

The Epistle to the Hebrews

Course Description:

Which epistle in the New Testament has engendered so much debate concerning its authorship? Who is the author? Who are the Hebrews? The epistle to the Hebrews is unique in unveiling the Son of God as the author. It is unique in its interpretation of the types and figures in the Old Testament, to portray the surpassing excellence and superiority of the Son of God, Christ, as revealed in the new covenant. In the 303 verses of this epistle, the Old Testament is quoted 210 times. No other epistle walks us through, in such a detailed manner, the superiority of Christ to the angels, to Moses as the true Apostle, to Aaron in His earthly ministry as the High Priest with better sacrifices and better blood, and in His heavenly ministry as High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec, as the source of eternal salvation. He is superior to the first tabernacle as the second and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, and He is superior to the old covenant as the Mediator of a new and better covenant. No other book warns us, the true Hebrews, not to shrink back, but to enter into the holy of holies, the true rest that God has prepared for us. As we read this book, we discover that every believer in Christ is a Hebrew, and that there is an incentive and a serious warning not to neglect such a great salvation that God has given us. The epistle to the Hebrews is a wake-up call with at least five warnings, and a coming judgment, shaking us out of our complacency, our sluggishness, our lassitude, and our disobedience, with inspiring examples of clouds of Old Testament witnesses who, through faith, endured, suffered and agonized, all for our sake so that we could obtain the better promises that they did not obtain. What more could drive us to run with endurance the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith? This is the second semester of a one year (three semester) course which will walk us through the epistle to the Hebrews, chapter by chapter, and often verse by verse.

Instructor: Antipas Desai

Time: Saturdays 11:30 AM–12:30 PM ET

Class Size: No limit

Syllabus (week by week):

The syllabus follows the chapters in the epistle to the Hebrews. We have already covered chapters 1–3 in the Fall Semester 2023. We will begin the Winter Semester 2024 with chapter 4, following a brief review of the three preceding chapters.

Week 1: Chapter 4: The second warning: to listen to His voice today, and not harden our hearts; to enter into the Sabbath rest through the living and operative word of God and by coming forward to the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace from the sympathetic great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God

Week 2: Chapter 5: The superiority of Christ the Son as the heavenly High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, over the earthly priesthood of Aaron; the qualifications of the Son, in His humanity, to enable Him to become superior to His earthly predecessor.

Week 3: Chapter 6: The third warning: to be brought on to maturity and the serious danger of suffering discipline in the next age if we do not give heed; fleeing for refuge within the veil, that is, the Holy of Holies, where Jesus the great High Priest has gone as our forerunner.

Week 4: Chapter 7: The striking shift in priesthood: the superiority of Melchizedek, according to whose order is Jesus who descended, not from the tribe of Levi, but from the tribe of Judah (not an old covenant priestly tribe), over Levi and his descendents (belonging to the old covenant priestly tribe). This is proven in the fact that Jesus is an eternal and perpetual priest, not according to the law of earthly inheritance, but according to the power of an indestructible life, having offered Himself once for sin, as opposed to His earthly predecessors who were required to offer sacrifices repeatedly for themselves and the people, and is thus able to save us to the uttermost.

Week 5: Chapter 8: The superiority of the better new covenant, mediated by Christ and enacted upon better promises, over the faulty and obsolete old covenant; the old covenant gave outward laws and requirements that could never be met, but God, through the new covenant, puts His laws into our minds, and writes them on our hearts.

Weeks 6 & 7: Chapter 9: The superiority of the heavenly tabernacle over the earthly tabernacle, where Christ as the heavenly High Priest, according to the order of Melchizedek, has entered once for all through the shedding of His own blood to accomplish an eternal redemption for us; the superiority of His once-for-all sacrifice over the repetitive sacrifices required in the old covenant.

Weeks 8 & 9: Chapter 10: The fourth warning: to come forward to the Holy of Holies and not shrink back; the superiority of the eternal single offering of the Son in His human body, in obedience to the Father's will, which erases all remembrance of sins. Such an offering, through the crucifixion of His flesh, has opened a new and living way for us to enter into the Holy of Holies by the full assurance of faith, and to live by faith, not shrinking back, holding fast the confession of our hope without wavering.

Course Objective:

God's speaking, which is in the Son, is crucial in our Christian life. However, to know the Son's speaking, we need to know the Son. If we do not know the Son, very likely we will justify what we want to do and say by calling it God's speaking. The epistle to the Hebrews shows us the superiority of Christ to our concepts of who God is, and what our Christian life should look like. If we want to know God's speaking, we must deal with our evil heart

of unbelief. We must let the Lord deal with our disobedience to His word. We may know only God's acts (what He does for us), but we may not know His ways (who He is and what He arranges for us so we can know Him). We must let the word of God divide our soul from our spirit and expose our selfish desire to use God for our own gain, and let Him work in us and purify our heart so He can use us. If we are the true Hebrews (river crossers), we need to see how Christ is superior to our way of following Him, and let go of everything inferior, however precious it may seem to us, to cross the river to lay hold of Him.

Resources:

The Epistle to the Hebrews, The Bible

Structure:

Lecture with a 10-15 minute question/discussion period

Homework:

Participants will be expected to invest 30 minutes each week in reading assigned verses and giving short answers to assigned questions. Group work is encouraged. Some questions may ask participants to share their thoughts in the discussion period, thus facilitating group discussion.

The timing and content of this class has been specially considered in view of participation of saints from Africa. For those from Africa who wish to join, please register through the church in Accra or the church in Kampala. Even though this class has been designed with Africa in view, all saints from everywhere are welcome to join them. All other registration is still through this website.