

The Message in Hebrews



SABBATH—JANUARY 1

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Hebrews 1:5–14; Psalm 132:1–5, 11–14; 1 Samuel 8:19, 20; Hebrews 5:1–4; Hebrews 8:8–12.

MEMORY VERSE: “Now the important thing is this: We have such a Religious Leader Who has made the way for man to go to God. He is the One Who sits at the right side of the All-powerful God in the heavens” (Hebrews 8:1, NLV).



Paul wrote Hebrews to help the faith of the Christians grow stronger during their hard times.

AROUND A.D. 100, a Jewish person wrote this prayer: “I have told You everything, O Lord, because You said You made the earth and everything in it for us. . . . And now, O Lord, see how other people control us. These people are weak and are nothing. But they eat up Your people the same as if we were food! You said we are the same as Your firstborn and only child. You said we were most dear to You. We are eager to serve You. But we are under the full control of other people.”—James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, volume 1 (New York: Hendrickson Publishers, 1983), page 536, adapted.

The Christians in the book of Hebrews may feel the same way as the person who wrote this prayer. If these Christians were God's children, why were they suffering so much?

Paul wrote Hebrews to help the faith of the Christians grow stronger during their hard times. Paul told them (and us) that God will keep His promises. Soon Jesus will take us home. For now, He works for us in heaven. He gives us the blessings of God. So, we must stay strong in faith.

JESUS IS OUR KING (Hebrews 1:5–14)

Jesus is our King. This idea is the most important topic in Hebrews. Jesus sits at the right hand of God the Father (Hebrews 8:1). As God Himself, Jesus always controlled heaven and earth. But when Adam sinned, Satan stole control of the earth from Adam and Jesus (John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11). Then Jesus came to this earth. He won against Satan at the cross. Jesus became the lawful King of all people who accept Him as their Savior (Colossians 2:13–15).

Hebrews 1 and 2 show us how God makes Jesus our King.

Read Hebrews 1:5–14. What do these verses show us?

Hebrews 1:5–14 has three parts. Each part shows us how Jesus becomes our King: (1) God adopts Jesus as His royal Son (Hebrews 1:5). (2) God introduces His Son to the angels. The angels worship the Son (Hebrews 1:6, 8). God announces that His Son will be King forever (Hebrews 1:8–12). (3) God tells His Son to sit next to Him. The Father puts His Son in charge of everything (Hebrews 1:13, 14).

The New Testament shows us that God kept His promises to David (read 2 Samuel 7:8–16; Luke 1:30–33). How? The answer is Jesus. Jesus was born from the family of David (Matthew 1:1–16; Luke 2:10, 11). Jesus was known as the son of David when He lived here as a Man. Jews killed Jesus because they did not believe He was the King of the Jews (Matthew 27:37). Peter and Paul preached that Jesus woke up from the dead to show that God kept His promises to David (Acts 2:22–36; Acts 13:22–37). John said that Jesus is “the Lion from the family group of Judah” (Revelation 5:5, NLV).

For sure, Hebrews agrees. God keeps His promises to David in Jesus: (1) God gives Jesus a “more excellent” name than any angel (Hebrews 1:4, NIV). (2) God names Jesus His Son (Hebrews 1:5). God announces that Jesus is the One who made all things. Jesus will be King forever (Hebrews 1:8–12). God tells Jesus to sit at His “right side” (Hebrews 1:13, ERV). Also, Jesus leads His people into the rest God has for them (Hebrews 4). Jesus is now the lawful King of this earth. As King, Jesus fights a war against Satan for control of this earth. Jesus also fights Satan for our hearts.

Now that you know Jesus is the King of heaven and earth, how does this Bible truth help you during hard times?



Jesus is now the lawful King of this earth.

JESUS IS OUR HELPER (Psalm 132:1–5, 11–14)

The Old Testament teaches us that the future King will come from the family group of David. This King will go to God to get help for His people.

Compare Exodus 4:22, 23 with 2 Samuel 7:12–14. Next, compare Deuteronomy 12:8–10 with 2 Samuel 7:9–11. Finally, compare Deuteronomy 12:13, 14 with Psalm 132:1–5, 11–14. What will the future son of David do? What promises will he keep?



Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to God and His law.

God announces that Israel is His son. God promises Israel rest from wars with their enemies. God also will choose a place where His people will build Him a house to worship Him. God keeps all these promises to Israel because of the future son of David. God will give David's son rest from his enemies. David's son will build a temple for God in Israel. So, we see that God keeps His promises to Israel by the promises He makes to David's son. David's son will go to God for Israel. He will be their Helper. He will ask God to help His people.

A Helper is a very important part of the agreement between God and His people. The Helper and the work He does make friendship possible between Israel and God. The agreement God gave to Moses showed that all Israel must obey God to get His blessings and protection (read Joshua 7:1–13).

Sad to say, the Old Testament shows us that many kings from the line of David were not loyal to God. So, God didn't bless Israel as much as He wanted to.

But there is Good News. God sent His Son to be born as the Son of David. Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to God and His law. So, God can keep all the promises He made to His people. Jesus is our Helper. He goes to God for us. God chose Jesus to be the One who gives us all of His promised blessings. Jesus is the only hope we have of being saved.

Think about how often you have broken the agreement with God. What does this thought teach you about why we must depend only on Jesus to save us?

JESUS FIGHTS FOR US (1 Samuel 8:19, 20)

Compare 1 Samuel 8:19, 20 and Hebrews 2:14–16. As we see in 1 Samuel 8:19, 20, what do the Israelites want a king to do for them? When we read Hebrews 2:14–16, how do we see that Jesus is the answer to all their wishes?

The Israelites forget that God is their King. They asked God for a human king to be their judge and war leader. Later, God becomes the Leader of His people again because of Jesus. As our King, Jesus leads us in the fight against sin and Satan.

Hebrews 2:14–16 shows us that Jesus is our Champion. He fights for us because we are weak. Jesus fights the devil for us and beats him. Jesus also frees us from sin. That is not all Jesus frees us from. All our lives we are afraid to die. By His death, Jesus frees us from our fear of dying, too. The way Jesus fights for us helps us remember the fight between David and Goliath. David saves his people from slavery by beating Goliath (read 1 Samuel 17:8–10). So, David acts as a champion, or a fighter, for Israel. He is their helper.

Read Isaiah 42:13 and Isaiah 59:15–20. How does the Lord talk about Himself in these verses?

We just saw how Hebrews 2:14–16 helps us remember the fight between David and Goliath. God will fight Satan for us, one-on-one. Isaiah shows us this same idea: “ ‘I will fight with the one who fights with you, and I will save your sons’ ” (Isaiah 49:25, NLV).

We may feel alone in our fight against Satan. Ephesians 6:10–18 shows us that, yes, we are in a fight. But God is our Champion. He goes first to the fight. We are part of His army. So, we must put on His battle suit. We do not fight alone. The “you” in Ephesians 6 shows us more than one person. As Christians, we must put on the battle suit from God. We stand as one behind our Champion, Jesus. We fight with Him.

What does it mean to wear God’s battle suit? Each day we fight against self and sin. How can God’s battle suit help us obey God everyday?



Jesus fights for us because we are weak. Jesus fights the devil for us and beats him.

JESUS, OUR HIGH PRIEST OR RELIGIOUS LEADER (Hebrews 5:1–4)

Hebrews 5–7 shows us a second job that Jesus does. Jesus is our High Priest or Spiritual Leader. His work as our High Priest shows us a promise God made to Jesus before He was born: “The Lord has sworn [made a strong promise] and will not change His mind [plans]: ‘You are a Religious Leader [High Priest] forever, in the same way as Melchizedek’ ” (Psalm 110:4, NLV; also read Hebrews 5:5, 6).

Read Leviticus 1:1–9; Leviticus 10:8–11; Malachi 2:7; Numbers 6:22–26; and Hebrews 5:1–4. As these verses show, what is the job of the priest?



Priests also taught the law of God to the people.

The priests helped people to be friends with God again and to understand Him better. History shows us that priests during Bible times helped their people know what the “gods” expected from them.

The Jewish priest helped people offer gifts to the true God. The people can’t bring their gifts to God without help. The priest knows how to give the gifts so that God will accept them. Then God will forgive His people and make them clean.

Priests also taught the law of God to the people. The priests were experts in the commandments. God put them in charge of explaining the law to His people. The priests showed the people how to live by the law of God, too.

Finally, the priests asked God to bless His people. God also showed His plans for the people to the priest. The priest helped the people to see that God cared about them and wanted the best for them.

1 Peter 2:9, NIV, shows us something else about priests. Christians are “royal priests. You are a holy nation.” As royal priests, we can do special things the same as priests did. Priests came to God in His Holy Tent or temple on earth. Today, we can come in prayer to God in His Holy Temple in heaven. We can come with bold faith (Hebrews 4:14–16; Hebrews 10:19–23). God also made us responsible for important work, too. We must work with God to save people on earth. God wants us to teach and explain His law to people. God also wants us to bring Him offerings of praise and good works. He loves these gifts!

We are “royal priests,” as Peter says. How should this wonderful Bible truth change our lives?

JESUS AND THE NEW AGREEMENT (Hebrews 8:8–12)

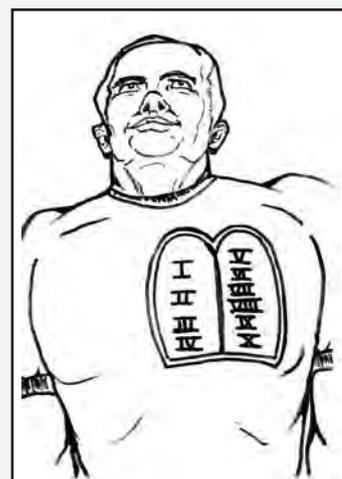
Hebrews 8–10 shows us the work that Jesus does for us under the New Agreement. The Old Agreement shows us only a hint of the good things God promises us. The Old Agreement helps us see the work that Jesus will do after He comes to this earth. The priests or religious leaders of Israel also show us the work that Jesus will do. But the priests were sinners. They were born and later died. So, they cannot do the work Jesus did. The priests also served in a temple that was only a copy of the temple in heaven (Hebrews 8:5). Now Jesus works for us in the temple in heaven. Only His blood can make us clean. Animal blood never can clean our minds or hearts. When Jesus makes us clean, we may come to God with bold faith (Hebrews 10:19–22).

**What does God promise us in the New Agreement?
Read Hebrews 8:8–12 for the answer.**

When Jesus became our High Priest, or Top Spiritual Leader, He made a new way for us to go to God. This new way is named the New Agreement. The New Agreement does what the Old Agreement can't do. The New Agreement gives us everything God promised. Only a High Priest who is God can give us these things because He is perfect and lives forever. As our High Priest, Jesus explains the law of God. He puts His law in our hearts and minds. Jesus offers God the gift of His death. This gift brings us forgiveness from God. Jesus makes us clean from sin. He changes our lives. He changes our stubborn hearts. He gives us soft hearts that will obey Him (Ezekiel 36:26). Jesus really makes us new in every way (2 Corinthians 5:17). Jesus blesses us in the most wonderful way, too: He helps us meet with God Himself.

God made the Old Agreement to show us the future work of Jesus. The Old Agreement was a beautiful plan. But some Jews misunderstood it. They did not accept the Bible truth shown by the Old Agreement. So, they missed the blessings that Jesus, our High Priest, wanted to give them.

“Everything in the Jewish temple shows Jesus’ work in heaven. Jesus is the life of the temple. The animal gifts showed the death of Jesus on the cross. The work done by the priests showed the future work of Jesus. Together, these things showed how the death of Jesus saves humans.”
—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 165, adapted.



Jesus explains the law of God. He puts His law in our hearts and minds.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: The book of Hebrews shows us many Bible truths. These truths fill us with hope. But Hebrews also is filled with warnings. We can read some of them in Hebrews 10–12. These chapters show us at least two important ideas: (1) Paul compares his readers to the Israelites in the desert. And (2) Paul wants us to have hope.

The Israelites in the desert saw the surprising power of God. God did many miracles to free His people from Egypt. The Israelites also heard God talk to them on the very high hill named Sinai. There, God said the Ten Commandments. The Israelites in the desert saw the cloud of fire in the night. They saw the cloud that protected them during the day. They ate manna. Manna was bread from heaven. The Israelites in the desert also drank water that poured from rocks wherever they camped. But when these Israelites arrived at the border of the Promised Land, they did not trust God. They did not have enough faith to enter the land. God asks His people to trust Him. “Without faith no one can please God” (Hebrews 11:6, ICB).

Paul says that we, too, are the same as the Israelites in the desert. We also are at the border of the Promised Land (Hebrews 10:37–39). We have more Bible truth than the Israelites in the desert. God made us responsible for more parts of His work, too. We did not hear God talk at Sinai. But the Bible shows us that God loves His children. We must tell people that Jesus Christ is God Himself (Hebrews 12:18–24). Jesus became a Man to save us (Hebrews 2:14–18). The question is: Will we keep our faith? Paul encourages us to follow the example of many men and women of faith in the Bible (Hebrews 11). Look, Jesus is the most important Person on this list (read Hebrews 12:1–3).



The book of Hebrews shows us many Bible truths. But Hebrews also is filled with warnings.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Jesus is our Champion. He goes first to fight the devil. How can we fight together as one church with Jesus? What things stop our church from working together? What makes our church weak? How did Satan make Israel weak in the past?
- ② As believers, we are a community of priests or spiritual leaders. God leads us. How can your local church offer better gifts of praise and good works to God?
- ③ How are we the same as the Israelites in the desert right before they entered the Promised Land? What lessons can we learn from their awful mistakes?