

## OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE HEBREWS

February 13, 2019

### Answers to Lesson 40 – Titus / Philemon

*Page 207*

Like Timothy, Titus converted to Christianity under the guidance of Paul. As a Greek, he was part of Paul's initial visit to Jerusalem (Acts 9) and helped to clarify the position of non-Jewish converts with respect to Jewish rituals and laws. Paul and his companions refused to give in to the false brothers who sought to steal their freedom in Christ. As a result, Titus was not forced to be circumcised. Also, Titus accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey during which time he was sent to Corinth on three occasions to help settle matters there.

*Page 208*

Paul did not want the Cretans to change their lifestyles just to conform to a new law or to earn their way into heaven. Good works were to overflow from the saving relationship they had with Jesus Christ. Living a life that was good started on the inside and worked its way out.

Paul was concerned primarily with the witness of the church. Doing good works was a powerful testimony of the truth of the gospel. Lives were to be lived so that no one could harm the Word of God or have anything bad to say about Christians. When people saw that Christ truly had power over sin and worldliness (and Christ thoroughly changed a person's behavior and attitude) they were drawn to Christ.

*Page 209*

Christians who put their trust in God were to be careful to devote themselves to doing what was good. It was those things that made it excellent and profitable for everyone. Expectations from God were not meant to make lives miserable but to allow people to truly enjoy life. Likewise, people were to learn to devote themselves to doing what was good in order that they might live productive lives.

Philemon was a prominent member of the Colossian church. One of his slaves, Onesimus, had run away to Rome. Somehow Onesimus met Paul and came to know Christ under the guidance of Paul. Onesimus knew he had to return to his master and settle accounts. Paul made an appeal to Philemon to persuade him to take Onesimus back without punishment.

*Page 210*

It was not the intention of Paul to overthrow the institution of slavery in his letter. Instead (by working through the system) Paul taught Christian principles. He was not teaching doctrine here but showing how doctrine affected our lifestyles.

Onesimus was a guilty slave. Paul interceded on his behalf as Christ did for us. We are guilty and stand condemned. But Christ paid the price. By Philemon's gracious act of forgiveness, Onesimus would be reconciled to him and would be received in a new relationship. Because of Christ's intercession for us, we are graciously forgiven and adopted as sons and daughters – no longer slaves. We are reconciled to God.

By receiving Onesimus as a brother, Philemon would not only renew Paul's spirit and spare his fellow Christian great punishment, but he also would reap some benefits himself. Onesimus would be as dear a companion to Philemon as he had been to Paul. Onesimus would be useful to the work of Philemon in spreading the gospel.



# Hebrews

King James Version is clear that Paul wrote the *Letter to the Hebrews*. Both Clement and Origen judged the content of Hebrews to be from Paul. However, the style of the letter was very different from his other writings. Scholars concluded the actual writing was done by another (Luke or Clement of Rome).

Name of the author is lacking but we know some things about the author – Author was a Christian who lived and thought within the apostolic tradition. Timothy was a known companion in ministry. Writer was temporarily distanced from the readers but expected to return to them soon. Instructions and exhortations revealed a person well educated in Greek rhetoric and Judaism.

In terms of dating the letter there is no concise way to determine time of writing (60-95 CE).

Intended readers were Christians and second-generation believers. They were baptized and fully instructed in the faith. They were believers long enough to become teachers. Recipients of the sermon were seen as a faith community in crisis. Some members had grown lax in attendance at their assemblies and commitment was waning.

Root of the crisis in the church:  
Delay of the final return of Christ had a demoralizing effect in the community.  
Author wrote to people who were under extreme external pressure.  
Some members had been imprisoned and others suffered the confiscation of their property.  
People suffered dishonor and the shame of the cross.

## **Hebrews 1:1-4**

It is an introductory statement of faith to a longer sermon.  
First four verses are known as a period (a sentence that makes a complete circle).  
Sentence expresses a faith that was held in common by the readers.  
Introduction does not seek to correct any false teachings.  
Verses create an atmosphere of trust by starting on the same solid foundation.  
Text that follows is predicated on the affirmation that God speaks to his people.  
Emphasis on God draws the reader to an understanding of Jesus Christ.

### **Hebrews 1:5-2:18**

Confession of faith concludes with the declaration that the Son is superior to angels.

We start to see numerous citations from the Old Testament.

35 Old Testament passages are cited with most of them coming from the psalms.

In terms of the language used, the author introduces Biblical quotations with verbs of speaking.

On a theological level, the author wants to make the Old Testament the very speech of God.

Words of Scripture are not speeches from the past dragged into the present.

Quotations are the words of God to those living through the present moment.

Matter of the existence or non-existence of angels was not open for debate.

Angels were portrayed as God's intermediaries in all the ways God related to creation.

It was believed that the law was given through angels.

Any adequate defense of the superiority of Christianity must establish that Christ is superior.

Author reminds us the source of the message is God.

Christ is the Son of God and the high priest.

Tradition of the Word of God remains unbroken.

Son became incarnate (subject to all human conditions) including death.

Christ pre-existed with God, existed on earth, and now is exalted at the right hand of God.

Author interprets Psalm 8 with Christ in mind.

Jesus was lower than angels for a little while and then crowned with glory and honor.

Christ is not only the one who goes before them but also creates a path forward.

As high priest, Christ offers a sacrifice of atonement for our sins.

### **Hebrews 3:1-5:10**

Note a pattern in this letter:

Essential content of the next section is announced in the preceding one by means of a phrase.

In this case the phrase is *a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God*.

Important qualities of the high priest are faithfulness and mercy.

The recipients of this sermon are now identified in Hebrews 3:1:

Brothers and sisters, holy partners in a heavenly calling

Jesus was compared to angels and now he is briefly compared to Moses (Hebrews 3:2-6).

Hebrews 3:7-11 is found in Psalm 95:7-11 but here the Holy Spirit is speaking.

Author uses the memory of Israel's rebellion as a stern warning to the readers.

The idea of testing is found in Hebrews 3:12-19 –

Hardness of heart causes rebellion against God.

Ancestors were the ones who put God to the test.

In anger God swore that the people would not enter his rest.

Warning continues . . .

do not have an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

encourage one another every day so that none of you may be hardened by sin.

ancestors were unable to enter the promised land because of their unbelief.

The message the ancestors heard did not benefit them because they were not united in faith. Hebrews 4:2 is the first time the word *faith* is used. Faith is described in the *Letter to the Hebrews* as a rhythm between movement and rest. Rest does not follow a pilgrimage but it occurs during a pilgrimage. The rest of God is both present and future. From our rest we do our work and not the other way around.

Hebrews 4:12-13 is a personal favorite of PSK. It is a fitting conclusion and forceful reminder of the nature and work of the Word of God. We are to respond with our very lives. The Word of God is characterized by what it does.

As the great high priest Jesus passed through the heavens. He was able to sympathize with our weaknesses. He was tested as we are yet without sin.

Role of the human high priest is outlined in 5:1-4. And then the role of Christ is outlined in 5:5-10 – He did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest but was appointed by God. Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears. He was heard because of his reverent submission. He learned obedience through what he suffered (though a Son). Having been made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. He was designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

But the people were dull in their understanding (Hebrews 5:11-14). By now they should be teachers but they needed someone to teach them the basics.

### **Hebrews 5:11-6:20**

The last part of Hebrews 5 and all of Chapter 6 is one unit  
Hebrews 5:11-6:3      Warning against falling away and a call to maturity  
Hebrews 6:4-12      Describes what happens when you fall away  
Hebrews 6:13-20      Offers the foundation for hope

Greek word for perfection is teleiōtēs (maturity) (the highest stage of Christian teaching). We are confident of better things because God is not unjust. God does not overlook our work or the love we show in serving others in his name.

Abraham is the model of those who trust in God's promise. God made a promise to Abraham – *I will surely bless you and multiply you* (Genesis 22:17). Promise follows the most severe trial of Abraham's faith, the offering of his son, Isaac. God seals the promise with an oath (we can be confident that God is dependable). Two unchangeable things (promise and oath) make it impossible that God will prove false. So we are encouraged to seize the hope set before us.

### **Hebrews 7:1-10:39**

Who is Melchizedek (Genesis 14:17-20)?

King of Salem and priest of the Most High God (king of righteousness / king of peace).

Met Abraham (who was returning from defeating the kings) and blessed him.

Abraham offered him one-tenth of everything.

We know nothing about parents or his genealogy (no beginning of days or ending of life).

Resembles the Son of God and remains a priest forever.

If perfection had been attained through the Levites, why speak of another priest?

- 1) Another priest arises through the power of an indestructible life.
- 2) Others who became priests took their office without an oath.  
But this one became a priest with an oath.
- 3) Other priests were prevented by death from continuing in office.  
Jesus holds his priesthood permanently because he continues forever.
- 4) He is able for all time to save those who approach God through him.  
He always lives to make intercession for them.  
As compared to the other high priests there is no need to offer sacrifices day after day.  
God appointed the Son who has been made perfect forever.

We have a high priest who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the God.

Jesus has now obtained a more excellent ministry.

He is the mediator of a better covenant (which has been enacted through better promises).

Hebrews 8:8-12 is from Jeremiah 31:31-34.

In speaking of a new covenant God made the first one obsolete.

And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear.

Christ is the mediator of the new covenant.

Those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

Under the law almost everything is purified with blood.

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin.

When Christ came into the world – Christ said – *See I have come to do your will.*

Christ has offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins.

The Holy Spirit speaks again – through Jeremiah 31:33 and 34b.

I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.

For where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

We have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus Christ.

We can approach God with a true heart.

### **Hebrews 11:1-12:17**

Now faith (pistis) is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen.

The word sometimes indicates trust or belief / sometimes it refers to the quality of loyalty.

The author is not offering a definition but a thematic unity to the discussion.

A call to continue in faith is matched with endurance.  
Movement is from experiences of faithful endurance to examples of redemptive history.  
Flow is chronological that starts at Genesis 1 and continues through Joshua 6.  
It is theological in that faithful endurance and God's approval are one continuous story.  
It emphasizes the reliability of God.  
It is Christological in that the story moves toward Christ.  
Faith is never different from hope.  
We learn from our forebears in faith.

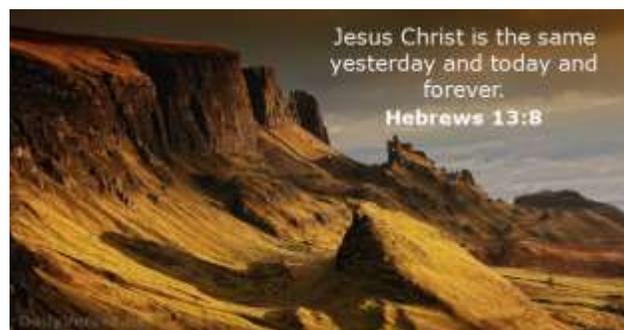
### **Hebrews 12:18-13:19**

We are reaching the climax of the entire message.  
It involves two extended metaphors: Mount Sinai and Mount Zion.  
Israel's experience of God at Sinai is an experience of the distant and inaccessible.  
Author addresses people as pilgrims who have come to Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem.  
Offering of Christ has made possible this accessibility to the presence of God.  
Christians have not yet arrived and are to remain in the proper posture of worship.

What follows is the collection of exhortations that sketch an appropriate life-style:  
Let mutual love continue.  
Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers.  
Remember those who are in prison and those who are being tortured.  
Let marriage be held in honor by all and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled.  
Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.  
Remember your leaders (those who spoke the word of God to you) and imitate their faith.  
Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.  
It is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace.  
Pray for us.

### **Hebrews 13:20-25**

Benediction is read at the end of every funeral and acts as the blessing for the people.  
Final greeting and farewell ends the letter.



### **Assignment for February 20**

Complete the Exercises from Lesson 41 on Pages 213-217  
Read *James* or the portions outlined on Page 217