**Hebrews 5-6**

**December 9, 2018**

**Review:**

* Genre: Epistle (A “word of exhortation”)
* Author: Unknown.
* Recipients: 2nd generation Jewish Christians
* When written: Likely Mid 60s AD

Key Words/Themes:

-Because Jesus is better than \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, let us\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”

🡪Hebrews powerfully shows that Jesus is the fulfilment/substance of the promise/shadow that went before. He is “better than” all that pointed to Him. Therefore, we can have confidence and hope.

**Hebrews 1-2: God has spoken through His Son**

--Author points out 7 truths that affirm that the Son is God’s final Word:

1. Appointed heir of all things

2. Created the world

3. Radiance of the glory of God

4. Exact imprint of His nature

5. Upholds the universe by the word of His power

6. Made purification of sins

7. Sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high

Christ is the Prophet through whom God has spoken His final word. He is the Priest who has cleansed His people’s sins and He is King who sits enthroned on high. (Bruce)

* Jesus is “*Better Than*” Angels/He is God

--Author uses 7 Old Testament passages to show how the Son is superior to angels

🡪Therefore “*Let us*” pay much closer attention lest we drift away

**-**-If the message delivered by angels carried retribution, how much more if we neglect the message of the Son?

* Jesus is made “Lower than Angels”/Jesus is Man

-- He was made lower than the angels and became man so He could be our representative.

--Author uses 3 Old Testament passages to show this unity with humanity.

🡪Because of Jesus’s solidarity with humanity, He has become our merciful and faithful high priest.

**Hebrews 3: Jesus is “Better than” Moses**

* The author calls us to consider Jesus, the Apostle and High priest of our confession.

Apostle=God’s representative to man. High priest=Man’s representative before God.

* The author compares Moses and Jesus:

Moses=servant in the house, part of the house, role was to testify to things to come

Jesus=Son over the house, founder, owner, maker, and inheritor of the house.

* We are His house (all believers) if we hold fast our confidence till the end.

-In Hebrews we see the *repeated insistence* that continuing in the Christian life is the test of the reality of that life.

-Perseverance of the saints=those who belong to the Lord will persevere to the end. How do we know who true believers are? They are those who hold fast to the end.

🡪The author has deep concern that they will fall away and therefore he constantly emphasizes the need for confidence and hope. He uses to use a familiar Old Testament passage to appeal to them: Psalm 95

*7Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,*

*“Today, if you hear His voice,
8do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
    on the day of testing in the wilderness,
9where your fathers put Me to the test
    and saw My works for forty years.
10Therefore I was provoked with that generation,*
*and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart;
    they have not known My ways.’
11As I swore in My wrath,
    ‘They shall not enter My rest.’”*

* The author draws on this widely known “example” to warn them against going the way of the Israelites in the Exodus by giving up their faith and hope. The two examples are:

1. The Israelites testing of God at Meribah

2. The revolt after the return of the spies

-In Psalm 95, a later generation is warned not to follow their example and face disaster and now, the author of Hebrews is issuing the same warning. (In urgency, the author warns that just as judgment came on those who rebelled against Moses, rebelling against Jesus leads to greater judgment as He Himself is greater than Moses:

* Therefore *“Let us”* take care lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

-Why was that earlier generation unable to enter His rest? Unbelief

🡪That earlier generation revolted against God’s appointed leader, Moses. To reject Jesus, God’s appointed Apostle and High Priest, would be an even more outrageous revolt. To return to the Law or Judaism would be similar to that earlier generation wanting to return to Egypt and equals outright rejection.

🡪Each day is a new “today” in which we can heed the warning to hear and obey God.

**Hebrews 4: The True Rest of God**

* Therefore “*Let us”* fear lest we fail to reach His rest

-What is His rest? The rest God promises His people is the rest He Himself enjoys:

*“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.****2****And on the seventh day God finished His work that He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work that He had done.****3****So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all His work that He had done in creation.” (Genesis 2:2-3)*

🡪The “rest” of God began at the close of creation and continues to this day. But it can be forfeited by disobedience.

* The rest reserved is a Sabbath rest, an entering into the rest that began on the 7th day of Creation. It’s a heritage, a homeland to come. In Hebrews 11, we see those who have gone before us who longed for that “better country”.
* Therefore *“Let us”* strive to enter that rest so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.
* Remember, God’s Word has the ability to diagnose the heart. It’s sharper than the sharpest sword and sees through to our innermost self.

**🡪Something to consider:** The Son of God is also the Son of Man, our representative. He too faced a temptation in the wilderness. Yet unlike that ancient generation, He was victorious.

* Hunger:

 *“‘Man shall not live by bread alone,
    but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Matthew 4)*

* Testing the Lord:

***7****Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” (Matthew 4)*

* Idol Worship:

*Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written,*

*“‘You shall worship the Lord your God
    and him only shall you serve.’” (Matthew 4)*

🡪So what ancient Israel (and in reality, all of us) failed to do, Jesus did as the Perfect Man. Which makes Him qualified to be our Perfect High Priest and our representative.

-Justified=Just as if I’d never sinned. Just as if I’d always obeyed. (Pastor Norm)

So our author concludes:

**Hebrews 4:14-16: Jesus our Great High Priest**

***Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.***

* Since we have a great high priest *“let us”* hold fast our confession. Why? Our high priest is able to sympathize with our weaknesses because He was tempted in every way too.

🡪 “Sympathy with the sinner does not depend on the experience of sin but on the experience of the strength of the temptation to sin which only the sinless can know in it’s full intensity. He who falls yields before the last strain.” (Bruce) Jesus is able to sympathize because He knows the difficulty of resisting temptation. He’s the only one who has faced every temptation in the fullest strength and prevailed.

* Therefore *“Let us”* draw near with confidence to the throne of grace. That throne where Jesus sits exalted at the Father’s right hand. There we will find mercy and grace to help us hold fast our confession of faith.

**Hebrews 5**

**Hebrews 5:1-4: Qualifications for a High Priest**

***Every high priest is selected from among the people and is appointed to represent the people in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. 3This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. 4And no one takes this honor on himself, but he receives it when called by God, just as Aaron was.***

* The author lists qualifications for a high priest:
1. He is selected from among the people

-Aaron and his successors were Israelites-from among the people he represented.

1. He represents the people before God-offering gifts and sacrifices for sins.

-Specifically at the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)

1. He is able to sympathize since he himself is subject to weakness.

-Because he too is a sinner, the high priest has to first offer sacrifices for himself before he can offer sacrifices for the people.

*“Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household. (Leviticus 16:6)*

1. He is called by God to serve as high priest. Aaron, the first high priest of Israel, was given the role by God.

*“Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar*.  *(Exodus 28:1)*

🡪If the author is going to make the case that Jesus is our high priest, he must show how He fulfilled these qualifications.

**Hebrews 5:5-10: Jesus’s Qualifications as High Priest**

***So also Christ did not exalt Himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by Him who said to Him,***

***“You are my Son,
    today I have begotten you”;***

***6as He says also in another place,***

***“You are a priest forever,
    after the order of Melchizedek.”***

***7In the days of His flesh, Jesusoffered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence. 8Although He was a son, He learned obedience through what He suffered. 9And being made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, 10being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.***

* Even Christ didn’t exalt Himself to role of high priest but He was appointed to it by God the Father.
* The author quotes Psalm 2:7 again (quoted in Hebrews 1:5). The same God who calls Jesus His Son, also appointed Him as high priest.
* The author also quotes Psalm 110. He’s already quoted the beginning of Psalm 110 in Hebrews 1:13. Here he quotes a further section:

***The Lord says to my Lord:
    “Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.”***

***2****The Lord sends forth from Zion
    your mighty scepter.
    Rule in the midst of your enemies!****3****Your people will offer themselves freely
    on the day of your power,
    in holy garments;
from the womb of the morning,
    the dew of your youth will be yours.****4****The Lord has sworn
    and will not change his mind,****“You are a priest forever
    after the order of Melchizedek.”***

***5****The Lord is at your right hand;
    he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath.****6****He will execute judgment among the nations,
    filling them with corpses;
he will shatter chiefs
    over the wide earth.****7****He will drink from the brook by the way;
    therefore he will lift up his head. (Psalm 110)*

* Throughout the New Testament, this was understood to be a Messianic psalm. We discussed in Hebrews 1 how Jesus challenged the Pharisees in their understanding of this.

**“***And as Jesus taught in the temple, He said, “How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David?****36****David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared,*

*“‘The Lord said to my Lord,
“Sit at my right hand,
    until I put your enemies under your feet.”’*

***37****David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?” (Mark 12:35-37)*

And He claimed to be the fulfilment of it when on trial:

*“Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”****62****And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man****seated at the right hand of Power****, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” (Mark 14:62)*

* The author of Hebrews points to the promise in Psalm 110 to show that not only is Jesus the promised Son of David but He is also a priest, after the order of Melchizedek.

-What tribe was David from? Judah What tribe was set apart to serve as priests? Levites. How then can Jesus be both Son/King from the Tribe of Judah and a priest if priests were supposed to be from the Levites? He has to come from another order-the order of Melchizedek.

-Melchizedek appears in Genesis 14 as the king of Salem (traditionally later Jerusalem) and is said to be priest of God Most High. He was a type or shadow of a coming King/Priest.

-The author of Hebrews is making the assertion that the promised prince of the house of David is also the perpetual priest of Melchizedek’s order. (Bruce) He is going to expound on all of that in Chapter 7 so more on that to come!

* The other qualification that Jesus meets is the ability to sympathize with those He represents.

-Jesus didn’t have to offer sacrifices for His own sins but he was tempted, grieved, and was “made like His brothers in every respect”. We’ve already looked at the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. Another key point in Jesus’s life: The Garden of Gethsemane.

*And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled.****34****And He said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.”****35****And going a little farther, He fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him (Mark 14:33-35)*

* He was heard because of His reverence-Jesus willingly accepted the cup of suffering from the Father’s hand making Him qualified to be a high priest by His agony and tears. Through His suffering, His trust in God never failed. The fact that the cup was *not* removed from Him makes Him *all the more qualified* to sympathize with His people when they are faced with a trial. Our high priest could have sought a way of escape by calling down legions of angels, but He did not. He submitted to the Father’s will.
* Even the Son’s obedience was fulfilled through suffering. As He walked the path of obedience to God, He lived out what obedience to God involves in the human life here on earth. Obedience means suffering.

🡪The readers are starting to face trials which they could avoid if they renounced their confession of faith-the author puts forth Jesus as the example to urge them to press on.

* Through suffering He was made perfect, fully qualified to serve as Savior and High Priest. He has now become the source of eternal salvation and the designated High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

**Hebrews 5:11-14: Warning against Abandoning the Faith**

***About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food, 13for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.14But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.***

* The author wants to expound on this Melchizedek but doesn’t feel like they are mature enough to understand it. He admonishes them for not being more mature.
* By this time they ought to be teachers, able to understand these things but they have become sluggish/dull. They need someone to teach them again the basics of the gospel message.
* Paul uses a similar phrase when talking to the Corinthian church. (Interesting connection given Apollos’ ties with the Corinthian church.) The rebuke being about immaturity.

*But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.****2****I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. (1 Cor. 3:1)*

* The mature have powers of discernment that have been trained by *constant* practice.

**Hebrews 6:1-8: No returning after leaving the faith**

***Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3And this we will do if God permits. 4For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. 7For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. 8But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.***

* So while the author thinks they are immature, he doesn’t want to keep going over the basics, but encourages them to press on to maturity. He doesn’t want to go over again:
1. Repentance from dead works/faith towards God

 2. Washings/laying on of hands

 3. Resurrection of the dead/Eternal judgment

-All of these things began as a foundation in the Old Testament but had their full significance in Christ. However, for the Jew, to revert back to these “basic” things, would be more palatable then pressing on to bigger (more controversial) things like the high priesthood of Jesus.

🡪 This is not saying that we aren’t to meditate on and focus on the gospel in our daily lives!! These readers were tempted to be sluggish, to not press on to understand the fullness of things like the priesthood of Jesus because that meant a more obvious break for traditional Judaism. They were tempted just to keep the basic elements that were familiar to their background in Judaism and basically revert back to Judaism for all practical purposes to avoid persecution.

* The author states the reason there is no point in going over the basics again. Because apostasy is unrecoverable. They must press on and not abandon their faith for an easier road.

-Apostasy=the abandonment or renunciation of a religious or political belief.

* The author states that in certain cases, it is impossible to return once you leave:
1. Once been enlightened=in some way the light of the gospel has broken in upon their darkness. Could reference experiencing baptism
2. Tasted the heavenly gift=seen and experienced spiritual blessings. Could reference experiencing communion.
3. Partakers of the Holy Spirit=Been a part of the power of the Holy Spirit. Could reference the laying on of hands.
4. Experienced the goodness of God’s Word and powers of age to come=Heard the teaching of God’s Word and have seen the power of the new age.
* Scriptures teaches that some will walk among us for a time and then will fall away. Think of the parable of the sower-the seed sown on good soil and that sown on rocky soil may appear to have similar growth for a time. But once a time of testing comes, the difference become evident.

🡪The author says if you experience these things and fall away, it’s impossible to be restored. Now, is anything impossible with God? The Lord can break into the hardest of hearts! But the warning here is that, in reality, those who have walked among us and left, are often the hardest to see return. They have seen and heard the reality of the gospel and have outright rejected it. Yet we cling to the fact that nothing is impossible with God for those we love who have walked away. But this is not a hypothetical warning. This is a real warning against a real danger. The danger of an evil, unbelieving heart which can result in deserting the living God.

* Why is it so hard for them to repent? They put themselves in the position of those who deliberately refused to believe Jesus was the Son of God and had Him crucified.
* The author compares such people to land that despite all the time spent cultivating it, refuses to yield a good crop. Therefore he encourages them to persevere.

**Hebrews 6:9-12: Persevere!**

***Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. 10For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for His name in serving the saints, as you still do. 11And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, 12so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.***

* After the severe warning, he encourages them that he doesn’t believe they are apostates and is sure of better things for them. Why? Because of the fruit of righteousness that is evident in their serving of the saints.
* He encourages them to continue in that zeal to the end, not to become sluggish, but to be imitators of those who have gone before to inherit the promises.

**Hebrews 6:13-20: The Faithfulness of God’s Promise**

***For when God made a promise to Abraham, since He had no one greater by whom to swear, He swore by Himself, 14saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” 15And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. 16For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. 17So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of His purpose, He guaranteed it with an oath, 18so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. 19We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, 20where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.***

* The author mentions Abraham as the supreme example of someone who was given promises by God and who believed them to the end.
* The particular promise the author references is the offering up of Isaac. God had promised that He would make Abraham a great nation (Genesis 12). Abraham believed God and in time, Isaac, the son of promise was born. Then God asked him to offer Isaac to Him. He was obedient and when he received Isaac back, the promise was reaffirmed:

*And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven****16****and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,****17****I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore (Genesis 22:16-17)*

* The author of Hebrews focuses on the fact that when God made the promise, He confirmed it with an oath. Since God has no one greater than Himself to swear by, He swears by Himself.
* The point is that God’s promise regarding the priesthood of Jesus is confirmed with a similar oath.

*The Lord has sworn
    and will not change his mind,
“You are a priest forever
    after the order of Melchizedek.” (Psalm 110:4)*

* And these 2 unchangeable things: 1. The Promise of God 2. The confirmation of the promise with an oath, are our hope.

🡪And this hope in the promise of God that Jesus is our appointed High Priest is our **anchor**. We are moored to an immovable object, the throne of God Himself. Our hope is fixed there because Jesus is there, seated at the right hand. He, as our High Priest, has entered behind the curtain as a forerunner on our behalf.

Hebrews-the book of assurance. Not because of who we are or what we have done. But because of Who we are anchored to. It’s not up to the boat to hold onto the anchor but the anchor to hold onto the boat. If Christ is our anchor, we will not drift from Him. He will hold us in the fiercest trial and storm to the end.

He is a High Priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek. Chapter 7 next time!

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How do the warnings in Hebrews motivate us to evaluate where our faith is and cling to our only means of salvation?
2. Jesus is our High Priest. Appointed by God, able to sympathize, promised with an oath. How is this hope our anchor?

As we celebrate Christmas, ponder these things! The Son, God’s Final Word, had come. And His message is one of great joy and hope.

 *“And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.****11****For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:10-11)*

Merry Christmas!

Our next Women’s Bible study is Sunday, January 27th!