

Hebrews

AUTHOR: Not absolutely certain. Many attribute it to Paul

TIME WRITTEN: Somewhere between A.D. 64 and 68

POSITION IN THE BIBLE:

- 58th Book in the Bible
- 19 book in the New Testament
- 14th of 21 epistle books
- 57 have preceded it. 8 to follow it.

CHAPTERS: 13

VERSES: 303

WORDS: 6,913

KEY WORD: The Superiority of Christ

TWO KEY PASSAGES:

1. **Hebrews 4:14-16** - "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."
2. **Hebrews 12:1-2** - "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

KEY CHAPTER: Hebrews 11

1. The hall of fame of the Scriptures is located in Hebrews 11 and records those who willingly took God as His word even when there was nothing to cling to but His promise.
2. Inherent to all those listed is the recognition that "without faith, it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. **Hebrews 11:6**

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT HEBREWS

1. Many Jewish Christians, having stepped out of Judaism into Christianity, wanted to reverse their course in order to escape persecution by their countrymen.

- a. The Hebrew writer exhorts them to “go on to perfection.” **6:1**
 - b. His appeal is based on the superiority of Christ over the Judaic system.
 1. Christ is better than angels, for they worship Him.
 2. Christ is better than Moses, for He created him.
 3. He is better than the Aaronic priesthood for His sacrifice was once for all time.
 4. He mediates a better covenant.
 - c. In short, there is more to be gained in Christ than lost in Judaism.
 - d. Pressing on in Christ produces tested faith, self-discipline, and a visible love seen in good works.
2. Many regard the Book of Hebrews as the fourteenth epistle of Paul.
- a. Hebrews 13:18-24 tells us that this book was not anonymous to the original readers.
 - b. Several names have been suggested.
 1. Paul
 2. Barnabas
 3. Luke
 4. Clement of Rome
 5. Apollos
 6. Silas
 7. Philip
 8. Priscilla (wife of Aquila)
 - c. Two evidences that Paul may have been the author.
 1. The language, style, and theology of Hebrews are very similar to Paul’s epistles.
 2. The author also refers to Timothy.
 - d. Six significant differences to indicate that perhaps Paul was not the author of Hebrews.
 1. The Greek style of Hebrews is far more polished and refined than that found in any of Paul’s recognized epistles.
 2. In view of Paul’s consistent claims to be an apostle and an eyewitness of Christ, it is very doubtful that he would have used the phraseology found in **2:3** - “which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him.”
 3. The lack of Paul’s customary salutation, which includes his name, goes against the firm pattern found in all his other epistles.
 4. While Paul used both the Hebrew text and the Septuagint to quote from the Old Testament, the writer of Hebrews apparently did not know Hebrew and quoted exclusively from the Septuagint.
 5. Paul’s common use of compound titles to refer to the Son of God is not followed in Hebrews, which usually refers to Him as “Christ,” “Jesus,” and “Lord.”

6. Hebrews concentrates on Christ's priestly ministry, but Paul's writings have very little to say about the present work of Christ.
- e. NOTE: The authority of Hebrews in no way depends upon Pauline authorship, especially since it does not claim to have been written by Paul.
1. Perhaps we must agree with the third-century theologian Origen, who wrote: "Who it was that really wrote the Epistle, God only knows."
3. The majority view today is that the recipients of Hebrews probably lived in Rome.
- a. The statement "Those from Italy greet you" in **13:24** seems to suggest that Italians away from Italy are sending their greetings home.
4. The recipients of the Book of Hebrews.
- a. Were Christians who had come to obedience through the testimony of eyewitnesses of Christ. 2:3
 - b. They were not novices (5:12), and they had successfully endured hardships because of their stand for the gospel. 10:32-34
 - c. Unfortunately, they had become "dull of hearing" (5:11) and were in danger of drifting away. 2:1; 3:12
 - d. This made them particularly susceptible to the renewed persecutions that were coming upon them (12:4-12), and the author found it necessary to check the downward spiral with "the word of exhortation. 13:22
 - e. While there is disagreement over the specific danger involved, the classic position that the readers were on the verge of lapsing into Judaism to avoid persecution directed at Christians seems to be supported by the whole tenor of the book.
 - f. Hebrews' repeated emphasis on the superiority of Christianity would have been pointless if the readers were about to return to Gnosticism or heathenism.
5. While the place of writing is unknown, it is reasonable to note that the failure to mention the ending of the Old Testament sacrificial system with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. would seem to indicate that it was written prior to that time and those significant events.
- a. Timothy was still alive. 13:23
 - b. Persecuting was mounting and changes were coming. 12:26-27
 - c. All this suggests a date between A.D. 64 and 68.
6. The basic theme of Hebrews is found in the word "better," describing the superiority of Christ in His person and work.
- a. Christ provides:
 1. A better revelation.
 2. A better position.
 3. A better priesthood.
 4. A better covenant.
 5. A better sacrifice.

6. A better power.
 - b. The writer develops this theme to prevent the readers from giving up the substance for the shadow by abandoning Christianity and retreating into the old Judaic system.
7. Other prominent words in the book are:
 - a. “Perfect.”
 - b. “Heavenly.”

SUMMARY OF HEBREWS

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Hebrews stands alone among the New testament Epistles in its style and approach.
 1. It is the only New Testament book whose authorship remains a real mystery.
 2. This profound work builds a case for the superiority of Christ through a cumulative argument in which Christ is presented as “better” in every respect.
 - a. In His **Person** He is better than:
 1. The angels.
 2. Moses.
 3. Joshua.
 - b. In His **Performance** He provides:
 1. A better priesthood.
 2. A better covenant.
 3. A better sanctuary.
 4. A better sacrifice.
 3. Evidently the readers are in danger of reverting to Judaism because of the suffering they are beginning to experience for their faith in Christ.
 - a. However, by doing so, they would be retreating from the actual substance back to the shadow.
 - b. The writer intersperses five solemn warnings and dangers about the peril of turning away from Christ.
 1. The first warning: The danger of neglect. 2:-14
 2. The second warning: The danger of unbelief. 3:7 - 4:3
 3. The third warning: The danger of not maturing. 5:11 - 6:20
 4. The fourth warning: The danger of drawing back. 10:26-39
 5. The fifth warning: The danger of refusing God. 12:25-29
- B. There are three major sections in the book:
 1. The Superiority of Christ’s Person. (1:1 - 4:13)
 2. The Superiority of Christ’s Work. (4:14 - 10:18)

3. The Superiority of the Christian's Walk of Faith. (10:19 - 13:25)

THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST'S PERSON. (1:1 - 4:13)

- A. Instead of the usual salutation, this epistle immediately launches into its theme—the supremacy of Christ even over the Old Testament prophets. 1:1-3
1. Christianity is based upon the highest form of divine disclosure: the personal revelation of God through His incarnate Son.
 2. Christ is therefore greater than the prophets of the Old Testament, and He is also greater than the angels, the mediators of the Mosaic Law. 1:4 - 2:18; Acts 7:53; Hebrews 2:2
 3. This is seen in:
 - a. His name.
 - b. His position.
 - c. His worship by the angels.
 - d. His incarnation.
 4. The Son of God partook of flesh and blood and was “made like His brethren” in all things (**2:17**) in order to bring “many sons to glory” **2:10**
 5. Christ is also superior to Moses (3:1-6), for Moses was a servant in the house of God, but Christ is the Son over God's household.
 6. Because of these truths, the readers are exhorted to avoid the divine judgment that is visited upon unbelief. (3:7 - 4:13.
 - a. Their disbelief had prevented the generation of the Exodus from becoming the generation of the Exodus.
 - b. The rest that Christ offers is much greater than what was provided by Joshua.
 - c. The readers are therefore urged to enter eternal rest that is possessed by faith in Christ.

THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST'S WORK. (4:14 - 10:18)

- A. The priesthood of Christ is superior to the Aaronic priesthood. 4:4 - 7:28
1. Because of His incarnation, Christ can “sympathize with our weaknesses,” having been “in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” **4:15**
 2. Christ was not a Levite, but He qualified for a higher priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek.
 - a. The superiority of Melchizedek to Levi is seen in the fact that Levi, in effect, paid tithes through Abraham to Melchizedek. 7:9-10
 - b. Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek, and “the lesser is blessed by the better” **7:7**
 3. The parenthetical warning in 5:11 - 6:20 exhorts the readers to “go on to perfection” by moving beyond the basics of their initial obedience to Christ.
- B. By divine oath (7:21) Christ has become a permanent and perfect High Priest and the “Mediator of a better covenant. **8:6**

1. The new covenant has made the old covenant obsolete. 8:6-13
2. Our great High Priest similarly ministers in “the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is not of this creation.” **9:11**
3. And unlike the former priests, He offers Himself as a sinless and voluntary sacrifice once and for all. 9:1 - 10:18

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN’S WALK OF FAITH. (10:19 - 13:25)

- A. The author applies what he has been saying about the superiority of Christ by warning his readers of the danger of discarding their faith in Christ. 10:19-39
1. The faith that the readers must maintain is defined in 11:1-3 and illustrated in 11:4-10.
 2. The triumphs and accomplishments of faith in the lives of Old testament believers should encourage the recipients of “something better” (**11:40**) in Christ to look “unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” **12:2**
 3. Just as Jesus endured great hostility, those who believe in Him will sometimes have to endure divine discipline for the sake of holiness. 12:1-29
 4. The readers are warned not to turn away from Christ during such times, but to place their hope in Him.
 5. The character of their lives must be shaped by their dedication to Christ (13:1-19), and this will be manifested in their love of each other through their:
 - a. Hospitality.
 - b. Concern.
 - c. Purity.
 - d. Contentment
 - e. Obedience.
 6. The author concludes this epistle:
 - a. With one of the finest benedictions in Scripture. **Hebrews 13:20-21** - “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,
 21 make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”
 - b. Some personal words. **Hebrews 13:22-25** - “And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words.
 23 Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.
 24 Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.

25 Grace be with you all. Amen.”