



DEVOTIONALS: 4 -11 FEBRUARY 2023

Hebrews One – “Supremacy of Christ”

Adapted - www.mensgroup.org/study-guide

Heavenly Father, thank you for this study. We pray that you guide us into strength and truth with the Holy Spirit, and that we are refreshed in our thankfulness and appreciation for the grace of Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the midst of suffering, we often feel spiritually parched. We wonder if God is with us in this barren land or if He is simply a mirage. Yet Scripture shows us that no matter where God’s people find themselves—in battle or prison, in valley or wilderness—one thing is true: God is faithful.

The book of Hebrews is estimated to have been written between 60 and 70 AD. Although long thought to be Paul, the author of Hebrews is in fact unidentified. The Book of Hebrews begins with no mention of the author, only of God. The human author of Hebrews remains unknown, but the book’s inspiration by the Holy Spirit is evident.

While author and dates may be debated, the theme of Hebrews is unmistakable. The words “better” and “superior” in their Greek forms are scattered throughout the book fifteen times, clearly demonstrating that, as the Messiah, Jesus Christ is the only priest, sacrifice, and covenant the Jews need anymore.

Hebrews, of course, was written to the Hebrews—aka the Jews. It was written to instruct Jewish believers that Judaism had been superseded by Christianity, and this was a huge change in faith for the Jews to accept. Unlike the Gentiles, who for centuries past had lost all knowledge of the true God and worshipped idols, the Jews had a Divine religion and a Divinely-appointed place of worship for the last 1,000 years. The first place of worship was the Tabernacle in the desert and the second place of worship was the Temple in Jerusalem.

To be asked to forsake their beliefs which had been honored and handed down by their fathers for over a thousand years was to make a HUGE DEMAND upon them. Unless they gave up faith in Jesus, they were not allowed to enter the Temple, which meant they would be banished from the altar, the sacrifice, the high priest, and the house of God—first the Tabernacle and then the Temple.

Those who chose to cling to the Messiah would be severed from the Messiah’s people, the Jews. It was the most severe test to which their faith could be put. Their loyalty to Jesus would cost them separation from all the traditional sacred rights and privileges of Jerusalem.

What Christ did during His ministry is greater than the ministry of the Levitical priests (Hebrews 8:3-6), greater than the old covenant (Hebrews 8:7-13), greater than the old sacrifices (Hebrews 10:1-14), and greater than anything they received at Mount Sinai (Hebrews 12:18-24) — Christ’s ministry is the completion of these things.

The book of Hebrews is a letter written to Christians who had begun following Jesus after growing up in the Jewish faith. These Jewish converts to Christianity were a discouraged, persecuted minority in the broader society, and they experienced temptation to merge the gospel with Jewish religious laws. The author of Hebrews speaks to their situation by making a case for the supremacy of Jesus Christ above all other leaders, social systems, political systems, and religions. Hebrews says that Jesus is enough, Jesus is above all, and Jesus is better (15 times!). Jesus is the full revelation of God, the perfect mediator who reconnects humanity and all of creation with God. Jesus is resilient over death and empowers all those who follow him to endure suffering and hardship while persevering in joy-filled faith.

Read: Hebrews 1:1-9

Discuss:

Let's get curious and ask questions that will help us discuss what the author wanted the original readers to understand.

1. What do you notice about the way the author describes Jesus, the Son of God? In your own words, how would you describe what the Son of God has accomplished?
2. Why do you think the author opens this letter with an emphasis on Jesus being superior to angels?

Spiritual Invitation: What is God saying to you through this passage?

Today, as before, new followers of Jesus are tempted to merge the "gospel" of their families, the media, or dominant culture with what Jesus has to say. But the author of Hebrews says there is no turning back to old systems, especially when those systems marginalize, abuse, and oppress. This merging of different objects of worship (Jesus + any other priority, viewpoint, system, etc.) is called *Syncretism*. *Syncretism* is the combination of different forms of belief or practice; the fusion of two or more originally different inflectional forms.

Syncretism gives the appearance of comfort and security but is ultimately frail and does not offer true salvation. Only Jesus through his life, death, resurrection, and ascension opens the way into the true presence of God and the restoration of the shalom God intended.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see ways you are tempted to merge any part of American culture with the Gospel of Jesus. For example, name the situations in your lives where you are tempted to believe that something or someone else:

- Has ultimate power
- Created the universe
- Is most beautiful and compelling
- Contains the full truth about life
- Loves you the most
- Deserves your worship, time, resources, and attention
- Holds all things together
- Can make you most happy and secure
- Can forgive you and make you right with God
- Is the Lord and has control of your life

Confess what the Spirit reveals to you and choose one next step you can take in turning away from any "*Jesus + _____*" that you have believed. Ask a trusted friend to hold you accountable in taking this next step.

Missional Opportunity: What action can you take this week in response?

"YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS; THEREFORE GOD, YOUR GOD, HAS ANOINTED YOU WITH THE OIL OF GLADNESS ABOVE YOUR COMPANIONS."

Thoughts on Hebrew 1:9 - Christ is the gift of life and the message of salvation to a lost and dying world. He is the image of the invisible God. He is the eternal Word clothed in human flesh for He is the incarnate Word of God - full of grace and truth. Jesus is the beloved Son of the Father in undiminished Deity, and in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Jesus Christ is the mysterious union of Deity with humanity, which we accept by grace through faith in Him. His triumph at the Cross will be openly displayed in the annals of history at His Second Coming when He breaks victoriously through the clouds to the rapturous welcome of His people, Israel, as they cry out their ecstatic and prophetic greeting: "Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord."

His description is beautifully inscribed in the 45th Psalm where, as our Kinsman-Redeemer, we read of the Lord Jesus Christ: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of Your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness.

You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of joy more than Your companions."

The millennial rule of Christ on earth will be the full, final, and glorious fulfilment of this ancient truth when, as King of kings and Lord of lords, Christ Jesus will rule and reign in irreproachable justice for He loves righteousness unfailingly and hates wickedness with a godly hatred, and did only those things that He heard from His Father in heaven. And because of His goodness and grace which delighted in righteousness and eschewed evil, God anointed Him with the oil of gladness beyond His companions. And as members of His Body who are in eternal union with Him, we will one day fully and finally enter into the joy of our Lord, when we see Him face to face.

It was for the joy that was set before Him, that our Saviour endured the Cross and despised its shame. Today He is sitting at the right hand of the throne of God in heavenly places. He is the Father's beloved Son, in Whom God is well pleased Who loves righteousness and hates wickedness, and Who is anointed with the oil of gladness as heir of all things.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you that Jesus is Your full and final message to humanity. Thank You that He is more than a messenger from God, but God incarnate who brought salvation to a lost and dying world. Thank You that the joy of the Lord is my strength and that one day I will enter into the fullness of His joy. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

PRAYER & CONCERNS

HOW CAN WE PRAY FOR YOU TODAY?

- Our Sweet, Sweet Gentleman, **Mr. Allan Kieckhafer** who passed away on January 25, 2023 was celebrated with a loving, honorable and joyous Celebration of Life Service on 30 January 2023. We have stood on the shoulders of this saintly giant and we give God praise and thanks for all that Mr. Allan taught us, the amazing legacy of service he has left us to live into and the vital a role he played in helping us grow into who we are now. "Almighty Father, you have built up your Church through the love and devotion of your saints: inspire us to follow the example of Mr. Allan whom we grieve his passing. May we, Fifth Ave. United Methodist Church, rejoice with him in the vision of your glory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen." We pray for Mr. Allan's family and the community of West Bend. Amen.
- Words cannot begin to express the heartfelt sadness and grief we are experiencing for the passing of our beloved **Ms. Beverly "Bev" June Vogel**. To Ms. Bev's family: "Always be assured that you have our full support, prayers and love." May God grant us grace, that in pain we may find comfort, in sorrow hope, in death resurrection. Amen.
- **We still need YOU! We need leaders and volunteers to serve in various positions on committees and boards. You may not think you have the gift, talent, and/or time to serve, but all are called to work in the kingdom. We need you!**
- We extend our deepest condolences and prayers of love and support to **Mr. Brett Barnett** on the passing of his sister, **Ms. Jerrie Barnett**. A Celebration of Life Service will be held, December 18th, in Michigan. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. Cards and notes of condolences and support can be mailed to: Mr. Brett and Ms. Mary Barnett, 932 Hillcrest Street, West Bend, WI 53095.
- With love and support, we extend our heartfelt condolences to **Mr. Leslie Dalton** on the passing of his sister, **Alice Dickmann** on Dec. 7. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen. Messages and cards of care and condolences can be mailed to: Mr. Leslie and Mrs. Alana Dalton, 4959 Lake Drive, West Bend, WI 53095
- **Mr. Don Walters** is still experiencing several medical challenges. We're keeping Ms. Joyce in our thoughts and prayers as well. Letters and notes of encouragement and love can be mailed to: Mr. Don and Mrs. Joyce Walters, 5368 Woodlawn Summit, West Bend, WI 53095.

- **Ms. Jeri Bowerman**, had cardiac stents inserted. Please send her your cards and notes of love, support and courage: Ms. Jeri Bowerman, New Perspectives Senior Living, 2130 Continental Drive, #322, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Ms. Sandy Wamser** having been diagnosed with Epilepsy, is still working with her medical team to find the correct medications and doses to control the seizures. She is very grateful for your love, prayers and support. Special prayers for Mr. Pat as he cares for Ms. Sandy. Cards and notes can be sent to: Mr. Pat and Mrs. Sandy Wamser, 3742 Pleasant Valley Road, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf**, appreciates your continued prayers for healing and strength as she continues to struggle with illness. You can send emails of prayers and support to: alankempf33@gmail.com; or cards and notes to Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.
- **Bro. Bob Krell**, prayers for strength and continued healing. Please mail cards and notes of prayer and encouragement to: Bro. Bob and Mrs. Jean Krell, 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090
- **Mr. Chuck Rogge** is still on a journey of healing. He is grateful for the cards and notes of support. Please continue to flood the mailbox with love and support to: Mr. Chuck and Mrs. Sue Rogge, 5011 Hwy. P, West Bend, WI 53095
- **Ms. Nancy Whitson** is still admitted at The Pavilion at Glacier Valley. She requests your prayers and support as she continues to journey with health concerns. Please send cards and notes of encouragement to: Mrs. Nancy Whitson, 922 Hickory Street, West Bend, WI 53095
- **Mr. Dick Simmons**, diagnosed with acute leukemia. “Dear God, we place our worries in your hands. We place Mr. Dick’s sickness under your care and humbly ask for strength and comfort. Be near him in times of weakness and pain; sustain him by your grace, that Mr. Dick’s strength and courage may not fail; give him confidence in the power of your grace, that even when he is afraid, may he put his whole trust in you. We pray all of these things in Your name. Amen. Mr. Dick, Ms. Shirley and family, we are sending you love, hugs, support and prayers during this difficult time. Cards, notes filled with prayers and support can be mailed to: Mr. Dick and Mrs. Shirley Simmons, 2908 Valley Avenue, West Bend, WI 53095.
- Lord, we ask you to plant seeds of courage and hope in **Ms. Lora Santiago**, daughter of Mr. Peter and Ms. Katie Glaser, as melanoma cancer has been found in her leg despite having immunotherapy. Your seeds of love and care through cards and notes can be mailed to: Ms. Lora Santiago, C/O Ms. Katie Glaser, N166 W21211 Glencoe Lane, Jackson, WI 53037.
- **Mr. Len McGinnis, Jr.**, continues to quietly face medical challenges. Your cards and notes of support and well wishes for Mr. Len and Mrs. Shelia McGinnis can be mailed to: 1230 Vogt Drive, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Ms. Linda Green**, sister of Mrs. Debra Matthies, thank you for your continued prayers for strength and courage as her cancer has returned and has metastasized. She is starting another round of chemotherapy and request your prayers that it will be successful. Please send her your cards and notes of support and faith. Her mailing address is: Ms. Linda Green, 2920 Donahue Ferry Road, Pineville, LA 71360.
- Many of our **church family members and friends** are experiencing health concerns. Please join me in praying for their healing and restoration. Amen.

PRAYER: I rest in you, Spirit of Life. I place in you my feet, my legs, my torso, my arms, my shoulders, my head and allow you to support all that I am. I rest in you, Spirit of Life, and give to you my worries, my fears, my doubts, my hopes, my joys, my pains, my anger, my love, my hate, and allow you to take in all that I am. And as I give all that I am, I find the place of truth, stillness, tranquility, eternal where you and I are one. I breathe in, deep, deeply, down, up, all that we are, as I stand on my toe at the edge of the universe, in oneness. And all that we are expands, until forever.
- Karem Barratt.

No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me,” says the Lord. – Isaiah 54:17

Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martín