

Total Christian Television (TCT)
School of the Bible: The Epistle to the Hebrews

Instructors: Pastor(s) Matthew L. Brown and Robert J. Lowe

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

Author: Unknown

Date: Before A.D. 70

Theme: The Superiority of Jesus Christ over the Old Covenant

Key Words: Better, Let Us

Author:

- Hebrews does not name its author
- Internal evidences that may indicate a Pauline authorship
- Others suggest Barnabas or Apollos

Date and Location:

- The content of Hebrews indicates that it was written before the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 (10:11; 13:11). The only evidence concerning the site of the book's writing is the greeting sent by "they of Italy" (13:24), perhaps indicating that the author was either in Rome or was writing to Christians in Rome.

Background and Purpose:

- The majority of the early Christians was Jewish and expected his soon return; the delay of Christ's return caused them to wonder if they had made the right choice in becoming Christians. Consequently, they were in danger of returning to Judaism.
- This epistle was written to wavering Jewish believers, encouraging them to stand fast in their faith. The writer points out the overwhelming superiority of Christ over all that they had experienced under the law.
- What is offered to them through Christ is so much better than that which is promised under the Mosaic economy they should never consider turning back.
- Emphasis in the text:
 - Incomparable glory of the Person and work of Christ
 - Showing His supremacy over the prophets (1:1-3)
 - Angels (1:4-2:18), Moses (3:1-19), Joshua (4:1-13),
 - Aaron (4:14-7:18) and the ritual of Judaism (7:19-10:39).

School of the Bible: The Epistle to the Hebrews

Content:

A key word of the epistle is “better”, used to describe Christ and the benefits of the gospel (1:3; 7:19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40).

Most of the blessings of Judaism had to do with earthly things:

1. an earthly tabernacle or temple
2. earthly priests,
3. Earthly sacrifices; a covenant that promised earthly prosperity. In contrast, Christ is “on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (1:3), where He dispenses heavenly blessings (3:1; 6:4; 8:5; 11:16; 12:22, 23).

The high point of the epistle is the presentation:

1. of the high priestly ministry of the Lord.
2. Christ is High Priest, not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek, who had no predecessors and no successors in the priesthood.

Thus, Melchizedek was a perfect type of Christ, who received the office of high priest by the direct call of God, not by inheritance (5:5, 6). Whereas the Aaronic priest had to offer sacrifices continually for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people, Christ once and for all offered His own sinless Person as the perfect sacrifice. In His flesh He experienced the testing that all believers know, and thus He is able to intercede compassionately on their behalf.

Personal Application:

Although Hebrews is specifically addressed to Jewish Christians, its teachings and practical admonitions are equally applicable to Gentile believers. In Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile believers.

The church today needs the teaching provided in the Old Testament laws of worship, which this book so beautifully relates to Christ and the gospel of eternal salvation.

Christianity is not something added on to Judaism. It is something new, but a fuller understanding of the Old Covenant gives a richer and more marvelous appreciation of the New Covenant of God’s grace through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is primarily doctrinal in its content and intensely practical. Like no other book, Hebrews points out the importance and the ministry of the preincarnate Christ, the superiority of Christ to all that has gone before in the Old Testament times.

STUDY OUTLINE OF HEBREWS

1. The superiority of Christ Jesus' person 1:1-4:13

- A. Jesus better and the prophets
- B. Jesus better than the angels (first warning: against neglect 2:2-4)
- C. Jesus better than Moses
- D. Jesus better than Joshua (second warning: against unbelief 4:1-3, 11-13)

2. The superiority of Christ Jesus' ministry 4:4-10:18

- A. Jesus better than Aaron 4:14- 5:10
 - 1. Understanding and compassionate 4:14-5:4
 - 2. After the order of Melchizedek (third warning: against lack of maturity 5:11-6:20)
- B. The Melchizedek priesthood, thus Jesus Christ's, better than Aaron's
 - 1. Aaron paid tithes to Melchizedek 7:1-8:5
 - 2. Aaronic priests made nothing perfect 7:1-10
 - 3. Aaronic priests died 7:23-28
 - 4. Aaronic priests served only shadows 8:1-5
- C. Jesus mediates a better Covenant 8:6 – 10:18
 - 1. The better Covenant 8:6-13
 - 2. The Old Covenant's sanctuary and sacrifices 9:1-10
 - 3. The New Covenant's sanctuary and sacrifices 9:11-10:18

Study Outline: The Epistles to the Hebrews

- 3. The superiority of the walk of faith 10:19-13:25**
- A. A call to full assurance of faith 10:19-11:40**
1. A call to steadfastness of faith (fourth warning: against turning back)
 2. A description of faith 11:1-3
 3. Heroes of faith 11:4-40
- B. The endurance of faith 12:1-29**
1. Jesus' endurance 12:1-4
 2. The value of chastening (fifth warning: against refusing God 12:25-29)
- C. Admonitions to love 13:1-17**
1. Love in the social realm 13: 1-6
 2. Love in the religious realm 13: 7-17
- D. Conclusion 13: 18-25**

Background and context study material and study outline was taken from the Spirit Filled Life Bible –King James Version from the Church of God in Christ Centennial Bible.

General Editor: Jack W. Hayford, B.A., B.Th., D.D., Litt.D.

Associate General Editor: Ithiel Clemmons, M.Div., Ph.D., D.D.