

# Hebrews

**Key message of the book: 'Draw near to God by faith in Jesus Christ.'**

## **Background information:**

The author is not known, but Paul is one possibility. Hebrews was probably written from Rome (13:24) around A.D. 65. The book was evidently written while the temple was still standing and in use, and maybe during the beginning of Nero's persecution. This situation would fit snugly before the Great Jewish Revolt in A.D. 66, which preceded the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70.

The book is written very beautifully in the classical form of Greek oratory, and is addressed to at least three different groups of Jews. The author would no doubt have known that Gentiles in the churches would be reading it also. The three groups of Jews would include: 1. True believers. 2. Unbelievers who were intellectually convinced of the Gospel. 3. Unbelievers attracted by the Gospel, but not yet convinced.

To fail to recognise these three categories will create confusion when reading certain portions of the book. For example, certain passages of Hebrews can be mistakenly construed as teaching that a believer can lose his salvation, if these categories are not taken into account (for example, see 6:4-6).

## **Key words and phrases:**

'Better': 13 times. The New Covenant and all of its provisions and purposes are far better than those of the Old. Christ is better than the angels, Moses, Aaron, or Joshua, etc.

'Perfect': 14 times. The law couldn't make anything perfect, but under the New Covenant, God can bring about perfection. Also 2 more times, where it is translated 'full age' in 5:14 and 'consecrated' in 7:28.

'Let us': 13 times. A gentle way to exhort and admonish the readers.

## **Message explained:**

The main purpose of the book was to demonstrate the superiority of Christ, to urge faltering believers to mature in their faith, and to warn unbelievers who were hesitating from entering into the salvation provided by Christ.

Here is a simple three-point outline of the book borrowed from Wiersbe (numbered), with key points and texts added by myself for the purpose of overview (alphabet letters). Longer readings have been bolded:

1. Christ is the Better Person (1-6)
  - a. God's communication to us: 1:1-3
  - b. Our responsibility to heed: 2:1
  - c. Christ's qualification to lead by suffering in human flesh: 2:9-10

- d. Christ is the Son Who competently rules His own house: (3:2, 6)
  - e. Danger of hardening the heart through sin and unbelief (3:12, 13)
  - f. The need to enter into God's rest by faith (4:11)
  - g. The need to boldly approach the throne of grace for help (4:16)
  - h. Rebuke for immaturity in the Word, serving as a hindrance to greater understanding **(5:11-14)**
  - i. The need to move forwards in understanding (6:1-2)
  - j. The sad plight of those who reject the light (6:4-8)
  - k. The happy condition of those who believe the promises (6:18-20)
2. Christ is the Better Priest (7-10)
- a. Explained in the figure of Melchizedec (7:1-3)
  - b. Received tithes from Levi and Abraham (7:9)
  - c. Has a continuing and effectual priesthood, superior to the Levitical priesthood **(7:19-28)**
  - d. Christ is the mediator of a better covenant (8:6)
  - e. The Old covenant has decidedly been superseded (8:13)
  - f. Christ ministers for the heavenly tabernacle, making the way into the holiest open for us **(9:11-14)**
  - g. The necessity of a better sacrifice (9:22-23)
  - h. The once-for-all purging of sin, wrought by our great High Priest **(9:24-28)**
  - i. Let us draw near to God in full confidence **(10:19-23)**
  - j. Remain actively engaged in fellowship with God's people (10:24-25)
  - k. Don't be discouraged by life's afflictions (10:36)
3. Faith is the Better Plan (11-13)
- a. The great cloud of witnesses who proved God's faithfulness (**chapter 11**)
  - b. Instruction to run the race, looking to our captain (author and finisher): (12:1-2)
  - c. Don't despise the chastening hand of God (12:5, 6)
  - d. Don't fall prey to bitterness (12:15)
  - e. Don't refuse Him who speaks, but fear Him, and seek to enter into His grace **(12:25-29)**
  - f. General instructions to faltering believers (**chapter 13**):
    - i. Brotherly love (v. 1)
    - ii. Hospitality (v. 2)
    - iii. Ministry to the persecuted (v. 3)
    - iv. Be sexually pure (v. 4)
    - v. Be content with God's presence (vv. 5-6)
    - vi. Give heed to your spiritual rulers, and observe their conduct (v. 7)
    - vii. Remember Jesus' faithfulness (v. 8)
    - viii. Avoid strange and novel doctrines (v. 9)
    - ix. Bear Christ's reproach, remembering that this world is not our home (v. 13)
    - x. Praise and thank the Lord continually (v. 15)
    - xi. Do good to others and give to them (v. 16)
    - xii. Obey your spiritual rulers (v. 17)
    - xiii. Pray for God's ministers (v. 18)



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