

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Session 28, Hebrews Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 28, Hebrews, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Mathewson's lecture focuses on the book of Hebrews, particularly its message to Jewish Christians. He emphasizes that the author of Hebrews argues for the superiority of Jesus Christ over Old Testament institutions to dissuade readers from reverting to Judaism. **A key analogy is drawn between the Israelites' wilderness experience and the readers' potential failure to fully embrace Christ.** The lecture explores the warning passages in Hebrews, interpreting them as cautions against consciously rejecting Jesus. **Dr. Mathewson suggests these passages target those who have encountered the gospel but haven't fully committed, urging them to embrace the salvation offered by Christ.** Finally, the lecture connects these themes to the broader concept of covenant theology, highlighting the fulfillment of the New Covenant in Jesus.

**2. 9 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 28 – Double click icon
to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Daniel).**



**Mathewson_NTLit_S
ession28.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 28, Hebrews

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. Mathewson's lecture on the book of Hebrews:

Briefing Document: Hebrews (Lecture 28)

Main Theme: The central argument of Hebrews is to persuade Jewish Christians *not* to revert to Judaism, but to fully embrace Jesus Christ and the New Covenant. The author achieves this by demonstrating the superiority of Jesus over various aspects of the Old Covenant (Moses, the Law, the Tabernacle/Temple, the sacrificial system).

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Author's Purpose:** The author of Hebrews aims to convince Jewish Christians that they have "everything to lose if they go back and they have everything to gain if they press on and embrace Christ in faith, no matter what the cost."
- **Jesus' Superiority:** The author demonstrates that "Jesus Christ is superior to Moses, he's superior to the Old Testament law, he's superior to the Old Testament tabernacle and temple, he's superior to the old covenant, to the sacrificial system." Jesus fulfills these Old Covenant elements.
- This is meant to dissuade readers from returning to something now fulfilled in a "greater way in the person of Jesus Christ."
- **The Wilderness Generation Analogy (Hebrews 3-4):** The author draws a parallel between the Israelites who wandered in the wilderness and the readers of Hebrews.
- The Israelites failed to enter the promised land due to unbelief and disobedience. "They failed to obtain that rest. They were denied that rest because of their disobedience and rebellion because they refused to act on God's promises, and enter the land, and experience the rest in the land that God had promised them."
- The readers of Hebrews are in danger of making a similar mistake by failing to embrace the "promise of rest" available through Jesus Christ. "The rest that you are about to enter is not entering a certain land, but now it's what the land symbolized and what was, what it pointed to for, in the Old Testament, that is the, the rest and the salvation now that Jesus Christ brings is now available to the readers of Hebrews."

- **The Sabbath Rest:** The lecture touches on the interpretation of Sabbath. The author states that "the New Testament, and a book like Hebrews chapters three and four is clear, that day of rest that the Israelites observed, that one day out of the week, has now been fulfilled ultimately in the rest that we experience in Jesus Christ. So, we fulfill the Sabbath by trusting in Christ, by resting in Christ, and by trusting in him for our salvation." This suggests that every day is a Sabbath for Christians.
- **Warning Passages:** Hebrews contains several stern warning passages designed to shock readers into recognizing the danger of turning away from Christ.
- One example is Hebrews 6:4-8, which speaks of the impossibility of restoring to repentance those who have tasted of the heavenly gift and then fallen away. "For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, they've tasted the heavenly gift, they've shared the Holy Spirit, they've tasted the goodness of God's word and the powers of the age to come, and then they have fallen away."
- Another is Hebrews 10:26-29, which warns of a fearful judgment for those who willfully persist in sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth. "For if we willfully persist in sin, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but only a fearful prospect of judgment and a fury of fire that will consume the enemies."
- **Interpretations of Warning Passages:Hypothetical:** The warnings are rhetorical, intended to wake up readers, but not reflecting a real possibility.
- **Arminian View:** Genuine Christians can forfeit their salvation by turning away from Christ.
- **Calvinistic View:** Those who turn away were never truly saved in the first place.
- **Loss of Rewards:** Those who turn away are Christians, but they will lose rewards in the future.
- **Author's View on the Readers and Warnings:**The sin in question is a willful, conscious rejection of Jesus Christ.
- The readers have been "enlightened" and have come within the "orbit of the church," but have not yet fully embraced Jesus Christ in faith. They are teeter-tottering and in danger of missing out on salvation itself.

- The author states "He says, for indeed, the good news of the gospel came to us just as it did to them. That is, they had the good news, the gospel, of entering this rest, the promise that God had provided. Yet the message they heard did not benefit them because they did not combine that message with faith."
- **The New Covenant:** The idea of the New Covenant is crucial to Hebrews, and it has roots in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36-37).
- The New Covenant is seen as the ultimate fulfillment of God's desire to establish a relationship with his people. It involves God adopting them as his own, conditions for maintaining the relationship (obedience), and promises of blessings or curses based on obedience.
- The New Testament authors believe that the New Covenant has been inaugurated through Jesus Christ, with an already/not yet aspect to its fulfillment.

Key Quotes:

- "Jesus Christ is superior because he brings fulfillment, he brings to a climax God's revelation that originally was revealed through the old covenant scriptures..."
- "...the author even argues from the Old Testament itself, that the Old Testament pointed to the temporary nature of the Old Covenant."
- "Don't commit the same mistake that your Old Covenant ancestors did back in the wilderness, who refused to believe and obey."
- "You have everything to lose if you turn your back. You have everything to gain if you press on and embrace Jesus Christ in faith, no matter what the cost."

4. Study Guide: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 28, Hebrews

Hebrews: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. Who were the original recipients of the letter to the Hebrews, and what was their potential spiritual state?
2. What is the primary purpose of the book of Hebrews?
3. How does the author of Hebrews use the Old Testament to support their arguments about Jesus?
4. What is the significance of the wilderness generation in Hebrews 3 and 4?
5. What does the "rest" symbolize for the readers of Hebrews?
6. Identify and explain one possible interpretation of the warning passages in Hebrews.
7. What sin are the readers of Hebrews in danger of committing, according to Dr. Mathewson?
8. Why does the author of Hebrews use the Tabernacle as his primary reference point?
9. According to Dr. Mathewson, should Christians observe a single day as a Sabbath? Why or why not?
10. What is the significance of the concept of "covenant" in understanding the book of Hebrews?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The original recipients were likely Jewish Christians who were contemplating turning back to Judaism. They were in a precarious spiritual state, teetering between fully embracing Christ and reverting to their former religious system.
2. The primary purpose is to persuade these Jewish Christians not to abandon their faith in Jesus Christ and return to Judaism. The author does this by demonstrating the superiority of Jesus and the new covenant.

3. The author uses the Old Testament to demonstrate how Jesus fulfills the prophecies, institutions, and figures of the Old Covenant. By showing Jesus as superior, the author emphasizes that turning away from Christ means turning away from something greater and more complete.
4. The wilderness generation serves as a warning example to the readers of Hebrews. Just as the Israelites failed to enter the promised rest due to their disobedience and lack of faith, the readers are warned not to make the same mistake by rejecting the rest offered through Jesus Christ.
5. The "rest" symbolizes salvation, a deeper spiritual rest in Jesus Christ. It is not merely a physical rest or a specific location but represents the blessings and security found in trusting Christ for salvation.
6. One interpretation is the Arminian view, which suggests that genuine Christians can forfeit their salvation by turning away from Jesus Christ. This view emphasizes the importance of obedience and the potential for believers to lose what they once possessed.
7. According to Dr. Mathewson, the readers are in danger of willfully and consciously turning away from Jesus Christ. This sin involves rejecting the knowledge and experience they have gained through the gospel and deliberately choosing to abandon their faith.
8. The author of Hebrews uses the Tabernacle because he is focused on the wilderness generation as his primary model. This particular generation worshipped God in the portable tent, and he draws a distinction between it and the Temple.
9. Dr. Mathewson does not think Christians are called to celebrate a single day as a new Sabbath. Rather, he asserts that Christians fulfill the true intention of the Sabbath by resting and trusting in Christ for our salvation.
10. The concept of "covenant" is significant because the author argues that Jesus inaugurated a New Covenant, superior to the Old Covenant. He refers to Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36 and 37 when he discusses this concept.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer the following essay questions, referencing the source material to support your claims.

1. Analyze the author's use of Old Testament figures and institutions (e.g., Moses, the Tabernacle) in the book of Hebrews. How does the author use these comparisons to persuade the readers of the superiority of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant?
2. Discuss the different interpretations of the warning passages in Hebrews. Which interpretation do you find most convincing, and why? Consider the implications of each interpretation for understanding the nature of salvation and apostasy.
3. Examine the analogy between the wilderness generation of Israelites and the readers of Hebrews. What parallels does the author draw between these two groups, and what lessons are the readers meant to learn from the Israelites' experience?
4. Explore the concept of "rest" in Hebrews 3 and 4. How does the author redefine the meaning of rest, and what does it mean for believers to "enter God's rest"?
5. Discuss the significance of the New Covenant in the book of Hebrews. How does the author present the New Covenant as superior to the Old Covenant, and what does this mean for the relationship between Christianity and Judaism?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Apostasy:** The abandonment or renunciation of a religious or political belief or principle.
- **Arminianism:** A theological system emphasizing free will and conditional election, suggesting that salvation can be lost.
- **Calvinism:** A theological system emphasizing God's sovereignty and unconditional election, suggesting that salvation is secured by God and cannot be lost.
- **Covenant:** A formal agreement or relationship, particularly between God and humanity, often involving promises and obligations.
- **Exhortation:** An address or communication emphatically urging someone to do something.
- **Exposition:** A comprehensive description and explanation of an idea or theory.
- **Manna:** The food miraculously supplied to the Israelites in the wilderness.
- **Melchizedek:** A king and priest in the Old Testament who is seen as a prefigurement of Christ.
- **New Covenant:** The covenant established through Jesus Christ, promising forgiveness of sins and a renewed relationship with God.
- **Old Covenant:** The covenant established with the Israelites through Moses, based on obedience to the law.
- **Sabbath:** A day of rest and worship, observed on the seventh day in Judaism and traditionally on Sunday in Christianity.
- **Tabernacle:** A portable tent used as a sanctuary by the Israelites during their wanderings in the wilderness.
- **Wilderness Generation:** The generation of Israelites who wandered in the wilderness for 40 years due to their disobedience and lack of faith.

5. FAQs on Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 28, Hebrews, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on the Book of Hebrews

- **Who is the author of Hebrews writing to, and what is their spiritual state?**
- The author is primarily addressing Jewish Christians, likely located in Rome, who have come within the sphere of the church and experienced aspects of the gospel. However, the author suspects that these individuals have not fully embraced Jesus Christ in faith and are in danger of turning back to their ancestral religion, Judaism. They are "teeter-tottering" between the old and new covenants.
- **What is the main purpose of the Book of Hebrews?**
- The primary purpose is to persuade Jewish Christians not to revert to Judaism but to embrace the new covenant offered through Jesus Christ fully. The author argues for the superiority of Jesus Christ over Old Testament institutions and figures (Moses, the law, the temple, etc.), demonstrating that Jesus fulfills these predecessors. The author emphasizes that they have everything to lose by going back and everything to gain by pressing forward in faith.
- **How does the author of Hebrews use the Old Testament to make his case?**
- The author strategically uses the Old Testament to argue that it pointed towards the temporary nature of the Old Covenant and anticipated a greater fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He uses examples like the wilderness generation of Israelites who failed to enter the promised land due to their disobedience, drawing parallels to the readers' situation. He demonstrates that Jesus fulfills the Old Testament prophecies and institutions, making the old covenant obsolete.
- **What is the significance of the "rest" mentioned in Hebrews 3 and 4?**
- The "rest" refers to the salvation available through Jesus Christ. The author draws an analogy between the Israelites' failure to enter the promised land (a physical rest) and the readers' potential failure to enter the spiritual rest offered by Christ. He urges them not to repeat the mistakes of their ancestors by refusing to believe and obey. The Sabbath rest, observed by the Israelites, is fulfilled in the rest experienced by Christians through faith in Christ.

- **What are the "warning passages" in Hebrews, and how should they be interpreted?**
- The "warning passages" are stern exhortations meant to shock the readers and make them aware of the danger of turning away from Jesus Christ. There are different views on how to interpret these passages: 1) as hypothetical scenarios, 2) as describing genuine Christians who lose their salvation (Arminian view), 3) as describing people who appeared to be saved but were never truly saved (Calvinistic view), or 4) as describing Christians who will lose rewards. The author's intent is to warn against consciously and willfully rejecting Jesus Christ after having experienced the gospel.
- **What sin are the readers in danger of committing, according to the author?**
- The sin the readers are in danger of committing is not any one specific sin, but a conscious, willful, and outright rejection of Jesus Christ. It is a turning away from the knowledge and experience they have had within the church and a return to their ancestral religion.
- **How does Hebrews present the concept of the New Covenant, and how does it relate to the Old Covenant?**
- Hebrews presents the New Covenant as the fulfillment of God's ultimate intention to establish a relationship with humanity. The Old Covenant, with its stipulations and consequences, was temporary and foreshadowed the New Covenant. The New Covenant, inaugurated by Jesus Christ, offers a superior relationship with God based on faith, not just obedience to laws. It is a "better covenant" established on better promises, making the Old Covenant obsolete.
- **How are the readers of Hebrews like the wilderness generation of Israelites?**
- The author draws a comparison between his readers and the wilderness generation of Israelites. Just as the Israelites experienced God's provision, miracles, and the giving of the law (manna from heaven, the pillar of fire, tasting of the Holy Spirit and God's word), the readers of Hebrews have experienced enlightenment, tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, tasted the goodness of God's word, and experienced the powers of the coming age through their involvement with the church. However, just as the Israelites failed to enter the promised land due to unbelief, the readers of Hebrews are in danger of falling away and missing out on the rest offered through Jesus Christ.