

A STUDY OF

Hebrews

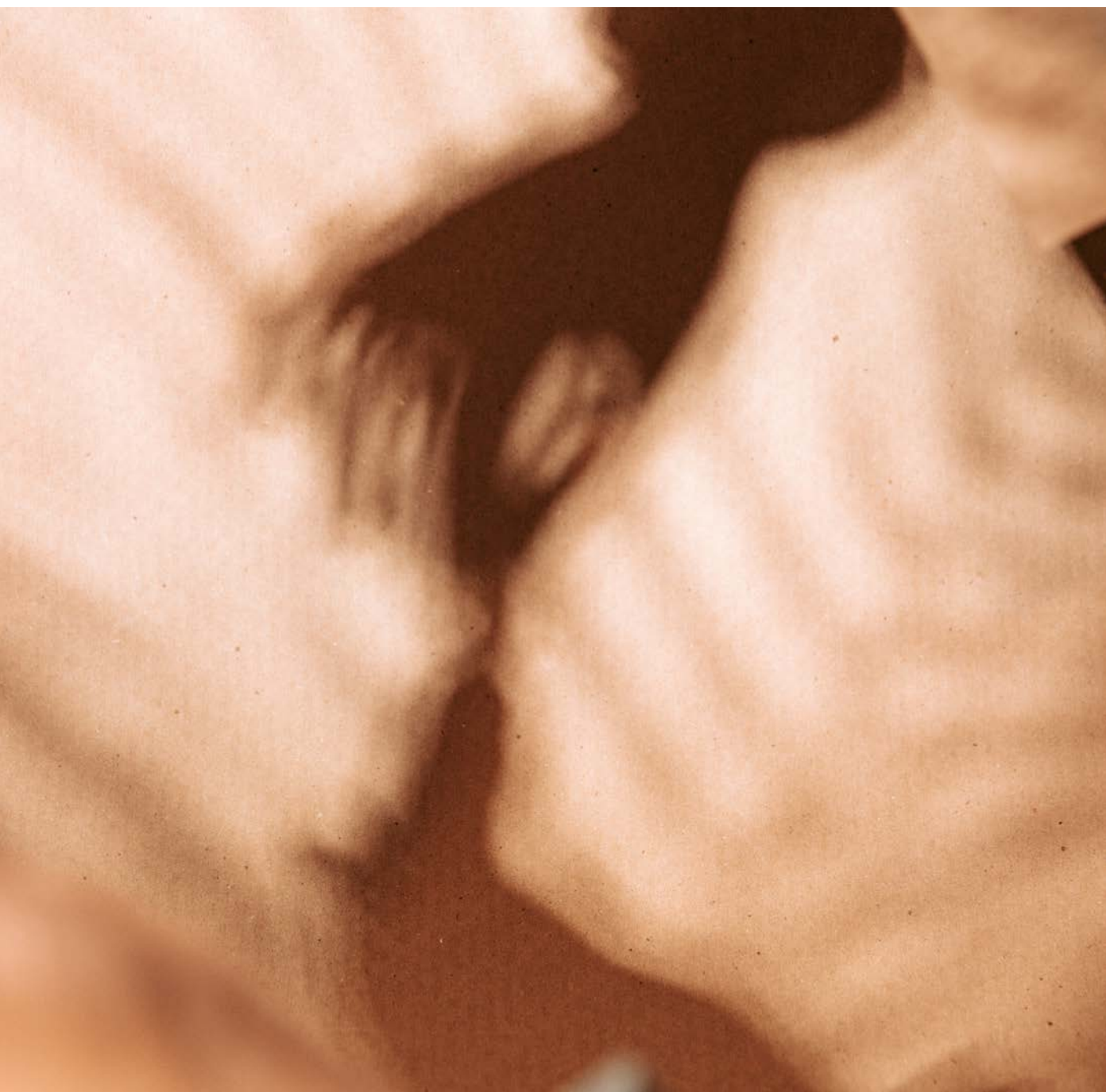
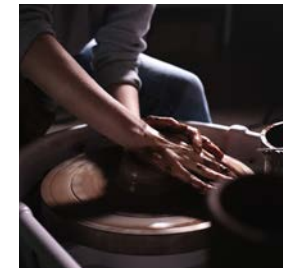


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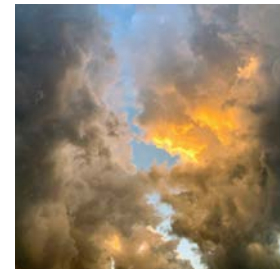
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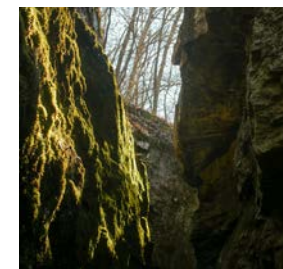
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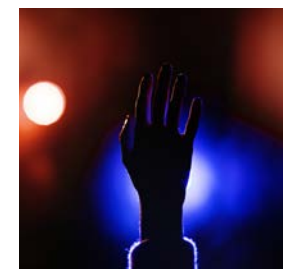
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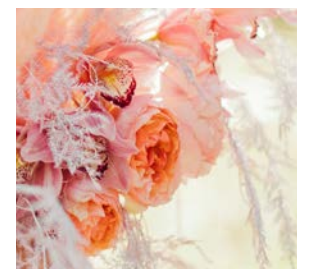
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Introduction

“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.”

Hebrews 1:1-4

Author

Although long considered a letter, many scholars today agree the book commonly called “The Letter to the Hebrews” is actually a combination of a letter and a sermon. Many careful readers will immediately recognize Hebrews is written with the tone of a sermon that was read aloud as a letter in early churches.

Hebrews has been cloaked in mystery from the earliest times and the author has been anonymous throughout church history and still is today. While there is a long tradition that the letter was written by the Apostle Paul, many scholars argue against the claim that Paul is the author. Other possible authors have been proposed, including Barnabas, Luke, Priscilla, and Apollos. While there are a few clues within the text, it seems the judgment expressed by Origen (AD 254) remains correct: “Who actually wrote the epistle, only God knows.”

Intended Audience

Discerning the intended original audience is equally challenging. A careful reading of the letter indicates the recipients were a specific local group, well known to the author (see 5:11-12; 12:4, 7; and 13:3 for examples). The author assumes the readers have a thorough working knowledge of the priesthood, sacrificial system, and other elements of Old Testament Judaism. This has led many to conclude the intended recipients were either Jewish Christians or proselytes (Gentiles who had converted to Judaism) who were now followers of Jesus. There is little to go on regarding the location of the recipients, other than a brief mention of Italy in 13:24.

Date

Similarly, there is very little internal or external evidence to determine the date the book was written. Many believe it was likely written before the temple was destroyed in AD 70. The argument for this dating is that in the discussion of Jesus being superior to the temple worship system, it does not mention the temple’s destruction, which would have strengthened its argument.

Key Themes

Hebrews has two major themes intertwined throughout the text. One is doctrinal (theological and leading to right thinking), the other is pastoral (practical and leading to right living). The first is exalting Jesus Christ as superior over any angel, priest, or institution. The second theme flows from the first: Hold fast to your salvation and encourage others to persevere in Christ.

The Superiority of Christ

Jesus’ superiority is demonstrated by the author’s repeated use of the Greek word *kreitōn* (κρείττων), translated “better” or “superior.” The writer consistently illustrates that believers have entered into a new and better covenant through the work of Jesus Christ. These arguments serve to demonstrate that the gospel is superior to the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. They demonstrate the Levitical priesthood was transitory in nature, while the reign of Christ is final and eternal.

Perseverance

Persevering in following Jesus despite trials and persecution is the natural outworking of believing Jesus is superior to anything else. The writer calls for this steadfastness in a series of five warning passages (2:1-4; 3:7 - 4:13; 5:11 - 6:20; 10:19-39; 12:25-29). These warning passages exhort believers not to leave the faith. The audience is encouraged to hold fast to Jesus through the repeated arguments for the superiority of Christ.



WEEK 1 | DAY 1

PRAY

Ask God to use this study over the next several weeks to lead you to know and love Him more. Pray that He would begin by revealing Himself to you today as you read His Word in scripture.

READ

Hebrews 1:1-4

INTERACT

Mark words that describe the Son or His work. Take note of how Jesus is described.

Circle the words “he became as much superior.” The superiority of Jesus to everything which came before Him is one of the main themes of this letter to keep in mind as you read in the weeks ahead.

RESPOND

If the Creator God had not made Himself knowable and revealed Himself to us, we would not be able to know Him at all. How does it make you feel that the God of the Bible has chosen to make Himself knowable to humanity, and specifically to you?

What does the passage say about who Jesus is? What does that mean about who God is?

Look at the things you marked in the passage. Which stands out to you and why? How can you reflect on that attribute of Jesus throughout the day?

PRAY

Thank God that He has revealed Himself to us through scripture and through Jesus. Recall specific things you know about God, praise Him for those characteristics, and give thanks to Him. Pray that God would help you remember who He is throughout the week.

How amazing it is that the Creator and Ruler of the universe has revealed Himself to mankind! Without Him making Himself known, it would be impossible to know Him or to know anything about Him. Yet in His grace and kindness, He has made Himself knowable. Through the Scriptures we can know the God who made everything and has been active throughout all of history. He has not only revealed Himself through His prophets, but He has also sent His own Son into the world to be known personally!

So, who is this Son of God? Notice the things you marked in the passage. The Son is the true receiver of all the divine benefits. He is co-author of the vastness of the universe, from distant galaxies to the DNA replicating in your body right now. The Son embodies the very glory and essence of God in the world. He is the one who sustains the seasons and speaks the plan of God into existence.

If this is not amazing enough, this same Son made a way for purification from our sins! The infection called sin has spread throughout the world, holding humanity in its grip, leading to all the greed, pain, wounds, betrayal, injustice, and perversion. Yet, the Son has brought cleansing from sin! He has now taken His rightful place in power and glory and been given a name above all others, which likely refers to the name that the Creator God of Israel uses of Himself in the Old Testament: Yahweh.

The Son of God described in these few short verses is an incredible picture of Jesus. Indeed, Jesus is the visitation of Yahweh to His people!



**PRAY**

Pray that God would remove distractions from you as you commit this time to Him. Ask Him to help you see who Jesus is, to know Him and His character, and to know fully the work He has done for you.

READ

Colossians 1:15-23

INTERACT

Mark the words describing Jesus or His work.

It is often helpful to mark transitional words or phrases to help connect ideas. Put a box around the word “but” beginning verse 22. Think about the ideas that the word “but” connects.

Put a box around the word “if” which begins verse 23 and underline the verbs that follow. Think about the ideas Paul is connecting and why he chose to make it a conditional statement by using the word “if”

RESPOND

In your own words, what does it mean for Jesus to be the image of the invisible God?

Jesus made reconciliation possible through His blood, shed on a cross. Take a moment and, in your own words, simply write out a response of gratitude and thanksgiving to Jesus for this amazing work of grace.

How do you think God would want to work through you to bring His glory and blessing into the world?

PRAY

Pray through your responses above and thank God for how He has worked through Jesus.

Similar to the opening of Hebrews, the letter to the Colossians opens with incredible descriptions of Jesus. In verse 15, Jesus is described as the “Image of the invisible God.” Can you remember another place in your Bible where the “image of God” was used to describe people? All the way back in Genesis 1, scripture teaches that God made humanity in His image (Genesis 1:26-27). That means humans reflect the glory, beauty, and wonder of their Creator to the rest of the world. God lovingly and graciously allowed humans to live out that reality, giving them authority to rule the Earth. What an amazing privilege—God set up the world so He might work through humanity to bless the world and fill it with His image.

Genesis also presents the problem that humans corrupted this privilege. Instead of reflecting God’s image into the world, humans began reflecting the dark power of sin and evil into the world. Yet God did not give up on His plan to work through humanity to bless the world even when no human seemed capable of fully and accurately reflecting the image of God.

To address this problem, Colossians says “The Son (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God.” Jesus does the very thing humanity was assigned to do but does so flawlessly. Jesus is the agent of reconciliation between the broken humanity and the Creator God. Notice how Jesus did this in such an unexpected way: by making peace through His blood, shed on a cross (Colossians 1:20). What a story! Jesus, the agent of creation, who holds all things together and is the fullness of God Himself, humbled Himself to go to a criminal’s cross to bring reconciliation and blessing into the world.

WEEK 1 | DAY 3

PRAY

Pray that God will help you understand the scripture you will read today. Ask Him to give you a clear understanding of who He is and what His Word says.

READ

John 1:1-18

INTERACT

Mark words that describe the “Word” or Jesus.

Draw a line from “Word” in verse 1 to “Word” in verse 14 to show they are connected.

Write out any questions you have. Come back to them as you progress through this study.

RESPOND

What do you learn about Jesus from this passage in John 1?

What does it mean for your life that Jesus has come into the world?

If knowing Jesus is the best way to know God, what can you do to strengthen your relationship with Him?

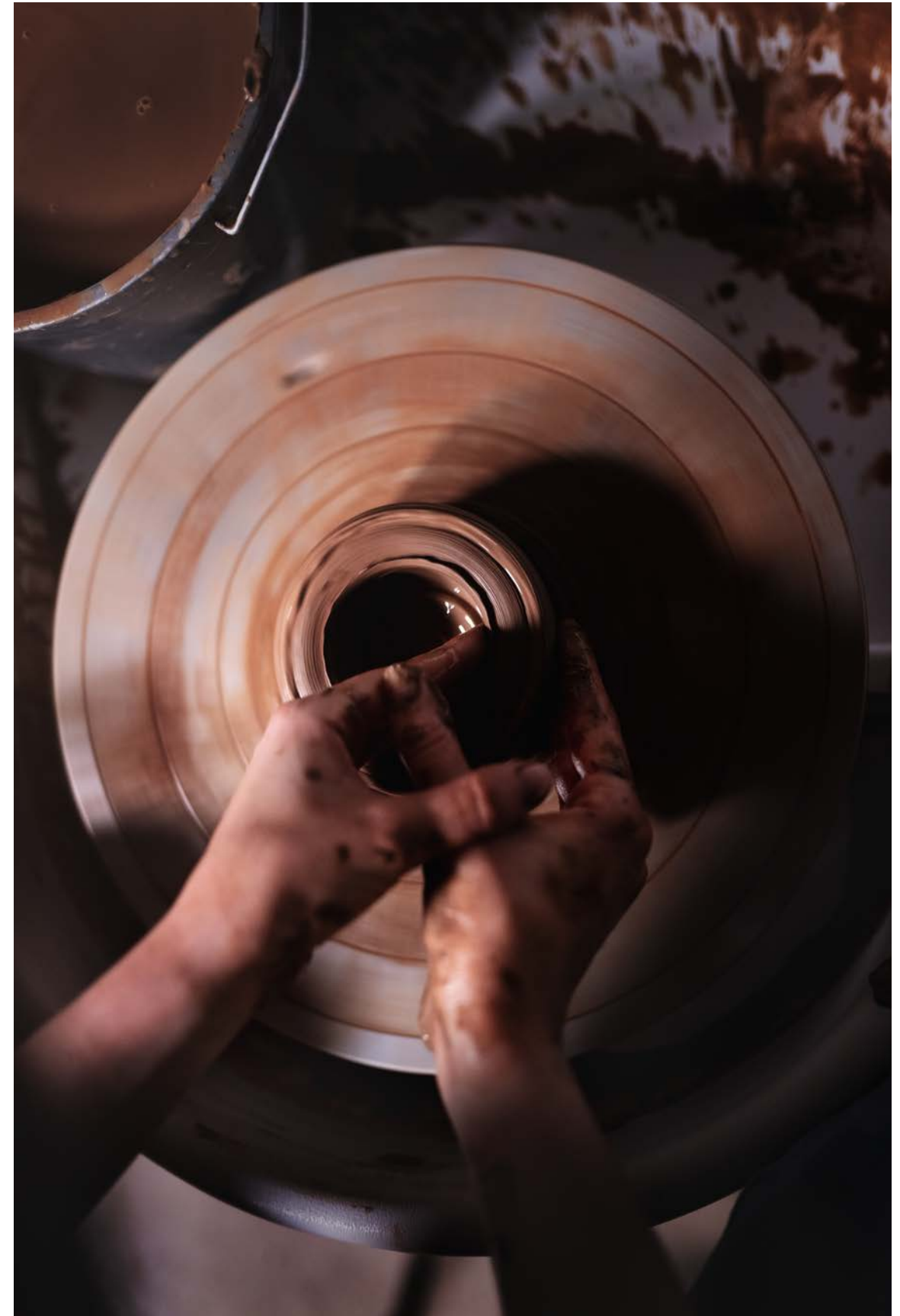
PRAY

Thank God for all that He has done through Jesus. Acknowledge things you marked in this passage such as “creating all things.” Thank Him for the things He has done specifically in your life.

When God speaks, His Word has immense power. God spoke and brought about the vastness of the universe. It was this “Word” that spoke the world into being and brought order and beauty into all that was made. This “Word” thundered to Moses on Mount Sinai and led the people of Israel into the Promised Land, dwelling with them on the journey along the way.

Yet, with all the ways we see the power of God’s “Word” in the Old Testament, the way John speaks of the “Word” is a surprising way to help us see a deep, theological truth. The eternal “Word” through which all things were made became a physical person who could be touched, felt, and known. Just like the opening of Hebrews, John is teaching us that to know the God of the Bible, the God who made the world, we simply need to look at Jesus. Jesus reveals the full glory of God in all His grace and truth.

Jesus came into our world like a light breaking through darkness! He has made Himself known to the world. All those who believe in His name He gives the right to be called children of God. In turning to Jesus and placing our trust in Him, we can know God and experience a new reality of being brought into His family.



PRAY

Dedicate this time to God and ask Him to reveal to you how you can submit to Him today.

READ

Psalm 2

INTERACT

Underline the verbs associated with the “nations” and “peoples” and the “kings of the earth.” (Example: In verse 2, the text says they “rage” or “conspire.”)

Circle the verbs associated with the “One enthroned in heaven.” (Example: In verse 4, the text says he “laughs.”)

As the writer of Hebrews continues his message on the supremacy of Jesus, he quotes Psalm 2 to declare Jesus as God’s Son (Hebrews 1:5, in tomorrow’s reading). Psalm 2 is dedicated to the true, heavenly king of Israel whom all the nations will worship. Through Him all the peoples of the earth can be blessed and find refuge and comfort. This pronouncement of His kingship also comes with a sincere and serious call to respond: honor this King and experience blessing or do the opposite and experience brokenness.

In our modern, individualistic society we tend to be suspicious of authority, pushing back against the idea of kings and rulers. We have been taught that every individual is the master of their own fate and are the kings and queens of their own lives. It can be hard for us to submit to a ruler or to recognize when a king is good, wanting to bless the world through their ruling.

It is not surprising that the writer of Hebrews selected this Psalm in dedication to Jesus, the true King of Israel, through whom the nations receive blessing. King Jesus is superior, even to the angels, for no angel ever received the pronouncement of being God’s Son.

RESPOND

What does it mean to live under Jesus as King?

How is it better to live under the rule of Jesus than entirely under your own authority?

In what areas do you find yourself clamoring to assert your own rule over your life? What is hard to hand over to God’s anointed King and how can you do that today?

PRAY

Take a moment to recognize how God’s rule is good for your life. Thank Him for the way He rules with goodness, love, mercy, and justice. Ask God to rule over every area of your life and confess where you have been seeking to keep control from Him. Pledge your allegiance to Him and His Kingdom.



PRAY

Ask God to guide you with His Holy Spirit during this time, helping you to understand the scripture and guiding you in how you should respond. Take a moment to sit in silence before reading.

READ

Hebrews 1:5-14

INTERACT

Re-read Hebrews 1:1-4 to get the context for verses 5-14.

Mark the sections that speak about angels and the sections that speak about the Son so you can see the contrast.

Underline the descriptions of the Son's activity as king.

RESPOND

In your own words, summarize the first chapter of Hebrews.

Describe what you have read and learned about Jesus this week.

Is Jesus' status in your personal life consistent with His status depicted in Hebrews 1? In what ways? In what ways is it not?

PRAY

Thank God that His rule and reign last forever. Confess any specific areas where you are living as if other things are superior to Jesus. Ask Him to help you live in humble submission to Him and to help you see Him as superior to all things.

One of the main purposes of the book of Hebrews is to make a comparison and show how Jesus is better than many of the Jewish traditions, religious practices, and even spiritual beings. In this first chapter, the author is using Old Testament scripture to compare Jesus with the mighty class of spirit-beings called angels. As discussed in the introduction of this study, this letter was written to Christians, primarily with a Jewish background, who would have been familiar with the Old Testament passages.

At first glance, it would seem backwards to compare the angels who worship around the throne of God to someone born in Bethlehem and crucified by the Romans. However, here we see the Old Testament passages quoted to make the all-important claim that Jesus is God's Son, vastly superior to the angels, and to whom no creature can compare.

His role, His ministry, and His status are one-of-a-kind. He has been named as the true Son of God, the unique King who reigns forever.



WEEK 2 | DAY 1

PRAY

Thank God for how His Word has changed your heart to be more like His. Ask Him to help you recall what you read last week. Ask Him to bring clarity to the words of scripture and their purpose in how they affect your daily life.

READ

Hebrews 2:1-9

INTERACT

Put a box around the word “therefore.”

Mark all the words that speak to the authority of God’s Word.

Starting Hebrews 2, the author continues to drive home the main themes of Jesus’ superiority and holding fast to our salvation. The word “therefore” connects back to the ideas of the previous passage, telling us that because Jesus is better than the angels, we should focus on Him and His message. We must stay anchored in the message of salvation Jesus brings so we do not drift away or live aimlessly without direction.

The act of committing to Jesus and His message does not only mean we hear His Word and accept it as truth, but His Word should actively and intentionally change the way we live. Remember, this message was not written to convince people who did not believe but mostly to people who already believed in Jesus and His message. Just as the message of the Old Testament called for strict obedience under the law, even more so should we commit our lives to actively obeying Jesus and His message.

However, we do not have the power to do this on our own. He gives us the power to follow Him when we commit our lives to Him in faith. As we are committed to Jesus, we can see Him guiding us. As we see Him guiding us, we are able to believe and act with clear direction. As we believe and act, we are able to encourage others to follow along with us. The message of the cross is powerful to anchor us to Jesus, the author of our salvation, who became a lowly man, who tasted death on our behalf, and is now crowned as our Heavenly King in all glory and honor.

RESPOND

Write out what Jesus has done for you. If you do not know, how can you take steps to find out?

How does the fact that Jesus gives us the power to follow Him change the way you relate to Him in your life?

Where are some areas in your life you struggle to believe Jesus gives you the power to follow Him? How can you ask Him to help you act and not just believe?

PRAY

Ask God to show you how you may have neglected His salvation and ask Him to forgive you for doing so. Thank God for what He has done for you. Ask Him to remind you daily that He desires to help you live according to the message of the cross. Surrender your will to Him today so He may guide and direct you.





PRAY

Pray that God would remove all distractions for the next few minutes. Pray that God would bring clarity to His Word as you observe and focus on the words and meaning. Pray God would bring to mind how your thoughts and life should change because of His Word today.

READ

Hebrews 2:10-18

INTERACT

Circle the repeated words.

Underline all the phrases that show who/what Jesus is compared to.

Mark all the “he” pronouns.

RESPOND

How does Jesus’ experience as a human affect the way you relate to Him?

In what area are you currently facing temptation? How can you invite Jesus into that temptation so He can help you flee from it today?

How have you suffered in the past year? How can you see Jesus offering healing and hope in the suffering?

PRAY

Thank God that He has defeated death for you. Thank Him that He is there for you in your temptation and suffering. Confess any areas in your life where you are experiencing temptation and suffering. Pray that He would meet you there, remove temptation, and offer an escape for you. Ask Him to place people in your life to walk alongside you and that He would give you the courage to confess to them what you are experiencing. Pray that you would see the ways Jesus is offering healing and hope in the suffering of this life.

So far, we have been shown how Jesus is greater than the angels and how the salvation He obtained for us is proof of His greatness. This idea now continues in a highly unexpected way. For Jesus to be made greater, He first had to be made lesser. Jesus was made a man. His experience as flesh and blood, His suffering, and even His death are all a part of His greatness, perfection, and salvation. Only by becoming human could Jesus truly die, and only by dying could He conquer death and the devil.

Being made like those He saves, Jesus’ salvation was made perfect. The angels could not suffer or fully relate to humanity. The high priests of the Old Testament could not fully withstand temptation and live sinlessly. Jesus suffered, was tempted, and can fully relate to us in our humanity.

Jesus stood in our place to take our punishment for sin so we might enjoy everlasting relationship with Him. When we face temptation, we know He understands us and stands ready to help us as an advocate and shepherd. When we face suffering, He offers healing for our hearts and a reminder that the story of salvation is not over yet.

WEEK 2 | DAY 3

PRAY

Ask God to help you have an attitude of worship as you read this passage today. Pray that He would show you the wonders of the world He created around you. Ask for help to be mindful of His power and rule in this world.

READ

Psalm 95

INTERACT

Try reading Psalm 95 out loud, either alone or with others, and consider the emotions the psalm evokes when hearing it.

Underline the commands to the reader. Notice what we are being called to do.

Write down any words or names (proper nouns or capitalized words) you don't recognize. Consider looking up those words to enhance your understanding of this psalm.

The Israelites, God's people chosen to carry His message of hope, were not always hopeful themselves. This psalm is written in memory of the story in Exodus 17. God's people, whom He had just freed from slavery, were wandering in the wilderness and grew thirsty. They complained to God that He was not providing water for them.

This psalm is structured in two parts. Verses 1-7 are a call to worship. Verses 8-11 are a reminder that rebellious hearts do not have rest. In Exodus 17, the complaint was not the issue God had with the Israelites, the issue was their hard hearts. The lure of this world and the pleasures therein are a constant temptation to rebel against the Lord and harden our hearts to His way. But by surrendering in obedience to Him, He leads us to rest.

It is with great intentionality the Psalmist begins with a call to sing of God's greatness, power, and goodness. It's a call to surrendered obedience to the One who rules over us. As we worship the One who is our hope of salvation, our hearts are prepared to surrender to Him. As we confess His greatness and goodness, we are more likely to trust in His way. While we are called to the action of submitting to Him, the effort is mostly on God's part in forgiving, sustaining, and providing the place of rest.

Psalm 95 is quoted throughout Hebrews 3-4 to draw a connection between the Israelites' experience and ours. Just as God provided a way for the Israelites to inherit the Promised Land and find rest, God also provided His Son Jesus to lead us to everlasting rest. May we hold on to the promise of future, eternal rest and enjoy His rest in this life through maintaining an attitude of daily worship and surrender to Him!

RESPOND

What is the emotional tone of the first part of the psalm? Does this reflect the way you feel about God in your life? Why or why not?

How can you outwardly confess God's goodness in your life?

In what ways do you show a tendency to harden your heart toward God? How can you begin to surrender those parts of your life to God?

PRAY

Ask God to help you express your gratitude to Him for His forgiveness and goodness in your life. Ask God to show you any ways you rebel against Him, trying to have things your way. Ask Him to forgive you for the hardness in your heart and to help you surrender those areas of your life today.



PRAY

Pray that God would remove all distractions as you spend this time with Him. Pray that His Word would be effective in changing your thinking and actions. Pray that you would not take His Word for granted.

READ

Hebrews 3:1-19

INTERACT

Underline any commands.

Mark any descriptors of Jesus or His work.

RESPOND

Why do you think the writer of this letter compares Jesus to Moses?

What does it mean to surrender to God’s will? What will that practically look like for you today?

Who can you encourage today to seek fully after Jesus? Reach out to them before you move on with your day.

PRAY

Thank God that He wants the best for you and ask Him to show you what that looks like. Ask Him to reveal in you the ways you tend to live for yourself and confess that to Him (be specific). Ask Him to help you replace each way you live for yourself with how He wants you to live. Thank Him for His forgiveness, salvation, and willingness to lead you into a closer relationship with Him.

Continuing to show us how Jesus is better, the writer of Hebrews shifts to comparing Jesus with Moses to show that Jesus is the better leader of God’s people. Moses was a faithful leader, but Jesus is faithful without fault. We have no reason to hesitate in following Jesus!

Considering Jesus’ superiority, we are urged to take care not to miss a much better life with Jesus. We often consider our lives entirely our own and want to make our own way and our own decisions regardless of what God wants for us. The salvation of those who follow Jesus is secure in Him, but it is still possible for us to rebel against God and miss out on His best for us in this life. Jesus wants to lead us into rest here on earth and in eternity with Him.

As we looked at Psalm 95 yesterday (quoted again here today), surrender is the way to rest in Christ in eternity. It is also how we find rest here on earth as we wait for the fulfillment of that promise. God’s best for us is found in obedience to His ways. While our tendency is to do what we want, God makes it possible to surrender to His ways if we ask for His help.

PRAY

Ask God to quiet your thoughts and allow you to listen to Him. Pray that you would be able to see past the circumstances that may be tempting you to doubt. Pray that God would speak rest into your heart through His Word.

READ

Hebrews 4:1-10

INTERACT

Circle all the times the word “rest” is used.

Underline each sentence that has the word “remains” in it.

Notice each time there is a shift from past tense to future tense.

RESPOND

What in your life keeps you from finding rest (be specific)? How can you actively trust God in this area?

How do the words of the author of Hebrews encourage you to trust in God’s promises?

Who can you invite into your life to help you stay focused on the promises of the future rather than the circumstances of the present?

PRAY

Take a moment to rest in silence. Ask God to help you see how He has a plan and a future for you. Ask Him to help you find encouragement to follow Him one moment at a time. Thank God for His rest which is coming. Ask God to help you find rest in Him today.

The people of Israel in the Old Testament looked forward to the promise of a new land that would provide for their physical needs and the promise of a new way with God that would provide for their spiritual needs. In Hebrews, we are reminded that Joshua’s victory in leading them into this land was not the full rest God had promised. If it had been, the story would have ended there.

The ultimate promise of rest can only be found in Jesus and the work He accomplished for us. We have seen that Jesus is better than the angels, better than the human high priests, and better than Moses. In the same way, His promise of rest is better as well.

The author is asking us to see God’s finished work. God has finished all that needs to be done for His promises to be true and we can rest with confidence in the future God has already acquired for us. His works have been finished since the creation of the world (remember last week how we saw Jesus was active in the creation of everything). We can trust His promise of rest and eternity with Him. Those who know Jesus can have peace with God, knowing we do not need to perform or earn any righteousness. It also means we are free to live as He intends, knowing He will supply all we need to live for Him, free from guilt and worry, and believing in His better ways. Though there will be days we still wonder how long we can wait, we are encouraged to believe God has a plan and to rest.





**PRAY**

Pray that God's Word would be alive and active to you, that it would nourish and comfort you but also convict you in the areas where you need refining by the Holy Spirit.

READ

Hebrews 4:11-16

INTERACT

Underline and write down descriptions of God's Word and what it does in your life.

Write down character traits of God you see in this passage.

Circle every command or every time the author says, "let us." Think about what the author is asking his audience to do.

Typically, when we think of someone standing before a king, we picture scenes from movies or television. There is usually a large distance in between them and often uncertainty, anxiety, or fear. Unfortunately, many times, approaching God can be viewed the same way. We might feel He is distant and hard to reach, or we are fearful to approach Him. When we look at this passage, we see He is the exact opposite!

It's amazing to see how Jesus shows us incredible empathy through living a life as a human. He was tempted in every way because of His humanity but remained sinless in His holiness. He is able to sympathize with us in our weakness and in our temptations. Because of this, we can draw near to Him. We can approach His throne without appointment, without question, and with confidence that in our time of need we will find grace, mercy, and help from Him.

In Hebrews 4:11-13 we learn God's Word pierces to the very depths of our being. It can bring comfort and nourishment to our hungry souls. It can also bring conviction. God sees and knows everything about us, and yet He still calls us to approach His throne with confidence. In our sin and shame, we can often view God as full of wrath or distant, but through the blood of Jesus we can draw near to Him and know He is constantly drawing near to us with a heart of compassion and abundant mercy.

RESPOND

In your own words, what has been your experience with approaching the throne of God? How would you feel standing before Him right now? Why?

How does it make you feel that every time you approach God's throne, He is eager to show you mercy? How does this make you feel about confessing sin?

What are some areas where you need to approach God and ask Him for mercy?

PRAY

Look at what you observed about God in the passage and praise Him for these things. Thank Him for revealing these things to you through His Word. Picture yourself before His throne (physically get on your knees if you are able) and confess anything that comes to your mind for which you need to ask forgiveness. Ask for forgiveness in confidence knowing He knows all you have done or thought and wants to grant you mercy and grace!

PRAY

Pray that God would use His Word today to deepen your understanding of Him. Ask Him to help free you from distraction, that you could have a clear mind as you spend this time with Him.

READ

Psalm 139:1-18

INTERACT

Underline all the actions that God takes.

Write down everything you learn about God in this passage.

Mark any recurring themes.

In Psalm 139, David ponders three big traits of God's character: His omnipotence (all-powerful), His omnipresence (present everywhere), and His omniscience (all-knowing). We learn that not only is God everywhere, but He is present with us. Not only does He know everything, but He knows everything about us. Not only does He create everything and hold everything together, but He created us individually and cares for us. Sometimes we can focus so much on how great and powerful God is that in our minds He can become a distant authority who only pays attention to us when we mess up. Or often He is seen as a being who created the universe, then stepped back and remains personally uninvolved. When we view God in these ways, He seems unapproachable, which couldn't be further from the truth.

This passage opens our eyes to see that rather than being distant, He is an extremely personal God who wants us to have a constant, close, personal relationship with Him. Not only did He create us, but He knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows the worst of our sins and still loves us. He knows when we experience joy, and He experiences joy with us! There is nothing we can do that He does not already know. There is nothing we can bring to Him for which He is unprepared.

As it says in Hebrews 4, no creature is hidden from His sight. So, let us draw near to His throne of grace with confidence, knowing when we place our trust in Jesus, we receive mercy and find grace.

RESPOND

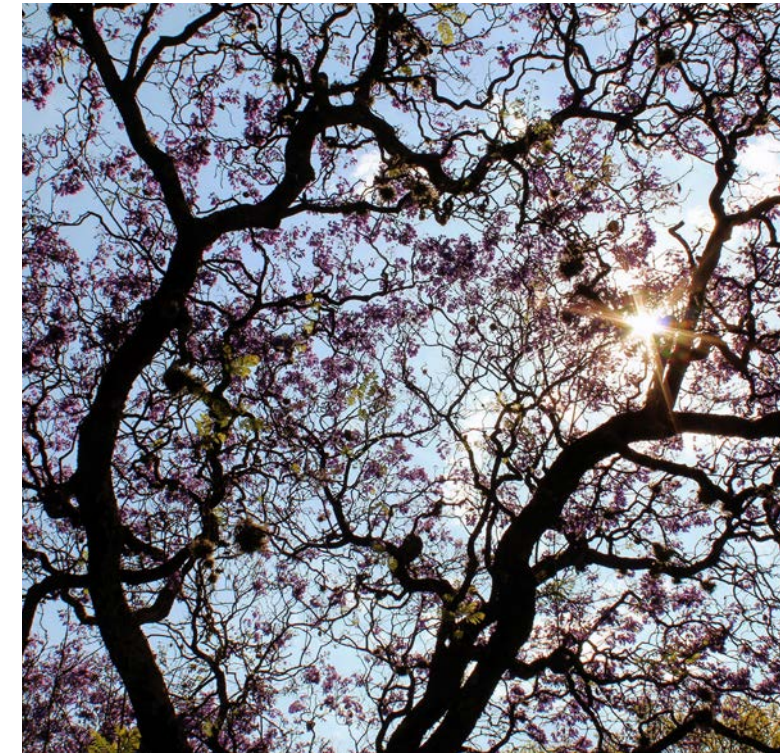
Do you feel close to God right now? Why do you think you feel this way? How does your feeling line up with the truth taught in this passage?

Why do you think learning these character truths about God is important?

How can you acknowledge God's presence throughout your day as He is constantly with you?

PRAY

Talk to God about the emotions you are currently feeling (or have been feeling recently) and process them with Him. Ask Him to make His presence known in your life. Be specific about areas where you need God's presence right now. Praise God that He knows you and draws near to you. Look over the things you learned about God in this passage, meditate on them, and praise God for what resonated with you the most.



PRAY

Spend some time in prayer asking God to reveal His goodness to you today. Ask Him to reveal areas where you have recently struggled with temptation. Pray that He would work in you to overcome that temptation each day.

READ

Luke 4:1-11

INTERACT

Read 1 John 2:16, noting the three examples of temptation he gave and how they parallel the temptations in Luke 4.

At the beginning of the book of Luke we see Jesus identifying with humanity in His baptism, then He identifies with us in our temptations. He was tempted in every way we are tempted yet He remained sinless. He also endured this temptation under conditions we would not bear, being in the wilderness without food for 40 days, face-to-face with Satan. In that time, He was tempted beyond what we can comprehend.

Sometimes when reading this passage, it is easy to view it as an instruction manual on how to fight off temptation. While that might be a helpful practical lesson, there is a deeper truth to be learned from this story. Just as Jesus defeated death on the cross, here we see Him defeat Satan and sin. Up until then, there was nobody who was able to withstand the full temptation of sin and not give in. Jesus remained victorious in this climactic showdown between the Son of God and the devil. We see the fullness of Jesus' humanity as well as the fullness of His deity.

His humanness experienced temptation, but in His holiness He never gave in. How beautiful is this picture Jesus shared with us! We should have confidence in His victory, knowing He can relate to us in our temptation but also that the same Holy Spirit who gave Him the power to resist temptation is alive in us! He has overcome the power of sin!

RESPOND

In your own words, what is significant about this story?

Do you have confidence that Jesus has given you the power to overcome sin through the Holy Spirit? Why or why not?

How can you better have confidence in Jesus' victory?

PRAY

Thinking through the Gospel, what it means for you in eternity, and what it means for you today, thank God for what Jesus has done for you. Ask Him to give you confidence in the victory of Jesus.



PRAY

Pray that God would help you read His Word clearly today. Ask Him to help you hold onto His promises and apply what you study.

READ

Colossians 3:1-4

INTERACT

Underline the commands.

Underline or write out the promises believers are given.

Put a box around the words “if then” or “since then.” Note the two ideas that have a cause-and-effect connection made by these words.

Continuing the theme found in Hebrews of finding rest in Jesus and approaching Him with confidence, Colossians 3 tells us that those who trust in Jesus are hidden with Christ. The moment we place our trust in Jesus, we spiritually enter into the death and resurrection with Jesus, becoming spiritually alive with Him. The verb used here means “to be co-resurrected.” Our old self is gone, we become a new creation in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17), and we are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13). For those who trust in Jesus, our new life in His Spirit has begun and the assurance of our future place with Him is so certain it is as though we are with Him already.

Because of this, we can now seek the things that are above. Colossians 3:2 makes a distinction between the things that are above and the things of earth. These things from above are realities of scripture believers can hold on to. As believers, our entire lives should point towards heavenly things.

If we are co-resurrected with Him then we can take heart in these verses. When Jesus comes back, just as He has promised, we will be revealed in glory, without sin and shame, and made fully whole in Jesus. Let us find comfort in these verses, but also, let us find conviction from His Word to put off the things of this world and pursue the things of heaven. May we rest our whole lives on the promises of Jesus found in Scripture as we seek heavenly things.

RESPOND

In your own words, what does it mean to be hidden in Christ?

Do you feel fully confident you have been “co-resurrected” with Christ? Why or why not? If not, with whom can you talk about this today?

How does your life reflect that you are seeking things above? How can you seek heavenly things today?

PRAY

Spend some time praying through the areas where you have sought heavenly things. Thank God for the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart to push you towards holiness. Spend some time in confession over the places where you seek earthly things. Ask God to work in you to give those things over to Him.

PRAY

Pray and ask God to give you a hunger for His Word today. Pray that you would be able to dive deep and explore scripture with an open mind and heart.

READ

Hebrews 5:1-10

INTERACT

Look back at Hebrews 4 to remember the context.

Mark any words or phrases you don’t understand. Look these words up or ask someone to help you understand.

For further study on Melchizedek refer to page 138. We will return to this in Hebrews 6 and 7 next week.

If we look back to Leviticus, we see that in ancient Israel the high priest was responsible for carrying out the sacrificial system God had created for various reasons and purposes. The most notable was the atonement for sins for the Israelites. The high priest represented the people to God. Even though the high priest was one of the most important people during those times, he was still a man, broken and sinful like the rest of the Israelites. He had to make sacrifices not only on behalf of Israel but also for himself because of his own sin.

In addition to being better than the angels and better than Moses, we see in this passage Jesus is the better, perfect Great High Priest. Instead of becoming a high priest during His time on earth, He became the perfect sacrifice, the perfect atonement for the sins of all of humanity. Sacrificing His life for the sake of many, He was raised from the dead, defeating death, and eliminating our need for atonement through animal sacrifice. Now, anyone who believes becomes the dwelling place of God through the Holy Spirit, a gift on top of the gift of salvation. We can now approach God through the blood of Jesus, knowing we will be met with mercy and help. God’s plan for redemption is fulfilled through His Son. This is incredible news for us as believers, and news we should celebrate daily!

RESPOND

How did Christ become qualified to represent us before God?

How can you offer prayers to God like Jesus did?

How have you made changes in your life based on what you have learned in this study so far?

PRAY

Spend time praising God for what you learned about Him today. Pray specifically for individuals you know who do not know Jesus. Ask God to reveal Himself to them and to use you to help them come to know Him.



WEEK 4 | DAY 1

PRAY

Ask God to help you dive into the full substance of His Word. Pray that your time with Him will yield good spiritual fruit.

READ

Hebrews 5:11 - 6:12

INTERACT

Mark or write down the things the author says we need.

Read Matthew 13:18-24. Compare that to the imagery in Hebrews 6:7-8.

See the *Fallen Away* resource on page 136 for further study.

When we think of a child growing and developing, the transition from milk to solid food is significant. The transition can be difficult but necessary if the child is to thrive and grow. Similarly, a spiritual infant needs milk, the basics of the faith. But if a spiritual baby is to grow into a productive spiritual adult, they need solid food. God's Word (the Bible) provides the spiritual nourishment every believer needs and this passage highlights why it is so important.

The truth of God's words falls like rain on people (Isaiah 55:10-11). Just as the land responds to the rain by producing vegetation, people's lives produce fruit. For believers, their lives produce fruit that God uses to bless others (Hebrews 6:7), but for those who have rejected Christ, it produces only thorns and thistles (Hebrews 6:8).

While this passage includes a stern warning, it ends on a hopeful note. May we not be spiritually lazy but be strengthened by the solid food of God's Word. May we be like those who have gone before us and inherited eternal life.

RESPOND

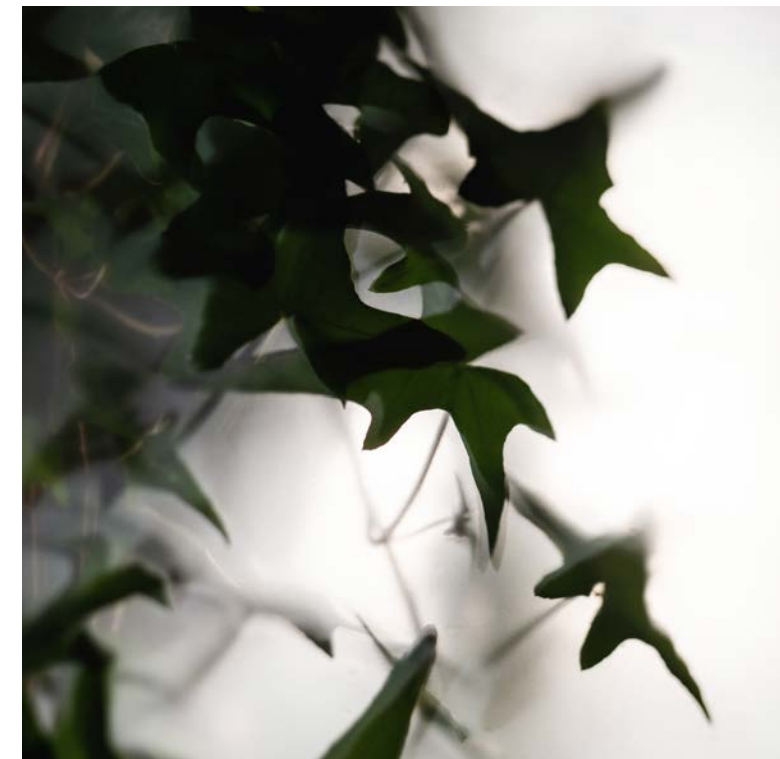
Look at the things the author says we need. Do you hunger for those things? How can you pursue those things this week?

What kind of fruit is your life producing right now? Where do you see the fruit of the Spirit increasing (review Galatians 5:22-23)?

Who would you like to imitate who has persevered in their faith? What would it take to be more like them? Who is someone you can ask to guide you to be more like them?

PRAY

Turn Hebrews 6:12 into a prayer. Pray against laziness and ask God to help you imitate those who have kept the faith.



**PRAY**

Ask God to open your eyes to the spiritual realities described in this passage. Pray that you will have a renewed sense of the incredible gift of Jesus Christ and a new appreciation for the anchor that is your faith.

READ

Hebrews 6:13-20

INTERACT

Underline God's words in 6:14 and write "Genesis 22:17" in the margin. Underline Genesis 22:17 and write "Hebrews 6:14" in the margin. Note the context of the original promise in Genesis 22.

Circle "Melchizedek" in verse 20. This important figure introduced in Hebrews 5:5-10 will be the main figure in Hebrews 7.

In modern society we reserve vows and oaths for our most solemn occasions: court testimony, marriage, oaths of political office, etc. In each of these oaths we traditionally invoke God as a witness ("so help me God"). If God makes an oath, what higher power does He call upon? There is no higher power, thus God swears by Himself and these solemn vows by God are exceedingly rare in scripture.

Why would God swear an oath? People swear an oath because we must affirm our truthfulness in a broken world where fallen humans routinely commit the sin of lying. God never lies (Numbers 23:19) and yet He swore by Himself to make a great nation of Abraham. Hebrews tells us that this was to demonstrate His commitment to fulfilling His promise. This should give us such a strong faith that it becomes an anchor for us!

And look where this anchor is lodged: behind the curtain. This is referring to the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies, where the presence of God dwelled in a special way in the tabernacle in ancient Israel. This curtain represented the separation of a Holy God from His sinful but worshiping people. God's promise to Abraham, fulfilled in Jesus, has given us an anchor on the heavenly side of the curtain. Jesus didn't just break through the separation; He tore the curtain in two (Matthew 27:50-51).

Jesus, our forerunner, has gone on to where we long to be (John 14:2-4), and there He serves as our high priest, representing us forever before God. Take a moment and let this reality sink in. Our only possible response to this incredible promise is gratitude that leads to worship and obedience.

RESPOND

How does the promise made to Abraham in Genesis 22:16-18 connect to Jesus?

What does the promise God made to Abraham mean for your life?

What are the winds and waves that are currently lashing at your soul? How can your hope and faith be an anchor for your soul?

PRAY

Thank God that Jesus has torn the curtain and given you access to the throne room of heaven. Take advantage of this by sharing your heart with the Lord in an extended prayer of gratitude and worship.

WEEK 4 | DAY 3

PRAY

Ask the Lord to reveal the incredible truths of this psalm to you. Ask Him to show you how the Old and New Testaments fit together through this study.

READ

Psalms 110:1-7

INTERACT

Circle every time you see “LORD” (all uppercase letters) and underline “Lord.” “LORD” indicates Yahweh in the original language, while “Lord” does not.

Circle where it says who wrote the psalm by the chapter number.

Circle “Melchizedek” and write “Genesis 14:18-20, Hebrews 7” in the margin. Circle “Melchizedek” in both of those passages and write “Psalm 110.”

For more on Melchizedek, see *Melchizedek* on page 138.

RESPOND

Why is it significant that Jesus is both king (one who rules) and priest (one who stands between God and man)? What would be lacking if Jesus were only a king, or only a priest?

What parts of Psalm 110 have yet to be fulfilled? What do you think of when you consider Jesus executing judgment among the nations (Psalm 110:6)?

What is something new you have learned today or from this study so far?

PRAY

Praise Jesus as your king and ask Him to help you be obedient. Confess your sins to Jesus as your priest and ask God to forgive you based on the completed work of the cross. Ask God who you can share the good news of Jesus with today.

Genesis, Psalms, and Hebrews are all incredibly important books that each tell us something amazing about God and His plan to redeem all mankind for Himself. Each of these books also tells us something about the mysterious Melchizedek.

In Genesis we meet a man identified as a priest-king. He is the king of Salem (peace) and brings bread and wine. In Hebrews we are told this man points forward to the priestly ministry of King Jesus (Hebrews 7:15-17). His evidence for making such a bold claim is found in Psalm 110.

Jesus used Psalm 110 to silence His critics in Matthew 26:41-46. He emphasized that the author of the psalm is David and poses a question: How is it that David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, calls someone who is not Yahweh (LORD) his Lord?

The writer to the Hebrews knows Psalm 110 reflects a conversation between God the Father and God the Son. God the Father says to God the Son (Jesus), “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.” Then God the Father says to Jesus, “You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

We will spend the rest of the week learning from Hebrews what this means. For today, let the incredible scene of Psalm 110 soak into your heart and mind. It is the most quoted Old Testament passage in the New Testament. Look at all that God says Jesus will do one day. Thank Him for revealing these truths to you.



WEEK 4 | DAY 4

PRAY

Take a moment to quiet your thoughts and pray that the Lord would help you focus on Him. Ask Him, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to help you understand the deeper things of His Word as you read and study.

READ

Hebrews 7:1-22

INTERACT

Underline every proper name. Write them out and consider what each of the six names have to do with the priesthood.

Circle the word “perfection” in verse 11. Underline “indestructible life” in verse 16. Draw an arrow from “indestructible life” to “You are a priest forever” in verse 17.

Underline verse 22. Write “Jeremiah 31:31-34” in the margin. Write “Hebrews 7:22” in the margin of Jeremiah 31:31-34.

For additional insight and review see Psalm 110, Genesis 14, and Numbers 18:1-2, 7.

In Genesis God blessed Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, with twelve sons (Genesis 35:22). God eventually changed Jacob’s name to Israel, and his sons’ families became the tribes of Israel. In Genesis 49 Israel (Jacob) pronounces a prophetic blessing over each of his sons. Judah will produce a ruler (Genesis 49:10) while Levi’s descendants will be scattered within the other tribes (Genesis 49:5-7). This prophecy is ultimately fulfilled as Levi’s descendants are given the priesthood through Aaron (Numbers 18:1-2). Thus, Aaron is the original priest of the Levitical (from Levi) priesthood.

Hebrews 7 demonstrates that the time of the priesthood of Levi (and Aaron) has come to an end. Instead, a new priest has come. This priest is like Melchizedek, who was both a priest and a king.

The priest-king Melchizedek, king of peace, wasn’t in this office based on genealogy but was appointed to the role by God. Melchizedek was recognized by Abraham as a superior, as evidenced by Abraham paying tithes to him. Taking the Genesis 14 story and the text of Psalm 110, the writer to the Hebrews shows that Jesus is a priest after the order of Melchizedek as demonstrated by His “indestructible life.” In other words, the resurrection proves Jesus is the priest like Melchizedek promised in Psalm 110, and He is the guarantor of a better covenant—the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Pause for a moment and marvel at the unity of scripture. Melchizedek, Abraham, Judah, Levi, Moses, and Aaron were part of a story that was always pointing to our Great High Priest and King, Jesus.

RESPOND

How would you describe Jesus’ superiority portrayed in this passage?

What has changed about the priesthood according to Hebrews 7:11-14? Why was this change necessary? Why could perfection never be attained through the old priesthood?

The author returns to Psalm 110 in Hebrews 7:21. What is God swearing in this verse? How does this give us a better hope? What is the significance of the better covenant we have in Christ (Hebrews 7:22, Jeremiah 31:31-34)?

PRAY

Did God answer your prayer for understanding? Thank Him. If you need more clarity, ask Him to help and then reach out to someone you trust like a pastor or community group leader. Thank Jesus for being your king, your priest, and your guarantor of the New Covenant and all the blessings it entails.



PRAY

Ask the Lord to make your time in His Word today an act of worship. As you read the passage, praise God for His traits, qualities, and actions you see as you read.

READ

Hebrews 7:23-28

INTERACT

Underline each connecting word (but, consequently, for, etc.). Consider how these words tie everything together.

Mark each time the word “he” appears. Re-read it and replace “he” with “Jesus” as you read.

Read 1 John 2:1-2.

In a world where everything is disposable, it is comforting to find something that is truly permanent. Hebrews 7:24 says “[Jesus] continues forever.” What flows from this thought should cause every follower of Christ to pause and thank God with our whole heart: “Consequently, he [Jesus] is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him...” (Hebrews 7:25 ESV). Completely, permanently, utterly saved. What a glorious truth!

This is the high point to which our study has been building all week. As we have studied from Genesis to Psalms to Hebrews, we have been considering the superiority of Jesus to the priests who came before Him. Now the writer presents Him in all His glory, “holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens” (Hebrews 7:26 ESV).

While the old priests had to offer sacrifices for their own sins, He has no such need. That’s why He was able to offer not a bull or a goat, but Himself. This sacrifice, this king, this priest, the Son of God, is perfect forever. Think about those two words: perfect and forever. They are both words that describe the ultimate. There’s nothing better than perfect; there’s nothing longer than forever. This is our King, our Priest, and our Savior. Jesus saves us to the uttermost, once and for all, because He is perfect forever.

RESPOND

Why were there many priests before? Why is it better that we have only one priest now?

What does it mean to be saved “to the uttermost” or “completely”? What does it mean that Jesus “always lives to make intercession” for those who come to God through Him?

Think back over all of Hebrews 7 and Psalm 110. What have you learned about the priesthood, Melchizedek, and most importantly, about Jesus Christ?

PRAY

Read Hebrews 7:26-28 as a prayer to God. Pause on each descriptive word in the passage and thank Him for how He embodies each characteristic. Praise Him for what He has done and continues to do as He makes intercession for us. Pray for those in the world who don’t know Him.



WEEK 5 | DAY 1

PRAY

Ask God to reveal His heart to you this week. Pray that He would show you His love for His people. Take a few moments before you study to meditate on the greatness of Jesus.

READ

Hebrews 8:1-13

INTERACT

Look up a definition of the word “covenant.”

Circle every instance of the word “covenant.” Notice the two covenants mentioned and the differences between them.

Re-read verses 1-2. Think about the main point each writer is making, what it means, and how it applies to what you learned from Day 5 last week (Hebrews 7:27-28).

RESPOND

What word or phrase from this passage has the Holy Spirit brought to your heart or mind? Re-read the passage and ask Him to speak to you through a word or phrase if He hasn’t brought one to light. Why might that phrase be significant?

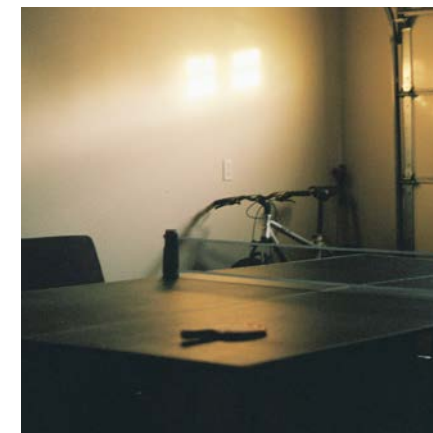
As we focus on the new covenant, we see the old covenant disappear. As you meditate on this new covenant, what things in your life are keeping you from focusing on Jesus? What inferior things in your life are drawing your gaze backward rather than forward to Christ?

PRAY

Though God’s plan may at times seem beyond you, thank Him for allowing you to be a part of His plan. Take time in silence to allow the Holy Spirit to continue to speak to you. Pray that God would continue to draw your gaze back to Him this week.

How great a high priest is Jesus! As we have seen, Jesus is a better priest. Here we see His ministry is better, and His new covenant is better. Just as Moses, Aaron, and the priests before mediated a covenant between God and His people based on the law, now Jesus mediates a covenant between God and His people based on grace. As God presented the first covenant, He had His entire plan in mind. In giving us a picture of the way things are in Heaven through the old covenant, He is better able to demonstrate the superiority of the heavenly sanctuary.

The old covenant and earthly tabernacle point us to a greater reality that exists in Jesus. We see the new covenant is established on better promises. Not that God made a bad covenant the first time, but the new law is written on our hearts. The Great High Priest Jesus sat down at the right hand of the throne of Majesty. The old covenant foreshadowed the greatness of the new covenant which enables us to personally know Christ. What a great thought!



PRAY

Ask God to help you continue to see how this new covenant affects your life today. Pray that God’s Word would be living and active in your life today just as God promised it is.

READ

Jeremiah 31:31-37

INTERACT

Circle the word “covenant.”

Underline anywhere it says what God will do.

Read Ezekiel 36:26-28.

In Jeremiah 31, which is heavily quoted in Hebrews 8, we see the shift from the law being written on tablets of stone to being written on the hearts of God’s people. This new covenant, promised here in Jeremiah and fulfilled in Jesus, involves an internalization of the law of God. With the help of Ezekiel 36, we see God cleansing His people and placing His Spirit within them. He softens and replaces their heart of stone. How amazing to consider, as followers of Jesus, we have the Spirit of the living God residing in us!

A second aspect of this new covenant is what God does with the sins of His people. We may be tempted to think God simply begins to overlook our sin because He remembers it no more. However, the new covenant begins with the shedding of Jesus’ blood for the forgiveness of sins, as Jesus explained to His disciples the night before He was crucified (Matthew 26:27-28). We will explore this more as we get to the second half of Hebrews 9. May we live each day mindful of the price Jesus paid for our sin and just as mindful that if we have trusted in Jesus, we experience new life by having the Holy Spirit live in us!

RESPOND

How would you describe to a friend the difference between the old and new covenants?

What does it mean to you to know God in the way described in Jeremiah?

Take a moment and allow God to examine your heart. In what condition is your heart right now? In what way do you need God to transform your heart today?

PRAY

Reflect on God paying for and remembering your sins no more. What words come to mind as you consider these facts? Present those words to God as a prayer of recognition and thanksgiving.

PRAY

Ask the Lord to enliven your imagination. Pray for Him to help the stories in God’s Word come alive in your heart today as you study what He has shown the prophets.

READ

Ezekiel 37:1-14

INTERACT

Underline anywhere it says what God will do.

Circle the word “bones” and underline the word “breath.”

Notice the descriptive words and phrases. Picture yourself in Ezekiel’s shoes and picture what he would see, hear, smell, and feel.

RESPOND

What do you think is significant about describing the bones as dry? What purpose does it serve to raise the bones in two stages? Why do you think God didn’t do it all at once?

The Israelites waited for a long time for the restoration of Israel. Are you in a season of waiting? What are you praying and waiting for God to do? How is your trust in Him and His promises?

As we have looked at the old covenant, we can gain a clearer picture of Jesus. How do you feel about your understanding of the Old Testament? How can you plan to improve your understanding after you complete this study?

PRAY

As you spend time in prayer today, ask God to help you trust in Him. Ask Him to help you experience the full, abundant life He promises in John 10:10. Thank Him for remaining by your side, even during hardships.

At the time of the prophet Ezekiel, the people of Israel were in exile in Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar. They were far away from their home, away from the land the Lord had promised them. Through the prophet Ezekiel not only did God promise to deliver the Israelites from their oppressors (Ezekiel 36), but he gave them this incredible picture of experiencing new life in the resurrection in Ezekiel 37 as an illustration to confirm His promises.

God remains constant even during trying and difficult times for His people. He remains alongside the people in their suffering and He promises restoration. As we have studied so far this week, a part of that restoration is the gift of His Spirit. Though these promises were for the Israelites, this same characteristic of God applies to us. He is with us amid our struggles and hardships. Though our full restoration may not come to us on this side of Heaven, we can take comfort in knowing He does keep His promises, and He will wipe every tear from our eyes and make us new.

WEEK 5 | DAY 4

PRAY

Pray for God to use His law to speak to your heart. Ask Him to help you see His heart for His people. Pray that He would use this passage to help you see the old covenant and how the new covenant is better.

READ

Leviticus 16:5-22

INTERACT

Underline every instance of “God” or “Lord.” Box each instance of the word “atonement.” Circle the word “sin.”

Review Hebrews 8:3-6.

This section describes the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur in Hebrew), a day when the Israelites would seek atonement for their sins.

Though the rituals seem meticulous and long, we see God desire to have a right relationship with us. We are the ones who disobeyed, yet He is the one who made a way for the people to be made right with Him. This passage gives us a bit of insight into the payment of sin. Because of sin, something must die. As Hebrews 9 says, without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins (we will look at Hebrews 9 more next week).

As we saw in Hebrews 8, Jesus is the better version of the atonement described in Leviticus 16. The practice of the Day of Atonement gave the Israelites a taste of what was to come in Jesus. We look back and have the benefit of seeing more to the story, though we are still waiting on the full restoration of God’s people.

RESPOND

Make a list of the main elements involved in the Day of Atonement (sacrifices, cleanliness, etc.). What do you think each element was designed to communicate to the Israelites?

How do you feel when you read about the sacrificial system? How would you feel if you had to do that today? How do you feel knowing your sins have been placed on Jesus?

Take a minute and think of your favorite “scapegoat” to blame when things go wrong. Why do you think you have that natural reaction to blame someone/something else? What changes when you consider Christ as the one who takes your sin?

PRAY

Thank God for continuing to reveal Himself to you today. Praise Him for providing a final atoning sacrifice through His Son, Jesus. Ask God to help you receive His forgiveness even when it may be difficult to accept.



PRAY

Ask God to use His Word to speak to you today. Pray that He would help you connect each of the passages you have studied this week and that you would gain a bigger view of God's redemptive work throughout all the Scriptures.

READ

Hebrews 9:1-10

INTERACT

Make a list of all the objects and places listed in this passage. Mark the ones you don't know and look them up or come back to them later.

Read Mark 15:37-38 and mark what happens to the curtain mentioned in Hebrews 9:3.

The writer of Hebrews continues to show us the superiority of Christ and the new covenant by highlighting the instructions for worship in the old covenant. While the tabernacle was still functioning, people did not have direct access to God. The priests were the only ones who could intercede and gain access to God for the people. Only the high priest could enter the most sacred of spaces. Through the work of Jesus, all who call on Him gain access to God. God Himself, in the Holy Spirit, indwells everyone who follows Christ. What a gift that we can talk to and commune with God without the need of an intermediary!

Another amazing aspect of the contrast between the old and new covenants deals with the external versus the internal. We see in this section how the old instructions for worship could not clear the conscience of the worshiper, alluding to the fact that these sacrifices had been external, not dealing with our internal state. As Jesus came and died as an atoning sacrifice for our sins, He cleansed us from the inside. With the gift of the Holy Spirit, under the new covenant, we can live with a clear conscience and with access to God. What a joy to live in the promise of I John 1:9 that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

RESPOND

What function did the curtain serve in Hebrews 9:3? What is the significance of what happened in Mark 15:38?

When you feel guilt or shame, how do you try to clear your conscience? What would be a "new covenant" response to guilt and shame?

In your own words, what have you learned this week? To whom can you teach this or what steps can you take to be able to teach others about Jesus?

PRAY

Thank God for giving you access to Him through Jesus! Thank Him that Jesus has taken your place, paid the price for your sin, and extends forgiveness to you. Sit quietly and meditate on what Christ did for you. As you close your time in prayer, respond to Jesus and what He reveals to you.





WEEK 6 | DAY 1

PRAY

As you begin a new week, ask God to meet you in His Word and that you would see the beauty of the gospel in a way you have never seen before.

READ

Hebrews 9:11-28

INTERACT

Underline every time the word “blood” is used.

Mark where you see each of the three persons of the Trinity. Note how they work together for the redemption of humanity.

In Hebrews 9:11-28 the author of this letter continues to look at the old covenant described in the Old Testament where Israel was required to sacrifice calves, goats, and other animals to receive forgiveness of their sins. For many modern readers this is a hard reality to imagine, but the deeper we dive into understanding, the more we see God’s amazing plan for redemption. We see how flawed, sinful humans could have a restored relationship with the Creator of the universe. The problem with the old sacrificial system was an imperfect sacrifice led to an imperfect cleansing, so the people needed to be purified repeatedly. That is, until a perfect sacrifice came to offer a perfect cleansing.

Jesus, the perfect Son of God, gave Himself up to death on a cross to purify once and for the rest of time those who believe and place their trust in Him. This means all who call Jesus Lord and accept His sacrifice in their place are clean forever and forgiven of all sin. This should cause us to fall on our knees in praise and gratitude and give meaning to an old, familiar hymn: “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”

RESPOND

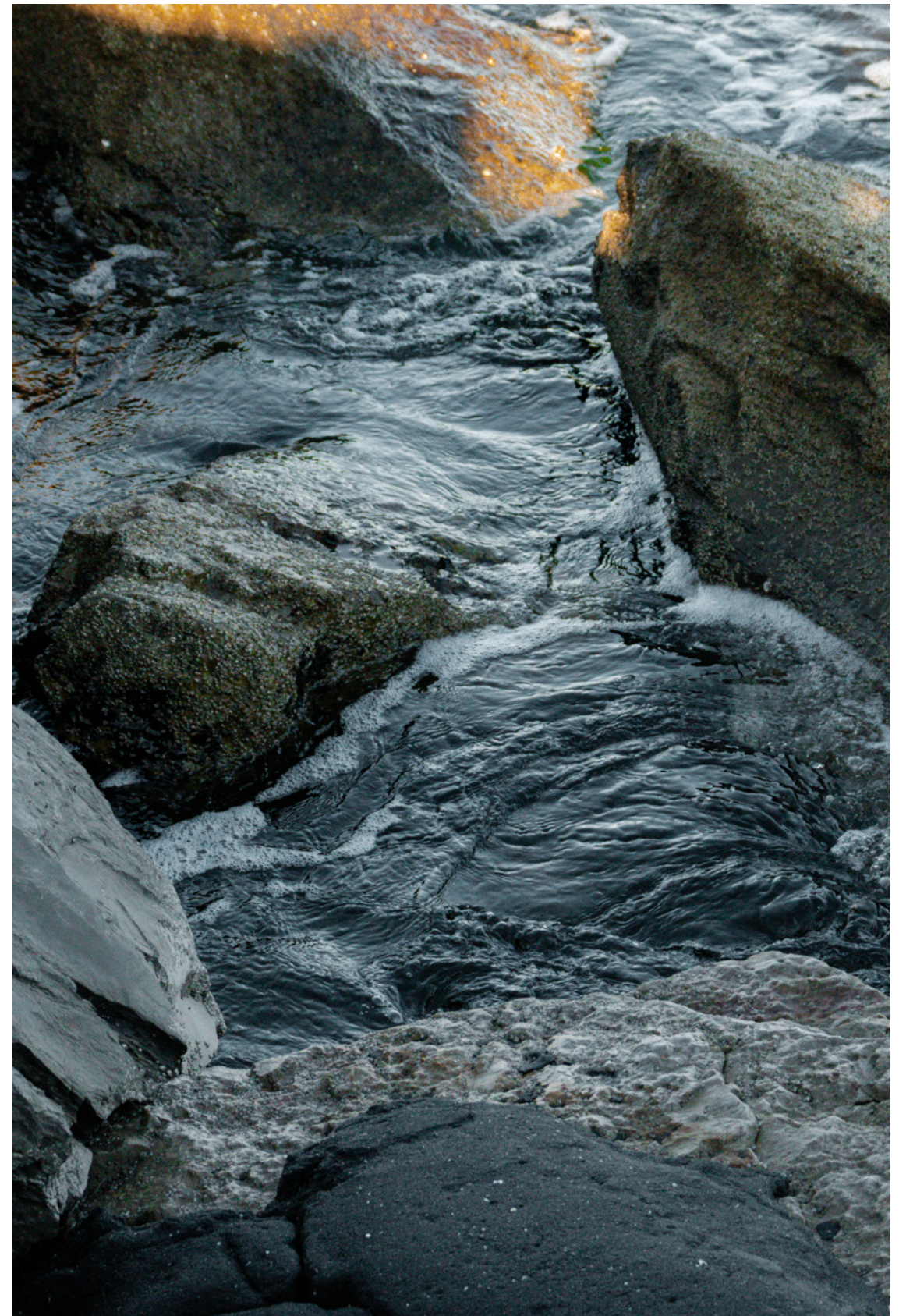
The word “blood” is used 11 times in this passage. Why does this word seem to be so significant? What does the shedding of Christ’s blood accomplish?

What are the individual roles of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in redeeming sinful humanity and how do they work together as one?

What should your response be to this divine work of redemption?

PRAY

Thank God that although you sin and fall short of His standard daily, He still sent Jesus to die the death you deserved and to offer His own blood as a payment for your sin. Confess any specific ways you find yourself falling short of His standard. Thank Him that the redemption through Jesus’ blood can grant you forgiveness for your sin.





PRAY

Pray that the Lord would open your eyes to behold wondrous things out of His Word and you would understand His love for you in a way you have never experienced before.

READ

Romans 8:1-11

INTERACT

Underline every instance of “flesh.”

Circle every instance of “Spirit.”

In Hebrews 9 we saw Jesus’ fulfillment of the sacrificial system and how the shedding of His blood secured our redemption, forgiveness of sin, and the cleansing of our conscience. In Romans 8, we see the enormous impact of Jesus’ death from a different perspective. God the Father sent Jesus to earth to represent humanity and to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law we all failed to live up to because of our sinful flesh.

By conquering sin through His own death, Jesus releases us from our slavery to sin and gives us a new identity and life in Himself. As Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20 (ESV), “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Romans 8 expresses that Jesus’ death on the cross not only freed us from something, but it also frees us to something and for something. If you are a Christian, not only have you been freed from sin, death, and a guilty conscience, but now you have been freed to a life led by the Holy Spirit. Now you have been given the freedom to set your mind on the Spirit, walk by the Spirit, and show that your allegiance is no longer to your sinful flesh but to the Spirit who gives new life.

RESPOND

How would you describe the difference between the flesh and the Spirit in Romans 8?

Describe a life that lives according to the Spirit. How much does your life resemble this description?

What does it mean to set your mind on things of the Spirit? How can you do this today?

PRAY

Thank God for sending Jesus to do what you could never do and dying the death that you deserved. Ask that you would be led by the Spirit today and not by your own flesh. Whenever you think of it throughout your day, ask God to set your mind on things of the Spirit in that moment.

WEEK 6 | DAY 3

PRAY

Pray that you would be free from distraction as you open God's Word and that any anxieties or worries would be washed away as you draw near to the Lord.

READ

Hebrews 10:1-18

INTERACT

Underline every instance of the word "sacrifices."

In Hebrews 10 we learn part of God's plan for the sacrificial system given to Israel in the Old Testament was for it to give Israel constant reminders of their sin and guilt. The blood of goats and bulls was never designed to take away sins but to show Israel their constant need for God to take away their sins. Therefore, it was never the sacrifice that covered their sins but the faith behind the action that pleased God and provided cleansing for Israel. This type of faith looked to a future promise and fulfillment of the sacrificial system.

This system of reminders was in place until Jesus came to earth to do the will of the Father and fulfill the law completely. Jesus was the fulfillment of the sacrificial system and offered His own life as the perfect sacrifice. It was the only sacrifice that could actually take away sin.

In the same way Israel looked forward in faith to the future fulfillment, today we look back and believe that Christ's sacrifice has taken away our guilt. We get to praise Christ that God no longer remembers our sins and lawless deeds, which means there is no longer any need to offer sacrifices for sin.

RESPOND

How was Jesus able to fulfill this sacrificial system once and for all? Why is that important?

Do you believe God has forgiven you for the wrong things you've done? Why or why not?

If God forgives your sins, does it affect how you live today? If so, how?

PRAY

Thank God that Jesus has made the ultimate sacrifice for sins. Ask Him to help you be filled and guided by His Spirit today.



PRAY

Pray that God would help you know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe.

READ

Romans 6:1-14

INTERACT

Underline every time the word “sin” is used.

Circle every version of the word “death” or “dead.”

Box every version of the word “live” or “life.”

Christ’s sacrifice not only frees you from sin and death, but it also frees you to live a new and abundant life. In Romans 6 we get an even clearer picture of the new life Jesus has obtained for us through His death and resurrection.

We see baptism is an outward expression of inward change in the life of a Christian. Specifically, it shows being a Christian means being united to Christ in death and in new life. In baptism, we are expressing that Christ’s death was our death. In the same way He was raised from the dead, we too get to share in this new and abundant life.

One thing that characterizes the new life of a believer is freedom from sin. The last few days we have seen how Christ’s death freed us from the penalty of sin, but today we see His death also frees us from the power of sin in our lives. Before Christ we had no choice but to sin because we were enslaved to it, but now we have been set free from this bondage and are called to daily choose righteousness instead of sin.

While we will never choose righteousness perfectly in this life, there is a day coming when the presence of sin will be removed. When Jesus returns, our battle against the flesh will be over. Until then, those of us who have been united with Christ in death and life are reminded that we are no longer slaves to the law or sin but to righteousness and grace.

RESPOND

Describe what Jesus’ resurrection frees you from when you place your faith in Him.

Describe what Jesus’ resurrection frees you to do or be a part of that you couldn’t experience before placing your trust in Him.

How can you lean on Him today to live free of the bondage of sin? Be specific.

PRAY

Confess to God the areas where sin is still reigning in your life. Ask Him to give you victory over that sin today and thank Him for the grace He richly provides in those areas.

PRAY

Pray the Bible would not just be another book to you, but that it would be the Word of God speaking to you through the power of the Holy Spirit. Pray it would lead you to a life of ministry devoted to God and to others. Take time to quietly listen to how He may be leading you in that area.

READ

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

INTERACT

Mark the specific work of Jesus in this passage.

This week, we have studied how Jesus’ death and resurrection conquered the penalty and power of sin. In 1 Corinthians we see a glimpse of Jesus’ victory over death. Although His death on the cross has already paid for our sin, He will one day come back to destroy death itself once and for all. In Revelation 21 we get a future picture of the “new heavens and new earth” where God will “wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4 ESV).

There is coming a day when everything in heaven and on earth will be subjected to Christ Himself. This means He will finally be seen and worshiped by all as the true King. “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11).

How great is our King! May we exalt Jesus in our lives each day!

RESPOND

In your own words, what does it mean that Christ is coming back to “destroy death”?

Why is it important that all things are subjected to Christ?

How would your life change if Christ had full authority over every decision you make today?

PRAY

Thank and worship God for all He has given you through Christ. If you are able, pray on your knees as a symbol of recognizing Jesus as the true King. To Him alone do we bow down and worship. Pray through the Lord’s prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). Ask that God’s Kingdom would come and His will would be done on earth as it is in heaven.





**PRAY**

Ask God to give you insight into His Word today. Pray that you would be moved to action by what you discover in His Word. Pray for a renewed vision of the work of Jesus on your behalf.

READ

Hebrews 10:19-25

INTERACT

Look back at the verses leading up to this passage to remember the context. Notice the logical flow of ideas indicated with words like therefore, since, etc.

Underline the phrases that begin with “let us.”

RESPOND

What does this passage tell you about the character of God? What does it teach you about what Christ accomplished on the cross for you?

Do you feel confident in approaching God? What are you believing or doing that keeps you from feeling the full confidence of Christ’s redeeming sacrifice?

How can you encourage others toward love and good deeds today? Plan to do what God has prompted you to do.

PRAY

Thank God for inviting you into His presence and listening to you even now. Ask Him to help you draw near to Him, trust in Him, and live a life that encourages others to love and live for Jesus.

In the old covenant, God’s dwelling place among His people, the Holy of Holies, was only entered by the high priest once a year. The book of Leviticus offers stern warnings about how the high priest was to enter the Holy of Holies. Should these commands not be followed, the result would be death (Leviticus 16).

Now, because of the blood of Jesus, we may enter God’s presence at any time without fear! Jesus has entered God’s presence first as our Great High Priest who intercedes on our behalf and has invited us into God’s presence with Him.

In view of all that Christ accomplished, Hebrews encourages us to do three things: let us draw near to God, let us hold fast to hope, and let us encourage one another. We can draw near to God in faith because we are cleansed and purified. We are made holy and righteous by Jesus’ sacrifice. We do not need to fear that entering the presence of God will result in our death. In fact, just the opposite is true. It is in His presence where we find true life. We can hold fast to our confession of hope in Christ because we know God is faithful, His promises are true, and He does not waver in His plan. We can consider how to encourage one another to love and good works, knowing our reward is sure, and the day of Christ’s return is nearer now than it has ever been.

We are fully empowered to live out the Christian virtues of faith, hope, and love, not because of our merit but by the death and resurrection of Jesus alone.

WEEK 7 | DAY 2

PRAY

Ask God to open your eyes to His truth today. Ask Him to teach you from His Word. Ask Him to reveal any places of mistrust, fear, or disobedience.

READ

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

INTERACT

Bracket connecting words that show logical flow of thought such as “but” or “so then.”

Circle all the commands.

Write Ephesians 6:10-18 in the margin next to 1 Thessalonians 5:8 and compare how Paul develops the idea of the armor of God.

RESPOND

Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:8, then read Ephesians 6:10-18. How does Paul develop the idea of the armor of God?

How does the promise of Christ’s return make you feel? Confident? Nervous? Fearful? Joyful? Why do you think you feel this way?

Think through your plans for the day. Think about your time at work, home, at school, etc. How can you practice the virtues of faith, hope, and love today? Plan something specific and achievable so you can walk in obedience to God’s Word.

PRAY

Thank the Lord that He has given you the ability to see that hope is only found in Jesus. Ask Him to help you to walk the way of Jesus in faith, hope, and love.

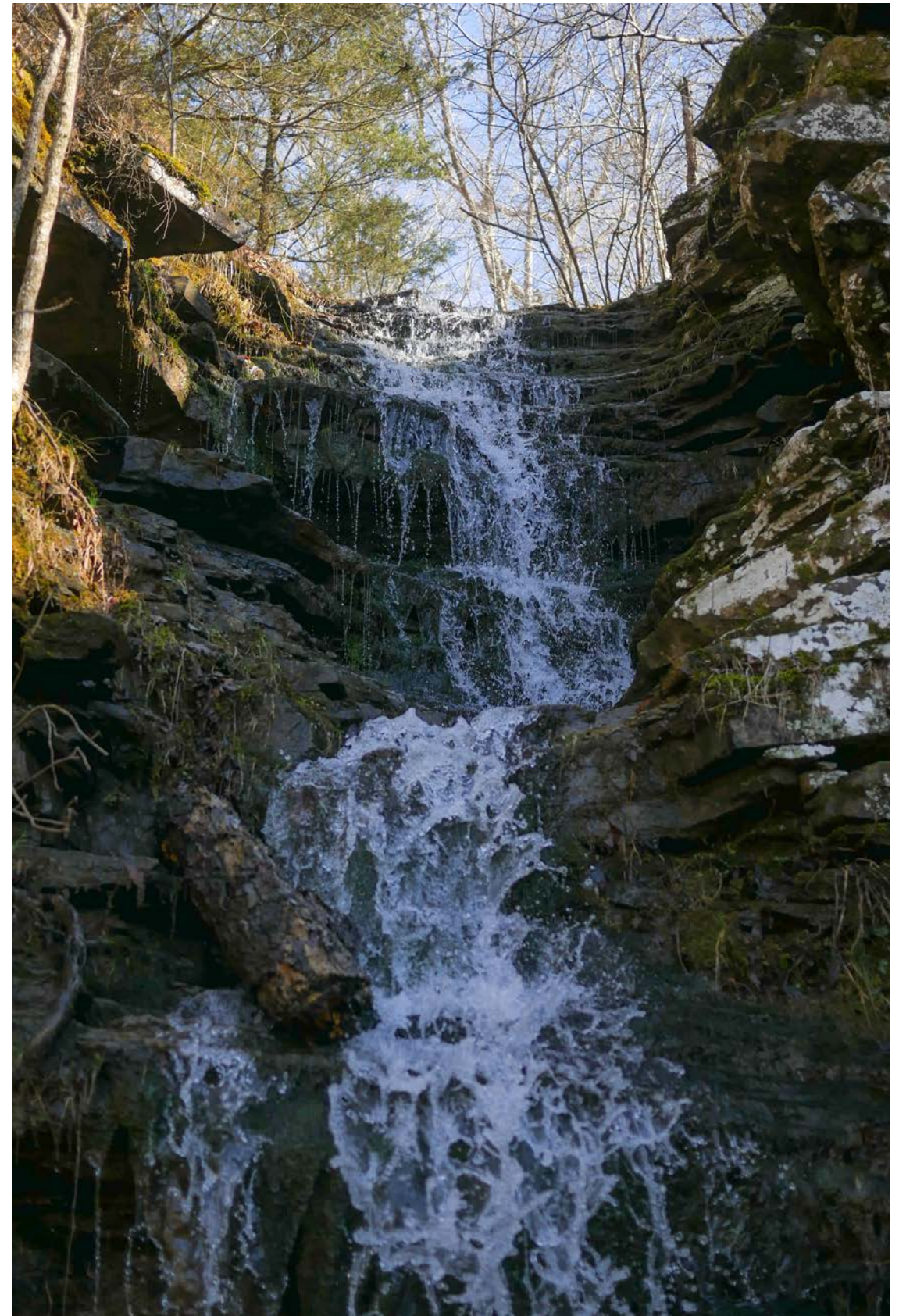
From about 27 BC to AD 180 Rome ruled all the Mediterranean and much of the known world in a time commonly called the Pax Romana (Latin for “Roman Peace”). It seemed the empire would know no end, and with slogans like “Pax et Securitas” (peace and security) they spread the message of Roman superiority. “If you live our way,” declares Rome, “we offer you peace and security.”

In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul holds out another kind of peace that will be achieved on the Day of the Lord. The Old Testament concept of the Day of the Lord involves God’s judgment and ultimate restoration of His created world (Joel 2:28-32).

Paul tells us the Day of God’s judgment and God’s salvation of His people could come at any time, and it will shake all the empires of the earth to their core. Jesus will return to judge the empires of this world, to set right all injustices, and to fully redeem His people. Considering this truth, Paul encourages the Thessalonians to stay awake and to be ready for Christ’s return.

And how are we to remain alert and awake? By constantly looking for signs or secret knowledge? On the contrary, we are to practice the virtues of faith, hope, and love! We are to encourage and build each other up; to keep living the normal Christian life.

The way of Jesus is narrow. We must avoid placing our hope in any worldly empire. Likewise, we must avoid stumbling into wild speculation about the significance of today’s latest outrage. Let us continue to walk hopefully, patiently, and expectantly in the way of Jesus, knowing that His return is nearer today than ever before.



WEEK 7 | DAY 3

PRAY

Pray that God would speak clearly to you today. Pray that you would be moved and transformed by His Word. Ask God to reveal any areas of unbelief or sinful patterns and ask Him to give you the strength to change.

READ

Hebrews 10:26-31

INTERACT

Highlight the descriptions of judgment in this passage.

The author references two Old Testament passages. Read Deuteronomy 32:35 and Isaiah 26:11 for context.

As Hebrews concludes this section on the benefits of salvation offered by Jesus, there is a stern warning. This may seem surprising considering the hope in the previous passage, but the author is pivoting on the phrase “Day of the Lord” at the end of verse 25.

As we saw in 1 Thessalonians 5, the Day of the Lord is both a day of judgment and a day of restoration and hope. First, Hebrews 10 addresses the Day of the Lord from the perspective of hope for those who have faith in Jesus. Then in verses 26-31, the author warns of God’s judgment on those who turn away from Jesus.

This is one of the most challenging passages in the book of Hebrews. The author states warnings as matter-of-fact realities. If we continue to run from Christ, the only thing awaiting us is a consuming and terrifying judgment.

Just as the rewards of the New Covenant are greater, so will be the judgment for those who reject Christ. This was a real choice facing the original readers and it is a real choice we face today. They were tempted, either because of persecution or potential social benefits, to return to their former way of life. We too can be tempted to embrace a way of living different than the new way of Jesus. We can place our allegiance with Jesus, or we can place our allegiance in some other system, empire, or kingdom. What we decide makes the difference between enjoying the benefits offered by Jesus and His sacrifice, or the fearful prospect of judgment.

This warning is not simply hypothetical. It is a call to decision. May we decide today to place our full allegiance in Jesus and give Him our complete and unwavering obedience.

RESPOND

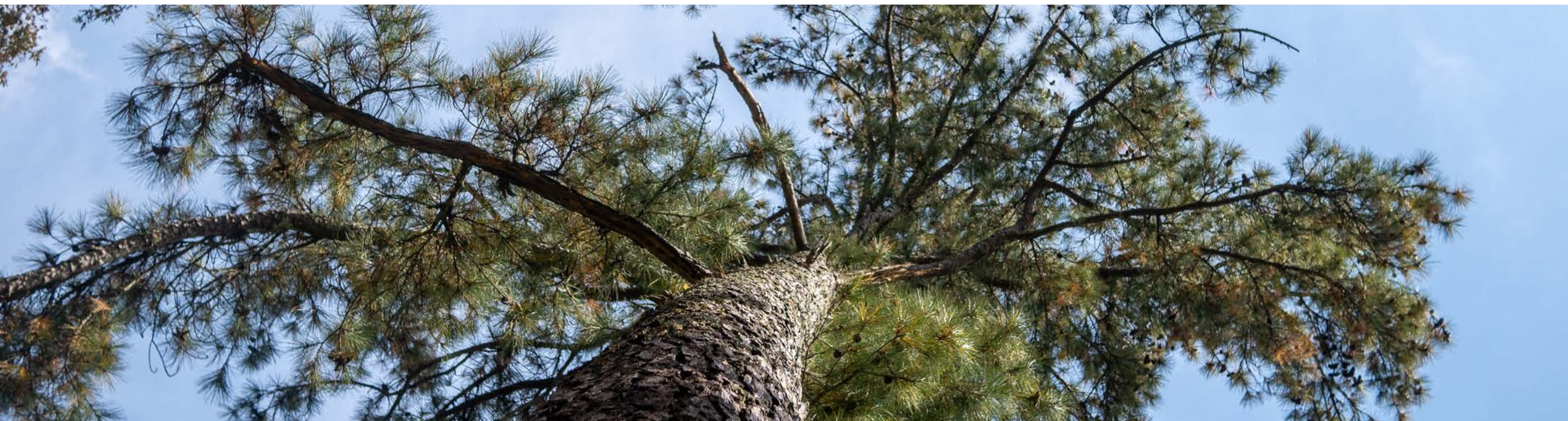
Why does the author give his readers such a stark warning?

What feelings arise when you read passages that speak of God’s judgment? How can God’s judgment move us to a deeper hope in Jesus?

The author offers a strong warning if we continue down the path of sinful rebellion. Do you have any areas of willful sin in your life? Confess them to God and repent. Rely on the sacrifice of Jesus by trusting His death and resurrection are sufficient to cleanse you and make you whole. Consider who you can reach out to who can walk alongside you.

PRAY

Take a few moments to pledge your allegiance to Jesus, telling Him how you would like to live for Him. Thank God that you are not without hope. Ask Him to help you to love Him by being obedient to His Word. Ask Him to keep you from willful disobedience; be specific about which sins tempt you most and ask Him for a deeper trust in Him.



WEEK 7 | DAY 4

PRAY

Pray that God would illuminate His Word to you today. Pray that you would be moved to action by what you discover in His Word. Pray you would have a heart for those who don't know Jesus and would long to see them come to know Him.

READ

Matthew 7:13-29

INTERACT

Underline the metaphors Jesus uses to describe the spiritual life.

Circle the promises of reward for those who listen to Jesus.

Bracket the warnings for those who fail to listen to Jesus.

RESPOND

In your own words, explain each of the three metaphors Jesus uses.

How do Jesus' warnings make you feel? Why do you think you respond the way you do? Are there any specific ways this passage makes you feel convicted about anything in your own life?

How can you take steps to develop your relationship with Jesus today? How can you take steps of obedience today (not only in what He has warned you not to do, but also in what He has called you to actively do such as love, forgive, and make disciples)?

PRAY

Thank God for teaching you how to live life in His Kingdom. Pray that He would give you what you need today to walk in obedience. Ask Him to help you take His words seriously and put them into practice.

The promises and warnings of Matthew 7 come at the end of a long teaching of Jesus traditionally called the "Sermon on the Mount." Throughout this teaching, Jesus calls His followers to live under the ethics of His Kingdom. Rather than just living in narrow obedience to the Old Testament law, He raises the bar and calls them to a deeper love for God and people. Jesus calls His followers to choose how to live, who to serve, and to which kingdom they will belong.

Jesus uses three metaphors to describe the promise of reward and the possibility of judgment. Those who choose the narrow gate will be saved, those who choose the wide gate will be destroyed. Healthy trees with good fruit will flourish; unhealthy trees that bear bad fruit will be cut down. Those who build their house on the foundation of obedience to Jesus will be secure, those who fail to heed His words will fall in the flood.

Jesus' warnings emphasize the importance of obeying Him and knowing Him personally. Those who know Him will keep His commands, but there will also be those who do not have a relationship with Jesus who carry out false acts of service in His name. Unlike the metaphorical warnings, which focus on our obedience to Jesus' teaching, this warning focuses on a failure to truly know and be known by Jesus.

Jesus wants us to know we are not only accountable for our obedience to Him but also our relationship with Him. He plainly tells His disciples "if you love me, you will keep my commands" (John 14:15 ESV). We cannot choose to either love Him or keep His commandments, we must do both. We would do well to listen to Jesus' promises and warnings as we seek to love and obey Him.



PRAY

Take a moment to sit in quietness. Try to quiet your thoughts and ask God to help you concentrate on Him. Pray that God would guide you as you read the scripture. Pray that the Holy Spirit would be your teacher today.

READ

Hebrews 10:32-39

INTERACT

Underline the actions of the audience in this letter.

Circle the commands.

The author quotes from two sections of the Old Testament. Look up Isaiah 26:21 and Habakkuk 2:3-4.

As the author finishes the warning in Hebrews 10, the readers of this letter are urged to recall their own faithfulness. They have exhibited great evidence of faith and would continue to do so. They were willing to suffer persecution and abuse for the sake of Jesus and their fellow Christians.

It is difficult for modern American readers to truly feel the full fury of the persecution and public shame experienced by these first-century believers. They were demonized and depersonalized as many minorities have been throughout history. On the one hand, they were criticized by their Jewish friends and family for insisting that Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel. On the other hand, their non-Jewish neighbors despised them for not worshiping idols or participating in practices of the pagan society. Similarly, there are many Christians throughout the world today who experience an intense level of persecution most modern American Christians have likely never experienced or could even imagine.

Whatever persecution they faced, whether confiscation of property, imprisonment, or public mockery, they endured because of the certainty of God's promised reward.

As we read this passage let us hold on to our confidence, knowing that God is faithful to reward us. Whatever we are facing, we can be sure God's promises are true, He will reward us if we seek Him, and we can endure.

RESPOND

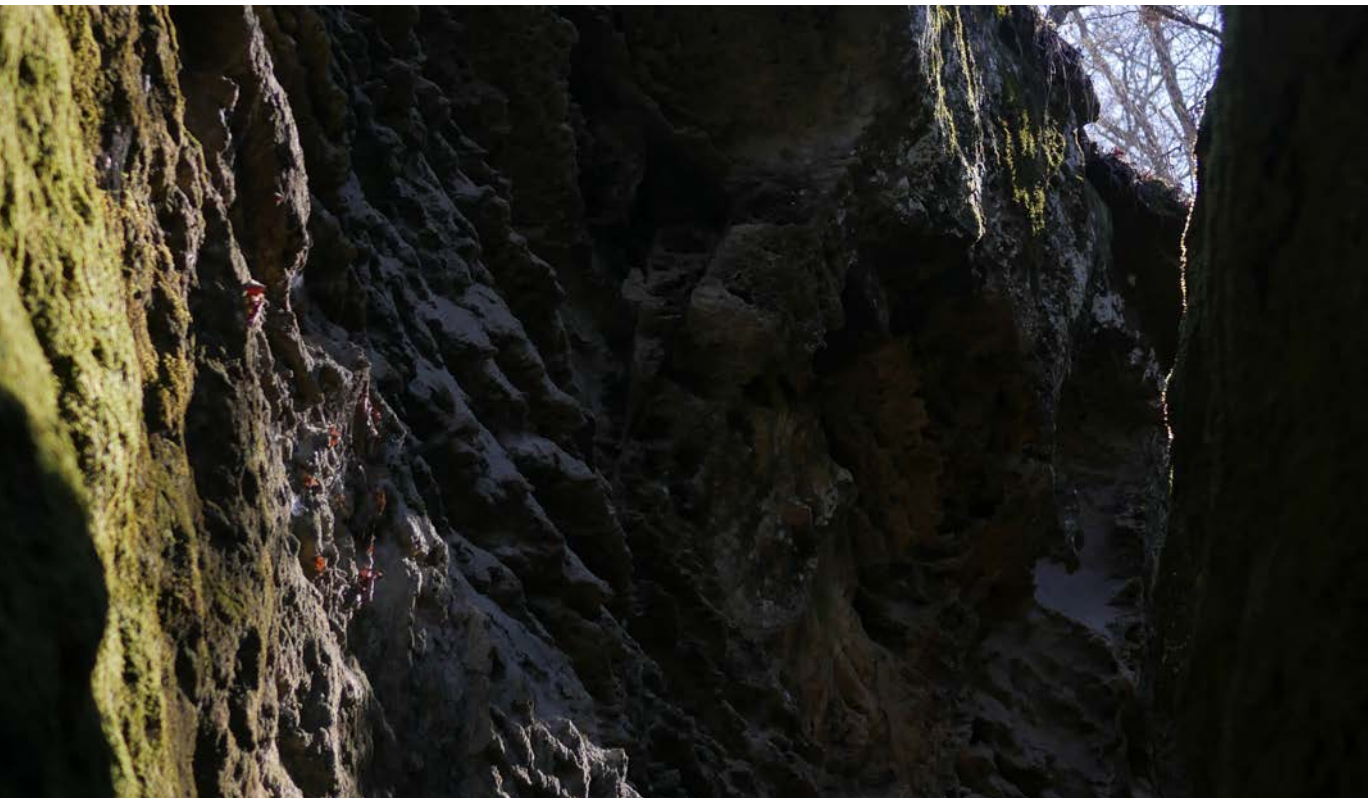
The author mentions multiple times a promised reward. What do you think he is talking about?

How do you think you would respond to more intense persecution for your faith? Why do you think you would respond that way?

The author paints the congregation's faith as a struggle that requires endurance. What are you facing that requires endurance?

PRAY

Pray that God would give you renewed joy in Him every day. Pray for strength to hold tightly to your faith in all circumstances. Ask God to grant you patience and perseverance to endure trials in life. Pray for the believers around the world who are physically, socially, and spiritually persecuted each day. Thank God for the hope He gives and tell Him you trust He will keep His promises.





WEEK 8 | DAY 1

PRAY

Ask God to help your faith grow. Tell Him what your life is like currently and ask Him to show you how He is present with you.

READ

Hebrews 11:1-40

INTERACT

Circle all the names listed as heroes of faith in Hebrews 11.

Underline the commands or promises of God.

Mark the challenges, trials, difficulties, and circumstances the various “heroes” faced throughout their lives.

RESPOND

Which hero of faith mentioned do you most identify with right now? Who do you look at and say, “I’ve been where they are” or “I want to have that kind of faith”?

What do you currently place your faith in that seems more secure than God? How have you falsely placed your security in tangible assets, people, or gifts in this life instead of God? Identify them and then confess them to God.

How can you grow to be more confident of who God is, knowing more fully that the object of your faith is reliable?

PRAY

Pray that God would help you place your faith and security in God alone. Pray for clarity to see Him at work in your life and the world around you. Confess any doubts you have (God is not afraid of your doubts). Pray that He would be close to you and that you would seek and know His presence.

Faith is the hallmark of those who claim to be followers of God Almighty. From our understanding of how the world came into being to the day we face our dying breath, faith is confidence in who God is and what He has revealed about Himself to us. The lives we live, we live by faith, not always understanding or being able to rationally grasp everything we cannot see or explain.

The writer of Hebrews aimed to arm the reader with an arsenal of examples of great faith. With over 20 named examples and thousands of unnamed examples, we see faith is the pillar upon which every other part of our lives is built.

Faith is described as belief in something that cannot be seen. Many of the people described in Hebrews 11 were in the midst of difficult circumstances and would have been surrounded by doubt. However, it is not always the strength of a person’s faith but the object of the faith that makes it secure and certain. We can confidently place our faith in God because He never changes and always keeps His promises.

The people of God were praised for their faith in God. It is in Him we are secure and cannot be harmed or shamed. Our faith may waiver, but God does not. And yet, in this life we don’t experience the final outcome of our faith. It is in the future God has prepared and promised that our faith is finally realized.





PRAY

Pray today that your heart and mind would be open to hearing the voice of God. Pray you would be able trust what God is speaking to you.

READ

Genesis 22:1-19

INTERACT

Circle the word “provide” every time it is used in this story.

Read Genesis 15:1-6.

Read Hebrews 11:17-19.

Abraham was a man of great faith. Despite times when his faith waivered, He demonstrated great faith in pivotal moments where God asked Him to trust. He left his family and moved to a far-off land. He continued to hold on to hope that He would have a son when he and his wife couldn’t conceive in their old age. Then his faith was put to the ultimate test when he was told to sacrifice his son to God. This was the very son God had promised would have many descendants through which God would bless the world.

Abraham displayed a confidence in God unlike almost anyone else in the entire Bible. He believed that in some way, somehow, God would provide a way for his son to remain alive. Either God would ask him not to sacrifice his son in the end or God would bring Isaac back from the dead. Isaac was Abraham’s only heir and the obvious fulfillment of God’s promise. Abraham knew that because of who God is, he could trust Him. God always comes through on His promises, and He did.

Later in the New Testament, upon the same mountain where Abraham nearly sacrificed his son, Isaac, God did in fact sacrifice His own Son, Jesus. It was upon the same mountain where Abraham built an altar to God, that the temple was one day constructed, and outside the temple, Jesus was crucified. God provided a sacrifice once and for all with His Son. Only faith in Him can truly save anyone from death.

RESPOND

Put yourself in the position of the various characters in the story (the servants, Abraham, Isaac). What do you think was going through their minds as this story progressed?

What can you learn from Abraham’s display of faith in this story? In what ways do you need to trust God deeper and more completely in the same way Abraham did?

PRAY

Praise God that He is faithful, keeps His promises, and is worthy of your trust. Ask Him to give you greater faith in the midst of what is happening in your life now. Thank Him for what He has provided for you (spiritually, relationally, and physically) and ask that He would continue to help you to lean on Him for provision.

PRAY

Pray today that God would fight for you in a specific area of your life. Pray that He would display His power and receive the glory in your life for acting on your behalf.

READ

Exodus 14:5-31

INTERACT

Underline all the physical ways God acted on behalf of the Israelites.

Mark all the instances the Israelites experienced fear and the emotions they expressed.

Read Hebrews 11:24-29.

Imagine the emotions the Israelites felt in Exodus 14. They had just left Egypt, full of courage and faith only to be chased down by an army they had no chance of defeating. Pinned between a giant body of water ahead and horses and swords behind, they immediately turned on their leader and cried out in fear.

In one of the greatest miraculous displays in all of Scripture, God parted the sea for His people, allowing them to walk across on dry land, while holding back thousands of soldiers all at once. The fear they were experiencing was likely replaced with a different kind of apprehension and awe as they walked across the dry sea floor with walls of water on either side of them.

The faith the Israelites displayed required almost nothing on their part. They simply moved away from the threat and into the provision of God. There was clearly nothing they could say, do, or bring to the situation that would contribute to their rescue other than trusting God in the way He provided. The same is true for the people of God today. God wants us to trust in the way He has provided and to take steps of faith in following Him. God did the work on the cross to save us from sin and death and sent His Spirit so that in any struggle in this life, we could rely on His strength in freedom, empowerment, and victory.

RESPOND

Describe the interaction and conversation Moses had with God.

Have you ever experienced God fighting for you? What was that time like and what emotions did you feel before and after He delivered you?

When you consider your life today, is there anywhere you feel trapped? How might God be providing a way out and how can you take a step forward in faith, even if there may be new fears along with it?

PRAY

Pray and confess any challenges you may have. Confess any ways you have tried to face those challenges on your own without seeking God. Praise Him that He alone is your deliverer and He fights for you. Ask Him to work in specific situations in your life and the lives of those around you. Ask Him for the strength and courage to do His will today.



WEEK 8 | DAY 4

PRAY

Pray that God would help you commit His Word to memory and that it would lead to a changed life and action. Pray that God gives you the opportunity to share your faith in Him to others around you this week.

READ

Joshua 2

INTERACT

Underline any time a character's faith is shown to be strong or weak in this story.

Circle "scarlet cord" in verses 18 & 21.

Read Hebrews 11:31 and Matthew 1:1-6.

For more on Rahab's story read Joshua 6.

Leading up to Joshua 2, the Israelites were preparing to enter the land that God had promised they would inhabit. Their leader, Joshua, sent two spies to look at the city and report back. These two spies then encountered Rahab, who we see mentioned in Hebrews 11. Rahab isn't a main character throughout the Old Testament, but her exceeding faith is remembered, and she is listed among the heroes of the faith in Hebrews 11. She is one of the few women mentioned in the list and she is also highlighted in the genealogy leading up to Jesus in Matthew 1!

Yet, she is not a person we would expect to be highlighted in scripture. She wasn't an Israelite and was clearly labeled as a sinner when she was described as a prostitute. Rahab seemed far from being able to access the family of God, yet she was praised for her faith in God in heaven above and on the earth below.

It is not the state of our life or the strength of our faith that determines our worth, value, or outcome, but it is the object of our faith and where we place our trust. Rahab had an exceeding faith in a great God. He was able to save her and offer her a better way. No matter who you are, what you have done, or what you are facing, God offers you a better way and asks you to trust in Him. There is no distance too far, situation too dire, or life too broken for God to save. Stepping out in faith and accepting God's provision in your life is the exact act of faith He desires from every person.

RESPOND

Describe the story and how Rahab acted on her faith.

Rahab had faith, but she also acted on it, placing the scarlet cord outside her window. Faith isn't just static belief but requires action and intent from those who believe in God. What action do you need to take as an act of faith right now?

Do you ever feel you are too far from God for Him to work in your life? Have you ever felt that way of someone else? Why would you think this way? How is it untrue? How can you repent of this false belief?

PRAY

Thank God that He has extended an invitation for you to be part of His family, no matter who you are or what you have ever done. Pray that He would give you a bigger view of Himself and how great He is. Pray you would trust Him and show your trust by your actions. Ask Him to use you today in the life of someone who is far from Him.



WEEK 8 | DAY 5

PRAY

Pray you would have a passion for God that runs deep. Pray you would be able to step into whatever circumstances God has prepared for you and that you would fight for holiness in your life.

READ

1 Samuel 17

INTERACT

Underline all the statements David makes about who God is, His character, and His purposes.

List the observations you see in verses 34-37 about David's development and the preparation for the battle he would eventually have with Goliath.

Read Hebrews 11:32-34.

RESPOND

What strikes you the most about David's preparation before he ever faced Goliath?

In Verse 46 David says the reason for His actions is so that the whole world will know the God of Israel. Do the faithful actions of your life speak to the surrounding world about the God you serve? How could your faithfulness lead others to know Jesus?

In what ways is God calling you to be faithful to Him today?

PRAY

Thank God that He is with you. Ask Him to help you be faithful to Him in the small things in your life (be specific with anything that comes to mind). Ask Him to give you a faithfulness that leads to action. Pray that through your life the world would know Jesus.

The story of David and Goliath has been told and retold to instill courage and give hope against insurmountable odds. Children and adults alike have their “Goliath” moments they must face. It is part of being human. Everyone hopes they will not lose but instead come out winning with a grand story of victory to tell. While this story is inspirational, it is much more about David's faithfulness to God and God's provision than simply a triumphant victory.

David was not a warrior. That's what makes this story so compelling. He was a man of faith and a man of action. Because no one saw David as a warrior, he was the perfect person through whom God could show His power in defeating the Philistines. David had a deep conviction about the God he served. He would not allow someone to speak falsely about God Almighty. In turn, God was with David in his battle.

As followers of God, we don't know what battles we will face or what challenges lie before us. God simply asks for our faithfulness, that we would trust Him, and that trust would lead to action. May we look to God and stay faithful to Him every day, willing to be used for His glory!





PRAY

Ask God to give you a clearer understanding of Jesus this week. Pray you would see that Jesus is currently seated at God's right-hand, reigning as Israel's promised Messiah and the true King of all the earth. Praise Him for this and ask for understanding of what that means for your life.

READ

Hebrews 12:1-2

INTERACT

Box the word "therefore" in verse 1. Look back and remember the previous chapter to gain context for what the author is about to say.

Underline the two "let us" phrases and make note of what the author is encouraging us to do.

Circle any descriptions of Jesus and what He has done.

RESPOND

What does it mean to fix our eyes on Jesus? How does doing this actually affect your life today?

The author exhorts us, "Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely" (Hebrews 12:1 ESV). What sins or weights are inhibiting you from running after Jesus with all you've got? To whom will you confess this? Who will you ask to keep you accountable and to run with you?

What is the joy set before you? How can you experience joy today in this future hope?

PRAY

Thank God for Jesus, that He endured the cross for you to make a way for your redemption. Ask God to fix your eyes on Jesus as your motivation to run after Him with endurance. Listen to the song, "Be Thou My Vision." Think about the words and let them be a prayer.

The imagery of Hebrews 12:1-2 gives us a gripping visual metaphor as the author compares a life of faith in Jesus to running an endurance race. Visualize the passage as if we are runners in an Olympic arena and those faithful people from Chapter 11 are here to witness us run the race marked out for us. The weight of their expectations and their words of encouragement motivate us to run with endurance.

However, a runner in a race doesn't fix their attention on the stands but on the finish line. Our finish line is to be made new, to experience the hope of our resurrection where we will be seated with Christ at God's right hand. Jesus Himself is our goal. (Ephesians 2:6; 2 Timothy 2:12; Philippians 3; Revelation 22:5)

We fix our eyes on Jesus who has gone before us. Jesus was clear that His way of ruling and reigning would not be won by sword, or power, or politics. Rather, He would overcome with a self-sacrificing love for His enemies. He endured temptation, rejection, persecution, and death. That is the path He took to the throne at God's right hand. This is the way of Jesus. This is the race marked out for us.

As we follow Jesus in this race, we will face temptation, hardship, suffering, and persecution. Yet, fixing our eyes on Jesus, our prize, we can regard all these obstacles as inconsequential to the joy set before us. We can run this race with endurance and joy because Jesus is worth it.

WEEK 9 | DAY 2

PRAY

Ask God to open your eyes to see how Jesus is bringing His eternal Kingdom to this world.

READ

Daniel 7:13-14

INTERACT

Underline “son of man” and mark any descriptions of Him and His work.

For more context read the entirety of Daniel 7.

Daniel was a Jewish exile living in the empire of Babylon. One night, he had dreams of four beasts coming up out of the sea, bringing destruction to the earth. The beasts represented earthly empires, likely Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

Daniel then saw the Ancient One seated on a throne of glory. The beasts would continue to rule for a time until “one like a son of man,” or a human, approaches the Ancient One and is given authority to rule an everlasting Kingdom composed of all the nations.

This passage is likely the source of Jesus’ most used term for Himself, the Son of Man. He is the human one who will be exalted over all the nations as King. Though human empires continue to rise and fall, Jesus has overcome them and will be proven the everlasting King. He has not overcome by displays of power, but by His sacrificial love and death on the cross. Jesus quotes this passage the night of His arrest saying from now on they would see the Son of Man going up on the clouds to be seated at the right hand of God (Matthew 26:64). He said this because He saw His crucifixion as His enthronement. He overcame the powers of evil with His self-sacrificing love on the cross.

Though we continue to live in a world trampled by the greed, war, oppression, and the evil of beastly empires, we know they have already been defeated. One day, the perfect rule of the Son of Man will be manifested on the earth, and His Kingdom will never end.

RESPOND

What is significant or surprising about the way Jesus has overcome the empires of our world?

How can you follow Jesus in self-sacrificing love rather than seeking power in the world’s empires today?

How will you worship King Jesus today?

PRAY

Ask God to help you discern the temptations of the world’s empires in your life and to give you the courage to reject their call. Ask God for His Spirit to help you pursue Jesus even through hardship and suffering.



**PRAY**

Ask God to open your eyes to see how Jesus is bringing His eternal Kingdom to this world.

READ

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12

INTERACT

Draw a box around the phrase “he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted” in Isaiah 52:13.

Draw a box around the phrase “Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong” in Isaiah 53:12.

Underline all the ways the “servant” of God was treated (ex. “despised,” “rejected,” “oppressed”).

RESPOND

Jesus’ way of overcoming sin and evil was not through power or might, but through self-sacrificing love for enemies. Is anything about this hard for you to accept? Why?

How does reading about Jesus as a suffering servant make you feel? Why do you feel this way?

PRAY

Thank Jesus for how He suffered in order to cleanse you of sin. Praise Him as your exalted king. Ask God to help you live in awe of Jesus with gratitude for His selfless love.

PRAY

Take a moment to clear your mind of the day ahead or anything distracting. Ask God to open your heart to feel the weight of your sin as you read about what Jesus did. Ask God to move you to a place of repentance and worship of Jesus.

READ

Acts 2:22-39

INTERACT

Look earlier in the chapter to see who is speaking and to whom they are speaking.

Peter quotes two psalms of David in this passage. Read Psalm 16 and Psalm 110 to see from where he is referencing these quotes.

RESPOND

Do you believe Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel and the true king of all the earth? If not, why?

Have you identified with Jesus and His people through the symbolic action of baptism? If not, why?

Do you know what it means to receive the Holy Spirit?

Who is a mature follower of Jesus who could walk through these questions with you? Call them today!

PRAY

Those who heard Peter’s message were “cut to the heart” when they realized their part in the death of Jesus and the weight of their sin. Spend time in prayer, confessing to God your own sin and brokenness. Ask Him to renew you by His Holy Spirit.

For centuries, the people of Israel hoped for the Messiah King who would come from the lineage of David. Peter and the other disciples came to believe Jesus was this promised king, though many in Israel doubted, asking how could someone who was crucified and dead be king?

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, masterfully refers to Old Testament prophecies found in David’s psalms which foretold how the promised Messiah, God’s Holy One, would die and then be raised from the dead. To Peter, there was no question that Jesus was the Messiah. He had seen Jesus suffer and die as God’s Suffering Servant, he saw Him risen from the dead as God’s Holy One, and witnessed His ascension to sit at God’s right hand as Lord and Messiah.

Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 ended with a promise: Everyone who repents and is baptized in the name of Jesus will be forgiven of sins and receive the Holy Spirit.

PRAY

Ask God to change your mindset about what makes someone great and replace it with the mind of Christ.

READ

Philippians 2:6-11

INTERACT

Read Hebrews 1:1-4 and Hebrews 2:9. Look for connections to what we’ve studied in Hebrews so far.

Our human perspective on how to achieve power, recognition, or influence break when we come to terms with Philippians 2:6-11. We expect exaltation to happen by developing incredible strength or skill, by amassing great wealth or possession, or by dominating our enemies by force and power. Yet, Jesus’ way is entirely different.

Jesus is by nature God, He already had the strength, riches, and power at His disposal, yet His divine nature did not prevent Him from becoming weak in human form. He chose to become lowly, poor, rejected, and scorned, though He deserved praise and service.

He obeyed the Father even to the point of His torturous death on the cross. He could have used His position to His advantage, but He willingly laid it all down. Because of His self-sacrificing love and complete humility, He has been exalted above every name to sit at God’s right hand and rule the world.

As we run our race after Jesus, we are called to have the same mind of Christ, believing humility is the true path to greatness. No one has ever shown greater humility and love than the all-powerful God who humbled Himself to save sinners.

RESPOND

What about Christ’s humility surprises you?

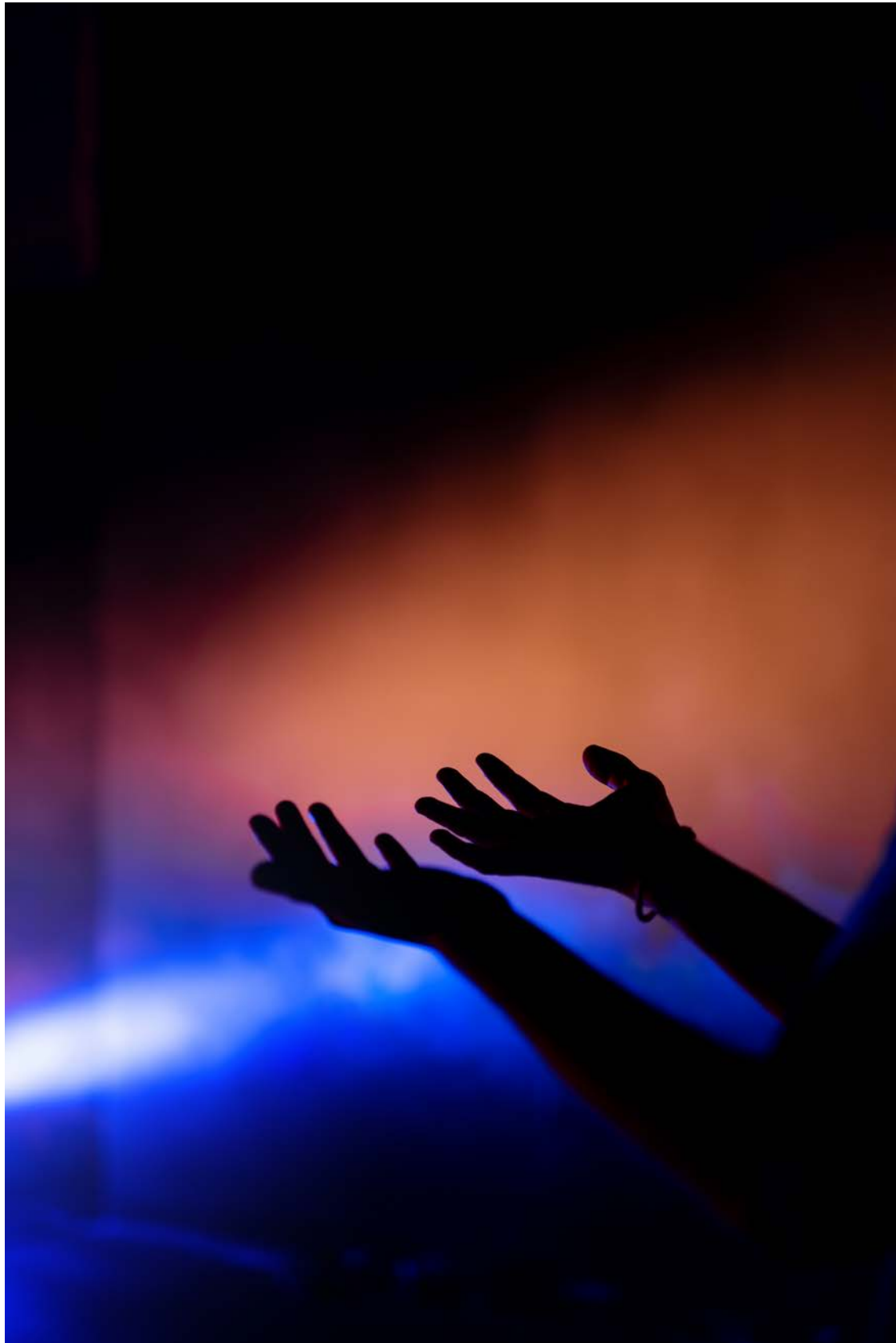
How do you find it difficult to follow Jesus’ example of humility and love for enemies?

PRAY

Praise Jesus for His humility and love for you. Tell Him all the things that amaze you about Him. Ask Him to grant you humility. Pray that He would help you to always serve Him and to be obedient to His will for your life. Pray for specific situations you face this week.





**PRAY**

Ask God to help you focus during this time. Pray you would be focused on Jesus and the joy set before you. Thank the Lord for Jesus' ultimate sacrifice for you. Throughout the week, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal how specific trials in your life shaped who you are.

READ

Hebrews 12:3-11

INTERACT

Underline any instance where the author encourages the reader to do something.

Circle each version of the word "discipline." Discipline is used both as a noun and a verb in the passage. Note the difference.

RESPOND

How does seeing the way Jesus dealt with trials, pain, and difficulty lead you in how you respond to hardship?

How has discipline or a trial shaped you? What did you learn? How are you encouraged by what you learned?

If you are in the middle of a trial, what helps you cling to God's promises?

PRAY

Thank God that He has brought you through the trials you have suffered. Name some of those specific trials. Thank Him for the specific things He has taught you and how He has grown your character. Ask Him to keep revealing Himself to you. Thank Him for protecting you from unseen and unknown difficulties. Praise Him for sending His only Son to earth for your sake.

WEEK 10 | DAY 2

PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal anything in your life that could cause you to run from God. Ask for the humility to acknowledge your sins and failures. Ask God for forgiveness, remembering all you have learned regarding God's character and His desire to forgive.

READ

2 Corinthians 7:8-13

INTERACT

Underline every version of the word "sorrow" or "grief." Go back and circle all the different actions sorrow can reveal.

In 2 Corinthians 7, Paul responds to a previous letter he wrote to the church in Corinth. In the previous letter, he pointed out sin and encouraged the church to seek repentance from God. At first Paul was concerned how the church would react to the harshness of his letter. Then he was thankful they accepted it and realized their need to acknowledge sin and ask God for forgiveness.

Paul addressed specific sin in his letter to the Corinthians. When a trusted follower of Christ points out a deficit or sin in our life, it can be difficult to accept. If we are willing to take an honest look at ourselves and repent, we can be joyful in the forgiveness of our sin and move to change our thoughts and actions.

Being confronted with our sin can drive us away from God or it can encourage greater intimacy with Him. When we choose to ignore a sin or try to hide it from the rest of the world, the sin can become like a festering wound and can cause us great pain and embarrassment. When we choose to acknowledge our sin, confess it, and ask our Father for forgiveness and help in overcoming it, we will draw closer to God. He wants us to cultivate the characteristics of His Son, Jesus. His desire is for us to become more pure in heart. Each of us can continue to learn from reading Paul's letters and become more humble as we ask the Holy Spirit to reveal where we need to make changes in our lives.

RESPOND

Who in your life can point out where you are living in sin? If you do not have someone, who is a safe, godly person who can walk alongside you and pray with you? Transparency can be hard, but it often can lead to growth. Ask a mature Christian to pray with you as you ask the Holy Spirit for guidance in growth.

Do you feel sorrow over your sin? Why or why not?

How can godly sorrow over your sin lead to repentance without regret? What is your next step toward that today?

PRAY

Pray that God would lead you to be broken over your sin and pray that you would hate the things He hates. Ask Him to reveal your sin to you. Confess your brokenness to Him, as well as specific areas where you have sinned against Him or others. Thank Him that through the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross, the weight of those sins can be removed! Pray that His Spirit would fill you.



WEEK 10 | DAY 3

PRAY

Ask God to reveal to you where you are strong in your faith. Then ask Him to reveal where you could use some improvement. All followers of Christ, have areas in their lives that can be refined. Pray for a desire to strengthen your faith.

READ

Hebrews 12:12-17

INTERACT

Underline all the commands in this passage.

Highlight and consider memorizing verse 14.

Read Genesis 25:29-34.

Following the topic of enduring hardship as discipline, the author of Hebrews begins to instruct the reader on how to persevere and live in the benefits of growing through the discipline God gives us. We should be persistent, building up our strength through faith.

We are to make every effort to live in peace, the peace that was given to us when Jesus died on the cross. We are to aspire to holiness, which means we are set apart for God's service and to be made like Him. It is a gradual work that will happen to us over time. We are made holy through consistently pursuing Christ, repenting from sin, with constant encouragement in community, and by praying at all times. As Christians we are called to be set apart. If we say we are a Christian, people in our sphere of influence should be able to see there is something different about how we live our lives. If there is nothing different about our lives, we may not reflect God to those around us and can potentially be a hinderance to others seeing God.

May we be a people who are visibly marked by Christ! May we be strong in our suffering as He was strong in His suffering and may we be more like Jesus every day.

RESPOND

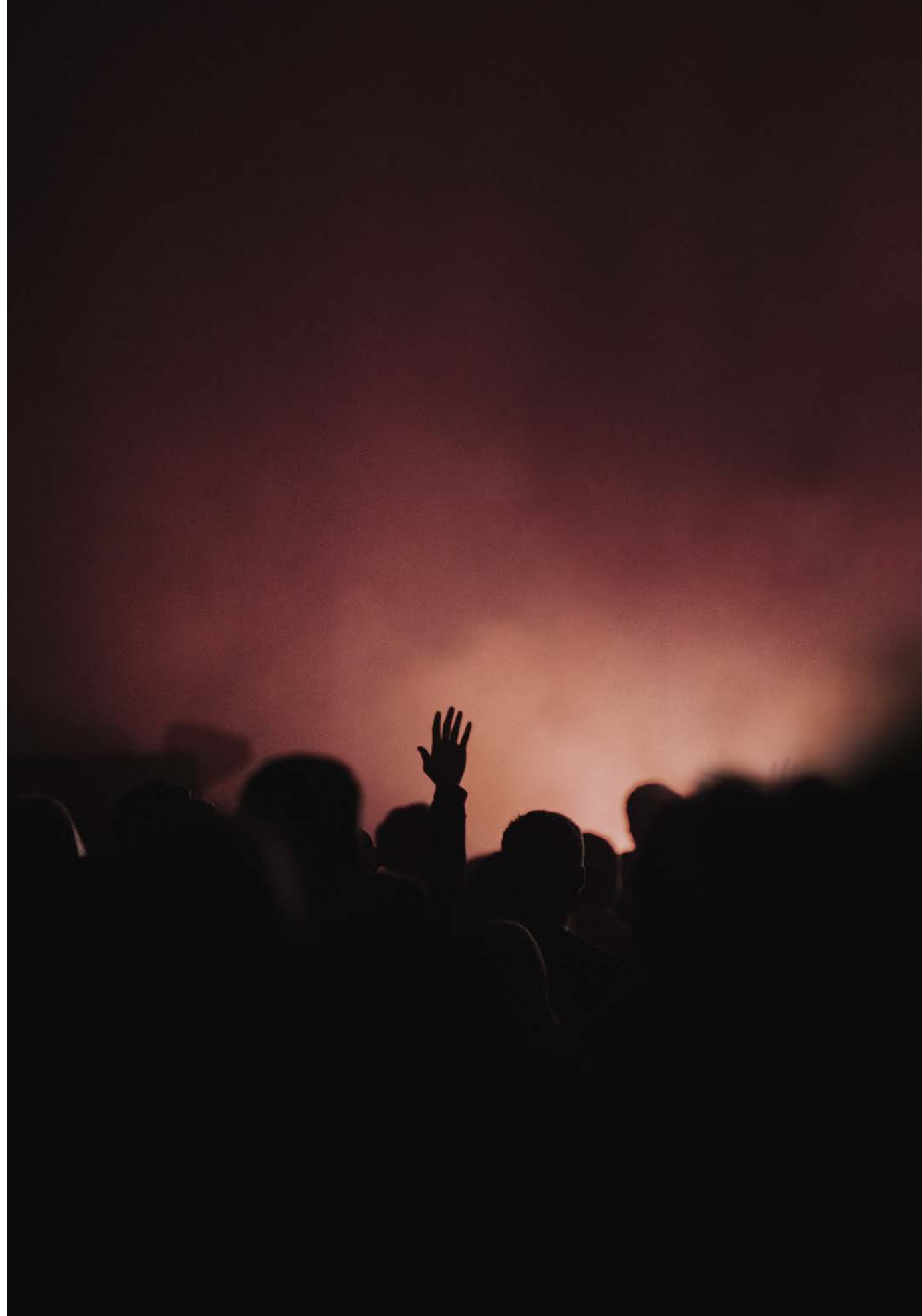
Reread verse 14. Without holiness, why will no one see the Lord?

Was there something from today's passage that caused you to think you should live differently? What was it and why do you think you felt that way?

Who do you know whose life visibly reflects the work that Jesus has done for them? Reach out to them, thank them for the example they have set for you, and encourage them to continue growing in their faith.

PRAY

Thank God that those who follow Jesus have His Holy Spirit who convicts us when we lack holiness. Ask God to convict you of where you need to change to pursue Him more. Ask for the wisdom and strength to make those changes. Pray that He would give you a desire to read His Word daily and that your life would reflect Him to those around you.



PRAY

Ask God to give you insight into what it may have been like to be an Israelite during the time of Moses, having to obey the old covenant. Thank God for sending His Son, Jesus, to earth to give us the new covenant.

READ

Hebrews 12:18-29

INTERACT

Underline what the readers of the letter are told to do in verse 28.

Read Exodus 19:10-13 and Exodus 20:18-21.

Hebrews 12 develops a picture of two mountains, Sinai and Zion, as symbols for the old and the new covenants discussed earlier in Hebrews. The recipients of this letter would have had a clear picture of Moses and the Israelites approaching Mount Sinai after they left Egypt and the fear they experienced. Mount Zion on the other hand, representing the new covenant, is described as the new Jerusalem with thousands of joyful angels and the church.

In the old covenant the people were so terrified that they asked Moses to be the only one to approach the mountain, going to God on their behalf. However, because of the new covenant and Jesus’ death on the cross for our salvation, we can now approach God without fear and have an intimate relationship with Him.

Jesus will one day come again and those who don’t know Him will face judgment while those who know Him will inherit new life in His Kingdom. In light of this new Kingdom, may we be obedient to Him, thankfully worshiping God in reverence and awe!

RESPOND

Describe the emotional response in approaching both mountains described in this passage.

What emotions do you usually experience when you approach God? Why do you think you feel this way?

How can you be grateful and worship God in reverence and awe this week?

PRAY

Think back on the things you have learned about God in this study. Take a moment to praise God for each thing you have learned, for who He is, and what He has done.

PRAY

Pray that God would speak to you during your time today. Spend a few moments in silence before you begin.

READ

1 Peter 2:4-10

INTERACT

Underline all the words that refer to God the Father and the Son.

Circle everything that He calls us to be.

RESPOND

As you look back at the words you circled, how do they make you feel?

Reread verses 9-10 out loud. When we believe and God accepts us into His family, we are His. We are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession. Do you believe that? How can you remember that throughout the day?

How are you living as an active member of God’s church and holy priesthood? How is God calling you to minister to others? If you are not sure, who is someone you can talk to who can provide some guidance?

PRAY

Thank God for sending His Son so you may be accepted into His family. Pray you would align yourself to Jesus every day. Pray that God would work through you in the lives of others and that your life would be used to benefit His church.





**PRAY**

Thank the Lord for His Word and the ability to read it. Ask Him to help you have an open heart and a willingness to apply His Word to your life. Pray you would trust in His truth and remove from your life any false teaching you may believe.

READ

Hebrews 13:1-14

INTERACT

Underline each of the commands the author gives to the reader.

The final chapter of Hebrews begins with a series of strong, practical encouragements for the audience of this letter regarding a new and better way of living under the grace of Jesus. The author calls them to devotion to Jesus only, not to the way of the world or the old way of Judaism.

Most of these commands seem attainable but are not fully possible without the foundation and strength of Jesus. We can choose to rely on Jesus and find joy, peace, and contentment or we can follow the never satisfying desires of the world, seeking our own comfort, sex, money, or false doctrine. While we need to follow the Holy Spirit in learning how to specifically live for Jesus in our world today, we know the standards to which scripture calls us don't change, because Jesus doesn't change.

Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. This means His promised gift of eternal life through Him remains the same and gives us an eternal hope in His power over sin. Through Jesus we are all invited to receive God's grace. The writer of Hebrews calls them to identify with the rejection and suffering Jesus experienced so they may have life in Him.

As a response to this outrageous display of love, let us leave behind the comforts and enslavements of this world and walk boldly to the cross, enduring all hardship that will come, so we may find the freedom and satisfaction we were created to find only through Christ Jesus.

RESPOND

Why is it significant that Jesus is unchanging?

Do any of the commands stand out to you and convict you of something you are or are not doing in your life? Why are you engaging or not engaging in that practice rather than following Jesus in obedience?

How do you identify with Jesus in His rejection? How do you identify with the suffering of those who have suffered on His behalf? How do you think they would view your life and commitment to Jesus? Why?

PRAY

Praise God that He is unchanging and you can trust in His promises! Confess a willingness to give Him your all. Confess any areas you are unwilling to surrender to Him (sin, possessions, comfort, social status, etc.). Ask Him to give you discernment to know His way and that He would fill your life with joy, love, peace, and contentment.

PRAY

Thank God for this time you get to spend with Him. Pray that you would worship Him with this time and that it would change how you live your life today.

READ

Hebrews 13:15-25

INTERACT

Underline each of the verbs in verses 15-18.

Circle all the ways God is described in verse 20.

Hebrews closes with some of the most important commands to the recipients of the letter, urging them to embrace a new way of life founded on God's grace, resulting in a transformed heart. After walking through the supremacy of Jesus, the new and better covenant, and how to persevere in our faith, the writer of Hebrews implores us to praise God, love others, live under the authority of the church, and to pray.

The sacrifices of the old covenant are gone and replaced with a new covenant that encourages us to offer our lives as sacrifices in praise to Him, acknowledging His name as King. In sacrificing our lives, we are called to do good and share with others.

We have been made into a new people who are called to love each other and praise God together. God has established His church and its authority. He has given us instruction on how to walk together with Him. May we submit to the authority of the church as our leaders submit to Christ. May we pray for those who lead the church to live honorably in every way.

What joy we have in Jesus! Through Christ's atoning death, we are offered an invitation into a new life and to become new people. Let us draw near to the Great Shepherd so we may be equipped to do everything that is pleasing in His sight.

RESPOND

What do you think is the most important command in this final section? Why?

We are told the most pleasing sacrifice we bring to God is the praise of His name through a life that does good and shares what we have. How often do you find yourself giving praise to God and offering your time and resources to others? How can you do this more?

We are not just reminded but commanded to obey and pray for our church leadership. Take some time to reflect and write down ways you can pray for them. Start with leaders of ministries where you or your family are involved and work your way to the elders of the church.

PRAY

Thank God for the book of Hebrews, recalling specific things He has taught you. Praise His name and adore Him for who He is. Pray for your church leadership, that they would have wisdom, pursue truth, run from sin, and be guided by the Holy Spirit in all things.

PRAY

Take a few moments to sit quietly. Ask God to clear your mind and remove all distractions. Pray that God would use this time to transform your mind to follow Jesus.

READ

Romans 12:1-2

INTERACT

Put a box around the word “therefore.”

Underline all the commands.

Bracket what happens as a result of the commands.

Just as in the closing of Hebrews, Romans 12 presents a new sacrificial system found in how we live our lives for the Lord, only made possible through the strength of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By opening this section with the word “therefore,” Paul is continuing from a previous thought that has been building through the first 11 chapters of Romans. Through this letter Paul has declared the saving work of Jesus is not just for the Jews, but for everyone. Only through the death and resurrection of Jesus can anyone attain righteousness. The old Jewish law is no more and now we offer the way we live as a pleasing sacrifice to God. It is only through Jesus’ sacrifice that our sins are forgiven. Because of this, we can worship God through the way we live.

We are to offer our whole selves to God. We must not be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewal of our mind through the work of the Holy Spirit in us, making us more like Jesus every day. If we conform to this world, we distort our perspective on what God’s will is. However, when we cling to what has been revealed to us through God’s Word, we can begin to sort out what is good and acceptable in God’s sight and live accordingly – the most perfect and pleasing gift we could bring to the Lord.

RESPOND

Explain this passage in your own words.

What does it mean to be “conformed to this world”? How do we prevent ourselves from being “conformed to this world” according to this passage?

What does this passage mean for you and the way you live your life? How will you live in light of this today and who will hold you accountable?

PRAY

Pray through the passage. Thank God for His mercy. Offer your whole life to God so you will do His will. Ask Him to help you to not be conformed to this world; be specific in ways this is a struggle for you. Pray that He would renew your mind, that you would develop a love for His Word and apply it to your life. Pray for wisdom, so you would know God’s will and follow it every day.



PRAY

Pray that the Holy Spirit would make the words of scripture clear to you. Pray that He would convict you of sin in your life. Pray any feelings of guilt would be outweighed by gratitude for all God has done for you.

READ

Galatians 5:15 - 6:6

INTERACT

Underline every command.

Circle every use of the word “Spirit” and “flesh.”

In the final thoughts of Hebrews, the author shares some practical exhortations for the readers to continue living a life pleasing to God. In Galatians, Paul shares similar exhortations to his readers so they may walk in the Spirit rather than the flesh.

Upon first glance, this passage may feel overwhelming. However, Paul is not out of touch with the battle between the desires of this world and the Spirit of God that lives within us. If God is who He says He is, then we can trust Him to work in us to help us follow Him.

We can choose to give in to the desires of this world, or we can lean on the Holy Spirit, endure, and walk with faith towards God. One produces a lack of fruit, while the other leads to a life of evident, abundant fruit of the Spirit, even as we walk through the promised trials of this life. This is not something anyone can do on their own, but those who follow Jesus are able to fully rely on the work of the Spirit in our lives.

Though living a life of righteousness may seem impossible at times, let us remember we are putting our faith in our High Priest “who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15 ESV). Therefore, “let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16 ESV).

RESPOND

Are there any items specifically listed which cause you to feel convicted? Why do you think you feel this way?

How do you see the fruit of the Spirit listed in verses 22-23 in your own life? How do you see them at work in the church today?

Galatians 6:2 reminds us to “bear one another’s burdens” which mirrors the very thing Jesus Christ did when He came to earth and took the penalty for our sins. How do you bear the burdens of others? Who could you help by bearing their burdens this week?

PRAY

Thank God that His Spirit lives in all those who trust in the name of Jesus. Ask Him to fill you with His Spirit and help you to live by the Spirit today. Pray through each attribute of the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23, asking God to help you live out each of them more every day.

PRAY

Thank God for the love that He has given you and pray that He will help you extend that love to others. Ask Him to help you stay connected to Him and to obey His Word today.

READ

John 15

INTERACT

Look at the context of the passage to see who is speaking, to whom they are speaking, and when this is happening.

On the last night Jesus was with His disciples before He was crucified, He gives them a picture of how they can live in a way that glorifies the Lord. Jesus describes Himself as the true vine, His disciples as the branches, and the Father as the vinedresser. The branches that stay connected to the vine and bear fruit will honor the Father, and those that do not will be removed.

This picture gives us a vision of how to live lives that honor the Lord and bear the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5. To bear fruit, we must remain in Jesus. He is the provider of life and disconnected from Him we cannot produce anything good. If we want to show we love Him as His disciples, we are to stay in His Word and keep His commandments. Only by staying connected to Jesus can we love one another as He has loved us and endure when the world hates us because of Him.

Jesus is our true source of life! Not only has He given us eternal life in Him, but we can experience true life and joy now living by His Spirit. Jesus is better than all the world has to offer and has given us all we need to follow Him. His covenant is better than the old covenant of works and His grace has covered all those who believe in the power of His sacrificial work on the cross. Jesus is our Great High Priest who rules for all eternity at the right hand of the Father. May our lives be submitted to Him in humble obedience and may all we do glorify Him!

RESPOND

How are you staying connected and abiding in Jesus? How can you improve in this?

What have you learned in this study?

What are you doing to be obedient to Jesus based on the things you’ve learned in this study?

PRAY

Thank God for all He has done for you. Thank Him that He has provided a way for you to know Him. Thank Him that He has given you the promise of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins if you trust in Jesus. Thank Him that He has given you all you need to follow Him. Ask Him to help you lead a life that glorifies Him every day.



FALLEN AWAY

Does Hebrews 6:4-6 teach that a believer can lose their salvation?

“It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.”

Hebrews 6:4-6

Hebrews 6:4-6 is a famously difficult passage to interpret. Bible scholars have offered differing opinions on its meaning over the years. The passage describes those who have fallen away using four experiences:

They have been enlightened: This could mean they realized Jesus was the Messiah but does not necessarily mean they had a saving faith in Him (see James 2:19).

They have tasted the heavenly gift: A person may have a strong presence of God under the conviction of the Holy Spirit without repenting of their sins or accepting Christ as their savior.

They have shared in the Holy Spirit: This could indicate they have been present when the Holy Spirit was at work among believers.

They have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come: Perhaps they, like Judas, have seen God at work and even witnessed miracles, but their hearts remain hard.

It is worth noting that the writer does not mention salvation, repentance from sins, or forgiveness of sins for those who have “fallen away.”

While there are many views on this passage, there are three primary ways of understanding it.

One view says it is hypothetical. According to this view, the writer was posing a warning against something that has never happened. The weakness of this argument is that it seems unlikely the writer would make such a forceful argument against something that cannot happen.

The next view says these are Christians who have committed apostasy and fallen from grace into condemnation. This view would teach that while God supplies grace for salvation, it is up to the exercise of the free will of the saved individual to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and maintain their salvation.

The third view many hold, including the teaching staff at Fellowship, is that those who fall away are not Holy Spirit indwelt children of God who have had a saving encounter with Christ. Instead, these are false believers who professed Christ but were never regenerated by a saving faith in Christ. Jesus taught this was possible in the parable of the soils (Matthew 13:18-23, 36-43).

The view that a person who has become a child of God through a saving relationship with Jesus (John 1:12) can never lose that relationship is supported by numerous scriptures as outlined below. While Hebrews 6:4-6 is a dire warning for those considering leaving the faith, those who know Christ should not fear that they are at risk of falling away. This is why Paul could write to the believers in Philippi, “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus..” (Philippians 1:6)

Passages for reference:

Nothing can separate us from Christ:
Romans 8:38-39.

Believers are kept by the power of God:
1 Peter 1:4-5.

Believers are sealed by the Spirit:
Ephesians 4:30.

Those who fall away were never true believers:
1 John 2:19.

Jesus says the elect cannot be led astray:
Matthew 24:24.

Jesus says those who belong to Him will be raised up on the last day:
John 6:40.

Jesus said no one can snatch His sheep out of His hand:
John 10:27-28.

MELCHIZEDEK

Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine.
He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying,
“Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth.
And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into
your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.
Genesis 14:18-20

While Melchizedek is an important figure to know in order to understand Hebrews, there is little account of who he is in the rest of scripture. In Genesis 14, he appears after a significant battle is won by Abraham over four Canaanite kings around 2,000 BC. Abraham (called “Abram” in this text) gives a tenth of everything he had won in battle to this “priest of God Most High.” That is the only historical account available of the mysterious Melchizedek.

Around 1,000 years later, David briefly mentions him again in Psalm 110. “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’” (Psalm 110:4)

Then the author of Hebrews mentions him again after another 1,000 years, thinking carefully about how Jesus is superior to the Old Testament system of priests and sacrifices. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, the author remembers Melchizedek and pulls everything together.

“Just think how great he was...” exclaims Hebrews 7:4. The great patriarch, Abraham, gave him a tenth of his spoils, indicating Abraham revered him. The writer to the Hebrews reasons that because all the priests descended from Levi, and Levi descended from Abraham, Melchizedek must be even greater than Levi (Hebrews 7:5-9). Melchizedek is a priest and a king, two offices that were not allowed to be combined under the law (see 1 Samuel 13 and 2 Chronicles 26). There is not another priest-king like him in the Bible.

Then Jesus became our eternal priest-king. Jesus, the Messiah, is the one promised in Psalm 110. A king and a priest who will reign in peace and righteousness, giving us bread and wine as we honor Him with our worship.

From the very beginning God has anticipated the day when our righteous priest and king would bring us peace with God, and He gave us a picture of Him in the mysterious man named Melchizedek.

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