

Contents

(Sanctuary Themes: The Book of Hebrews)

1. Jesus and the Book of Hebrews (June 28–July 4)	4
2. Jesus Our King (July 5-11)	11
3. Jesus, One of Us (July 12-18)	19
4. Jesus, Higher and Better (July 19-25)	26
5. Jesus, Our High Priest (July 26–August 1)	33
6. Sanctuary Language in Hebrews (August 2-8)	40
7. Jesus and the Covenant (Agreement) (August 9-15)	47
8. Jesus and the Sanctuary (August 16-22)	55
9. Jesus' Ministry (Work) and the Sanctuary (August 23-29)	62
10. Jesus, Our Sacrifice and Salvation (August 3–September 5)	69
11. Jesus, Our Assurance (September 13-19)	76
12. Jesus and the Christian Walk (September 13-19)	83
13. Jesus and Our Future (September 20-26)	90

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Introduction The Rest of the Story

“The heavens declare [announce] the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1). When Christians look at the shining stars, they cannot help being awed (impressed) by God’s power and greatness.

The heavens have a story to tell. By looking at the heavens, we can catch parts of the story. No matter how far our telescopes try to see into the universe, they can show only so much of the story, because only so much is shown there. For example, there is the part of the story about how Jesus came to earth as our Savior to offer us eternal¹ life.

What the heavens do not tell us, the Holy Bible does. The Bible takes us where rocket ships and telescopes can never go. The Bible shows us things that the Hubble telescope² will never find.

The book of Hebrews gives us a window into the universe. Even the world’s greatest scientists and astronomers³ cannot discover this view.

“And so he [Jesus] is able, now and always, to save those [people] who come to God through him [Jesus], because he lives forever to plead with God for them” (Hebrews 7:25, TEV).

“The whole point of what we are saying is that we have such a High Priest, who sits at the right of the throne of the Divine Majesty [God] in heaven. He [our High Priest] serves as high priest in the Most Holy Place, that is, in the real tent [sanctuary] which was put up by the Lord, not by man” (Hebrews 8:1, 2, TEV).

“But Christ [Jesus] has already come as the High Priest of the good things that are already here. The tent in which he serves is greater and more perfect; it is not a man-made tent, that is, it is not a part of this created world. When Christ went through the tent and entered once and for all into the Most Holy Place, he did not take the blood of goats and bulls to offer as a sacrifice; rather, he took his own blood and obtained [got] eternal salvation for us” (Hebrews 9:11, 12, TEV).

The above verses show truths about the heavens that the heavens could never show.

The book of Hebrews has many mysteries. For example, who wrote Hebrews? When was Hebrews written? For whom was Hebrews written? What problems does Hebrews discuss? The book of Hebrews also shines with light, truth, and details about salvation. Hebrews explains what Jesus has done for us, what He is doing for us, and what He will do for us throughout eternity.⁴ It shows what

¹eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

²the Hubble telescope—a telescope in outer space that sees the planets and stars ten times more clearly than telescopes on earth.

³astronomers—women and men who study the stars and planets.

⁴eternity—life without end; forever.

Jesus did by His life and death (Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 2:9; Hebrews 7:27; Hebrews 9:12, 28). It also gives the clearest explanation in the Bible of Jesus as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 2:17, 18; Hebrews 4:15, 16; Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 9:24).

Many places in the Bible give us short views of heaven. Hebrews lets us take a deep and close look at heaven.

Before starting this quarter's lesson, read through the book of Hebrews. Pay attention to its strong warnings against backsliding.⁵ Listen to its emotional encouragements about faithfulness and obedience. Most of all, rejoice in the hope, promises, and faith that come from every page of this book. Hebrews boldly tells us that "Christ did not go into a man-made Holy Place, which was a copy of the real one. He went into heaven itself, where he now appears on our behalf in the presence of God" (Hebrews 9:24, TEV). Jesus is now standing in the presence of God for us. So we do not need to be afraid of the future.

As you study Hebrews, notice two important truths: (1) Jesus' ministry (work) in the heavenly sanctuary, and (2) His ministry to Christian people on earth. These are the truths that we as Adventists have been preaching to the world. In Hebrews, we find important parts of the sanctuary truth. The Cross is connected to the heavenly sanctuary. In the sanctuary, Jesus works with His blood for us, having "obtained [gotten] eternal salvation for us" (Hebrews 9:12, TEV) through His life and death on earth.

Hebrews is all about Jesus. So we will focus on Jesus as He appears in Hebrews. "Jesus, Our King"; "Jesus, Our High Priest"; "Jesus, Our Assurance (Hope)"; and "Jesus, Our Sacrifice and Salvation" are some of the weekly topics we will study to help us be more faithful and obedient. Faithfulness and obedience are the basis of Hebrews.

The author of these lessons is Dr. Ekkehardt Mueller. He was born in Germany. When he wrote this study guide, he was an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute at the General Conference. A New Testament scholar (expert), Dr. Mueller takes us on an interesting and wonderful trip into the heavens themselves. There Jesus, our High Priest, "lives forever to plead with God" (Hebrews 7:25, TEV). Mueller shares with us a truth about the heavens that the heavens themselves can never show.

That is why the truth has to be told to us. Hebrews tells us the truth. So let us listen carefully to what Hebrews says.

⁵backsliding—leaving God.