

HEBREWS INTRODUCTION

AUTHOR: Unknown.

Opinions differ, pointing to such persons as Paul, Apollos, Barnabas, Luke, and various others. Fact Check:

1. The author was a friend of Timothy, Hebrews 13:23.
2. The author was well versed in the Old Testament Scriptures.
3. The author used the same Old Testament quotation that was used by Paul on two occasions: "The just shall live by faith" (Habakkuk 2:4 quoted in Hebrews 10:38. Cp. Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11.)
4. The author was evidently known by Peter. Peter was the disciple to the circumcision, that is, the Jews (Galatians 2:7). His two epistles were written to the Jews who were scattered all over—the Jews of the dispersion (1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 3:1).
5. The author wrote about "many things...hard to understand" (Hebrews 5:11). Peter says the very same thing about Paul's epistle to the Jews, "Paul...hath written unto you...some things hard to be understood" (2 Peter 3:15-16).

DATE: Uncertain. Before A.D. 70. Probably A.D. 64-67.

1. There is no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem nor of the temple which occurred in A.D. 70. The references to the priesthood and temple point to both still standing (Hebrews 10:11). Yet persecution seemed to be imminent (Hebrews 10:32-36; Hebrews 12:4).
2. The Hebrew Christians were second generation believers (Hebrews 2:1-4), and they had been saved for some time (Hebrews 5:12; Hebrews 10:32; Hebrews 13:7).

3. Timothy had been imprisoned, but was now free (Hebrews 13:23).

TO WHOM WRITTEN: Uncertain. The specific recipients are not named. But the epistle is definitely written to *Jewish believers*.

There is one hint. "They of [apo] Italy salute you" (Hebrews 13:24).

PURPOSE: The author writes for three reasons.

1. To show that God is fulfilling the old covenant by giving all men a new covenant.

2. To give a strong word of exhortation (Hebrews 13:22).

3. To give a strong word of warning.

They forever sensed a terrible tension between their new Christian faith and the world and their years of indoctrination in the Jewish faith.

⇒ First, there was the national and religious identity of the Jew. The Jewish political system and religion were one. For a Jew to turn to another religion was almost to deny his nationality—and in the eyes of many it was an act of treason.

⇒ Second, there was the extreme prejudice between the Jew and Gentile.

⇒ Third, there were the teachings of Jesus. Jesus had predicted the destruction of the Jewish nation and the center of their worship—the temple itself (Matthew 24-25). By turning to Christ, a Jew was accepting the overthrow of his nation and the worship he had known all his life.

SPECIAL FEATURES:

1. Hebrews is *The Epistle of the Better Revelation of God*. The supreme revelation is Jesus Christ Himself. The author shows the supremacy ("the better things") of Christ over a religion of ritual and formalism, in particular over Judaism. To stress the point, the writer uses the word *better* time and time again. He says that Christ...

- is "so much better" (Hebrews 1:4).
- gives us "better things" (Hebrews 6:9).
- is the "better person" (Hebrews 7:7).
- brings the "better hope" (Hebrews 7:19).
- assures the "better covenant" (Hebrews 7:22).
- is the Mediator of a "better covenant...and better promises" (Hebrews 8:6).
- purifies with "better sacrifices" (Hebrews 9:23).
- gives us heaven, a "better possession" (Hebrews 10:34).
- gives us a "better country [heaven]" (Hebrews 11:16).
- gives us a "better resurrection" (Hebrews 11:35).
- provides "better things" (Hebrews 11:35; Hebrews 11:40; Hebrews 12:24).

2. Hebrews is *The Epistle of the High Priesthood of Christ*. His high priestly office is the major point of Hebrews.

3. Hebrews is *The Epistle of the New Covenant*. The old covenant required an animal sacrifice for sin and a high priest to offer the blood of the sacrifice to God. The blood of animals can never take away the sins of man. The same is true of a human priest. No human priest is perfect or ideal; therefore, no human

priest can stand before God and offer the perfect sacrifice to God nor make an eternal entrance into God's presence.

4. Hebrews is *The Epistle of Exhortation*. The exhortation is fivefold (Hebrews 13:22)

- a. The exhortation to "hold fast" (Hebrews 3:6).
- b. The exhortation to "go on to perfection or maturity" (Hebrews 6:1).
- c. The exhortation to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession" (Heb. 3:1).
- d. The exhortation to "consider Him that endured" (Hebrews 12:3).
- e. The exhortation to "let us..."
 - fear (Hebrews 4:1) • labor (Hebrews 4:11) • come boldly (Hebrews 4:16)
 - go on (Hebrews 6:1) • draw near (Hebrews 10:22)
 - hold fast (Hebrews 10:23) • consider one another (Hebrews 10:24)
 - lay aside every weight (Hebrews 12:1) • have grace (Hebrews 12:28)
 - go forth (Hebrews 13:13) • offer the sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13:15)

5. Hebrews is *The Epistle of Severe Warnings*.

- a. Warning One: The Danger of Neglecting Salvation, of Drifting Away from Salvation (Hebrews 2:1-4).
- b. Warning Two (Part I): The Danger of Unbelief—Hardening One's Heart (Hebrews 3:7-19).
- c. Warning Two (Part II): Fear—Lest You Miss God's Rest (Hebrews 4:1-13).
- d. Warning Three (Part I): The Danger of Immaturity, of Falling Away (Hebrews 5:11-6:3).

- e. Warning Three (Part II): Fear—Lest You Fall Away (Hebrews 6:4-8).
 - f. Warning Three (Part III): Precautions Against Falling Away (Hebrews 6:9-20).
 - g. Warning Four: The Danger of Apostasy, of Withdrawing from Christ (Hebrews 10:26-39).
 - h. Warning Five: The Danger of Refusing to Hear Jesus Christ—of Shutting One's Ears to the Cry of His Beloved (Hebrews 12:25-29).
6. Hebrews is *The Epistle of God's Hall of Fame*. (Hebrews 11:1-40.)

HEBREWS CHAPTER ONE OUTLINE

THE SUPREME REVELATION: JESUS CHRIST

Christ Is Superior to the Prophets, 1:1-3

1. **Jesus Christ is the supreme spokesman (v.1-2a)**
2. **Jesus Christ is the appointed heir of all things (v.2b)**
3. **Jesus Christ is the Creator and Maker of the worlds (v.2c)**
4. **Jesus Christ is the very glory of God Himself (v.3a)**
5. **Jesus Christ is the express image of God (v.3b)**
6. **Jesus Christ is the Sustainer of the universe (v.3c)**
7. **Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of mankind (v.3d)**
8. **Jesus Christ is the supreme Mediator (v.3e)**

Christ is Superior to the Angels, 1:4-14

1. **Christ has a more excellent name, the name of God's only Son; angels have an inferior name (v.4-6)**
 - a. Christ is the Son of God; angels are not (v.5a)
 - b. Christ has a Father-Son relationship with God; angels do not (v.5b)
 - c. Christ is worshipped by angels; angels are not worshipped by Him (v.6)
2. **Christ is God's heir; angels are only created subjects of God (v.7-9)**
 - a. Christ is God, the Sovereign Majesty who sits upon the throne of God (v.8)
 - b. Christ has been exalted above all creatures (v.9)
3. **Christ is the Creator and Sovereign Lord; angels are created subjects and ministering spirits (v.10-14)**
 - a. Christ created earth and heaven; angels did not (v.10-12)
 - 1) They age and perish, but Christ is eternal (v.11)
 - 2) They change, but Christ is unchangeable (v.12)
 - b. Christ is the exalted and Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth (v.13)
 - c. Angels are the ministering spirits of Christ: sent forth to minister to believers, the heirs of salvation (v.14)