

Opening Up Hebrews

Davenant Hall ✕ Michaelmas Term (Fall 2021)

Teacher: Rev. Danny Hyde, PhD (cand.)

Course Description

ΠΙΡΟΣ ΕΒΡΑΙΟΥΣ—“To the Hebrews”—is an exciting letter—but an enigmatic one. In the early third century Origen said “only God knows who wrote” it. We’re unsure who wrote it, from where, precisely to whom, or even when it was written. But we know theologically, it is the fresh Word of the Spirit of God through an author to a Christian community (e.g., 1:1–2; 3:7). We even know why: it’s an *urgent* “word of encouragement” (13:22) to a people that has grown spiritually weary of following Jesus. 12:12 says their hands had drooped, their knees had become weak, and the path they followed was wandering from the straight one Jesus prescribed. They were tired of following Jesus, serving their neighbors, loving one another, and were persecuted even to death.

Knowing all this, what was this preacher’s message? Positively, persevere to glory; negatively, don’t fall away. Why? Because all that God had spoken in promise form in ages past has been manifested (fulfilled) in the incarnation of the Son—Jesus. Thus, contra the pop summary of the letter as “Jesus is better,” which can so easily be turned into an excuse for “replacement theology” or “supersessionism,” the writer is saying in the eschatological fulfillment of time, heaven itself has touched earth, this heavenly reality is still present, and this heavenly reality will one day be fully manifested again.

In this course, we’ll study this amazing letter of the New Testament, delving into exegetical, theological, and practical issues while expositing it verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter.

Course Format

The format of the course will blend lectures, guided discussion, student activities, and Q&A. The instructor will often be doing most of the talking, but generally to illuminate and draw out themes from the text for discussion. Thus, students will be expected to come having already read and engaged with the text selection for the week, and with thoughts prepared to contribute.

Classes will meet via Zoom for two-hours each week and will be recorded for later viewing by students who cannot participate (but not for dissemination outside of class). Additional student participation and instructor interaction can take place on a Google Classroom discussion board.

Course Objectives

Objectives for this course include:

1. **To engage** some of the background history, overall structure, main themes, and contents for understanding the letter to the Hebrews (*mind/head*).
2. **To enable** utilization of Hebrews proficiently in the areas of preaching, teaching, devotion, family worship, and testimony to the lost of the grace of God in your life (*will/hands*).
3. **To enflame** love for the Lord to whom you belong body and soul in life and in death (*affections/heart*).

Course Requirements (*for-credit students*)

Participation (20%): Attentive and sustained participation in class is the primary requirement. For-credit students may have one excused absence. Each additional absence will result in a penalty of one grade (e.g., A to A-, A- to B+, etc.)

Outline of Hebrews (10%): after listening to/reading Hebrews (see “Course Texts” below), outline the entire book (no minimum/maximum number of pages)

Chrysostom Reading Response (20%): For-credit students are required to submit a 5-page *max* response to the Chrysostom homilies (Times New Roman, 12-point, 1” margins). This response is to answer the following:

- 1) give an example of how Chrysostom gave an interesting/surprising exegesis of a passage
- 2) give an example of how Chrysostom engaged in theological exploration/elaboration on a passage
- 3) give an example of how Chrysostom engaged in apologetics/polemics
- 4) give an example of how Chrysostom performed pastoral application of a passage to his congregation
- 5) give an example of how Chrysostom used rhetorical devices effectively.

Term Paper (40%): For-credit students are required to submit a 10–15 page (including footnotes: no endnotes!) research paper by 11:59pm PST 30 days from the last class (same formatting parameters as above). Paper topics must be approved by the instructor in advance. Your paper may be in the realm of historical theology (e.g., how a certain author used a certain passage), history of exegesis (e.g., the exegetical tradition of a certain passage), dogmatics (e.g., the doctrine of X in Hebrews), or devotional theology (e.g., how Hebrews’ doctrine of X impacts the Christian life in a certain way). I expect analysis of the text, interaction with secondary sources, biblical, theological, historical, polemical, and/or practical aspects of what you are researching.

- *Nota bene*: if you are a minister of the Word or seminary student/licentiate/candidate/aspirant, you may instead write a sermon on a passage of your choice. I expect the same analytical rigor as above except show me your work in footnotes; this is a sermon after all!

Course Texts

The Letter to the Hebrews

- Please listen to the traditional King James Version as read by Alexander Scourby:
https://youtu.be/GAx_jUEZ6yM
- Please read in one modern translation of your choice (e.g., NIV, NASB, ESV)

John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, trans. Rev. John Owen, Calvin's Commentaries 22 (Grand Rapids: Baker, reprinted 1996). 329 pages

- This is the most readily available English edition (even free online at ccel.org).

St John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Hebrews* in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series* 14, ed. Philip Schaff (1889; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 363–522. 160 pages.

Patrick Gray and Amy Peeler, *Hebrews: An Introduction and Study Guide*, T&T Clark Study Guides to the New Testament (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2020). 95 pages.

Recommended Reading

Commentaries

St Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Hebrews*, trans. F.R. Archer, ed. J. Mortensen and E. Alarcón, *The Works of St Thomas Aquinas* 41 (Lander, WY: The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012). 330 pages (**Medieval Roman Catholic**)

Raymond Brown, *The Message of Hebrews*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1982). 272 pages (**Baptist**)

F.F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Revised edition, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990). 392 pages (**Open Brethren**)

Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1977; repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993). 594 pages (**Anglican**)

Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006). 359 pages (**Roman Catholic**)

Simon Kistemaker, "Hebrews," in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*, ed. Michael J. Kruger (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 411–435.

Archbishop Dmitri Royster, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003). 246 pages (**Eastern Orthodox**)

Introductions

D.A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 391–407.

David A. deSilva, *Hebrews: Grace and Gratitude* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2020)

Barnabus Lindars, *The Theology of the Letter to the Hebrews*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Kenneth Schenck, *Understanding the Book of Hebrews: The Story Behind the Sermon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003).

The Epistle to the Hebrews and Christian Theology, eds. Richard Bauckham, Daniel R. Drover, Trevor A. Hart, and Nathan MacDonald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009)

Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Discussion Topics	Reading
1	Sept 27	Hebrews 1:1-2:4	Chrysostom, Homilies 1-3
2	Oct 4	Hebrews 2:5-4:13	Chrysostom, Homilies 4-7
3	Oct 11	Hebrews 4:14-6:20	Chrysostom, Homilies 8-11
4	Oct 18	Hebrews 7:1-28	Chrysostom, Homilies 12-13
5	Oct 25	Hebrews 8:1-13	Chrysostom, Homily 14
6	Nov 1	Hebrews 9:1-28	Chrysostom, Homilies 15-17
7	Nov 8	Hebrews 10:1-18	Chrysostom, Homily 18
8	Nov 15	Hebrews 10:19-12:3	Chrysostom, Homilies 19-28
<i>THANKSGIVING</i>	<i>BREAK</i>		
19	Nov 29	Hebrews 12:4-29	Chrysostom, Homilies 29-33
10	Dec 6	Hebrews 13:1-25	Chrysostom, Homily 34