

Questions on Hebrews – Day 1

1. Introduction and Overview

- A. What question is Hebrews answering?
1. Hebrews was addressed to a severely persecuted church. How are 21st century western Christians 'persecuted', if at all? What does Hebrews have to say about our situation?
 2. Sin and sacrifice feature as prominent topics in Hebrews. Some parts of the church emphasise them almost to the point of forgetting about forgiveness and freedom from guilt. At the other extreme, some seem to forget about the problem of sin altogether. Can you briefly summarise how we should think about sin and sacrifice, in light of Hebrews?
 3. Follow the 'strand' of Melchizedek (an Old Testament priest whom Hebrews says pre-figured Jesus), which starts in chapter 5 and ends in chapter 7. Circle every mention of his name. Looking at the outline of Hebrews in your materials as well as the listing of 'exhortations' we have marked, what does the thread of Melchizedek tell you about how Hebrews is organised?
 4. List your own 'favourite bits' of Hebrews.

2. Greater than Angels and Prophets

1. Does Christ's humanity have any meaning for you? Is he first and foremost the pre-existent Son of God and ruler of the universe sitting at the RH of the Majesty in Heaven and therefore remote from your existence? Or are you able to hold the two aspects of his humanity and divinity together? If so, how?
2. Is it necessary to have suffered in order to minister to others? To what extent do you have to have experienced something to empathise with others? More positively, are there examples that you can discuss where difficulties you may have faced have equipped you to help others? Do we rely too much on others when only God knows what we are really going through?

3. Greater than Moses and Joshua

1. Jesus is given the title "Apostle and High Priest" in verse 3:1. What other titles for Jesus have been seen in the first three chapters of Hebrews? What does each title say about him?

2. The writer of Hebrews continually quotes the phrase "do not harden your hearts". How does a hardened heart omit itself from the Sabbath rest of God? How do you see a "hardened heart" in a modern/personal context?
3. What does it mean to be separated physically and spiritually, emotionally and intellectually by the word of God? Can you see an example of this in your own life?

4. Jesus Our Great High Priest

1. Does Jesus meet your needs in being able to approach God and in feeling that you are accepted by God? Do you find that you can pray easily? Is God approachable to you, or would you rather go to another human being?
2. Try to imagine the extent of the sufferings of Jesus when he was tempted, yet without sin; compare that with our suffering, when we so easily give in. How does this make you feel?
3. Discuss our attitude when we approach the throne of grace. Do we come confidently (yet reverently) as the Hebrews writer exhorts us? Do we come brashly and in an over-familiar way? Are we reluctant to come at all, and thus fail to receive the mercy and grace that God promises?

5. A Better Priesthood

1. Jesus is a priest for a new covenant, that fulfills the old covenant based on obedience to law. How do we now interpret Jesus' own view on the law expressed in Matthew 6:17-20? Has the old covenant been removed? Do we have any obligation to the old law?
2. Jesus is now our Great High Priest, and intercedes for us constantly. Can you think of other cases where Jesus interceded for people? Is this how you think of Jesus interceding for you?
3. Melchizedek is a priest of a new order, one who has power and a kingdom. Can you outline why the role of priest and king overlapping are so crucial to our view of the church today?