

Week 52 Chronological

December 21: Hebrews 1-6

We do not know who wrote Hebrews. If there is a question-and-answer time after the Judgement Seat of Christ, that is one of the many questions I have. This letter is written as a tribute to the incomparable Son of God and to encourage the persecuted believers. The author begins the letter stating that God spoke to the fathers in the Old Testament through prophets at different times and different ways. We are blessed in the fact that He communicates with us by His Son. Jesus Christ is superior to all. He is not a created being. He was there from the very beginning. He is and always has been.

We are saved through His atoning work on the cross. We should be careful not to drift away from His teachings. Jesus condescended His throne and made Himself lower than the angels so that He could go to the cross and take away our sin. Why would we take that gift for granted and continue living in our sin and iniquity? S

The author warns them against unbelief. As we walk with Christ, we may have some questions. This is not a problem. Sometimes doubts creep up. What we do with those questions will make the difference between strengthening the faith and apostasy. If we search out the answer to these questions, God proves Himself, and our faith is strengthened. However, if we do not address the question and just retain the doubt, then that is the slippery slope to apostasy. We should do everything in our power to grow in our faith, not walk away from it.

The role of the high priest is reviewed. The Jewish high priest had to make a sin offering for himself and the people. Jesus is the high priest. However, He did not have to make sacrifice for Himself because he was sinless and blameless. He had no guilt. Instead, He took on our guilt and gave Himself up as the ultimate sacrifice.

Relationships are like most other things in this world. If we ignore them long enough, they will go away. Paul encourages the readers to refrain from regressing in their faith. We too should do everything we can to grow closer with Him. It takes daily time with Him. I love Dania tremendously and I want our relationship to grow, so I spend time with her every day, even when we are crazy busy. If I only spent time with her for an hour on a Sunday morning, would our relationship grow? Would she feel loved if she only got an hour of my attention out of the 168 hours a week? That is only 0.5 percent of the week! Surely God deserves more of our time than that!

December 22: Hebrews 7-10

Melchizedek is a figure we read about all the way back in Genesis. Abraham gave him a tenth of his possessions. Abraham was a great man and still gave a tenth to Melchizedek, indicating that Melchizedek is superior to Abraham. Jesus is the high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek. He is superior to all. No matter how far we climb in the social ladder, we will always be subservient to Him. Everyone has a boss, except for God.

The first covenant and second covenant are discussed. The author claims that if the “first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second one.” However, the covenant itself was perfect and faultless. God is perfect and faultless. However, we are not. That is where the imperfection comes into the first covenant. It was our inability to fulfill our end of the covenant that led to it falling apart. It is not God’s fault, nor is it the Law’s fault.

The first covenant called for a tabernacle. In the tabernacle was the most holy place where the ark of the covenant resided and God’s glory filled the room. The high priest alone was the sole individual that was allowed behind the curtain once a year to make sacrifice. Now, Jesus stands before the Father, acting as our advocate. He is the perfect High Priest.

Throughout the Old Testament, bulls were brought as sacrifices to atone for the sins of the people. The blood of these animals merely covered the sin. However, Jesus is the perfect sacrifice. His blood does not just cover up our sin. Instead, it completely washes our sin away, like it never happened. That does not mean that we are free from the worldly consequences of our sins. However, we are freed from the grave. We may taste physical death, but we will not taste spiritual death.

December 23: Hebrews 11-13

The author discusses the importance of faith. In the Old Testament, the heroes of the faith acted on faith. It was Abel’s faith that caused him to give an acceptable sacrifice to God. Enoch was so faithful that he never actually died. Instead, he was simply taken away by God. Faith is essential if we are going to please God. We must trust Him when He gives us a direction. Noah was warned that the rain was coming, and he faithfully built the ark. His faith made him a hero of the faith. Abraham acted in faith when he departed his family at God’s command. God has our best interests at heart. We can trust Him and do what He tells us to do, even when it does not make sense. A long time ago, when I was young and you were even younger, God was pushing me toward joining the navy. It made no sense at the time. My friends all thought I was crazy, I thought I was crazy, but it was the direction God was sending me. However, He used all my experiences to bring me to this point. Who knows what would have happened if I did not act on faith?

Our faith should drive us to endure. The Christian life is not for the faint of heart. There will be trials and tribulations. So, we should run our race with endurance, keeping our eyes on Jesus. He is the founder and perfecter of our faith.

Hebrews closes with a command to let brotherly love continue. Our ability to love is to set us apart from the rest of the world. We are called to love our fellow Christians and love our enemies. That is how we change the world, with love. As we go through this life we can always remember that God will never leave us or forsake us. He is our helper. If we seek Him and His will, He will give us the strength we need to love and do His work.

December 24: 2 Timothy 1-4

December 25: 2 Peter 1-3 and Jude

Second Peter is another of the General Epistles. This letter emphasizes Christian living. We are encouraged to strengthen our faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. If these are present in our lives, then we will live fruitful lives for the LORD.

Peter warns against the false teachers present during his time. He reminds the reader that there were false prophets in the past and there will be false prophets in the future. It is imperative that we can discern what true teaching is and what is false. These teachers might have sweet words and tell us exactly what we want to hear, but if these words are not in congruence with God's Word, then they are destructive words that can lead to our destruction.

In the last days there will be scoffers. They live according to their own desires. They have no fear of The LORD. This has been an issue from the beginning, though. Throughout history the arrogant have existed, claiming that there is no God. To be sure, there are scoffers today. We need not fear these people. Just because they deny the truth of God does not mean that God is threatened. God remains God regardless of how many people believe in Him. God is not shaken by these scoffers. We should not be shaken by them either.

Jude is a short letter. Jude seeks to protect Christian truth, opposing heretics that threaten the faith. The gospel should be defended vigorously by all believers. One thing to note about Jude is that there are reference to extrabiblical texts. The account of Michael and the devil arguing over Moses's body was taken from *The Assumption of Moses*, an apocryphal book. In this story, Michael goes to bury Moses's body, but the devil tries to stop him, claiming ownership over Moses because of the murder he committed in Egypt. In this story, he does not rely on his superiority to condemn the devil, but instead calls on the LORD to judge. In our struggle with sin and worldliness, it is best to get God's help rather than trying to defeat temptation on our own. God is strong to save and He never fails.

December 26: 1 John 1-5

First John addresses an issue of division. There are some in the ranks that have departed fellowship. This rift was due to a difference of opinion on doctrine, ethics, devotion, or a combination of the three. Sadly, we see people forsake the fellowship based on differences of opinion today.

John warns the reader of the danger of lying to themselves. If they say that they have fellowship with Jesus, but they continue to walk in darkness, they are lying. Their faith is a faith of lip service, confessing with their lips, but not making a change in their hearts. He also addresses the issue of people that think they are better than they actually are. "If we say, 'We don't have any sin,' we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1:10). Everyone sins. Everyone needs a savior. If we had the ability to be perfect and sinless, the cross would not have been necessary and it could have been left up to us to work out our own salvation. As believers, we are not perfect, but we serve the One who is perfect. His blood has set us free from our sin.

We will continue to struggle with sin for the rest of our lives. John explains that we know we are in Him when we keep His commands. As believers, we cannot love the world or the things that belong to the world. Instead, we should fix our eyes on the Father and seek His will. We are God's children and should remain in Him. Since we are part of God's family, we should love one another. Cain was Abel's brother. Abel made a sacrifice that was accepted by God. Cain's sacrifice was not. As a result, he murdered Abel. He did not love his brother or God. Instead, he was filled with evil. We should love, not with word or speech, but with truth and action.

Though we seek God and His will and do what is right, the world will continue to fall into sin and depravity. We have no reason to fear. God is greater than the one in the world. It might look like the devil is winning, but he is not. The darkness cannot overcome the light. God has His victory!

December 27: 2 John and 3 John

John's second letter is either addressed to a lady or the lady that owned the home where a church met. John reiterates the need for believers to follow God's commands. However, he also advises to watch out for deceivers. They do not confess Jesus's return. If a teacher is not rooted in Christ and goes beyond His word, are not to be trusted. They are not giving solid instruction in the LORD. Sadly, there are many teachers out there today that go outside of Christ's teaching. We must be on the alert for this false teaching.

John's third letter is the shortest book in the New Testament. This letter gives a lot of positive advice. However, it also warns against Diotrephes, a power-hungry leader. Diotrephes slanders the other teachers. He does not welcome the brothers, most likely to protect his position. There are people out there like that today. Do not be deceived by them!

December 28: Revelation 1-5

We start the final book of the Bible today! Great job! In this book, the glorified and resurrected Messiah reveals Himself to John while he is imprisoned in Patmos. Patmos used to be an empty island with not much by way of agriculture. John begins the letter explaining that this revelation was given to show His people what will take place soon. Of course, what is soon to us is very different than what is soon for God. John describes Christ in His glory. He is dressed in a long robe with a gold sash around His chest. His head and hair are white like wool and His eyes like a fiery flame. His face shines like the sun at midday.

John is told to write letters to the seven churches in Asia. The first letter is addressed to the church in Ephesus. Things at this church are going well. They are known by God for their inability to tolerate evil, their good works, labor, and endurance. However, they have begun to fall away. They have forgotten their first love. The church is encouraged to remember how far they have fallen, repent, and do the works they did in the beginning.

The church in Smyrna is afflicted and poor. Despite their poverty, they are rich. They are about to suffer, but they should have no fear. They are encouraged to remain faithful until death. Their perseverance will result in receiving the crown of life. The church in Pergamum remains faithful

despite living where Satan's throne is. They remain faithful to Christ, but He has a few things against them. Some of the believers are placing stumbling blocks in front of other believers. They are told to repent.

Thyatira is known for their love, faithfulness, service, and endurance. Their works now are greater than they were when they first began. However, they tolerate Jezebel. This is most likely a nickname referring to the idolatrous queen of the northern kingdom of Israel in 1 and 2 Kings. This woman has led them astray, into committing sexual immorality and eating meat sacrificed to idols. The people enjoined in her practices must repent or they will be thrown into great tribulation.

Sardis has a reputation for being alive, but they are in fact dead. They need to strengthen what remains before it dies. Even though many are dead in their faith, there are some among them that will walk with Jesus because they remained faithful. The church in Philadelphia has limited strength, but it has remained faithful to Jesus. As a result, they will be spared from the hour of testing.

Laodicea is lackluster. They are neither hot nor cold. As a result, they will be vomited from Christ's mouth. They are rich and successful, but this success has caused them to place their faith in their worldly possessions, not in God. They think that they are perfect and faithful. Their success has blinded them to how wretched and pitiful they are. Our worldly success does not equal spiritual success.

After writing the letters, John is taken into the throne room of heaven. John describes what he sees on the throne as resembling jasper and carnelian stone. A rainbow that looked like an emerald surrounded the throne. There were 24 thrones around this throne occupied by 24 elders dressed in white with gold crowns on their heads. Four living creatures surrounded the throne. When these creatures give glory to God, the 24 elders fall down before the One seated on the throne. They worship Him and cast their crowns at his feet.

In the right hand of the One on the throne is a scroll. However, there is no one worthy to open the scroll, so John begins crying. He is told to stop weeping by one of the elders. The Lion from the tribe of Judah is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals. The Lion of Judah is described as a slaughtered lamb. The Lamb takes the scroll and the 24 elders fall down before Him, singing praises.

The first seal is opened and a white horse appears. The horseman on it has a bow. A crown is given to him and he goes out as a victor to conquer. When the second seal is opened, a red horse appears. The horseman on this horse has the power to take peace from the earth, causing people to kill one another. A black horse appears when the third seal is opened. The horseman has a set of scales in his hand. The fourth seal is broken and a pale green horse arrives. Death is the name of the one riding this horse. Hades follows behind him. He is given authority to wipe out 25 percent of the earth.

The fifth seal is opened and the martyrs are revealed under the altar. These are the ones that were murdered because of their faith. They cry out asking how long they have to wait for justice

to be done. How long will they wait before their blood is avenged? They are each given a white robe and told to rest for a while. When the sixth seal is opened, a violent earthquake shakes the earth. The sun turns black and the moon becomes like blood. Everyone hides in caves and the rocks of the mountains.

December 29: Revelation 6-11

After all of this, John sees four angels standing at the four corners of the earth. Another angel appears and he gives instructions to the four angels empowered to harm the earth. When the seventh seal is opened, there is silence in heaven for about a half an hour. Seven angels stand in the presence of God and they have seven trumpets. The first angel blows his trumpet, causing hail and fire mixed with blood to fall to earth. The second angel hurls something like a mountain into the sea, causing the sea to turn to blood. When the third trumpet is sounded, a great star falls from heaven and lands in a third of the rivers and springs of water, making them unsafe to drink. The fourth trumpet sounds and a third of the sun, third of the moon, and third of the stars are darkened.

The fifth trumpet sounds and clouds of locusts come up out of the abyss. These are not ordinary locusts, though. They do not harm any of the vegetation. Instead, they only go after humans that do not have God's seal on their foreheads. The sixth angel blows his trumpet and the command is given to release the four angels bound at the great river Euphrates. These angels go and kill a third of humanity. Despite all the death and destruction that is taking place around them, the people that are spared still refuse to repent of their works and seek God. Instead, they just continue in their murders, sorceries, sexual immorality, and theft.

Another mighty angel comes down from heaven, surrounded by a cloud with a rainbow over his head. John is about to write down what he hears, but is then commanded to not write it down. John is given a measuring rod and is told to measure God's sanctuary and the altar. He is told that God's two witnesses will be empowered to prophesy for 1,260 days (about 3.75 years). If anyone tries to harm them while they are prophesying, fire will come from their mouths and consume their enemies. However, when their testimony is complete, the beast will come from the abyss and make war with them. They will be killed and their bodies will remain in the public square. The people will be so happy that they will exchange gifts with one another. After 3.5 days, though, these witnesses will be resurrected and great fear falls on the crowd. They are called up to heaven and another earthquake hits, killing 7,000 people.

December 30: Revelation 12-18

Revelation 12- 14 serves a prelude to the bowls of wrath we already read about. He describes a sign. He uses the term "sign" (Greek *semeion*). This is the same term he used in his Gospel account. He sees a woman pregnant in labor and in agony. In the second sign he sees a great dragon. This beast represents satan and the devil. The dragon has seven heads and ten horns, and is similar to the beast in 13:1, but there are enough differences to indicate that these are two separate beasts.

War breaks out in heaven. Michael and his angels fight against the dragon and his angels. The dragon does not prevail and he is cast out of heaven. This does not stop the dragon from continuing his pursuit of the woman and her child.

A beast rises out of the sea. It has ten horns and seven heads. This beast is given power by the dragon. The whole earth is amazed at this beast, so they follow it. They worship the dragon because it gave the beast authority. They ask “who is like the beast?” Their faith is in this monstrosity, not in God Almighty. The beast blasphemes against God.

Another beast comes out of the earth. He has two horns like a lamb, but he sounds like a dragon. This beast drives the earth to worship the first beast. It performs great signs and wonders. He orders the people to make an image of the beast from the sea. The image is given a spirit so that anyone who does not worship the beast is killed. This beast requires that everyone be given a mark on his right hand or on his forehead. This mark is a requirement to buy or sell anything.

Things are seeming bleak, but then John looks to Mount Zion and the lamb stands there with the 144,000 who had His name and His Father’s name written on their foreheads. They sang a new song to the One seated on the throne. Only those redeemed by God could learn the song. Three angels appear and give proclamations. The first calls for giving God glory since the hour of His judgment has come. The second proclaims the fall of Babylon. The third announces that anyone aligned with the beast will drink from God’s wrath.

John sees seven angels with the seven last plagues. When these plagues are finished, God’s wrath is complete. The first bowl is poured out and painful sores break out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The second bowl turns the sea into blood. The third bowl turns the rivers and springs to blood. The fourth bowl gives the sun power to burn people with fire. Those that are burned by the sun blaspheme God rather than repent of their sins. The fifth bowl brings incredible darkness. The sixth bowl dries up the Euphrates. Three unclean spirits resembling frogs come from the dragon’s mouth. These spirits travel to all the kings of the world, encouraging them to gather their people for battle at Armageddon. When the seventh bowl is poured out, a loud voice from the sanctuary says, “It is done!” Another earthquake hits, but this one is so severe that the city splits in three parts and the cities of all nations fall.

One of the seven angels tells John to come and see the judgement of the prostitute that sits on many waters. This notorious prostitute is Babylon the Great. John is carried away to the desert where he sees a woman sitting on a scarlet beast covered in blasphemous names. On the woman’s head it is written “Babylon the Great The Mother of Prostitutes and of the Vile Things of the Earth”. When John sees her, he is astonished. The angel asks him why. He then gives the meaning of the woman and the beast. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated. They are also seven kings. Five of these kings have fallen, one is, and the other has not come yet.

After John sees all this, another angel appears from heaven. He cries in a mighty voice announcing Babylon’s fall. God’s people are called up out of Babylon. The earthly leaders that lived luxurious lifestyles because of their relationship with Babylon weep in fear. All their

luxury is stripped away. Merchants cannot sell their goods. Babylon the great has fallen. Her light will never shine again. Though many had trusted in this great city, it is fallen. Nothing in this world lasts forever. Kings and kingdoms will rise and fall. The only One that is consistent and eternal is God Almighty.

December 31: Revelation 19-22

When Babylon falls, there is great rejoicing in heaven. John sees another rider on a white horse. This horse is different from the one he saw earlier in his vision. This rider is Jesus. He has many crowns, showing that He is more powerful than the devil. He has a name that is only known by Him, reminding us that even though God has shown us a lot, He has not revealed everything about Himself and His plan. The beast and the kings of the earth gather to make war against Him. The beast is taken prisoner, along with the false prophet. The rest are easily defeated with the sword that comes from the rider's mouth.

No matter how powerful a worldly system might look, it is not more powerful than God. God is Almighty. There is none before Him. Our faith should be in Him alone. He is the victor over Hades and death.

After the beast is defeated, Satan is bound up for 1,000 years and thrown into the abyss so that he could not deceive anyone. This period coincides with the return of Jesus and there are multiple views on how to interpret it. The views to interpret this passage are Premillennialism, Amillennialism, and Postmillennialism. All the views make solid arguments in their favor, but the views also have weaknesses. Premillennialism holds that Jesus's return will happen before the thousand years. Amillennialists see these events as symbolic. Proponents for this view argue that Satan's binding occurred the first time Jesus came to earth and defeated death on the cross. Postmillennialism holds that Christianity will grow more influential up to the point of Christ's return. In my opinion, we should not get wrapped around the axle on which view is right. One day, it will be revealed to us. Our biggest mission right now is to go and love people like Jesus, showing them who He is.

After the thousand years, Satan is released to deceive the nations again. He will rally people for battle. The text describes the army as being as numerous as the sand of the sea. They will be summarily defeated. Satan and the false prophets are thrown into the lake of fire where they will be tormented forever and ever. Today, there is a false interpretation on what hell is. Some think that hell is run by Satan and that there is a lot of partying and fun happening there. That is not the case. The lake of fire isn't for the devil to rule, it is for him to be punished.

After this event comes the Great White Throne of judgement. Everyone stands before the throne, both living and dead. The book of life is opened and everyone is judged by their works. This means that every one of us, regardless of whether we know Jesus or not will be judged.

When the judgment is complete, John sees a new heaven and a new earth. He also sees the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven. An announcement is made that God now dwells with humanity. The fellowship with God that Adam and Eve enjoyed with God before their sin, is restored to mankind.

After viewing the New Jerusalem, John sees the river of living water. The water flows from the throne of God and the Lamb, down the middle of the street in the city. The tree of life is on both sides of the river, which bears 12 different kinds of fruits every month. Night no longer exists because the LORD God gives the light.

John is told that God is coming quickly. As we discussed earlier, though, God's timing is very different than our timing. When John is done hearing these things, he bows down to worship the angel that had been showing him around. John is quickly told to get back up because he is a fellow servant.

The reader is encouraged to come to Jesus. "The one who is thirsty should come. Whoever desires should take the living water as a gift." Jesus is a gift for all mankind. He did not come to save one nation or people group; He came for all of humanity. All we must do is confess Him as Lord and Savior and repent of our sins. Jesus holds the keys to eternal life.