

Handouts

Notes, Questions, Prayers of Paul



Book of Hebrews

**God's eternal plans made real in
the church and in us**

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The place of Hebrews in our Bible and faith

- It can be confusing if simply pulled out of the Bible and read on its own, but **when read in context**, AFTER the Old Testament and as the early Christian faith was forming,
- **It helps us to see how God is the author of all human and salvation history.**
- How God does this in Bible history, with foreshadowing “types” and their fulfillment in Acts & Hebrews, why this was important to clarify in the founding of the church, and what it means for us today, is what this lesson is all about.

When we understand this view of History

- As taught in detail in Hebrews,
- It becomes one of the best apologetic resources in the Bible.
- Apologetics means “a defense of the faith.”
- Understanding how God fulfilled what He promised in the Old Testament through Jesus was essential for the early church, but it can also be for us today.
- Before we can defend our faith, we need to be able to defend it to ourselves, to be assured in our hearts we can truly trust it.
- The historical realities of Hebrews will help us do that.

Because only a God outside of time

- Could set up the OT pictures of what was to come in Jesus.
- And then to have the details of His life meticulously fulfill all of them.

How does this happen in Hebrews

- God picked **a people** to work with throughout human history—it makes sense to FOCUS one story.
- By watching how God interacted with them the rest of the world could see God at work.
- Anyone, anywhere was welcome to become part of that story.
- And many people did join the Jewish people and participated in the Jewish religion—these are the ones we ultimately see showing up in Jerusalem at Pentecost.
- And there are many stories scattered through the Old Testament that show us how God was at work outside of the nation of Israel—story of Job, Jonah, Nebuchadnezzar.

Regardless of the various place and people He worked with

- The focus of His story is that from the time Adam and Eve sinned, is that God promised a Redeemer.
- The history of our Bible and all the various things that happened with the history, laws, and sacrifices of the Jewish people was to show what was coming in the Messiah.
- The New Testament fulfilled all that was promised.
- Hebrews was written as final summary of this process that all that had happened before was now fulfilled in Jesus.
- (Which of course won't make sense if you didn't read what came before)...but those of you reading through the Bible have read that.

This also helps us understand the true Jesus

- And helps us distinguish the true Jesus by false pictures of Him.
- Because when we look at HOW he was foretold and described in the past, we see how--

- ***The REAL Jesus is congruent with the picture of what He was prophesied to be in the past.***
- And the REAL Jesus specifically fulfilled the prophecies that it was written He would fulfill.

False ideas about Jesus, then and now

- The Jews thought the Messiah, and hopefully Jesus was the one who would rescue them from the Romans.
- They wanted a conquering military leader.
- That is not what He was promised to be.
- They had to ignore many passages about Him to make Jesus, the Messiah fit into their mold.

Today people make a similar mistake

- They don't look at the true Jesus of the Bible.
- They make Him into some sort of magical answer to all their needs; someone whose only wish is to make them healthy and wealthy.
- Those ideas are not supported either by prophecies (correctly interpreted) about Jesus or the true story of his real life.
- ***And if you don't think you fall into that—check out your prayers—WHAT do you pray for, what do you expect Jesus to answer?***

Do you pray—

- ***Your kingdom come; your will be done?***
- Do you ask for growth in godliness? To become more like Jesus?
- To be a blessing for others? To develop the fruits of the Spirit?
- Or do you primarily pray for earthly health and wealth?
- What do you pray for those in the church, your Christian friends?
- **(See handout—see the prayers of Paul and author of Hebrews.)**
- Jesus will answer every prayer for health and wealth and unimaginable blessings in heaven.
- But to do that—he first had to come as Messiah, as the Christ—what does that mean?

Understand the meaning of Christ/Messiah

- To the surprise of some, “Christ” is not Jesus’ last name (surname). “Christ” comes from the Greek word *Christos*, meaning “anointed one” or “chosen one.” This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *Mashiach*, or “Messiah.” “Jesus” is the Lord’s human name given to Mary by the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:31). “Christ” is His title, signifying Jesus was sent from God to be a King and Deliverer (see Daniel 9:25; Isaiah 32:1). “Jesus Christ” means “Jesus the Messiah” or “Jesus the Anointed One.”
- There are hundreds of prophetic passages in the Old Testament that refer to a coming Messiah who would deliver His people (e.g., Isaiah 61:1; Daniel 9:26). Ancient Israel thought their Messiah would come with military might to deliver them from decades of captivity to earthly kings and pagan nations. **But the New Testament reveals a much better deliverance provided by Jesus the Messiah—a deliverance from the power and penalty of sin (Luke 4:18; Romans 6:23).**
- From www.gotquestions.org

This understanding that Jesus

Was THE Christ, the Messiah, the anointed one they had been looking for was not obvious to the people after his death and resurrection.

- Why they didn't understand, we don't know...but they didn't seem to grasp who He truly was, even as they trusted Him as Savior.

- Confirming and explaining this link between what thousands of years of history and prophesy foretold and linking it to the life of Jesus was the primary message in early history of the church.
- It is all through Acts and then Hebrews is a summary of it—let's first look at how this key idea is repeated again and again in Acts.

The church begins at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descends

- Huge event and then Peter stands up to explain
- *¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! ¹⁶ No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:*
- *¹⁷ "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.*
- *. . . . And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'*

That was the experience of the people,

Peter then had to tell them why it happened and what it was all about....

- *Acts 2:22 "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, **u**with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. . . . ³⁶ "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: **God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.**"*
- Jesus was the One who had long been prophesied—not just any savior god, who would make your life better now, but this ONE, this Messiah who they had heard about and looked forward to all their lives.

Who Peter was talking to.....

How they got there—on the Roman Roads

As we go through Acts, we see that proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah was the foundation of Peter's preaching

- *Acts 3: 17 [after healing the crippled man] "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁸ **But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer.** ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out,*
- *Acts 5: 41 [after being flogged for telling people about Jesus] **The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. ⁴² Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.***
- **Consider the uniqueness of this message—not what Jesus can do for you—but what He DID—in fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah—this is what made Him the God to believe in.**

Stephen the first martyr continues the tie to the Old Testament

- *Acts 7 ⁵¹ "You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! ⁵² **Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him***

[referring to Jesus]— ⁵³you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”

The core message continues

- **Phillip** who shares with Ethiopian eunuch from the passage of Isaiah 8:30—that Jesus is the one the prophet was talking about.
- **Saul/Paul** Begins his ministry and the theme of it--
- *Acts 9: 19 Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹All those who heard him were astonished and asked, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?” ²²**Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.***

His regular pattern as he goes on his journeys

- *Acts 13:5* When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. . . . [After being asked to share in the synagogue] ²⁶“Fellow children of Abraham and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. ²⁷**The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath.**
- ³⁰But God raised him from the dead, ³¹and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people. . . .
- ³⁸“Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹**Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses.[this is a key message of Hebrews]**

When the pattern changes.....

- **Acts 14** At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed. . . .
- ⁸In Lystra there sat a man who was lame. He had been that way from birth and had never walked. ⁹He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed ¹⁰and called out, “Stand up on your feet!” At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.
- ¹¹When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have come down to us in human form!” ¹²Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes because he was the chief speaker. ¹³The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought bulls and wreaths to the city gates because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifices to them.
- **They stopped them, but you can see why it was important that whenever possible Paul preferred to preach his message in a context where people would get the proper interpretation from it. Without the historical foundation of history to tie to, people wrongly understood a miraculous healing.**

It became his custom

- **17** When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ²**As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the**

Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead.

- *He gets kicked out... goes to Berea...¹¹ Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. ¹² As a result, many of them believed,*
- They checked out Paul's message to make sure it did line up with the OT scriptures and because it did, many believed.

Continues in Corinth and Ephesus

- Again, he begins in the synagogue, but in both of these locations when they disagreed, he simply moves elsewhere in the city and teaches for an extended period of time—
- The application here—it takes time to learn new ways, and how the new faith was a continuation of an older one.
- Also, in these areas he didn't get the quick response Peter had.
- Application—we need to take time to explain the Christian faith to people, to learn it ourselves, especially if we don't know all our Bibles.
- We have the audience of Paul, not Peter, people, even many Christians who did not grow up knowing God's Word.

Finally, even outside the synagogue, his message is consistent

- *Acts 26:19 "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. ²⁰ First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. ²¹ That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. ²² But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. **I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— ²³ that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles."***

From first to last, his message was rooted in the Old Testament

- That is what gave his message authority and power.
- Our message is part of God's plan of redemption for his people.
- Shown in partial form in the OT and revealed fully in the life of Jesus in the New Testament.
- This is what from the start they preached, but apparently it was difficult to comprehend.
- **AND here is where Hebrews comes in and shows us in more detail how what was in the OT was now relevant to the NT audience.**
- In some ways I imagine it as an expanded transcript of what Paul and others (Priscilla and Aquilla, Apollos, Acts 18:24-26) shared to Jewish people with a background in the Old Testament but who needed to be walked through how Jesus fulfilled it.

As a result of their interactions

- *Acts 18:24 Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.*
- ²⁷ When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and

sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. ²⁸ **For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.**

Hebrews begins...

- **God's Final Word: His Son**
- **1** In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² 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. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, [if you want to know what God the Father is like, look at Jesus] sustaining all things by his powerful word.
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Hebrews overall is a primary example of Typology, a key to understanding the relationship between the Old & New Testament

- *Typology is based on the assumption that there is a pattern in God's work throughout salvation history.*
- *God prefigured his redemptive work in the Old Testament and fulfilled it in the New; in the Old Testament are shadows of things to be more fully revealed in the New. The ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, . . . demonstrated to Old Testament believers the necessity of atonement for their sins; these ceremonies pointed forward to the perfect atonement to be made in Christ. **The prefigurement is called the type; the corresponding figure is called the antitype.*** Virkler, Hermeneutics

It can be confusing

- Because when you read many Biblical commentaries, they will talk about something being a "**type**" in the Old Testament, for example, the sacrificial lamb in the Old Testament was a "**type**" of Christ's **future death on the cross**

How this ties into Hebrews

- *The Old Testament tabernacle is identified as a type in Hebrews 9:8-9: "The first tabernacle . . . which was a figure for the time then present."*
- *The high priest's entrance into the holiest place once a year prefigured the mediation of Christ, our High Priest. Later, the veil of the tabernacle is said to be a type of Christ (Hebrews 10:19-20) in that His flesh was torn, (as the veil was when He was crucified) in order to provide entrance into God's presence for those who are covered by His sacrifice. From GotQuestions*

- *The whole sacrificial system is seen as a type in Hebrews 9:19-26.*

Some specific examples of how Jesus was foretold as a “type” in the Tabernacle

- On the outside of the Tabernacle--Jesus describes himself as "the door" and the only "way" to God, there was only one way to get into the Tabernacle court.
- Next was the altar for sacrifices, which had to be made continuously—which represented that a blood sacrifice had to be made for people to approach a holy God.
- But as Hebrews points out—this was never enough....
- Then on the inside, you had the Holy place and the Holy of Holies....

Old Testament Tabernacle

As evidence that Jesus’s death was accepted and the way to God now open—what happened to the veil in the Temple—

- In the Old Testament, only the High Priest was allowed behind it once a year to make the sacrifice for sins.
- In Jesus day, the veil in the Temple in Jerusalem was **60 feet long, 30 feet high and 4 inches thick**—massive, impressive, intimidating barrier, blocking man from God until...
- ***Jesus, again crying out loudly, breathed his last. At that moment, the Temple curtain was ripped in two, top to bottom. There was an earthquake, and rocks were split in pieces. Matt. 27:50-53***
- Access to God was now free and open.
- What had been a symbol, a type of separation, now—free access.
- Again, the book of Hebrews explains all this in detail—that all the images were no longer necessary as the real Messiah had come.

They had been told that Jesus was the fulfillment even when He was alive

- In the New Testament, when John sees Jesus coming to be baptized, he says, “Behold the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world”
- If you haven’t read the story of the sacrificial lamb in the Old Testament you have no idea what he is talking about.
- But if you’ve read about it, or lived all your life worshipping at the Temple, when you hear John say those words—if you were spiritually aware—what an incredible statement!
- But not everyone wanted to accept Jesus for who He truly was/is.

And there are more....

- **Old Testament types**—the Law, the sacrificial system, and the entire setup of the Old Testament tabernacle, the work of the priests, especially the High Priest.
- All of these pre-figured, were **types** of the coming ministry of Jesus.
- And Hebrews goes step-by-step showing his audience how Jesus, as the ultimate **antitype**, in corresponding to what came before, fulfilled these promises of salvation in the Old Testament.
- **IMPORTANT—this is also referred to as “progressive revelation” not meaning a NEW thing, (as Mormons & other cults wrongly claim) but a fulfillment of what was promised and shown in part in the past.**

Believing them and trusting God to fulfill them in reality

- **THIS is the faith that was commended in chapter 11.**
- Not just that they had “faith” but what they had faith in—
- The promises of God that He would fulfill what He promised.
- *Heb. 11: 13-16MSG Each one of these people of faith died not yet having in hand what was promised, but still believing. How did they do it? They*

saw it way off in the distance, waved their greeting, and accepted the fact that they were transients [strangers and pilgrims] in this world. People who live this way make it plain that they are looking for their true home. If they were homesick for the old country, they could have gone back any time they wanted. But they were after a far better country than that—heaven country. You can see why God is so proud of them, and has a City waiting for them.

So, what now? What is our application?

- Hebrews 12, The Message tells us **Discipline in a Long-Distance Race**
- **12¹⁻³** *Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we'd better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in.*
- [Another translation puts it this way: **Jesus, for the joy set before him, endured.**]
- *Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he's there, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!*

Part of running this race, means training, discipline

- **Hebrews 13:7, NIV** **Endure hardship as discipline;**
- *God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?⁸ If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.⁹ Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!*
- ¹⁰ *They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.¹¹ No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*

Final applications

- With Hebrews we see both the broad expanse of God's work and the minute details he used each step of the way, and this should inspire us to:
- Trust His control of human history.
- Trust His control of our history, remembering challenges are meant to help us become all He created us to be.
- Lay aside the weights that slow you down—keep rearranging your life as His disciple.
- **And run with endurance the race set out for you!**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Book of Hebrews, God's eternal plans made real in the church and in us

Important suggestions: be sure everyone in the group gets a chance to contribute—freely share YOUR thoughts, insights, questions—truly interact with each other and God's Word.

1. What is God's view of time and how does that help us understand prophecy?
2. Why is it important for us to understand how unique the Christian faith is in that the New Testament is a fulfillment of the Old Testament? How can this give us confidence in our faith?
3. What is Typology? What is a "type" and an "antitype?" How does understanding this help us understand the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament?
4. What did you think about the prayers of Paul for his people? How does that challenge us to pray for each other?
5. What does the passage in Hebrews 12 teach us about the Lord's discipline? Is it to punish us? What good can it do for us?
6. What are some ways we can run our race in the Christian life better?

Prayers of the writer of Hebrews and the Apostle Paul

A challenge to me as I read these was that I wondered if we are not happy with ourselves, our churches, what is happening overall in the Christians in our families and our world, is because the majority of our prayers for one another (if one looks at the prayer requests of most groups and churches and if we look at our own) have become prayers for earthly success and healing.

In contrast, consider these prayers:

From the writer of Hebrews for himself and those he was writing to:

Hebrews 13: 18 Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way. **20** Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, **21** equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen

The Apostle Paul's Prayers for his people:

Col. 1:9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, **10** so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, **11** being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, **12** and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

Eph 3:14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. **16** I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, **18** may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, **19** and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Phil. 1:9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, **10** so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, **11** filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

1 Thes. 5: 23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.