



Hebrews: The Whole Way

A Bible Study with Dr. John N. Oswalt

Student Workbook

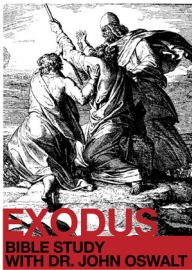


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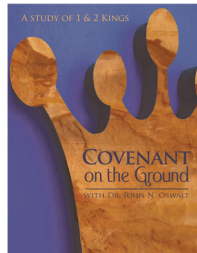
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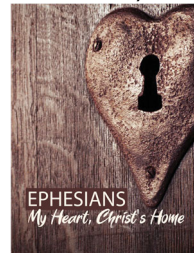
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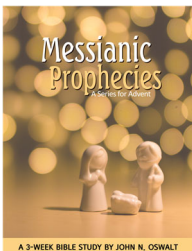
Covenant on the Ground: 1 & 2 Kings



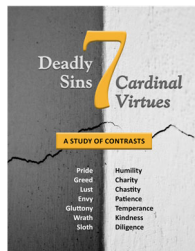
Ephesians: My Heart, Christ's Home



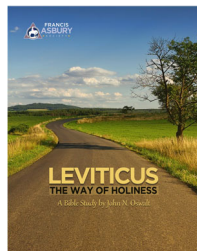
Ezekiel: Death & Resurrection



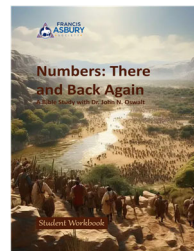
Messianic Prophecies



*7 Deadly Sins
7 Cardinal Virtues*

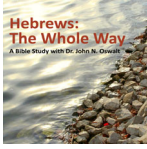


Leviticus: The Way of Holiness



Numbers: There and Back Again





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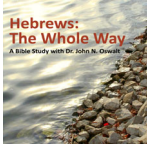
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SESSION 1

Introduction and Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Situation

- A. Written to a people who had _____.
- i. Had done so with _____
- a) The _____ had come.
- b) The _____ was about to _____.
- c) They had been willing to be _____ to lose _____.
- ii. It _____ happened.
- B. So _____ to the _____ religion
- C. We can do the _____.
- D. But the _____ life is a _____, not a _____, a _____, not a _____, a _____ that must be nurtured.
- E. God is calling us into an _____ love _____ with Jesus, based on a _____ of _____ he is, and _____ he has done, and _____ of _____ that is taking us

2. Date: probably _____ the _____ of the Temple in _____.

3. Authorship:

A. Ultimately, _____ chose _____

B. But not much _____, in either _____ or content.

C. On the other hand, _____ that is _____ to his _____.

D. So maybe a disciple of his: _____, Priscilla, _____, _____.

4. Content: More than any other New Testament book, this one _____ how _____ is what the Old Testament is pointing to.

A. Not _____

B. The author is _____ that these people might _____ their _____ failure at _____.

C. Jesus is:

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

iv. _____

v. _____

D. One of the unusual features is the _____.

Outline

1. Doctrinal—Christ the Better Way (Hebrews 1:1–10:18)
 - a. Christ’s Superiority (Heb 1:1–3:6)
 1. To the angels (Heb 1:1–14)
 - (2. Don’t drift away (Heb 2:1–4))
 3. As a human (Heb 2:5–18)
 4. To the best of humans (Heb 3:1–6)
 - b) Christ—Fulfilling and Surpassing (Heb 3:7–10:18)
 - (1. Don’t harden your hearts (Heb 3:7–4:13))
 2. The Great High Priest (Heb 4:14–7:28)
 3. The priest of a better covenant (Heb 8:1–10:18)

2. Practical—Let us draw near by faith (Heb 10:19–13:19)

A. Keep the faith (Heb 10:19–11:40)

B. Run the race (Heb 12:1–13:19)

3. Conclusion (Heb 13:20–25)

Chapter One

Background: Judaism grew up during the inter-testamental period. In that time angels became more and more prominent as the mediators between us and the more and more distant God. (So, the personal name “Yahweh” got replaced with “Adonai” [Lord]). The beginning of this process can be seen in Daniel 10.

1. Is there an introduction? On what basis do you say that? If there is, what is it? If there is not, why do you think that is so?

2. According to verse 2, what was Jesus’ function?

3. According to verses 2 and 3, what makes Jesus superior to the angels?

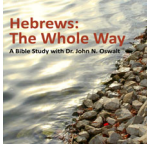
4. Why all these Old Testament quotations?

5. Look up these references: Psalms 2, 45, 104, 110; 2 Samuel 7:14; Deuteronomy 32:43. Do you think these authors all knew what they were talking about? Does that invalidate the argument? Why or why not? In interpreting the Psalm passages, remember Jesus' point that David, as king, wrote these passages (so they are not talking about some Hebrew king, Matt 22:41–46).

6. Many of these references are establishing that Jesus (the itinerant preacher from Nazareth) was God's Son. What is the point of that argument in this context?

7. Verse 14 says the angels are ministering spirits to those who are going to be saved. Who is Jesus?

8. As far as this chapter is concerned, what is Jesus' function that he is fulfilling better than angels can.



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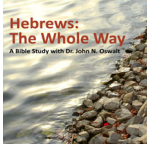
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SESSION 2

Hebrews 2:1–3:6

Background: It was a common Jewish conviction that angels had been the tool God used to give the covenant at Sinai to his people (so v. 2).

1. What prompts the author to insert this warning (Heb 2:1–4) at this point in his treatment of the superiority of Christ (Heb 1:1–3:6)? What arguments might be brought forward for intentional purpose? What arguments for a sudden thought?
2. Notice “therefore” (v. 1). What are the cause and effect (vv. 2–4) involved? (“This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord” refers to the gospel.)
3. How does “drift” (v. 1) happen in the Christian life? How do we guard against it?
4. In verses 5 through 18 the writer is addressing the possible objection that Jesus is not higher than the angels, but by becoming a human, he is actually lower. How does he use Psalm 8 (here vv. 6–8) to begin refuting that idea?
5. Notice verse 9 in particular. What is the paradox there? What is the point?
6. Why did Jesus have to become a human and suffer in order to fulfill (complete, perfect) his ministry (vv. 10–18)? What is the need of humanity? Notice a repeated word in verses 9, 14, and 15.
7. What does verse 11 say was the purpose of Jesus’s ministry? What does this mean about the nature of salvation?



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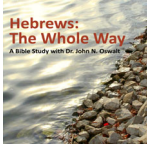
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SESSION 3

Hebrews 3:7–4:13

1. Scan the section quickly. What is the repeated word? Express the key idea in a brief sentence.
2. How does 4:12–13 function in relation to 3:7–4:11? Is it a conclusion? Then how does it function to conclude the previous section? If it is not a conclusion, what is it?
3. If you are not familiar with the story of Kadesh Barnea, read Numbers 13:26–14:25. Why did Israel not obey God's command to enter the land? How does Psalm 95:7–11 (Heb 3:7–11) characterize their attitude (what words does it use)? What is the significance of such attitudes? How do they relate to each other?
4. In a lot of Christian hymnody, Canaan is seen as heaven (and the Jordan as death). Do you think the author is using it that way here? Why or why not?
5. In what sense was Canaan "my rest"? (For the first 40 years or so, it was a place of intense conflict, so how could that be called a place of rest?)
6. What is his argument that "rest" does not merely refer to Canaan but has an application that is contemporary with those reading the book?
7. If "rest" does not merely relate to Canaan, what does it relate to as a theological concept? If we believe, do not harden our hearts, obey God's command to enter, what "rest" do we enter into?

8. Again, think of the analogy with Israel: they were “saved” from Egypt; they had received and accepted the covenant with God; but something more awaited them in the walk of faith. What was it, and how does that relate to the book’s readers and to us?



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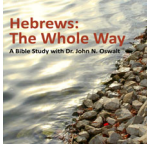
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SESSION 4

Hebrews 4:14–5:10

This is the first part of the unit, Hebrews 4:14–7:28, The Great High Priest. The other segments are: Hebrews 5:11–6:20, Don't Fall Away and Hebrews 7:1–28, Melchizedek and the Better Priesthood.

1. What is the significance of “Therefore” in Hebrews 4:14? What is the prior cause and what is following effect? Why does this cause produce this effect?
2. What about the “For” beginning verse 15: again, what is the cause and what is the effect? Why does this cause produce this effect? What is it about this high priest?
3. Notice Hebrews 4:16. What kind of a throne is it? What is the significance of that description?
4. How are Jesus and Aaron alike (vv. 4, 5)? What is the importance of this point?
5. What is the implied difference between Jesus and Aaron in verses 2 and 3? (It will be dealt with more explicitly later.) Why is it important?
6. Hebrews 5:7 says Jesus' prayers were heard because of his “reverent submission.” He was the Second Person of the Trinity, so what does submission have to do with it?
7. Think through the sequence in Hebrews 5:8–9. He *learned* obedience (?) through suffering (?) and, once *made perfect* (?), he *became* (?) the source of eternal salvation? What is that sentence saying about the nature and meaning of the Incarnation? What happened to Jesus and why?



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SESSION 5

Hebrews 5:11–6:20

This is the second part of the unit is Hebrews 4:14–7:28, “Jesus the Great High Priest.” The final part is “Melchizedek and the Better Priesthood,” Hebrews 7:1–28. This is the third “warning passage.” It consists of two parts: the Admonition (Heb. 5:11–6:8) and the Encouragement (Heb. 6:9–20).

Background: The oath being talked about in Hebrews 6:13 and following appears in Genesis 15. When God, symbolized by the torch and the incense pot, passed through the animal and bird parts (Gen. 15:17), he was calling down a blood curse upon himself if he failed to keep his promise.

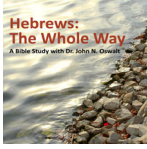
1. Look at Hebrews 5:10 and 6:20. What do they tell you about the intervening material?
2. In Hebrews 5:11–14, two statements appear to contain *non sequiturs* (things that don't follow). They are “Anyone who lives on milk... is not acquainted with the teaching on righteousness” and “...the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.” What do you think the author is trying to say? How do these matters mark the immature or mature Christian?
3. According to the author, what are the “elementary teachings about Christ”? In this light what do you think are some of the advanced teachings?
4. Do you think Hebrews 6:4–8 is one of the advanced teachings just referred to? Why or why not?
5. Note carefully the statement, “It is impossible (Heb. 4) ...to bring them back to... (Heb. 6).” What? What did he not say? What is the importance of this distinction?

6. List the characteristics of the person described in verse 4. Would you call them a “nominal” (name only) Christian? What is the problem in bringing such a person to... ?

7. If we fall away from the faith, how are we subjecting Jesus to “public disgrace” (Heb. 6)?

8. In verses 9–20, the author gives two reasons why he does not think his readers will fall away. What is the reason in verses 9–12? What is the reason in verses 13–20?

9. “Hope” appears in verses 11, 18, and 19. It not a weak word (“I *hope* Jim will come!”) but a strong one (“Jim said he is coming: I’m sure he will.”). It is the intellectual side of faith. Why can we be sure of our faith, according to verses 13–20?



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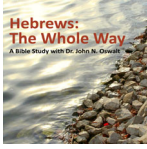
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SESSION 6

Hebrews 7

Background: The oath being talked about in verses 20–22 that found in Psalm 110.

1. Look up and read Psalm 110. Now look up Genesis 14:18–24. List what is said about Melchizedek. Now look at your list and think about what is not said.
2. According to verse 6, why might we think that Abraham was “greater” than Melchizedek?
3. What is the line of argument in verses 9 and 10? What is the key point being established in verses 1–10?
4. According to verse 11, what was the goal of the Torah, one that it could not in fact attain (see also Hebrews 7:19)? What is the significance of that statement for our understanding of the intended work of Christ. (Look back at Hebrews 2:10–11.)
5. What argument against Jesus is he addressing in verses 11–14?
6. In verses 15–22, what are the reasons why a priest in the order of Melchizedek is better than a priest from the order of Levi?
7. In verses 23–25, there are two causal statements. What are they and what is their point?
8. In verse 26–28, why is Christ’s sacrifice perpetually effective?



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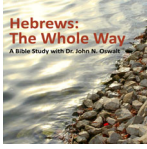
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SESSION 7

Hebrews 8:1–9:10

Background

- It is important that we distinguish what is said here from a pagan world view. In that view, this visible world is just a copy of invisible realities and is only significant to the degree that it conforms to those realities. The Bible denies that: this is a real world and what takes place here is significant in its own right. Thus, when the writer talks about a heavenly tabernacle, he should not be understood to be talking about a “real” tabernacle in heaven. He is using language like that of paganism to say that while the original physical tabernacle was real, it was intended to illustrate real spiritual truth (see Heb. 9:9). It is the truth that is real; there is no such thing as a heavenly tabernacle (see Rev. 21:22). Christ is not offering sacrifices in heaven.
 - Probably “we cannot discuss this now” (Heb. 9:5) refers to the spiritual significance of the design and furnishings of the Tabernacle.
1. In the light of the Background above, what is the point of Hebrews 8:1–2?
 2. Where did Christ, as perfect High Priest, offer his once-for-all sacrifice? So, what is the point being made by suggesting that he did not practice his priesthood on earth (vv. 3–4)?
 3. Look up Exodus 25:9. What does he say there about a “Heavenly Tabernacle”? What is he saying and why?
 4. According to verse 10 what was wrong (v. 7) with the Old Covenant? What will be different about the New Covenant? What is the significance of that? Is God going to dispense with his laws (instructions)? Explain your answer.
 5. Look at Hebrews 8:12. What prevents God from “writing [his instructions] on their hearts” in Jeremiah’s day? What must happen before he can do that? What will it take to fulfill that promise?



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SESSION 8

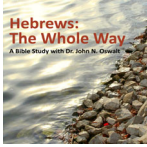
Hebrews 9:11–10:18

A Better Sacrifice

1. Look up Exodus 24:8. What was the point of that act there? Compare this statement with that of Jesus in Matthew 26:28. What is the point there?
2. How many times does “blood” occur in this passage? Why is there so much emphasis on this? Notice the final statement in Hebrews 9:22. Why is this true? Compare with your answer to question 1 above.
3. According to verses 12–14 what does Jesus’ blood do that the blood of bulls and goats cannot do?

Why is this so?

4. How does the writer understand the nature of the old covenant (vv. 16–20)? Why was it then necessary to seal the covenant with blood? However, in verses 21–22, he assigns a further purpose for the blood. What does it accomplish in these cases?
5. What has Christ done (vv. 23–28)? How many times was it necessary? Why? (cf. Heb. 7:26–28)
6. In what ways do the Old Testament sacrifices foreshadow New Testament realities (Heb. 10:1)? Why did God command sacrifices if he was not “pleased” with them (Heb. 10:6)?



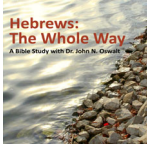
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SESSION 9

Hebrews 10:19–11:40

1. In Hebrews 10:22–25, the author has three admonitions for the believer, each headed with “Let us.” What are they, why should we do them (vv. 19–21), and what does each involve?
2. Verse 26 is the key to what follows. What kind of sin are we talking about?
3. Verses 32–39 are intended to be affirmative after the previous warning. What are verses 32–35 doing?
4. What are verses 36–39 doing? Look back at Hebrews 6:9–12.
5. The writer says that faith is living in a way that shows we believe in what cannot be seen. Make a list of the persons mentioned in Hebrews 11:4–31 and record how each of them lived lives shaped by their conviction of the certainty of invisible realities. Look especially at Hebrews 11:13–16.
6. We sometimes think of faith as believing in something hard enough to make it happen, and verses 32–35a might suggest that, but that is not the point the writer is making. Look at verses 35b–40. What is faith? Look back at verses 1–2.



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SESSION 10

Hebrews 12

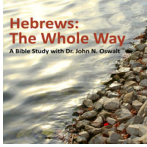
Background: “Sharing the holiness of God” (Heb. 12:10). Christians are holy in two ways. The first is positional. We are holy because we belong to him, like a vessel in the Temple is holy. We can only be used for his purposes. But the second is what Christian faith is meant to issue in. That is to share his character: good, right, true, just, pure, joyful, self-giving love.

1. What imagery is he using in verses 1–2a? What is the significance of that image for us Christians?
2. According to verses 2b–4, what might be a reason why the hearers/readers might be tempted to return to Judaism?
3. If we have to endure persecution or other hardship, how should we understand it? What might be some wrong ways of viewing such things?
4. Verse 14 is a strong statement. See Background above and also verse 10. In the light of those verses, look at Hebrews 2:11; 4:9–10; 9:13, 26; 13:12 and write out a statement of what salvation is (and is not).
5. According to verse 15, what two things could prevent us from reaching the goal of our salvation, namely, being a godly person?
6. How does verse 16 fit into what verses 14 and 15 are saying? How is selling your birthright on the same level as sexual immorality, or is it?

7. Verses 18–29 are one long, extended argument built on the image of two mountains. Make two columns and put the features of each mountain in a separate column. What conclusion are we intended to draw?

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8. How do verses 28 and 29 fit in and tie the whole argument together?



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SESSION 11

Hebrews 13

1. Verses 1–19 are a collection of exhortations concerning the Christian life. Make a list of them. Do you see any order to them? Is there a common theme? Are there several themes?
2. Look particularly at verses 8–16. What is he talking about, and how does the discussion of altar and sacrifice work into it?
3. What is said about leaders in verses 7 and 17? Organize these comments. Why should we be submissive to leaders? Which leaders should we be submissive to?
4. Think about the significance of each of the parts of the great benediction in verses 20–21:

The “God of peace”? Why describe him that way (rather than some other)?

“Through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead...” What does the blood of the eternal covenant [what is that?] have to do with it?

“Great Shepherd of the Sheep.” Why describe Jesus that way here?

“Put you in perfect repair¹ for every good work that he directs you to do” (KJV)? How does this flow from what precedes?

What is pleasing to him?

¹ The KJV says “make you perfect.” The word here is different from the normal word for completeness (*teleios*). So why did they translate it that way? They did so because the word means to restore something to its original condition (*katartidzo*). This is what James and John were doing to their nets when Jesus called them (Matt 4:21). So, the NIV’s “equip you with everything” seems weak to me.



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