal. Guests were offered the very best, no matter the cost to the host. Our author thinks back to when Abraham welcomed strangers with a lavish meal and every comfort he could provide (Genesis 18:1-8). Unbeknownst to Abraham, his guests were angels in human form, sent by God! Why do you think that hospitality is a powerful demonstration of love?

**Answer:** Hospitality is tangible generosity, as it gives to others from not only finan-



cial resources but also time and attention. Offering hospitality demonstrates a desire to know, serve, and extend compassion to others. Hospitality also enfolds strangers into the warmth of a home or family.

2. What attitude or feeling is our pastor-author highlighting in verse 3?

**Answer:** The author is reminding the readers that the church is one body, and we are called to, “rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15). We are to blend our hearts with the persecuted and mistreated. Since we are one, our care for another is such that “if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Corinthians 12:26).

3. Next on the list is sexual purity, specifically as it concerns marriage. How are believers to view marriage—not just their own but the marriage of others as well?

**Answer:** All marriages—not solely the institution of marriage but each individual union—are to be upheld in honor, not just our own. God gave marriage as a way to reflect Christ’s union with his bride, the church, so to cherish marriage is to reflect the value of the gospel.

4. It’s clear from verse 5 that love of money breeds discontentment. Why do you think love of money and discontentment go hand in hand?

**Answer:** Someone who loves money will find herself perpetually dissatisfied with how much she has, believing that more is better. And with this mindset, she will feel she never has enough. Additionally, riches in this life are totally uncertain, so to “love” them is to set one’s heart on something unreliable that will, sooner or later, prove disappointing.

5. From the Old Testament quotes in verses 5–6, what is the foundation of lasting contentment?

**Answer:** Trusting in God alone and knowing him as a steadfast helper in times in every arena of life.

#### ✦ SEEKING THE CITY TO COME (13:7-17)

6. The blessing of biblically sound leaders is especially vital during times of difficulty when faith is tested. What three approaches toward faithful leaders are advocated in verse 7?

**Answer:** 1. Acknowledge their God-given authority and the word they preach and teach. 2. Observe the way they live, love, and exercise their faith personally. 3. Seek to pattern your life on theirs.



7. Look again at verses 13–15. What attitude and outlook is to characterize our Christian life?

**Answer:** We are to be willing to suffer for his sake, remembering that he suffered before us on our behalf. As we do, we keep in mind that a better life awaits us.

8. How are believers to live under the authority of their spiritual leaders, and why?

**Answer:** We are to obey and submit to the spiritual authorities placed over us, remembering that the authority they exercise is given by God for our good.

✦ **WELL EQUIPPED (13:18–25)**

9. From the benediction in verses 20–21, list everything noted about God and what he did and does.

**Answer:** God brings peace. He raised Jesus from death, and that same resurrection power is at work to grow us and keep us faithful to the end. Through our union with Christ, God transforms us so that please him in every way—a transformation that will one day be perfect and complete.

10. The epistle has taught us a lot about the old covenant, especially the practice of the priesthood and how the priests carried out their ministry. According to verse 20, how is the new covenant—the one we live under with Christ as our great high priest—different from the old one?

**Answer:** The new covenant is eternal because it was sealed by Christ's sacrificial offering of his own blood, which paid for the sins of God's people once and for all.