



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

HEBREWS

Lesson 13

Here we are, lesson 13. I can't believe we've already come to the end. I pray that you've grown personally as much as I have. Learning about the role of Jesus as our High Priest, according to the order of Melchizedek, is more than life-changing. I can't begin to describe the effect this book has had on me. Things I thought I knew, I found out I hadn't even come close to fully understanding. I can't wait to go to Israel again next year and learn even more. Why not save your money and join us? ☺

The first part of Hebrews was mainly theological, and the last three chapters are more practical. Some say it moves from exposition to exhortation or from doctrine to duty. At first, it seems like chapter 13 is full of nonrelated exhortations, but as you read more carefully, you'll see how they all go together. In chapter 11 the writer gave his readers many examples of faith, and then in chapter 12 he encouraged them to run the race that God had put before them. Now, in chapter 13 he presents the evidences of faith that should be present in their lives if they're walking and living by faith. In his introduction to this chapter, Kent Hughes wrote, "So the question that our text answers is this: understanding that God is both the consuming fire of Mount Sinai and the consuming love of Mount Zion, how ought we to live - especially in the church?"

First Day

1. Read Hebrews 13:1-25. Observe and list the facts you find. (There are many!)

2. What do you think is the main point or thought of the chapter? Write a one or two sentence summary.

3. Are there any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts?

4. This book seemed to move from loving God to loving others. How does this chapter reflect that? (Why, and how, should loving God reflect how we love others?)

5. Are there any "let us" statements? What are they calling us to do?

6. What kind of personal information does the writer add in his conclusion in verses 22-25?

7. Upon first reading, what specifically spoke to you in this chapter?

Although we're going to end here for today, I can't wait to jump into it again tomorrow. There are so many great exhortations in this chapter for you and me. Let's pray that we hear and receive exactly what the Lord wants to speak to us individually.

Memory Verse of the Week: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Hebrews 13:8

Second Day

Work on your memory verse. This should be an easy one to remember!

1. Read Hebrews 13:1-25. Reread verses 1-6. What are we commanded to do in verse 1? What do these verses say about that?
 - A. Romans 12:10
 - B. John 13:35
 - C. 1 John 3:14
 - D. 1 John 4:19-21
 - E. 1 Peter 1:22

2. How is love expressed in verse 2? What do these verses say about that?
 - A. Romans 12:13
 - B. 1 Peter 4:9
 - C. 1 Timothy 3:2

Not only does the writer exhort his readers to love the brethren, he reminds them that they should be loving strangers as well. And who knows, they may have an angel in their midst. Most likely they were very familiar with the story of Abraham entertaining angels in Genesis 18 and really understood what he was talking about.

3. Why is hospitality such an important thing for us to show toward believers AND unbelievers? Are you given to hospitality? Is showing hospitality easy or difficult for you? What can you do to help grow in this area?

4. Who does he tell his readers to show concern and have empathy for in verse 3? Why?

I'm not sure if he's talking about prisoners in general or believers who had been imprisoned for their faith. Scholars are split on that. Visiting prisoners was a common practice at the time. Prisoners usually depended on

friends and relatives to provide food and clothing. When I visited a Haitian prison, it was quite similar to that. If someone didn't bring you food, you didn't eat. Bottom line, prisoners needed to be remembered. They were also called to show empathy for those being mistreated. The suffering and mistreatment of people is universal. You and I have that same calling today.

5. All of the exhortations found in verses 1-3 fulfill what great commandment? Read Matthew 22:39.
6. Are you purposely setting out to love others as yourself? Do you show compassion for those who are mistreated? What about those whom you dislike? Do you love your enemies? Are you an "empathetic" person?
7. Read verses 4-6. The writer moves from the social sphere to the more personal relationship of husband and wife. What does he tell us about marriage?

In the Greek, the phrase literally meant "Marriage should be honored by all" or even more literally, "Let marriage be precious to all of you." Marriage is ordained by God (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:6) and a sacred institution. Purity within marriage is essential, shown by his comment, "the bed undefiled." The word "bed" is speaking about their sexual relationship, meaning that it is an 'altar', so to speak, where a pure offering of a couple's life is made to each other and to God." (Hughes)

8. Who will God judge, according to verse 4? Why are they a threat to a pure marriage?

I want to read you a paragraph by Kent Hughes on this verse. He wrote, "This means that everyone, ostensible Christians and non-Christians alike, will be judged for adultery (extramarital relations) and sexual immorality (other illicit sexual relations, including perversions). Further, those who have taken up adulterous lifestyles and remain unrepentant will

suffer ultimate judgment and damnation, for despite their insistence that they are 'Christians,' they are self-deceived. God's Word is terrifyingly clear. (1 Corin. 6:9-10, Ephesians 5:5-6, 1 Thess 4:3-7, Revelation 21:8). All who are living in serial adultery or fornication and are unrepentant are under God's wrath and ultimate judgment regardless of what they assert about a salvation experience. The judgment God metes out has both a future and present reality. In the future, the unbelieving sensualists will stand before the Great White Throne and be judged accordingly (Revelation 20:11), and the Christians will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ where their works will be judged (2 Corinthians 5:10, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.)"

9. In verses 5-6 he now talks about their relationship with money and "things." What is his exhortation to us? Define the word "covetousness." Contrast covetousness with contentment.
10. The writer quotes Psalm 118:6 in verse 6. Why? How does it relate to verse 5?

Money and things can never satisfy a person's heart. Money and riches will pass away, but God will never leave us! We can't serve God and serve money, Jesus said in Matthew 6:24. Possessions often "possess" us. Ecclesiastes 5:10 says, "Whoever loves money never has enough money; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income." Many can take everything away from you, but no one can take God. John Knox once said, "A man with God is always in the majority."

11. We'll end with this question. Do you have a love for money? Is your life characterized by covetousness or contentment? Pray about it ...

Third Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Hebrews 13:1-25. Reread verses 7-16. What does the writer say about "those who rule over you" or lead you?

Most scholars think that the writer is calling them to remember leaders of their past that had probably already died. The verb "remember" means "call back to mind that which you know about a person." He may have been referring to the apostles, but more likely he was talking about previous heroes of faith and church leaders that had been instrumental in building up their faith. The writer believed it was important to carefully observe how they lived their lives and the outcome of their faith. He tells them to look at their lives beginning to end and then imitate their faith. The writer has been concerned with the topic of finishing well, and here it gives us another motivation to do so. Leaders come and go, but these leaders' lives pointed to Jesus Christ and were worth remembering. This clearly reminds us that what we do in this life matters; we always influence people, either for good or bad.

2. Are you living your life in a way that is worth remembering? Can others "carefully" observe your life and desire to imitate your faith? Who are you influencing, and are you influencing them for Christ?

In verse 7, the writer reminds them again that Jesus won't change. This may very well be the most "preached on" text of the book of Hebrews. Again, leaders come and go, but Jesus remains the same, and He is the center of our faith. I've never really thought of this, but the sequence that the writer uses is significant. Hughes wrote, "Yesterday Jesus offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save Him from death (5:7). Today He is the high priest before the Father who is able to sympathize with our weakness because He has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. (4:15). And forever this same Jesus always lives to intercede for them (7:25). Our priest is eternally the same and eternally contemporary."

3. Write your thoughts on verse 8. How does it minister to you more, now that we've studied Hebrews?

Because Christ doesn't change, neither do His doctrines. He warns them not to allow strange doctrines to lead them astray.

4. In verse 9 he warns them not to believe that following their old dietary laws would in any way make them more "spiritual." What do these verses say about this topic?
 - A. Romans 14:16-17
 - B. 1 Corinthians 8:8

If we believe that somehow we will become better or stronger Christians because of a special diet, we have absolutely no understanding of grace. Spirituality, then, becomes about self and works. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes said, "Food goes into the stomach for the strengthening of the body; but only *grace* strengthens the heart, that is, the vital center of man's being and personality and source of his conduct and character."

5. Have you ever believed that eating certain food would make you holy? Why?

In verse 10 the writer refers to the believer's "altar." He is symbolically speaking about Jesus Himself and His work on the cross. Under the New Covenant, our altar is Jesus Christ, for it is through Him that we offer our spiritual sacrifices to God (Hebrews 13:5, 1 Peter 2:5). The writer's goal in verse 10 seems to be to show the superiority of Christ's work to that of the Aaronic priesthood.

6. The book of Hebrews is very repetitive. In your own words, what is the writer saying in verses 10-14? What point is he trying to make again?

Although the blood of the sacrificial animals was used inside the sanctuary, the animals' bodies were left outside. Outside the city gate of Jerusalem, Jesus paid the price for our sins. By shedding His blood, Jesus forgave our sins and made us holy or sanctified. By doing this He fulfilled the laws concerning the removal of sin on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus

16:26-28). Because Jesus is our atoning sacrifice, we need to "go to Him, outside the camp" and bear the disgrace He bore. His cross was standing outside the camp so the whole world could not only see, but have access to the Father if they come to Him, our once-and-for-all sacrifice. As we wait, we aren't seeking the things of this world, but we're waiting for the New City Jerusalem to come, our Heavenly home.

7. Believers are no longer required to offer animal sacrifices to gain access to the Father. What sacrifices and offerings *are* we called to bring (vs 15 -16) Also, read Romans 12:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, and 1 Peter 2:5.
8. Have you ever thought of "doing good and sharing" as sacrifices to the Lord? What exactly does that mean? How are they sacrifices?
9. Do you daily bring the Father thanks and praise? Are you offering Him a dedicated life of obedience? Are you "continually" confessing the name of Christ and giving Him thanks? Are you doing good?
10. How do you do works to "please the Father," without them becoming works of the flesh?
11. Did anything specifically speak to your heart in this section?

We'll end here for today. See you tomorrow, ladies.

Fourth Day

Work on your verse. Hide that one in your heart!

It's strange that believers need to be reminded to do good, isn't it? It should be a way of life for us, but sadly, it's not. We can't just "talk" the talk, we must "walk" the walk as well. God obviously wants us to praise Him with our lips and our life. Today I read that if you take the letters G O O D, you can re arrange them to say GO DO! That's pretty cool!

1. Read Hebrews 13:1-25; then focus on verses 17-25. What does the writer say about how they should relate to their leaders? Why?
2. If you are accountable to your leaders, who are your leaders accountable to? Who are they responsible to?

Leaders are called to keep watch over their flock of believers. With great spiritual responsibility comes great accountability and judgment (James 3:1). The leaders have a big responsibility to "shepherd" the people well. Like all of us, they will give an account to the Lord on how well they obeyed His Word and did their job. A lot of pain can come with this responsibility, but also lots of "joy." (vs 17)

3. Does this mean we are to obey them, no matter what they say, all the time? How would you explain what the writer means?
4. Today, if your pastor had to give an account of your soul to the Lord, would he be able to do it with joy? Are you a pleasure to lead or a pain?
5. Let's look at verse 17 in another way. Are you a leader in any way? (Maybe a parent? teacher? small group leader?) How well are you "leading"? Are you doing your best, knowing that you will give an account to the Lord of how you are doing?

6. Why do you think the writer puts this statement in right now?

The writer's exhortation to these believers was probably not very well received. I imagine there was some mounting tension, wouldn't you think? Those who were opposed to Christ and His teachings probably desired nothing more than for these believers to go back to their old faith. Perhaps that's why he asks for prayer in verse 18.

7. The writer has a clear conscience, trying to live as honorably as he can. Could you make that statement? Are you confident that you are doing your best to live honorably?

8. What seems to be his biggest request in verse 19?

I wish we knew where the writer was, don't you? That sure would help everything make more sense. But we do know this: The writer desires prayer. All leaders covet the prayers of those they are leading. Are you praying diligently for your leaders? If we desire power in our lives and our churches, we must pray. Hughes wrote, "How different the modern church would be if the majority of its people prayed for its pastors and lay leadership." How true!

The writer now brings his letter to an end with a beautiful benediction. Read verses 20-25 again, letting the words sink deep into your heart. First he calls upon them to pray for him, then he bestows this beautiful prayer upon them.

9. Why do you think the writer chooses to use the title, "God of all peace"?

10. Before the writer gets to the actual prayer request, he reminds them of a few great truths. What are they?

11. What title does he give Jesus? (John 10:14-15). Why is that title so fitting?
12. What's his request in verse 21? ("Equip" means "to perfect" or "to make good.")

The writer reminds us that we have a foundation of God's peace, His eternal covenant, and the risen Great Shepherd. This God can certainly equip us with everything we need and enables us to accomplish His will. This Great Shepherd of our soul takes amazing care of us.

We're going to end here for today. Tomorrow we'll review his benediction again and then do a brief overview of the book. I can't believe we're almost done ...

Fifth Day

Write your verse from memory.

1. Read Hebrews 13:1-25. Relook at verses 20-25. What does he ask his readers to do in verse 22? Why?
2. Wiersbe writes that, "The benediction seems to gather together the major themes of Hebrews: peace, the Resurrected Christ, the blood, the covenant, spiritual perfection (maturity), and God's work in the believer." Can you list the phrases he uses to describe each? (In order)

The writer introduces Timothy and brings greetings to them from those in Italy. Timothy's relation to this group of people is unknown, as well

as exactly why he talks about the people in Italy. Was he in Italy, or were believers from Italy with him? No one can really fully explain these personal references, but they really don't matter, in light of the purpose of the book. Let's take a little time now and look back through the 13 weeks of study and remind ourselves of some important things the Lord spoke to us.

3. In a brief summary, can you state the main theme or thought of the book of Hebrews?

4. After looking back over the chapters and lessons, answer the following questions:

A. How were you challenged by this book?

B. How were you encouraged by this book?

C. How were you changed by this book?

I guess this is good-bye, my friends. I pray that you would hide the book of Hebrews in your heart and continually be reminded of the superiority of the New Covenant and its blessings. And may He make you "complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever!"

