**‘HIS STORY’ 13 – HEBREWS - DON’T GIVE UP ON JESUS!**

The last six books of the Bible have a clear theme running through them, which is “through suffering to glory” – and this reminds us at the outset that the pathway we tread is not an easy one. It’s rocky at times, it’s a steep climb, there are obstacles and opposition that stand in our way, therefore - Don’t give up on Jesus! Let me just share with you a few things about this book: It is written in a **style of Greek** that is the language of the street – not classical Greek language style – which is used more in university. It is the **most Jewish** of all the New Testament books (NT) and shows the clear link between the Old Testament (OT) and the NT – and the sacrificial system and Christ. We don’t know **who wrote** it nor to whom it was written. All of NT books until now has a genuine **clear author**, the book itself does not tell the author like most of the other books do. Certainly, Paul has a style of introducing himself and writing that this book does not copy. Its led many to wonder whether it is Paul, or some have even suggested it’s **Apollos**. Regardless of who penned the words, the **Holy Spirit** inspired it! I think it could be Paul but whoever it was, it certainly was a **preacher!** **When was it written** – probably between AD55 when Romans was written and AD 70 (for temple sacrifices were still happening), and in AD70 the temple was destroyed, and most of the early church leadership has died off. Emperor Nero had come to power and persecuted believers. **Why was Hebrews written**? Now persecution was happening if you were a believer in Jesus, both Jews and Gentiles were becoming believers. The Jews had a very quick and easy way to escape persecution, all they had to do was go back to the Synagogue - where it was legal to practice Judaism but not the Jesus People of the Way! But to do this a person would have to declare – Jesus is not the Messiah! Now you see why some of the teachings in Hebrews says – don’t turn back! Hebrews is not easy reading. The writer speaks of milk or meat. It takes some chewing over; it is serious spiritual meat. Milk is the gospel story told simply. Meatis the same story explored deeply, it needs chewing…here Hebrews starts to give some serious meat about who Jesus is and what he has done for us.

The book starts with establishing Jesus as **God’s son through whom God has spoken in these last days.** You see up until now God had spoken through other people like Abraham and Moses. He had spoken through the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, but now he had spoken through Jesus who is his final word! So, what Hebrews does is shows us the link between Jesus and the Hebrew people’s past. Let’s start with who Jesus is first. Most times when we think about Jesus, our Christology is very limited. We get *gospelitis*! Which is that we tend to think about Jesus being confined to the Gospels.

**Jesus the Greatest Chapters 1-4**

So how do we lift Jesus out of the Gospels and put him on centre stage?

You can almost hear the ancient Jewish people asking…..so where does this Jesus fit into our history? **Does he rank *alongside – the angels?***

**Greater than Angels** – Angels have a very prominent place in Jewish history, they are revered. They are like intermediaries sent on missions from God…so Jesus greater than angels? Yes, he is the greatest messenger sent from heaven!

**Greater than Creation** – So if creation speaks of the splendour and power of God and we struggle to apprehend the awesomeness of it, how much more is the Creator of all this we see? One day God will wrap all this up when it has fulfilled its purpose. But the Creator is surely greater than the creation.

**Greater than** **Moses** – If there was ever a pinup from OT apart from Abraham the Father of faith then Moses was it. He delivered the nation from captivity, through him the Laws were given, the priesthood was established, and the very foundations of the nation were installed through his leadership. Was Jesus greater than Moses? – Yes, because Moses worked on God’s building but it was God who was making something and Jesus is the cornerstone from which everything is measured and set in place. And if Moses got them out of Egypt but they perished on the way to their promised land – surely Jesus is greater because he gets us into the new land of Gods kingdom!

**Greater than** **Abraham and the Priesthood** – So now you’re telling me that Jesus is greater than all those who have gone before, in fact, they were all just **the preliminaries to the main event**! Yes, that’s true. Even the father of faith Abraham bows the knee to Jesus and his OT protégé **Melchizedek**, who was a picture of Jesus in the Old Testament. You can almost sense the listeners to this amazing story asking for more information…..so tell us then if Jesus is the greatest what exactly did he do that exhibits his greatness? We know what Moses did, Abraham did, we know what angels do – just what did Jesus do and **what is he doing now** that keeps **his greatness current?** Hebrews goes on now to answer that:

**Jesus the Great High Priest Chapters 5-10**

Now here is something that we Protestants are not that familiar with. We threw out the priesthood with all its corrupt practices in the reformation and decided that everyone now is a priest… and in doing so we find it hard to **understand the function of priesthood** well. A **priest stands between** man and God. A priest is someone who offers sacrifice. A priest is an intermediary. A priest enters the most holy place on the behalf of others and is set aside for this special role. Now within the priesthood, there was a **hierarchy**. Most duties were done on a roster basis but there was only one **High Priest**. It was his job and only his to make an offering in the most holy place once a year…. And this was such a dangerous job that if he was struck down because of his sin when doing this – he would be pulled backwards by a rope out of this most holy place. Now Jesus is not just any priest he is **the High Priest**. He acts on our behalf before the Father in a role of making peace with God the Father. But here is where Jesus moves into an arena on his own. He doesn’t just offer the sacrifice **– he is the offering as well**. His life is poured out once for all time as a sacrifice for the sin of the world. The book of Hebrews teaches us some special insights about sacrifice and what Jesus’ death on the cross really achieves for us.

This sacrifice was so **effectual** it never needs **repeating.**

All other priestly sacrifices were made by people with **human weakness** – his was not. This sacrifice was so **final** it **supersedes** every other covenant agreement. This sacrifice is so **powerful** that it **reaches all people, for all time.**

So what does Jesus do now? Hebrews tells us he **lives on to pray for us.**

Do you know that Jesus prays for you **that your faith won’t fail?** He is still a **priest in Heaven.** His sacrifice still **pleads for our sin today**.Still has **nail-scarred hands** – and a spear scar in his side. Resurrected but **no longer visible to you.** Hebrews says that **Jesus sat down at God’s right hand** because he has **finished** his work!

His sacrifice was made at a **point in history**, yet it is like it functions right now…. for you and me. The Father God sees the offering of Jesus’ life right now – for your life. It’s as though **this morning the life of Jesus is poured out right now for you.** The Blood of Jesus cries out for your sin and mine today!

And Jesus declares you and me – forgiven!

Now we are only halfway through the message…..because now we ask the most important question. **What does this mean for us today and tomorrow**?

*We hear this and go – so what! Jesus the greatest – came here for me?*

*Jesus is my priest who prays for me? Jesus’ sacrifice is effectual for all time for all sins of the World. Jesus is seated at the right hand of Father now in heaven….So?*

**Jesus our High Priest knows what it is like to be Human** – he prays for you and me.He knows the **ignorance and waywardness** of our hearts and can **deal gently with us Ch 5.2.** When he was here on earth Jesus offered prayers with loud pleadings, cry’s and **tears to the Father Ch 5:7.** Jesus understands how easy it is for us to turn back and **lose our way Ch 6:4.** And we **flee to Him for refuge Ch 6:18** because he is the **anchor for our souls** in our worst moments of **fear, anxiety** and mistrust. **It is in those moments He can lead us through the curtain right into God’s presence. Why? Because he has gone there already for us!!!**

**Therefore!** Every now and then in Hebrews, there is the word **‘Therefore’**….I remember my pastor used to say….when you see a, therefore, ask ‘- What is the therefore there for?

**Therefore: Let us – is used many times in the book.** (2 Negatives and 2 Positives)

1. **Let us not GIVE UP – stay on track** – **PERSEVERE Ch 10**

Jesus Golgotha and Gethsemane…He knows what it is like!

1. **Let us not TURN BACK – unbelief like Israel did. Ch 6**

Grumbling our way through life, complaining that we get the short straw. Wanting to go back to the way things used to be. Jesus’ temptations in wilderness – He knows what it is like!

1. **Let us BE INSPIRED** by those who have shown us how to believe in the face of all kinds of human conditions **Ch 11.**
2. **Let us RUN WELL the race of life Ch 12. 1.**

The last chapter of Hebrew’s is the great chapter of **Faith – Forsaking all I trust Him - Ch 11. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him – Ch 11.6.** Can weak and frail human beings stay the course of faith? – YES! By faith we can and here is the list of those who did and more since then! **Enoch** walked right into heaven. **Noah** built a boat on dry ground while people mocked him**. Abraham** looked for a land that was to come, started out not knowing where the place was. **Sarah** conceived a baby in her old age. **Abraham** offered Isaac up believing God would provide or raise him up. **Jacob** blessed his family. **Joseph** asked for his bones to be carried north to his land. **Moses** preferred poverty for his people to prosperity. **People** sprinkled blood over their doors**. People** followed Moses in a journey even when presented with obstacles. **Joshua** saw the walls of Jericho come down when only a miracle would do it. **David, Samson, Samuel, prophets, Gideon** - all these died in faith, believing God for something they could not see. Yet none of these received what we now have – Jesus.

**Don’t give up on Jesus because he won’t give up on you!**

These are cheering you on to finish the race well. The **applause of heaven!** You’re coming around the final bend and the crowd in heaven erupts into applause for you as you run the final straight to the tape….and who is waiting there but Jesus. He is your prize, well done! Even if you have to endure suffering, trial or painful discipline.

**Hebrews finishes with a warning**….be careful. You could lose your way or turn back. It’s happened many times. Watch out (encourage) each other **Ch 12:15**.

Worship with godly fear **Ch 12:28.**

And also, **a final round of relational reminders** - Keep loving each other, do meals together, visit prisoners, remember those who are suffering for their faith, keep your marriage vows, don’t love money, keep praying for your leaders they need it! Just keep giving the sacrifice of praise. And remember it is by **faith – it’s the only thing we bring to the equation of salvation.**

Last week I told you about my recent discussion with Bob the upholsterer. When he said to me….you know Lloyd I’m hoping that doing this work for you will get me into heaven! – No Bob…. It won’t. There is only one thing that will get you into Heaven and that’s – to trust in the saving work of Jesus the Greatest! – Greater than Angels, Greater than all of Creation, Greater than Abraham, Greater than Moses! - Jesus our High Priest who sits this morning in heaven with scars from this earth…and he **prays the Father will bring them all home!**