

# WHY HEBREWS?

For April we are back in the New Testament and will be exploring the book of Hebrews. Hebrews was most likely a sermon preached in the early church. The book is a well thought-out connection between the Old Testament and the coming of Christ. We will see several connections with Deuteronomy as we read. Because it is shorter, we are reading it a little differently this month. We will read through in shorter sections, and then review in larger sections. It may seem odd at first—my hope is that it will give us different perspective and allow the big themes to stand out as we go. Here are some of the reasons we chose Hebrews—and we encourage you to look for these themes as you read.

*It displays the supremacy of Jesus Christ over prior people, institutions, and events.* One great way to read Hebrews is to ask from each text: “*what is this saying Jesus is better than?*” He is better than angels (Ch. 1), Moses (3), Sabbath rest (4), Aaron and the priesthood (5-7), the old covenant (8), the old sacrificial system (9-10), and even better than the many saints who are meant to be our examples (11-12). What point is the author seeking to make through the repeated message that Jesus is better than \_\_\_? He is showing us the supremacy of Jesus Christ over prior people, institutions, and events. Jesus is better than Moses—he can actually bring us face to face with God, unlike Moses. Jesus is better than the priestly system—for he stands as an eternal priest, not needing to purify himself (for he is perfect), able to permanently intercede for us to God. He is better than the sacrificial system—for his sacrifice is once and for all to cleanse us from sin and make us right with God. How does that change our life as we read? Jesus is better—than any person, institution, event, idol, or dream that we may try to put in his place. See the “better-ness” of Jesus in Hebrews.

*It displays the definitive nature of Jesus’ work.* Hebrews 1 begins with this strong statement: **Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom he also created the world...** This sets the trajectory of the book: seeing Jesus’ coming to earth, death, and resurrection as the climax and definitive work in God’s plan of salvation. Jesus’ actions aren’t just one of the important moments in Scripture; they are *the climax* of the story that everything else points to. Two other sections make this point clearly. In Hebrews 8, the contrast is explored between the Old Covenant (Mosaic) and the New Covenant. The strong statement is even made in 8:13 that the first covenant is now obsolete in light of Jesus’ work. Why? Because the goal of salvation has been accomplished in Jesus’ person and work, and he has ushered in the eternal covenant where we are to know God in relationship. The second clear example of this is in Hebrews 9-10. Here the emphasis is on Jesus’ once and for all, single work of salvation (in contrast to the priests and sacrificial system).

Why is that important for the author to stress? Because it fits with the theme of the book: Jesus' work in salvation was climactic and definitive. No more is needed, for he has accomplished all of it. So: as you read Hebrews, look for how it portrays Jesus' work as being complete, final, and climactic. The more we appreciate this, the more we will worship him.

*It shows us why Jesus' work is sufficient for our lives.* Rather than leave us with an “okay that's cool that Jesus is supreme and definitive, but so what” attitude, Hebrews often connects these important ideas about Jesus with our everyday living. Hebrews 4:14-16 is a great example. **Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God** (because Jesus is an eternal, perfect, better high priest), **let us hold fast our confession** (let us press on in believing). **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses** (Jesus, our high priest, isn't unaware or lacking care towards our sin and suffering), **but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin** (Jesus knows what it is like to be tempted, battered by the weight of the world—and yet he resisted in holiness). **Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need** (in light of these rich ideas: let us come near to God in prayer, crying out for mercy and grace in our need—knowing that Jesus is our high priest who has walked in our weakness, understands our pain, and is on our side). Notice (and this is important): the rich theology of Hebrews changes how we view Jesus, which changes how we approach God, which then changes how we live. From these three main ideas, here is my encouragement: see the glory of Christ in Hebrews, let it drive you to worship, and then realize how that attitude should change how we live each day. Happy reading!