

A Study of the Book of Hebrews Course Handout

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” ESV

Hebrews 12:1 – 2

Primary Resource for this study: *Concordia Commentary: Hebrews* by John W. Kleinig, PhD, DD (and other degrees), Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO. 2016. References to “Kleinig” and “*Concordia Commentary*” in this study are from this source. However, please bring other commentaries, Lutheran or otherwise, and online resources to our discussion for consideration.

Note for the first class on Hebrews: In preparation for the opening session please read the introduction to **Hebrews** that you likely have in a Bible or Bibles at home. Note especially any discussion on authorship, date of authorship, its inclusion in the Canon of Scripture, and to whom the **Hebrews** was originally sent.

Authorship, Canonicity, Recipients of Hebrews

Many in the early church (200 AD – 400 AD) argued that Paul authored **Hebrews** or that it was based on Paul’s sermons and teachings and written by one of his disciples. A primary reason for those early church “fathers” and leaders to advocate for Paul’s authorship was to obtain **Hebrews’** inclusion as an authoritative writing from God upon which doctrine could be based i.e., they wanted **Hebrews** included in the Canon of Scripture. The Epistles of Paul were almost certainly the first books to gain wide acceptance as authoritative in Christian congregations around the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, establishing authorship by Paul (termed “Pauline authorship”) made a book a “shoe-in” for the New Testament Canon. As a matter of fact, no surviving letter of Paul was excluded from the Canon although the Pastoral Epistles (**1 and 2 Timothy, Titus**) were adopted a little later than his other epistles, not because of controversy, but probably because they were less well-known and not as widely circulated as his earlier epistles.

However, Paul was not the author of **Hebrews**. How do we know this? Compare **Hebrews 2:3 – 4** to **Galatians 1:11 – 12** for one example.

What differences do you see that would relate to authorship?

Besides having the assurance that the writer has the necessary qualifications to record and share the Word of God, what other reason(s) is(are) there that knowledge of authorship is helpful to us? (A helpful text may be **2 Peter 1:19 – 21**)

The author of **Hebrews** is unknown. At the same time, Kleinig states:

“While all scholars agree that no amount of detective work can discover the secret of the author’s identity in the evidence extant to us now, most still hazard a calculated guess on the basis of external historical data and internal linguistic and theological evidence. The most likely candidates are, in order of increasing probability, Barnabas, Apollos, St. Paul, Clement of Rome, and Luke.”

Luther believed the most likely author of **Hebrews** was Apollos (but did not have a strong opinion on that – for once 😊). What do we learn about Apollos in the following verses?

Acts 18:24 – 28 _____

1 Corinthians 3:1 – 6 _____

Authorship issues was not the only problem for **Hebrews**. **Hebrews** teaching on repentance (especially **Hebrews 6:4 – 6**) created conflict among church leaders in reconciling it with Paul’s and the other Apostle’s writings that were already accepted as authoritative. We will look at these verses in **Hebrews** and its teachings in detail later to explore this. Resolving the problem took centuries for **Hebrews** to be adopted into the Canon. For books to be included in the New Testament canon there had to be wide agreement (“catholicity”) across the entire Christian church as it existed in the 2nd to 5th centuries. As would be expected, some books known and utilized in a particular region as authoritative may not have been known that well in another region and therefore not accepted in that region. **Hebrews** was adopted fairly early (certainly before the end of the 2nd century) by eastern Mediterranean churches, especially the church based out of Alexandria, Egypt. The western churches (dominated by Rome) gradually accepted **Hebrews** and it was officially recognized by the West by 393 AD. Kleinig points out:

*“Acceptance of **Hebrews** was accelerated by its role in the debates in the fourth and fifth centuries on the divine and human natures of God’s incarnate Son and his identity as one of the three persons of the Holy Trinity.”*

It should be noted that the Alexandrians in particular promoted **Hebrews** as authoritative and maintained that it was either written by Paul or one of his disciples in order to promote their position.

Interestingly, look back at **Acts 18:24**. What do you see that may give circumstantial evidence of Apollos being the author of **Hebrews**?

During the reformation in the 1500’s, there was a resurgence of controversy over **Hebrews**’ teaching on repentance. Luther was among those who had mixed feelings on **Hebrews** and he put it with **James, Jude, and Revelation** at the end of his translations and considered these books to be deuterocanonical. It should be noted that the Lectionary Readings for the LCMS do

not include selections from **Hebrews**. At the same time, the LCMS, along with the Roman Catholic Church, Eastern Orthodox Church, and all other reformed/protestant churches consider **Hebrews** canonical and therefore God's Word.

If you look at older Bibles, **Hebrews** is titled "**The Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews**". Even today, it is very common to see it titled, "**The Letter (or Epistle) to the Hebrews.**" However, modern scholarship, including conservative, "Bible believing" scholars such as Dr. Kleinig, generally agree that **Hebrews** is not an epistle but rather a sermon with a short letter attached at the end.

Compare **Hebrews 1:1 – 2** with other books of the New Testament that are clearly Epistles, **Romans 1:1**, **James 1:1**, and **1 Peter 1:1**. What do you note that is different?

According to Kleinig, **Hebrews** was likely written sometime between AD 50 and 90. Many authorities believe that it was written prior to AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple built by King Herod the Great since no mention of the temple's destruction is mentioned in **Hebrews**.

The recipients of the message are unknown. Kleinig believes that "***Hebrews** is addressed to a Greek-speaking Jewish-Christian congregation...either as ethnic Jews or as proselytes.*"

How does **Hebrews 13:22 – 25** give a possible clue as to the location of the congregation?

Let's begin the study of the text itself by reading **Hebrews 1:1 – 4**.

What is the significance that God speaks to us?

How does this compare with other religions and "spiritualism"?

When we look at examples of God speaking His Truth through the prophets versus Jesus speaking the Truth, how do they differ? Compare examples from **Exodus 11:4 – 5**, **1 Samuel 15:1 – 2**, **2 Kings 7:1**, **Matthew 26:34**, **Mark 10:15**, and **John 5:24**.

What is meant by, or what is the significance, of the text saying that God’s Son has spoken to us in these “last days”?

In what ways has the Son “spoken to us”?

How does this verse impact or substantiate the overall organizational structure of the Bible?

What do verses 2 – 4 say about Christ and “What does this mean?”

Why is crucial to understand that Jesus the Christ is God?

How does Christ’s sitting “down at the right hand of the Majesty on High” help provide insight into verses like **John 20:15 – 18** and **John 16:5 – 7**.

As we study **Hebrews** it is important to note that the author (or “teacher” as Kleinig terms him) quotes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was the common “Bible” of that day since the most common language throughout the Roman Empire was Greek. However, the Old Testament’s original language is Hebrew (with a little Aramaic). This Greek translation of that time is called the Septuagint and is abbreviated in scholarly literature as LXX. Our modern translations of the Old Testament depend largely upon Hebrew manuscripts rather than the Septuagint because the Hebrew manuscripts are thought to be more accurate. Therefore, if you see a quote of an Old Testament (OT) verse in the **Book of Hebrews** and it is not quite the same reading as what you read in your ESV or NIV Bible, that is the most likely reason for the difference. This is also true of all of the New Testament books.

Understanding that information about the Septuagint (LXX), here are a few of Kleinig’s summarizing comments on **Hebrews 1:5 – 14**.

*This section presents a chain of quotations from the LXX...with brief introductions and the author’s conclusion in 1:14. Even though it looks as if the quotations are joined together topically in a haphazard fashion, the material is, on closer observation, arranged with much art and great care. The teacher in fact employs a number of rhetorical devices to arrange and interpret this chain of quotations, all of which serve to explain the reference to the Son’s **“more excellent”...“name”**. The use of **“For”**...in 1:5 reinforces that connection...The seven scriptural quotations in 1:5 – 13 disclose the name that God had formerly promised and has now given to his enthroned Son (**“the name that he has inherited”**, 1:4). They are foundational utterances of God (5:12), **“the foundational Word of Christ”** (6:1)...By quoting what God says, the teacher invites his hearers to join him in reflecting on the name that the Son has received as is inheritance from God. He has them listening to the very voice of God as speaks to his Son (1:5, 8 – 13) and about the relationship of the angels with his Son (1:6 – 7).*

With that in mind let’s read **Hebrews 1:5 – 14**.

A fundamental understanding of who the Son is (within the Trinity) is to understand **“begotten”** in verse 5 and **“firstborn”** in verse 6. What do these descriptions of Christ mean?

How could these terms be distorted into heresy (and they have been)? For instance, how could verse 6 be misinterpreted?

Can you name any groups or religions who distort Jesus’ relationship to the Father?

How would you explain verse 6 i.e. “when” did God command the angels to worship Him?

How do these verses differentiate Jesus, the Son, from angels?

On a quick side note compare **Deuteronomy 32:43** in the NIV or ESV to the text in **Hebrews 1:6** that is quoting the verse in **Deuteronomy**. Remember that the **Hebrews** quote is from the Septuagint (LXX). How does the text differ from the NIV or ESV, both of which are translated from Hebrew texts (Masoretic Texts)?

Does this disparity bother you? If not, why not? _____

Read **Hebrews 2:1 – 4**.

Hebrews 2 starts with “**Therefore...**” What overall thought or concept is the “**Therefore**” referencing from the previous chapter?

Do you think it is fair to use verse one as a “proof text” against the Calvinistic theology of “Once saved, always saved”? (We will be looking at this issue extensively in our study of **Hebrews**.)

What is the warning for us in verses 2 – 3 and what is meant by “**great salvation**”?

What is the purpose of signs and miracles in verse 4?

Is it fair/legitimate to use this verse as a “proof text” against Pentecostal theologies that teach that the gift of miracles is present today? Is so, why...If not, why not?

In understanding and discussing **Hebrews 2:5 – 18**, it might be helpful to see a condensed version of Dr. Kleinig’s outline of those verses as follows:

- I. *The subordination of the world to come to Jesus as the Son of Man (2:5 – 9).*
- II. *God’s perfection of Jesus as the pioneer of salvation through his death (2:10 – 13)*
- III. *The purpose of the Son’s incarnation (2:14 – 18)*

With that in mind let's begin by reading **Hebrews 2:5 – 9**.

In Chapter 1, as well as in these verses, the teacher makes comparisons and provides examples of the difference between angels and Jesus, the Son of God. Why do you think he does this and what might it say about what is going on in the congregation (or possibly the church at large) to whom **Hebrews** is addressed?

Verses 6 – 8 reference **Psalm 8**. Let's read **Psalm 8** keeping in mind that it was written by David. From David's perspective who is "man" and "son of man"? In other words what is the Psalmist talking about?

In comparison, who is "man" and "son of man" as interpreted by the teacher in **Hebrews**?

In all four Gospels Jesus repeatedly refers to Himself as "Son of Man". What does He mean by this and, considering He is the Son of God, why does He say this?

The initial reading and context of **Psalm 8** and the elaboration on the meaning of this **Psalm** by the teacher in **Hebrews 2:8 - 9** illustrates what classic principles of Biblical interpretation (see handout on Hermeneutical Principles?

How does this validate us using these principles of hermeneutics?

How would you summarize what is being said about Jesus in verses 5 – 9?

Let's read **Hebrews 2:10 – 18**.

To whom does the “he” in verse 10 refer? _____

How do we reconcile **Hebrews 1:2** and **John 1:1 – 3** with verse 10 and its impact on our thinking in the Creeds?

Going back to verse 9 to establish the context of verses 10 – 18 (as well as the context of the whole of the Bible) what does it mean that “it was fitting” that Jesus was made “perfect through suffering” in verse 10?

What is the meaning of verse 11? _____

Verse 11 states that Jesus calls us his “brothers”. What is the significance of this globally and to you personally?

What do we learn in verse 17 was at least one purpose Jesus was 100% human like us?

What does that mean or what is the importance of this? (Hint: Think of all the things the OT high priests had to do to atone for sin.)

The last phrase of verse 17 is translated in various ways. If you have access to a variety of translations, compare the wording.

What is the difference between atonement and propitiation?

Besides what we discussed in verse 17, what other results or benefits relative to Jesus' humanity as Savior and also relative to being our brother in verses 14 – 18?

What does that mean personally to you?

Read **Hebrews 3:1 – 6**.

Once again, we have a chapter starting with “Therefore”. What is this “therefore” referencing from the previous chapter and how is it a little different than the first “Therefore” that is at the beginning of Chapter 2 previously discussed?

In verse 1 we the teacher for the first time directly addresses the congregation of the “Hebrews” by calling them “holy brothers”. Dr. Kleinig notes that *“This is the only place in the NT where Christians are called “holy brothers”*. He calls us all a *“Heavenly Band of Brothers”*. 😊 What is the significance of this description for the Hebrews congregation and us?

We have already discussed Jesus being our ultimate High Priest. How (or why) would Jesus be referred to as an “apostle” in verse 1?

What are the comparisons of Jesus to Moses in verses 2 – 6 and what is the point of them?

What does it mean that “we are His house” in verse 6 and what reassurance or meaning does that give us?

Although it is a long section let's look at **Hebrews 3:7 – 4:13**.

What are some overall themes or messages in this section of **Hebrews** and can you identify a general point that is being made?

Why does the Teacher reference the falling away of the Israelites to the congregation (and us)? What is the point of that? Why not just say “Be sure to be faithful to the end and not fall away.”?

What is meant by “today” in 3:13, 3:15, and 4:7? What point is being made?

What does it mean to enter God's “rest”?

Do these verses support or contradict a “Once saved always saved” theological position?

How does 4:12 – 13 fit with the context of the previous section of verses?

What is(are) the overall point(s) of these two verses?

How does the Word of God separate “soul and spirit” (see verse 12)?

Read **Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10**. These verses describe Jesus our great High Priest.

What do we learn about our High Priest, Jesus, in **Hebrews 4:14 – 16** and what reassurances do these verses give us?

Hebrews 5:1 – 10 draws comparisons between the earthly High Priests of the Old and New Testaments.

What similarities and differences do we see between Jesus and the Biblical High Priests?

What blessings do we receive from the similarities?

What blessings do we receive from the differences?

What does it mean that Jesus is a high priest “after the order of Melchizedek”?

Let’s read **Hebrews 5:11 – 6:3**.

What shift in tone do you see here and how would you describe what is happening the congregation?

How do we fall into the same trap(s)?

According to verse 14, what is the mark (or at least a mark) of being a “mature” Christian and what examples can you give of having this characteristic?

In **Hebrews 6:1 – 2** we have a list of elementary teachings. List out those teachings and briefly describe each one.

This list is not meant to be comprehensive list of all the basic teachings of the Bible or the Christian Church. Are there any teachings that you can think of that could be added to this list?

How do we go about teaching the elementary teachings and yet move on so as not become complacent as we have noted in **Hebrews 5:11 – 12**?

In the introduction to this study of **Hebrews**, we briefly discussed that **Hebrews 6:4 – 6** was (and to some extent still is) very controversial in the early church (~100 – 400 AD) and again revisited at the time of the Reformation by Luther and others. These verses along with questions about the authorship of **Hebrews**, delayed **Hebrews** acceptance into the Canon of Scripture and impacted its acceptance during the Reformation. In order to keep a better context for the verses let’s read **Hebrews 6:4 – 12**.

What do verses 4 – 8 seem to be saying that caused so much theological “heartburn” throughout the ages of the Christian Church?

What words in these verses allude to Baptism and Holy Communion?

How would you explain or interpret these verses so that they are consistent with the rest of Scripture and the doctrine of repentance?

Let's re-read **Hebrews 6:9 – 12**. How do these verses give reassurance and hope to the Hebrew congregation and to us for our salvation in Christ?

Let's read **Hebrews 6:13 – 20**.

How do these verses reinforce the reassurance offered the Hebrew congregation (and to us) that we just studied in verses 9 – 12?

What characteristics of God do we see in these verses?

In Chapter 7, the teacher returns to the theme of Christ's role as our perfect high priest after the order of Melchizedek and further explains what the significance and meaning is of "the order" of Melchizedek. In order to help understand **Hebrews 7:1 – 10** Dr. Kleinig points out the following:

"For us to follow his argument we need to understand two assumptions that were taken for granted by him [the teacher] and his congregation. The first assumption is about the role of God's Law in the OT in establishing the priesthood. The Law of Moses authorizes the priests to act as God's agents...Without the Law they have no authority to act...So from that perspective the claim that Jesus is God's new High Priest is problematic and illegal because he does not meet the basic ritual requirements. In fact, his membership in the tribe of Judah disqualifies him from the Levitical priesthood.

The second assumption is that God can intervene more immediately to establish a new royal and priestly dynasty...The authority...is by divine power rather than divine Law...By his resurrection God establishes his priestly status in the order of Melchizedek." (Concordia Commentary page 346)

Understanding Dr. Kleinig's point, how does our perspective, paradigm, bias differ from that the congregation of **Hebrews**?

Let's now read **Hebrews 7:1 – 10**.

What things do we learn (or have reinforced) about Melchizedek from these verses?

What is the point of the multiple references to tithing?

Hebrews 7:11 – 19 continues the comparison of Jesus to Melchizedek and the differences between the priesthood of Levi/Aaron established by God with the Israelites during the Exodus. What is meant by the rhetorical question being asked in verse 11?

What does **Hebrews 7:18 – 19** mean?

What does this mean in our daily walk with Christ and how we deal with other people?

How could misinterpretation of these verses lead into the trap of “cheap grace”?

How does the Teacher continue to differentiate Jesus' priesthood from that of the Levitical priests in **Hebrews 7:20 – 28** and how do these differences give us reassurance and peace?

Verse 22 references an “oath”. What is the oath and why is it important?

Dr. Kleinig introduces Chapter 8 as follows:

Here we come to the central part of the sermon with thematic shift from the appointment of Jesus as High Priest to the location of his liturgical ministry in the heavenly tent. This new unit, which provides an exposition of Jer 31:31 – 34, extends from Heb 8:1 to 9:28. Its significance is marked by the author’s claim in 8:1 that he has come to the “main point” of his argument.

Since this section of the sermon deals with the location for the liturgical ministry as the Eternal High Priest, the author employs a wide range of spatial imagery. Jesus’ location is at God’s “right hand...in the heavenly realms” (8:1); there in a “tent”, like the tent of the tabernacle, he performs his liturgical ministry with its “holy things” (8:2). That tent is the “place” that God has chosen for the new covenant (8:7).

Understanding these points by Dr. Kleinig lets read Chapter 8 of **Hebrews** and answer the following questions.

In verses 7 – 13 what are the differences between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant and why is the New Covenant better ?

What are the “better promises” in verse 6 upon which the New Covenant is based?

What is the meaning of verses 10 and 11?

What is meant in verse 13 by the Old Covenant “becoming obsolete”?

What implication would this give as to the date of authorship of **Hebrews**?

Any other thoughts, comments, or questions about Chapter 8?

In Chapter 9 the Teacher continues to compare the Old and New Covenants contrasting what the priests and High Priest under the Old Covenant had to do in the “earthly tent” (tabernacle) compared to the New Covenant with Christ functioning as our High Priest in the heavenly “true tent”. With that in mind, let’s read **Hebrews 9:1 – 14**.

First a quick aside about verse 4. What did the contents of the Ark of Covenant represent?

The stone tablets? _____

The golden urn of manna? _____

Aaron’s staff that budded? (See **Numbers 17:1 – 11** for the background)

Comparing verses 1 – 10 to 11 – 15, what are the differences (both functionally and outcome/results) between how the High Priest in the tabernacle and Jesus as our eternal High Priest in heaven?

What does this say about how people of the OT were saved?

Other comments or questions on that section? _____

As we read **Hebrews 9:15 – 28** keep in mind the following comment by Kleinig regarding this section of Scripture:

The most remarkable rhetorical feature of this unit is its repeated shift in focus from the work of Jesus as High Priest to the work of Moses and the priests and then back to Jesus again to show the liturgical continuity as well as the discontinuity of the two covenants.

What is the point of the allusion to a last will and testament in verses 16 – 17?

How does the story of Joshua and people of Israel inheriting the Promised Land relate to this last will and testament concept?

Considering that the world has gone on for over 2000 more years since this was written, how can the Teacher be correct in verse 26 when he says Jesus' first appearance was "at the end of the ages"?

How do verses 27 – 28 differentiate the purpose of Jesus' first and second coming?

Based on these same verses, how many more times is Jesus coming back and how does this impact the various beliefs regarding "The Rapture"?

Note the following comments by Dr. Kleinig regarding **Hebrews 10** to help give context and understanding of what is being said: (I took the liberty of creating bullet points instead of long paragraph to help provide clarity.)

"This part of the sermon weaves together various strands of the argument that stretches back to 5:1...In it the main themes from this extensive exposition are recalled and correlated:

- † *the Law and its fulfillment by Christ,*
- † *the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Jesus,*
- † *the repeated offerings of the Levitical priests and the single self-offering of Jesus,*
- † *sin and its removal,*
- † *sacrifice for sin and remission of sin through blood,*
- † *cleansing from sin and access to God through Jesus in the Divine Service,*
- † *sanctification and perfection."*

Keeping in mind that these verses summarize or often restate previous points, let's read **Hebrews 10:1 – 18**.

Hebrews 10:5 – 7 contains a quote from **Psalms 40:6 – 8**. None of the Gospels ever record Jesus quoting these verses yet the Teacher says "...when Christ came into the world, he said...". How would you respond to someone who tries to use this as a "proof text" that the New Testament is incomplete and that there are lost books of the Bible?

Prior to verse 10 the Teacher has referred to our Savior as “Jesus” multiple times and as “Christ” multiple times. In this verse he refers to Him as “Jesus Christ” for the first time. How do you distinguish referring to Jesus as “Jesus” vs “Christ” vs “Jesus Christ”?

Why does the Teacher use “Jesus Christ” in this context?

Kleinig has an interesting insight on verses 12 – 13 comparing Christ’s role as High Priest to his role as King of all creation:

“In contrast with the priests who stood in service before God, Jesus ‘sat down...at the right hand of God.’ And he remains seated there without interruption...he is now enthroned as co-regent with God...He is therefore both High Priest and King. As High Priest he atones for sin; as King he offers an amnesty from the debt of sin. As High Priest he appears before God on behalf of the congregation for their salvation; as King he has defeated their enemy by his death and resurrection in order to free them from fearful slavery to the foe. As High Priest he intercedes with God for sinners; they therefore can approach Him as King to receive God’s mercy and grace.”

Any thoughts on Dr. Kleinig’s comparison of Christ’s roles?

How do earthly kings become kings compared to how Jesus became King?

What does this say about God?

Verses 17 states that God no longer remembers our sin. How can that be since He knows all things? Also how does verse 18 help provide some answer to this question?

A quick sidebar related to this topic. **1 John 1:8 – 9** is quoted within two of the settings in the Lutheran Service Book as follows:

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. [But] If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ESV

God’s justice demands that we are accountable for our sins. How is it then that God is “just” to forgive us our sins as stated in this Word of Scripture?

Any other thoughts on **Hebrews 10:1 – 18**?

As we read **Hebrews 10:19 – 39** note that it is similar in pattern and content to **Hebrews 6**. First, he starts with positive encouragement about the blessings we have because of Christ’s blood sacrifice on the Cross, then moves on to warnings about the consequences of turning our backs on Christ, then ends this section both encouraging and warning the congregation in their faith. As we read this:

Of what blessings/or encouragements are they/we reminded in verses 19 – 25?

What warnings do we have in verses 26 – 31?

What is the only solution to the sinful status for the person(s) described in these verses and what is our responsibility to them?

In verses 32 – 39 the teacher is encouraging the congregation in a different manner than the words of encouragement verses 19 – 25. What are the encouragements and how do they differ from verses 19 – 25?

Can you relate to any of these “encouragements”? If so, care to share your story?

What warnings are repeated (or restated a little differently) in verses 32 – 39?

How does the Teacher end this section in verse 39 on a positive note and “tee up” Chapter 11?

Hebrews 11 (especially verse 1) is one of the most well-known, and most frequently quoted, chapters (verses) in the New Testament. Let’s start with **Hebrews 11:1 – 2**.

In your own words what does **Hebrews 1:1** mean?

What are the “things hoped for” and of those “things” what comforts you the most?

What are the “things not seen” and of those “things” what gives you the most comfort and/or confidence?

What does verse 2 mean?

Read **Hebrews 11:3 – 7**.

In terms of time and place how does verse 3 differ from most of the rest of this chapter?

What encouragement does that give to all of us?

It is interesting that the first act or understanding mentioned about faith is believing that God created the heaven and earth. What does that say about our situation of today, especially Satan's activity?

As we continue with the rest of the chapter Dr. Kleinig comments:

The whole of chapter 11 is a rhetorical tour de force, a masterpiece in persuasive speech. It appeals to the congregation imaginatively and emotionally. Its imaginative appeal stems from its vivid presentation of the story of God's faithful people in the OT as the congregation's own story, the story of its journey from earth to heaven... Yet even though these people of faith are the congregants' spiritual ancestors, they do not belong to the past as figures from ancient history; they surround the congregation like unseen spectators in the Divine Service and continue to bear witness to God's faithfulness as the congregation hears about them when the Scriptures are read and expounded (12:1). Like Abel, they not been silenced by death but continue to speak (11:4).

How would you explain the work of the Holy Spirit as it relates to verse 6? How could this verse get misinterpreted?

How did Noah building the Ark condemn the world?

Throughout these verses as well as the rest of the chapter the faith of the person mentioned is tied to some action. What is the point of this and how should we be looking at these actions or "good works"?

What faith driven action occurred or was performed by:

Abel? _____

Enoch? _____

Noah? _____

Let's read **Hebrews 11:8 – 12**.

What faith driven actions are attributed to Abraham in these verses?

Considering Sarah laughed when Abraham was told that she would bear a son at age 90, how can she be credited to have faith to conceive?

What "city" is being referenced in verse 10? _____

Hebrews 11:13 – 16 is a wonderful interlude expounding upon the impact of faith or the meaning of faith in those previously listed.

What promised "things" did they not receive (verse 13)?

How did they see and greet them from afar?

How does this apply to us? _____

What is meant by verses 14 – 16? _____

Since God has had to "do it all" for us to attain salvation, how can he not be "ashamed to be called our God"?

What comfort does that give you?

Any other thoughts on these verses? _____

What further faith driven action (or belief) do Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph display in **Hebrews 11:17 – 22**?

What is the lesson for us in this “act” of faith?

Regarding verse 21 Kleinig explains the meaning of Jacob “**bowing in worship over the head of his staff.**”:

*Jacob’s prostration over the top of his staff recalls how Jacob had left the land with nothing but a staff to take on his journey to Haran (**Gen 32:10**). Now that he had come to the end of his earthly journey without reaching his promised heavenly homeland (**Heb 11:13 – 16**), he bowed down over that staff in a faithful act of submission and entrustment to God who had promised to bring him to that place. He put himself and future destiny in God’s hands.*

Any other comments on the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob or how their faith relates to us?

Let’s read **Hebrews 11:23 – 29** regarding Moses’ faith.

How is it an act of faith by Moses’ parents that they hid him for three months?

Verses 24 – 26 is a significant elaboration of **Exodus 2:11 – 12** relative to Moses’ faith at the time he was living in Pharaoh’s house. Considering what we know of Moses’ reluctance to do God’s will at the burning bush, what does this say about the process of God developing faith in Moses?

Note that verse 27 is referencing Moses’ faith upon leading the Israelites out of Egypt not his first flight from Egypt after killing the Egyptian who was beating an Israelite. This verse would therefore not be in chronological sequence with verse 28 relative to the life of Moses and the Exodus in general.

What is the act of faith in performing the first Passover and crossing of the Red Sea?

Let's read **Hebrews 11:30 – 40**.

In what, did the Israelites and Rahab have faith? _____

Sarah and Rahab are the only women mentioned in this “Hall of Fame” list of OT saints. How is Rahab’s listing particularly important and unique?

What comments or insights (especially related to faith or faithfulness) would you like to share about the author’s choice of names in verse 32 or the events mentioned in verses 33 – 38?

What example and/or warning is there for us in the last half of verse 37 through verse 38?

What concept is repeated in verses 39 – 40 that circles back to some of our discussion in verse 1?

Let's read **Hebrews 12:1 – 2**.

The author says, **“we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses”**. What images or thoughts does this bring to mind and how is this encouraging to us?

How do we “lay aside every weight and sin” and why? (Hint see verse 2 but...What does that mean or look like in our daily lives?)

Verse 2 is often translated that Jesus is the “author and finisher” of our faith. Lutheran theology emphasizes that we cannot choose to come to faith and that we are brought to faith entirely as a work of the Holy Spirit. Do you believe this verse should be used as one of our proof texts for that doctrinal belief? Why or why not?

Considering the context of these verses in that they follow examples of faith from a long list of patriarchs how are they (and we) encouraged to run the race?

What was (or is) the joy set before Jesus and what does this tell us about Jesus and God in general as it relates to you and me?

The Teacher now goes on to relate Jesus' suffering and death to our daily walk with Jesus in **Hebrews 12:3 – 11**. As we read that consider the following questions.

What is the goal, or "big picture" laid out for us in verse 3?

What are some concrete examples of God's discipline?

Can you give any examples of God's discipline in your own life and how that benefited you?

What is meant by yielding a "peaceful fruit of righteousness"?

Let's read **Hebrews 12:12 – 17**.

What allusions to a runner running a race is there in verses 12 – 13 and how does that apply to our running the race for Christ as an individual? as a congregation or church body?

Verse 14 says “Strive for peace with everyone”. Considering the big picture that we are running the race for heavenly goals what does that look like in our individual lives and in the life of the congregation?

How do you strive for peace yet take a stand against unrighteousness?

What is meant by “root of bitterness” in day-to-day terms?

What is to be our attitude in helping and correcting each other?

What point is being made in the reference to Esau?

Dr. Kleinig introduces **Hebrews 12:18 – 29** as follows:

The larger and immediate contexts are significant for the understanding of this unit. It is, as many commentators claim, the rhetorical climax of Hebrews, its conclusive peroration. As such it draws together many of the themes that have been previously elaborated. It deals with the heavenly calling of God’s sons to serve as priests in the heavenly sanctuary... This passage uses the story of the Lord’s theophany to the congregation of Israel at Mount Sinai to explain why the members of the church should pursue God’s holiness by listening to the voice of Jesus as he speaks good things to them in the Divine Service.

Compare and contrast the experience of the Israelites at Mount Sinai to the new heavenly Jerusalem in **Hebrews 12:18 – 24** and what assurances/comfort that gives us.

Now read **Hebrews 12:25 – 29**.

What warning are we given in verse 25 and what is the basis for the severity of that warning? Also, what is the implication of that warning for the world at large that carries through to verses 26 and 27?

What does it mean that “God is a consuming fire”?

Following are excerpts of Dr. Kleinig’s introduction of Chapter 13:

At first glance chapter 13...seems to be a grab bag of material on various topics that have little to do with one another and the rest of the sermon. So some scholars have concluded that this is a later appendix that was added to turn the sermon into a letter and apply its original message to a new situation. But these objections to its integrity have been decisively refuted by a number of studies...Rhetorically speaking, this chapter, taken together with 12:18 – 19, functions as the peroration of the sermon, its conclusion, which aims to move its hearers by summarizing the main points... and appealing to their emotions, such as their sense of community and their sympathy for one another.

With that in mind let’s start the “home stretch” of our study of **Hebrews** by reading verses 1 – 8.

As we have discussed all along, **Hebrews** was most likely written as a sermon inspired by God. How does this ending in **Hebrews 13** differ from a typical Lutheran sermon?

It might be easy to blow by verse 1 but what does “brotherly love” mean and what does that look like in our daily lives?

What Biblical example do we have in verse 2 and how does verse 2 apply to us?

Any one of verses 3 – 7 could be the basis of a sermon. Do any of these verses strike home with you? How we implement them into our walk with Christ?

What does it mean to “remember your leaders” in verse 7?

What is the meaning of verse 8? How does it relate to the rest of the context of the sermon?

It is not uncommon to see verse 8 posted above the entry or exit to a Pentecostal or Assemblies of God church. Those congregations use verse 8 as a proof text that we can perform miracles just as the early disciples and evangelists did in the **Book of Acts**. How would you respond to a “charismatic” on their use of this verse in that manner?

Let’s read **Hebrews 13:9 – 14**.

Verse 9 references “strange teachings”. What “strange teachings” are suggested or hypothesized in your commentaries and what hint do we get as to the nature of these teachings?

How would you generally summarize verses 10 – 14?

Regarding verse 10 Dr. Kleinig makes the following somewhat surprising comment.

Well, what is that altar, and how does it function for the congregation? That is, without doubt, the most controversial question in the interpretation of Hebrews, an issue on which there is little or no agreement, because any consensus is hampered not just by the lack of decisive data in Hebrews but also by the theological and historical presuppositions of its interpreters.

He then goes on to give 5 possible explanations, three of which he argues against very effectively and leaves two possible likely interpretations. Having said that what do you think is meant by “the alter”? 😊

What is the significance of Jesus suffering “outside the gate”?

Let’s read **Hebrews 13:15 – 19**.

What is the meaning of verses 15 – 16 in everyday thinking? What does that look like?

Bonus question 😊. Of what other account/instructions/reprimand in Paul’s letters does “share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God” remind you of?

Verse 17 harkens back to verse 7. What other reasoning and elaboration do we get on how to treat our pastors and Spiritual leaders?

Notice the reason given by the teacher in verses 18 – 19 for the congregation to “pray for us”. What does the teacher mean by this and why wouldn’t he just command them to pray for them as one of their leaders?

Let’s finish reading **Hebrews** and complete our study! Please read **Hebrews 13:20 – 25**.

How do verses 20 – 21 summarize what we have studied in Hebrews?

What phrases or words in verses 22 – 25 give indication that they are still part of the sermon and not aside comments?

What do we learn about Timothy?

Review question to see if you were paying attention at the beginning of our study. 😊 What is the possible significance of the mentioning “those from Italy” in verse 24?

Why end with “Grace be with you all”?

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1 – 2 ESV