

Making much of Jesus

present-day lessons from the letter to the Hebrews

Although written to Jews who had trusted in Jesus, and although drawing regularly on Old Testament references, the letter to the Hebrews has a very pressing contemporary significance.

This series of studies is intended to stir in our hearts both a deepening delight and a growing confidence in all that Jesus is and has done, imparting to us the fortitude and strength we need to serve Him faithfully in today's world.

You can find the background to this short series [here](#).

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11. Perfected (Heb.10.1-18)

[w/b Sunday 10th November 2019]

“.. By one sacrifice He has made perfect for ever those who are being made holy ..”

Hebrews 7.1-10.18 are the very core of what the writer has to say in this letter: the first 6 chapters lead up to this central portion, and from 10.19 to the end the writer is applying what he's been saying to the circumstances of his readers.

He has spoken about Jesus' **priesthood** and clarified that it is of a different order from that of the Levitical priests. He's spoken about the new (in the sense of 'renewed & final-version', rather than 'different') **covenant** that He mediates. Finally his focus is now falling on the **sacrifice** which makes the covenant effectual.

[Before attending your Community Group try to consider all 7 questions - even though your Group may not have time for them all. Key questions in this study are probably 1, 4 and 5. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]

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1. Read Hebrews 10.1-18. You'll have a sense of deja-vu as you read this passage! The writer is essentially repeating and underlining what he's already been explaining.

How would you summarise in a sentence what the writer is saying in this passage?

Read **2 Pet.1.12-15**: why do preachers and pastors tend to repeat what they've been saying? Do you find that helpful or frustrating?

2. Read Hebrews 10.1. At least 10-12 times in chapters 8-10 the writer makes it clear that the Law (or 'the first covenant' - 9.1) was *'only a shadow .. not the realities themselves'*.

What does he mean by referring to the Law as 'a shadow'?

How does that help inform the way in which you read the Old Testament?

3. Read Hebrews 10.1-4. The first covenant was only ever a signpost, pointing forward to 'the good things that are coming': the writer starts by speaking about the deficiencies of the Law.

What does the writer point to as the basic 'deficiency' of the first covenant?

What are 'the good things that are coming' to which the Law, for all its deficiencies, was pointing?

What has been your experience of those 'good things'?

4. **Read Hebrews 10.5-10.** The writer now starts to contrast that with the efficacy of the sacrifice of Jesus by quoting (vv.5-8) and the expounding (vv.9-10) Psalm 40.6-8.

In the light of the writer's exposition of the psalm, what comprised the 'sacrifice of the body of Jesus'?

How was this 'sacrifice' of Jesus different from, yet pre-figured in, those 'offered in accordance with the law'?

5. **Read Hebrews 10.11-14.** The contrast is continued between the sacrifices offered by the Levitical priests and that offered by Jesus.

What 3 major contrasts does the writer draw in these verses?

How do you square in your own experience the **past** tense ("*He has made perfect*") with the **present** continuing tense ("*those who are being made holy*")?

6. **Read Hebrews 10.15-17.** By quoting from Jeremiah 31 and indicating this was what the Holy Spirit said, the writer stresses that the new covenant was not some after-thought on God's part.

How does the new covenant differ from the first covenant according to the prophecy of Jeremiah?

What difference has an understanding of the new covenant made to you in your daily living?

7. **Read Hebrews 10.18.** This verse is a climactic conclusion to not only the previous verses in the chapter but also, in some ways, to the whole extended passage from 7.1.

Why do you think the writer has focused so persistently on the theme of 'sacrifice' through this passage?

Read **Heb.10.12** again: what makes it such good news for you that an 'offering (that's the word used here, rather than 'sacrifice') for sin is no longer necessary'?