

LIVING THE LIVING WORD
Bible-Based Bible Study and Application

Grace Chapel
Orange, CA

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HEBREWS

1. INTRODUCTION

Last week, we saw that Peter was dealing with false teachers who seduced people away from the truth and back into their own lusts. Peter warns his readers against this by using history to assure them of coming judgment on the teachers and those who follow them. He also challenges his readers not to be drawn away by earthly lusts, knowing that all these things will be burned up one day, when “the elements melt with a fervent heat.”

Like Peter, the author of Hebrews wants his readers to remember the past in order to understand the future. However, his emphasis is quite different. Although he does touch on judgment—in fact, he makes a series of dire threats—he also lays a heavy emphasis on reward.

2. SEEING THE FUTURE THROUGH THE PAST

Hebrews addresses a Jewish community of believers who have been faithful in the past, and suffered persecution for it—although not yet to the point of bloodshed. They are getting tired, and are in danger of abandoning the faith. The author writes in order to encourage them to endure.

Hebrews 11:1-12:17

We often miss the transition into 11:1 because of our English vocabulary. “Faith” and “belief” are interchangeable—at least in biblical terms—so we might translate 10:39-11:1 in this way:

Now we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. Now belief is the substance of things expected, the evidence of things not seen.

In other words, it is precisely the belief of 10:39 that is under discussion all the way through chapter 11 and into chapter 12.

In Hebrews 11 the author carries us from creation through Noah in 5 verses. Another 15 are devoted to Abraham and the patriarchs, 7 more to Moses, 2 to the conquest of Canaan. The last 9 verses carry us, in sweeping generalities, from the judges through the prophets. This is not simple historical review, however. Note the commentary in the end of verse 4 and verses 10, 13, 16, 39-40. What is his agenda

here? Is it not to draw our attention to the good company we're keeping when we endure hardship for the sake of the reward?

But he's not finished. As we move into 12:1-2, we see that we're also keeping company with Jesus, who did the very same thing. This history then forms the basis for the exhortation to a particular attitude toward chastening (12:3-11) and a particular set of attitudes for daily conduct (12:12-17).

Summary

Notice that Hebrews uses some of the same events that Peter did, but emphasizes a completely different theme. This is an important point for us to understand. Neither of these writers is giving a "fair and balanced" view of the history – nor are they trying to. They are, however, giving an accurate picture of the history. They are deliberately drawing out their respective themes, and emphasizing those themes over other legitimate themes in the stories. It is perfectly all right to do this, *as long as the theme you're emphasizing is actually there.*

3. LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGES

Your Daily Walk

I challenged you to take the Bible stories you know and make them a part of your daily reflection on Scripture. Which stories have you found most helpful?

Honing Your Skills (30-60 min.)

DO NOT turn to Psalm 139 in your Bible.

Let me ask you, what is Psalm 139 actually about? What does it all mean? What are the implications of that for daily life? Why should I care?

Now, after you've explained all that to me without looking at your Bible, tell me—have you memorized Psalm 139? No?

...are you sure?

Reading (1-2 hrs.)

Ryken is operating on a fairly conventional understanding of literature. Because of this, not everything he has to say will transfer well to Scripture. The Bible is genius communication; God is just better at this than anyone else. Because of that, it regularly transcends the genre expectations that we bring to it.

That said, the Bible is written in human languages, using human literary conventions to communicate to human beings. A solid understanding of literature (such as what Ryken gives us) is a valuable part of coming to understand what the Bible is about.

Heavy-Duty Homework (2-3 hrs.)

What other lessons did the Bible use the Flood to teach?

4. A CONCLUDING CHALLENGE

This week concludes our time together in this series. I hope you've absorbed quite a bit of information about the way that Scripture communicates about itself, and the way that Scripture uses other Scripture.

More important than the information, though, is the skill set. As we've studied how later biblical authors reflect on and apply Scripture by earlier authors, I've tried to help you develop those same skills in your application of the Bible stories and psalms you know, especially Psalm 139.

Most important of all, I hope the time you've devoted to reflecting on Scripture for this series has been a time of sweet fellowship with the Lord. Remember, there's lots more Scripture where these bits came from; we've barely scratched the surface. I pray that you'll continue to grow in a lifestyle of reflection on Scripture in the coming weeks and months.

As you grow, always, always remember that very important lesson from the Garden of Eden: the *first* thing to think about, in any situation, is "What does God have to say about this?" Map your world with the Word of God; let all of your thinking about all of life also be meditation on Scripture. You'll be amazed at what you see.