

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Lecture 27, Hebrews

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in New Testament History and Literature, lecture number 27 on the book of Hebrews.

All right, just one announcement before we get started, actually two announcements related to each other.

One of them is Friday, there is an exam, your third exam that covers the information that goes through Titus. So, I think Ephesians through Titus. And today we'll start on the book of Hebrews, but this will not be on the third exam.

So, exam number three coming up Friday. That also means, second, that there is an extra credit review session that right now is looking like it will be Wednesday evening, possibility of Thursday, but plan on either Wednesday or Thursday. And I will let you know, hopefully, by the end of the day, I'll email everyone and let you know exactly when that will be, but another extra credit review session.

So that is Wednesday or Thursday and then the exam on Friday. Did I see someone's hand up? I'm not sure. Oh, yeah. Yes. Good. All right.

All right. Let's open with prayer. Father, we do thank you for the beautiful day you've given us again.

Thank you for your faithfulness to us, your love for us, and especially the love you demonstrated in sending your living word, your son, Jesus Christ, but also the written word that testifies to him and to what it means to live in obedience to Jesus Christ and what it means to be your people. So, I pray that we'll take seriously that revelation through our studies, our desire to know your word better the world that you have created, and the different areas of knowledge that you have graciously communicated to us and given us responsibility to know. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Today, we actually move into the final section of the New Testament, although you could argue that the book of Revelation, in a sense, is a different kind of a different type of book all on its own. But we move into a section of the New Testament comprised of Hebrews and James and 1 and 2 and 3 John and 1 and 2 Peter, which are usually labeled the general epistles or the Catholic epistles.

By Catholic or general, we simply mean that these letters appear to be addressed to a fairly wide audience. You pick that up, especially when you read James and 1 Peter,

the introductions of those letters. The author is unlike some of Paul's letters where Paul is addressing specific churches in specific locations or where in a couple of instances, he's addressing specific persons.

With many of these letters, Hebrews through all the way through Jude, all the books besides Revelation, you read them and many of them, you get a sense that they're addressed to Christians living over a fairly broad geographical area. Or at least in the case of Hebrews, there is no indication in the letter itself or in the work itself of a specific audience so that, again, it's usually been labeled one of these general epistles. So, we've looked at several books that could be considered as groups, such as Paul, the prison epistles, because he wrote, Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians while in prison.

We looked at the sections that are often labeled the pastoral epistles, though that's probably not the best label for them. But now we're looking at a section that is often called the general or the Catholic epistles. And again, because they appear to be addressed to Christians living more broadly in a larger geographical area rather than one specific place, at least most of them.

Except for a book like Hebrews, again, we can't be entirely sure whether it was addressed to a very specific audience or not, though I suspect that it was. But the letter itself doesn't tell us. Now, in the book of Hebrews, one of the questions that has perplexed people studying Hebrews is to try to figure out who may have written it.

Because by calling Hebrews a letter, we often refer to it as the letter to the Hebrews, and we'll talk a little bit about that title as well. But by calling it a letter, in some sense, our expectations in reading this work are frustrated because it doesn't begin with a letter. All the other letters we've looked at from Paul, and some of the letters we will look at, will have an identification of the author, so Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, and then an indication of who he's writing to, to the saints in Colossae, or to Timothy, my beloved brother, or something like that.

That's lacking in Hebrews. And so, it becomes problematic to figure out, well, then, who may have written this? You're confronted with much the same problem you are in the Gospels, in that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John do not name the author, which is normal for narrative. You don't begin a narrative by indicating who's writing it, at least in the first century, so that's normal.

But this work is a little bit more difficult because, although sometimes it sounds like a letter, and we often call it a letter, there's no hint at all who wrote it. And we don't have any evidence that there ever was an introduction to it that somehow has gotten lost or left off. Instead, Hebrews simply begins in chapter 1, and verse 1, begins, Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in

these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he created the worlds.

And then he launches into a rather detailed description of who Christ is and what that means for his readers, but there's no indication of authorship. So, the church, interestingly, the church throughout history has actually come up with a number of possible proposals. Very early on it was common to think that Paul was the author of the letter to Hebrews.

In fact, very early on, one of the reasons Hebrews may have gained in popularity in the early church in the 2nd century and on was because many people thought that Paul was the author of it. Yet, I think the common consensus today is probably Paul did not write it. But even then we can't be entirely sure, so some have suggested, well, Apollos may have written it, or even Barnabas, two well-known Christian leaders in the 1st century that may very well have penned the book of Hebrews, Luke, there's actually a monograph, a book that was produced just very recently, that argued that there's a number of similarities verbally and otherwise between Luke's gospel and the letter to Hebrews.

Some think Luke wrote it. Others have listed other possibilities. Even Mary, the mother of Jesus, gets a vote as to who was the author of the book of Hebrews.

Probably we can't do much better than Origen, who said, God only knows who wrote the book of Hebrews. So, we can make a pretty good guess about who the author may have been as far as the implied author as he reveals himself in the text, as far as what the author may have thought, perhaps something of his background and the sources of his thinking and what he was trying to accomplish, etc. But to try to pin a precise name on him and a precise identity on the author or her, if someone thinks that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a candidate, then, although that one hasn't really caught on, but we probably, again, have to settle for Origen's conclusion, God only knows who wrote the letter to the Hebrews, because we just don't have enough information and the author doesn't identify himself or herself in the letter.

Now, why was Hebrews written? Again, the other difficulty is because Hebrews does not identify the readership as far as exactly who they are and where they are, such as Paul identifies his readership. Again, it becomes a little tricky, though, interestingly, some early church tradition identifies or locates Hebrews in the city of Rome. So, some have suggested that Hebrews may have been addressing persons, and we'll talk about who specifically it may be, but maybe addressing a group who are living in Rome.

That's a possibility, but again, we'll have to simply rely on Hebrews to tell us everything we can possibly know about who the readers are. Now, back to this first

point, to the Hebrews. Again, most of your Bibles will have something like the letter to the Hebrews, or just Hebrews, or something like that.

Once again, that is not original. When the author, whoever he was, sat down and wrote the book of Hebrews, he did not start by writing to the Hebrews on the top line and then start his letter. That is a label that has been added by the later church, and some have debated whether it's accurate or not.

What it's meant to do is try to capture what appears to be the content and the primary audience from reading the letter of Hebrews itself. So again, we're solely reliant on the book of Hebrews to try to piece together who might be the readers. But the reason for the title of the Hebrews stems from a couple of things.

Number one is, that the author of Hebrews, whoever he is, seems to assume that his readers are very familiar with the Old Testament and with the Old Testament sacrificial system. Which, because of that, you can see why someone would label this book to the Hebrews. They think the primary readers are Jewish, and you can kind of see that as you read the book.

Again, it's almost as if the author's whole argument assumes, again, knowledge of the Old Testament knowledge of the Jewish sacrificial system, and even the Jewish Tabernacle and temple worship. And the assumption then is, or the next question is, well, what readers most likely would be familiar with that? Could the writer assume that kind of knowledge? And some would suggest that it must be Old Testament or people steeped in the Old Testament, that is, a Jewish readership. Actually, I'm going to assume that most likely the readers of Hebrews are probably Jewish.

Now, we have to go on, and we need to be a little bit more specific. Are they non-Christian Jews? Are they some kind of false teachers? Is that the problem? Are they Christian Jews, Jews who have been converted to Christianity? Who precisely are these readers? One of the dominant, when thinking of the overall purpose of Hebrews 2, or Hebrews also, is that the primary way that Jesus is portrayed in, and this was actually one of the questions in your quiz today, too, from your textbook reading, is the primary way that Jesus is portrayed in the book of Hebrews is as the high priest in fulfillment of the Old Testament. And the reader, the author, is heavily reliant on Psalm 110.

In fact, I would argue that Psalm 110 lies behind much of the entire book of Hebrews. It's in Psalm 110 that, interestingly, the author of Psalm 110 combines both the idea of a Messiah king and also a high priest. Listen to what... We've actually read this before.

We've even seen this text before. Psalm 110 played an important role in Paul's understanding of Jesus as the cosmic Lord of the universe in Ephesians, along with other Psalms, too. But Psalm 110, listen to this, the first few verses.

The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool. The Lord sends out from Zion your mighty scepter, the mighty scepter of the king. Rule in the midst of your enemies.

Your people will offer themselves willingly on the day you lead your forces on the holy mountains. From the womb of the morning, like dew, your youth will come to you. The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind.

You, referring to this king, are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. The Lord is at your right hand. So, interestingly, Psalm 110 anticipates and portrays this picture of one who is both a messianic figure, and a royal figure, but who also now is a king, but not in the way one would assume.

And we'll go back to that. I want to return to that question. Or a priest, I'm sorry, not king.

This kingly figure is also a priest, but not quite in the way one would expect. And we'll talk more about that. So, my conclusion is, that I would suggest that the readers of Hebrews, given all this Old Testament background, and apparent assumption that they would be very familiar with the Old Testament, and some of the intricacies of the sacrificial system, I take it that the author's primary audience are Jewish.

And I want to prove that in a little more detail later, but I probably can't do much better than the quotation that is found in your notes. This is a quotation from F.F. Bruce. And in his commentary on Hebrews, this is how he summarized the readers.

He says The addressees of Hebrews appear then to have been a group of Jewish Christians who had never seen or heard Jesus in person. In other words, they're kind of second-generation Christians. These are not like the apostles and those who had been eyewitnesses of Jesus.

But they've never heard or seen Jesus in person, but they've learned of Him from some who had themselves heard Jesus and listened to Him. Since their conversion, they had been exposed to persecution, but while they had to endure public abuse, imprisonment, and the looting of their property, they had not yet been called upon to die for their faith. They had given practical evidence of their faith by serving other fellow Christians, especially by caring for those of their number who had suffered most in the time of persecution, yet their Christian development had been arrested, or kind of stopped and slowed down.

Instead of pressing ahead, they were inclined to come to a full stop in their spiritual progress. If not, indeed, slip back to the stage they had left. Very probably, they were reluctant to sever their ties with the religion that enjoyed protection under Roman law, that is, Judaism, and face the risks of irrevocable commitment to the Christian way.

The writer who knows them or has known about them for a considerable time and feels a pastoral concern for their welfare, warns them against falling back, for this may result in falling away from their Christian faith altogether. He encourages them with the assurance that they have everything to lose if they fall back, but they have everything to gain if they press on. And it's that last line, I think, that admirably summarizes the main message of Hebrews, that the author is trying to convince his readers they have everything to gain if they embrace Christ, but they have everything to lose if they turn their backs on him.

It's almost as if they are at a transition stage of either moving forward and embracing Christ fully in faith, or turning back to their ancestral religion, that is, turning back to Judaism. We'll return to that in just a moment. I want to raise the question again, who are the readers more specifically? But, again, it seems to me the purpose then of the author is to try to convince these readers, whoever they are specifically, again, probably Jewish and from a Jewish background, to convince the readers that they have everything to lose if they turn their backs on Christ, but they have everything to gain.

Despite what they might have to suffer and experience in doing so, they have everything to gain if they will move forward and embrace Christ faithfully. Now, as I said, one of the difficulties with Hebrews is how to classify what kind of literature it is, because in some respects when you read it, it reminds you of reading an epistle or letter, because it has theological argumentation as you find in Paul's letters, but then it also has exhortation material and commands, and we'll see Hebrews is well known for having a series of rather stern warnings that the author issues to his readers, and we're going to try to put all this together. But the closest clue that we have to what kind of book Hebrews is is in chapter 13 and verse 22, where the author says that he's writing a word of exhortation.

In other words, I think one of the best ways to classify this, is this is a sermon in written form sent off like a letter. In other words, it has all the earmarks of a sermon or homily, but now in written form. And it actually ends like a letter and is probably sent off.

It'd be like someone writing down a sermon and then attaching a letter ending and sending it in that way. So probably that's how we should think of Hebrews, and probably why it doesn't begin like a letter and doesn't have all the other things that you might expect to find in Paul's letters. It's more like a sermon, something

someone would preach, but committed to writing, put down in written form and sent off like one would send a letter.

And we'll see that this is very fitting for the author's purpose. Now again, more specifically, who were the readers of Hebrews? I suggested to you that most likely they are from a Jewish background. And let me fill that out a little bit more.

I think what's going on is this. Most likely the readers of Hebrews had come out of a Jewish background. They worshipped under the Old Testament and belonged to some form of Judaism, such as we looked at back with the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, that they had belonged to some form of Judaism.

And they had heard the gospel preached and responded to it, and were now, had now begun to meet with, perhaps they had not yet completely broken off ties with the Jewish synagogue, but were beginning to meet with this newly founded church and this new-fangled religion that we call Christianity. And now, a number of things were happening. Many of these persons who had become, had kind of made the transition from Judaism into Christianity were now experiencing some of the struggles that went along with that.

And one of them, I wonder, I would guess that one of them was that they were probably being ostracized and treated very poorly by their own family members for leaving Judaism and now apparently converting to this newfound religion called Christianity. Which, as the quote from F.F. Bruce read, a religion that did not enjoy the protection most of the time under Roman rule, like was true of Judaism. So, you have this group of those who had been raised and lived life under Judaism, now they have heard of this newfound religion and about this person, Jesus Christ, they've heard the gospel preached to them, and now they've responded in some way and began to associate with this church, but now perhaps they are facing the persecution and ostracism and problems, even from their own friends and family and from the synagogue, for leaving.

Moreover, another factor may be that they have left a religion that really in some senses appealed to the senses physically. They have left a religion that not only met in a synagogue but centered around sacrifices and centered around feasts and festivals and the Passover meal, etc., etc. And now they were leaving that to worship a Jesus whom they had never seen, who was invisible, and they were to worship in a temple that now is a heavenly temple.

So perhaps Judaism had some attraction in that it was tangible and physical, something they could touch and feel and actually see. In exchange for a Christianity that revolved around worshipping a Jesus that was invisible, or at least was not visibly present but was in heaven and a temple that was heavenly as well. And so that may have provided a reason for them wanting to go back to Judaism.

So, again, to recap, along with some of the persecution and ostracism they may have faced from Jewish family and friends because they had now responded to this new religion, and perhaps because of a longing to go back to a religion that was tangible and visible and physical, many of the readers, these Jewish Christians, were now tempted to turn around and go back to their own religion. And the author then is going to write and do everything he can to persuade them of the danger of doing that. Now, in my opinion, you may ask, well, were these readers actually Christians or were they not? In my opinion, the author, I think that the author suspects that most of his readers have not yet fully embraced Christ.

They had not yet made the full transition from Judaism into Christianity and they had not yet embraced Jesus Christ fully. I wonder if he thought they were kind of on the tipping point where they could have gone either way. And now it appears that they're in danger of tipping back and going back to Judaism.

The author then writes to warn them, if you have everything to lose, if you turn around and you turn your backs on Jesus Christ, having come this far and having heard the gospel and now even associated with the church, to reject that and go back to your former religion. You have everything to lose if you do that and you have everything to gain instead if you press on and move ahead and embrace Jesus Christ in faithfully. So, I'm going to work from that assumption.

These are Jews who have made a transition or are in a transition into Christianity to embrace Jesus Christ and this gospel in faith and to be part of this church, yet the reader suspects that they probably have not yet fully done that and they need that extra push so they don't turn back and neglect and reject everything they've been exposed to. All right, there are two ways of looking at Hebrews as far as when we think of how it breaks down, how it outlines, and what's the main plan of Hebrews. There are two ways of dividing it.

One of them is more structural. That is, when you read through Hebrews, one of the things that sticks out to you is how the author flip-flops back and forth between exposition and exhortation. It would almost be similar to Paul's indicative imperative.

Whereas usually Paul devotes almost half of his letter to indicative and then he'll get to imperative towards the end, the author of Hebrews keeps switching back and forth. The exposition part is usually a section where the author demonstrates that Jesus Christ is superior to something in the Old Testament. Then the exhortation is for the readers not to fail to understand that and to press on in obedience and faith to Jesus Christ.

So again, in all of the exposition sections, the author compares Jesus Christ to something in the Old Testament. Jesus is compared to the angels, he's compared to

Moses, he's compared to Joshua, he's compared to the rest that the people enjoyed when they entered the land, he's compared to the tabernacle and the temple, he's compared to the sacrifices, the animal sacrifices, he's compared to the Old Covenant. Just all the prominent features of the Old Testament, Jesus is compared to in these exposition sections to show that Jesus is superior.

Once the author demonstrates that, then he'll shift to an exhortation to say, if this is true, then here's what you better do. Don't go back. Why would you want to go back to your ancestral religion, to Judaism, when something far superior is right in front of you? Why would you want to go back? You have everything to lose if you go backward, and you have everything to gain if you move forward and embrace Christ who is superior, is the superior revelation of God.

In fact, in the verses I just read in chapters 1 and 2, in the past, God spoke in various ways to the prophets, but in the last days, he has spoken through his Son. And it's if the writer is trying to get his reader to say, don't miss that. Don't turn a deaf ear to God's final revelation in his Son, Jesus Christ.

So, he passionately tries to get them to, again, if you can kind of see them as almost on a seesaw, a teeter-totter, and it could go either way, he wants to tip them so they'll embrace Christ fully, instead of going the other way to go back to their life under Judaism. Another way of dividing the letter and looking at it is threefold. You'll see that at the top of page 50 in your notes.

The first four chapters portray Jesus as God's true revelation, God's true messenger. Again, Jesus is the final revelation of God. Jesus is the final speech of God.

So, they better listen to him. The second section is about Jesus as our high priest. Jesus in this large section is portrayed as the superior high priest.

So again, they better listen to him and embrace him in faith. And then finally, our partnership with Jesus, what it means then to walk in obedience to this Jesus who is God's final messenger and who is our high priest. Now, you'll notice from the outline that I've given you, if anyone, if those of you, those sharp-eyed students out there, you'll notice that the chapter and verse references don't follow each other in that outline.

That's because Hebrews is really quite difficult to outline because sometimes sections function as a transition, like a conclusion to what comes before, but at the same time an introduction to what comes next. Hence, if you look closely at the chapter and verses on this threefold division, they don't quite match up. It's because some of these sections function as both a conclusion and an introduction to the next section.

Now, part of what the author does in Hebrews is to get the readers to understand. Again, if he's going to convince them not to go back to the old covenant and their Jewish religion, he needs to convince them that they have something far more superior to turn to, and that is Jesus Christ and the new covenant salvation that he brings. However, at times, when one reads the book of Hebrews, it would be easy to see or to think that the author is being rather derogatory about the Old Testament.

I mean, when he talks about Jesus being superior and we have a superior priest and a superior covenant, and he says things like the sacrifices of the Old Testament could never save, they could never bring about perfection, but Jesus and the new covenant do. The author says things that could almost lead you to think that he was very almost anti-Semitic or anti-Old Testament and saw the New Testament as something superior and the Old Covenant and Old Testament as something inferior that his readers could do without and that they no longer need it at all. So, the question is, what then does the author find wrong with the Old Covenant? By the Old Covenant, I simply mean the arrangement or covenant that God made with Israel under Moses.

Israel's life and their obedience to the law were all regulated by the Old Covenant. But as we saw, the Old Testament anticipates that one day there will be a new covenant, a new way of God extending blessings to his people, a new way of God relating to his people that doesn't depend on the Old Covenant and the law. But what is wrong with the Old Covenant? Why is the author convinced that the readers should not turn back to the Old Covenant? What does he see as wrong with it? Why is the New Covenant so superior? What does he think is wrong with the Old Covenant, if there is anything wrong at all? First of all, we need to avoid misunderstanding.

And that is, I take it as I read Hebrews, I take it that the author is not saying that the Old Covenant itself was defective or that God screwed up and gave the Old Covenant he shouldn't have and it didn't work, so now he had to go to Plan B, which is a new covenant, or that the Old Covenant means bad or worse, it means evil, and the New Covenant means everything is fine and good. Certainly, that's not the case. Instead, I would suggest to you that the primary shortcoming of the Old Covenant, according to the author of Hebrews, is that it could never completely deal with the problem of sin in a way that allowed the worshipper, it allowed God's people to enter into God's presence.

So, the problem with the Old Covenant is the author is convinced that it could not, it was unable to ultimately and finally deal with sin so that the worshipper could enter into the very presence of God. But now the author is convinced that that is what the New Covenant through Jesus Christ now offers. And you can see how that fits into his argument.

Again, why would the readers want to go back to Judaism when they have something that will ultimately deal with sin, cleanse them from sin, and allow them to enter into the very presence of God, something they could not do under the Old Covenant? Why would they want to turn their backs on that and go back to the Old Covenant? Again, the author doesn't have any problem with the Old Covenant, the only thing is it's been fulfilled in Christ. What the Old Covenant pointed to and anticipated has now arrived in the person of Christ in the New Covenant, so why do they want to go backward when what the Old Covenant pointed to has now arrived? And so, the writer convinces them, again, I'll use this phrase over and over, they have everything to lose if they turn their backs on Christ, but they have everything to gain if they will embrace Him in faith, no matter what it costs them. So, the Old Covenant, again, is not inferior, it's not outdated, it's not bad, it just could not bring about perfection.

Perfection is the word the author uses throughout Hebrews, basically to refer to the fact that the New Covenant has now arrived and has dealt with sin finally through Jesus Christ, and now we can enter God's presence in worship, which one could not do under the Old Covenant system. In fact, the author is going to argue as well that the Old Testament Tabernacle and temple serve just as much to restrict God's presence as they did to bring God's presence with people. And we'll look at that just a little bit more.

Any questions as far as how the author understands the Old Covenant? Again, we're mainly to understand it not in terms of something bad or second-rate or inferior or useless being now finally replaced by something good, but seen in terms of the Old Covenant was meant to point forward to and anticipate something greater. Now that that has arrived, again, why do they want to go back to something else? Why would they want to refuse Jesus Christ and go back and embrace something that has been fulfilled in a far greater way in Jesus Christ and the New Covenant? Nice question. Okay.

Any other questions? That lies behind much of chapters 3 through 12, much of what the author does with the Old Covenant. Over and over again, he'll say things that could lead you to think that the New Covenant is no good or Old Covenant is useless, it's no good, it's bad, it's defective and deeply flawed, but that's not his point. Again, I think the author's view of the Old Covenant in relationship to the New is summarized, again, in the first two verses I read.

Long ago, God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets. That's the Old Testament. But in these last days, that is, in the time of fulfillment, He has spoken to us by His Son.

So, the New Testament, then, God speaking through His Son in this New Covenant salvation is the very fulfillment of what the Old Covenant and Old Testament were pointing to and anticipating. Now that that has arrived, again, they're in grave danger

of missing that and neglecting that by going back to, again, whether it's out of pressure from family or perhaps because the Old Covenant was just more tangible and visible for whatever reason, the author doesn't want them to commit the mistake of missing this New. God has finally spoken.

Yes, God spoke in the past to the Old Covenant, but now God has finally spoken in the time of fulfillment that the Old Testament was anticipating. Now God has spoken through His Son, and He's trying to get His readers, don't miss that. One of the ways that the author argues this, we're still talking about the Old Covenant, is one of the ways the author argues this point is what I call the historical argument.

The author argues not just from the fact that Christ is the fulfillment, but the author goes back and argues from the Old Testament itself. And his argument looks like this. When you go back to the books of Exodus and Leviticus, and you read about the Old Testament priest, here we'll talk a little bit about the Old Testament priest.

Again, Jesus as priest, Jesus as high priest, is the dominant way that the author of Hebrews portrays Christ. But when you go back and read about the high priest in Exodus and Leviticus, which was to be in what line? In other words, you couldn't wake up one morning and decide, I think I'll be a priest today in the Old Testament. What was the qualification for being a priest? Yeah, a descendant of Aaron, or the tribe of Levi, you had to belong or else tough luck.

You were out of luck if you wanted to be a priest if you were not in the line of Levi. Now, here's how the author of Hebrews, here's how it works. He says, if this was meant to be the final priest, in other words, if this was God's plan for the ultimate, if this was to be God's ultimate priest, a priest in the line of Levi, then why, historically, why years later do you have Psalm 110 anticipating the coming of another priest? Remember that verse I just read from Psalm 10? It said, the Lord has sworn forever, you are a priest in the order of Melchizedek.

Why is that in there? Why does Psalm 110, years later, anticipate the coming of another priest, if the priest of the Old Testament was all there was in Exodus and Leviticus? Or another example, the author talks about rest. Remember the way he describes when Israel, remember Israel, they were led out of Egypt, through the wilderness, brought up to the promised land, and through Joshua, Joshua brought them into the promised land. You remember your class with Professors Wilson, Hildebrandt, or Phillips, talking about the conquest and entering in the land of Canaan.

The author refers to that as giving the Israelites rest, the rest from their enemies, settling in the land. Now, what the author does, again, is he says, in the Old Testament, you don't even have to go to the New Testament, in the Old Testament, if Joshua gave the Israelites the ultimate final rest, if that's all there was, why, years

later, do you have Psalm 95 offering a rest? There's still a rest available. So, again, he's trying to get them to see if Joshua if the Israelites going into the land of Canaan if that's all there was, and yes, that was a fulfillment, but if that's all there was, then why do you still have a Psalm like 95 anticipating there's still a rest available? And finally, the covenant.

If, again, historically, the covenant that God made with Israel in the book of Exodus, which he made through Moses with Israel, if that covenant was the ultimate final covenant, why, years later, does Jeremiah 31 anticipate another covenant? Do you see what the author's doing? He's arguing from the Old Testament itself that the Old Testament even points to the temporary nature of the Old Covenant. If the readers read their Old Testament carefully, they would see that the priesthood and the rest in the land and the covenant, the Old Covenant, and with the Old Covenant, the tabernacle and temple and sacrifices, they would be able to see that that was all temporary because the Old Testament itself anticipates something greater in texts like Psalm 110 and Psalm 95 and Jeremiah chapter 31. Then, to go further, the author then says, this something greater than the Old Testament itself anticipated has now been fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

So, again, why do they want to go back to the Old Covenant? Why do they want to return to this when what the Old Testament itself was pointing to has now arrived in the person of Jesus Christ? By the way, I want to say a couple of things, especially about the first one, the priest. And I should have Ted come and talk about the Dead Sea Scrolls and their view of whether there are two messiahs, a priestly messiah, and a kingly messiah. But, anyway, the issue is this.

From the Old Testament, we know that the messiah, the king, is going to come in what line? In the line of David. But we just said the priest comes in what line? The line of Levi. So, you have a problem.

If you have a messiah who is also to be a priest, how can that be? Because they come from completely separate lines. You can't have someone coming from the line of Judah and Levi apparently at the same time. So, what the author of Hebrews does then is, interestingly, is, yes, Jesus is from the line of David, but he finds his solution in Psalm 110.

Jesus is a priest, but not after the line of Levi. So, remember Psalm 110 that we just read? Psalm 110. The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

That's the promise made to David. But then the Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, you, that is this messiah, you are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek. So, apparently, there's another order of priests, and I don't want to go into all the details of who Melchizedek is.

I have questions myself. But the author is basically saying Jesus is a priest, but not in the line of Levi. He's a priest according to a different order, the order of Melchizedek.

Therefore, Jesus can be a messiah in the line of David, and he can still be a priest, though. He can still be our high priest without coming through the line of Levi. He comes through a different line.

He belongs to a completely different order of priests that Psalm 110 says is the priest of Melchizedek. If you go back to Genesis, that's where you read the story of Melchizedek, and the problem is it doesn't tell us very much about him, or who in the world he was and what he did. It says nothing about his lineage, who his parents were, or whether he died.

It just says nothing about him. But somehow the Psalm picks up on this and understands that there's another priesthood, there's another order of priests in the order of Melchizedek, and Jesus belongs to that. So that's how Jesus can be a messiah in the line of David, and he can still be a priest without coming through the line of Levi.

He belongs to this other order that the author of Hebrews finds in the Old Testament, this order of Melchizedek. And so a key theme in Hebrews, you're going to find that the name Melchizedek crops up several times in Hebrews. As the author is going to argue, Jesus is indeed a high priest.

He meets all the qualifications of a high priest. Even though he doesn't come through the line of Levi, he's in the order of Melchizedek. And therefore, he can be both messiah and king, but he can also be our high priest.

The other thing that you see going on is in Hebrews, when the author talks about, when he wants to compare the worship that the Jewish Christian should engage in and be part of, that is, he talks, and he refers to Jesus in a physical temple, or a heavenly temple, he compares that, interestingly, he compares it not to the temple in Jerusalem, but he compares it to the Old Testament tabernacle. So, interestingly, whenever the author talks about the Holy of Holies and the sacrifices that were offered up, and the sanctuary, and the table of showbread, and the Ark of the Covenant, all those things that belonged in the temple, but when the author of Hebrews describes that, he refers to the tabernacle from the Old Testament, not the temple. The reason he does it, some have suggested, well, that's proof that the temple had been destroyed, so Hebrews must have been written quite late in the first century, sometime after 70 AD, when the temple was destroyed.

I think there's a better explanation, though, and that is, over and over, the author of Hebrews is going to compare his readers to the Israelites who wandered in the

wilderness throughout the Book of Exodus. Remember, they're the ones who wandered in the wilderness until they got to the promised land that Joshua eventually led them into. When they left Egypt and made their trek through the wilderness, they set up a tabernacle.

A tabernacle is just kind of a portable temple. So, they set up a tabernacle, and then when the pillar of fire would move, or the cloud would move, they would move as well, and wherever they ended up, they would set up this tabernacle, and that's where God dwelled, and they would tear it down, so it was kind of portable. The author always appeals to that, and I think the reason is, not because the temple was destroyed, but because the author wants to compare his readers to the Old Testament people when they wandered in the wilderness, and we'll see why he does that.

On Wednesday, we'll talk more about why the author compares his readers to the Israelites as they wandered from Egypt through the wilderness to the land of Canaan.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in New Testament History and Literature, lecture number 27 on the book of Hebrews.