

“Hebrews on the Horizon” Hebrews 1-13

Context: Both the faith community to which the Epistle of Hebrews was written and the identification of its author remain unclear. What is clear is that the faith community certainly had a great familiarity with the Old Testament rituals, traditions, and doctrines that foreshadow true holiness, salvation, and deliverance through Jesus Christ. What is also clear is that the main object of the letter is the exhortation to remain faithful to Jesus, the One who has initiated, sustains, and will perfect the believer’s faith (cf. Hebrews 13:22). The exhortations in this book can be summed up in three pivotal verses worth memorizing. These urge believers to turn from entangling sin that leads to apostasy by fixing their eyes upon Jesus who empowers them to run the race until the day of their souls’ transformation in eternity (cf. Hebrews 12:1-3).

Life Principle: You can’t see the joy set before you with your back turned toward God (cf. Hebrews 12:1-2).

1. Superiority of Jesus Christ above all – Hebrews 1:1-4:13

The author exhorts the readers to avoid abandoning allegiance of faith in God and so losing the promise of His rest. They are called to turn from created powers, servants of His revelation, and rituals of religion by turning to Jesus Christ Who is God above all that He created.

2. Superiority of Jesus Christ as priest – Hebrews 4:14-10:18

The author calls the readers to turn away from anything that we think can deliver us from God’s demand for justice and expiation, even the Old Testament rituals of atonement. When sensing our true weakness, we are to turn toward Jesus who, as the perfect High Priest, is present with God. His very rank, character, mediation and even perfect substitutionary sacrifice for us are superior to Levitical ritual. Any other fidelity is punishable apostasy.

3. Superiority of Jesus Christ’s faith – Hebrews 10:19-13:25

The concluding chapters encourage the reader to guard their faith against apostasy and bear their trials with their eyes fixed upon the perfecter of their faith. Jesus is presented as the ideal example amidst many others who showed eternal faith in the heavenly Father. The author goes on to explain how that faith is lived out in confidence, community, conjugal love, contentment, and conformity to God’s will.

For Further Study:

- Three tasks are recommended in preparation for studying a book of the Bible. *First*, read it through quickly twice to get a sense of the flow of ideas in the book. *Second*, read it through slowly to determine its purpose and pivotal idea. *Finally*, make an outline of the flow of ideas and think through how the pivotal idea is associated with the major ideas in the outline. As a **Bible study method**, prepare yourself for studying Hebrews this way. What is the flow of ideas in this book? What is/are the verse(s) that reveal the pivotal idea of the book?
- The means by which we are able to discern the superiority of Jesus Christ is found in Hebrews 12:1-3. How do you practically “fix” or “look” at Jesus Christ, since He has not been visible for almost 2,000 years (See: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/barnes/hebrews/formats/hebrews.pdf> p. 294 or <http://www2.mf.no/bibel/vines.html> #8 look/aphorao)? What impact does the tense and mood of the participle “fixing” have on the action that we are called to do?
- One of the many things that the Epistle to the Hebrews is, is Christocentric, or Christ-centered. Our doctrinal statement resonates with this book declaring Jesus’ pre-eminence in His humanity as well as His divinity (see our **doctrinal statement ‘On Jesus Christ’** under **what we believe**, footnotes 4-11 at <http://www.gracepointfellowship.org/files/DocStmnt.pdf>). What does it matter to you that Jesus is one of us (cf. Hebrews 4:12-16)?

Transformation exercise:

Memorize Hebrews 12:1-3. Skim the book of Hebrews and list three expectations set before you that bring joy. Ask the Spirit to make you sensitive to someone who has lost heart that you might encourage with one of these expectations that have been set before you.