

Hebrews - A Letter Addressed to Modern-Day Christians

Part 2

Key Words We Will Find The Overall Structure of Hebrews and Its Focus on Jesus Christ as our High Priest

Before we start into a verse by verse study of Hebrews, I want to show you the overall structure of the book which will enable us to more fully appreciate each verse as we study them in depth.

The one thing that is revealed by this letter above all else is **Jesus as our High Priest.**

All other themes stem from this revelation.

This fact is a revelation from God; no human mind could come up with this concept; this is revealed knowledge given by Holy Spirit through the author of Hebrews.

In some ways I feel God has left the physical author of Hebrews a mystery on purpose for us to look directly to Holy Spirit as revealer of this essential knowledge.

John 14:25-26 [NIV] *“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counsellor, **the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, **will teach you all things** and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”*

John 16:12-13 [NIV] *“I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, **he will guide you into all truth**. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

The revealing of Jesus as our High Priest ties in with three other things that are the outcome of Christ's High Priesthood and our goal: 1) our inheritance; 2) our rest 3) our attaining perfection.

Each of the subjects are linked and recur often in Hebrews.

Key words we will trace through Hebrews to give us an in-depth understanding of their meaning are:

- 1) **High Priest** - central to fulfilment of all other key words.
- 2) a) **Promises**; b) **Oath**; c) **Covenant** – these three are linked and only guaranteed fulfilment through our High Priest Jesus Christ.
- 3) a) **Offering**; b) **Sacrifice**; c) **Blood** – these words are linked and shown to be essential for the establishment of any Covenant with God.
- 4) a) **Faith**; b) **Hope**; c) **Confession** – again these are linked as the required response from us.
- 5) a) **Inheritance**; b) **Rest**; c) **Perfection** – again we will see that these are essentially linked, as we cannot obtain one without the others.

We will also find passages containing very solemn warnings –

- 1 Neglect – **Hebrews 2:1-4**

- 2 Unbelief – **Hebrews 3:7-4:13**
- 3 Falling away – **Hebrews 6:4-8**
- 4 Wilfully continuing to sin – **Hebrews 10:26-31**
- 5 Failing – **Hebrews 12:14-29**

I see these as a slippery slope and if we neglect what has been offered to us by God through Christ we **will** end up failing to receive our inheritance and rest.

We will find passages of practical application –

- 1 Confident access to God – **Hebrews 4:14-16**
- 2 Journey to maturity or perfection – **Hebrews 6:1-3**
- 3 Need for zeal, faith and patience – **Hebrews 6:11-12**
- 4 Need to draw near, hold fast, assemble and encourage – **Hebrews 10:19-25**
- 5 Need to remember and endure – **Hebrews 10:32-39**
- 6 Need to press on, endure discipline, be strong, pursue peace and holiness – **Hebrews 12:1-14**
- 7 Practical pursuit of love, holiness, submissiveness and fulfilling prayer – **Hebrews 13:1-25**

We will also find passages of comparison and contrast –

- 1 Jesus superior to angels – **Hebrews 1:4-14**
- 2 Jesus superior to Moses – **Hebrews 3:1-6**
- 3 Priesthood of Melchizedek superior to the Levitical priesthood – **Hebrews 7:1-28**
- 4 New Covenant superior to Old Covenant – **Hebrews 8:6-13**
- 5 Heavenly tabernacle superior to tabernacle of Moses – **Hebrews 9:1-28**
- 6 Sacrifice of Jesus superior to the Levitical sacrifice – **Hebrews 10:1-18**
- 7 Mount Zion superior to Mount Sinai – **Hebrews 12:18-24**

We will find that the words “let us” occurs twelve times –

To me this indicates how essential it is for us to assemble together often to be supportive one of another and do things as one body.

- 1 Let us be careful – **Hebrews 4:1 [NIV]**
- 2 Let us make every effort – **Hebrews 4:11 [NIV]**
- 3 Let us hold firmly to the faith we profess – **Hebrews 4:14 [NIV]**
- 4 Let us approach the throne of grace with confidence – **Hebrews 4:16 [NIV]**
- 5 Let us go on to maturity – **Hebrews 6:1 [NIV]**
- 6 Let us draw near to God – **Hebrews 10:22 [NIV]**
- 7 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess – **Hebrews 10:23 [NIV]**
- 8 Let us consider how we may spur one another towards love and good deeds – **Hebrews 10:24 [NIV]**
- 9 Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us – **Hebrews 12:1 [NIV]**
- 10 Let us be thankful – **Hebrews 12:28 [NIV]**
- 11 Let us then go to Him [Jesus Christ] – **Hebrews 13:13 [NIV]**
- 12 Let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – **Hebrews 13:15 [NIV]**

About 90% of what we are to study in Hebrews is about an unseen [spiritual] realm and there is no way we can know it except by revelation from God through the Holy Spirit.

Science cannot tell us, reason cannot work it out.

If God hadn't chosen to reveal it we would never have known it.

We have to set our minds on receiving this revelation by faith for there is very little we can do to check out in a physical way.

We are going to find out about the way our High Priest operates in heavenly realms, and that without a High Priest we cannot approach God.

This is going to be a long study.

It is going to take endurance and fortitude on your part as well as mine, but I feel the end product will be well worth the hard slog.

Hebrews 1:1 [Interlinear literal translation of Greek] *“In many parts and in many ways of old God having spoken to the fathers in the prophets.”*

God in past spoke to mankind in many ways – *“in many parts or instalments”* – God did not give the whole truth at one time.

For instance, **Amos** is a cry for social justice.

Isaiah had grasped the Holiness of God.

Hosea because of his own bitter home experience, had realised the wonder of the forgiving Love of God.

“In many ways” – predictions, types, figures, sometimes prophets asked to enact the truth they were presenting, when speech had failed.

Hebrews 1:2 [ILT] *“In these last days spoke to us in a son”.*

The last days were already there at the time of the first New Testament Pentecost.

Acts 2:16-17 [NIV] *“This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel. In the last days.....”*

Hebrews 9:26 [NIV] *“..... but now He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages.....”*

“In the consummation of the ages” [ILT]

This phrase adds urgency to what God is saying.

The once and for all time sacrifice of Jesus Christ set in motion the end time when the consummation of all that went before began the growth of Son's of God in earnest.

Nothing now hindered the fulfilment of God's Plan for all of mankind.

The essential awaited sacrifice had been made.

John 19:30 [NIV] *“Jesus said, ‘it is finished’. With that, He bowed His Head and gave up His Spirit.”*

Hebrews 1:2 [NIV] *“but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.”*

The prophet had to use human methods to transmit his part of the Truth of God, speech or dramatic action.

Jesus in contrast revealed the full truth of God by being Himself, not so much by what He said or did but by what HE IS.

John 14:8-10 [NIV] *“Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.”*

Father in Christ doing the work.

In a word, the prophets were the Friends of God.

But Jesus was the Son.

Jesus was a prophet but also a whole lot more; Jesus is the final and the full and perfect revelation of Himself that God is going to make to humanity; **if we miss Jesus we have no hope of knowing God our Father.**

All the way through Hebrews, Jesus is emphasised as being unique and superior to everything else.

Hebrews 1:2-4 [NIV] *“but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he **made the universe.** The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the **exact representation of his being, sustaining all things** by his powerful word. After he had **provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.** So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.”*

We now are given a sevenfold description of Jesus as the Eternal Son of God.

The Eternal Son of God was manifested in human history as Jesus of Nazareth but eternally He is the Son of God; He **did not** become the Son of God when He was born of the Virgin Mary.

Isaiah 9:6 *“Unto us a **child is born,** [as a baby to His mother, Mary] **to us a Son is given,**” [by His Father in Heaven].*

1 Appointed heir of all things – everything is going to end up with Jesus.

The world tomorrow belongs to Jesus Christ. The New Testament writers never doubted the ultimate triumph of Jesus.

Physically they saw a Galilean carpenter who was crucified as a criminal on a cross on a hill outside the city of Jerusalem.

Spiritually they had experienced through their intimate association with Jesus Christ the Love of God and the Power that was behind that Love.

This revelation convicted them of the ultimate victory of Jesus Christ over all the world’s powers and kingdom.

Revelation 11:15 [NIV] *“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.”*

We all could do well to grasp this fact-defying optimism of the early Church.

2 The universe made through the Son.

Greek word “*aion*”, translated “*universe*” or “*worlds*”, is a measurement of time.

The writing of Hebrews anticipated the theory of relativity [time and space cannot be separated] by a good many years as he describes the universe from the aspect of time rather than space: the Bible is not out of date, it is man who is vainly trying to catch up with the truth revealed in it if we only had eyes to see and a non-prejudiced mind to accept.

Why in this order “*heir*” first then “*creator*”?

This is because the whole thrust of Hebrews is to the future **not** to the past.

What the letter aims to do is to get us into our inheritance with Jesus Christ.

Genesis 1:26-27 [NIV] “*Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*”

God is in the process of creating children on whom He can shower His Love.

This is being done in two stages, both of which involve Jesus Christ His Son.

“*image*” – shadow, resemblance but not the real thing.

“*likeness*” – model, son, manner [two for one] same character.

The first stage, the physical “*image*” was started in the Garden of Eden with the physical creation of Adam and Eve out of “*the dust of the ground.*”

The second stage, the spiritual “*likeness*” only started for humanity in general after the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit to dwell “*with and in*” humanity.

3 The radiance of God’s Glory, the shining Glory of God among men.

Jesus Christ is the only way we can look at God as physical human being because of God’s brightness and holiness.

1 John 1:5 [NIV] “*This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.*”

God is light, the source of all light physical and spiritual [enlightenment].

John 9:5 [NIV] “*While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*”

Jesus Christ as a human being was the Light that had come into the world.

1 Thessalonians 5:5 [NIV] “*You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.*”

Our goal is to be a reflection of Jesus Christ who is the light of God come into the human realm.

4 Exact representation of His being [or substance].

The Greek word meaning (a) seal, or (b) mark, the impression left in wax by a seal.

No detail is missed or different.

Colossians 1:15 [NIV] *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.”*

Christ is the exact likeness of God the Father.

John 14:11 [NIV] *“Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.”*

Christ and the Father are One.

Philippians 2:6 [NIV] *“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.”*

Equal with God the Father.

2 Corinthians 4:4 [NIV] *“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*

Jesus Christ is the light that reveals God the Father to this blinded world.

5 Sustains – upholds all things by the power of His Word.

The early church truly believed in the providence of the Creator God. They saw in their personal lives and in the world as a whole a power that was carrying the world and each individual life towards a destined end.

Revelation 1:8 [NIV] *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end goal of all things.

Colossians 1:15 [Message Bible] *“Everything got started in Him [Jesus Christ] and finds its purpose in Him”*

It is ridiculous to try to put anyone on a level with Jesus the Son of God.

Such statements show total ignorance of who Jesus is.

Numbers 1-5 are describing Jesus’ eternal being.

Numbers 6-7 relate to His redemptive work.

6 Provided purification for sins – through His sacrifice on the cross – dealing with the sin problem in the universe once and for all time.

Not even any stain of sin left.

Revelation 21:5 [NIV] *“I am making all things new.”*

Sin is the great “uncleanness” in God’s sight.

Our nature as guilt-laden, could not come into immediate contact with God without our High Priest's Blood of Atonement there on the mercy seat.

1 Timothy 2:5 [NIV] *“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”*

Jesus Christ is the one and only Mediator between us and God the Father.

We are now able to approach the radiant, bright presence of God's holiness and still exist.

Leviticus 16:1-2 [NIV] *“The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the LORD. The LORD said to Moses: “Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.”*

Only High Priest and only on Day of Atonement could a human be in the holy presence of God without dying.

Deuteronomy 5:26 [NIV] *“For what mortal man has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived?”*

Even hearing the voice of God could kill a human being.

What a great blessing we have in the mediatory power of Jesus Christ.

7 Sat down at the right hand of Majesty on High – once Jesus had made the complete, eternal sacrifice on the cross, there was no need for Him to stand as did the other human high priests, continually having to make one sacrifice after another as none could purify all things

Hebrews 7:26-27 [NIV] *“Such a high priest meets our need, one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.”*

This sitting of the Son of Man was an act of the Father.

Ephesians 1:17, 20 [NIV] *“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” ... “which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.”*

This description of the Son in His pre-existing state co-equal with the Father, but always of His exalted states as the Son of Man after His sufferings and as Mediator for humanity in the presence of God.

There is a similar presentation in **Colossians 1:15-18** [NIV] *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.”*

- 1 Image of the invisible God
- 2 First-born **before** all creation
- 3 All things created by Him – both visible and invisible – and for Him
- 4 Eternally existent before all things

- 5 All things hold together in Him in the New Creation
- 6 Head of the body [the church]
- 7 Beginning of New Creation – first-born from the dead

In a natural birth, the head precedes the body; in a spiritual birth of the new order, the head [Christ] precedes the body [the church].

When the head appears in a birth it is a sure sign that the body will follow.

Romans 8:28-39 [NIV] *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died, more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

This is the hope that we have that we are to tell others.