The Book of Hebrews

Study Guide

LESSON TWO

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON AND STUDY GUIDE

This study guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video lesson. If you do not have access to the video, the study guide will also work with the audio and/or text versions of the lesson. Additionally, the lesson and study guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
  - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
  - **Schedule viewing** — In the Notes section of the study guide, the lesson has been divided into sections that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
  - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the study guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each section and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
  - **Record comments and questions —** As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
  - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
  - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
  - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

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Notes

I. Introduction (0:20)

II. Recurring Content (1:18)

The author of Hebrews wrote to exhort his audience to reject local Jewish teachings and to remain faithful to Jesus.

A. Last Days in Jesus (2:10)

Christian theologians often refer to the Bible's teaching on the last days as "eschatology" (from the Greek word *eschatos* (ἔσχατος) which means "last" or "final").

The author of Hebrews had eschatology in mind when he wrote the book (Hebrews 1:1-2).

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Israel's history helps us to understand the eschatology found in the book of Hebrews:

- During the monarchical period, Israel fell deeper and deeper into rebellion against God.

- Israel and Judah went into exile.

- Due to their rebellion, Israel suffered for five centuries under the tyranny of the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans.

- Between the Old and New Testaments, Jewish communities held to the hope that God's final judgments and blessings of the last days would come.

Two great ages of history:

- "This Age" – the age of sin that resulted in Israel's failure and exile.

- "The Age to Come" – when God would pour out his final judgments on his enemies and his final blessings on his faithful people.

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The author of Hebrews pointed out the theological differences between unbelieving Jews and followers of Christ:

- Unbelieving Jews: The Messiah will bring a catastrophic transition between this age and the age to come.

- Followers of Christ: Jesus is the Messiah who is bringing the last days in three stages: inauguration, continuation, and consummation (Acts 2:17, 2 Peter 3:3).

The theme of the "last days" was important to the author (Hebrews 2:5; 6:5; 9:11; 9:26; 10:1; 13:14).

B. Old Testament Support (9:03)

The book of Hebrews quotes, refers to, or alludes to the Old Testament nearly 100 times.

1. Factual Backgrounds (9:50)

The author of Hebrews incorporated historical facts into his presentation of the Christian faith (Hebrews 7:2; 12:20-21).

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2. Theological Outlooks (11:01)

The author of Hebrews focused on theological beliefs affirmed by the Hebrew Scriptures.

- God's son (Hebrews 1:5, 2 Samuel 7:14)
- angels as serving spirits (Hebrews 1:7, Psalm 104:4)
- lower than angels (Hebrews 2:6-8, Psalm 8:4-6)
- blessings of God's vindication (Hebrews 2:13, Isaiah 8:17)
- God's oath to Abraham (Hebrews 6:13-14, Genesis 22:17)
- God as a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29, Deut. 4:24)
- other examples of theological continuity between Old and New Testament times (Hebrews 4:4-7; 8:5; 9:20; 10:30, 31; 10:38; 13:5).

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3. Moral Obligations (14:49)

Old Testament moral requirements were to remain as standards in New Testament times:

- not to rebel (Hebrews 3:7-15, Psalm 95:7-11)
- not to be discouraged (Hebrews 12:5-6, Proverbs 3:11-12)
- adhere to righteousness (Hebrews 12:13, Proverbs 4:26)
- confidence in God (Hebrews 13:6, Psalm 118:6-7)

4. Eschatological Predictions (16:00)

The author of Hebrews used several Old Testament eschatological predictions to show that God's final judgments and blessings are fulfilled in Christ:

- angels will worship (Hebrews 1:6, Deut. 32:43)
- current arrangement destroyed (Hebrews 1:10-12, Psalm 102:25-27)
- universal sovereignty (Hebrews 1:13, Psalm 110:1)
- royal priesthood from God (Hebrews 5:6; 7:17, Psalm 110:4)
- overcome human failure (Hebrews 8:8-12, Jeremiah 31:31-34)
- no further sacrifices (Hebrews 10:16-17, Jeremiah 31)
- other predictions about the eschatological age (Hebrews 7:21; 10:37; 12:26)

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5. Dynastic Ideals (18:23)

The author referred to a number of dynastic ideals that were established for David's lineage in the Psalms.

Jesus is the perfect fulfillment of the ideals for David's house.

- royal son to rule nations (Hebrews 1:5, Psalm 2:7, 2 Samuel 7:14)
- honoring the king (Hebrews 1:8-9, Psalm 45:6-7)
- vindication shared with Israel (Hebrews 2:11-12, Psalm 22:22)
- devotion of body to God (Hebrews 10:5-7, Psalm 40:6-8)

C. Exhortations to Persevere (20:24)

The book of Hebrews includes around 30 explicit exhortations.

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1. Responses (22:00)

The author's exhortations encouraged his audience to apply his book emotionally, conceptually, and behaviorally:

- Emotional exhortations (Hebrews 3:8; 3:13; 3:15; 4:1; 4:16; 10:22; 10:35)

- Conceptual exhortations (Hebrews 2:1; 3:1; 6:1)

- Behavioral exhortations (Hebrews 12:16; 13:1-19)

2. Motivations (25:32)

The author of Hebrews associated many of his exhortations with positive motivations (Hebrews 4:13-16; 10:35; 13:16).

The author often used negative motivations to exhort his audience (Hebrews 2:2-3; 6:4-8; 10:26-31).

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We must keep in mind that the book of Hebrews is not a technical systematic theology.

The author of Hebrews never described apostates (those who fall away from Christ) as having been "justified." But he did use some terminology that Evangelicals often reserve only for true believers.

The threat of divine judgment for apostasy is not unique to Hebrews.

III. Rhetorical Structure (34:40)

A. Angelic Revelations (36:44)

Jewish communities in the first century often exalted angels as glorious creatures that brought divine revelation to human beings.

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The author responded to the challenge of angelic revelation in five steps:

- source of divine revelation (1:1-4)
- God's messianic Son (1:5-14)
- message of salvation (2:1-4)
- ruler over the angels (2:5-9)
- Abraham's descendant (2:10-18)

B. Moses' Authority (40:38)

The author of Hebrews exhorted his audience to hold Jesus' authority above the authority of Moses, calling them to:

- honor Jesus above Moses (3:1-6)
- avoid hardness of heart (3:7-19)
- enter God's rest (4:1-13)

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C. Melchizedek's Priesthood (43:32)

The author of Hebrews challenged the local Jewish teachings about Melchizedek's royal priesthood:

- hold firmly to the faith (4:4-16)

- Jesus qualified as royal high priest (5:1-10)

- move to maturity (5:11-6:12)

- Jesus superseded Levitical priesthood (6:13-7:28)

Levitical sacrifices could never bring full atonement, but as the fulfillment of Melchizedek's royal priesthood, Christ had made atonement once and for all.

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D. New Covenant (51:18)

The author of Hebrews further explained the supremacy of Christ as God's ordained royal high priest by discussing how the new covenant is superior to the old.

- Jesus mediates the new covenant as the royal high priest in heaven (8:1-13)

- Jesus superior to Levitical priesthood (9:1-18)

- Jesus brought final forgiveness of sin (10:1-18)

- hold onto hope (10:19-23)

- encourage one another (10:24-31)

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- remember the past and not throw away their confidence (10:32-35)

- persevere in doing God's will (10:36-39)

- faith that saves (11:1-40)

E. Practical Perseverance (1:01:36)

In closing, the author listed many exhortations about specific areas of life:

- persevere as in a race (12:1-3)

- endure hardship (12:4-13)

- encourage each other (12:14-17)

- be thankful for the blessings in Christ (12:18-29)

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- be faithful in daily life (13:1-19)

- closure (13:20-25)

IV. Conclusion (1:08:31)

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Review Questions

1. Explain why the author of Hebrews focused so much on eschatology.

2. How did the author of Hebrews use the Old Testament to support his theological views? Give some examples.

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3. List and explain the two critical features of the author's exhortations to persevere.

4. How did the author of Hebrews teach his audience that Jesus is superior to angels?

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5. What exhortations did the author of Hebrews use to persuade his audience to hold Jesus' authority above Moses' authority? Why was this important?

6. Why did the author of Hebrews exhort his audience to hold Jesus above Melchizedek?

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7. Explain in as much detail as possible how the new covenant is superior to the old.

8. List and describe at least five practical ways the author of Hebrews encouraged his audience to persevere in the face of hardships.

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Application Questions

1. In light of the teaching on eschatology found in the book of Hebrews, what do you anticipate and expect in the age to come?

2. The book of Hebrews quotes and refers to the Old Testament nearly 100 times. How do you esteem and uphold the importance of the Old Testament in your life and ministry?

3. What guides, tools or gauges do you use to help you understand the requirements established in the Old Testament that remain as standards for the modern church?

4. List some people who have been a source of encouragement to you. How have these people helped you persevere and remain faithful to Christ?

5. What temptations, persecutions or pressures make it difficult for you to remain loyal to Christ?

6. How can you use the encouragements and warnings in Hebrews as an evangelistic tool?

7. What teachings or practices in your community, country, or nation pose a serious challenge to Christians?

8. How does the understanding that Jesus is your royal high priest affect your prayer life?

9. In what ways does the message of Hebrews encourage you to endure hardships?

10. One of the purposes of Hebrews is to emphasize that Jesus Christ has overcome sin for us. How can you communicate the sufficiency of Christ to those in your area of influence and ministry?

11. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?

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