

The Everlasting Covenant

Introduction to Hebrews

This morning we are going to read through the book of Hebrews. My plan, we'll see if it is also God's plan, is to preach through Hebrews as we go through Exodus and Leviticus. About every four or five chapters, hopefully at a point where there is specific relevance, we'll go through a book of Hebrews. A few comments on Hebrews. We don't know who the author is, but it is definitely Pauline in style and substance, but the language is different so it probably was not Paul who actually wrote it since Paul clearly identifies his letters as coming from him. It was probably someone who was associated with Paul. It is written like a sermon rather than like a letter so it is possible that it was a transcription of a sermon by Paul or a sermon of someone who was trained by Paul. The KJV writers put that it was written by Timothy, but there is no proof of that. Other people say it was written by Luke, but it doesn't seem to be written by Paul. We also don't know when it was written, considering the lack of knowledge about the writer and the timeframe that it was written. There's very little internal evidence because it talks about the temple instead of the tabernacle that it was written after 70 A.D., but that's a different debate. There still is not much debate that it is part of the canon of Scripture, probably because it gives such a logical presentation that explains the relationship between the types and shadows in the Old Testament and the substance that is in the New Testament. It makes so much sense in explaining what God was doing in the Old Testament prophesies that it has been taken as being God-breathed with little debate. The reason is because it is such a logical book that goes back and says how you should look at the Old Testament, this is why you look at what it meant to be a high priest and you look at Christ and you see the law had to change because you went from being a high priest on the order of Aaron to a high priest on the order of Melchizedek and there was a changing of the law and so these things had to change. There is talk about what the temple was and what those things were and it explains so many types and shadows so there is no debate on whether it's part of the canon because it matches what the Old Testament says. That's the other difference with the books in the New Testament. Hebrews is a sermon and the other ones are letters. So part of the reason Hebrews is accepted as part of the canon is because it makes sense and logical fits the rest of Scripture. So much is explaining the things that went on in the Old Testament, that the Old Testament is hard to understand without the book of Hebrews. So why go through Hebrews in conjunction with Exodus and Leviticus? When we started the book of Exodus, I introduced the book by saying that there were four things to look for as we went through the book. The four things were: the sovereignty of God, the types and the shadows, how the New Covenant being a better covenant, and then I called it non-types – meaning the examples of behavior to avoid. The reason that I want to go through Hebrews is to help us to be able to see these things in Exodus and Leviticus, in particular, how to interpret the types and how the New Covenant is a better covenant. As we read through Hebrews, consider how the writer of Hebrews deals with types and how he keeps pointing out that we have a better covenant in Christ than they received with Moses. I want to encourage the men to not read it quickly to get through it, but read it so the people can hear it and understand it, read it deliberately. It doesn't take that long and we're not pressed for time so read the chapters you have been given in a way that helps people to hear them and understand them. I also want to lay things out that are there so the children hear them. For the Sovereignty of God, in chapter 1, is how Christ's coming had been prophesied before. Repeatedly God had said one would come who sit on the throne that the world was created by Him and for Him and with the coming of Christ those things had come to pass. Another thing that points to Christ is when Abraham went to Melchizedek to give a tithe after he fought with the kings. There are five verses in the Old Testament that were related to Melchizedek, four of them are in Genesis and one is in Psalm 110. Those are the only places where Melchizedek is mentioned, but a good chunk of Hebrews talks about Melchizedek and his importance. This points to the importance of how God orders things, that God can cause him to rise up without giving us any knowledge about him. Moses goes to Melchizedek and gives him a

tithe of all that he won in the war and that's all you hear about it. He came out to offer wine and bread, obviously a picture of Christ, and he receives the tithe and that's it. Yet, God had significant things to say and for us to understand that the writer of Hebrews makes really clear and really plain. Melchizedek was very important so he explains how God did this for a purpose and as we go through Exodus and Leviticus, it's important for us to remember that God was purposeful in everything that He did there. And then types, as I said before, the types in the better covenant. These are the two things that we should really see in Hebrews, but all kinds of types are dealt with. The Sabbath being a type of the eternal rest. Chapter 4 is spent on making whoever reads Hebrews to understand the reason that we continue to celebrate the Sabbath is because there continues to be a promise of eternal rest, the eternal rest promised in Christ has not been fulfilled, we have not been resurrected yet. So we keep the Sabbath to testify because from the beginning there were six days that God worked and one day that He rested, not because He needed rest, but to testify there was an eternal rest at the end of time. We also see how Christ was a high priest as Aaron was a high priest. God appointed Aaron as high priest so we could see that we need a mediator between God and man. As we go through Exodus we see Aaron's priesthood and we should recognize that we need a priest, but not a priest like Aaron. Not a priesthood that constantly kills animals, but a priest like Melchizedek. Then we get to chapter 5, Melchizedek is a type of Christ, he is the priesthood that we are part of because everyone in Christ is a priest and a king. Melchizedek was a priest and a king, so this figure that popped up in these verse four verses, this tells us what Christians are and how different we are from the Levites. The purpose of the Levites was to constantly offer offerings to make themselves acceptable to God. You don't see Melchizedek making any sacrifices and you see Christ making one sacrifice to establish that priesthood and that priesthood was established at the time of Melchizedek because Christ had been pre-ordained before the foundation of the world to be sacrificed to be that priesthood. That priesthood that was established, the kind of priests that we are, because we are kings and priests in Christ. So the writer of Hebrews says that as you see Aaron's priesthood, understand how much better Christ's priesthood is, priests that we are, priests that Paul was writing about in Ephesians, that there's not this separate group anymore. Now we are all priests on the order of Melchizedek, the two will become one through Christ. Then there is the sacrificial system in chapter 7, being a type, pointing to the need to be cleansed because of the infirmity of man. The weakness, the sins of man and the sacrifices that had to be made because even every high priest kept sinning so there kept needing to be sacrifices. So to actually have it so sacrifice is no longer needed, which is what it was pointing to, there had to be a perfect sinless sacrifice, Jesus Christ, a sacrifice that would end the infirmity of man because corruption will put on incorruption. As we see all the sacrifices and start the book of Leviticus, where you have five chapters that talk about all the different types of sacrifices, they are to point to the perfect sinless sacrifice that would stop all the other sacrifices so you wouldn't have to do any of those other blood sacrifices. Then the type of temple, of the sanctuary. In Exodus we will get to the passage where God says He showed Moses the pattern of the temple. He showed Moses the temple and the one on earth was supposed to be the model of that, that's how He showed it to him, was what the writer of Hebrews says. So every single thing in this sanctuary, everything in the tabernacle, these are pointing to things about God, but the writer of Hebrews also says he doesn't have time to explain this now. As we are going through Exodus, we are supposed to figure out what the explanations are, why is there a table of showbread, why are there the labors, why are there the candlesticks? Why are there all these things that are pointing to heavenly realities that Moses was just told to make something that looked like it? As we get to that we need to consider Hebrews and how the writer of Hebrews said this is pointing to that as we consider those things and ask what all those things point to. We know some obvious ones like the Holy of Holies versus the holy place because there was that veil that was pierced through, that veil is the flesh of Christ. There are so many other things there, so many other types and the book of Hebrews teaches us how to consider these types. The book of Hebrews talks about leading out of Egypt and that covenant led them to a land they ended up losing, but it points to a better covenant of an everlasting covenant, the covenant that we are not going to lose the world. The church of Jesus Christ will conquer the whole world then the heaven and earth will be made one and the church will not lose the world, not like Israel lost the Promised Land. Then the book of Hebrews talk about the Day of Atonement, how the Day of Atonement was pointing to the fact that there had to be a better priesthood, a priesthood that didn't require a sacrifice for themselves before they could offer a

sacrifice for the people. Christ doesn't need to sacrifice for Himself before He can sacrifice us. His sacrifice covers us and only had to be done once because He's not like the high priest who had to sacrifice first. Then there's the picture of the bulls and goats, the picture of the need for shedding of blood in order for sin to be forgiven. So often in Exodus and Leviticus we will get to, in not too many weeks, we will get to the passover and that's pointing to the blood of Christ needing to be shed. Even in chapter 10 it talks about the law was just a shadow of the good things to come, all the ceremonial law is just a type and as we read through the law and study Leviticus, it's required for us to understand that these things are pointing to greater realities. Then we get to chapter 12 and it talks about the sonship. This is the father and son and it's the picture of God the Father and every one of His adopted sons. The anti-type is a Christian and God the Father. It points out the type of the feast with this picture of everyone coming up to Jerusalem and that was just to be a picture of everyone coming up to the heavenly Jerusalem, the firstborn of all creation, all those who are saved ascending up to God. It was just a picture. As we go through and consider those things we should ask ourselves what are the pictures telling us about a spiritual reality because that's the point of Exodus, that's the point of Leviticus. There are moral laws there that the point is for us to obey. There are also many ceremonial things because it is written to Aaron's priesthood, it's written to them to say this is the things that are supposed to be understood. All these were written, all the ceremonial things were taken away and Jesus Christ, in His sacrifice on the cross, are all pointing to realities about the better covenant. It even talks about the blood of Abel in chapter 12, how the blood of Abel was just a picture of the blood of Christ. If the righteousness of Abel cried out from the ground, how much more does the righteousness of Christ cry out from the ground? Then the last type is all those sacrifices, you would take them outside the camp because Christ was to be crucified outside the camp. Again, as we go through Hebrews and we read it, think about how the writer of Hebrews is dealing with things in the Old Testament because that's how we need to deal with it as we go through Exodus and Leviticus. Then the picture of the better covenant which is the main theme of Hebrews. There are reasons why we have a better covenant. The first is that we have a better revelation. While God had spoken in many different ways, now He has spoken through His Son. He gave testimony of what God was like, but then He had God be with us. If you have seen the Son, you have seen the Father. The New Covenant has a much better revelation than the Mosaic covenant. Chapter 2 talks about how Christ rules is a way that Moses never did. The law could never sanctify, could never change, but Christ through His suffering is able to sanctify those sons who He brings to glory. Moses was never able to make us the brethren of God, but because Christ can make us perfect we become one with Him so we become His brothers. The Mosaic covenant could never do that, it required Christ and the new covenant. Moses could give fear, fear of the law and the judgment to come, but Christ was able to remove fear by overcoming death and was able to deliver those who have fear of death. Moses couldn't reconcile us to God. As we have seen in the beginning parts of Exodus, he was a sinner that needed to be reconciled so he couldn't do the reconciliation. But Christ being tempted as we are, but yet without sin, He is able to aid those who are tempted. Chapter 3 we see how superior Christ was to Moses. Moses was a faithful servant in the house, but Christ was the one who established and built the house. When Moses established the law, it was just for the Israelites. When Christ builds the house, it went beyond just the Israelites, He brought into His household Gentiles from the ends of the earth. There are no Israelites and Gentiles anymore. Moses just gathered the people who God had separated, Christ gathers a people from every tribe, every tongue, and every nation and makes them into a house. Chapter 4, again, talks about the Sabbath, but it talks about the difference between the rest promised by Moses. Moses promised the rest we talked about when we recited Exodus 3 this morning. The land filled with milk and honey, but that's just the type of the true rest, the rest where there won't be the wrestling with sin, there won't be the difficulties of trying to figure out how to provide for yourself all the things of this world. Christ came and provided the true rest and the meanings to obtain the true rest. Moses' rest was a shadow of the much better rest which was in Christ. Again, chapter 5 talks about Melchizedek. The Melchizedekian priesthood was much better than the priesthood of Aaron. When Levi was in the loins of Abraham, he gave tithes, he's clearly the Melchizedekian priesthood as a greater priesthood than the Levitical priesthood. It talks about a whole list of reasons why it's a better priesthood. For Melchizedek, the sacrifice is only made once for all versus constant sacrifices. Aaron had to make sacrifices, Eleazar had to make sacrifices, you just keep going and every single one of the high priests had to make

sacrifices. The priesthood of Melchizedek is much better than the priesthood of Aaron. The Melchizedek priesthood is a king, Aaron just had authority in religious matters. The Melchizedekian priesthood is by selection rather than by inheritance. It's that God says this is a priest in the order of Melchizedek, that's what He does with every person when they are saved. Whether it's someone in the Old Covenant or the New Covenant, He makes them a priest on the order of Melchizedek rather than the ones in the Levitical priesthood where you had to be a descendant of Aaron. In the Melchizedekian priesthood you were a receiver of tithes versus the Aaronic priesthood where you gave tithes. The Melchizedekian priesthood was profitable. When that priesthood was established by Christ, it takes over the whole world while the Levitical priesthood couldn't even change Judah, Judah rejected Christ. Obviously one of the most is that in the Melchizedekian priesthood, the High Priest is without sin whereas the first high priest made a golden calf to worship an idol. It's also a better covenant because when the priesthood changed from Aaronic to Melchizedekian, the law also needed to change so how much better is the New Covenant better than the Old Covenant because all those ceremonial things that were related to the Mosaic law, they're all related to the priesthood of Aaron and they all go away because we are of the priesthood of Melchizedek. We don't do all the blood sacrifices because they were associated with the Mosaic law and the priesthood of Aaron. We don't approach God through bulls and goats, we can boldly approach God through Christ because His blood is sufficient that it opened the way through the veil. In chapter 10, it talks about how the Old Covenant reminded of sin with constant sacrifices. The New Covenant doesn't just cause us to see our sin, the New Covenant turns us from sin and it breaks the bondage of sin. It takes away sin by changing the people part of the New Covenant. Chapter 11 talks about all the men and women of faith. None of them obeyed Moses, it's because they had faith in Christ, that's why they did what they did so we join with them and see all those people and how by faith in the covenant of grace that was established through the blood of Jesus Christ, that through that they did all those great works because they were part of a better covenant. Let me briefly talk about a few examples of behaviors that we are supposed to turn from. Chapter 3 talks about the example of those who were in the wilderness. We are going to see rebellion after rebellion as we go through Exodus and the writer of Hebrews says don't follow their example. Exhort each other now to walk in righteousness for if God would judge them for forty years for trampling on the blood that was shed in the Mosaic covenant, how much more would you expect the judgement to be for those who reject the living God. He caused all those over the age of 20 to die because they trampled over the blood of the passover lamb, how much more will He judge those that trample on the blood of Jesus Christ. Exhort one another today to love and good works. Exhort one another to turn because if God judged under the Old Covenant that way, how much more will He judge in the New Covenant. Chapter 5 and 6 we are warned not to be like those who were to receive the letters. They still needed milk and they didn't move onto meat. We are supposed to be growing and maturing in our understanding. We're not to just go over the same things over and over again, the laying on of hands, repentance from dead works, these are things we are supposed to move on from and think more deeply. We should be warned about the example of those who just want to remain babes in Christ. That's not what we are called to, we are called to be more like the writer of Hebrews than the person who just wants to preach the simple gospel every week. We are called to understand and have deeper understanding. Then obviously the examples in chapter 11, what the people of faith did. With greater revelation how much more should we do because we do have greater knowledge and understanding. We're not supposed to look at the examples of all those people who walked by faith and go, 'That was great that they were supposed to be able to do that', we're supposed to say we have greater power than they had because we have greater revelation and knowledge. We are to see their example of walking by faith and it should be a rebuke and exhortation for us because we have greater knowledge. Then the last one in chapter 12 is that there were lots of people that resisted Christ and a lot of people that resisted Moses and we should see that and expect people to resist us too if we walk in righteousness. That will be the response. We're also warned with the example of Esau who sold his birthright for a small bite of food. Again, the reason we are going through Hebrews as we go through Exodus and Leviticus is to consider as we read this book, the four things that I asked you to consider for Exodus, God's Sovereignty, types and shadows, how the New Covenant is a better covenant, and the examples that we are to follow and those that we are not to follow. But especially as we read it this morning, consider how the writer of Hebrews treats the Old Testament. How he doesn't say

these things just happened, but that these things were pointing to a greater reality. As we study Exodus, this is what we want to be saying, what greater spiritual reality is being pointed to by these things so that we glorify God more, we see the magnificence of God more, we see how God is ordering all things and directing all things because as we study Hebrews and as we apply it to the study of Exodus, the response should be to praise God. The response should be to say, 'This is our God and this is what He did and what He is doing.' He would kill millions of people in the desert to testify it to the better covenant, how much more should we take it seriously?