

Give Me Your Best

Hebrews Overview

(preached Pine Grove 8/21/16; Sunday PM)

Introduction

When I went to Clemson from Whitmire High School, it was hard to break from high school to college...

Everything was different...

More people.

More responsibility.

More assignments.

More freedom.

More things to do.

Less popularity.

Fewer friends.

Less money.

All of the differences had an effect on me in different ways...

I went to Clemson with one of my best friends from high school, but he was gone after a semester because he was homesick.

He literally couldn't break from his home and his mother and the habits of Whitmire...

Me, on the other hand, I was just as homesick, but I tried to make it work...

To do that, I tried to make Clemson like Whitmire...

I made a few close fiends who lived in my dorm, and rarely ventured out...

I made a habit out of playing video games, which reminded me of what I did back home...

For me, living meant bringing as much of Whitmire to Clemson as I could.

And yet I never made the break completely because I always went home on weekends and for the most part maintained the same friendships I had in Whitmire from high school...

I even spent a lot of time on the campus at South Carolina, simply because my buddies lived there...

I say all that to say that it is hard to break from a former way of life....

When all you've known all your life is small town living, it is hard to escape the small town...

Now, transfer that to a Jew who was living in the first century who had come to faith in Christ.

All of his life, all he had known was trying to keep the law...

Trying to live as a good Jew...

And a major portion of his life was spent offering sacrifices to God...

The Jews had a very complex sacrificial system...

Some of it came at direction of the OT, but many other sacrifices had been added by the priests over the years...

By the time of the Christ, the sacrificial system was even big business as people raised livestock just to provide it for daily sacrifices...

Now, the question is why did the Jews offer so many sacrifices?

Well, God established a sacrificial system in the book of Leviticus to enable Israel to maintain a relationship with him....

Israel had been given his law, but that did not stop them from breaking it, and every violation of it interrupted their relationship to their God...

So, God made a way for their sins to be covered for while so that Israel could maintain open lines of communication to him....

Now, all these sacrifices gave rise to the priesthood of Israel, where God set men up as priests to offer the sacrifices on behalf of the people...

This system grew and grew until the time of Christ, where priests were always busy and sacrifices were always being made because the people were always sinning against God...

Now, the sacrificial system also served another purpose too.

It was meant to point to the need of a blood sacrifice to take away sin...

Though the blood of bulls and goats could not forgive sin, the blood painted a picture that sin was related to a death and blood...

The point being that one day God would send a real sacrifice to take away sin....

It wouldn't be a perfect bull or goat; instead, it would be God's own perfect Son...

And by the time that Hebrews was written, which was in 65-69 BC, that sacrifice had come and died and been offered to God...

And God had accepted the death of Jesus as that once for all sacrifice for sin that the Jews had been promised since the book of Genesis...

Yet, many Jews had a hard time breaking from their past practices of offering sacrifices and keeping the law and simply living as Jews even though Jesus had freed them from their former way of life....

That is the book of Hebrews was writing...

Hebrews are the people who make up the nation of Israel...

Israelites, Hebrews and Jew are all names for the same group of people.

And this book was written to Jews who had come to believe in Christ...

But were having a hard time breaking away from their old way of life.

Specifically, they were having a hard time breaking away from the Jewish sacrificial system.

And so, God inspired someone to write them a letter, and teach them that Jesus was superior to all they ever knew as Jews...

He was superior to the character of the OT.

He was superior to the priests of the OT.

He sacrifice was superior to the OT sacrifices...

His covenant with the world was better than the old covenant..

And to teach that faith in him brought better benefits than Judaism could ever bring in a life, and led to a better life as well...

Going back, I say that God inspired someone to write the book of Hebrews because we have no idea who wrote it...

We also don't know where this church of former Jews was located..

It could have been anywhere in the Mediterranean world...

We do know from this book that it was a church that was founded by someone who came to them and preached faith in Christ to them...

We do know that it had been around for some time because the writer of Hebrews tells the people in the church that should have been more mature by now...

We do know that there were unsaved people that went to this church as well...

Because the writer at times speaks to people who aren't saved.

He speaks to people who go to this church and enjoy the fellowship of the believers at it, but who haven't put their faith in Christ...

He also writes to people in the church who believe the facts of the gospel, but don't believe in the Jesus of the gospel.

But for the most part, the writer of Hebrews speaks to the Hebrews who are simply having a hard time seeing that Christ is all they need...

But God inspired someone to write to them to show them that Jesus is better, in fact, the best that God has to offer to mankind...

And so, we will divide this book in 5 parts that show why Christ is the best....

Now, the purpose of the book of Hebrews is pretty much summed up in the first 4 verses of chapter 1, so let's begin there in our first section entitled...

I. The Best Position (1:1-4:13)

A. Above prophets and angels (1:1-2:18)

Verse 1...

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 [a]in these last days has spoken to us [b]in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the [c]world. 3 [d]And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and [e]upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

The opening verse simply acknowledge that true God of the world and revealed Himself to the Jews...

He had spoken to them in the OT in visions, direct conversation, through the prophets that spot for him...

Through miracles and other wonders...

In other words, the ancestors of the Jews in this church had worshipped God as he revealed himself to them in the OT, but now God had spoken a final time to the Jews and to the whole world in His Son..

Everything else in the OT was just a foreshadowing and a preview to the coming of Jesus...

Who is God in the flesh according to verse 3....

Who came to make purification for sins and then sat down at the right hand of the Father in heaven, where he has a name higher than any other in the universe...

Couple things to notice here....

Jesus is the best because He is God...

Jesus is the best because his sacrifice ended all sacrifices...

Please notice an important truth about Christ...

He is seated in heaven...

Guess what was true for every Jewish priest?

There was never a time to sit...

Sacrifices had to be made everyday at all times to keep the sins of the people covered...

Yet, when Jesus offered up his perfect life for imperfect sinners, it was the perfect and final sacrifice for all time...

And he could do what no priest could ever do...

He could sit down because as He said on the cross...

All sacrifices were finished in His death on the cross...

So, these verses set up the entire book because these opening verse set Jesus on the pedestal that He deserves...

And for the rest of this opening section, the writer sets out to show that Jesus is superior to any other created being...

In verse 1:5-2:18, the writer shows that Jesus is superior to the angels...

Now we understand this due to the simple fact that Jesus created the angels...

But it seems like this church of former Jews was backing away from Christ by even claiming that Jesus was below the archangel Michael..

And maybe even other angels..

So, God set out to correct that error in the rest of chapter 1 and 2...

B. Above Moses (3:1-4:13)

And that brings us to chapter 4, where the writer of Hebrews meant to show that Jesus was also superior to Moses...

Again, of us Gentiles, this is a no brainer, but for a Jew who had heard about the greatness of Moses since they were a kid, it is hard to overcome...

Yet look what is written in Hebrews 3:1-6....

3 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; 2 [a]He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. 3 For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. 4 For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. 5 Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; 6 but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

Clearly, Christ is superior to Moses, but that's not all...

As we move to chapter 4, verse 14, the writer of Hebrews makes the case that Jesus is....

II. The Best Priest (4:14-7:28)

The Jewish priesthood had existed for centuries by the time of Christ...

These were the men who stood in between the sinning Jew and a holy God...

These were the men who acted as a middle man to offer the sinner's sacrifice to God to cover their sins for a while...

Yet, Jesus as a great high priest surpassed all the priests of the OT..

In chapters 4-7 of Hebrews, we are going to see that Jesus is superior to the priests of OT...

Let's simply read verses 4:14-16 to get us thinking about Jesus as the greatest high priest...

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,

let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Since Jesus was not isolated from the world like many of the Jewish priests, Jesus was exposed to many temptations that Jewish priests were not exposed to...

All of that made him a sympathetic priest because he knows the temptations of sin even though he never sinned....

That makes him sympathetic to his people...

Jewish high priest were not known for their sympathy toward the people, but often filled with frustrations toward their continuous sin.

Not Jesus.

He lived in the world, saw and fought the temptations that come to all men, and that made him sympathize with us, not become frustrated with us...

Jesus is better than any OT priest because Jesus knows the temptations of sin, and feels pity toward those who need a sacrifice for their sin...

The writer then turns his attention to two of the greatest OT priests in chapters 5-7...

In chapters 5 and 6, we see Jesus' superiority to Aaron...

A. Above Aaron (4:14-6:20)

And in chapter 7, we see that Jesus was greater than Melchizedek...

B. Above Melchizedek (7:1-28)

We won't spend any time there, but I do want to look at the summary of this section in verses 23-27...

23 [h]The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, 24 but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. 25 Therefore He is able also to save [i]forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. 26 For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people,

because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

Long story short, the OT was full of priests because they kept dying out due to their own sins as well...

The beauty of Jesus is that he lives forever to stand in between sinful man and holy God...

He died a perfect death because of his perfect life and because of that he became the perfect once for all sacrifice that forever forgives the sins of men...

Jesus is the a better priest; in fact, he has the best priesthood of all time.

Let' leave the priesthood and move to what Jesus accomplished in his ministry...

III. The Best Ministry (8:1-10:18)

In chapters 8-10, we see that Jesus delivered far more than the various parts of the Jewish religion in the OT...

First of all, Jesus' New covenant is better than the Old Covenant of the OT...

A. Better than the Old Covenant (8)

Look at verse 10 of chapter 8....

10

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel

After those days, says the Lord:

[g]I will put My laws into their minds,

And I will write them on their hearts.

And I will be their God,

And they shall be My people.

11

“And they shall not teach everyone his fellow citizen,

And everyone his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’

For all will know Me,

From [h]the least to the greatest of them.

12

“For I will be merciful to their iniquities,

And I will remember their sins no more.”

The New Covenant that Jesus established between God and man was ratified in his death on the cross...

This new covenant said that man could be right with God on the basis of faith in Him, which was nothing new as we have learned from the book of Galatians...

But what was new about this covenant that Jesus established was this...

God would put His Spirit in the hearts of those who came to faith in Christ...

You see, the Old Covenant put the law before the people and said do this and live....

But Israel couldn't do it because they did not the ability to obey God that comes through having his Spirit in them...

So, they simply looked forward to the day that God would forgive their sins in a Savior and God saved them on the basis of that faith...

The superiority of the New Covenant that comes in Christ is this....

Not only are we saved by faith in Christ, we are also given the gift of the Holy Spirit that enables God's people in this age to obey him and keep the law...

Not in order to be saved, but to live lives more pleasing to God and better reflecting His character...

Jesus is better than the Old Covenant because Jesus brings in an era of history where God's people have the ability to obey God better than ever...

Jesus is also superior to the buildings of the OT and to the sacrifices of the OT...

Look at Hebrews 9 and 10....

B. Better than the old tabernacle (9:1-12)

C. Better than the old sacrifices (9:13-10:18)

If you can think back to the OT, there are chapters upon chapters devoted to how the tabernacle and the temple of God were to be built and how sacrifices and worship was to happen in them...

Look at Hebrews 9:23-28....

23 Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for

us; 25 nor was it that He would offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place year by year with blood that is not his own. 26 Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin [x]by the sacrifice of Himself. 27 And inasmuch as it is [y]appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, 28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

What the writer is getting at is this....

The things in the OT were examples and shadows of what was to come...

When men built the tabernacle and temple and priests went through extraordinary procedures to enter into it and followed detailed laws to offer sacrifices to God....

It wasn't because God likes to make things hard for people...

It was because the tabernacle and the temple and the sacrifice were copies of what Jesus was going to do when he offered himself up as a sacrifice for sin...

And entered heaven to deliver his blood on behalf of his people....

All the buildings and all the priests and all the sacrifices were just previews of the incredible event where Jesus died to offer his blood to God...

And guess what?

Once that was accomplished, we were free to approach God on the basis on Jesus' blood applied on our behalf...

None of you cleansed yourself 7 times before coming into this building tonight...

This building isn't built according to a certain set of biblical plans for how we worship...

None of you wore special clothes or followed any of the OT rules and procedures for the tabernacle tonight....

And the reason for that is this...

All of that has passed away....

All was preview of the coming Christ and his coming sacrifice, and once he delivered it...

All of those shadows of the tabernacle and the temple faded away forever...

So, Jesus is better than a building or a sacrifice...

That brings us to the next to last section of Hebrews...

In chapters 10-12, we see that Jesus brings the best better benefits to his people when compared to the OT...

IV. The Best Benefits (10:19-12:29)

Look at Hebrews 10:19...

19 Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a [h]sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; 24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Let me tell you one of the greatest benefits that Christ brought into the world...

And it is this...

Confidence in salvation...

One thing that the Jew in the OT lacked was assurance...

He sinned and he offered a sacrifice, but it was only as good as his next sin and his next sacrifice...

His mind was constantly restless about his standing before God...

The great reality of Jesus Christ is the completeness and finality of his sacrifice for sin....

Once we trust in Christ and his sacrifice on our behalf, we have assurance that his sacrifice is enough and accepted by God...

There is no need for Jesus to go back and offer Himself over and over...

He has done it once for all, and that gives us hope and confidence in our perfect standing before God....

The recipients of this letter were Jews that were lacking assurance and confidence because they were wavering in their faith in Jesus....

If he wasn't greater than the angels or Moses or Aaron, then maybe his sacrifice wasn't that special and maybe they weren't that secure in their salvation...

And when your faith is questioned, your assurance that you are right with God is questioned...

Therefore in chapter 11, the writer of Hebrews seeks to boost the faith of this church of Jews by pointing to their heroes in what is called the Bible's hall of faith...

And the point of the chapter is found in the opening verse of chapter 12...

12 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 [a]fixing our eyes on Jesus, the [b]author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Take note of verse 2...

Jesus the author and perfecter of faith...

In Jesus, all is made perfect...

Sin, law, priesthood, temple, sacrifices are all made perfect in Christ...

There is a picture that has been making it rounds around the internet lately...

It is a Radio shack sales paper from 1991...

On the front page of the paper are 13 products, a computer, a phone, a video camera, an answering machine that total to over \$5,000...

And then beside the ad is a picture of an iPhone that contains every product in the ad in one device that costs \$5000 less...

Needless to say, a smart phone is the perfecter of many former electronics products...

In that all of them can fit in a smart phone for much less cost and lots more convenience...

For the former Jew who worried about sacrifices, and 613 laws, and going to see the priest and order of worship....

Jesus came and perfected all of that in his life, and they could simply be saved by faith in Him....

The book then closes with chapter 13, which shows that faith in Jesus produces....

V. The Best Behavior (13:1-21)

After 12 chapters of dealign with some deep truths about the superiority of Jesus to all of the former things of the OT...

The writer of Hebrews ends with some practical instruction....

Telling this church of Jewish converts to:

Love their brother in verse 1...

Show hospitality in verse 2...

Remember prisoners in verse 3..

Hold the institution of marriage high in verse 4...

Do not be greedy in verse 5...

Honor teachers and preachers in verse 7...

Avoid false teachers in verse 9...

Praise the Lord in verse 15....

Do good and share in verse 16...

Obey, honor, and be a joy to those who are over you in the church in verse 17...

And then pray for others in verse 18...

And then there is closing to the letter in verse 20-25 in chapter 13....

Conclusion

What can we take with us from the book of Hebrews to give us help now and in the future?

1) Be thankful for the era in which you were born.

We all are part of a time when we can see the fullness of Jesus Christ...

We see how perfectly he kept the law and fulfilled the requirements the law, the priesthood, the sacrificial system simply because we live years after the time of the OT...

What a blessing that is...

We don't drag rams to a tabernacle for a priest to kill and cover our sins for a while...

We look back and trust the sacrifice of our spotless Lamb 2000 years ago as payment for our sins once for all...

That leads to the second and final application...

2) Be Confident in the Completeness and Perfection of Jesus Christ

So man false religion add to Christ.

Do you know what that tells me?

They either don't have a biblical understanding of who Jesus is....

Or they lack confidence in what he has done...

And that is a deadly mistake...

When you see Christ as not enough, you are not saved and in danger of hell forever...

Adding to Christ is not something to be taken lightly...

Adding to Christ doubts the word of God which says in Hebrews and other place that Jesus is the perfecter of our faith and not just a part of it....

To devalue the person and work of Jesus Christ is to set yourself up for destruction...

Please don't make that mistake tonight....

Jesus is all you have, but the good news is that Jesus is all you need.

Let us pray.