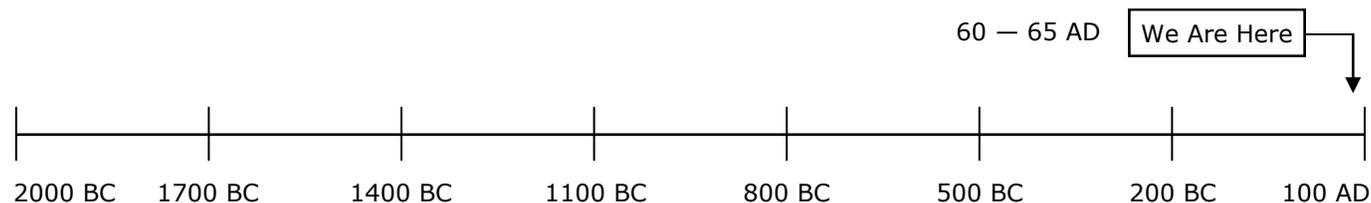


How Now Shall We Live?

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Week 51: December 17-23 — *Hebrews, 1 Peter, 2 Peter*

98% Complete — 8 Days to Go



Helpful Resources

The Light of Christmas (p.261)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

As we have neared the end of our year in the Bible, we read three very important books — *Hebrews* and two letters from Peter. Let's first take a closer look at each book. Then, we will connect them with a common theme.

Hebrews: Although written to Jews who had been converted to Christianity, in an attempt to encourage them to remain in the faith despite persecution, this book is very helpful and challenging to us today. It is simply written with clear objectives and a straightforward manner. Of those objectives, the overarching truth is the superiority of Christ (*1:1-3*) in four areas:

1. **Superior to Angels** (*1:4-14; 2:5-18*): While the author pointed out the helpful ministry of the angels, he also proved that no angel could have accomplished what Christ did. Christ has taken the form of a man and redeemed his fallen race, a task that angels could not perform and a mystery they cannot understand.
2. **Superior to Moses** (*3:1-7*): The author commended Moses for his work on earth, being a faithful servant of God and a leader "in His house." However, Christ was not only a servant among the people of God, He was and is the leader of the entire house (or family) of God. While Moses' ministry was outstanding, it was an illustration of the greater things to come in Christ; and, although Moses attempted to lay down his life for Israel, God did not allow him to do that, but rather He deferred to Jesus, who died for the sins of all.
3. **Superior to Levitical Priests** (*4:14-5:10; 7:1-28; 8:1-13*): Though the priests of the Old Testament served a great purpose, Christ surpassed them all. Not only did He supersede their lineage (of Aaron) through the order of Melchizedek (*5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:15-17*), but He provided access to God through His own sinless life and sacrificial death. Christ in His righteousness provided salvation in a way that they could not. He intercedes for us still, sitting next to the Father, a position or place that no earthly priest has ever held.
4. **Superior to Animal Sacrifices** (*9:11-28; 10:1-18*): Animals are not precious enough to God to warrant full pardon for the sins of any man, much less the sins of all men. Thus, God sent Christ to be sacrificed instead, for His blood is much more precious. and was allowed to be substituted for all the sins of men. If animals could remove sin, then there would have been no need for Jesus to die.

- Personal Application

Letters of Peter: As we turn our attention to Peter's letters, let's combine his encouragements and admonishments with the truths that we discovered in *Hebrews*. The common thread between these three books is a challenge to live righteously and to grow spiritually in light of what we know to be true.

1. [*Hebrews*] **Since Christ is superior in every way to the Old Covenant and since He is clearly sufficient for our salvation, how now shall we live?** Since we know that through Christ we have salvation, we can confidently approach the Lord and know for sure that we shall be saved. Since we are assured of Christ's redemptive work, let us grow steadily in our faith (*11:1-40*), trusting more each day in the One who saved us.
2. [*1 Peter*] **Since we have so much to look forward to, how now shall we live?** Let us not waver in unbelief, but instead let us remain faithful to God despite trials and persecution (*1:3-12*). Let us endure until the end, accepting whatever God has ordained. May we desire to live holy lives as He did (*1:13-2:12*), ridding ourselves of every sin and encumbrance that may get in our way.
3. [*1 Peter*] **Since we understand all that Christ has done, how now shall we live?** Since Christ gave His all for us, we commit to give our all for Him (*1:13-2:12*). Gratitude and love for His sacrifice should be our motivation for obedience and service. Full knowledge of His saving grace and the process of our regeneration should compel us to good works and faithful living. Nothing that is expected or asked of us by the Lord compares to what He endured on our behalf. Any circumstance we face pales in comparison.
4. [*2 Peter*] **Since we know that the end times may be near, how now shall we live?** Since we know there will be a judgment day, a day when we shall be recompensed for our deeds in the flesh, whether good or bad, how now shall we live? Since we know that we will meet Jesus one day and be held accountable for our lives, how now shall we live? We should live to honor Him instead of ourselves. He should live to please Him instead of ourselves. We should strive to meet the needs of others instead of our own (*3:1-16*).

How Now Shall We Live?

Let's consider each part of Peter's question. First, what does it mean "to live?" Paul said, "to live is Christ." Christ is everything to us, thus our everything is for Him. Second, we shall live "but how?" Paul said, "Whatever you do, do all in the name of Jesus." Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with all that you are, and love your neighbor as yourself." The final part of Peter's challenge is the "now" part. We are not to live for now; that is a selfish, temporal mindset. However, we are to set our minds on the future, on the day when we will stand before God. In order to be ready for that day, we must live for Christ now. How we live now will determine our rewards then.

The Bottom Line

Because Christ has *given His all for us*, we gladly now *give our all to Him*.

Questions to Consider

1. If you were trying to convince one of the sufficiency of Christ, what would you tell him?
2. What is the greatest motivation for you to live a righteous life?