

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF

Hebrews

What? Where? A richly profound Christian treatise, Hebrews is the 19th New Testament book, between Philemon and James

Who? Its author, often thought to be Paul, is uncertain.

Why? Systematically showing the relation between Judaism and Christianity, Hebrews was evidently written to believing Jews whose faith in Christ was being sorely tested.

Comparison is Hebrews' stock-in-trade. Its consistent theme is the inherent superiority of Jesus over all things (angels, Moses, Levite priests, etc.) and the consequent superiority of the new covenant over the old. Jesus Christ is

- better than angels, though made a little lower than angels for a time (1:4ff; 2:9ff)
- worthy of more glory than Moses (3:1-6)
- greater than priests (4:14-16; 5:1ff; 7:23-28)
- better blessing, better hope (7:7, 19)
- mediator of better covenant (7:22; 8:6-13)
- high priest of better tabernacle (8:1ff; 9:11)
- better sacrifice (9:12-28; 10:1-14; 12:24), meaning greater punishment for those who despise it (10:28-31)
- reigning from a better mountain (12:18-26)

Faith in God and in the promises set before us through Jesus Christ is its persistent call:

- Give heed; don't drift or neglect the Word (2:1-3).
- Beware; don't fall into unbelief or disobedience (3:12—4:11).
- Go forward in faith, not backward; bear fruit (6:1-10).
- Our hope is sure and steadfast; God

can't lie (6:11-20).

- Draw near, hold fast, love, serve (10:19-25).
- Keep confidence: He will come to save (10:35-39).
- Regardless of opposition, faith will conquer all (11:1-40).
- Look to Jesus; run the race with patience (12:1ff).
- Let us have grace to serve God (12:28).

Struggle and suffering are its context:

- Jesus experienced them (2:9, 10, 18; 4:15; 5:7, 8; 12:1-3; 13:12).
- All the saints of old felt them (11:1-40).
- We experience them (12:3-13).
- We have grace to help in time of need (4:16).

Rest is its promise (3:11—4:11). This can refer to

- Canaan, the land God promised Israel (3:11, 18; 4:8)
- eternal life that God promises believers (4:1, 3, 5)
- God's rest on the seventh day at Creation (4:4, 10)
- believers' symbolic rest on the seventh-day Sabbath (4:9)
- believers' spiritual rest in Christ for eternal salvation (4:10)
- believers' final rest in God's eternal kingdom (4:9, 11)

Old and new covenants compared and contrasted:

- old covenant described (9:1-10)
- new covenant defined, twice (8:7-13; 10:16, 17)
- priesthoods, from Aaron to Melchizedek (5:1-10; 7:11-28)
- change of laws, from stone to heart (7:12; 8:10; 10:16)
- holy places, from earthly to heavenly (8:5; 9:11, 12, 23, 24)
- sacrifices, from animals to Jesus himself (7:27; 9:7-28; 10:1-14)
- worldview, from a Mosaic/Levitical system to the inherently higher value of a new High Priest (Christ) and the infinitely longer-lasting benefit of His sacrifice (7:24-28; 8:1, 2; 9:24-28; 10:5-14)

Christ's pre-eminence: Jesus is God's final spokesman; creator, upholder, and heir of all things; perfect image of God; purger of sins; lover and ruler of right; the unique Son at God's right hand, far above and worshipped by angels; captain of our salvation, destroyer of the Devil, and freer of captives; great, merciful, faithful; apostle and high priest of our confession forever by the power of an endless life; Son over His own house; fully tempted, yet fully sinless; author of eternal salvation; holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, perfected forever; minister of the true tabernacle; author and finisher of our faith; mediator of the new covenant; the same yesterday, today, forever; and that great shepherd of the sheep (1:1-14; 2:10, 14, 15, 17; 3:6; 4:14, 15; 5:9; 6:20; 7:16, 26, 27; 8:2; 12:2, 24; 13:8, 20).

Hebrews in a sentence: Because Jesus Christ — God's Son, our high priest and sacrifice — and His new covenant are in every way better than Moses and the old covenant, let us hold fast this faith, move on to maturity, and not faint under any trial.