Some stories grip the imagination.
As a child, I remember really enjoying Aesop’s fable.
One that particularly struck me was “the dog and his shadow”
It’s about a dog with a big juicy bone that went with it over a bridge where he sees a reflection – what looks like a bigger, juicier bone.
In his desire for it, he drops the real thing and loses it in the icy waters.

Over 25 centuries, that story grabbed at my young emotions.
I could almost hear the splash as he let go of what he had for something that looked better but wasn’t really.

As the moral put it
“Grasp at the shadow and you lose the substance”

I don’t know if the author of Hebrews knew that fable (unlikely but possible because it was written 500 years before he wrote)

Whether he did or not, there are some of the same ideas at work in his thinking. Look at 10v1

“Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who approach.”

Everything that had gone before Jesus – good as it might look – was just a shadow compared to him.

This has been the theme of Hebrews. Jesus is Better! So don’t go back to the shadow

In this short series, we have seen already how Jesus is better than the angels – chapter 1.

Last week, we saw how he is better even than Moses – chapters 3+4.

We’ve got the idea of the argument now so we’re going to do a whistle stop tour through the next 6 chapters. You need your bible and fingers working well. Hang on – here we go:

1. He is better than Aaron (4v14-5v10)

Aaron was the first high priest but Jesus is the great high priest 4v14

Aaron went into the presence of God but Jesus has gone into the heavens

Aaron was a fallible human being who led the people into idolatory
Jesus was the perfect Son of God

Aaron had to offer sacrifice for his own sins – 5v3
Jesus became the source of salvation for all – 5v9

‘and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him,”
Jesus was better than Aaron

2. He was better than Melchizidek – chapters 6+7

Melchizidek was a rather special guy. He only appears twice in the OT – Genesis 14 and Psalm 110. But each appearance is with two key people – Abraham and David.

Melchizedek means “King of righteousness”. He was a man of honour and a priest of a different tradition.

Abraham responds to him by giving tithes.

M had no past history and no genealogy, a man who recognised goodness and rewarded it when he saw it.

A King before whom we can bow, a human figure and yet more than human - sounds a bit like Jesus?

Psalm 110 is an unusual psalm of David because it links priest and king. That was not Judaistic tradition which kept strict separation between the roles by and large.

David has taken the title from elsewhere, passed it on to his descendants until it reaches David’s greater son – Jesus. Such a High priest meets our needs – 7v26

“For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.”

Jesus is better than Melchizidek.

3. Jesus’ covenant is a better covenant- chapter 8

His work is finished – v1.

His covenant is founded on much better promises, the promises of internal change. V10 quotes Jeremiah 31v31

This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord:
I will put my laws in their minds, and write them on their hearts,”

The promise of a heart transplant;
A desire to follow God – not a duty
The promise of forgiveness for all – v12

4. Jesus sanctuary is better – chapter 9

The OT sanctuary was

- An earthly sanctuary – v1
- Inaccessible to most people v6-7
- And temporary v8

The better sanctuary of Jesus is

- Heavenly – v11
- Accessible and
- Complete
Jesus is better than angels, Moses, Aaron and Melchidek. He offers a better covenant, a better sanctuary and finally

5. **A better sacrifice – chapter 10**

The sacrifice of the law (v1) had been repeated endlessly – year after year. But Israel’s sin offering could not remove the sense of distance between them and God.

Quite the reverse – it maintained it – v3

Therefore it is absurd to go back to law to try and be right with God.

Law reveals sin but gives no power to deal with sin

Notice in the forest – “Falling branches”

Law actually encourages sin.

Professor of Ethics

Jesus sacrifice for sin is superior

It was once for all – not needing to be repeated v10-14

“And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

As we often say during the HC service

“a full perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world”

Because of that, we are empowered – v15-17

The Holy Spirit of God works within each believer and he quotes Jeremiah 31 again.

Or as a rather lesser poet put it in doggerel form

“the law demands and condemnation brings. The Spirit bids me fly and gives me wings”

Don’t try and change from the outside inwards. It doesn’t work.

Let the HS change you from the inside.

Be transformed from within by His power.

From these wonderful truths a few new “lettuces” – some people liked the pun the other week

1. **“Draw near with assurance – v22”**

‘let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith”

Wonderful truth – the right of every believer to be sure of their salvation. Don’t be robbed of that by the enemy’s lies.

However much you’ve mucked up or gone astray – God’s love is constant. His grace is still available.

2. **Hold on unswervingly – v23**

’Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering”
We live in an increasingly secular society.
“You can’t really believe that” approach!
The church has gone the same way often.

Hold on to God’s truth with swerving

3. **spur one another on – v24**

“And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds”

Christianity is not an individual pursuit, It’s together.
We need each other.
If a friend is going of the rails – draw alongside. “Come on”.
If a flat mate is messing up – “Let me share this with you”

4. **encourage one another – v25**

“not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

There is a great danger of net meeting together. We need each other. I know life is busy and there is so little time. I know how boring “meetings” can be but Christians need to meet together.

If you want to grow, if you want to stay true to Jesus – you need to be in a small group. What about risking “equipped to Serve”. That will be a small group – but we will encourage one another and spur each other on.

I enjoyed Aesop’s fables and yet even as a child, they often left a sour taste.
They usually had an unhappy ending – like the idiot who killed the goose that laid the golden egg or the dog who dropped the bone.

I like happy endings.
I want to end well and happy.

However our story started, We can write our own ending.
God has given us that freedom, that responsibility.

If you want an unhappy ending:

- Go back to the shadows,
- Feed your doubts,
- Let go of assurance,
- Stay alone, stop meeting with other christians

If you want a happy ending, the ending God wants for you,

- Stay confident in what God has done and promises
- Trust that Jesus makes everything better
- Trust in his superior once and for all sacrifice,
- Draw near to Him,
- Spur others on
- Keep the encouragement flowing
- Allow the HS to work in you – come and get prayer tonight
Let’s pray:

Thank you Lord God for Jesus.
Thank you for your wonderful purposes worked out in history.
Thank you that Jesus is your very imprint – better than anyone and anything else on offer.
Help us to stick with Him in all that lies ahead – for our own sake and for your glory – Amen

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