



JESUS IS GREATER

PART ONE IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS



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STUDY 1 – JESUS: THE FINAL REVELATION

READ: HEBREWS 1:1–4

“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...” –Hebrews 1:3

OVERVIEW

R. Albert Mohler Jr., in *Exalting Jesus in Hebrews*, says the first verses of Hebrews “are some of the most remarkable in all of Scripture”! These four verses lay out a vision of the rest of the book and contain beautiful teachings on God’s revelation to us, creation, the Trinity, the relationship between the Old and New Testament, and the person (who he is), work (what he has accomplished), and excellence of Jesus – just to name a few!

The letter is written to a Jewish community that had become followers of Christ and shows the superiority of Jesus to their old ways. The truth that Jesus is better echoes in each of the opening verses. It is an exhortation and encouragement to endure and stay faithful to Jesus and his gospel.

Right off the bat, the writer encourages them (and us) with a statement of fact: “God has spoken” (vv. 1-2). The passage reaches all the way back to creation and the ways God has revealed himself since, which culminates in speaking to us through his Son. This reveals the essential elements of his message to us: who Jesus is and what he has done. This is the good news of the gospel.

Jesus is the:

- Son of God – the fullest and most complete revelation of the Father
- One whom God has spoken to us through – God’s final and definitive revelation
- Heir of all things – he was invested with everything of God, he has full authority
- Creator of the world – preexistent, authority, power, and full deity
- Radiance of the glory of God – in all attributes and abilities, exactly like the Father
- Exact imprint of his nature – definitive representative; identical substance of God
- Upholder of the universe by the word of his power – sustainer of the entire world

It is not only who Jesus is that is important, but what he has done. He has made “purification for our sins” (v. 3). Jesus has dealt with the primary human need and dilemma; he has dealt with our sin problem by dying on the cross. In his resurrection and ascension, he “sat down” – to show the work was finished – at the “right hand of the Majesty on High” – the place of ultimate power and authority. It is because of who Jesus is and what he has done that we can both know God and have eternal life with him.



MESSAGE NOTES AND APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges, or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. What is something you used to do that you have a tendency to drift back to (or dream about going back to) even though you have a better life now?

2. Read the following passages and discuss the ways God reveals himself and his story to us. Why is it important that "God spoke"?

Psalm 19

Luke 24:36-44

John 1:1-18



3. What is the message God has spoken to us through the prophets and ultimately his Son that is revealed in his word?

4. Look at what Hebrews 1:1-4 says about who Jesus is and what he has accomplished on behalf of those who believe in him. What questions do you have about Jesus? How do the truths in the passage cause you to respond (both inward conviction and outward action)?

5. Functionally, what (or who) do you tend to think is more excellent than Jesus? Use this text to show yourself how Jesus is more beautiful, satisfying, and excellent.

AS YOU GO...

- What are specific steps you can take to grow in your understanding and application of the message God has revealed to us through his scriptures and his Son?
- Take time this week to meditate on who Jesus is and what he has accomplished through his life, death, and resurrection. Praise him.
- Discuss with your group and others what you hope to grow in through this study in Hebrews. Pray that God will make you more like him.



PRAYER

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, we thank you for who you are. You are beautiful in and of yourself. We thank you for your grace in speaking to us through your creation, your word, your Spirit, and ultimately your Son. We thank you and praise you as the creator and sustainer of all things, including us. Father, we confess that we drift toward lesser things and lesser ways than you. We are sinners. But we thank you for the sending of Jesus who made purification for our sins. Who conquered sin and sat down at your right hand in victory. Oh God, empower us to live in light of who you are both for your glory and our joy.

PRAYER REQUESTS



STUDY 2 – JESUS: BETTER THAN ANGELS

READ: HEBREWS 1:5–14

“But of the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.’” –Hebrews 1:8

OVERVIEW

The main idea we see in this passage (and the entire book) is that God the Father has given Jesus Christ the Son a *name greater than all names and the throne to a kingdom that has no end* (Mohler; emphasis added). And it starts by showing that Jesus is greater – better, superior – to angels (v. 4). Why?

As discussed in the previous study, the letter is written to a Jewish community that had become followers of Christ. The letter shows the superiority of Jesus to their old ways; it is an exhortation and encouragement to endure and stay faithful to Jesus. Literature from the period between the Old and New Testament reveals an intense focus on angels. There was considerable reflection (some good and some in error) on angels as messengers and protectors, as well as a rise in the notion of guardian angels. With that, it makes sense that the writer starts with clarification on angels and, specifically, Jesus’ relationship to angels – primarily that Jesus is greater and more excellent.

The argument made is that Jesus is superior because of his name and identity as God’s Son. Angels may serve as God’s agents, God’s messengers, and as God’s witnesses, but God never makes claims of sonship for any of the angels. Jesus is both the one and only Son of God and the Son who fulfills the promises of God. It is the angels who worship Christ, not Christ worshipping the angels (Mohler). Jesus is worthy of worship (v. 6).

He continues to show that, while angels experience God’s presence and carry out his purposes, they are merely servants (v. 7). While they are servants, the Son is divine. While angels surround the throne of God, the Son sits on the throne of God. While angels are sent, the Son is the Anointed One who was sent for the sins of the world (John 3:16).

The passage closes with a distinction between the creator (Jesus) and the creation. Jesus “laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning,” will “remain,” “never be changed,” and “have no end.” While created things (including angels) will “perish,” “wear out,” and “be changed.” Jesus is superior and can be trusted, because he is creator, eternal, permanent, unending, and seated at the right hand of the Father.

Most importantly, angels are ministering to serve those who are to inherit salvation, while Jesus is the means of salvation as the Son of God who “came to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10).



MESSAGE NOTES AND APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges, or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. The writer is showing that Jesus is “more excellent” than angels and to be worshiped over the angels. Where in the Bible do you recall angels appearing? What was their role?

2. In what ways is Jesus superior to angels? What is his relationship to angels (or the angels’ relationship to him)?

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PRAYER

Jesus, we confess that you are superior to, greater than, and better than anything that is created. You are the creator and sustainer of all things. With the angels, we sing of your grace, glory, and goodness. Jesus, you are God. Jesus, you are worthy of worship. Jesus, you are the creator and sustainer of all things. Jesus, you are enthroned as King over all. Jesus, you are eternal. We confess we hold other things as supreme over you. Oh God, help us to have a right view of you. Thank you for the inheritance we have as sons of the most high and the salvation we have through you.

PRAYER REQUESTS



STUDY 3 – A WARNING: DON’T DRIFT FROM THE GOSPEL

READ: HEBREWS 2:1–4

*“Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.”
–Hebrews 2:1*

OVERVIEW

Chapter 2 begins by building off of the previous chapter’s incredible explanation of Jesus’ *supremacy* as the Son of God, being placed on God’s throne higher than the angels, and *authority* as God’s final revelation to proclaim redemption through his death and resurrection. In light of the greatness of God’s Son, the author of Hebrews encourages us to pay that much more attention to what we have heard from Jesus. The author’s encouragement consists of some simple logic. In verses 2 and 3, he writes that, if the message declared previously by angels was reliable and God punished those who did not listen to it, how much more for those who reject the message from God’s own Son?

Yet the reality is that we all struggle to pay attention to the message of Christ. This is in part because the world we live in is not neutral. We find ourselves living in a contested space where we are constantly challenged by messages contrary to the gospel. We see this, for example, in advertisements promising contentment through buying more stuff or popular worldviews preaching that a happier life is found in following your deepest inner feelings. Listening to these contrary messages over the message of Christ leads to a slow but steady drifting from the gospel, which is where we find our life, joy, and peace. And so, because of this, the author of Hebrews warns us here not to “neglect such a great salvation.”

The warning held in this passage should not result in a deepening dependency on our own strength, but in Jesus’ strength. The bad news is that, left on our own, we all drift from the gospel. The good news is that Jesus died for gospel-drifting people like you and me. And, as our great high priest who is able to sympathize with us in our weakness, he is praying for you – right this second – that you would continue in his life-giving gospel. How can we “neglect such a great salvation” when we know how loved we are by Jesus?



MESSAGE NOTES AND APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges, or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. The writer of Hebrews refers to two messages in this passage: the message “declared by angels” in verse 2 (the old covenant) and the message “declared...by the Lord” in verse 3 (the new covenant). What are these two messages? How are they similar, and how are they different?

2. In verse 3, the writer says that the message of God’s grace in Christ was first told by Jesus and the early church, “while God also bore witness by signs and wonders.” What does this reveal to us about the purpose of signs and miracles in the Bible?



PRAYER

Father, thank you for the gracious gift of your Son, Jesus. Thank you that for my sake, he became sin, who knew no sin, that in him I would be made right with you. God, I confess, there are so many times that I drift from the gospel of Jesus to some other message. Thank you that, through Jesus, I can confess this to you, knowing that I have your free forgiveness in Christ. Holy Spirit, empower me this week to cling to the message of the gospel in a world that so often preaches the opposite. Jesus, thank you that I am kept in the grip of your grace, and your hold will never let go. Pray for me this week, that I would keep your gospel in sight, where I find my life, joy, and peace.

PRAYER REQUESTS



STUDY 4 – JESUS: HUMILIATED AND EXALTED

READ: HEBREWS 2:5–18

“Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.” –Hebrews 2:8b-9

OVERVIEW

The gospel contains within it many paradoxes. To be rich, you must be poor...to save your life, you must lose your life...to be great, you must be the least. But perhaps the biggest paradox of all lies in the nature of Jesus himself, the Son of God, who experienced the depths of humiliation in his crucifixion and the heights of exaltation in his resurrection. It is this theme, of humiliation and exaltation, that the author of Hebrews expands on in the majority of chapter 2.

The author starts by celebrating the “coronation of the last Adam” in verses 5-9 (Mohler). Quoting Psalm 8, he shows the fulfillment of God’s plans for Jesus, who in his resurrected glory is exalted above all things. But the passage takes a shift in verse 10, revealing that the glory of Jesus is surprisingly based on his suffering. Rather than a life of never-ending praise, the King of the universe subjected himself to a life of humiliation, leading him to the cross, where he ultimately suffered and died for our sin. This humiliation was necessary in order that Jesus would share in our lives of sin and brokenness (yet without sinning) and – having fully conquered death and the devil – invite us to share in his life of glory.

This is the ultimate paradox of the gospel, the simultaneous humiliation and exaltation of Jesus. Yet it’s not just the paradox of Jesus’ life, but of our lives too. You could say that, in Christ, our life becomes one of humiliation and exaltation. Right now, we still feel the biting presence of sin in our lives. And it’s this sin that causes us to experience pains deeper than we can imagine. Yet, at the same time, we also have the presence of the resurrected Jesus in our lives, who by his grace has delivered us from darkness into light and has promised one day to fully renew our world. If living in this tension sounds difficult, it is. But thankfully it’s not up to your own strength to carry on. In the gospel, you are united with Christ who has experienced the depths of sin and the heights of resurrected glory, all for you. He has gone before you, and now is working in you, so that his life becomes your life.



MESSAGE NOTES AND APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges, or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. When you think about Jesus, do you see him more as “meek and mild,” or as glorious king? How does the writer of Hebrews show Christ embodying both of these qualities in his life, death, and resurrection?

2. The writer of Hebrews says in verse 10 that God made Jesus “perfect through suffering.” Knowing that Jesus never sinned, how is it that he was “made perfect” through his life of humiliation?



PRAYER

Jesus, thank you that, for my sake, you were made perfect through suffering that you may bring your people to glory. I confess that I want to be united to your life of exaltation, but not humiliation. I confess that I want you to make my life "better," not for you to come in and be my life. Thank you that you have become my merciful and faithful high priest, that you have died for my sins, and that you are able to help me when I struggle with your plans for my life. Thank you that, by your grace, I can freely confess this as you lead me in joyful repentance. Help me today as I follow you in a life you never promised would be easy, but always promised would be drenched in your love.

PRAYER REQUESTS



STUDY 5 – JESUS: GREATER THAN MOSES

READ: HEBREWS 3:1–6

“Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.” –Hebrews 3:5–6

OVERVIEW

What’s your response to something new? Some of us love new things. We’re the first in line for the newest iPhone, the latest remade movie, or the most current fashion trends. Others of us are skeptical of new things. We struggle to immediately trust the newest trend that’s here for a minute, then gone forever. This is felt even more when the “something new” seems to threaten a core belief we hold. This was the dilemma faced by the religious people of Jesus’ day upon encountering him. Here comes a man who was essentially a mechanic, from a small town, claiming that all the promises of God would be fulfilled in him. How could this be?

This argument of Jesus – that every Old Testament promise and prophecy would be fulfilled in him – is the central argument of the book of Hebrews, and is where the author now turns more directly. The author begins in Hebrews 3:1–6 by comparing Jesus’ faithfulness to God with the faithfulness of Moses, who the author of Hebrews reminds us was “faithful in all of God’s house” (v. 2). Yet Jesus is considered to be deserving of greater glory than Moses. How can that be? The author gives us two metaphors to help us understand: First, he states that while Moses was faithful, he was merely a *part of God’s house* (God’s people), yet Jesus is the *builder of the house*. And while Moses was faithful as a *servant*, Jesus was faithful as a *son*. As shocking as it must have sounded to a 1st Century religious Jew, in Jesus we have something far greater than Moses. We have a new covenant with a greater promise than before.

The newness of Jesus in God’s plan to rescue sinners shouldn’t produce skepticism, but rather security. In Jesus, we have our great apostle (literally, “sent one”) who was commissioned by God before time began to come and reveal the Father’s love toward sinners. In Jesus, we have “the high priest who has performed a superior sacrifice on your behalf” (Mohler). And in Jesus, we have the heir of God’s house who has freely welcomed in lost people from every walk of life through his death and resurrection. All of this propels a life of hope and confidence in the One that all of scripture points to.



MESSAGE NOTES AND APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges, or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Moses was the mediator of the old covenant. Yet Jesus comes to bring a new covenant for God's people. What's new about the new covenant, and how is it greater than the covenant Moses represented?
2. Verse 3 calls Jesus the "builder" of the house. How does his role differ from Moses' role? According to verse 6, what is our role?



3. This passage asks us to put our confidence and hope in Jesus. How does knowing that Jesus is the apostle (sent one) and high priest (advocate with God) of our confession fuel us to put our hope in Jesus?

4. The author of Hebrews writes in verse 5 that Moses was faithful as a servant in God's house. In what way was Moses faithful? How does this inform how we are to be faithful to Jesus?

5. What are some specific ways God has been calling you to be faithful over the past few weeks?

AS YOU GO...

- Spend some time this week reflecting on what it means that Jesus is our confidence and our hope. Ask Jesus to continue to strengthen your hope and confidence in him.
- Jesus is the apostle (sent one) of our confession. How has he called us to be apostles (sent ones) in our world? Who is he sending you to?
- Meditate on the new covenant texts (Jeremiah 31:31-34 & Ezekiel 36:24-28) this week and focus on what makes Jesus and his covenant the climax of God's redemption plan.



PRAYER

Jesus, you are the great apostle, who gave up the comforts of heaven to come down and reveal God's love toward sinners. You are the great high priest who, after making the sacrifice for our sins, sat down at the Father's right hand having completed all you set out to accomplish. Thank you that you have called me, an orphan, into your heavenly house. Help me to be faithful this week in all that I do as I hold fast to my hope in you.

PRAYER REQUESTS



STUDY 6 – A WARNING: DON’T HARDEN YOUR HEART

READ: HEBREWS 3:7–4:13

“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.” –Hebrews 3:12-13

OVERVIEW

In our own strength, we’re prone to hardening our hearts and trying to find our own way. God is great as long as he’s doing what we want him to do, but we run to other things as soon as we don’t agree with his plan. This isn’t true faith, and it’s rooted in unbelief. As J. I. Packer states in *Rediscovering Holiness*, “Self-reliance is not the way of holiness, but the negation of it. Self-confidence in face of temptation and conflicting pressures is a sure guarantee that some sort of moral failure will follow.”

The question then becomes, “how do we keep our hearts from growing hard?” With themes that are repeated throughout the book of Hebrews, the writer encourages us to hold fast, fight for our hope, and not go it alone. The Israelites’ hearts grew hard while waiting 40 days for Moses to come down from the mountain with a word from God. We have the living and active word of God in our hands. When we abide in it, the Holy Spirit speaks to us, shows us the state of our hearts, and deepens our affections for God. When pierced by the holy word of God, we recognize our own weakness and rejoice in the strength of our Savior. Our hearts are softened.

But God also knows that we face a real enemy who seeks to confuse us with lies and keep us from the truth. This is why we’re commanded to “exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today.’” The command isn’t to urge one another to rest in God and his promises only when times are hard. The command is to encourage one another in this way every day as long as we live.

In Hebrews 4:9-10, Jesus is shown to be the true Sabbath rest. The rest found in Jesus is greater than the rest the Israelites hoped for when wandering in the desert and dreaming of the Promised Land, and it’s more than reserving one day each week for worship and relaxation. Entering Jesus’ rest means knowing our salvation. It means greater peace and freedom than anything in this world can offer. It means everlasting joy. *This* is why the author warns us not to harden our hearts – hardened hearts are not resting hearts. Striving to enter Jesus’ rest is different from striving in our own strength to do anything – it’s persevering in our pursuit of God and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, recognizing that Jesus has paid it all and done it all. In him, strivings cease, and we find rest.



MESSAGE NOTES AND APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges, or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Psalm 95:11 is quoted in Hebrews 3:11, 4:3, and 4:5. Why is this warning so urgent and important?
2. The book of Hebrews both models encouragement and commands us to encourage one another daily. Why is this kind of community crucial for walking in obedience and growing in our faith and understanding of God?



PRAYER

Holy Spirit, open our eyes, that we may behold wondrous things out of your law. Soften our hearts so that we will know the truth of God's promises and rejoice in the glory of our risen Savior. Father, forgive us for the times we've grown impatient and failed to trust that you are faithful. Thank you for loving us too much to leave us without warning. We know that it is your desire for us to rest in the sureness of our salvation and, in that rest, find freedom and strength to live for you. Show us how to encourage one another in truth, and give us hearts that long to see others rest and find hope in you.

PRAYER REQUESTS



STUDY 7 – JESUS: OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST

READ: HEBREWS 4:14–5:10

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” –Hebrews 4:15-16

OVERVIEW

In Hebrews 4:14, Jesus is described as our great high priest – making clear that he is the better high priest, greater than all the high priests of the Old Testament. The role of high priest was a special position designed by God. A high priest had to be a member of the tribe of Levi and a descendent of the family of Aaron, the brother of Moses. Wearing a garment interwoven with threads of gold and a breastplate covered in precious jewels and inscribed with the names of all the tribes of Israel, the high priest would go before the Lord once a year on the Day of Atonement to represent all of Israel and offer sacrifices for the sins of the people. Despite all of the high priest’s qualifications, the sacrifices they made could only delay God’s judgment, and sacrifices would have to be made again the next year for the people to remain in relationship with God. The rest we find in Jesus that is described earlier in Hebrews 4 was not a reality for the Israelites in the Old Testament, and the threat of God’s wrath was constant. As our great high priest, Jesus did far more than the previous high priests, in all their mystery and qualifications and adornments, could ever do. He was and is both our great high priest and the only sacrifice that could make atonement for all sin for all time.

Even more precious is that the writer of Hebrews describes Jesus as our great high priest who is sympathetic to our weaknesses and sitting on a throne of grace. Jesus was tempted in every way, yet without sin. Because he was fully man, he understands our struggles and, as Hebrews 5:8 states, “he learned obedience through what he suffered.” He alone knows the feeling of resisting every temptation. Because of this, he can be our strength as we learn to obey. We will never reach a point of temptation that is foreign to Jesus. We can never say to our Savior, “you just don’t understand how hard this is.” He has felt it and fought it, and he will help us fight.

Because we have a great high priest who has paid it all, we are invited to come near every moment of every day. Jesus has bridged the gap for all time, allowing us to experience the presence of our mighty God who is filled with love, mercy, and power.



PRAYER

Precious Savior, knowing that you suffered every temptation and then died in my place in perfect obedience to the Father is too much for me to fully comprehend. The depth of your love for us is greater than I can imagine. Because you suffered, died, and rose again, we can have communion with God. Forgive me for ever thinking that you don't care about my needs. I am weak, but your power is made perfect in weakness. Thank you for being my strength. We praise you, Jesus, and long to see you in all your glory.

PRAYER REQUESTS



STUDY 8 – A WARNING: DON'T BE IMMATURE

READ: HEBREWS 5:11–6:20

“Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things – things that belong to salvation.” –Hebrews 6:9

OVERVIEW

As it is with so much of God’s word, Hebrews 5 and 6 hold both the weight of wrath and judgment and the miraculous light of hope in the truth of God’s promises. They seem like extremes, and perhaps they are, but they are not contradictory. It is love that warns us to hold fast to our hope so that we don’t fall away and face judgment alone, and it is love that offers assurance of salvation through Christ Jesus who went before us to satisfy the wrath of God on our behalf. It is with love that the writer of Hebrews urges the church to grow up and learn to walk in righteousness so that they will know the truth of God’s promises as the sure and steadfast anchor of their souls.

In Hebrews 5:11, the writer suggests that those he is writing to “have become dull of hearing.” He has been explaining deep and beautiful truth about Christ as our great high priest, but his concern is that the people have become sluggish and indifferent. Perhaps they feel as though they know enough about God’s word and can carry on with their lives without giving it much more thought. Or maybe they’re happy to celebrate freedom from eternal judgment but not eager to practice the disciplines that teach them to be holy as Christ is holy. The writer knows that the church will not find their purpose in God’s kingdom or experience the depth of joy and peace God offers them until they realize the sureness of their salvation.

Throughout Hebrews, the writer reminds us that true faith is proven through perseverance. It is possible for people to taste God’s goodness and witness his power – as the Israelites did when delivered from Egypt – yet lack faith that believes in God’s promises when times are hard. The warning against false faith is severe, as the writer states that at some point this continual tasting and rejection makes it impossible to experience true repentance. But by earnestly seeking after God, abiding in his word, and trusting him, we prove the rock solid truth of his promises and salvation. As Romans 8:16 states, “the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

Despite the warning, the writer seems sure that this church’s faith is real because they have not stopped showing love for God’s name and serving the saints. But now it’s time for them to grow up, realize that they are beloved, and walk in the sureness of better things – things that belong to salvation.



MESSAGE NOTES AND APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges, or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. What types of truths and principles do you think the writer is referring to when he mentions milk vs. solid food?
2. Believers can sometimes focus all their energy on gaining knowledge while failing to serve others, and sometimes focus completely on serving while failing to abide in the word and seek God. How are these both signs of immaturity?



PRAYER

Lord, you are our refuge and our hope. Knowing that your promises are true, and that it is impossible for you to lie, we can hold on to the hope set before us as the sure and steadfast anchor of our souls. Teach us to walk in maturity as we rejoice in the finished work of Christ our Savior. Teach us to be holy as you are holy. As was prayed in Jude 1:24-25, to you who are able to keep us from stumbling and to present us blameless before the presence of your glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

PRAYER REQUESTS



STUDY 9 – JESUS: SUPERIOR TO MELCHIZEDEK

READ: HEBREWS 7:1–28

“For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.” –Hebrews 7:26

OVERVIEW

When I was a kid, I remember the first time I was struck by the word *forever*. I was watching the movie *Cocoon*, the one where the members of a retirement community go for a swim in a pool with an organic alien pod and find that it has restorative powers to the point where they feel as though they could live... *forever*. My hands got a little sweaty. The room started to spin. My stomach fell right to the bottom of the floor. It was like someone had removed the safety net and pushed me off the high wire all in one fell swoop. Talk about an existential crisis! My finitude coming face-to-face with the infinite was more than I could bear. The enormity of the word brought no hope, no joy, no comfort...only what the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard would describe as *angst*.

I had a similar experience to the word *perfect*, but we'll leave that story for another day. In his commentary on the book of Hebrews, R. Albert Mohler Jr. reminds us of the importance of understanding this word rightly in light of the passage: “The word *perfect* is central to the meaning of [Hebrews 7], but we must make sure that we are understanding the word in the way that the author of Hebrews is using it... We use *perfect* much as we use *better* or *best*, as a comparative or superlative term instead of as a statement of objective fact. The author of Hebrews, however, uses *perfect* according to the true sense of the word...It means that Jesus Christ, the perfect high priest, is true perfection in a way that only one who is both fully divine and fully human can embody. Moreover, the intrinsic perfection of Christ is the defining characteristic of his priestly ministry.” (p. 105-106)

So when we come to the book of Hebrews and see Jesus installed as *perfect* priest, reigning *forever*, executing a better covenant, we would do well to see those ideas apart from our own finite limitations. We would do well to think of them apart from the Levitical priesthood, with its continual offerings of lesser sacrifices made by men who would come and go, one after the other. We would do well to remember that our Priest-King is reigning forever and perfectly interceding on our behalf, after the order of Melchizedek.



MESSAGE NOTES AND APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges, or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Describe some times in your life when you have depended upon a mediator (whether formal or informal) to stand as a go-between for you and another person. What are some of the ways in which that experience went well? What are some ways in which it didn't go so well?

2. What did you previously know about Melchizedek? Read Genesis 14 and Psalm 110 and discuss what these two passages reveal about him. How do references to Melchizedek in these two passages relate to and inform the priesthood and kingship of Jesus?



3. What does it mean that Christ is now, through his perfect work, the sufficient priest who mediates between God and man? How is Christ's final act of atonement superior to the Mosaic Law?

4. Why do we need Christ to fulfill the offices of prophet, priest, and king? In what ways does Christ fulfill these? How does this threefold office demonstrate Christ's perfection?

5. How does Jesus Christ function as a mediator on our behalf? How should an understanding of Christ's intercessory role affect how we pray? How does it comfort you?

AS YOU GO...

- Spend some significant time this week reflecting on your need for a perfect mediator. Write down areas of weakness or temptation that are birthed out of your sinful nature.
- Confess your sin to this great high priest, seated at the right hand of the Father, able and ready to make perfect intercession for you.
- Walk in the newness of life, knowing that your sins have been forgiven and that your perfect high priest has finished his work, pointing others to the joy that can only be found in him.



PRAYER

King Jesus, you are a good and faithful high priest. When you sat down at the right hand of the Father, you put an end to the sacrificial system, for you are a better priest of a better sacrifice in a better covenant. We rest in your finished work on our behalf. And we wait for the day when your kingdom will come in its fullness.

PRAYER REQUESTS



STUDY 10 – JESUS: MEDIATOR OF A BETTER COVENANT

READ: HEBREWS 8:1–13

“Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man.” –Hebrews 8:1-2

OVERVIEW

In 1997, the New York-New York Hotel and Casino opened on the Las Vegas strip in Paradise, Nevada. Its architecture resembles famous New York City sites, including the Empire State Building, the Grand Central Terminal, and Times Square. A replica of the Statue of Liberty stands out front. Even the hotel’s lounges and meeting rooms are named after New York City neighborhoods. Every detail points to the Big Apple.

Despite a pattern of similarities, visiting the famous hotel in Las Vegas is not the same as experiencing the real-life hustle and bustle of New York City. The sheer size and grandeur of the real city is lost in the copy. The block facades of the fake don’t inspire awe like the bright lights and shiny glass of the authentic. Besides, the Las Vegas strip is a cheap substitute for the real people, history, art, and culture that give New York City its charm. The replica simply doesn’t do justice to the original.

Hebrews 8 is written to a people who have spent generations in a world of replicas and copies, building their life and identity around a shadow and a hint of something real to come. Jesus is the fulfillment of everything the Old Testament prophets and priests could only dream to be true. He is the high priest we have always needed. His offering brings a complete and lasting forgiveness. His dwelling is not a tent or a temple made by human hands, but a throne in heaven at the right hand of the Father, from whence he intercedes for us. He is the mediator of a new covenant of grace, far surpassing what the old covenant could accomplish. In Christ, all things are made new, rendering the old order obsolete.

The author of Hebrews invites God’s people to check out of the hotel and move into the real-life city that we were created for. The replica no longer makes sense now that the real thing is readily accessible. While the Statue of Liberty on the New York skyline has represented new hope for millions of immigrants in our nation’s history, the cross of Christ promises something even better: God’s presence and power for sinners and sufferers in this world and in the age to come.



MESSAGE NOTES AND APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges, or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Hebrews treats Old Testament customs (the priest, the sacrifices, the law, the tabernacle, etc.) as a “copy and shadow of heavenly things” (v. 5). Why do you think God commanded his people to use these copies and shadows in the first place? What do they reveal about God and his Kingdom? What do they reveal about humanity?



2. Verses 8 - 12 describe the new covenant that is inaugurated in Christ, as foretold by Jeremiah the prophet. The phrase "I will..." is repeated six times in these verses. What are the promises of the new covenant? How are they similar to or different from the old covenant (see Exodus 20)? What response do these promises stir in you?

3. The new covenant of grace is made possible by the blood Jesus shed on the cross. We now have full access to God through Jesus Christ, our mediator. What barriers or obstacles prevent you from freely approaching God? In what ways do you still live with an old covenant posture toward God?

4. The early church faced temptation to maintain the status quo of worship by continuing to offer animal sacrifices and acknowledging a human high priest. These habits threatened to stunt the mission and message of the early church. What structures, habits, or patterns do you observe today that could potentially be a threat to the mission and message of the church?

AS YOU GO...

- Imagine how life would be different if not for Christ's establishment of a new covenant. How would your day, week, or year be different under the old covenant?
- Consider visiting a Synagogue, talking with a Jewish friend, or doing some research to understand more deeply the signs and symbols of the old covenant.
- What discipline can your group practice together this week to keep the law of the Lord in your mind and written on your heart?



PRAYER

- Thank God for his generous provision of a new covenant that frees us from the penalty of sin.
- Ask God to give you a hunger for his word, that his law would be in your mind and written on your heart.
- Rest in God's mercy and forgiveness, knowing that he promises to remember your sin no more.

PRAYER REQUESTS



STUDY 11 – JESUS: A BETTER SACRIFICE AND TEMPLE (PART ONE)

READ: HEBREWS 9:1–14

“...he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.” –Hebrews 9:12

OVERVIEW

As we get to chapter 9, it would be beneficial for us to remember all of the comparisons the author of Hebrews has given us up to this point. In the opening pages of his letter, the author reminds us that Jesus is by far better than the angels who, although they are ministering spirits in the very presence of God, will never be greater than his one and only Son. In chapter 3, we see that Jesus is greater than Moses, the one through whom the very law of Israel was given. In chapters 5–7, we see that Jesus is a better high priest than all who have come before him and that he is to be seen in line with Melchizedek, a priest without beginning or end and one who is greater even than Abraham. And in chapter 8, we see Jesus as the mediator of a better covenant.

In chapter 9, the author of Hebrews continues his walk through the old covenant by landing at the tabernacle, the epicenter of sacrificial worship in the life of Israel during the wilderness wanderings in Exodus, the tumultuous period of the judges, and the beginning of the monarchy under Saul and David. He reminds his audience of the lampstand and the table and the bread in the Holy Place. He reminds them of the golden altar of incense, the Ark of the Covenant, the urn of manna, Aaron’s staff and the tablets of the covenant in the Most Holy Place. He reminds them of the cherubim over the mercy seat. He reminds them of these wholly unique places in the life of their nation to point to God’s holiness and his unmerited presence with them throughout the ages...

And then he points them to Jesus.

“But when Christ appeared...” in verse 11 is not a phrase to be glossed over. It marks a change, a shift, an altogether *different* reality for the people of God. It signals the time when the incessant slaughter of imperfect animals on behalf of imperfect people by an imperfect priest in front of an imperfect tabernacle would finally be over. It signals the time when the single slaughter of a perfect sacrifice by a perfect priest in a perfect and better tabernacle on behalf of a newly redeemed people *had finally come*. Christ had offered himself as the perfect sacrifice and now stands as the perfect priest in the “greater and more perfect tabernacle.”



MESSAGE NOTES AND APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges, or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean for Christians to approach God? How does this passage inform our understanding of worshiping God? Where does Scripture command us to approach and worship God?

2. Why is it significant that a central temple/tabernacle in which God is to be worshiped no longer remains? What does this mean for individual Christians and for the corporate gatherings of Christians in the local church?



PRAYER

"Great God, in public and private, in sanctuary and home, may my life be steeped in prayer, filled with the spirit of grace and supplication, each prayer perfumed with the incense of atoning blood. Help me, defend me, until from praying ground I pass to the realm of unceasing praise. Urged by my need, invited by Thy promises, called by Thy Spirit, I enter Thy presence, worshipping Thee with godly fear, awed by Thy majesty, greatness, glory, but encouraged by Thy love."

–Taken from *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions*

PRAYER REQUESTS



STUDY 12 – JESUS: A BETTER SACRIFICE AND TEMPLE (PART TWO)

READ: HEBREWS 9:15–28

“For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.” –Hebrews 9:24

OVERVIEW

Mediation between two parties with grievances has been part of human existence for a while. You wreck my car ... I misplace the laptop you lent me ... he may or may not have agreed to watch your dog for you; these things happen all the time. And many times, the two offended parties have trouble deciding how it should all play out. Well, I'm sure *both* parties have an idea of how *they* would like it to play out, but if they are going to both be happy, someone else usually has to step in. And this was no less common in biblical times (both Old *and* New Testament periods). Misplacing a camel can be just as awkward as misplacing a laptop.

But the stakes change when the social standing of persons involved isn't the same. Whether the reasons are justified or not, the dynamics of the process change when the mediation is between you and your boss, or you and the president of the company, instead of you and your co-worker, for instance. In those cases, having a mediator on your side can be really beneficial because compromise is a bit harder to come by. But what if you are completely in the wrong? And what if the offense you made against them would quite simply bring insurmountable punishment? You might want a different kind of mediator. You might want a mediator that would act on *your* behalf as well as the one you offended. You might want a mediator that was as interested in restoring the relationship you had with the offended party as he was in maintaining justice.

If you've been in church any amount of time, you've probably heard the saying, "Christianity is not a religion, it's a relationship." And while there is truth to be found in that idea, I get the feeling the writer of Hebrews would've scratched his head at that one. After all, he spent a lot of space in his scroll, or parchment, telling us about covenants and sacrifices and lampstands and judgment. He actually goes to great pains to tell us, not that the *need* for a sacrifice has been *done away with*, but that the need for a sacrifice has been *fulfilled*. He tells us all we saw in the Old Testament in that regard has found a *better fulfillment* in Jesus. And it's precisely because Jesus has fulfilled every aspect of the religious requirements of the law that he became the perfect sacrifice and now sits to mediate as well on our *behalf*.



MESSAGE NOTES AND APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges, or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. How does Christ's role as a mediator differ from our culture's understanding of a mediator? Why is it pure folly to expect a compromise in light of our offense against him?
2. How does Christianity function as both a religion and a relationship? How do we see the writer of Hebrews pull from both of those ideas to describe the work and person of Jesus?



PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you walked into the Heavenly temple on my behalf, setting yourself as the one and only sacrifice ever needed for the forgiveness of sin. You are my mediator. You are my great high priest. You are at the right hand of the Father pleading on my behalf. You are my rest. You are my comfort. You are my joy and my delight. Steer my heart toward you.

PRAYER REQUESTS



STUDY 13 – JESUS: ONCE-FOR-ALL SACRIFICE

READ: HEBREWS 10:1–18

“For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” –Hebrews 10:14

OVERVIEW

The theme of this passage is best described in the hymn writer’s words: “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.” Hebrews 10 begins by showing that the old covenant involving animal sacrifices was unable to atone for sins. The repeated offerings and sacrifices merely served as a reminder to the people of their sin and disobedience. The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins (v. 4).

God did not take pleasure in burnt offerings and sin offerings (v. 5). His desire was obedience from the heart, and animal sacrifices did nothing to change the heart (Isaiah 1:11, 1 Samuel 15:22). Only through the Greater sacrifice, Jesus, could we receive forgiveness of sins and a transformed heart. By God’s will and Jesus’ obedience, “we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10).

The concluding verses (vv. 11-18) show the superiority of Jesus’ sacrifice. By his single offering, “he perfected for all time those who are being sanctified” (v. 14). In *The Passion of Jesus Christ: Fifty Reasons Why He Came to Die*, John Piper states that “Being sanctified means that we are imperfect and in process...the joyful encouragement here is that the evidence of our perfection before God is not our experienced perfection, but our experienced progress.”

In God’s sovereign grace, he has written his laws on our hearts and our minds (v. 16); thus moving us more and more toward holiness. We also see, under the new covenant, that our sins are remembered no more (v. 17); our sins are fully forgiven and God will never hold them against us.

The blood of Jesus “accomplished everything necessary for the forgiveness of sins...once for all” (Mohler). Are you embracing this truth and resting in the completed work of Jesus?



MESSAGE NOTES AND APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges, or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Read Hebrews 10:5-7 and Psalm 40:6-8. What are the similarities and differences between these two passages?
2. Hebrews 10:14 says, "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." How are both the perfection and the sanctification the author refers to here related to the work of Jesus? Explain the already-not yet tension at work in this verse.



3. Read Hebrews 10:15-16 again. Where in your own life have you seen evidence of the Holy Spirit putting God's law in your heart and writing it on your mind?

4. What conclusion does the author draw about the sin of those for whom Jesus has offered a sacrifice? How does the language of "once for all time" relate to the forgiveness of sins and the end of offerings for sins?

5. Meditate on verse 17. How can you use this truth to fight against the enemy when he tempts you to feel shame over sins God has already forgiven?

AS YOU GO...

- In Hebrews 10:16 it is written, "I will put my laws on their hearts and write them on their minds." Examine your daily walk with God. How does your life reflect what Jesus has done for you?
- If you were to use this passage to explain the gospel to an unbeliever, what truths from the text would you use? Pray for opportunities to share these truths this week.
- In the context of Hebrews 10:1-18, what does resting in the finished work of Jesus mean to you?



PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we will never be able to grasp the depth of your love for us. May we always remember the sacrifice that was made on our behalf; a sacrifice that brought forgiveness of sin, transformed hearts, and a personal relationship with you. May we rest in the finished work of Jesus as we commit our lives to you; lives that embrace your love and pour out love to those you place in our path. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

PRAYER REQUESTS



WEEK 14 – A WARNING: DON'T THROW AWAY YOUR CONFIDENCE

READ: HEBREWS 10:19–39

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...” –Hebrews 10:22a

OVERVIEW

What does it mean for us to have a home? Do we envision a place of rest, comfort, or sanctuary? What does it mean for us as Christians to know that we can dwell every day in God’s very presence?

This idea would seem impossible to Israelites during the Old Testament era: God was unreachable – set apart even from his chosen people. This separation was symbolized by the veil at the entrance to the Holy of Holies. The only one who could even dare to enter God’s presence in the temple was the high priest, and even he could only “visit” once per year. But this great separation was torn apart as the body of Christ was torn apart in sacrifice (v. 20). In Hebrews 10:1–18, the writer explains God’s provision for his people in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The veil is torn, and God’s people may now freely make a home with him whenever they desire.

Having laid out the case that Jesus’ sacrifice was truly once and for all, the author asks the reader to consider what their response should be to God’s work. What does it mean to be in God’s presence as part of a community of faith? The writer suggests three responses, each with the refrain “let us...”

- 1) Let us draw near to God in assurance of faith (v. 22)
- 2) Let us hold fast to our hope (v. 23)
- 3) Let us spur one another to works of love (v. 24)

What are the marks of a community that dwells in God’s presence? Faith, hope, and love – the exact list of Paul’s description of eternal things in 1 Corinthians 13:13.

Yet, there can be wrong responses to this gift as well. The author next exhorts the readers (vv. 26–31) not to “profane the blood” of Christ (v. 29) by willfully sinning. To do so is to turn your back on the work of Christ. And if we do so, to willfully sin and walk away from the truth we know in the gospel, what hope do we have? Hope is lost, and all that a sinner will have is fear in facing God’s judgment (v. 31). But the writer confirms for the readers that this is not their way; they have shown themselves to be true believers, willing to sacrifice temporal things for the greater reward God has offered in Christ. They understand what it means to dwell with the living God, a union no one can take from readers then or readers today.



MESSAGE NOTES AND APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges, or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Think back to your childhood home. Share some of the images or memories that come to mind. What difference can you describe between somewhere that was your home and somewhere that you would only visit (relative's house, hotel, etc.)? What does it mean to you that, because of the completed work of Christ, we can have a permanent home in God's presence?

2. In addition to being referred to in Hebrews, each of the synoptic gospels (Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, and Luke 23:45) describe the tearing of the massive curtain at the entrance to the Holy of Holies the moment Jesus died. Matthew notes that the tear was from the top to the bottom, implying this was a work of God. Why do you think early Jewish Christians would have viewed this as such a significant event, and what does it imply about our relationship with God in the new covenant?



3. One of the main ideas of this section is hope, which is also a theme of other sections of the letter (chapter 6 for example). How do you define hope in the sense of our relationship to God, and why is hope so vital for maintaining a healthy faith?

4. One of the themes of Hebrews is the idea that God has spoken through Christ, and that we are called to respond. Re-read Hebrews 10:26-31, and discuss how one of the responses we are called to is repentance from willful or deliberate sin. What are some of the ways that we deliberately choose to defy God's word, and according to these verses, what are the consequences?

5. Verses 32-35 speak of the consequences of being a follower of Jesus. Christ Himself warns us that we should consider, or "count the cost" (Luke 14:28), before choosing to follow him. What has your faith cost you? If you cannot think of anything, what do you think God might ask you to give up in order to faithfully follow him?

AS YOU GO...

- As the writer says in verse 19, the death and resurrection of Christ should give us "confidence" to put our full trust in the work God has done. Yet this trust is not simply about the individual, but about the community that gathers each week to celebrate God's work in Christ. This week, consider how you might grow in and share the faith, hope, and love that the writer asserts in verses 22-24.



PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for living the life we couldn't live and dying in our place so that we could be made clean. Thank you for welcoming us to the throne of grace, where you are seated as our risen Savior. Search our hearts and show us where we're holding on to unforgiveness. We confess that we sometimes want to seek revenge for ourselves or those we love, but we know that you are our perfect judge, and vengeance belongs to you. Forgive us, Lord. Strengthen us by your Spirit to hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for we know that you are faithful. Lord, teach us to stir up one another to love and good works and encourage one another. Open our eyes to see those around us through your light, and let your Spirit work through us in our daily interactions so that we will glorify you in all we do and say. Amen.

PRAYER REQUESTS



APPENDIX

“Angelology” by Albert Mohler

Hebrews 1:14 draws a contrast between the reigning Christ and angelic servants. Yet it also speaks of the role of angels in the lives of God’s people. They are “ministering spirits” who are sent out for our good. What is this ministry that they have among God’s people? A good short course in “angelology” might be helpful here, especially since American Christianity is often confused by the unbiblical, pop culture portrayal of angels. The commercialized, cute, chubby, cupid-like angels seen in get-well cards could not be further from the biblical portrait of angelic beings. When an angel shows up in Scripture, people fall down in sheer terror. Just think about the response of the shepherds to the angelic visitation in Luke 2: 9. Clearly we need to recover a biblical doctrine of angels.

Both the Old and the New Testament make clear that angels are creations of God. While they may have distinct privileges and even extraordinary powers, they are by no means divine. Angels reside in the heavenly assembly and are part of the throng worshiping before the throne of God. The Bible also indicates that angels are messengers of God and that they carry out his purposes. The angels function as witnesses of major redemptive-historical events, such as the birth of Christ. They are also agents of God’s justice. After the fall, God placed an angel with a flaming sword at the border of the garden of Eden to exact vengeance on anyone who would try to eat from the tree of life (Gen 3:25). Revelation indicates that Christ will lead an angelic army in the last day to execute his just judgment on the world. Hebrews 1:14 underscores the glorious reality that for those of us who believe in Christ, angels are sent from God’s throne room to work for the good of the church. We may not know exactly how angels are engaged in spiritual warfare on behalf of the church, but we can be confident that these agents of God’s throne are sent out for that very purpose. God works all things for the good of his church (Rom 8:28). This includes the ministry of angels.

Yet while this passage gives us a clearer understanding of the function of angels in God’s purposes of redemption, we must not miss the main point. Angels are spirits that minister to the body of Christ and are thus sent out by Christ himself. Angels are indeed remarkable. But they pale in comparison to the glory of the Redeemer, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He is superior to every angel – indeed to the entire angelic host.

The following text was used as a resource throughout this study:

Mohler, R. Albert, Jr. *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in Hebrews*, B&H Publishing Group, Nashville, TN, 2017. (“Angelology” taken from pages 20-21)