



# BIBLE IN A YEAR 2020



## Summary

This letter is written for people who know what it means to look for God through the hopes, stories, laws, symbols, festivals and sacrifices of the Jewish religion. Its purpose is to direct people to Jesus to find fulfilment and the greatest example of everything they will recognise that points the way to God.

It also packs encouragement and warnings for every believer to respect and trust Jesus, avoid a hard-hearted approach to life, receive the life-changing power that comes with faith in Jesus, and live appropriately, free from sin.

While the letter is packed with references we might need to look up in the Old Testament, its summaries of Jesus' supremacy and the power of faith in action are essential for applying long-established ideas to our lives today.

**Bern Leckie**

# Wednesday January 29: Hebrews 1-3

Jesus is The Greatest...

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

## What did I like about today's reading?

... Showman? ... Dancer? ... Love of All? I think at least one of those is true.

I love that the writer of this letter really, really loves Jesus and has clearly done a lot of thinking about how great he is. Not just a symbol of good but “the exact representation” of God. And not just someone who turned up 2000 years ago, but who was there making the universe, written about through history in scripture, and above all remains living eternally.

I could just listen to this on repeat and worship all day. But there is another purpose to this dazzling description of Jesus' greatness, majesty and power. It's to do with us.

Maybe most amazingly, Jesus chose human life and death so that he could “taste death for everyone”, breaking death's power over us when we believe and follow him.

The signs of how God could bring us back to full life with him were written into the laws and religious traditions of his chosen people, who had special access to symbols marking the way to heaven. But Jesus turns out to be greater than any of those symbols – he is the real thing they were all pointing to, and he makes God accessible for all of us.

## What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

God has always been serious that we can and should reconcile with him. He needs us to know that we can't do this by our own efforts, but must do this by recognising and following Jesus. So there is nothing of greater importance than believing in him.

“God is the builder of everything,” including a house that he has already made us part of. He is not remote from us. If we feel remote from him, it may be an issue with our hearts.

## What am I going to do differently as a result?

Check my heart. I recognise that it can feel hardened to God's invitation to believe sometimes, and if that is down to “sin's deceitfulness”, what am I choosing to believe instead?

## Who am I going to share this with?

This will be great to discuss with people who did “The SHAPE of you” course with us last year, and we're due a reunion to see how we are doing after discovering or remembering who God has made us to be.

# **Saturday February 1: Hebrews 4-7**

## **Old ideas with new power for us**

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

### **What did I like about today's reading?**

People sometimes say that God in the Old Testament seems completely different from God in the New Testament. In the Old Testament it's easy to focus on the laws and God disciplining his people when they would not follow them. But Jesus in the New Testament speaks of love and forgiveness - what's changed?

This letter makes the connection between the Old and New - it's Jesus, fulfilling an old promise by bringing in a new covenant relationship between us and God. He is able to do this in a role the Hebrews recognise - a priest. Uniquely Jesus didn't have to offer sacrifices for himself, but was able to make a sacrifice of himself. So if God knew this was the plan all along, why have the Old system? It was "a copy and a shadow" (chapter 8 verse 5) of greater things.

The greatest revelation of all is that sacrifices to God were never demanded as a one sided thing from God. Just as God originally called people to take part in his work with him, his grand plan to save us involved him making a perfect sacrifice himself.

### **What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?**

God isn't a frustrated taskmaster or spoilsport. He worked through the centuries to bring a nation to the point where they could recognise the significance of Jesus and share this with the world. Then, "from the least of them to the greatest" they will know God and be in a good relationship with him.

### **What am I going to do differently as a result?**

The call is to stop sinning and taking God's sacrifice for granted. I want to sin less and enjoy relationship with God more.

### **Who am I going to share this with?**

One of my clients is Jewish and knows much more than me about what God's people have expected for centuries from priests and sacrifices. I don't know when they will be ready to recognise Jesus as someone they are looking for, but I would love to find out what makes a great priest to them, and happy to share what I have found about Jesus.

## **Wednesday February 5: Hebrews 8-10**

**Not just promises, ideas and hopes – Jesus is the real thing**

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

### **What did I like about today's reading?**

Reading this alongside Exodus I feel I'm getting into the swing of gifts and sacrifices, and yet it's clear that Jesus has changed everything - not so much abolishing but completing the old systems which, it turns out, were "a copy and a shadow of what is in heaven." Jesus, on the other hand, is contact with heaven itself.

It is an incredible hope that we have in Jesus whose "once for all" sacrifice goes far beyond what religion can deliver. It focuses the whole power of heaven to break the hold of sin and death in my life, in all our lives, for whatever is in our past, present and future.

This is not just forgiveness for sin, but freedom from it. God's desire is not to turn a blind eye to our wrongdoing, but enable us to live without doing wrong, and the writer encourages us to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds" with confidence and faith.

### **What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?**

God is who he is in both Old and New Testaments - loving and encouraging when we approach him, but ready to judge and discipline us when we turn away. He has also been at work throughout history in directing people towards reconciliation with him.

### **What am I going to do differently as a result?**

As encouraging as this is, it's also a real challenge to move out of all kinds of sin and guilt in life. Sometimes it's frustration and anxiety which gives rise to sin in me, yet if I can see things from the perspective of God who has dealt with and overcome everything, I should be able to see the things which make me anxious differently. That's what I want to do.

### **Who am I going to share this with?**

People I pray with, and maybe more. I've got some faith stories I'd like to share with a wider audience, and they are a work in progress.

# **Saturday February 8: Hebrews 11-13**

## **The incredible power of faith**

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Bern Leckie:

### **What did I like about today's reading?**

Defined here as "confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see", faith is amazing. It's epic, life-transforming, world-changing stuff when we put it into practice.

I love these descriptions of what faith does. They raise my expectations about what faith is and what to expect from a life of practical faith. It's clearly more than simply believing that God exists. It's a power that changes things. Jesus said it can move mountains. I'm even more impressed that it can move hearts and minds away from limiting beliefs and destructive habits and into freedom from doubt, fear, sin and death.

This puts our struggle with sin into perspective - it's not a small annoyance, it's a significant battle where blood may be shed, and God strengthens us for it through discipline.

I love how the closing pictures show a life of faith as the opposite of ordinary, dark, gloomy or unapproachable. Our faith journey takes us into full on, joyful life in the company of the best of all creation. This is an awesome thing to accept, but when we do it moves us into truly being able to live a different life from the one we had before we knew Jesus.

### **What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?**

God is living and active, working to transform the world and establish an unshakable kingdom, which he offers us life in. Part of how he does this is in guiding and disciplining us. Ultimately, God has made us and the world so that he can be found through faith in Jesus.

### **What am I going to do differently as a result?**

I really need to cut down some activity which takes time but doesn't inspire, raise faith levels, produce joy or glorify God. But the things that do, I want to invest more in them. I need to pay attention to God's guidance to help tell the difference, because the passage is clear that hardship may need to be endured, but the purpose of discipline is to end up in right relationship and stronger, more able to obey God and join in his work.

### **Who am I going to share this with?**

Some people who are close enough to know and pray with me, and perhaps some others who I hope will be inspired to look into faith for themselves after hearing some shared stories.