

## INTRODUCTION

For most of those who have a passing familiarity with the Bible, Hebrews is not one of the most noteworthy books. Families don't do readings out of Hebrews at Eastertime; TV preachers don't argue that people should send them money because Jesus is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek. The gospels, Acts, and Romans all get more play. Even the stories of Moses and David from the Old Testament are more familiar than Hebrews. In many ways, despite its length, Hebrews is a forgotten book.

That notwithstanding, Hebrews is actually one of the main doctrinal pillars upon which genuine Christianity rests. The gospels tell the what of the story of Jesus; Hebrews tells the why. In a dazzling display of intricate logic, the anonymous writer of Hebrews raises the hood on Christianity and explains how it works. In so doing, he addresses thousands of years of needs: the needs of its original audience, the wavering Hebrew Christians who needed a reason to keep serving Christ, as well as our needs for understanding today. Despite all of this abstract, technical detail, though, the writer also manages to make a number of practical applications. His analyses of the two covenants are thickly sown with reasons why Christians of all times should persevere.

Hebrews is a book that the Lord's church needs to study and understand, even if no one else does. We cannot simply believe everything we're told. We must be responsible for our own faith, and many of the arguments that the Hebrews writer raises explain the practical differences between us and the denominational world. Without this book, our understanding of Christianity would be immeasurably poorer. To enrich our understanding and our lives, we need to plunge into Hebrews, to learn why we ourselves are heirs of a better covenant.

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# A BETTER COVENANT

## LESSON ONE: A More Excellent Name

### SPOKEN THROUGH ANGELS

One of the most confusing ideas in early Hebrews is the one presented in Hebrews 2:2, which says that the word was "spoken through angels." This idea is repeated twice more in the New Testament, in Acts 7:53 and Galatians 3:19, yet it appears to directly contradict Exodus 20:1, which presents Jehovah as the lawgiver.

We can resolve this contradiction by paying attention both to the word "angel" itself and to the context of Hebrews. "Angel" is nothing more than the transliteration of the Greek *angelos*, which means "messenger," and may refer to both celestial and human intermediaries. This fits with Hebrews 1:1, which says that God spoke to the fathers "in the prophets in many portions and in many ways." At times, men like Moses were the messengers; at others, angels delivered God's message to non-prophets like Gideon. The rest of Hebrews 1 establishes that even the most glorious of these messengers was inferior to the glorious Christ, who delivered His word directly to the people. Thus, if the angelic word proved steadfast, how much more will the word of Christ be?



### HEBREWS 1:1-14

1. What contrast does the writer present in Hebrews 1:1-2? What does this tell us about the multitude of holy books written since the resurrection that claim to be from God? Why is this important?
2. How is the Son described in Hebrews 1:2-3? What do these things mean? Why does the writer describe Him in these ways?
3. In Hebrews 1:4, to what is the Son compared? Why would the writer make this comparison? Passages like Acts 7:53 may help you in your answer.
4. What proof of this statement does the writer offer in Hebrews 1:5-6? Identify the two quotes from the Old Testament and explain the significance of the writer using them here.
5. We see another contrast made between Hebrews 1:6-7 and Hebrews 1:8-9. Explain this contrast, identify its source quotations, and discuss the significance of their use here.

## LESSON ONE: A MORE EXCELLENT NAME

6. Yet another contrast appears in Hebrews 1:10-12. Identify the things being contrasted, give the Scripture reference for the Old Testament passage being cited, and show its relevance to the discussion.
7. The final contrast of Hebrews 1 (but not of the book!) shows up in Hebrews 1:13-14. What is it? Why is it important? Also, in this instance, identify the Old Testament quotation and explain why the definition of Hebrews 1:14 is important.



### HEBREWS 2:1-8

1. Hebrews 2:1 begins with the words, "For this reason." What reason is that? Why is this important?
2. Also in Hebrews 2:1, what conclusion does the writer say we should draw from those reasons? How should we apply this?
3. What comparison does the writer make in Hebrews 2:2-3? How does this prove his point?
4. According to Hebrews 2:3-4, how were the words of the Lord presented? Why is this significant?
5. Specifically, what does Hebrews 2:4 tell us about the role of the Holy Spirit in these things? How is this significant to our understanding of miracles and miraculous spiritual gifts?
6. The writer returns to making more comparisons in Hebrews 2:5-8. What is he comparing? Identify the source of the quote in Hebrews 6:6-8, and explain the point.
7. What does the last half of Hebrews 2:8 tell us about the Son of Man? What is this talking about? Why is it important? 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 may help.

# A BETTER COVENANT

## LESSON TWO: Worthy of More Glory

### WHOSE HOUSE WE ARE

One of the peculiar things about the Christian experience is the recurring desire of Christians to identify themselves with men rather than with Christ. In 1 Corinthians 1:12-13, Paul condemns the Corinthians' tendency to describe themselves as disciples of Paul, Apollos, or Cephas. Strangely enough, most self-professed Christian groups in the world today repeat this error. They refer to themselves by the names of their founders or names that their founders chose. Sadly, such names only reflect the way they obey those men, rather than God.

We, by contrast, belong to a different house, not a house ruled by those who oppose the will of God, or even a house of those who served God faithfully, like Moses. We belong to the household of Christ, and we need no man to serve as our intermediary with God or to tell us what God's will is. Each one of us has known the adoption as sons, each one of us is beholden to God and God alone, and each one of us will be judged for how we have obeyed Him. This is the dignity of the simple name "Christian." Let us never abandon it.



### HEBREWS 2:9-18

1. What steps in the elevation of Jesus does Hebrews 2:9 record? How does this relate back to the previous discussion?
2. What does Hebrews 2:10 reveal about God's plan for Jesus? How does it describe the appropriateness of this plan? According to Hebrews 2:11, what makes the plan appropriate?
3. In Hebrews 2:12-13, the writer cites a number of Old Testament passages to support his argument. Identify the quotations, and explain their significance to the text.
4. According to Hebrews 2:14, what fact motivated Christ to act? What action did He take? In Hebrews 2:14-15, what two consequences of this act are described? Why is this important?
5. What does Hebrews 2:16 tell us about those who can and cannot expect help from God? Why would this be true? Why is it important?

## LESSON TWO: WORTHY OF MORE GLORY

6. What action of God's does Hebrews 2:17 mention? What capacity did this give Jesus? What is Jesus able to do in this capacity? Why is this important?
7. What does Hebrews 2:18 reveal about why Jesus is now a suitable high priest? Why is this relevant?



### HEBREWS 3:1-14

1. In Hebrews 3:1, how is Jesus described? What does this mean?
2. Hebrews 3:2 compares two people. Who are they? According to the text, how are they similar?
3. According to Hebrews 3:3, what difference exists between these two people? What does Hebrews 3:4-6 tell us about why they are different? What's the importance of this discussion?
4. In Hebrews 3:2-6, the word "house" is used repeatedly. What does this word refer to? What do we have to do to belong to the house of Christ? Why is this significant?
5. What Old Testament quotation appears in Hebrews 3:7-11? How does this support the writer's contention in Hebrews 3:6? What should it teach us today?
6. What does Hebrews 3:12 warn us against? What way of dealing with the problem does the writer prescribe in Hebrews 3:13? What effect will this course of conduct have? How do we need to put it into practice?
7. What desirable state does Hebrews 3:14 describe? What do we have to do to enter into this state? What are some actions we need to carry out to achieve this goal? How does Hebrews 3:16 pose a contrast to this idea?

# A BETTER COVENANT

## LESSON THREE: Diligent to Enter

### THE WORD AND THE PRIEST

Hebrews 4:11-16 marks a transition between two of the major divisions of Hebrews. Because of its transitional language, it gives two reasons to persevere that appear to be pointing in opposite directions. On the one hand, Hebrews 4:11-13 summarizes the argument for obedience that the writer has used the first four chapters to make. Because the word of God is a keen tool of judgment, and because God is an omniscient and just judge, we can be sure that our sin will find us out. Thus, our only alternative is to continue faithfully.

By contrast, Hebrews 4:14-16 introduces the theme of grace that will occupy the attention of the writer until the midpoint of Hebrews 10. It tells us why we should persevere even when we don't measure up to the perfect standard of the word of God. It tells us that through the intercession of Christ, our great high priest, we can come confidently before the throne of God and receive His mercy instead of His judgment. At the intersection of these two ideas of obedience and grace, we find the tension that defines our Christian walk.



### HEBREWS 3:16-4:13

1. What series of Israelite actions is described in Hebrews 3:16-18? What series of responses does God embark on to deal with these actions? What should this teach us?
2. What conclusion does the writer draw from these things in Hebrews 3:19? What justifies his conclusion even though unbelief is not mentioned in the previous few verses? What does this tell us about the connection between belief and obedience?
3. What fear does the writer encourage in Hebrews 4:1? What reason to fear does he provide in Hebrews 4:2? What deficiency does he identify in the Israelites? What should we take from this?
4. What statement does the writer make at the beginning of Hebrews 4:3? How does he justify that statement? What objection to his logic does he raise at the end of the verse? How do Hebrews 4:4-5 address the objection?
5. What two divine "therefores" does the writer cite in Hebrews 4:6? What does God do in consequence in Hebrews 4:7?

## LESSON THREE: DILIGENT TO ENTER

6. What logical proposition does the writer advance in Hebrews 4:8? What conclusion does he draw from it in Hebrews 4:9? What meaning does he assign to the rest in Hebrews 4:10? What application does he urge us to draw from this in Hebrews 4:11?
7. What does Hebrews 4:12 reveal about the word of God? What does Hebrews 4:13 reveal about the eyes of God? How do these things relate back to the conclusion of Hebrews 4:11?



### HEBREWS 4:14-5:10

1. In Hebrews 4:14, what action is urged upon us? Why?
2. What does Hebrews 4:15 say Christ is not? What does it say He is? What action does Hebrews 4:16 accordingly urge upon us? What will happen if we do? How do we do this?
3. What general description does Hebrews 5:1 offer of the role of the high priest? According to the last part of Hebrews 5:2, what problem does the high priest have? What does this allow him to do? What does Hebrews 5:3 say he must do in consequence?
4. What does Hebrews 5:4 reveal of the priesthood? What does Hebrews 5:5 say about Christ and this qualification? According to Hebrews 5:6, when did this happen?
5. According to Hebrews 5:7, what did Christ do during the days of His flesh? What response did He meet with? How does this relate back to Hebrews 5:2-3?
6. In Hebrews 5:8, what does the writer say happened to Christ despite His Sonship? What result does he attribute to this in Hebrews 5:9? What's the meaning of this to us?
7. How is Christ described in Hebrews 5:10? How does this differ from the earthly priesthood discussed in Hebrews 5:1-4?



# A BETTER COVENANT

## LESSON FOUR: Convinced of Better Things

### PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS?

Perhaps the weakest of the five points of Calvin's T-U-L-I-P doctrine of predestination is the fifth, perseverance of the saints. It argues that once a man is saved, he cannot become un-saved. This follows logically from the idea that we cannot choose ourselves to obey the gospel, that it is God who irresistibly chooses the elect. After all, if we cannot save ourselves, we cannot un-save ourselves either.

Unhappily for the Calvinist, the doctrine of perseverance of the saints wrecks itself on the book of Hebrews. Generally speaking, the entire book is an appeal to Hebrew Christians to remain faithful. If it is indeed impossible for them to fall away, why would the writer have bothered? In more specific detail, Hebrews 6:4-6 describes one who has undeniably been saved, yet still falls away. The truth about the perseverance of the saints is at once liberating and sobering. It is we ourselves, not God, who choose whether we take advantage of the offer of His grace. On the other hand, it is also we ourselves who bear the responsibility for remaining faithful.



### HEBREWS 5:11-6:8

1. What abrupt change of direction do we see in Hebrews 5:11? Why? What does this tell us about the relationship between the writer and his audience?
2. According to Hebrews 5:12, where should the Hebrews be? Where are they? When we take this in conjunction with passages like James 3:1, what should it teach us?
3. In Hebrews 5:13-14, the writer describes two different states. What are they? What determines whether a Christian is in one state or the other? How do we need to apply this?
4. What exhortation does the writer give in Hebrews 6:1? What things in Hebrews 6:1-3 does he want to avoid? Is there anything inherently wrong with those things? If not, what's the point for us?
5. What personal pattern of behavior is described in Hebrews 6:4-6? What important spiritual truth does this reveal?

## LESSON FOUR: CONVINCED OF BETTER THINGS

6. What does Hebrews 6:6 say about the fallen-away Christian? What does this mean? Passages such as Hebrews 2:3 may help you with your answer.
7. Hebrews 6:7-8 compares two things. What are they? What is the difference between them? How should this affect the way we consider our lives?



### HEBREWS 6:9-20

1. In Hebrews 6:9-10, what does the writer reveal about his real attitude toward the Hebrews? What justification does he give for his conviction? What does this teach us about God?
2. What does the writer say he wants for the Hebrews in Hebrews 9:11? What does this mean? How do we need to apply it?
3. Hebrews 6:12 once again contrasts two states. What are they? What goal does the passage set before us? How does it say we should achieve that goal? What does this teach us about faith?
4. What Old Testament character is introduced in Hebrews 6:13? What does Hebrews 6:13-14 tell us about God's dealings with this character? According to Hebrews 6:15, what does the character do? What does he receive?
5. What general statement does Hebrews 6:16 make? How does God put that general statement into practice in Hebrews 6:17?
6. Hebrews 6:18 begins by discussing "two unchangeable things." What are they? What do they mean to us? How does Hebrews 6:19 describe them? How does this relate back to Abraham?
7. What does Hebrews 6:20 reveal about the actions of Jesus? What does it reveal about the office of Jesus? How does this relate back to Hebrews 5:10?

# A BETTER COVENANT

## LESSON FIVE: The Likeness of Melchizedek

### TWO PATHS TO GOD

The Hebrews writer intended his comparisons of two priesthoods in Hebrews 7 to illuminate the differences between the old and new covenants. In this, however, he also distinguished between two religious worldviews.

The first is exemplified by the pattern of the Law of Moses. In it, believers do not approach God directly. Instead, they have a special class of priests or clergymen. This group of religious specialists tells the people what God wants them to do and deals with Him for them so that they can go on about their lives and basically ignore God. Though outmoded, this Mosaic pattern is evident throughout the denominational world today.

By contrast, under the terms of the New Covenant, every believer is a priest. Every one of us has the right to approach God directly through the intercession of Jesus Christ. This right, however, also places upon each one of us the responsibility to study the word ourselves and be devoted to God ourselves. Let us cherish both.



### HEBREWS 7:1-17

1. What Bible character is introduced in Hebrews 7:1? What does Hebrews 7:1-2 say we know about him? What does Hebrews 7:3 say that we don't know about him? How does this make him comparable to the Son of God?
2. In Hebrews 7:4, what does the writer say he is going to prove in the succeeding verses? What basis for comparison does he provide in Hebrews 7:5?
3. What does Hebrews 7:6 say Melchizedek did? According to Hebrews 7:7, what does this establish?
4. What argument does the writer advance in Hebrews 7:8-10? What does he mean to prove?
5. What rhetorical question does the writer ask in Hebrews 7:11? What does he mean for us to understand from this question?

## LESSON FIVE: THE LIKENESS OF MELCHIZEDEK

6. What contention does the writer make in Hebrews 7:12? What problem does Hebrews 7:13 bring up if the law is not changed? How is Christ's unsuitability for the Mosaic priesthood established in Hebrews 7:14? Why is this significant?
7. What is the "this" in the first part of Hebrews 7:15? What event is described in Hebrews 7:15-16? How does it make "this" clearer? How does Hebrews 7:17 show us that Jesus has this power?



### HEBREWS 7:18-28

1. Hebrews 7:18-19 lists two things that a change of law accomplishes. What are they? What do they mean to us?
2. In Hebrews 7:20-21, what distinction is made between the priests of the Old Law and our Lord? Upon what basis is this distinction made?
3. How is Jesus described in Hebrews 7:22? Why is this true? Hebrews 6:17-18 and Hebrews 7:21 may help you answer.
4. What two things are contrasted in Hebrews 7:23-24? How are they different? What passage in Hebrews 7 tells us that this difference genuinely exists?
5. According to Hebrews 7:25, what is Jesus able to do? Why? What does this mean for us? 1 John 2:1-2 may provide insight.
6. How does Hebrews 7:26 describe Jesus as high priest? Why is this "fitting?"
7. What new contrast is offered in Hebrews 7:27? What contrast then is drawn in Hebrews 7:28? How does the second contrast explain the first?

# A BETTER COVENANT

## LESSON SIX: A New Covenant

### THE OBSOLETE COVENANT

The religious world around us fails to understand many things about the Bible, but one of the most astonishing of these gaps concerns the passing of the Old Law. The distinction between the Law of Moses and the law of Christ is one of the major themes of the New Testament. It appears as one of the primary arguments not only of Hebrews, but also of Romans and Galatians. It tells us that we are no longer under the authority of Moses.

The implications of this are profound, yet few if any recognize them. Most so-called believers revere the Ten Commandments, yet the Ten Commandments as such are not binding upon us unless they are repeated in the New Testament (which nine of them are). Tithing was certainly a commandment for the Jews, and most denominations still practice it, but it is not bound in the New Testament, so we have no authority to tithe. Instrumental music in worship is everywhere in the Law of Moses, but nowhere in the law of liberty, so we do not use them in worship. Our understanding this of one apparently abstract point actually defines our service to God.



### HEBREWS 8:1-6

1. Early in Hebrews 8:1, the writer refers to the "main point" of his discourse. What is this main point? How has he been working toward it?
2. Hebrews 8:1 also mentions "such a high priest." Explain this, using the previous discussion.
3. How is this high priest described in Hebrews 8:1-2? What does this mean?
4. What basic statement is made in Hebrews 8:3? What conclusion does the writer draw from this statement? Logically, what does this enable him to do later?
5. What does the Hebrews writer reveal about Jesus on earth in Hebrews 8:4? Why? What insight does this give us into the doctrine of premillennialism? Why?

## LESSON SIX: A NEW COVENANT

6. How is the offering of gifts according to the Law described in Hebrews 8:5? Why is this description accurate? What should we learn from the conduct of Moses here?
7. What does Hebrews 8:6 tell us Jesus has obtained? Why? How is this true?



### HEBREWS 8:7-13

1. What statement is made in Hebrews 8:7? Is this logical? Why? What does it imply? Where does the "fault" in the first covenant come from, according to Hebrews 8:8?
2. What promise does God make in Hebrews 8:8? What should the Jews have expected on the basis of that promise? Does a similar promise appear in the New Testament? What should we expect from this?
3. How does God describe this new covenant in relation to the old covenant in Hebrews 8:9? What reason does He give for this?
4. According to Hebrews 8:10, what does God say He will do under the new covenant? What does this mean? What result will it have for God and us? What does this mean? 2 Corinthians 3:1-3 may help inform your answer.
5. What does God say will not happen under the new covenant in Hebrews 8:11? Why? Practically, what does this mean?
6. What reason does God give why the people will know Him in Hebrews 8:12? What does this mean? How is it true in practice?
7. In Hebrews 8:13, what implication does the writer draw from the presence of the new covenant? What happens to the old covenant as a result? What does this mean for us?

# A BETTER COVENANT

## LESSON SEVEN: All Things Are Cleansed with Blood

### THE IMPORTANCE OF BLOOD

Today, most of us live in a suburban setting, far from the gritty realities of rural life. In some ways, this makes it more difficult for us to understand the Bible. We abstractly grasp the point of Leviticus 17:11, which tells us that the life is in the blood. However, to the man who regularly kills animals, this is a visceral truth.

It's a visceral truth that we need to understand because it is blood that saves us. Our covenant with God is based on blood that was shed 2000 years ago, but is no less real for that. We earned the death penalty for our sin, but Christ died in our place, His life for our life, His blood for our blood. It was the only way to balance the scales of God's justice. Justice demanded blood, and so blood was provided.

This brutal, yet beautiful truth must be the center of our existence. Jesus gave up everything He had, even His own life, and gave it to us. It's up to us to answer this incomprehensible sacrifice by giving everything to Him.



### HEBREWS 9:1-10

1. What does Hebrews 9:1 say about the first covenant? What does this mean? Why does it say "even" the first covenant had these things?
2. In the space provided below, draw the tabernacle as the writer describes it in Hebrews 9:2-5. The writer says of this description that he is not speaking in detail. What does this tell us of the writer's knowledge of the Law of Moses?
3. According to Hebrews 9:6-7, what is the difference between the outer and the inner tabernacles? What ritual does Hebrews 9:7 refer to? Where is it found in the Old Testament?
4. According to Hebrews 9:8, what did the Holy Spirit mean for the arrangement of the tabernacle to tell us? What does this mean?

## LESSON SEVEN: ALL THINGS ARE CLEANSED WITH BLOOD

5. What does Hebrews 9:9 say about the gifts and sacrifices of the old covenant? What does this mean?
6. According to Hebrews 9:10, what problem do those sacrifices have? What two competing views of holiness does this reveal? Why is this important?



### HEBREWS 9:11-22

1. How is Christ described in Hebrews 9:11? How is the place He entered described? How does all of this relate to Hebrews 8:5?
2. According to Hebrews 9:12, what did Christ do? How did He do it? Why does the text focus on blood? What does it mean that He did this "once for all?" What does this tell us about the faith described in Jude 3?
3. Hebrews 9:13-14 presents a contrast between two things. What are they? What did the first do? What does the second do? Why?
4. Hebrews 9:15 begins with the words "For this reason." For what reason? How is Christ described in this verse? What necessary thing did He do? What does this mean? What did His action permit?
5. What statement is made in Hebrews 9:16? What explanation is given for this in Hebrews 9:17? How is this true? What does it mean?
6. In Hebrews 9:18-21, what event is described? Where is this found in the Old Testament? What is the significance of this to the writer's previous statements?
7. What statement is made in Hebrews 9:22? Why is this true? How does it help us to understand the Bible? Leviticus 17:11 may help.



# A BETTER COVENANT

## LESSON EIGHT: The Consummation of the Ages

### THE DAY THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

History is filled with momentous dates. However, as the centuries roll by, those dates fade into insignificance. Few in modern America remember the day that William the Conqueror won the English throne in 1066, even though the Norman Conquest had consequences that reverberate even into the present.

One day, however, that retains its significance, and will do so until the end of time, was the day that Jesus died on the cross. Few on that day recognized its significance, but with Jesus' dying cry on that hilltop outside Jerusalem, the world was changed forever. One man, by His willingness to live and die for God, solved in a moment of time the biggest problem of human existence. With explosive force, that death leveled the barriers that sin had built between the Creator and His creation. For those who had nothing to look forward to but death, the future suddenly held out the hope of eternal life. All of creation to that point waited in expectation of that moment; now, all of creation looks back to it. It truly was "the consummation of the ages."



### HEBREWS 9:23-10:4

1. To what does the "therefore" at the beginning of Hebrews 9:23 refer? What does it say about the difference between earthly and heavenly cleansing? What are the implications of this statement?
2. According to Hebrews 9:24, what did Christ not do? What did He do? What does He do now? Why is this important?
3. According to Hebrews 9:25, what else does Christ not do? Who does have to do that? What does Hebrews 9:26 reveal about what Christ would have to do otherwise? What has He done once instead? What is this moment called?
4. What basic truth about mankind is cited in Hebrews 9:27? How is this applied to Christ in Hebrews 9:28? How does this relate to the previous discussion?
5. According to Hebrews 10:1, what is true of the Law? What is not true of the Law? What failing does the Law have in consequence?

## LESSON EIGHT: THE CONSUMMATION OF THE AGES

6. What question does Hebrews 10:2 ask? Why does it ask it? How does the question relate back to Hebrews 10:1?
7. How are the sacrifices of the Law described in Hebrews 10:3? What does this tell us about them? According to Hebrews 10:4, why is this true? Why would that be true?



### HEBREWS 10:5-18

1. In contrast, Hebrews 10:5-7 attributes an Old Testament quotation to Christ. Where is it from? How does it relate to the previous discussion?
2. What new contrast is set up in Hebrews 10:8-9? How is it a contrast? According to Hebrews 10:9, what is the effect of this contrast? What does that mean?
3. Hebrews 10:10 includes the words "by this will." By what will? What is done by this will? How? For how long? Why should we care?
4. Yet another contrast appears in Hebrews 10:11-12. What is contrasted in this comparison? What's the point of the contrast?
5. What does Hebrews 10:13 describe Christ as doing now? What does Hebrews 10:14 reveal about why? What is the significance of all of this? 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 may help you answer.
6. What Old Testament quotation appears again in Hebrews 10:15-17? What is it being offered to prove? What should we learn from its use here?
7. Hebrews 10:18 uses the words "these things." What things? What's the meaning of the verse? Why? What is its relevance to us?

# A BETTER COVENANT

## LESSON NINE: In Full Assurance of Faith

### WHY GOD ISN'T CUDDLY

One of the worst things that happens when believers don't study their Bibles is that they lose touch with who God really is and instead remake Him in their own image. In modern America, where we enshrine tolerance and acceptance, we naturally think of God as tolerant and accepting. In a recent television interview, the famous evangelist Joel Osteen wasn't even willing to affirm that God would condemn the atheist to hell.

The problem with re-creating God in our own image is that in reality, the process went the other way around. We are made in the image of God, yes, but we cannot comprehend the totality of God. Our human blindness causes us to tolerate and excuse evil, but God with His infinite understanding sees it for what it truly is. He has commanded us to hate evil and to shun it, and when we reject His commandments, His nature compels Him to condemn us. In His mercy, He did everything He could to save us from the consequences of our own actions by sending His Son, but when we reject even that, no hope remains for us. It is foolish to believe otherwise.



### HEBREWS 10:19-25

1. What does Hebrews 10:19 say that we have? In light of the previous discussion, why do we have it?
2. In Hebrews 10:20, how is the blood of Jesus described? Is the flesh mentioned in this verse the veil or the way through the veil? How does all of this work? Ephesians 2:14-15 may prove useful.
3. What other reason is given in Hebrews 10:21? What has the writer previously said that tells us this is true?
4. What does Hebrews 10:22 say we should do on the basis of these reasons? What two things make us able to respond in this way? What are those two things? What does this teach us?
5. According to Hebrews 10:23, what else should we do? What reason does the writer give why we should do it? What proof has he previously offered in support of this idea?

## LESSON NINE: IN FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH

6. According to Hebrews 10:24, what else are we supposed to do? What does this mean? How should we do it?
7. What does Hebrews 10:25 instruct us not to do? What are we to do instead? Why? Practically, how can we carry this command out?



### HEBREWS 10:26-39

1. What hypothetical course of action is mentioned in Hebrews 10:26? What is no longer present after this course of action is chosen? According to Hebrews 10:27, what is present? What should this teach us?
2. What two things are compared in Hebrews 10:28-29? How are the elements of this comparison parallel? What meaning should we take from it?
3. What two Old Testament quotes appear in Hebrews 10:30? Where are they from? How do they support the writer's argument here?
4. What does Hebrews 10:31 reveal about God? What does this mean? How does it compare to the modern American view of God? What should this teach us?
5. In Hebrews 10:32, what are the Hebrews urged to remember? According to Hebrews 10:32-34, what happened at that time? Why? What does this tell us about the Hebrews?
6. What are we instructed not to do in Hebrews 10:35? Why? What does Hebrews 10:36 tell us about claiming this reward? How should this shape the way we think about Christianity?
7. What prophecy is made in Hebrews 10:37? What two possible actions now are given in Hebrews 10:38? What happens as a result of each? What does Hebrews 10:39 urge us to do as a result?

# A BETTER COVENANT

## LESSON TEN: By Faith

### WHAT IS FAITH?

One of the most pernicious false doctrines floating around is the idea that we are saved by “faith only,” that once we give mental assent to the idea that Jesus is the Christ, nothing we do can cause us to be lost. Thus, salvation is divorced from any sort of obedience or righteousness. This tragic teaching will cause millions of souls to be lost before the end of time, and it’s all the more tragic because of the Bible’s depiction of faith.

In Hebrews 11, Abel didn’t just give mental assent to the idea that he was supposed to sacrifice to God. Only when his faith led him to do what God wanted was he justified. Abraham did not receive the promises because he spent his life in Haran while testifying loudly that he loved God. Instead, God made His covenant with Abraham because Abraham did what God had commanded. True Biblical faith is not a matter of thought. It is a matter of action, of constantly working to fulfill the will of God. We are saved by faith, yes, but it is not merely faith that Christ will justify the ungodly, but that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.



### HEBREWS 11:1-16

1. According to Hebrews 11:1, what is faith? What does Hebrews 11:6 tell us that the components of faith are? According to Hebrews 11:2, what is the result of faith? Why is this important?
2. For each of the heroes of faith listed below, give their act of faith and its result. Then, describe the lesson that their story teaches us.
  - Abel (Hebrews 11:4).
  - Enoch (Hebrews 11:5).
  - Noah (Hebrews 11:7).
  - Abraham (Hebrews 11:8-10).
  - Sarah (Hebrews 11:11-12).

## LESSON TEN: BY FAITH

6. According to Hebrews 11:13, what happened to all of these faithful people? What did they do anyway? What does Hebrews 11:14 say that this proved to God? Why should we care?
7. Hebrews 11:15-16 describes two attitudes. What are they? What does each lead to? What should this teach us? Consider Hebrews 10:39 in your answer.



### HEBREWS 11:17-40

1. In Hebrews 11:17-19, Abraham makes a repeat appearance. What does he do now? What obstacles does he face? Why does he overcome them? What's the significance of this to us?
2. Hebrews 11:20-21 describes two people doing the same thing. Who are they? What are they doing? Why is this an act of faith?
3. According to Hebrews 11:22, what did Joseph do? Why is this significant? Genesis 50:24-25, Exodus 13:19, and Joshua 24:32 may help with your answer.
4. Below, list the acts of faith of Moses and his family described in Hebrews 11:23-27, along with the things that motivated them. Why do you think the writer emphasizes the faith of Moses?
5. Hebrews 11:28-31 describes four acts of faith carried out during the Exodus. What are they? Who did them? Are the faithful mentioned here always people we would expect to be mentioned? What should this teach us?
6. Hebrews 11:32-35a lists a bunch of good things that people did. Hebrews 11:35b-38 lists a bunch of bad things that happened to people. Why do both make the list of triumphs of faith?
7. According to Hebrews 11:39, what happened to all of these people? How does Hebrews 11:40 explain this? What does this tell us about our lives as Christians?

# A BETTER COVENANT

## LESSON ELEVEN: Run with Endurance

### DISCIPLINE

The difference between God and Satan is not that God never causes us pain, while Satan does. Instead, it is that God causes us pain with a purpose, while Satan does not. God's goal for our lives here is not to give us ease and earthly pleasure; rather, it is to do whatever is necessary to prepare us for heaven. Sometimes, God's actions to do that cause us pain. The divorcee endures tremendous pain whenever she hears that she must leave her husband to find Jesus, the churchgoing non-Christian suffers every time an invitation reminds him that he is lost, and the adulterer undergoes immense anguish when his sin finds him out at last.

Even though they are painful, all of those things are from the hand of God. God promises us that every Christian will face pain like that in his life; in fact, the Bible tells us that if we never endure chastening, we are not actually sons of God at all. Rather than resenting this discipline when it occurs, we need to pay attention instead. The lessons that we learn through pain are costly, but they are better than no lesson learned at all.



### HEBREWS 12:1-17

1. Hebrews 12:1 mentions "so great a cloud of witnesses." What witnesses? What are they witnessing? What should we do about it? Why?
2. According to Hebrews 12:2, upon whom are we to fix our eyes? How is He described here? What did He do? How does this fit in with the preceding discussion? What does Hebrews 12:3 say we should do about it?
3. Of what two things does the writer accuse the Hebrews in Hebrews 12:4-5? What exhortation is he talking about? Where is it found?
4. Yet another contrast appears in Hebrews 12:7-8. What two states are being contrasted? What parentage is assigned to each state? What should this teach us?
5. The writer returns again to contrasts in Hebrews 12:9-10. What two things are being contrasted? How are they different? According to Hebrews 12:11, how are they similar? Why should we care?

## LESSON ELEVEN: RUN WITH ENDURANCE

6. What admonitions are given in Hebrews 12:12-13? According to Hebrews 12:14-15, what are some of the things that this practically means for us? Taking Deuteronomy 29:14-18 into account, what is the "root of bitterness" of Hebrews 12:15? How do we need to apply all this?
7. What Bible character appears in Hebrews 12:16? What did he do? Why? According to Hebrews 12:17, what happened to him as a result? What does this mean to us?



### HEBREWS 12:18-29

1. To what is Hebrews 12:18 referring when it begins with "for"? According to Hebrews 12:18-19, to what have we not come? What is it talking about? How do we react to this description?
2. What two reactions are described in Hebrews 12:20-21? What underlies both of these reactions? Why would God present Himself in this way? We see a similar message from God in Hebrews 9:8.
3. According to Hebrews 12:22-23, to what have we come instead? What different impression does this description leave?
4. To whom else does Hebrews 12:24 say we have come? In what role do we see Him? What other thing is mentioned in this verse? Why does it speak better than the blood of Abel? Genesis 4:10 may be useful here.
5. What are we told not to do in Hebrews 12:25? What comparison is then made? What lesson should we take from the comparison?
6. What Old Testament quotation appears in Hebrews 12:26? Where is it located? What does Hebrews 12:27 say about this quotation? What does that mean?
7. With what statement is Hebrews 12:28 begun? How are we supposed to react to this fact? What attitude should we have while doing this? How should Hebrews 12:29 inform our attitude?



# A BETTER COVENANT

## LESSON TWELVE: This Word of Exhortation

### OUTSIDE THE CAMP

Hebrews 13:13 contains a curious instruction. The writer tells the Hebrews to go to Jesus “outside the camp, bearing His reproach.” At first glance, this is confusing; at second, it is powerful. Remember: one of the big problems the Hebrews were facing was the pull back into Judaism from their Hebrew countrymen. When the writer instructs them to go outside the camp, he’s telling them to leave behind the Jewish community just like Jesus did, to abandon their old lives for the hope of eternal life with Him.

Even today, there are many Christians who are unwilling to go outside the camp. They want Christianity to be a hobby, not a life, and so they maintain connections with those in the world who constantly discourage them from doing what God wants them to do. The cure for the disease of divided allegiance is as obvious as it is unpleasant. If we want to go to heaven, we have to be Christians first, last, and only. We must reject everything in our lives that pulls us away from God. Only then, truly outside the camp, can we be with Christ.



### HEBREWS 13:1-14

1. What does Hebrews 13:1 admonish us to do? What two applications of this commandment do we see in Hebrews 13:2-3? How should we carry these things out today?
2. What command appears in Hebrews 13:4? Why is this important? How do we need to practice this?
3. What does the writer further instruct us to do in Hebrews 13:5? How are we supposed to do this? What quotations from the Old Testament appear in Hebrews 13:5-6? Where are they from? How do they support the writer’s argument?
4. What exhortation is given in Hebrews 13:7? About whom is this talking? What does it mean to us?
5. What general statement does Hebrews 13:8 make? What application does the writer take from this statement in Hebrews 13:9? About what does the writer seem to be talking (Colossians 3:20-23 may help here)? How should this passage shape our attitude toward serving God?

## LESSON TWELVE: THIS WORD OF EXHORTATION

6. What comment is made in Hebrews 13:10? What does Hebrews 13:11 say? What's it talking about? How does this show the preceding comment to be true? How does all this relate to earlier verses?
7. According to Hebrews 13:12, how did Jesus conform His own behavior to the pattern of the Old Testament? What does Hebrews 13:13 tell us about the way we need to respond to Jesus' actions? What would this have meant to the Hebrews? What attitude does Hebrews 13:14 describe that would move us to behave in this way?



### HEBREWS 13:15-25

1. What general command is given in Hebrews 13:15? What specific acts fulfill this command? How does this relate back to the previous few verses? How should we practice this today?
2. According to Hebrews 13:16, what else are we supposed to do? Why? How?
3. What command appears in Hebrews 13:17? Why should we do this? What mindset does the verse urge upon us? What does all this mean practically?
4. In Hebrews 13:18, what does the writer request? With what does he appear particularly concerned? According to Hebrews 13:19, what result does he hope will follow? What does this reveal to us about the writer?
5. How is God described in Hebrews 13:20? Why? What did He do? What means did He use to accomplish this? What does the language the writer uses here reveal to us?
6. What prayer does the writer offer in Hebrews 13:21? How does this relate to the epistle generally?
7. What interesting historical details do we see appearing in Hebrews 13:22-24? What do they tell us?

# A BETTER COVENANT

## LESSON THIRTEEN: Review

### THE SO-WHAT OF HEBREWS

Hebrews is among the least accessible books of the Bible for those who do not already know the Scripture well. It's not a chattily informal letter like 1 Thessalonians or a heroic adventure story like Acts; instead, it is ordered around a number of intricate comparisons between the new and old covenants. Even though we may struggle to wrap our minds around these details, the main points that Hebrews makes are of enormous relevance.

First, it makes a compelling argument for the spiritual supremacy of Christianity. The new covenant is not some strange extrusion grafted onto the teaching of the Law of Moses; rather, it is the logical development and conclusion of that teaching. The things of the Law reach their highest possible form in Christ, and nothing better than He can or should be expected. Because this is so, Hebrews also encourages us to remain faithful. On the one hand, Christ's pre-eminence gives us assurance of His power to save us; on the other, if we reject Him, we have no hope. This book, then, speaks to each one of us, and teaches us, like them, to run with endurance.



### HEBREWS, PART I

*For each of the passages given below, describe the comparison made in the passage, its importance in the overall argument of Hebrews, and its meaning for us today.*

1. Hebrews 1.
2. Hebrews 2:1-4.
3. Hebrews 3:1-6.
4. Hebrews 6:16-20.
5. Hebrews 7:1-10.

6. Hebrews 7:20-28.

7. Hebrews 9:11-14.



## HEBREWS, PART II

1. Hebrews 9:18-28.

2. Hebrews 10:1-10.

3. Hebrews 10:11-18.

4. Hebrews 10:26-31.

5. Hebrews 12:18-24.

6. Hebrews 12:25-29.