

HEBREWS 1-9

**JESUS**

*greater than*

**>>>**

# WELCOME TO 2020

As I look back over the last decade there has been great change in our culture and even our church culture when it comes to what it means to be a faithful and committed Christian. It may even be that our passion and commitment is not as strong as it once was, especially when it comes to proclaiming the name of Jesus.

I have continued to wonder, do we still believe that Jesus is Greater than anything and everything? Has our picture of who He is grown with our own growth and maturity?

I am convinced there is no better place to start a new year and new decade than by diving into the letter to the Hebrews. There is much that we can learn and much that can either restore or build our confidence in Him. Over the next ten weeks, we will cover Chapters 1 to 9.

I love the way R. Kent Hughes begins his commentary on Hebrews...*"C.S. Lewis memorably portrayed the growing Christians experience of an ever enlarging Christ in his Chronicles of Narnia. Lucy, caught up in her spiritual quest, saw the lion Aslan (Christ) shining while huge in the moonlight... 'Welcome, child' he said, 'Aslan' said Lucy, 'you're bigger.' 'That is because you are older, little one,' answered he. 'Not because you are?' 'I am not. But every year you*

*grow, you will find me bigger."* Hughes comments...*"Expanding souls encounter an expanding Christ!... Hebrews... presents the greatness of Christ like no other New Testament writing does and... it repeatedly demands a response from the reader."*

Every time people ask me about what has helped my faith grow or what it is that has played a significant role in shaping my Christian journey the answer has always been the same—Being part of a group of people who gave time to wrestle with God's word outside of the Sunday gathering.

**It is my hope that the questions that follow will not only allow us to focus on Jesus being superior to all others, but to accept He is Greater Than!**

My prayer is that this series will produce a memorable start to our new decade, as we continue to acknowledge that it is "On this Rock" (The Gospel) that He continues to build His church, as we continue to place ourselves in the hands of our loving Saviour.

**Ian Barnett**



**Senior Minister  
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**Our mission** is to build a community of grace committed to making disciples of Jesus.

**Our vision** is to be a faithful, adventurous and compassionate church with an expanding influence on communities, cities and nations with the hope and love of God.





STUDY TWO  
**LISTEN UP**  
HEBREWS 2:1-4

Having established Christ's supreme authority, the preacher confronts listeners with their responsibilities not to drift away. How can we ignore such a great salvation (v3)? A constant theme throughout the book is the reliability of hope in Christ and the need to hold fast to it. Take note, the author also counselled caution...if those who were disobedient to the older revelation, the Law of Moses given through angels (Acts 7:38), were punished, those offered salvation in Christ surely would not escape. No doubt we need to wrestle with today's views that it seems harsh or outdated to talk about God punishing sin. Yet this reality is woven throughout the Old Testament (Ps 62; Ezek 7:3) and was expanded by Jesus

(Matt. 5:22; 16:27; 23). The foundation for God's punishment is His holy character and divine love. Sin is a force that moves and separates people from a holy God. The sending of Jesus has increased the urgency and importance of hearing and responding to this message.

**Read Hebrews 2:1-4**

1. In verse 1 we are given advice on how not to 'drift away'. Is that possible?
2. How might we drift away? How can we guard against 'drifting away'? See Romans 10:17. Have you had any experience of this?

3. Given the superiority of Christ over angels and His identity as the divine, the Son of God demands that He be heard. How might you pay more careful attention?
4. Commentators generally think v2 relates to the Mosaic Covenant. So if the old covenant came from God, delivered by mere angels demanded retribution for sin...what do you consider God will think of those who have spurned the gospel now delivered to us by His own Son?
5. What should our response be now that God has 'spoken to us by His Son'? (ch1:2)
6. What is the point of "signs, wonders... miracles...gifts of the Holy Spirit" according to verse 4?

**Pray**

God, give us hearts to listen and be open to you and your will.



### STUDY THREE

# HE IS THE MAN

HEBREWS 2:5-18

In addition to the references of the Son's supremacy, this passage discusses in depth Jesus coming to earth and taking on a "status" lower than that of the angels. Jesus walked the earth as a human before being exalted back to heaven. In verses 10-18, the author explains the incarnation, which was necessary for Jesus to be able to identify with our suffering. To add weight to this, Psalm 8 is referenced. There is suffering and becoming a Christian does not relieve this. What suffering does, or should do, is force us to wrestle more passionately with the character and purpose of God. However, as Larry Crabb has pointed out, "feeling better" has become more important than finding God. **While chapter 1 highlights the**

**divinity of Jesus, chapter 2 highlights the humanity of Jesus.** Without His humanity, He cannot become our Saviour. We need to remember that we are living in the middle between Christ's first coming and His second.

#### Read Hebrews 2:5-18

1. In what sense is mankind a little lower than the angels (v7)? How are we "crowned with glory and honour" - more than angels? (vs7b-8)
2. What does it mean that Jesus, 'tasted death for everyone' (v9)? Verses 10-18 explains.

3. What does the writer mean when he says that Jesus would be made 'perfect' through suffering? Wasn't Jesus already perfect? How would suffering make Him perfect?
4. What do you think of Larry Crabb's comment above? Is that true for you?
5. Do you think of Jesus as your brother? What are the implications of verse 12 for you?
6. Verse 17 tells us that Jesus 'had to be made like His brothers in every way.' This makes Jesus' incarnation indispensable. How does this encourage us in our daily life?
7. See verse 18. How can Jesus' temptations help us in our temptations?

#### Pray

Thank you God that you can empathise with us, you know what it's like to be human, because you experienced humanity first-hand.



## STUDY FOUR

# HE IS GREATER THAN

HEBREWS 3:1-19

Since believers have been identified as “Children” (ch2:13) they need a model of someone who has lived out the faithfulness of a Son. Jesus, God’s Son, provides an example superior to that of the greatest Old Testament (OT) figures. As creator, He has greater authority than Moses does. Jesus must be the object of our worship. In our culture today, those we call heroes or superstars are likely to be Instagram influencers, singers, media personalities, or sports stars. All of this will lead us to follow the wrong example. Once again, the author quotes the OT; in this case, it is Psalm 95:7-11. The hearer’s were to follow the example of those who had fallen in the desert but were to hold firmly to their confidence. They were to encourage one another “today” (v13) while responding obediently to God’s voice.

**We need help to see that the faithful who focus on Christ, will be faithful**

**until the end and realise that sin hinders our faithfulness.** Faithfulness is a community affair. We truly do depend on each other.

### Read Hebrews 3:1-19

1. What is this ‘calling’ (v1) that the ‘holy brothers (and sisters)’ share? What is our life to look like under this heavenly calling?
2. If we really are ‘brothers and sisters’, how might we be a better ‘brother’ or ‘sister’ to the other brothers and sisters within our Church?
3. The writer of Hebrews urges us to ‘fix our thoughts’ on Jesus (v1). The world would have us focus on anything but Jesus. What are some of those things that distract you?

4. How can you learn to consider Jesus (i.e. by fixing your thoughts on Him) more frequently and rightly in your life?

5. How would you help a Christian brother or sister if they are having difficulty holding on to their ‘courage and hope’ (v6)?

6. Put into your own words the reasoning in verses 1-6, concluding with the statement, ‘we are His house.’ What is the writer saying? Think about the ‘if’ in verse 6 - does it suggest that our salvation is conditional? (see also v14)

7. We have in the passage today a warning about not having a ‘sinful, unbelieving heart’ (v12). What happens if that persists? Is there an antidote to having a heart like that? How might you fall for ‘sin’s deceitfulness’ (v13)?

8. In verse 7 the writer introduces the quotation of Psalm 95 with: ‘as the Holy Spirit says.’ What does that tell you about the Bible?

### Pray

Today when we hear your voice Lord, let not our hearts be hardened, but be immediately obedient.





STUDY FIVE

# IN HIM WE REST

HEBREWS 4:1-13

There is a profound moment in this letter (for example, see vs12-13). The author saw some of the original audience as poised between either entering God's rest or turning their backs to a spiritual desert. Some hearers were far too casual in their evaluation of salvation and the consequences of rejecting it (see ch2:1-3). What is being impressed on them is the real opportunity that lay before those who were willing to take God at His word and move forward in obedience to lay hold of his promises of rest. **To put it simply, the example of Israel's rebellion in the wilderness is a strong model of what not to do.** Once again the author is reflecting upon the failure to enter God's rest as he takes

us back to Genesis where God rested from His work (Genesis 2:2). Jesus is the gateway to enter God's rest. It is through His faithfulness as high priest, that the door is opened. We are called to trust and obey!

We all need to be challenged in connection with the fast-paced life we are living. Spiritual wandering and restlessness are not new problems. (Matthew 11:28).

**Read Hebrews 4:1-13**

1. What does the 'therefore' mean in v1? What does v2 add? Why isn't 'hearing' enough? What is 'faith'?

2. The author of Hebrews is writing to correct a theological crisis. It appears they are in danger of missing out on 'God's rest'. See Psalm 95:11 (quoted in v3). Why might they be missing out on it?

3. What are the different understandings of 'rest' in this passage? (vs1,3,4,5,6,8,9,10,11)

4. In v11 comes the 'So what?' as we ponder on how to respond to what we have heard so far. Discuss what you and your group might take away today, especially in relation to 'make every effort to enter that rest.'

5. What might be a proper response to the warnings of v1 and v11? (See v12) What do those descriptions of God's Word mean for us in practical terms?

6. How should Christians use their Sundays? How is Sunday different from a Sabbath day under the Old Testament? Is Sunday a day of rest for Christians? Do you ever reflect on your heavenly calling and God's heavenly rest on Sunday?

**Pray**

May we find our rest in you our God.



## STUDY SIX

# HE OPENS THE DOOR

HEBREWS 4:14 - 5:10

Therefore, in light of all that Jesus has done as our compassionate high priest, we are invited to *“approach the throne of grace with confidence”* (v14). Christians are to draw near to God with unabashed openness, since He alone is the true source of mercy and grace, the *“one who will help us in our time of need”* (v16). The high priest has three roles. Firstly, he offers sacrifice for sin, secondly he represents the people and finally God appoints him. Jesus truly represents us as the Son of Man. He can sympathise with the people, yet unlike Aaron, is without sin, and is able to become our perfect sacrifice. Melchizedek is now mentioned—there will be more said of this later (see Ch7).

Jesus’ high priesthood represents an open door to God, rather than a heavenly bouncer who stands between God and

humanity. **Jesus as our go between escorts us to God, tearing down the obstacles that had prevented our free access to His presence.**

### Read Hebrews 4:14 - 5:10

1. Look back to Chapter 2 to understand what the “therefore” (v14) is there for. What claims are made about Jesus there? How do they support the truths and claims of Hebrews 4:14-16?
2. In v14 the writer of Hebrews encourages us to “hold firmly to the faith we profess”. How would you summarise the “faith that you profess”?

3. Share with others your “confidence” regarding prayer. How does vs15-16 help us understand how we might “approach the throne of grace with confidence”? What does this mean for you? See Romans 8:26-27.

4. Why is it so important that we understand that Jesus can sympathise with sinners? (v15) How does that affect your outlook on the Christian life? How does it equip you in your fight against sin?

5. What was the purpose of Old Testament priests? How did Jesus fulfil the duties of High Priest? In what ways was Jesus a “typical priest”?

6. Why is Jesus compared to Melchizedek? What does v6 mean?

7. In Hebrews 5:9 we might have expected to read “He (Jesus) became the source of salvation to all who believe (in) Him”. Instead we read “He became the ... for all who obey Him”. What is the significance of the writer’s choice of words? See Job 1:1,8

### Pray

God, grant us everything we need to trust you, hold on to you and not be ashamed of you. Give us the truckloads of confidence Paul is talking about in this passage.





## STUDY SEVEN

# HE IS OUR HOPE

HEBREWS 5:11 - 6:20

The author calls upon the hearers to grapple with their spiritual immaturity. Growth does not occur automatically and believers are called to move beyond the basics and train themselves to discern between good and evil. In fact, what should have been happening by now is that the hearers should have become teachers themselves. **Spiritual growth is key and a believer's development includes a process of moving forward to maturity while being grounded in the faithful teaching of God's word.** In a challenging and difficult section, the writer warns of falling away from God. If anyone turns his or her back on God, there will be no opportunity to be restored to repentance. These are hard words to hear and 6:4-12 is considered one of the most disputed passages in the NT. If you reject Christ, there is simply nowhere else to go. As v6 says it is like *"they are crucifying the Son of God all over again"*. Of course, there are better days predicted, because *"God is not unjust"*.

How blessed we are to remember that Christ is our anchor (v19).

### **Read Hebrews 5:11 - 6:20**

1. In v11 how accurately does the writer's description of his readers apply to you personally? What is meant by "milk" and "solid food"? What changes need to be made to your "diet"? Who is responsible for your "diet"?
2. What are the "elementary teachings about Christ" that we are to leave behind? How well grounded are you in these? (vs1-2). What does "going on to maturity" look like for you?
3. Read Mark 4:13-20 and John 15:1-8. How do these passages help us in our understanding of Hebrews 6:4-6?

4. Throughout this letter, there is the constant reminder of the need to endure to the end (see Hebrews 2:1; 3:6,12,14; 4:1,11; 6:11) Can you envisage a time or situation which would cause you to fall away? What are some of the ways in which we can make sure that we don't fall away?

5. Can we ever be sure that someone has fallen away to the extent that they have crucified the Son of God all over again? Should we stop praying for such a person? See Romans 11:11-24; 1 John 5:15-21 and Numbers 14:13-20.

6. How do God's promises to Abraham apply to believers today? What does it mean to be an heir with Abraham? How does being an heir of God's promise change your perspective on the promises of this world?

7. What part do our good works play in our salvation (v10) See 1 Thessalonians 1:3 and Titus 2:14; 3:4-7.

### **Pray**

May our hope to get through life, not be based on circumstances but on the Lord Jesus.



STUDY EIGHT

# HE IS KING

HEBREWS 7:1-28

The priest Melchizedek foreshadowed the heavenly high priest, Jesus Christ. Melchizedek was *"like the Son of God"* in that he remains a *"priest forever"*. This was in contrast to the Levitical priesthood, which clearly had a beginning and an end. We need to understand that for the first Christians, what we call the Old Testament comprised the sum total of God's word. The author is briefly explaining the connections between Melchizedek and Jesus. (See Genesis 14:17-20 & Psalm 110). We often refer to Jesus as our Lord and Saviour, even friend; I wonder how often we think of Him as *"King of righteousness"* and *"King of peace"*. Jesus is indeed King. In Jesus' appointment as high priest, believers have a new and superior way of approaching God.

**This is a WOW moment and a major cataclysmic change**, for all hearers then

and now. Jesus' authority does not come from His good deeds or His ancestry but because He is the eternal mediator between God and man.

**Read Hebrews 7:1-28**

1. What did you know about Melchizedek before reading Hebrews 7? See what Genesis 14 and Psalm 110 reveal about Melchizedek? How do these passages inform us regarding the priesthood and kingship of Jesus?
2. What were the roles of kings in the Old Testament? Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20. What were the roles of priests? See Exodus 28 and Leviticus 4.

3. Why do we need Christ to fulfil the offices of prophet, priest and king? In what ways does Christ fulfil these? How does this threefold office demonstrate Christ's perfection?
4. How does the sacrificial system demonstrate the costliness of sin? How does Christ's sacrifice demonstrate it? How does the biblical understanding of the penalties of sin compare to the secular world's understanding of sin's consequences?
5. What is the significance of Christ shedding His own blood instead of another's? How should this shape our understanding of Christ's death on the cross as it relates to us?
6. How do we know Jesus Christ was not the Father's back up plan? What does Jesus teach us in Luke 24:13-49 about the Old Testament and God's sovereign plan from the beginning?

**Pray**

Thanks that our salvation is complete through Jesus, and that as we can pray to him, Jesus is also interceding for us.



# STUDY NINE HE IS JESUS

HEBREWS 8:1-9:10.

The writer continued to contrast high priests and the exalted Son, quoting Jeremiah 31:31-34 and pointing out that the new covenant is “founded on better promises” (v6). The second covenant replaces the first and the author wants them to understand the much greater value is the new covenant in Christ. We may miss the impact of Hebrews 8 if we fail to understand the value of the Old Testament Judaism. It is important to realise that maybe the author shrouds the appearance of Melchizedek so that the priesthood of Jesus could shine. Moreover, Jesus’ ministry was not performed on earth but in heaven, where He sits at the right hand of God. In heaven we find true sanctuary, the one true tabernacle. **It was God’s plan for Jesus to bring in the new covenant.**

The old had weaknesses, as it was incomplete and ineffective. Israel, God’s son had failed, but in Jesus, God’s Son succeeds.

### Read Hebrews 8:1-6 & 9:1-10

1. Did Christ’s work for us end with His death and resurrection? If not, then in what ways is Christ still at work? How is His current work significant for your life?
2. What does it mean for Christians to approach God? How does this passage inform our understanding of worshipping God? Where does Scripture command us to approach and worship God?

### Read Hebrews 8:7-13

3. What do you understand by the word “covenant”? What were the promises of the first covenant? (Hebrews 8:6)
4. Read Jeremiah 31:31-37. Why was it necessary for God to make a new covenant with his people? How would the new covenant remedy the situation?
5. If God’s people broke His covenant in the Old Testament, is it possible to break the new covenant today? See Hebrews 10:26-39.
6. How effective were the sacrifices offered by the Levitical priests? Did they really make atonement, that is, take away the sin of the people? If not, what was their purpose? See Leviticus 16:11,17,22 also Hebrews 10:1-4.
7. What is the one big lesson that you take from this very difficult passage?

### Pray

May what we learn about the old covenant sacrificial system give us greater understanding, praise and thanksgiving for what Jesus did for us on the cross.



STUDY TEN  
**HE GAVE ALL**  
HEBREWS 9:11-28

Having described in detail, the earthly tabernacle in the first section of Chapter 9, the author now goes on to describe the entrance of Jesus into the true tabernacle, not with the blood of bulls and goats, but His own blood. Three things are being pointed out how Christ's covenant offering is superior to the Old Testament animal sacrifices. Firstly, the blood offering was His own (vs13-22). Secondly, the place was in heaven (vs23-24) not an earthy tabernacle and finally the offering was eternal (vs25-28). We also see references to Christ's last coming (v11), His present availability in God's presence on our behalf (v24). Plus His future appearance to bring final salvation to all who await His coming (v28).

Here, one week out from Easter 2020, it is helpful to remember that with Jesus' sacrifice there needs to be no repetition. It was the perfect sacrifice for His people. This is in contrast to high priests who

had to offer sacrifices repeatedly (The Day of Atonement). **Jesus' return from the most holy place will only be for the purpose of bringing His people home and giving them the final blessing of salvation, namely the long awaited heavenly rest.**

**Read Hebrews 9:11-28**

1. What does it mean for your conscience to be cleansed "from dead works" (v14) as opposed to being ceremonially cleansed (v13)? How does the cleansing of v14 free you to genuinely worship God and joyfully serve Him here at FAC?
2. To whom does v15 apply? Jews born under the old covenant, who have now come to Christ under the new covenant? Any one else? See Romans 3:25-26.

3. How was the first covenant put into effect with blood? See Exodus 24:1-8

4. Why was blood necessary for making covenants? See Genesis 15:9-21; Psalm 50:5; Jeremiah 34:17-20. How is forgiveness connected to the shedding of blood (v22)?

5. If Jesus has become the full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, is there any place for offering sacrifices today? See Hebrews 13:15-16.

6. It is sometimes suggested that people get a second chance after they die. What do you think? What does Hebrews 9:27 teach us about life after death?

7. What have you learned from this study of Hebrews this term? What things have strengthened your confidence in Christ?

**Pray**

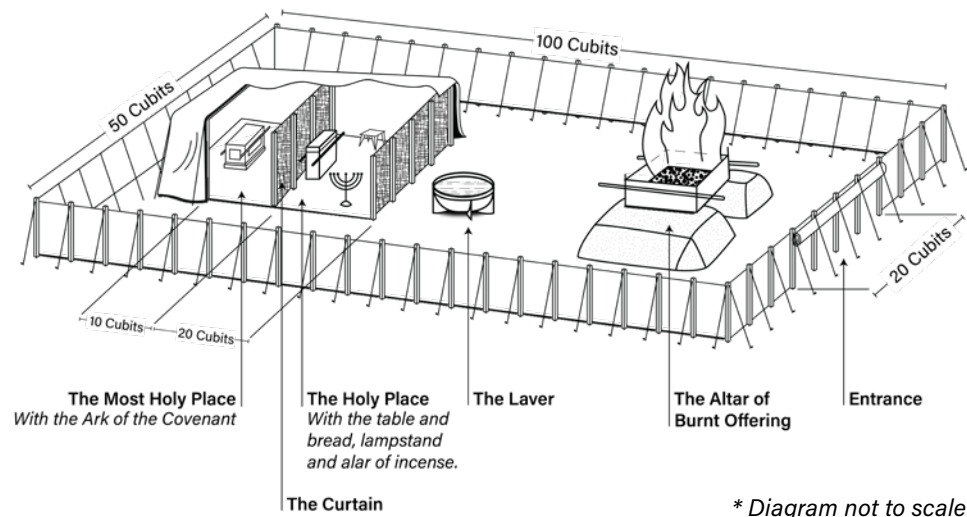
Let us not take for granted the privilege of allowing the cross and Jesus' resurrection to transform our lives. May this transform our lives, and may we share this with others that they too would have lives transformed.

# THE TABERNACLE

The tabernacle consisted of a tent-like structure (the tabernacle proper) covered by rug-like coverings for a roof, and an external courtyard (150 feet by 75 feet). The whole compound was surrounded by a high fence about 7 feet in height. The fence was made of linen hangings held by pillars.

The tent (tabernacle proper) was divided into the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. The tent was made of acacia wood boards overlaid with gold

and fitted together to form the walls, measuring 45 by 15 feet. On top, four layers of curtains acted as a roof to shield the tabernacle from sun and rain. The innermost layer was woven with fine linen and embroidered with figures of cherubim (angels), the second layer was made of goats' hair, the third layer was made of rams' skins dyed red, and the outermost layer was made of porpoise skins. The curtains were pinned to the ground with loops and clasps.<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup>Information from Goodseed.com. (2020). Diagram of the Tabernacle and Basic Layout. [online] Available at: <https://www.goodseed.com/diagram-of-the-tabernacle-and-basic-layout.html>

# PRAYER

Thank you for the book of Hebrews revealing to us how Jesus exceeds all other people, pursuits, objects or hopes to which we can easily offer our allegiance. May these studies continue to expand our knowledge of Jesus, our love for Jesus, and our trust in Jesus for every part of our lives. Use this book to enable

us to persevere, through whatever we are suffering through. Use this book to challenge and encourage us to keep on sharing Jesus as the source of our hope, love and trust with others who come into our lives.

Amen.



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# NOTES

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