



Hebrews - The Superiority of Jesus Christ

Introduction: The book of Hebrews describes in detail how Jesus Christ not only fulfills the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament, but how Jesus Christ is better than everything in the Jewish system of thought. The Jews accepted the Old Testament, but most of them rejected Jesus as the long awaited Messiah. The recipients of this letter seem to have been Jewish Christians. They were well versed in Scripture, and they had professed faith in Christ. Whether through doubt, persecution, or false teaching, however they may have been in danger of giving up the Christian faith and returning to Judaism. The authorship of this book is uncertain. Several names have been suggested, including Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Priscilla, and Paul. Most scholars do not believe that Paul was the author, because the writing style of Hebrews is quite different from that of his letters. In addition, Paul identified himself in his other letters and appealed to his authority as an apostle, whereas this writer of Hebrews, who never gives his or her name, appeals to eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry for authority. Nevertheless, the author of Hebrews evidently knew Paul well. Hebrews was probably written by one of Paul's close associates who often heard him preach. (The One Year Bible Companion - Tyndale House 1992)

The Epistle to the Hebrews is really an answer to the question, "what do you have?" In a word the answer is "Christ." In Him we have:

- ✓ One who is greater than the prophets.
- ✓ One who is greater than the angels.
- ✓ One who is greater than Moses.
- ✓ One who is greater than Joshua.
- ✓ One whose priesthood is superior to that of Aaron.
- ✓ One who serves in a better sanctuary.
- ✓ One who has introduced a better covenant.
- ✓ One who is an antitype of the typical furniture and veil.
- ✓ One whose once-for-all offering of Himself for sin is superior to the repeated sacrifices of bulls and goats.

Just as the stars fade from view in the greater glory of the sun, so the types and shadows of Judaism pale into insignificance before the greater glory of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. (Believer's Bible Commentary - 1990 - William MacDonald)

25 Week Study Outline:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 1:1-4	The Son speaks for God
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 1:5-14	Jesus Christ is no angel.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 2:1-4	The Gospel is God's last word.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 2:5-18	The Son became a man.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 3:1-6	Jesus is the Greatest!
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 3:7-19	Rejecting Jesus is a serious mistake.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 4:1-13	The Promise of rest still stands
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 4:14 - 5:8	The High Priest - Jesus.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 5:9 - 6:12	Grow up or face danger.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 6:13-20	God takes an Oath?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 7:1-10	Who's Melchizedek?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 7:11-28	The Old is Out, the New is In!
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 8:1-13	Better Promises - Better Covenants!
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 9:1-15	A Tale of Two Sanctuaries
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 9:16-28	Shadows Substantiated in the Lord Jesus Christ.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 10:1-18	The Old has Gone the New has Come
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 10:19-25	Come in and Welcome
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 10:26-39	Beware of Giving up
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 11:1-7	Faith and the Beginning
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 11:8-22	Faith and the Patriarchs
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 11:23-39	Faith and Deliverance
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 12:1-11	Perseverance after Christ
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 12:12-29	Revering the Right Mountain
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 13:1-8	Christian Responsibility and Privilege
<input type="checkbox"/>	Hebrews 13:9-25	Sharing Christ's Separateness

"He (the author) meets the Hebrew Christians on their own ground. His answer is, "Your new faith gives you Christ, and in Christ all you seek, all your fathers sought. In Christ, the Son of God, you have an all-sufficient Mediator, nearer than angels to the Father, eminent above Moses as a benefactor, more sympathizing and more prevailing than the High Priest as an intercessor: His Sabbath awaits you in heaven: to His covenant the old was intended to be subservient; His atonement is the eternal reality of which sacrifices are but the passing shadow; His city heavenly; not made with hands. Having seen him, believe in Him with all your heart - with a faith in the unseen future strong as that of the saints of old, patient under present and prepared for coming woe, full of energy, and hope, and holiness, and love.

Such was the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews. We do not possess the means of tracing out step by step it's effect upon them, but we know that the result at which it aimed was achieved. The Church of Jerusalem did not apostatize. It migrated to Pella (Eusebius II Eccl. 3;5); and there, no longer dwarfed under the cold shadow of overhanging Judaism, it followed the Hebrew Christians of the Dispersion in gradually entering on the possession of the full liberty which the law of Christ allows to all." (John Kitto & Smith) Quoted in Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature John M'Clintock & James Strong - 1871)

Study 1: The Son Speaks for God

But while it contains many things suitable to the Hebrews of early times, it also contains many which can never cease to interest the church of God; for the knowledge of Jesus Christ is the very marrow and kernel of all the Scriptures. The ceremonial law is full of Christ, and all the gospel is full of Christ; the blessed lines of both Testaments meet in Him; and how they both agree and sweetly unite in Jesus Christ, is the chief object of the epistle to the Hebrews to discover.....The gospel revelation is excellent above the former; in that it is a revelation which God has made by his Son. In beholding the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ, we behold the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Father, John 14:7; the fulness of the Godhead dwells, not typically, or in a figure, but really, in him. When, on the fall of man, the world was breaking to pieces under the wrath and curse of God, the Son of God, undertaking the work of redemption, sustained it by his almighty power and goodness. From the glory of the person and office of Christ, we proceed to the glory of his grace. The glory of His person and nature, gave to his sufferings such merit as was a full satisfaction to the honour of God, who suffered an infinite injury and affront by the sins of men. We never can be thankful enough that God has in so many ways, and with such increasing clearness, spoken to us fallen sinners concerning salvation. That he should by himself cleanse us from our sins is a wonder of love beyond our utmost powers of admiration, gratitude, and praise. (Matthew Henry)

Read Hebrews 1:1-4, (compare to Colossians 1:15-20)

1. Hebrews 1:1-4 is often referred to in the Lord's Supper. Why do you think that is? Can you think of other passages of scripture, similar to this, that are used in this remembrance meeting? When we consider his supremacy how do we reconcile Phil.2:5-8?
2. This passage of scripture is an incredibly concise review of all that God has done for mankind, it takes us back to the beginning of time and ends at the ascension of our Lord. Do you think it misses many key facts? Rewrite this passage and put in what you think should be included.
3. This passage is often used to illustrate the fact that God literally spoke to the prophets who wrote the canon of scripture. Is there any need for him to speak to anyone in quite the same way today? Notice the escalation in terms of how God deals with Man (first he uses the prophets, later in these last days, he uses his only Son) why would he do this?
4. In the gospels we read of the Lord saying "It is finished". Do you get a sense of the completion of his work in this passage? Is there something symbolic in the phrase "he sat down"?
5. This passage contains some of the clearest references to the eternity of the Son and his deity. Review other passages from both the O.T. and the N.T. which confirm this fact. What are the implications to you and I based on the fact that the Son is here ascribed to be both eternal & God?
6. Since the Lord ascended to paradise, what has he been doing? Before his incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth, what was the Son busy doing? Is it possible to see all of his past and present activities in this passage or do you have to look elsewhere in Scripture to get a clear idea of the Sons activities in and before time ?

Study 2: Jesus Christ is No Angel

False teachers in many of the early churches taught that God could be approached only through angels. Instead of worshiping God directly, followers of these heretics bowed to angels. Hebrews clearly denounces such teaching as false. Some thought of Jesus as the highest angel of God. But Jesus is not a superior angel; and, in any case, angels are not to be worshiped (see Col. 2:18; Rev. 19:1-10). Jesus is God, he alone deserves our worship. Angels are God's messengers, spiritual beings created by God and under his authority (Col. 1:16). (The One Year Bible Companion - Tyndale House 1992)

Read Hebrews 1:5-14

1. What does supremacy mean?
2. What words & thoughts are used in this passage to indicate that Jesus Christ is God? Would an angel be an adequate sacrifice for sins? Why or why not?
3. Do angels possess free will? Defend your position from the Word of God. What is the role of angels? As a first century misguided Christian do you think that you would be swayed away from worshiping angels if you read this passage? Recently, our culture has had some renewed interest in angels, is this a good thing?
4. Investigate each of the O.T. references (of the Lord) presented here and discuss whether you usually considered it as applying only to God or to his Son? Is the O.T. important to our understanding of the eternal position of Christ or does the N.T. answer all of our questions? Why? Are there other O.T. references that the author could have used in Hebrews other than the ones listed here?
5. Two or three aspects of Jesus' superiority above angels are addressed in this section. What do you think that they are? Why is his superiority over angels important to us? Is his superiority over angels as important as his superiority over the prophets?
6. Do you think that passages related to the Lord's superiority over prophets and angels are very relevant in Canadian Society? Have you ever met anyone who wished to lower Jesus to the level of a prophet or an angel? Relate your experience.

Study 3: The Gospel is God's Last Word

Since the infinitely superior Son of God has spoken, we ought of necessity to give the most earnest attention to the things which we have heard from Him and concerning Him (the Gospels & the Acts). If Hebrew believers thought that the Old Testament prophets should be heard, how much more the Lord of Glory Himself! (The New Unger's Bible Handbook - Merrill F. Unger - 1984)

Read Hebrews 2:1-4

1. How were you raised as a child? As you age, have you had sometimes the desire to return to what you once had? Do you think the Hebrews had this, probably unspoken, desire as well?
2. Summarize the passage in your own words. What do you think God's objective was in having this passage written down?
3. The author is appealing to the Hebrews to anchor themselves on what they "heard". What had they "heard" and how would it keep them from drifting?
4. Many other passages refer to angelic involvement in the giving of the Law of Moses (*Compare Deut. 33:2, Acts 7:53, Gal 3:19*). Have you ever considered their involvement in this event before? What do you think they were doing there? Do angels witness anything else in our world today?
5. The readers receive a warning in the form of a rhetorical question (v3). What is the answer to the question that's asked?
6. The term signs, wonders and various miracles is used elsewhere in scripture. Why won't the word "miracle" convey what the author needs to say. Compare this passage to **II Cor. 12:12, II Thess 2:9**. Who else requires these three elements to legitimize their "work" (*Also review Acts 2:22*)? Why???

Sign=semeion (points to something outside of or beyond itself)

wonders= teras (wonderful proof - related to word terrify)

Miracle = dunamis (dynamite or power)

7. From this passage do you get the sense that the Gospel is God's last word? Does he not use signs, wonders & miracles today?

Study 4: The Son Becomes a Man

Chapter Two of the letter to Hebrews deals with the manhood of the Lord Jesus as emphatically as Chapter One dealt with his deity.....The deity of Christ was the whole crux of the issue between those who believed in Him and those who did not. The Jews had crucified Him publically and officially because, as they said, He was a man and yet made Himself God.

So quite fittingly, the writer first of all deals with the question of the deity of the Lord Jesus and proves it from the Old Testament Scriptures. But now he turns to discuss the manhood of the Saviour. Here again he has his eye fixed on the need of those to whom he is writing, for this chapter deals not only with the manhood of the Lord Jesus but with all the sufferings that He involved Himself in when He took upon Himself flesh and blood. (An Unshakeable Kingdom David Gooding - 1976)

Read Hebrews 2:5-18

1. Remember the audience of this Epistle and suggest reasons why the author of the book decides now to discuss the Lord's manhood and his sufferings.
2. Review the O.T. quotations. What was the motivation that led each of these writers in the O.T. to write these words. If you were the O.T. writer what could possibly have been your experience that would have led to those writings? Do these quotations surpass the experience of the writers?
3. What does 2:11 mean? Verse 11 refers to shame, do you think that shame is something the Hebrew Christians had been feeling? Is it important for us to realize that the boot is on the other foot and the Lord of ALL is not ashamed of us?
4. What reasons are given in this passage for Jesus taking on "flesh & blood"? Are there other reasons that are not mentioned here?
5. What causes man to fear death? As believers should we be afraid? (See **1 Cor 15:55**). What is the meaning of life for a believer? Consider our "age" and discuss ways that man has tried to forget about death?
6. The writer again discusses angels (v.16). Why in the light of our previous studies? Which angels require help?
7. This passage reminds us again of the Lord taking upon Himself manhood. Write down ways from the gospels that showed how low an estate of manhood He embraced (i.e. Matt. 8:20). How is it possible to consider the humble estate of the Lord Jesus and still see him as supreme?

Study 5: Jesus is the Greatest

"Many Jewish Christians, in their infantile state (5:11-13), had not yet fully learned the relation of Christ to Moses. It seems that they still thought of Moses as the Law - Giver, and of Christ as an Executive to Enforce the Law of Moses on all other nations: Moses first, Christ under him. But they had it just backward. Christ is as far above Moses, as the heir and owner of a house is above the servants in the house." (Halley's Bible Handbook - Henry H. Halley - 1927)

Read Hebrews 3:1-6

1. This Passage begins with a "*therefore*". How does the thoughts expressed in this passage tie in to what has been written before? When we fix our minds on something, can we be easily moved? Is this always an admired trait in contemporary society?
2. What is our "Heavenly Calling"? Did Israel enjoy a heavenly calling? What was their calling if not heavenly? Prove your answer from the Word of God.
3. What does the word *Apostle* mean? Do we usually consider the Lord an Apostle? What or who is a *High Priest*? What does the term "*we confess*" mean in the context of this passage? The term "*house*" or "*God's House*" is frequently used here; what does or can this word mean in this context?
4. What do you remember of Moses? How in this passage are we reminded of the superiority of the Lord Jesus? How did the Hebrews regard Moses? Did the Hebrews regard Moses as a servant? If you were a non Christian Hebrew how would you regard the Lord? In what ways are the Lord Jesus and Moses similar? In what ways are they different?
5. Do we forget the position of the Son in relation to God's House? Do we focus often on His humanity and forget His divinity? How was the Lord faithful?
6. What is the warning found in this passage? Do we heed warnings very well. What other warning have we encountered in Hebrews? Have you read Pilgrims Progress? If you have did *courage* play a role in Christian arriving at the Celestial City? Do we often consider *courage* to be a necessary trait in the walk of a Christian? What tests would some of the Hebrew Christians encounter (and overcome) if they wished to walk courageously? Do we think much about *Overcoming* today (See **Rev. 3:21**)?

Study 6: Rejecting Jesus is a serious mistake

.... the warning is continued and is based upon Israel's experiences of old. Just as their fathers had left Egypt a great multitude, yet many (in fact, the majority) failed to enter Canaan because of unbelief: so a vast throng of Jews had become outwardly obedient to the faith, but there was ever the danger that their conversion to Christianity might be merely intellectual and their forsaking of Judaism simply what people call today "a change of religion." Therefore the importance of examining themselves in the light of the Word of God and pressing on to "make their calling and their election sure" (H.A. Ironside, Hebrews - 1932)

Read Hebrews 3: 7 - 19

1. The title for this study today is "Rejecting Jesus is a serious mistake". How do you see this thought in the passage before you?
2. Have you ever consciously "hardened your Heart" against something"? What is the result in your life? Can a hardened heart ever be softened? Israel was warned not to harden their hearts, what practical examples had Israel seen around the effects of heart hardening?
3. V11 & 18, 19 discuss entering God's rest (**Compare Heb 4:1-11 & Matt 11:28-30**). What is God rest? What was the entrance requirements for the Israelites of old? Is it different for you and I? Are there different kinds of *rest*?
4. Compare V1 & V12. What are the actions that these two verses teach us to do? How does one "turn away from the Living God"? Do you struggle sometimes with rebellion and what does rebellion result in?
5. V12 tells us not to have unbelieving heart. The word unbelieving can mean one of two things in scripture: it can mean weak faith (Lord, I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief" **Mark 9:24**) or "*unbelief renders the benefits of Christ fruitless and ineffectual*- Alexander Cruden (see **Mark 6:5,6**). What kind of unbelief is being discussed here? What does unbelief in its strongest form seem to stop from happening?
6. From the context of this passage how do you think the Hebrews (and us) are to encourage one another? What is encouragement in a Christian's walk? In scripture the word encourage can sometimes be translated as strengthen (KJV uses exhort here). Does this word help when we consider the persecution that the Hebrews were starting to feel? Why are we to encourage each other while it is "Today"?
7. How is sin deceitful? Have anyone of us escaped it's ability to trick us? Do our feelings & emotions (especially if we aren't feeling encouraged) lead us astray? How do we guard against this?

Study 7: The Promise of Rest Still Stands

The Superiority of Jesus to Joshua

Since Moses was unable to lead the Israelites into Canaan, the writer reflects on the position of Joshua, who did lead them in. But he shows that even Joshua did not secure for his people true rest. Joshua failed for the same reason as Moses, that is, through the people's unbelief. This leads the writer to exhort his readers to seek that superior rest, which he goes on to imply is found in Christ.

Tyndale New Testament Commentaries - Hebrews: Donald Guthrie - 1983)

Read Hebrews 4:1 - 13

1. What is an ideal lazy summer Sunday afternoon to you? Do you believe that this is what entering into God's rest will be like? What does this term "God's Rest" really mean?
2. Does Christianity feel like a rest to you? Should it? How did Jesus describe Christian Living in **Matt 11:28,29**? Is our "rest" only referring to some future time or can it also apply to the here and now?
3. Review this passage and identify the verses and terms which apply to believers and those which apply to unbelievers and apostates. Were the Hebrews who no longer believed ever truly believers?
4. V1 & 11 contain warnings. What are they? What should our response be to such warnings?
5. V12 says that the "Word of God is Living & Active". Prove this from your own experience. How can something written as long ago as the Holy Word of God be still considered so sharp? Does the Word of God ever grow old? Have you ever felt it's sharpness in relation to your own life?
6. The Word of God can judge "thoughts and attitudes of the heart". Is this a good way to be judged? What do you know of the judgement of believers? Is this judgement by the Word of God a far nicer judgement than that which happens in heaven?
7. Consider the statement that "Nothing is hidden in all creation from God's sight". How should we conduct ourselves given this thought? What attribute of God is being discussed in this verse? Why do believers have to give an account?

Study 8: The High Priest - Jesus

To the Jews, the High Priest was the highest religious authority in the land. He alone entered the Holy of Holies in the temple once a year to make atonement for the sins of the whole nation (Lev 16.) Like the High Priest Jesus mediates between God and us. As humanity's representative, He intercedes for us before God. As God's representative, He assures us of God's forgiveness. Jesus has more authority, He is superior to the Jewish High Priests because He is truly God and truly man. Unlike the high priest who could go before God only once a year, Christ is always at God's right hand, interceding for us. (The One Year Bible Companion - Tyndale House 1992)

Read Hebrews 4:14- 5:8

1. Again we have a passage that begins with a "therefore". What is the connecting thought between this passage and the passage that it is following?
2. How is Jesus' superiority seen in this section? In Hebrews 3:1 we encountered the term High Priest for the first time in relation to our Lord. What do you think a Jewish Christian would imagine when he saw that verse in Heb 3:1. Did the Lord have any claim upon the Levitical priesthood? Hebrews initially was written for Jewish Believers with a great understanding of the O.T., how would you explain the concept of the O.T. priesthood to a person with no understanding in this area?
3. In this passage we are shown that the Lord Jesus *"as the great resource of His needy people, able to keep them from falling. Also they change the emphasis 'from the word as scrutinizer to the Lord as Sympathizer.'"* (Believer's Bible Commentary - William MacDonald). Is it important to you and I that the Lord has been tempted as we are? Was his temptation limited to the time in the wilderness?
4. What is the "Throne of Grace"? How do we approach it? This passage reminds us that under the Old Covenant, the high priest is presented as a man, who sins, not unlike the people around him. Is it important that our High Priest is absolutely and totally without sin? Do we receive gentle treatment from the Lord as we sin and go astray?
5. Why is it significant that Jesus did not take the honour of being the High Priest upon Himself? Is this characteristic of his personality?
6. Where do we see N.T. examples of what V.8 speaks of?

Study 9: Grow Up! - or Face Danger.

.... they are not the fundamental doctrines of Christianity but rather teachings of an elementary nature which formed the foundation for later building. They fell short of Christ risen and glorified. The exhortation is to leave these basics, not in the sense of abandoning them as worthless, but rather of advancing from them to maturity. The implication is that the period of Judaism was a time of spiritual infancy. Christianity represents full growth. Once a foundation has been laid the next step is to build upon it. A doctrinal foundation was laid in the O.T.; it included the six fundamental teachings (6: V1 &2)..... These first principles represented Judaism, and were preparatory to the coming of Christ. The readers are urged to pass from "shadow to substance, from type to antitype, from husk to kernel, from the dead forms of the religion of their ancestors to the living realities of Christ." (Believer's Bible Commentary - 1990 - William MacDonald)

Read Hebrews 5:9 - 6:12

1. Do you like being criticized. What does a well meaning and clear criticism do? What is the criticism in this passage intended to do? Would it work if it were written directly to you too? Review what the other warnings in Hebrews which we have studied were meant to do.
2. Why was Jesus, the Incarnate Son of the Living & Perfect God, made perfect? Was this necessary?
3. Some scholars (*most of whom would say that this passage is controversial*) think that the basic doctrines mentioned here refer to the groundwork about Jesus found in the O.T.. Why does the writer think that the following things are "elementary":
 - a. repentance from dead works (KJV):
 - b. faith toward God (KJV):
 - c. doctrine about Baptisms (KJV)
 - d. laying on of hands:
 - e. resurrection of the dead:
 - f. eternal judgement:
4. What do you think that a foundation does? Is it easy to repair a weak foundation? If we think of a foundation as part of a home... would we enjoy our lives very much if we just lived within the walls of the foundation? Is the building complete? What then must occur in this analogy for a complete structure? How does that relate to our lives?
5. What is being suggested in 6:4 - 6? If you read this passage out of context or without the strength of other scriptures what might your answer be? Consider the Parable of the Sower and discuss which type of ground may identify this group of people.
6. Some would define an apostate as someone who *knowledgeably, willfully, and with malice turns away from the Lord*. Is backsliding the same thing? Can an apostate ever be saved? Can a Christian be an Apostate? What do you think the process the deceiver uses is to bring someone who was near to salvation to the role of an apostate?
7. If the previous questions addressed the apostate person; who is being addressed in V 9-12? Are these people living a Spirit filled Christian life?

Study 10: God takes an Oath!

What the writer is concerned to show is (i) the solemnity of God's promises, (ii) His unchangeable character, and therefore (iii) the absolute certainty of His Word. This is really an explanation of the basis of the Christian's "full assurance of hope". (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries - Hebrews - Donald Guthrie)

Read Hebrews 6:13 - 20

1. Have you ever been promised something that was not delivered as expected? What makes a promise likely to be reliable? If someone who you have a good relationship with promises something are you likely to believe that person? Do human promises have built in clauses based on things that are unexpected or out of the promiser's power to control?
2. What makes God's promises better than a man's? Is anything out of his control? Could God do better than the promise he gave to Abraham (See **Gen 22:16-18**)? Up to now we've studied how the Lord is superior to all else.. is it a coincidence that He chooses no other name, but His own, to use as a bond to His oath?
3. Why was Abraham blessed (to the level of God using His own name) after being willing to sacrifice his only son Isaac, and not when he first *believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness* (**Gen 15:6**)? What was different between the two times and what was different about Abraham's faith?
4. The KJV uses the phrase "*immutability of his counsel*" while the NIV uses the term the "*unchanging nature of his purpose*". Immutability is one of God's attributes. Please review the following passages that discuss the Triune God's immutability. **Num. 23:19,20, 1 Sam. 15:29, Ps. 102:27, Is. 40:28, Jas. 1:17**. Did you learn anymore about God's nature in these passages? Do you get the impression that God is immovable in his plans?
5. "*You know what is the use of an anchor. If it is firmly fixed the sailors do not mind how rough the sea may be. The anchor holds their vessel safely, though the waves may be tossing and the wind roaring all around them. So if you love the King, the hope that he will help you will keep your heart from failing. And though you may be in the greatest danger or difficulty, you will never be really afraid.*" (Prudence speaking to Mercy - *Young Pilgrims Progress* - Helen Taylor (John Bunyan)) Hebrews uses several nautical terms; forerunner (KJV), anchor (a forerunner is a small ship which goes ahead of a larger ship to avoid sand bars). What is the meaning (to you) of these images? How is God an anchor to you? Do you know of any other such terms in God's Word, meant to conjure up an image related to the security we have in God. (*i.e. I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep Jn 10:14....*)?
6. What is the hope which the believer has? How is the hope held secure? What hope does the world have and do they have any security? See 6:11; does God want his children to feel secure in their hope?

Study 11: Who's Melchizedek?

We have here to remark, first the peculiar point at which Melchizedek enters the scene; and secondly, the double effect of his ministry. He did not come forth when Abraham was in pursuit of Chederlaomer, but when the king of Sodom was in pursuit of Abraham. This makes a great moral difference. A deeper character of communion was needed to meet the deeper character of conflict.

And then, as to the ministry, the bread and wine refreshed Abraham's spirit, after his conflict with Chederlaomer; while the benediction prepared his heart for his conflict with the king of Sodom. Abraham was a conqueror, and yet he was about to be a combatant, and the royal priest refreshed the conqueror's spirit, and fortified the combatant's heart.

It is peculiarly sweet to observe the manner in which Melchizedek introduces God to the thoughts of Abraham. He calls Him "the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth"; and not only so, but pronounces Abraham "blessed" of that same God. This was effectually preparing him for the king of Sodom. A man who was "blessed" of God did not need to take aught from the enemy. (Notes on the Book of Genesis - 1880 - C.H.M.)

Read Hebrews 7:1-10

1. If you have had children did you go to long lengths to choose names for them? What were you thinking when you picked out their names? Did the names you chose seem to have any bearing on the type of people they eventually became?
2. So far in our studies we've avoided looking at Melchizedek. Let's quickly review the O.T. references which discuss this man. (**Gen. 14:18-20, Ps. 110:4**). Do you think that the writer of Hebrews is stretching the story of Melchizedek past what the original text really says or does he just show a remarkable ability to read an old story and breathe a new application into it? Support your answer using the sources that the writer of Hebrews had available.
3. What do you consider regarding the inspiration of the Word of God when you read passages like those in Genesis and Psalms and realize that they were inspired and written down with the Lord Jesus in mind? How (& why) else could you explain why God would cause such an insignificant event in Abraham's life to be allotted 3 verses?
4. Hebrews tells us that Melchizedek's name means King of Righteousness and the city, Salem, where he was High Priest (probably Jerusalem later on) means King of Peace. Develop a reason to explain why the writer of Hebrews goes to lengths to point this out to us. What would the name 'Melchizedek' mean to the Jewish believer reading this letter?
5. V.3 has perplexed some. What is the writer really trying to say in this verse? Regarding Melchizedek's lineage is it significant that (*this is implied - not written*) he would not have come from Jewish stock? Do we see followers of God who have come from outside "the chosen circle" often in Scripture? If so brainstorm their names.
6. What is the writer's point in Verses 4 -10. Have you ever been blessed? Was the person who blessed you, **superior or inferior (for want of a better term)** to you or was he a peer? When a blessing occurs in scripture who usually does the blessing (*remember the Lord Jesus with the little children, the patriarchs blessing their offspring, Moses' blessing*)? Why is this so? Can you think of any other biblical examples of blessings and look for differences in these blessings?
7. A key point on the Levitical (or Aaronic) priesthood is made in verse 8. How is this point in contrast to the High Priestly Ministry of Jesus?

Study 12: The *Old* is out, the *New* is in

.... we find the second argument that shows Melchizedek's priesthood to be superior to Aaron's. The argument is that there has been a change in the priesthood. The priesthood of Christ has set aside the Levitical priesthood. This would not have been necessary if the latter had achieved its purpose fully and finally. The fact is that perfection was not attainable through the Levitical system. Sins were never put away and the worshipers never obtained rest of conscience. The priesthood that was set up under the Law of Moses was not the ultimate one. Another kind of priesthood is now come in effect. The perfect priest has now come; and His priesthood is not reckoned according to the order of Aaron but rather after the order of Melchizedek. (Believer's Bible Commentary - 1990 - William MacDonald)

Read Hebrews 7:11-28

1. Why did Jesus come to earth? How do you see Jesus' Melchizedek priesthood as superior to the Levitical priesthood in this passage?

2. V19 makes a slight comment regarding how the *law makes nothing perfect*. Where in scripture is this thought more fully developed? What do we learn about the law there? Can the law effectively change our behavior? Does the law help us to be better people? Is the O.T. law *good*? How does God plan to reform us if not through the law?

3. V12 reminds us that the law is changed when a new priesthood is put into effect (not unlike how the law would change after a revolution in a country). Did the Lord Jesus, descended from David's line as he was, qualify for the Levitical priesthood? Wouldn't it have been easier for God to have allowed any tribe to serve at the altar? What was special about the Levites and why does God discriminate against the other tribes? Did the ordinary O.T. Jew have free access to God, anytime / anyplace?

4. A few weeks back we studied about God making an oath. What do you remember from that study and what parts would apply to V20-22. Is it important that God makes oaths related to Jesus' priesthood? Is it important that our Lord Jesus is an Eternal priest? Why? Would an immortal angel be a good eternal High Priest? What additional High Priestly qualification's does Jesus possess which an immortal angel just does not have? What limitations does mankind have which block him from properly and consistently representing other humans in the role of High Priest?

5. V25-28 discuss 4 ways that makes the Lord's priesthood superior to all others:
 - a. v25 *He has Complete ability to save completely (or forever)*
 - b. V26 *He is a Priest who is perfectly suited to our need*
 - c. V27 *The Sacrifice of this priesthood is final*
 - d. V28 *His Priesthood is Sealed by divine oath (4 areas are taken from The New Unger's Bible Handbook - Merrill F. Unger - 1984)*

Prepare to discuss how important each of these four areas is important for you as a believer.

Study 13: Better Promises, Better Covenants

As High Priest over the true tabernacle on high, the Lord Jesus Christ has entered into heaven itself there to minister as priest in behalf of those who are his own in the world. The fact that He, when ascending, was received by His Father in heaven is evidence that His earthly ministry was accepted. That He sat down indicated that His work for the world was completed. That He sat down on His Father's throne and not on His own Throne reveals the truth, constantly and so consistently taught in the scriptures, that He did not set up a kingdom on the earth at His first advent into the world, (Major Bible Themes - Lewis Chafer - 1926)

Read Hebrews 8:1-13

1. The concept dealt with in this chapter is on how the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant. Newness has a certain fear for many and explains in part something of the Jewish reticence to accept the New Covenant. As a believer today you might hear some perspective on Christian living today that seems *new*. Do you think that Christian living should be a constant fresh understanding of age old truth?
How do you normally approach new ideas?
"Let's check this out"
"We'll wait and see"
"Let's go for it!"
2. After reading this section do you think that the Hebrew believers would still desire to go back to what they once had? If a return to what they once had could be made, would it be worthwhile? From what you know of the original covenant, would you say that it was conditional or unconditional in nature? Explain your answer using this passage as your source. What other biblical covenants are you familiar with and are they conditional or unconditional? How about the covenant which the Lord Jesus is the High Priest of?
3. So what is the Point in what has been said thus far? Reflect & discuss the symbolism of the Lord Jesus sitting down at God's right hand. The Levitical priest approached the Holy of Holies in what position. Was this place a spot he'd linger in? Compare the aspects of the two priesthoods described here (V1-5) and explain what makes Jesus' priesthood so much better. Is Jesus a real priest, or is His priesthood symbolic of something else?
4. What do you think God's purpose was in creating the original covenant? What was wrong with it? Does God make "imperfect / inferior" covenants? Why do you think he instituted the old...Why not just start with the Lord Jesus and skip the Old Covenant?
5. Are you always faithful to the Lord? If Israel's covenant came apart due to the unfaithfulness, what is holding your covenant with God together? Do you think that the O.T. sacrifices and offerings would have given Israel a sense of forgiveness and restoration or would they, after sacrificing, still have a gnawing sense of unresolved guilt? How can a just God make the statement in V12. Is that a promise to us or just Israel?
6. What part of this set of studies have you enjoyed so far? Has this set of studies enhanced something in your relationship with God thus far?

Study 14: A Tale of Two Sanctuaries

Their sacrifices were offered continually, year by year, His once for all. Theirs reached only to the "purifying of the flesh", His to the "Conscience". Their efficacy was temporary, His eternal. The sacred writer thus elevates the person and work of our Lord out of the plane of this world, and proclaims them to be free of those elements of weakness by which every other priest and sacrifice had been characterized. The two evils from which all others suffered most were death and time. The former carried off the priest, and so terminated his ability to serve at the altar; the latter rolled past the sacrifice, carrying the sinner with it and rendering his condition every day more hopeless. But here is a priest over whom death hath no dominion, here a sacrifice with which time hath no concern. (The Eternal Sacrifice - Garrett, 1887)

Read Hebrews 9:1-15

1. Without consulting a commentary, draw a picture of what you think that the tabernacle in the wilderness, as described in this passage, would have looked like. Why was it necessary for God to design such a structure? What was God's purpose in having the Israelites lug the tabernacle around the desert for all those years? Why do you think that the ancient *tabernacle* is referred to instead of Solomon's glorious temple?
2. In this passage we see that God establishes rules (or regulations) around how worship is conducted. Does this continue in the NT? Why does God choose to do this? Do you know others who desire to worship God on their own terms? Is this ever effective or is it really rebellion?
3. The writer of Hebrews alludes to the "good things that are already here" (NIV) or the "good things to come" (NKJV) V11. What good things? Do you think from the earlier studies that we have done in Hebrews that these people had experienced many "good things"? Do Canadian Christians expect "good things" to mean material things or spiritual things?
4. From the days of Adam & Eve until the time of the Israelites in the wilderness, how was God accessed. If you were a Hebrew believer how would you view this new way (through the shed blood of Christ) of approaching God. What were the positives and negatives of each way of approaching God in the past ages? Is there negatives in the access which we enjoy today?
5. Most of the articles listed in this passage have been typified (symbolized) to the *n*th degree in the past. What is the danger of studying passages and then applying typology to them? Can typology be applied if the NT does it (as in the story of Melchizedek)? Discuss why detail is given about the earthly tabernacle here. What is the significance that the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom?
6. Discuss the significance of the High Priest offering a sacrifice of blood. Why is blood so important in the OT economy? Is blood important in the Day of Grace? What is the connection between the shedding of innocent blood and forgiveness? What is the conscience? Does everyone have one? Is it possible to clear a guilty conscience (how does this happen in the OT and how in the NT)?
7. The author of Hebrews has decided to discuss the most important sacrifice that the Jewish community knew (**The Day of Atonement - Lev. 16**). Why do you think it's important that the writer focuses on the most important sacrifice of the Jewish calendar and how important would it be that the Lord Jesus' is seen as superior to the most important Jewish sacrifice?

Study 15: Shadows are Substantiated in Jesus Christ

“... the problem was not just a question of leaving an old system for a new one of equal value. Rather it was a matter of leaving Judaism for Christ, and as the writer shows, this involved leaving shadows for the substance, ritual for reality, the prior for the ultimate, the temporary for the permanent - in short the good for the best. The problem also involved leaving the popular for the unpopular, the majority for the minority, and the oppressors for the oppressed.” (Believer's Bible Commentary - 1990 - William MacDonald)

Read Hebrews 9:16-28

1. What does the word *Sacrifice* mean to you? How is the term sacrifice applied commonly today? Chapter 10:1 tells us that *the Law was a shadow of the good things to come*. Does a shadow give a very clear image? Would the Hebrew Believers have connected the Lord to the Law & the Sacrificial systems on their own?
2. Discuss what you know of the 8 or 9 different covenants between God & man found in scripture. Which covenant is being referred to here and which aspects of the other covenants are still in effect? In which ways does chapter 9 continue the thought presented in chapter 8 regarding the superior quality of the new covenant?
3. Some false cults minimize (or do away with altogether) the necessity for shed blood. Count how often you see the word blood in Chapter 9 and describe its context. Was there any eternal merit in the OT "bulls & goats" sacrifices? Explain your answer.
4. Have you ever been a beneficiary of a will? What had to happen for that will to take effect? Could any blessing have come into effect for us without the Lord's death? Explain the purpose of the discussing wills here and what you think it would mean to the Hebrew reader.
5. The NIV translation does not use the word *remission* in v22. This could be because the word remission is not commonly used in the necessary context in our society. We use it to discuss things like "a cancer being in remission"- this being a temporary slowing down of the disease. Why is the word *forgiveness* better to explain what has happened with the Lord's shed blood?
6. Chapter 9 really begins to confront us with the difference between outward cleansing and inward cleansing using terms such as "external regulations" and "outwardly clean". Do you know people today who maintain an outward purity in their lives but are inwardly dirty? Is it easy to witness to people that are morally (and practically) upright? Explain your answer. Did the Lord Jesus find it easy to impact the *morally* good with his teachings?
7. From V24 - V28 we are told in many ways that the Lord's Sacrifice is superior to the Old Testament sacrifices. List them and tell why they are superior. Does even a minimal grasp of the OT sacrificial systems enhance your understanding of the Lord's work on Calvary? Why does a knowledge of "a shadow" help your understanding of the real

thing?

Study 16: The Old has Gone the New has Come

Observe, here, that which is very important, that the conscience is cleansed, our sins being expiated, the worshiper drawing nigh by virtue of the sacrifice. The meaning of the Jewish service was that guilt was still there; that of the Christian, that it is gone. As to the former, precious as the type is, the reason is evident: the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin. Therefore those sacrifices have been abolished, and a work of another character (although still a sacrifice) has been accomplished—a work which excludes all other, and all the repetition of the same, because it consists of nothing less than the self devotedness of the Son of God to accomplish the will of God, and the completion of that to which He was devoted: an act impossible to be repeated, for all His will cannot be accomplished twice, and, were it possible, it would be a testimony of the inadequacy of the first, and so of both. (Synopsis of the Books of the Bible - Hebrews - John Nelson Darby 1800-1881)

Read Hebrews 10:1-18

1. Consider the passage before you and note the words & phrases used to describe the imperfection (inadequacy) of the Law and the perfection and completeness of the Lord's work.
2. What would worship have been like in the days of the Law? What would your attitude be as the priest approached the altar with your sacrifice?
3. What does the word *sacrifice* mean in scripture? How do we tend to use the word today?
4. What a sad plight of the OT priest, knowing that the offering which they are presenting is utterly powerless to remove sin (V11). Why carry on with the sacrifice if it was futile?
5. In chapter 1:13 we were reminded of the exalted position of Christ over his enemies. Why is this brought out again in V13?
6. Perfect!..... elusive isn't it? Is it presumptuous for the writer to say that Christ's work was perfect? Describe what you think made the Lord Jesus' work perfect? When was the last time that you accomplished something and truly could say you did it perfectly? Review the context of the use of the word Perfect within Hebrews (see **Heb 2:10, 5:9, 7:19, 7:28, 9:11, 10:1, 11:40, 12:23**,). Who can claim perfection & why?
7. Why would the writer to the Hebrews have felt led to quote again from the same passage in **Jeremiah 31:33** - see **Heb 8:10**? When you restate something when you write a letter,

what are you trying to accomplish? What is significant about this quotation?

Study 17: Come in and Welcome

... "its not holy boldness, my brethren, rather it is unholy boldness. For we have boldness to come into the Divine presence, not because we have merit, not because we have attained a certain stage of sanctification; we have boldness to come into the divine presence in spite of the fact that we were ungodly sinners and are still imperfect saints.... I picture Israel's high priest going into the divine presence, and I cannot imagine that he stood there long and really spoke out his heart to God and enjoyed the experience." (An Unshakeable Kingdom - David Gooding - 1976)

Hebrews:10:19-25

1. Do you feel confident getting really close to God? Is it possible to be too familiar with God? Is it possible to have an awe and fear of God and yet have a close relationship? What is the basis of our confidence in entering the presence of God? If we were really confident about coming into the presence of God, what other effects would it have on our lives? What would a person look like who had this kind of confidence? Would he be *normal*?
2. Remember the other warnings which you have read in this study series? (**Heb 2:3, 3:6, 4:1,11, 5:11- 6:12**) Find the warning in this passage. What is the desired outcome of this warning?
3. What is meant by our approach being a new and living way? Has *the way* been travelled by anyone else before? What type is mentioned in this passage and what does it signify? Is it an important type for us to remember?
4. What four conditions are imposed upon us when we draw near? What is the spiritual significance of each condition? Do we always enter the close presence of God with enough care for our spiritual grooming?
5. Could / Did Israel always approach God with these four aspects met? Which aspects apply to the OT and how did they fit? Under the Old covenant was it possible for the faithful to approach God?
6. Consider what you have learned about the Hebrews and discuss whether they would have been tempted to give up on their confession of hope. Share various hymns that speak to you of the Lord's faithfulness that could have encouraged the Hebrew believers to remain steadfast.
7. Is the love referred to in V24 an emotional love or a love produced by an act of our will? What type of love is easier for us to practice? If this passage (love & good deeds) were a plant which would be the root and which the fruit? Have you ever tried to put this command into practice in your fellowship? What was the result?
8. If V24 & 25 are a warning against apostasy why then should the Hebrews be steadfast?

How about us?

Study 18 - Beware of Giving up

"To apostatize either from the truth as to His Person or His finished work, means eternal ruin. It is not mere failure in the life that is here contemplated. The willful sin in this passage is the definite rejection of His atoning sacrifice. Nor is this simply the foolish and wicked determination of a moment, of which many have been guilty, but have afterwards been brought to sincere repentance. The apostle really says, "If we are sinning willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no other sacrifice for sins." The verb is the present participle. It is what has become habitual." (Henry A. Ironside - Hebrews 1932)

Hebrews 10:26-39

1. What is *"the unforgivable sin"*? Summarize what you think V26 - V31 is saying? Does this apply to believers? Explain your answer.
2. Remember studying Chapter 6? What did we say an apostate is? The Hebrew believers seem to be beset by them. What do these people seem intent on doing? Is this the same or is it quite different than being mildly neutral to the Good News? Can you identify any apostates by name in the NT? This is the fourth warning regarding apostates in Hebrews is apostasy a deliberate sin?
3. What is your dictionary's definition of mercy? Was mercy an outcome of a legalistic system? Can the law appropriately show mercy or can we even expect mercy from the Law? Why would people desire to be under a legalistic system? Are the Hebrew's showing some desire to revert back to this kind of system? Did the full application of the Law of Moses make the Israelites seem like a vicious & unkind people when you read the OT? Have you ever met anyone who thought so?
4. In V32 the Hebrews are reminded of their past. Why do you think the writer would remind them of days of past persecutions? Did they stand fast? List what the Hebrew's did in those earlier times and what the outcome of their earlier resolve was. When you remember the things past in your own walk as a Christian, how do you feel about such benchmark encounters? Was your faith weakened or strengthened in those activities? Is the act of remembering good for you to do?
5. Consider NT passages that discuss endurance and share what you learn from them. Is endurance, in anything, ever easy?
6. Some commentators point to the words "for in just a little while" V37, and they say that it hearkens back to Isaiah 26:20. Consider this reference and its application for the Hebrews. Review Habakkuk 2:3,4 and suggest reasons why the author of Hebrews did not directly quote this reference.

Study 19: Faith and the Beginning

"God has two ways in which men can come to Him today. The first is that you can come to Him by works. Yes, if you can present perfection in your works, God will accept you - but so far nobody has been able to make it. Therefore, this is not a satisfactory way to come to God, but many people are hobbling along that futile route.

The only other way to come to God is by faith. Many folk don't find faith a very satisfactory way either and feel like the little girl who was asked to define faith. She said, "Well, faith is believing what you know ain't so." That is what faith means to many. They think it is a leap in the dark, an uncertainty, or some sort of gamble.

To other folk faith is a great mystery. It is a sort of sixth sense, some intuition into the spiritual realm, or an "open sesame" to a new world. Faith to some of these people is like belonging to a secret order into which you are initiated, and there are some mystical works which God will accept in lieu of good works if you just believe hard enough. Faith for these people is like a fetish or some good luck charm which you hang around your neck or carry with you. But that is not faith." (Edited Messages on Hebrews, Volume 2, J Vernon McGee)

Read Hebrews 11:1-7

1. The writer of Hebrews after having discussed the supremacy of Christ over the prophets, angels, Moses, His greater Priesthood, & His greater sacrifice; now focuses on the Faith of the those who had gone before. Discuss why the writer believes this to be important for the Hebrews to think about. How does this passage connect to chapter 10:35-39.
2. V1 defines *faith* for us. Dwell on this description of faith for a few minutes and then rewrite the definition found in V1 into something a little less profound. Now add in what you learn about faith in V6 and be prepared to share what you define faith as. Impossible is not something that we think about when we think about God. Why is it impossible, *not very difficult*, to please God without faith?
3. We have this beautiful creationist verse tucked in here (V3) which ultimately sums up how we must believe in the creation accounts.... *by faith*. Have you ever had your faith tested in this area of Faith and how did you overcome the temptation to abandon your faith to current popular research? Was faith in the reliability of the scriptures a popular decision?
4. Was a life of faith easy for the those listed in this passage. Discuss the hardships and struggles that those listed in this passage faced.
5. Why would Adam & Eve be excluded from this roll of people of faith? What made Abel's sacrifice so much better than Cain's? Is it the personal excellence of Abel that matters to God or the excellence of the sacrifice and what is the difference between the two? How about for you and I?
6. Is the experience of Enoch much different than the experience that we hope to enjoy? Is it a question of faith for us too? Does the life, lived in faith, always please God?
7. According to your earlier definition of faith (question 2) is the experience of Noah (when warned about things not yet seen) different than anyone else's listed in this passage. Does the faith you have allow you to believe in greater works by God than have ever been seen (Noah), the future hope of being with Christ (Enoch), and the acceptance of Christ as the better sacrifice (Abel)? Is your faith (or the faith of the Hebrews) much different from the faith of these three men?

Study 20: Faith and the Patriarchs

Faith is confidence in the trustworthiness of God. It is the conviction that what God says is true and that what He promises will come to pass.

Faith must have some revelation from God, some promise of God as its foundation. It is not a leap in the dark. It demands the surest evidence in the universe, and finds it in the word of God. It is not limited to possibilities but invades the realm of the impossible. Someone has said, "Faith begins where possibilities end. If it's possibility, then there's no glory for God in it."

There are difficulties and problems in the life of faith. God tests our faith in the crucible to see if it is genuine (1 Pet. 1:7). But as George Muller said, "Difficulties are food for faith to feed on." (Believer's Bible Commentary - 1990 - William MacDonald)

Read Hebrews 11:8-22

1. Some scholars & commentators will point to this chapter of Hebrews and will observe that the major groupings coincide with dispensational breakdowns. Is there a reason for this or do you think that this is merely coincidence? Explain your answer.
2. Although Abraham was considered to be a powerful & influential man he did not invest heavily in real estate nor did he seem to really actively pursue the great wealth that came to him (see Gen 13). It seems that 4000 years ago he was looking forward to a heavenly city. What can we learn from his point of view? What verses would the Lord Jesus use as he discussed accumulating wealth (for the sole purpose of accumulating wealth) 2000 years later?
3. Abraham believed the promises of God, although he must have wondered how they could ever come about. List the promises discussed in this passage and reflect on how likely they were to come about (from man's perspective). If Abraham choose to tell his neighbours about God's promises to him what would they think? Do we often like to believe promises that are out of the range of the possible and into the realm of the miraculous? How do we get past this mental hurdle?
4. Discuss what you can learn about faith from V20-22. Is faith usually demonstrated in our actions or can it be visible in other ways? Is faith an emotion? Does faith influence your emotions? How so?
5. Consider the audience that the writer is addressing in this book and consider the reason why great men of faith like Job & Melchizedek are excluded from this list. Can you think of other contemporaries of Abraham's who could have been included?
6. What are promises that God has made to you? What does a strong faith and the promises of God have in common? Can these two elements be easily separated? Are his promises dependable? Recall what you discussed when we studied chapter 6:13-20 and list some of your key discoveries from the passage on God takes an oath!

Study 21: Faith and Deliverance

"We should be pleased to think, how great the number of believers was under the Old Testament, and how strong their faith, though the objects of it were not then so fully made known as now. And we should lament that now, in gospel times, when the rule of faith is more clear and perfect, the number of believers should be so small, and their faith so weak. It is the excellence of the grace of faith, that, while it helps men to do great things, like Gideon, it keeps from high and great thoughts of themselves.... And faith will enable a man to serve God and his generation, in whatever way he may be employed. The interests and powers of kings and kingdoms, are often opposed to God and his people; but God can easily subdue all that set themselves against him. It is a greater honour and happiness to work righteousness than to work miracles. By faith we have comfort of the promises; and by faith we are prepared to wait for the promises, and in due time to receive them. And though we do not hope to have our dead relatives or friends restored to life in this world, yet faith will support under the loss of them, and direct to the hope of a better resurrection.... Shall we be most amazed at the wickedness of human nature, that it is capable of such awful cruelties to fellow-creatures, or at the excellence of Divine grace, that is able to bear up the faithful under such cruelties, and to carry them safely through all?" (Matthew Henry - Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible)

Read Hebrews 11:23-39

1. Incredible passage isn't it! What is the writer trying to make the Hebrew believers realize? Have they really given up on the faith of their fathers by trusting Christ? What do you think many of those listed in this passage would have seen that gave them such strong faith?
2. What are the differences between the sacrifice that Jephthah performed and the sacrifice which Abraham almost performed? Still, how can you see Jephthah's faith in the type of man he was?
3. Using a commentary (if necessary), consider the list of V33-38. Who are some of these nameless people whose actions are discussed here? Why would the writer have stopped naming them to just considering their exploits?
4. Another interesting feature of this list is the people who are listed here do not always possess sterling character qualities. What does this tell you about what God considers faith to be? Is faith always equated to personal righteousness? Discuss people of our generation who model faith to you.
5. This list is as interesting for who is not on it as who is. Why are people like Ruth, Esther, Mordecai, Ezra, Nehemiahetc. not listed in this 'top ten'?
6. If we are real people of faith, what quality (qualities) should be manifested in our lives and our actions? Consider the book of James and state why this is so. Is faith really faith if we are only partially sure? What do you think of the statement "*seeing is believing*" in light of this passage? Does walking a life of faith equal having an easy life?
7. The word *promise* (in some form) appears often in this chapter (V9,11,13,17,33,39), and frequently in Hebrews (18X). Discuss the relationship between Faith & Promise (i.e. If there is no promise can there be faith?).
8. Much of our study in Hebrews has looked at the Lord Jesus' Supremacy. Is it possible to see His supremacy even in a chapter that deals with faith? Explain your answer.

Study 22: Perseverance After Christ

"There are various ways in which as saints we get tried (though we live in great quietness: there might be more persecution if there was more faithfulness); but through all circumstances God is threading our way, occupying Himself with us, our particular characters etc, to break us down and instruct us. What we want is to realize that God love us so much - we are of such value to God (more surely than many sparrows) as that he should take much pains to make us "partakers of His holiness." We are apt not to believe the activity of His love. Some trouble comes on us; God has been watching us individually for years, weeks etc., watching us to bring this trouble which He sees needed.

It is of the greatest importance that there should be the consciousness of God's constant dealing with us in love. We are of that family, and not of the world; therefore He deals with us as sons." (J.N. Darby: Notes on the Epistle to the Hebrews)

Read Hebrews 12:1-11

1. This passage begins with a "therefore". Why is the "therefore" important? Come to your study prepared to discuss how we can throw off hindrances and sins that entangle us. How is the phrase "let us" different than the phrase "thou shalt"? In your opinion why doesn't the Christian encounter many "thou shalt's"? What is the race and the goal of faith?
2. Have you spent time with your eyes fixed on the Lord Jesus? What happens when this is a regular part of your quiet time? V3 ties in with other passages in Hebrews; in the past the Hebrews had been told (see 10:32-36) to remember their past trials. Which technique do you think is more effective in keeping to a Christian course?
3. What is the point of V4? Do we often view discipline as a positive event. Rank how you view discipline on a scale of 1 - 10 with 0 being very negative. Why do we view discipline this way, even when we acknowledge the benefit we have received from parental discipline? The KJV notes that parents discipline children according "to their pleasure", does this motive always produce a consistency in discipline which God does possess?
4. Was it easier for the patriarchs, which we studied for the past few weeks to look forward to the coming King, or should it be easier for us to look back and consider him, and walk in the path which he has trod for us?
5. How do you view discipline? How did you teach your children to 'appreciate' discipline? What's God's technique in disciplining us and why is this necessary? Do we often view hardship as a discipline from God... how do we sometimes view it? The passage seems to indicate that all hardship teaches us discipline, and should be regarded as if God administered it. Explain whether you believe this statement to be true or false.
6. Discipline according to V11 seems to allow two courses of action that the one who is being disciplined can choose. What are they? Speculate on where they may lead. Take time to review your own life and consider your own responses to the disciplining that the Lord has allowed.

Study 23: Revering the Right Mountain

The one who had just said, "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto Myself," now envelopes Himself "in a thick cloud," and says, "Set bounds unto the people, round about." The sweet accents of grace and mercy are exchanged for the "thunderings and lightnings" of the fiery mount. Man had presumed to talk of his miserable doings in the presence of God's magnificent grace. Israel had said, "We will do," and they must be put at a distance in order that it may be fully seen what they are able to do. God takes the place of moral distance; and the people are but too well disposed to have it so, for they are filled with fear and trembling; and no marvel, for the sight was terrible, - "so terrible, that Moses said, 'I exceedingly fear and quake'" (Notes on the Book of Exodus - C.H.M. (No Date))

Hebrews 12:12-29

1. Is the injunction to "live at peace with all men" important to the Hebrews who are being persecuted? What happens to our relationships when we are under pressure? How does this affect our testimony as believers? Does this injunction have anything at all to do with a life of faith?
2. Why is holiness so important to God? How do we get our hands on holiness? How much of holiness is God's Work and how much is your work? If you consider holiness as two entities, *positional holiness* & *practical holiness*, which type is being alluded to here? Which type can be achieved on our own?
3. What do we learn from this story of Esau (the Hebrews doubtlessly were familiar with it (V17 - "*as you know*"))? How is it possible for Esau (son of Issac / twin of patriarch Jacob) to be considered "godless"? V17 seems harsh to us; yet how is this true of apostates. Reflect back on other Hebrews passages that were targeted at apostates and add this passage in with them. How does this help you to further your understanding of this sin?
4. What spiritual lesson is to be gained from the scene at Mt Sinai? The Law is God's righteous requirement, however did the Law produce the knowledge of sin or did it produce the knowledge of salvation? Do you think that the scene at Mt Sinai fits in with your last answer? If coming to Mt Sinai produces fear what does the believer coming to Mt Zion produce? What is the significance of the title of today's study in light of this passage? Would it be fair to say that this occasion in V18-24, would be the result of faith that obtained the promise?
5. This passage, as it looks back into Israel's history, uses several negative words to capture Israel's relationship with God. Words such as *rejected*, *fear*, *refused* are tucked into this passage. Consider the positive opposites of these words in light of your experience as a believer and your future hope.
6. The writer to the Hebrews up till this point hasn't dipped into prophecy much. He seems to have focused on history more than the future. Discuss the future event being alluded to in this passage. Spend time reflecting on the permanence of the future kingdom which "*cannot be shaken*" and how this should lead us into thanksgiving and worship of God. How does the knowledge that the "Unshakable Kingdom" will be a reality tie into the supremacy of Jesus Christ?

Study 24: Christian Responsibility and Privilege

In this next chapter there is more than one truth important to notice. The exhortations are as simple as they are weighty, and require but few remarks. They rest in the sphere in which the whole of the epistle does: what relates to the Christian's path as walking here, not what flows from union with Christ in heavenly places. Brotherly love, hospitality, care for those in bonds, the strict maintenance of the marriage tie and personal purity, the avoiding of covetousness: such are the subjects of exhortation, all important and connected with the gracious walk of a Christian, but not drawn from the higher and more heavenly sources and principles of the Christian life as we see in Ephesians and Colossians. (Synopsis of the Books of the Bible - John Nelson Darby (no date))

Hebrews 13:1-8

1. This passage in the NIV is titled "concluding exhortations". How many exhortations do you find in the first 8 verses? Explain why the writer to the Hebrews would feel led to write about some of these matters? Considering what we have looked at regarding faith in the last few weeks does faith fit in at all to standing well in these areas?
2. Compare these exhortations to the following NT reference's (and additional ones that you think of) that speak about much the same,
Brotherly love: **Matt 5:43-48, Rom 12:10, 1Thess 4:9, 1 Pet 1:22**
Hospitality: **Matt 25: 35, Matt 10:40-42, Rom 12:13, Titus 1:8, 1 Pet 4:9**
The imprisoned & ill-treated: **Matt 25:36, 2 Tim 1:8**
Marriage: **Matt 5:31-33, Eph 5:25-33**
Materialism: **Matt 6:21, Phil. 4:11**
Respect for & submission to Church Leadership: **1 Pet 5:5**

Think of who each of these passages is being written to and look for additional points related to our exhortations in each of these verses.

3. These exhortations contain reasons why the author has written them and why they should be followed. What are the reasons for each of these. Speculate on the condition of our society if these exhortations were followed. How would it affect family relationships, business dealings & government?
4. In each of our lives we probably struggle living a life of faith in relation to one or more of these exhortations. Consider (*privately*) your own struggles in some of these areas and decide for yourself if your life of faith was expressed through your thoughts and actions.
5. Two promises:
"Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you"
"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today & forever."
These verses touch deeply on the Lord Jesus' immutability. Why do the Hebrew believer's need this attribute of God reinforced for them (when they think of Christ)? Why are these such good verses to give to someone who is experiencing some trials? Can you think of other verses that say similar things about Jesus (ie. "the Author and Finisher of our faith" (Heb 12:2)) in other NT passages?

Study 25: Sharing Christ's Separateness

"See, God has had enough of it, enough of the holy days, enough of those 'seen' things, vestments and incense and foods and washings and ceremonies. His Son has died outside the camp. Let us come forth to Him and bear His reproach. Men may not like it overmuch, for the human heart to this very day does like a bit of show in religion, doesn't it? It does like a few vestments, a little incense to smell, and a gorgeous building that makes you feel awesome, and some holy days to observe. These things certainly appeal to us naturally. They do not appeal to God - not in the slightest. But if you do not have that kind of thing when you meet together as Christians, you may be looked down upon by the religious world; but it is only His reproach." (An Unshakeable Kingdom - David Gooding - 1976)

Hebrews 13:9-25

1. Think back on our previous studies of Hebrews and remember some of the teaching that the Hebrews had to put behind them. Have they shown tendencies to sometimes follow cunningly devised teachings? Be prepared to discuss at your study some beliefs (or traditions) you once held and how difficult it is to put them behind you.
2. Even here, at the end of our study, we encounter phrases which assume a strong, working knowledge of the OT. What was the significance of being "*outside the camp*" to the Jewish community? Who was with you if you were outside the camp? Why were the bodies of animals, whose blood was used in the Most Holy Place, burnt outside the camp? What's the significance of the Lord Jesus being crucified outside of Jerusalem? Why should we be "*outside the camp*" today?
3. In V7 we are told to remember our leaders and in V17 we are asked to obey them. Who are these leaders? Is obeying religious leaders a socially wise thing to do today? What balances (as opposed to blind obedience) do you have as you obey your leaders? When & where will your leaders be required to give an account?
4. "*Lettuce*" verses (Let Us verses) are planted often in Hebrews. Review the list of "*Lettuce*" verses (**Heb 4:1,11,14,16, 6:1, 10:22,23,24, 12:1,28, 13:13,15**). When the writer of Hebrews uses this phrase what is he hoping to induce us to do in each of these verses?
5. Compose a *sacrifice of praise* to give to our Lord, based upon the things that you have been reminded of from your studies in Hebrews.
6. Compare the benediction in V20,21 to other NT benedictions. (**2 Cor 13:14, Jude 24&25, Rom 16:25-27**) What similarities and differences do you observe between them?
7. The Hebrews are encouraged to pray for the writer and his associates. Who should we remember in our prayers?