

A More Excellent Name

October 29 – Hebrews 1:1-14

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 301 – 64 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

We transitioned to the mysterious book of *Hebrews*, mysterious because the author is not identified. Scholars have argued for centuries for one writer or another, but the truth is we just don't know (someone from Italy who knew Timothy, *13:23, 24*). No matter who the writer is, the words were still inspired by God through His Spirit. The book is still very Christ-centered and points people to the gospel.

As to the title of the book, this was given much later by early Christians. Since the audience seems to be Jewish, and the writer's arguments are aimed at proving Christ's superiority to Jewish icons (i.e., angels, Moses, the High Priest, etc.), it has been called *Hebrews*. As to its placement, the author refers to intense persecution (possibly under Nero), so it could be dated anywhere from 64-70 AD, which is why the chronological Bible places it after Paul's letters.

The writer's opening arguments were meant to prove the superiority of Christ. For example, though God had spoken to His people through the prophets in many ways prior to Christ, "in these last days, He has spoken to us through His Son" (*v.1*). In other words, who is greater, those who prophesy or the One who fulfills the prophecies? Who is more important, those who are sent by God to speak to His people, or the One who is God and who comes from heaven to be with and die for His people?

The writer immediately supported his claim of Jesus' superiority by providing evidence. For example, "He is the appointed heir of all things" (*v.2*). Through Christ, God made the world (*v.2*). Christ was (and is) "the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of His nature, who upholds all things" (*v.3*). Finally, after "He made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand" of God in heaven (*v.3, 13*). **No prophet could claim such a list of credentials. Jesus is greater than all of them!**

Not only did Jesus surpass the prophets, He is also "much better than the angels" (*v.4*). Again, the writer provided Old Testament quotes as evidence to support his claim (*v.5-14*). For example, to which of the angels did God refer to as His Son? None of them (*v.5; Ps. 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14*). Besides, "All the angels worshipped Jesus at His birth" (*Heb. 1:6; Lk. 2:13, 14*).

The writer continued. While the angels are created beings, ministers of God, Jesus is God, who "laid the foundation of the earth" and who sits on the throne above everyone else (*Heb. 1:7-14; Ps. 104; 45:6, 7*). Though the writer continued with more evidence of Jesus' superiority, he has already made a strong case. **Jesus is "much better than the angels," for He has "a more excellent name" (*Heb. 1:4*).**

Daily Reflection

Why did the writer think it was necessary to spend so much of his book (and he is not done) proving that the Messiah was superior? The Jews held in high regard the prophets of old (though not while they were alive), as well as the angels. Angels made several appearances in the Old Testament and were given important responsibilities (i.e., giving the Law, *Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19*). Thus, it was commonly held that angels, especially archangels (i.e., Michael), eclipsed the status and authority of everyone, including the Messiah. This letter attempted to dispel such beliefs and elevate Jesus to His rightful position in their minds.

What about you? Does Jesus occupy the highest place in your mind, or does He take second place to others? Explain your answer.

So Great a Salvation

October 30 – Hebrews 2:1-18

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 302 – 63 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

The writer of *Hebrews* continued his arguments proving the superiority of Jesus over the angels. **However, he made the argument personal by applying the truth of Christ's superiority to our salvation.** Because Christ has "the more excellent name" and is "much better than the angels" (1:4), then "we must pay closer attention to what we have heard" (2:1).

Simply put, if the words of angels were (or are) heeded, then how much more should we heed the words of the Messiah, who is God Himself and superior to the angels? **His words and actions have provided us salvation, something no angel can offer (v.2, 3). "How will we escape if we neglect so great" an offer?**

Before continuing this thought on salvation, the writer added one more piece of evidence that angels were not to be as esteemed as the Jews believed (v.5-8). After creation, God gave the responsibility of stewardship over creation to mankind (*Gen. 1:26*). Likewise, the Lord has foreshadowed that man will reign in the kingdom of God after Jesus' return (*Ps. 8:4-6*). However, because of sin, mankind has failed as God's caretakers. Therefore, He sent His Son Jesus to redeem man's fallen status. As a result of all that He has done, God has highly exalted Jesus with the name above all names and given Him authority above all things, "having put all things in subjection under His feet" (*Heb. 2:8*).

But, as remarkable as all of this sounds, there is more! Jesus, who is greater than the angels, made Himself "a little lower than the angels" and came to earth as a man (v.9). During His time on earth, He suffered at the hands of sinful men and was put to death (v.10). His death, however, "brought many sons to glory" (v.10), meaning that His sacrifice made our salvation possible. The writer finished the chapter by explaining this amazing feat.

Since we are "children of flesh and blood," Jesus "partook of the same" and became like us (v.14). Since He was human, Jesus was tempted as we are (without sin) and, thus, He "came to the aid of those who are tempted" (v.18). Because of our sin, death is the wage or punishment. Death is the evil fruit of the devil's work in the Garden (*Gen. 3*). All people die because all people sin (*Rom. 5:12*). The devil has held that power over us since the Fall.

However, because Jesus lived a sinless human life, He was eligible to offer Himself as a sacrifice and die in our place. Jesus' death is the only acceptable ransom to satisfy God's wrath against sin. When the wrath of an offended person is appeased, that is called propitiation (*Heb. 2:17*). Jesus laid down His sinless life on our behalf, thereby substituting Himself as a propitiation to God and ransomed us from sin's penalty. Simply put, Jesus died in our place so that we might have life. Therefore, the devil can no longer hold death over us as something to fear. Besides, with Christ's resurrection and promise of eternal life, death no longer has the sting it once did (v.15).

Daily Reflection

Jesus "had to be made like His brethren (human) in all things, so that He might make propitiation for the sins of the people" (v.17). What an amazing truth! **Thus, "there is salvation in no one else," not even angels** (*Acts 4:12*). "There is no other name that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

In fact, God "does not give this kind of help to the angels" (*Heb. 2:16*). Those who rebelled against Him in heaven (Lucifer and his followers) will not be redeemed. **But God, in His mercy, has chosen to offer salvation to fallen human beings (that's us), only through the shed blood of His Son. How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?**

Who Will Hold Fast?

October 31 – Hebrews 3:1-19

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 303 – 62 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

The writer of *Hebrews* made his third case for the superiority of Christ. He has already proven that Christ is greater than the prophets and the angels. Today, he proved Christ's superiority to Moses, who is a Jewish national hero, most highly esteemed of the Old Testament saints.

He began by referring to Jesus as "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession" (3:1). This is the second time that Christ has been called a high priest (2:17). Remember that reference, as the writer will flesh out that theme later in his book. Calling Jesus an Apostle might be a little startling at first, but the author is not comparing Jesus to His disciples or to Paul. The word *apostle* simply means "one who has been sent," a messenger or envoy. Jesus was sent to earth by His Father, so He is the foremost Apostle.

Moses was amazing! He led the Israelites out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and to the Promised Land. He even gave Israel the laws of God and performed miracles. But the writer pointed out three ways that Jesus is still superior to Moses. While both men were faithful to serve "God's house" (or people), Moses was part of God's house (one of God's people), while Jesus was the builder of the house (3:2, 3). The builder of the house has more honor than the one who lives in the house (v.4).

Second, Moses was a servant of God, but Jesus was the Son of God (who is really a member of the trinity and is God Himself, v.5, 6). Third, Moses was "in" the house of God, but Jesus is "over" the house of God (v.5, 6). Again, Moses was incredible in his own way, but he's no comparison to Christ. Moses was a man, but Christ was (and is) the Godman.

Notice that the writer described the house of God today as us. "Christ was faithful over His house (God's house) — whose house we are" (v.6). **God's house today is the Church, all true believers in Christ.**

From here, the author warned his readers of the dangers of an unbelieving heart (v.6-19). On the surface, one could get the idea that these verses insinuate that a Christian could lose his salvation. He wrote things like, "If we hold fast our confidence until the end..." (v.6), and, "Take care not to fall away from the living God..." (v.12), and again, "If we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end" (v.14). But that is not what the writer is saying at all. **It is impossible for us to undo what God has done for us through Christ. We are saved for eternity.**

What the writer is saying is that there are those among us — Christians in name only — who claim to be followers of Christ, but who are really pretenders. When the trials come (like persecution), they will tuck their tail and run because they were never truly believing in Christ at all. The Israelites were his example (v.7-11, 16-19). **They were God's chosen nation, yes, but not all of them believed God with their heart. They honored Him with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him.** Therefore, they rebelled against God and missed out on His rest — the Promised Land of Canaan.

Daily Reflection

Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven... I will declare to them, 'Depart from Me, for I never knew you...'" (*Matt. 7:21-23*). There are many people in our country, in our churches, in our families, who say that they are Christians, but they will not be there in heaven with Christ. They never truly believed in Him for salvation.

Those who hold fast their confidence and remain faithful are true believers. While faithfulness is not a means to retain our salvation, faithfulness is evidence that our salvation is genuine. So, what are we to do? "Take care, first, that there is not in you an evil, unbelieving heart" (v.12). Then, "encourage one another day after day..., so that none of you will be hardened" and fall away (v.13).

The Believer's Rest

November 1 – Hebrews 4:1-13

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 304 – 61 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

The writer of *Hebrews* proved Christ's superiority over Joshua, another Old Testament Jewish hero. His superiority relates to God's promise of rest. **Though Joshua partially fulfilled the promise, Jesus completely fulfilled it.** Let's look a little more closely at this promise.

The promise of entering God's rest is mentioned in the first verse (v.1). The writer connected this promise to the previous passage regarding the Israelites' failure to enter the Promised Land of Canaan because of their unbelief (3:9-11, 16-19; Heb. 4:3, 5). Thus, many of them did not get to experience God's promise of rest. **Yet the promise remains today (4:6, 7), meaning the door is still open for people to enjoy God's rest.**

But what is meant by "God's rest"? There is a theme of rest in the Bible. This rest was first mentioned at creation when God completed His work in six days and rested on the seventh (*Gen. 2:2; Heb. 4:4*). The Lord was not tired from working. Rather He was finished and satisfied with His work. **Therefore, the rest symbolizes the end of work.** However, with man's fall from grace and the entrance of sin, we were (and are) not able to enjoy God's rest on earth. **We will not get to enjoy God's rest until we are with Him in heaven.**

However, that rest was symbolized on earth by the Promised Land of Canaan, the land God gave to Abraham and his descendants. Though they had been working as slaves in Egypt, God sent Moses and Joshua to free them from bondage and lead them to their rest in Canaan. But, because of their unbelief and failure to trust God, many of them did not enter that rest (*Heb. 4:1-6*). Therefore, Moses failed to give His people rest. **Even when Joshua led the people into Canaan 40 years later, the Israelites did not experience complete rest.** Since they disobeyed God and did not rid the land of His enemies, they were constantly harassed and attacked. Simply put, their rest was hindered.

So then, the rest that God's people sought, and which was promised, was not fully enjoyed.

Thus, God "fixed another day" of rest, a better day, which David prophesied (*Ps. 95:7-11; Heb. 4:7-10*). "There still remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God" (*Heb. 4:10*).

Jesus is our Sabbath rest. He fulfilled God's promise. Because of His work on the cross, He earned our salvation with His blood. Therefore, because of His work, we do not work for our salvation. We can rest in Him, knowing our salvation is secure and that we will get to enjoy God's rest forever in heaven. Thus, Jesus is superior to Moses and Joshua. He leads us to rest that is eternal and final. **When the struggles of our earthly life are over, when we get to enjoy the eternal life that has been promised to us, then we will experience true rest.**

Daily Reflection

Because Christ has made that rest available for us, the writer of *Hebrews* warned, "Therefore, let us be diligent to enter that rest..." (v.11). This warning reiterates what he's said before. "If you hear God's voice, don't harden your heart" (3:7, 8, 15). Jesus is the only hope for our souls. "How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (2:3).

Those who reject God, beware. He knows your heart. "No creature is hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to His eyes..." (4:13). But surely God can't see your heart? Think again. His Word "is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit... able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (v.12). He knows everything about you. There is nothing you can hide from Him.

Are you resting in Him or rejecting Him? **Apart from Christ, you will never experience rest, not on earth, nor in the afterlife.** "Come to Me," Jesus said, "all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (*Matt. 11:28*).

Draw Near With Confidence

November 2 – Hebrews 4:14-5:11

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 305 – 60 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

The writer of *Hebrews* continued his case proving the superiority of Christ over Old Testament icons. So far, he has addressed Christ's preeminence over the prophets, angels, Moses, Joshua, and the Promised Land (rest). Next, he addressed the exalted position of Israel's high priests.

High priests were Israel's spiritual leaders. They also had the responsibility of overseeing the tabernacle or Temple sacrifices and offerings (5:1). High priests had to be in the lineage of Aaron (who was the first, 5:4) and consecrated with blood. They wore special clothes and performed key ceremonies, for example the Day of Atonement. Once a year, high priests were permitted to go beyond the inner veil and enter the holiest place of the tabernacle or Temple (called the Holy of Holies) and atone for the sins of the people with the blood of a lamb.

However, even after carefully following all the prescribed rituals, high priests were just sinful men who needed to make sacrifices for themselves (5:3). But, in their sin, high priests could sympathize with other sinful men and their weaknesses (5:2).

Now that we have a general understanding of the role of the high priest, the writer of *Hebrews* connected him to Christ, who was "designated a high priest by God" (5:10). For example, since Jesus was tempted while in the flesh (without sin), He sympathizes with us in our weaknesses and sufferings (4:15). However, Jesus didn't just pass through the inner veil, He tore it (Matt. 27:51). Furthermore, with His ascension, He exceeded the Holy of Holies by "passing through the heavens" and going directly to God the Father (Heb. 4:14). How was He able to accomplish this feat? With what sacrifice was He able to atone for the sins of His people? His own. He was the Lamb who sacrificed Himself, and by His blood He purchased forgiveness (atonement) for our sins (5:7-9).

However, the only hang up with connecting Christ to the high priest is that Jesus is not in the lineage of Aaron, but David. From whom, then, does Christ get His priestly credentials? The writer wrote, "The order of Melchizedek" (5:6, 10). Melchizedek is a mysterious Old Testament priest who appeared to Abraham (Gen. 14:18-20). There is much to say about this figure. He is surrounded by a great deal of symbolism, which the author will unpack in a later chapter. For now, he wrote, "Concerning him we have much to say, and it's hard to explain..." (Heb. 5:11).

Daily Reflection

What was the point of all this talk about the high priest? The author was not only connecting Christ to the role of the high priest, but he was also trying to demonstrate that Christ's priesthood exceeded that of any Old Testament priest. Why does that matter?

Because Christ did more than any ordinary man could do, He afforded us something that we could never afford ourselves — a right relationship with God, free of sin. **Because the veil between us and God no longer exists, we can enter the very presence of God ourselves. We have no need of earthly priests. Christ is our high priest, and because of His priesthood, we have access to the throne of God.**

"Therefore, draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that you may receive mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (4:16). Because of Christ, you can boldly go to God in prayer, not proudly, but humbly, and lay your cares at His feet. What do you want to tell Him?

Press On to Maturity

November 3 – Hebrews 5:12-6:20

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 306 – 59 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

The writer of *Hebrews* admonished his readers for their spiritual immaturity and impatience. He had so much to say (for example, about Melchizedek), but he was hesitant because they were not quite ready to hear it (5:11). Even though he eventually shared the information, his frustration with them was evident.

Imagine a teacher who can't move on to more difficult lessons because her students have not grasped the more elementary teaching (6:1-3). Or imagine a pastor who must repeat simple, shallow truths because his congregation is not ready to wade into deeper doctrinal waters. Finally, imagine a ten-year-old who still drinks milk from a bottle because he has not learned to chew solid food (5:12-14).

What is happening? **Spiritual infancy (or a lack of spiritual growth) can be an indicator of several causes — spiritual laziness, deception, disobedience, or an absence of saving faith.** Christians who are spiritually lazy are unwilling to put in the work with spiritual disciplines (i.e., Bible reading, prayer, going to church, giving, using spiritual gifts, obedience). Thus, they don't develop as others do, or even at all. Those who are deceived have been taken captive by the enemy's lies (i.e., unbiblical philosophies, secular wisdom, worldly distractions, etc.).

Those Christians who have allowed unconfessed sin in their lives are callous to the Holy Spirit. They are disinterested and apathetic to spiritual things. Those who have no saving faith are just "playing the game," pretending to be Christian. They never really surrendered their lives to Christ and do not have the indwelling Spirit. As a result, they fall away (6:4-8).

In the case of the Hebrews, the writer believed it was spiritual laziness. He hoped for "better things concerning them, for he had witnessed signs of their spiritual growth (6:9, 10). He challenged them to demonstrate the same

diligence in the other areas of their lives, that they would refuse to be sluggish, but instead that they would be faithful and patient (6:9-12).

Regarding patience, the writer knew that his people were enduring persecution and that it was tempting for them to leave the faith. Thus, he assured his readers that the hope of their salvation was secure, like an anchor (v.19), that God, who cannot lie, was faithful and reliable (v.13-18), and that Christ, like a high priest, had indeed become "a forerunner for us," going where no man had ever gone, beyond the veil to the throne of God (v.19, 20). In other words, those who put their faith in these things will not be disappointed. God will not fail to accomplish all that He has promised.

Daily Reflection

So then, what are we to do? "Leave the elementary teaching behind and press on to maturity..." (6:1). Be diligent to "realize the full assurance of hope — Christ — until the end" (v.11). Avoid being "sluggish (lazy) but rather imitate those who through faith and patience have inherited the promises..." (v.12).

Personally, I like the writer's challenge, "By this time you ought to be teachers..." (5:12). One of the best ways to grow up in Christ is to teach others. **Teaching, leading, or mentoring others forces you to grow deeper in your own understanding, application, and growth.**

Evaluate your spiritual growth. How are you doing? How are you "teaching others"?

To lead someone, you must be a step ahead.

Our Great High Priest

November 4 – Hebrews 7:1-8:2

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT
Day 307 – 58 Days to Go

Today in Your Reading

The writer of *Hebrews* continued his case proving the superiority of Christ over Old Testament icons. So far, he has addressed Christ's preeminence over the prophets, angels, Moses, Joshua, the Promised Land, and the high priests. **Next, he addressed Christ's superiority over the priestly lineage of Aaron (the first high priest).** Not only is Christ superior to the Old Testament priests, but His lineage also supersedes that of the Levites, from which Aaron was a descendant. How? Christ is "a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (7:17). What does that mean?

After having mentioned Melchizedek three times already, the writer of Hebrews finally explained this man and his importance to the superiority of Christ. Melchizedek was a mysterious priest who appeared to Abraham after he had rescued Lot from the warring kings (7:1; *Gen. 14:18-20*). Who was he, where did he come from, why did he bless Abraham, and why did Abraham give him a tenth of all he had won? The writer of *Hebrews* answered these questions.

First, Melchizedek's name meant "king of righteousness" (*Heb. 7:2*). Second, we are told that he was also the King of Salem, which means "king of peace" (7:1). Next, we learn that Melchizedek had no father or mother, no genealogy, no birthday, and no day of death. How is that possible? That would mean he was eternal. Exactly. The writer said it this way, "He (Melchizedek), like the Son of God, remains a priest perpetually, meaning forever. What?

Maybe this will help — Melchizedek was an Old Testament appearance of Christ (a theophany). Abraham recognized Melchizedek to be unique, more than a man, God in the flesh. That's why Melchizedek blessed Abraham (7:1), and that's why Abraham gave him an offering, or a tithe, a tenth of his spoils (7:2, 4). To give an offering to anyone but God would've been idolatry or to worship a false god.

But wait! There's more! Old Testament priests collected a tenth by Law, but Melchizedek collected a tenth from Abraham, who existed long before the Law (7:5-10). What's the point? **Since Melchizedek's priesthood superseded Aaron's Levitical priesthood, Melchizedek is superior.** Why does that matter? Though Christ descended from the tribe of Judah (7:14), His priesthood is according to the lineage of Melchizedek, meaning it supersedes, and is superior to, the Levites (7:11-19).

Since that is true — that Christ's priesthood supersedes Aaron's priesthood — and He still lives (as Melchizedek does), **His priesthood is permanent and perpetual. Christ replaced all priests, once and for all, and His work as our Great High Priest continues forever (7:20-24).** Why is that important? He will always make intercession for us before the Father (7:25).

Finally, our Great High Priest is "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens" (7:26). While the Levitical priests had to offer sacrifices for their own sins, Christ did not (7:27-28). Furthermore, His sacrifice was so perfect that He only needed to offer it once (7:27). After He gave His sacrifice, He sat down at the right hand of the Father in heaven, the true tabernacle or temple (8:1, 2). Old Testament priests never sat down because their work was never finished. There were always sins for which to atone. But when Jesus died on the cross, He atoned for all sin!

Daily Reflection

Praise God today for your Great High Priest! You need no one to get to the Father but Him!
