



# HEBREWS

Jesus is **GREATER THAN...SO STAND FIRM**

**JESUS IS GREATER THAN...**

**THE HIGH PRIEST—CHAPTER 4**

## **FACILITATOR'S NOTE**

Chapter four has many things to consider. REST! Do you want rest? All of us do. Unfortunately, the Israelites missed out on their rest due to disobedience. In this chapter, the Hebrew author addresses this rest and its availability to the faithful should they live by faith through the Word of God. Here, we learn the power of God's Word and its ability to read us as much (if not more) than we read it. The Word exposes us for who we really are and leads us to Christ, our great High Priest. This High Priest is greater than any priest who ever lived. Why? Because He never dies and is the only one who can provide the proper sacrifice/atonement for sins. As opposed to High Priests in the past who were the only ones allowed to enter the presence of God on behalf of the people, Jesus has destroyed any and all barriers to God in order to bring us near His throne of grace. WOW! Praise Jesus! Enjoy this study of hope.

**IMPORTANT:** As always, we encourage you to begin preparing for each lesson by committing the class and the teaching to God in prayer. After this, we encourage you to dig into not only the specific chapter in Hebrews for this week (Chapter 4), but also the book of Hebrews as a whole and the Scriptures at large. As you move through your readings, jot down any thoughts that come to you and particular passages that stand out and speak to you. We assure you that these will come into play as you facilitate this discussion. It is **ONLY AFTER DOING THESE THINGS** that you should approach this lesson plan and perhaps use it as a guide. Your group is different than all the rest and so your lessons should be adapted accordingly.

## **PRAYER**

Begin your time with a prayer thanking God for the gift of His Son, Jesus, and His eternal plan of salvation made possible through Him.

## FOCUS

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- The Sabbath Rest is available to the faithful and obedient.
- WARNING: Flee from Disobedience.
- The Word of God is living, active, and powerful!
- Recognize that **JESUS IS GREATER THAN** any earthly High Priest.

## LESSON

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### Discussion Starters (OPTIONAL)

- Do you struggle with finding rest in our hurried lives? In what ways do you typically find rest?
- Have you ever considered that our lack of rest could be due to unbelief and disobedience?
- Is rest available even in busied and hurried lives? How?
- How much time (on average) do you spend the God's Word each week?
- When you study God's Word, how does it make you feel? Why?
- Do you think you study God's Word more for information, or formation? Explain.
- How does it make you feel to know that we have a High Priest that can sympathize with us in our weakness and temptations? Do you struggle believing this?

### FROM GOD'S WORD

- 4:1-10
  - Key Points
    - God promised long ago that the Israelites would find rest in the Promised Land if they would remain faithful and obedient. That promise still stands, but what rest is available to us? *Heaven – In God's presence (the eternal Promised Land) forever!*
    - The author encourages his readers to fear the Lord in order to enter that rest.
      - The Fear of the Lord brings us into a reverent state before God. Knowing our place before Him and knowing He is God and we are not!
      - Without fear, we will not enter His rest.
    - The Israelites did not properly fear God. In fact, they had the gospel ("good news") preached to them as well.
      - Their gospel was God's promised deliverance from physical slavery in Egypt, a covenant between them and God establishing them as His people in special relationship with Him, and the hope of entering the Promised Land of rest in Canaan.
      - Our gospel? God has promised to deliver us from spiritual slavery with a covenant establishing us as His people (the church)

in special relationship with Him with the hope of entering His eternal rest with Him in heaven.

- Why did the Word (gospel) fail the Israelites in verse 2? *Because they did not have faith as a community in what they heard preached to them. Do we?*
- What “rests” does the Hebrew author refer to?
  - Sabbath Rest (4:4)
  - Canaan Rest (4:8)
  - Eternal Rest (4:9-10)
    - Which “rest” remains for us and how can we enter it (vv. 10-11)? *Eternal Rest, and faithful obedience to God and our Lord Jesus Christ is how we will enter that rest that was bought for us by our great High Priest.*
    - From what you have observed in Hebrews thus far, how would you describe the faith that is required to receive God's rest? *Psst...It's not rigid observance/obedience to God's rules, but a heart fully devoted to God. It is out of devotion and love that one will honor God's commands.*
- For Discussion
  - How do you picture the Eternal Rest?
  - How did the Israelites refuse to receive their rest? *It wasn't just disobedience. It was more the hardness of heart as said in verse 7.*
  - Do we harden our hearts in disobedience toward God today? How? What can we do?
- 4:11-13
  - Key Points
    - The author encourages his readers to strive to enter that Eternal Rest. How? THE WORD OF GOD
    - How does the author describe the Word of God in verse 12?
      - Living, **not** dead (as some would claim today)
      - Active, **not** dormant or useless
      - Sharp, **not** dull, boring, uninteresting
      - Piercing, **not** silent or weak
    - The Word of God exposes us for who we really are. Perhaps that is why we have often avoided it (except for in times of need) in the past. Perhaps we are afraid of what it will expose and how it will push us to change.
      - The interesting thing is that no living creature is hidden from THE WORD (verse 13) but instead all are “naked and exposed” in God's eyes as Christians. We cannot hide who we truly are from God, the High Priest, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.

- **Informational vs. Formational Reading of God's Word** – We must begin to see God's Word with different eyes. Not as a textbook. Not as words on a page, but words in our hearts. We have to see Scripture as more than informational, but more formational. As the Word dwells in us, it begins to shape us from inside out. But if it does not take up residence in our hearts, then it is simply information in our heads that may only be occasionally accessed and used. When the Word is not in our hearts, THE WORD (JESUS) is not in our hearts. When we are Biblically illiterate, we are God/Jesus/Spirit illiterate. We don't worship the Word, we worship THE WORD. However, we come to know THE WORD through the Word. For this to happen, we must approach it differently than we have in the past. We can't approach it as the teachers of the Law did. We have to approach it formatively instead of informationally.
  - For Discussion
    - The "word of God" that judges our thoughts and attitudes described in verses 12-13 holds the specific promise of God's Eternal Rest. How can God's Word expose the condition of your heart to you?
- 4:14-16 (continued next week in Chapter 5)
  - Key Points
    - The author tells his readers to hold fast to their confession of Jesus Christ as the Son of God since Jesus is also our great High Priest (v. 14).
    - This is the same High Priest who sees us for who we really are and to whom we must give account, but who also has passed through the heavens and has been tempted in every way on our account.
    - This Jesus (Son of God, Judge, High Priest), is able to sympathize with us in our weakness and understands temptation (though is sinless) (v. 15). How does this make you feel?
    - It is only by this High Priest that we can have confidence and draw near to God's presence without any barrier (namely our sin) standing in our way. It is by grace and mercy that we can stand before God and enter into relationship with Him (v. 16). THAT IS GOOD NEWS!!!
  - For Discussion
    - Have you found that some of your personal experiences have helped you understand another person better? How/Why?
    - When you are tempted, does it make any difference at all knowing that Jesus was tempted too?
    - MORE ON THIS DISCUSSION NEXT WEEK...

## REFLECTION

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- God rested from His work on the 7<sup>th</sup> day (Sabbath). Do we understand the importance of Sabbath today? Why or why not? Is taking Sabbath still important to God? What does it mean to you to rest from your work?
- Why do we struggle with obedience to God?
- What relationship (yes, I said “relationship”) do you have with Scripture (God’s Word)? How would you like to change or deepen that relationship?
- Do we have confidence to approach “the throne of grace” or do we still struggle with feeling unworthy? Explain.

## PRAYER

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**LESSON OUTLINE** – Here are the lessons we will be studying the weeks to come.

- INTRODUCTION (January 5)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Angelic Beings–Chapter 1 (January 12)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Angelic Beings–Chapter 1 (January 19)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...But Still Human–Chapter 2 (January 26)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Moses–Chapter 3 (February 2)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The High Priest–Chapter 4 (February 9)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The High Priest–Chapter 5 (February 16)
- THEREFORE, Don’t Fall Away–Chapter 6 (February 23)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Melchizedek–Chapter 7 (March 2)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The Law–Chapter 8 (March 9)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...The Tabernacle –Chapter 9 (March 16)
- JESUS IS GREATER THAN...Sacrifices–Chapter 10 (March 23)
- THEREFORE, Have Faith–Chapter 11 (March 30)
- THEREFORE, Stand Firm–Chapter 12 (April 6)
- THEREFORE, Offer Acceptable Sacrifices–Chapter 13 (April 13)
- CONCLUSION (April 27)