

## **Synthetic Bible Studies**

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible  
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and  
Bible Expositions

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### **LESSON NINETEEN**

#### **HEBREWS**

In the case of the Epistle to the Hebrews there is uncertainty as to the authorship. It may have been written by Paul, or Apollos, or some one else, we cannot tell absolutely. There is also uncertainty as to the church addressed. While Jewish Christians are in the mind of the writer very evidently, yet there is no positive knowledge as to where they were located, whether at Jerusalem, Alexandria, or Rome, possibly the place last named.

But while uncertainty exists as to these two particulars, there can be none whatever as to the reason for writing the Epistle.

No one can read it carefully even two or three times, without perceiving a two-fold object, viz: to comfort the Christians under persecution, and to restrain them from apostasy on account of it. And the persecution must have been very severe, judging by the nature of the temptation to which it gave rise. For the apostasy contemplated was not like that of the Galatians, the supplementing of evangelical faith by the works of the law, but the renunciation of that faith altogether and the return to Judaism.

It is the assumption all the way through that the Temple was still standing at this time, with its glorious history and magnificent priesthood, and that the followers of Moses were allowed to pursue their religion in quietness and peace. All this was very different from the outward meanness and poverty, the unrest and tribulation of those seeking to follow the teachings of the Nazarene.

## Theme

There were many lines of argument open to the apostle (for convenience, I assume the writer to be Paul), by which to counteract this tendency towards apostasy, but he chooses only one, viz: *Christianity is superior to Judaism as seen in its Founder, CHRIST.*

The tempter is represented as urging that:

- Judaism was introduced to the world by "the goodly fellowship of the prophets"! "Christ is superior to the prophets!"
- Judaism was ministered to Israel through angels. "Christ is superior to the angels"!
- Judaism owes its position to that mighty man, Moses. "But CHRIST is superior to Moses"!
- Judaism is associated with the divinely instituted priesthood of Aaron. "Yes, but CHRIST is superior to Aaron"!

These are, so to speak, the four points of the discourse, but the whole revolves around the single argument already indicated. And yet the apostle does not go straight on with his argument. He makes a digression every once in a while, sometimes at the close of one division of his theme, and sometimes in the middle of it, for the purpose of warning his hearers, for the purpose of comforting them, or exhorting them to steadfastness in the Christian faith.

And this we shall see as we proceed.

## Outline

1. CHRIST is superior to the prophets (1:1-3).

He is so in seven particulars:

- He is GOD's Son.
- He is heir of all things.
- He made the worlds.
- He is the express image of GOD.
- He upholds all things.
- He Himself purged our sins.
- He is sat down at the right hand of GOD.

2. CHRIST is superior to the angels (1:4-2:18).

- (1) He has the more excellent name of Son (1:4,5).
- (2) He is worshiped by the angels (1:6).
- (3) He is Himself the Eternal GOD (1:7-12).
- (4) He is (as Mediator) awaiting the possession of the kingdom (1:13,14).
- (5) He is the ruler of the age to come (2:5-8).

It is in this division of our theme that we meet with the first of the digressions spoken of, one

occurring in the middle of the argument (2:1-4) and another at its close (2:9-18).

- the first is in the way of warning,
- the second in the way of comfort.

If the earlier dispensation, that of Judaism, punished every transgression, and disobedience, how shall we escape if we neglect this greater light, the heavenly origin of which was so unmistakably demonstrated by witnesses at once confirming and being themselves confirmed.

And then, on the other hand, think of your privileges, your exaltation to the position of "brethren," and your claims upon the Lord of glory as your true High-priest, faithful, merciful, capable and sympathetic! Capable and sympathetic because He has suffered through persecution just as you are suffering, He knows all about it and how to overcome it.

The student will notice how the inspired writer naturally and easily glides from one link in the chain of reasoning to another.

The testimony to CHRIST's superiority to the prophets brought him face to face with CHRIST's present position at the right hand of the Majesty on high, above the angels, and this led to a comparison with the angels. The comparison with the angels, in turn, leads to the statement about CHRIST's humanity and the qualification of priesthood it confers.

Ready is he now to enlarge upon that thought (3:1), only pausing to touch for a moment upon the third division of his argument which now begins.

3. CHRIST is superior to Moses (3:1-4:13).

The comparison in this case runs in two parallel lines of two members each:

- (1) Moses a servant over GOD's house (3:5).
- (2) CHRIST a Son over His own house (3:6).

That is an interesting phrase, "**Whose house are we,**" (v. 6), suggesting a simple plan for a fruitful sermon.

In what sense are believers' CHRIST's house?

He built them - "**without him was not anything made that was made.**"

He bought them - "**Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.**"

He occupies them - "**Ye in me and I in you.**"

Here, as in the previous instance, we meet with a digression, first, of warning (3:7-4:13), and then of comfort (4:14-16). The warning turns on the interpretation of that "rest" denied to GOD's Old Testament people because of disobedience, as recorded in Psalm 45. It is not the rest of Canaan (4:8), but the rest of faith in CHRIST (4:4-10 compared with 3:14).

Under the head of the comfort in this case the writer recurs again to the theme of the priesthood

of CHRIST from which he had been diverted for the moment, and on which he now enlarges, practically to the end of the Epistle.

4. CHRIST is superior to Aaron (4:14-10:39).

(1) CHRIST is Himself a priest, a fact very necessary to be established if any comparison with Aaron shall be made, and which, the writer establishes in two ways (5:1-10).

- He is a priest because He possesses the capacity for sympathy (vv. 1-3), and
- because He has received a divine appointment to that office as Aaron did (vv. 4-10).

The customary digression now follows in which the readers are exhorted (5:2-6:3), warned (6:4-8), and comforted (6:10-22).

(2) CHRIST is a priest after a higher order than Aaron, viz: the order of Melchizedek (7:1-19).

This is a higher order because it is of a kingly type (v. 3), and of permanent duration (v. 3), because Melchizedek received tithes from Aaron in the loins of Abraham (v. 6), and because he blessed Abraham (v. 7). Moreover, the permanency of this order implies the abrogation of the Levitical law (vv. 11-17).

(3) CHRIST is a priest made with an oath (7:20-22).

(4) He is an unchangeable priest (7:23-25).

(5) He is sinless (7:26-28).

(6) He is a priest of a better covenant (chap. 8).

A better covenant because based on better promises. These promises are written on the heart, not on tables of stone (v. 10); they are universal in their application and not limited to a single people; and they bring forgiveness with them (v. 12).

(7) He is a priest of a better tabernacle (chap. 9).

This tabernacle is not material in its structure, but spiritual (v. 11); it is not hallowed by the blood of beasts, but by His own blood (v. 13); and it does not stand for temporary but eternal redemption (v. 12).

(8) He is a priest of a better sacrifice (chap. 10).

He Himself is that sacrifice, the substance of which the Old Testament sacrifices were but the shadow (vv. 1-9); a sacrifice necessary to be offered only once (vv. 10-18).

The digression in this case, as in the preceding, is in the nature, first, of exhortation (vv. 19-25); secondly, of warning (vv. 26-31); thirdly, of comfort (vv. 32-39).

### **Conclusion**

It may be questioned whether I am justified in placing chapters 11-13 under the general heading

of the "Conclusion," as the first two are very closely connected with the comforting part of the "digression" noted above. Opinions will differ as to this.

At all events we have here a dissertation on the history of the Old Testament saints (chap. 11), showing what faith is and what faith can accomplish in men and through them. Of course the design of the writer is very apparent, viz: to encourage his hearers to remain steadfast under present trial in consideration of the glorious outcome of it all.

And this design he expresses, indeed, in the exhortation which follows (12:1-13), and the warning (12:14-29).

The conclusion, speaking more definitely, is confined to the last chapter with its several precepts and admonitions, the loving benediction and the personal requests and salutations.

~ end of Lesson 19 ~

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