



SIMPLY THE BEST

Studies in Hebrews 1-10

Bathurst Presbyterian Church 2017



Jesus is phenomenal. Seriously. He is mind numbingly phenomenal.

That's why it's such a tragedy when people refuse to follow him. Or worse still, when people decide to stop following him!

Hebrews is a New Testament letter written to Jewish Christians who are in danger of giving up on Jesus because they don't fully appreciate how amazing he is. For this reason, the book of Hebrews contains some of the most astounding descriptions of Jesus in the New Testament. The author's aim is to dazzle us with the scope of Christ's majesty so that we'd never dream of turning away from him. Why on earth would you? He is simply the best!

These studies take us through Hebrews 1-10. As with any study, you'll get the most out of them if you're able to read the relevant passage and answer the questions before your group meets. That will also equip you to best encourage the others in your group with what you say. However, if some weeks you don't get to prepare, please don't use that as an excuse to not go along. Just being there is a great way of showing the group that they're important to you. Plus, the studies are designed to be useful even if you're thinking about them for the first time at group.

Each study firstly works through the verses (section by section) so as to help build an understanding of what the overall passage means. The study then ends with an "Implications" section in which some practical applications are considered. Hebrews is a pastoral book (Heb 13:22) which is intended to change the way we live so please make sure to give adequate time to this final important part of the study.

After all, if Jesus is simply the best, he definitely deserves the best from us.

Hebrews 1:1-2:4

Read Hebrews 1:1-4

1. Are there any clues about who this letter is written to? How might this influence how we are to read it?
2. What are some of the different ways God spoke to people throughout the Old Testament?
3. What are the "last days"? (see Acts 2:14-17) How does God primarily speak to us during these last days? What are the benefits of this method? What implications does this have for when we talk to people about God?
4. List the things we're told about Jesus in these verses? Try describing each of these in your own words.

Read Hebrews 1:5-14

5. A lot of different Psalms are quoted in these verses. What seems to be the main point of the section?
6. What new things do we discover about Jesus in these verses?

Read Hebrews 2:1-4

7. What is the connection between these verses and the previous section?

8. What is "the message spoken by angels"? (have a look at Acts 7:53 for a clue)

9. What message has Jesus announced to us? How was this message confirmed to the original readers of Hebrews? In what ways has it been confirmed to us?

10. What do you think is the main lesson of these verses for us?

Implications

- Lots of things are said about Jesus in this passage. Were there any that especially impacted you? Why?

- What effect should it have on our lives knowing that Jesus sustains "all things by his powerful word"?

- What are some of the most common ways that people "drift away" from the gospel?

- What things can we be doing to avoid drifting away? Try and be as practical and specific as possible.

Hebrews 2:5-3:16

Read Hebrews 2:5-9

1. In these verses, the author refers to Psalm 8. Read through the Psalm. What is it about?
2. What is the main idea the author is wanting to communicate by quoting Psalm 8?
3. Despite what Ps 8 describes, what do we *not* see? (v8b). Can you think of any examples in life of this happening?
4. What we do see is Jesus who was "made a little lower than the angels." (v9) What is this referring to and how did it fulfill Ps 8?

Read Hebrews 2:10-18

5. Why was it "fitting" for Christ to suffer? In what way did it make him perfect?
6. What ramifications did Jesus temptations, suffering and death have for us?
7. From these verses, list as many reasons as you can why Jesus needed to become a man.

Read Hebrews 3:1-6

8. What aspect of Jesus being a man does the author want us to focus on in these verses?

9. In what ways is Jesus superior to Moses? Why would it have been important for the original readers to appreciate this? Why is it important for us?

Implications

- This passage describes humanity as being held in slavery by their fear of death? What do you think this means and how do you think this is reflected in everyday life?

- What does it personally mean for you, that Christ “tasted death” for you? How should this influence the way we live?

- What does it mean to ‘fix your thoughts on Jesus’? Why is this important? What practical things can we do to help each other do this?

- What is the most outstanding thing about Jesus you have learnt in this study? Can you think of one specific thing you’re going to change as a result of this truth?

Hebrews 3:7-4:13

Read Hebrews 3:7-19

1. Verses 7-11 quote Psalm 95 in order to remind us of a tragic episode in Israel's history. (you can read about it in Numbers 14 if you're not sure of the details). In what ways did Israel "test" and "try" God?
2. What happened to Israel as a result of their hardened hearts? Do you think this was reasonable of God?
3. What lesson does the author want us to learn from Israel's mistake?
4. The word "today" is used several times in these verses. Why is this a significant term in the argument?
5. Verses 16-18 ask a series of rhetorical questions. What point is the author trying to make?

Read Hebrews 4:1-13

6. What is God's rest? In what sense are we still able to enter God's rest? (v1)

7. What kind of rest did Joshua give the Israelites. How do we know this wasn't the complete rest that God has in mind for his people?
8. List out all the phrases which describe the effort we should go to to enter God's rest?
9. How do v12-13 fit into the structure of the argument?

Implications

- What sorts of things can hardened our heart against God? How can we help each other resist this? Try and be as practical and specific as possible.
- What encourages and spurs you on to follow Jesus? Why is it important to "encourage one another daily"? List some ways that you could do this in the coming week.
- What kind of rest do non-Christians seek in life? How is this different to the rest that Christians long for? How should this reflect in our lifestyle choices?
- In what ways have you found God's word to be "sharper than any double-edged sword" in your own life?
- What challenges did this passage put before you? What comforts does it put before you?

Hebrews 4:14-5:10

Read Hebrews 4:14-16

1. What was the role of priests in the Old Testament? (have a sneak look ahead at 5:1). How important would this role have been for Israel?
2. What reasons are given for Jesus making such a good priest?
3. How is Jesus similar to us? How is he different? Why are both these things important?
4. These verses start with "therefore" to show they are closely connected with the previous section. What do you think is the connection?

Read Hebrews 5:1-10

5. What are some ways in which Jesus is like the high priests in the Old Testament?¹
6. What are some ways in which he is different?
7. Remind yourself of Jesus "cries and tears" by reading Mark 14:32-41. Why do you think Jesus was so traumatized by the prospect of the cross?

¹ These verses mentions someone called Melchizedek (v6,10). Don't be too distracted by him. We'll discover all about him in Study 6.

8. In what sense did Jesus learn obedience through suffering? What was the result?

9. What do you think is the main point of this passage?

Implications

- Do you regularly pray concerning things you care deeply about? Why or why not? What things in this passage would encourage you to do this?
- What is involved in “holding firmly” to the faith? When are we tempted not to? How does this passage help?
- What is the most outstanding thing about Jesus you have learnt in this study? Can you think of one specific thing you’re going to change as a result of this truth?

Hebrews 5:11-6:20

Read Hebrews 5:11-6:3

1. What is the "this" in v11 which the author would like to tell them more about? Why doesn't he do that in these verses? (The author will return to this topic at the end of this section in 6:20).
2. How does the author contrast the actual spiritual condition of his readers with what it ought to be? What does he want them to be doing as a result?
3. Look at the truths listed in 6:1-2. In what sense are these "elementary teachings about Christ"?

Read Hebrews 6:4-12

4. What kind of case is being referred to in v4-6? Could it be referring to someone losing their salvation? Why or why not?
5. What is the point of the illustrations used in v7-8?
6. What is the author confident of in his readers? What is the basis for his confidence? Why does he want it for his readers?

Read Hebrews 6:13-20

7. What is the connecting thought between v12 and v13?

8. What did God promise Abraham? What made God's promise so certain?

9. Why is the certainty of God's promises such a comfort for those who put our hope in Jesus?

Implications

- Why do you think some passages (like this one) warn against falling away but other passages (eg Rom 8:28-39) emphasize God's sovereign care of his people? Which type of passage do you most need to heed at the moment?
- What things in life can hinder us from advancing onto "solid food"? What practical things can we do to minimize these hindrances?
- What do you think is the most challenging truth in this passage? How should it change your life? Give specifics.
- What do you think is the most encouraging truth in this passage? How should it change your life? Give specifics.

Hebrews 7:1-28

Read Genesis 14:17-20 and Psalm 110

1. Congratulations you have just read every OT reference about a person called Melchizedek. You're now a Melchizedek expert (the certificate is in the mail)! Did you notice any thing about Melchizedek which makes him seem particularly important?

Read Hebrews 7:1-10

2. Why is it significant that Melchizedek was without genealogy"? (v3) Do you think this is meant to be taken figuratively or literally? Do you think it makes any difference to the authors point?

3. What evidence does the passage give for Melchizedek's importance?

Read Hebrews 7:11-22

4. How is Melchizedek's priesthood different to the Levitical priesthood?
5. List the ways in which Christ' priesthood is similar to Melchizedek's priesthood?
6. What does it matter that Christ's priesthood is like Melchizedek's?
7. In what way does Jesus offer a "better hope" (v19) for us?

Read Hebrews 7:23-34

8. How is Christ's priesthood superior to the Levitical priesthood?

9. This is quite a convoluted passage. What do you think is its main idea?

Implications

- *"All this stuff about Melchizedek is so weird. Its got nothing to do with my everyday life!"* How might you respond to a comment like that?
- According to this passage, what is Jesus doing for us right now? How should this shape the way we live?
- What sorts of different things do people rely on to make them acceptable before God? What does this passage teach us about becoming acceptable to God?
- What is the most important thing about Jesus you've personally discovered (or been reminded of) in this passage?

Hebrews 8:1-13

Read Hebrews 8:1-6

1. What is significant about Jesus being at the right hand of God's throne?

2. What does the "sanctuary, the true tabernacle" refer to to? Why do you think this is important?

3. What is similar between Jesus' ministry at the true tabernacle and the Levitical priest's ministry at the earthly sanctuary?

4. What is different between Jesus' ministry at the true tabernacle and the Levitical priest's ministry at the earthly sanctuary?

Read Hebrews 8:7-13

5. What's a covenant?

6. What was wrong with the first covenant?

7. How is the new covenant better?

8. What do you think is meant by v11?

9. What is the main lesson of this passage?

Implications

- If the first covenant is "obsolete", does that mean the Old Testament is now irrelevant to us? Why or why not?
- In what ways should we see the new covenant being lived out in our day to day life?
- What difference should it make that God "remembers our sins no more"? How might this be reflected in our lifestyle?
- *"If my sins are going to be forgiven anyway, I may as well not worry about what I do."* How might you respond to a comment like that?

Hebrews 9:1-10:18

Read Hebrews 9:1-10

1. Using the description found in these verses, have a go at drawing the earthly tabernacle.

2. What was the role of the priests within the tabernacles? Why do they seem so important?

3. What was the role of sacrifices within the tabernacles? Why do they seem so important?

Read Hebrews 9:11-27

4. List all the ways in which the tabernacle that Jesus operates is superior to the earthly tabernacle.

5. List all the ways in which Jesus is superior to the earthly priests.

6. List all the ways in which Jesus's sacrifice is superior to the earthly priests.

Read Hebrews 10:1-18

7. What comes to mind when you hear the word "shadow"? What is a shadow like? How does it differ from the real thing?

8. What do you think it means that the Old Testament law is only "shadow" compared to the work of Christ?

9. These verses serve as a good summary of the last few chapters. What do they say about our need for any further
 - a) temples
 - b) priests
 - c) sacrifices

Implications

- Lots of things are said about Jesus in this passage. Were there any that especially impacted you? Why?

- What implications does this passage have for the way we do church at BPC?

- You have been made "perfect" through Christ (10:14). If we really believed this, how would it shape the way treat Christ? How would it shape the way we treat each other? Try and be specific.

Hebrews 10:19-39

Read Hebrews 10:19-26

1. Verses 19-21 provide a wonderful summary of the book so far. What do we have because of Jesus? What has Christ done in order for us to enjoy this?
2. What does the author want his readers to do as a result of what Christ has done for them?
3. What reasons (if any) does the author give for doing each of these things? Which of the above activities do you find the most challenging? Why?
4. Which of the above activities do you find the easiest to neglect? Why?

Read Hebrews 10:26-31

5. In your own words, describe the person outlined in these verses.
6. What fate is in store for such a person?
7. In what way do these verses take us full circle back to study 1 (look back at 2:1-4).

Read Hebrews 10:32-39

8. What sort of history did the original readers have as Christians?
9. Why does the author want them to remember their "earlier days"?
10. What incentive does the author give his readers to persevere?

Implications

- What helps you most to persevere in your faith? How can you use this to also help others persevere?
- In this passage the author has asked his readers to reflect on their journey as Christians. What have been some of the key moments in your Christian life? How has God used them to help you persevere?
- "I don't like verses like v30-31. I prefer to think of God as being a God of love." How would you respond to a comment like that?
- Congratulations! It's been a long study series through some seriously difficult passages. Quickly skim back over the studies. Has there been any one truth about Jesus which has really stood out to you. Why?