

HEBREWS: PERSEVERE, HOLD ON, BELIEVE TILL THE END  
INTRODUCTION, PART 2

Hello CVCHURCH family! I'm Scottie Alvarez, the EPICC youth and Celebrate Recovery pastor. Our lead pastors Scott & Kathe Wood send their prayers and hugs from Scottsdale, Arizona where they're vacationing. Kathe's enjoying her pool time and Pastor Scott is reading and hiking. Welcome, Pastor Scott & Kathe, and all of you who are participating online! Last week we began our brand-new series in the book of Hebrews that we're calling **PERSEVERE, HOLD ON, BELIEVE TILL THE END**, and in last week's part 1 of my introduction, we learned 4 key truths about this unique book that sets the stage for our verse-by-verse exploration in the coming weeks. We learned that, **1) The Book of Hebrews is a spoken teaching, or sermon; 2) Hebrews was most likely written just before the destruction of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70AD; 3) The anonymous author was a Greek Jewish Christian who was highly educated in both Jewish synagogue tradition and in classical Greek persuasive speaking; 4) The original hearers were Jewish Christians who needed encouragement to endure persecution.** If you missed any of last week's teaching, or want to review it while you're out walking, driving to or from work, or working out in the morning, go to our **website [cvchurch.com](http://cvchurch.com)**, our **YouTube channel [@cvchurchla](https://www.youtube.com/cvchurchla)**, or our **Facebook page [@cvchurchla](https://www.facebook.com/cvchurchla)**, and share with friends or watch, listen, and download the script and notes. Today we'll conclude our 2-part introduction to Hebrews, and next week, August 4<sup>th</sup>, Pastor Scott & Kathe return for Hebrews Chapter 1, and then Pastor Scott and I will continue through Hebrews together, chapter by chapter, into the Fall. Before we focus on the main themes and practical applications of Hebrews, let's turn our hearts, minds, and wills toward Jesus. Let's pray: *"Heavenly Father, we come before You today grateful, eager, and ready to delve deeper into Your Word. As we study the Book of Hebrews, open our hearts to understand its profound themes and practical applications. Whatever darkness, despair, or depression we entered this worship center with today, may You lift it from us. May Your Holy Spirit open our eyes to see and our ears to hear. Awaken our understanding so that we may apply Your truth to every area of our lives. In Jesus name, Amen.*

Follow your notes as I read Hebrews Chapter 1, verses 1-4, just to give us a feel for this book. As I read, ask yourself: **"How can I apply to my life Christ's superiority, Christ's faith and endurance, and Christ's new covenant?"** This will allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us about how we persevere, hold on, believe till the end. Follow along in your notes with **Hebrews 1:1-4: Jesus Christ Is God's Son -- 1 Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. 2 And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. 3 The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honor at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven. 4 This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names.**

To persevere, hold on, and believe till the end, we must hear, understand, and apply the three major themes of the Book of Hebrews. Here's the first fill-in in your notes: I.

**Theme #1: CHRIST is SUPREME.** One of the most prominent themes in Hebrews is the superiority and supremacy of Jesus. Hebrews emphasizes that Jesus is superior to God's messengers, the angels; He is superior to the Israelite hero, Moses; and He is superior to the Old Testament priests, also known as the Levites, members of Israel's tribe of Levi, the Levitical priesthood--which we read about in the Old Testament Book of Leviticus. American theologian and professor at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, Donald Hagner, writes: **"[Asserting the superiority of Jesus to the angels] may seem strange to the modern reader... There is, however, evidence from the first century that some groups worshiped angels... [Gnostics]—that is, people who regarded materiality as intrinsically evil—might well conclude that angels, as spiritual beings, were superior to Jesus, who had been incarnated in human flesh. Angels were popularly regarded as powerful intermediaries between God and humans, who had to be feared and placated. Surprisingly, the situation was not much different from that of today. From astrology to 'new age' phenomena... one encounters the conviction that fates, powers, or the stars control our lives, and that we must order our lives accordingly, in relation somehow to those realities. But if what our author has said about Christ is true, then Christ is far superior to any created beings, be they angels, powers, stars, or whatever else..."** What created beings have you put above Jesus? Your boss, coworkers, strangers on social media, your spouse, your kids, family, your pets, someone you're dating? Flip back to Hebrews 1:4, **"This shows that the Son is far greater than the angels, just as the name God gave him is greater than their names."** Hagner explains: **"...the author [of Hebrews] first articulates a comparison that focuses on Jesus' title 'Son.' Jesus is as far superior to the angels as his name is to theirs. The Greek word angelos, 'angel,' means literally 'messenger.' By the 'superior name' the author does not mean 'Jesus' but rather 'Son' [which] points to the uniqueness of Jesus.** In other words, Jesus' identity as 'Son' is superior to any angel's identity as 'messenger', which proves that Jesus is superior to any angel.

But it's not just angels. Christ also is superior to the central figure of the Old Testament, the great Israelite hero Moses. Hagner writes, **"...the author again returns to the theme of the superiority of Christ, but now, that of Christ to Moses. To the Jews, Moses held an incomparable position among those whom God had used in the history of the people of God. Through Moses the people had been delivered from slavery in Egypt, and through him on Sinai God had given Israel its greatest possession, the law. To argue that Jesus is greater than Moses was to make an astounding claim, especially to the minds of Jewish readers, and that is exactly what our author does..."** What religious figures have you put above Jesus? Mary, the saints, the pope, L. Ron Hubbard, a famous pastor, a ministry leader? Jesus is superior to anyone and everyone, including Moses. But it's not just Moses. Christ is superior to the priests of the Old Testament, the Levites. The Levitical priests ushered in God's presence, prepared the way for the Lord, and represented God's blessing to the other tribes of Israel. Aaron, Moses' older brother, was Israel's first high priest. In the Old

Testament Book of Exodus, God instructs Moses to appoint Aaron as high priest to mediate between the people and God. Follow along in your notes as I read Hebrews 7:23-28 **“23 There were many priests under the old system, for death prevented them from remaining in office. 24 But because Jesus lives forever, his priesthood lasts forever. 25 Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf. 26 He is the kind of high priest we need because he is holy and blameless, unstained by sin. He has been set apart from sinners and has been given the highest place of honor in Heaven. 27 Unlike those other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices every day. They did this for their own sins first and then for the sins of the people. But Jesus did this once for all when he offered himself as the sacrifice for the people’s sins. 28 The law appointed high priests who were limited by human weakness. But after the law was given, God appointed his Son with an oath, and his Son has been made the perfect High Priest forever.”** The late William L. Lane, American New Testament scholar, explains: **“...the Levitical priesthood... was fulfilled by the priesthood of Christ. The inability of the Levitical institution to attain the goal of perfection and Christ’s corresponding ability to do so [establish] a new eternal priesthood... The writer clearly recognizes the validity of the Old Testament priesthood: Aaron was called by God, but [from Christ’s perspective] only as a foreshadowing of a new and superior priesthood announced in the Old Testament itself.”** In other words, because Jesus fulfills the promise of the original priesthood—the authority and ability to cleanse us from our sins—He demonstrates the superiority of His new priesthood over the old priesthood. The late Scottish professor F. F. Bruce, arguably the most influential evangelical scholar of the last 75 years, puts it like this: **“[The Son of God] possesses in himself all the qualifications to be the mediator between God and the human race. He is the Prophet through whom God has spoken his final word; he is the Priest who has accomplished a perfect work of cleansing for his people’s sins; he is the King who sits enthroned in the place of chief honor alongside the Majesty on high.”**

Theme #1: Christ is supreme. Theme #2, and this is the second fill-in in your notes, is **II. Jesus is the PIONEER and PERFECTOR of our faith.** This comes from the famous distance-running passage that we designed our series graphic to visualize (this one is not in your notes so follow along as I read it), **[Show Hebrews series graphic with this passage below it in lower 3rds]** Hebrews 12:1-3, **“1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. 2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne. 3 Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won’t become weary and give up. 4 After all, you have not yet given your lives in your struggle against sin.”** Hagner emphasizes, **“The Greek word archēgos can be translated in several ways [‘pioneer’, ‘champion’, ‘captain’, ‘author’, ‘leader’]. The title is applied to Jesus four times in the New Testament, twice in Hebrews and twice in Acts. The root**

idea of the word is ‘one who goes first, at the head of’ in the sense of ‘leading the way’ or ‘making a way’ and thus in the New Testament references it can connote one who is a pathbreaker, one who goes ahead of us, making possible a new reality.” One of our stalwart scholars from our Revelation series, American professor Ben Witherington III, puts it like this: “...Christ is being portrayed as the ultimate example of faith/faithfulness... the crucial verse is to be translated ‘looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of faith/faithfulness’... Our author is writing pastorally and suggesting that, by being obedient even unto death, Christ set the ultimate and only complete example of faithfulness. He not only sets the example, he makes truly Christian faith possible by dying and ascending to the right hand to add believers thereafter. This may also suggest that the perfect manifestation of faithfulness for the believer is to suffer for and die in the faith. Christ endured the cross for the joy set before him, and his followers can likewise endure suffering because they have ‘the assurance of things hoped for’ (Hebrews 11:1).” Where is the Holy Spirit calling you to persevere, hold on, and believe till the end? F.F. Bruce drives this point home: “For the great salvation which the gospel proclaims was not only ‘first announced through the Lord’... but was procured for us by Him through His [sacrifice of Himself for us on the cross]. He is the Pathfinder, the Pioneer of our salvation... He is the Savior who blazed the trail of salvation along which alone God's ‘many sons’ could be brought to glory. Man, created by God for His glory, was prevented by sin from attaining that glory until the Son of Man came and opened up by His death a new way by which humanity might reach the goal for which it was made. As His people’s representative and forerunner He has now entered into the presence of God to secure their entry there.” Where is Jesus calling you to remain steadfast and look to Him as your pioneer and perfecter?

Theme #1: Jesus is supreme above anything and anyone in all creation; Theme #2: Jesus is the pioneer and perfecter, the author and finisher of our faith; and Theme #3, the third fill-in in your notes: **III. Jesus fulfills the PROMISE of direct ACCESS to God.** God made his people this promise through the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah. Follow along as I read Jeremiah 31:31-34: “**31 The day is coming,**” says the Lord, “**when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. 32 This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife,**” says the Lord. **33 “But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days,**” says the Lord. “**I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, ‘You should know the Lord.’ For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already,**” says the Lord. “**And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins.**” The author of Hebrews quotes this promise from God through the prophet Jeremiah to emphasize how Jesus fulfills it with a new, better promise, a new covenant (covenant means a binding legal contract). This is found in Hebrews 8:6-7,13: “**6 But now Jesus, our High Priest, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for he is the one who mediates for us a**

far better covenant with God, based on better promises. **7 If the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second covenant to replace it... 13 When God speaks of a 'new' covenant, it means he has made the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and will soon disappear.**" I asked the website GotQuestions.org 'what was the old covenant?' and its answer is superb. It quotes from Hebrews chapter 10, and it says: **"The author of Hebrews details some of the differences between the Old Covenant and the New. The Old Covenant required repeated, daily sacrifices of animals as a reminder of the people's sin. But 'it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins'. Under the New Covenant, 'we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all', ending the need for animal sacrifices. 'Where [sins and lawless acts] have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary'. Under the Old Covenant, only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place where God's presence dwelt—and that only once a year. But under the New Covenant, Jesus is our High Priest, 'we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus', and we can 'draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings'.** Where are you still living under the requirements of the Old Covenant, of the law of Moses, of the Ten Commandments, the 'thou shalt not's'? Where have you failed miserably to 'be a good person'? Where have you tried to earn your way into God's presence by making symbolic sacrifices? Where do you need to trust the promise of Jesus? He wants to fulfill all that striving FOR you, on your behalf! He wants you to accept His free gift of direct access to Him, your Creator and the Creator of the Universe. He fulfilled all of the Old Covenant, all of the Law of Moses, all of the Commandments, so that you can have a relationship with Him, the spotless Lamb of God. Lecturer, scholar, and professor George H. Guthrie closes with this: **"...when the church ceases to lift Christ to the height where all people can see Him, [the church] becomes useless and a fraud. The modern views of Jesus that attempt to make Christianity 'fit' for modern perspectives actually undermine the heart of Christianity—that Jesus was vindicated as the Messiah, God's Son, by his resurrection from the dead, and that He was exalted to the right hand of God as Lord of the universe—and as the church's ministry. It is only the exalted Jesus who can make purification of sins... and provide us a way to draw near to God. It is only the exalted Jesus who can offer help to us in our time of need, deliver us from death, and lead us to glory. In short, it is only the exalted Jesus who is fit for our worship and attention and who can help us persevere in the Christian life."** If you want to trust His promise today, draw near to Him, and accept His help, His victory over death, and begin a relationship with Him that will usher you with Him into Heaven for eternity, you can do that right now by sincerely praying this prayer with me: *"Jesus, forgive me for rejecting you. Forgive me for seeing you as something other than who you are. I confess that you are supreme. I admit that I have fallen short, but that you are the pioneer and perfecter of my faith. Jesus, I believe that by your resurrection from death to life, you fulfill the promise of giving me direct access to you. Jesus, I choose to follow you as my Lord and God from this moment forward. Strengthen my faith and help me see your supremacy in all aspects of my life. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.*