

HEBREWS

Synopsis: * Hebrews is named after the recipients and served to encourage Jewish Christians not to go back to Judaism. A key word in the book is “better.” It is used at least twelve times. The writer emphasizes that everything is better in Christianity than in Judaism.

Author: Unknown

Chapters: 13

Background:^ There is considerable controversy over who wrote the book since the author does not identify himself. The strongest tradition is that Paul wrote the letter, but while there are many things in the epistle reminiscent of Paul, there are also many things different from Paul’s usual style. The important thing to remember is that the Holy Spirit is the real author.

The letter appears to be written to a group of Christians the writer knew personally (13:18, 19). These Christians may have been a small segment within a congregation (13:17, 24). They had been Christians for some time (5:12; 10:32). They had started the Christian life with enthusiasm (6:10; 10:33, 34); they had even endured persecution (10:31, 32). However, they had become discouraged. They were staying away from worship (10:25). They were in danger of apostatizing (2:1ff; 6:1-6; 10:26-31). The line of reasoning indicates they were tempted to return to Judaism.

The book was probably written before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. A basic knowledge of the Jewish system as outlined in Leviticus, Numbers, and Exodus is a great help in understanding the teachings of the letter.

Five Great Lessons*

1. If one leaves Christ, he has no hope.
2. Forsaking the assembly is a sin.
3. We need to appreciate what God has done for us.
4. There comes a time when we must teach others.
5. The old law has been taken away.

Outline^

- I. ARGUMENT: Christ is better than the prophets and the angels (1).
- II. EXHORTATION (2:1-4).
- III. ARGUMENT: Christ is better than the angels and Moses (2:5-3:6).
- IV. EXHORTATION (3:7-4:16).
- V. ARGUMENT: Christ has a better priesthood, part 1 (5:1-10).
- VI. EXHORTATION (5:11-6:20).
- VII. ARGUMENT: Christ has a better priesthood, part 2 (7:1-10:18).
- VIII. EXHORTATION (10:19-13:25).

*Butterworth, Ken. *God Hath Spoken: An Open-Bible Study Series – New Testament Workbook*, 2006.

^Roper, David. *Through the Bible: A Systematic Study of the Old and New Testament Scriptures*, 1999.

Lessons ^

Though we may not have a Jewish background, we do get discouraged and are tempted to go back to our old ways of life. Hebrews has a powerful message for us all: The world can offer nothing better than Christ!

This is the only book in the New Testament that presents Jesus as our high priest. Ten times in the book He is referred to as “high priest” and other times as “priest.” Key verses are 4:14-16. Because Jesus is our high priest, we can approach God’s throne with boldness!

Note the contrast between the old and new covenants, especially in chapters 8-10. Why would anyone want to go back to the Old Testament for his or her religious practices?

The recipients’ basic problem is identified in 5:11-14. “You have become dull of hearing” (v. 11). These Christians had failed to grow up spiritually. How many of us are still spiritual babies after years of being a Christian?

Challenging Themes*

1:1-2 It is through Jesus, and not man, that authority for all things is to be established.

1:5-14 These verses explain why Christ is better.

Cf. 6:9; 7:7, 17, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 39-40; 12:24

2:3 How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

8:1-7 The blood-stained cross is what ended the old law.

9:14 & 10:4 What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

11:1-12:2 Great heroes of faith encourage us to endure.

**Butterworth, Ken. God Hath Spoken: An Open-Bible Study Series – New Testament Workbook, 2006.*

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