

Looking Unto Jesus

A 13-Week Study in the Book of Hebrews

Hebrews Background:

The book of Hebrews was written sometime around 67 A.D. The author of Hebrews has been a long-time controversy. 2 Peter 3:15 could be a strong suggestion that Paul is the writer, however, since the writer does not directly identify himself, we cannot conclusively know who he is. Some have suggested that it could have been written by Luke or Barnabas, and there are a host of other suggestions as well. It seems that if the writer is not Paul himself, he was most likely in the circle of Paul's companions, and his doctrine would be seen clearly as being "Pauline."

Our title for this study comes from **Hebrews 12:2**. Hebrews is a book that exhorts us, not only to **look unto Jesus**, but to **keep on running --- towards MATURITY**.

There are some very interesting things to note before we get into our study of this book. Among them is the frequent usage of several words throughout the book. The first of these is the word **BETTER**. It is used 13 times, as the writer reveals to us the superiority of Jesus Christ and His salvation over the Hebrew religious system and the Old Covenant: It declares a **better revelation** (1:1-3), that Christ is **better than angels** (1:4), that we've been given a **better hope** (7:19), and a **better Covenant**, established on **better promises** (8:6).

The second word for us to note is the word **PERFECT**, used 14 times in the original Greek text. It is a word meaning **perfect standing before God** ---- something that the Law could never accomplish (see 7:11, 7:19, 10:1).

And the third to note is the word **ETERNAL**, as the writer proclaims to us our **eternal salvation** (5:9), **eternal redemption** (9:12), and our **eternal inheritance** (9:15), along with **Christ's eternal throne** (1:8), **eternal Priesthood** (5:6, 6:20, 7:17, & 7:21), and lastly, **Christ's eternal character and nature** (13:8).

These Hebrew Christians were going through difficult times and were being tempted to turn away from following Christ and "go back" to their Jewish religion. The writer of Hebrews calls them to evaluate and see that **Christ is better**, His promises and blessings are **eternal**, and His salvation brings us something nothing else can ---- into a **perfect standing** before God.

We, too, often face the temptation of *sliding back* into our former mind-set ---- the old attitudes of our hearts, still so familiar and so easily able to influence our focus away from Christ. We are also called, as we study this book, to take a good look at all we possess in the Lord. Look at the riches of the inheritance He has given us. Is there any

promise that can come close to His? Is there any power more powerful? Is there any love so great? Is there any salvation more able to save than the gift He has given us? Not only is there nothing **better** than the salvation we have been given, and all the blessings it has brought, but there is **nothing else**. It is so great a salvation because it is the **ONLY salvation**.

The writer of Hebrews calls his letter a “word of exhortation” (13:22). As we read through this book we come across **five serious warnings**-----all dealing with our **response** to God’s Word. They include warnings against **drifting** from God’s Word [neglect] (2:1-4), **doubting** God’s Word [hardening your heart] (3:7 – 4:13), **dullness** towards God’s Word [sluggishness] (5:11 – 6:20), **despising** God’s Word [willful disobedience] (10:26 – 39), and **defying** God’s Word [refusing to hear] (12:14 – 29).

In light of these warnings, it is important for us to remember that this “word of exhortation” is written, not to frighten us, but to **encourage** us, to **exhort** us to **heed God’s Word**. It points out to us the sad, spiritual consequences that result in a person’s life when they do not heed God’s Word, and it seems to be saying to us, **“God has spoken to us through His Son. He has given us His Word. Are you listening? What are you doing about it?”**

As we take our journey through the book of Hebrews we will be given a **clearer picture** of Who Christ is. We will be challenged to **evaluate** what we possess, to receive **exhortation**, to **examine** our hearts, to **expect** a fulfillment of His promises, and **exalt** the Name of Jesus as we **look to Him** and **continue running towards maturity** until we come to the finish line of our race.

I have mainly used the New King James translation throughout this study, but we encourage you to look at several different translations as you dig into each lesson. Doing so will broaden your understanding of the text, giving you a clearer picture and helping you to more accurately apply these truths to your life.

Please have the first lesson completed when you come to the first study. We strongly encourage you to complete your lesson each week. Don’t try to do it all in one sitting, but spread it out throughout the week, which will give you more time to glean all that the Lord has for you and to come prepared to share your thoughts in our discussion time.

If for some reason you were not able to complete your study, **we want you to come anyway**. I know that you will receive much from the overview message and discussion each week and you can always go back to complete the lesson afterwards.

Take a few moments before you begin your time of study in God’s Word to ask Him to quiet your mind from all other distractions and open your heart to the things He wants to show you. Take notes as you read, jotting down those things the Lord impresses on your heart.

We look forward to digging into this letter to the Hebrew believers together and to share with each other the insights and encouragements the Lord speaks to our hearts each week.

*Shawn Van Hook
And the LT Women's Ministry Team*

Resources: Many of you have asked us for study resources we would recommend, so below is a list of some resources we feel are most helpful.

Bible apps:

There are a number of free apps you can download that give you access to a library of different Bible translations you can cross-reference. Here are a few we recommend.

- 1) Gateway Bible
- 2) Blue Letter Bible
- 3) You Version

Commentaries:

Commentaries on the Bible can be useful tools, however, we caution you that you need to be careful of which commentators you are gleaning knowledge from. Here are a few of the commentators we would recommend.

Bible Knowledge Commentary (if you could only have one resource, this is the one Pastor Kris would recommend).

Other recommended commentaries include:

Albert Barnes Commentary
Adam Clarke Commentary
David Guzik Commentary

Biblehub.com also has over 50 commentaries you can access online for free.

This is a very abbreviated list of useful tools available to you. We pray as you study God's Word that your passion for the Bible grows stronger and that you will become a "student" who is able to "... rightly divide the word of truth."
(2 Timothy 2:15).