

# The Epistle To The Hebrews



**A Study Guide With Introductory Comments,  
Summaries, And Review Questions**

**Student Edition**

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The outlines were developed in the course of my ministry as a preacher of the gospel. Feel free to use them as they are, or adapt them to suit your own personal style.

**To God Be The Glory!**

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# The Epistle To The Hebrews

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This study guide was designed for adult Bible classes, though it might be suitable for junior and senior high classes as well. Some have used it for personal devotions, and others in small study groups. In whatever way it can be used to the glory of God, I am grateful.

- **Points to ponder** for each chapter are things I emphasize during the class.
- **Review questions** are intended to reinforce key thoughts in each chapter. There is a “teacher’s edition” available with answers included.

# The Epistle To The Hebrews

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## Introduction

The epistle to the Hebrews is a unique book in the New Testament. It begins as an **essay (He 1:1-2)**, progresses as a **sermon (He 2:1-4)**, and ends as a **letter (He 13:23-25)**. Its contents are deep and challenging. Many Christians find it difficult; some equate its difficulty with the book of Revelation.

But for Christians willing to take the time to read and reflect upon it, they will be:

- Reminded of how blessed they are to have trusted in Christ
- Impressed with the superiority of Christ and His New Covenant over Moses and the Old Covenant
- Warned of the danger of apostasy and the need for steadfastness in their faith

## Author

The author does not identify himself. Many believe it to be the apostle Paul (e.g., Clement of Alexandria) and have offered arguments in his favor (cf. Commentary on Hebrews, Robert Milligan, p. 5-19). Yet it seems unlikely when you consider the author's statement, "...was confirmed to us by those who heard Him" (**He 2:3**). This suggests the author received the gospel message second-hand, while Paul declared that he had not received the gospel from or through men (**Ga 1:11-12**).

Other names have been proposed over the years: Barnabas (suggested by Tertullian), Apollos (suggested by Luther), even Priscilla (suggested by Harnack). Perhaps Origen says it best, "But who wrote the epistle, to be sure, **only God knows.**"

## Recipients

The general consensus is that this letter was written to **Jewish Christians**. There is uncertainty as to where they and the author were at the time of composition. Many believe the recipients were in Palestine, and the author in Rome. Others suggest the readers were in Rome and the author elsewhere, based upon a possible implication in **He 13:24**. In any case, they were Jewish Christians whom the author knew personally (**He 10:34; 13:19**).

## Date

We know the epistle was written prior to 96 A.D., because Clement of Rome quotes from Hebrews in his letter that was written at that time. There are certainly strong indications that it was written prior to 70 A.D....

- There is no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple
- The author writes as though priests were still offering sacrifices - **He 8:4; 10:11**

If the Jewish Christians were in Palestine, it was likely before or at the beginning of the Jewish Wars (ca. 66-70 A.D.; cf. **He 12:4**).

The time frame of **63-65 A.D.** is often suggested.

## Purpose And Theme

The author wrote this epistle to prevent his readers from abandoning their faith in Christ (**He 2:1-4**). To encourage his Jewish brethren not to go back to the Old Law, he endeavored to show the superiority of Christ and His Covenant (**He 8:1-2,6**). A key word found throughout the epistle is **“better”**:

- Christ is “better than the angels” - **He 1:4**
- We enjoy “the bringing in of a better hope” - **He 7:19**
- Jesus has become “the surety of a better covenant” - **He 7:22**
- He is also “the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises” - He 8:6
- The heavenly things benefit from “better sacrifices” - **He 9:23**

Indeed, the purpose of this epistle was to **exhort** his readers to remain faithful to the much better things they have in Christ (**He 13:22**). As for its theme, I suggest the following:

### **The Superiority Of Christ and The New Covenant**

## Outline

Here is a simple outline of the book, with its main divisions...

- 1. The superiority of Christ - He 1:1-8:6**
  - a. Better than the prophets, as a much better Spokesman - He 1:1-3
  - b. Better than the angels, by virtue of His Deity and humanity - He 1:4-2:18
  - c. Better than Moses, for He is the Son who provides a heavenly rest - He 3:1-4:13
  - d. Better than Aaron, as His priesthood is a superior one - He 4:16-8:6
- 2. The superiority of the New Covenant - He 8:7-10:18**
  - a. For it is based upon better promises - He 8:7-13
  - b. For it is based upon a better sanctuary - He 9:1-28
  - c. For it is based upon a better sacrifice - He 10:1-18
- 3. Exhortations drawn from this superiority - He 10:19-13:25**
  - a. Draw near to God and hold fast - He 10:19-39
  - b. Run the race of faith with endurance - He 11:1-12:29
  - c. Miscellaneous exhortations - He 13:1-25

## Key Warnings

A unique feature of the epistle to the Hebrews are the warnings throughout the book. As we conclude this introduction, perhaps it may be profitable to summarize them.

- 1. The warning against drifting - He 2:1-4**
  - a. Through neglect we can easily drift away
  - b. The solution is to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard
- 2. The warning against departing - He 3:12-15**
  - a. Through sin’s deceitfulness we can become hardened and develop a lack of faith by which we can depart from the living God
  - b. The solution is exhort one another daily and remain steadfast

3. **The warning against disobedience - He 4:11-13**
  - a. Like Israel in the wilderness, we can fail to enter our rest through disobedience
  - b. The solution is diligence and heeding the Word of God
4. **The warning against dullness - He 5:11-6:6**
  - a. Dullness of hearing can make it difficult for us to appreciate the extent of our blessings in Christ, and even falling away to the point of crucifying the Son of God afresh!
  - b. The solution is grasping the first principles of the oracles of God, and then pressing on to spiritual maturity and perfection
5. **The warning against despising - He 10:26-39**
  - a. It is possible to so despise God's grace as to no longer have a sacrifice for sins, but only a certain fearful expectation of judgment
  - b. The solution is to hold unto our confidence in Christ, and believe with endurance
6. **The warning against defying - He 12:25-29**
  - a. It is possible to refuse to listen to the One who now speaks from heaven!
  - b. The solution is to look diligently to the grace of God, receiving it in such a way so we may serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear

With such warnings, this book is indeed a "word of exhortation" (**He 13:22**)!

### Review Questions

- 1) **Who is author of the book of Hebrews?**
- 2) **Who were the original recipients of this epistle?**
- 3) **When was it written?**
- 4) **What has been suggested as its purpose? Its theme?**
- 5) **What are the three main divisions of this epistle?**
- 6) **List the six warnings found in this epistle.**

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## Chapter One

Dispensing with greetings and salutations typical of letters at that time, the epistle to the Hebrews begins like a sermon, with the author immediately declaring the superiority of Jesus. While God spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, He now speaks to us through His Son (1-3). Jesus is also demonstrated to be much better than angels (4-14).

### Points To Ponder

- How Jesus is superior to OT prophets
- How Jesus is superior to angels

### Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**
- 2) **How did God speak in time past? How does He speak today? (1-2)**
- 3) **List seven things that describe the Son. (2-3)**
- 4) **List five ways that Jesus is superior to the angels. (4-14)**
- 5) **For whom have the angels been sent forth to minister? (14)**
- 6) **List the Old Testament passages that are referenced to in this chapter. (5-13)**

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## Chapter Two

The author interrupts his comparison of Christ with angels with his **first** of six warnings in this epistle: a warning against **drifting** by neglecting our great salvation (**1-4**). He then illustrates Jesus' superiority to angels by being made lower than the angels, whereby He became the perfect captain of our salvation and a merciful and faithful High Priest (**5-18**).

### Points To Ponder

- The very real danger of drifting and neglecting our salvation
- Man's fall from his exalted position over creation
- Jesus' humanity and its impact on His role as Savior and High Priest

### Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**
- 2) **How can we avoid drifting away? (1)**
- 3) **What proves we cannot escape judgment if we neglect our great salvation? (2-3)**
- 4) **How was this great salvation revealed and confirmed to us? (3-4)**
- 5) **What does Psalms 8:4-6 reveal about the creation of man? (6-8)**
- 6) **Has man maintained his authority over all things? (8)**
- 7) **List eight reasons Jesus was made lower than angels (became flesh). (9-18)**

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## Chapter Three

Having demonstrated Jesus' superiority to prophets and angels, the author now compares Jesus to Moses (1-6). The comparison is followed with a reference to Israel's unfaithfulness in wilderness which leads to the **second** of six warnings in this epistle: a warning against **departing** from the living God by developing an evil heart of unbelief (7-19).

### Points To Ponder

- How Jesus compares to Moses
- The very real danger of departing from the living God

### Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**
- 2) **How are the original recipients of this epistle described? And Jesus? (1)**
- 3) **How are Moses and Jesus compared in this chapter? (3-6)**
- 4) **Whose house are we? Under what conditions? (6)**
- 5) **What period of Israel's history is referred to in Psalms 95? (7-11)**
- 6) **What three things can lead the Christian to fall away? (12-13)**
- 7) **What three things can serve as an antidote preventing apostasy? (12-14)**
- 8) **Who rebelled in the wilderness and did not enter the Promised Land? (16-18)**
- 9) **Why were they not permitted to enter? (19)**



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## Chapter Four

Since many Israelites failed to enter their Canaan rest because of unbelief, the author says we should fear lest we come short of our promised rest: heaven (**1-10**). Diligence is also required, and the **third** of six warnings is given: a warning against **disobedience** in view of God's living and powerful Word (**11-13**). A positive motivation is then given: our great High Priest, Jesus, who enables us to obtain mercy and grace as needed (**14-16**).

### Points To Ponder

- The Sabbath rest, the Canaan rest, and the heavenly rest
- The living and powerful Word of God
- The privilege of prayer with Jesus as our High Priest

### Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**
- 2) **Since we have a promise of rest, why should we fear? (1)**
- 3) **Why did the word fail to profit many Israelites? (2)**
- 4) **What three different "rests" are spoken of in this chapter? (4-10)**
- 5) **What "rest" remains for us? What is required of us to enter it? (10-11)**
- 6) **How is the word of God described in this chapter? (12)**
- 7) **To whom must we give account? (13)**
- 8) **Why should we hold fast our confession? (14-16)**

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## Chapter Five

How Jesus is superior to prophets, angels, and Moses has been discussed. Now comes Jesus' superiority to Aaron as High Priest. Qualities necessary to be high priest are reviewed, ably met by Jesus (**1-10**). Before proceeding further, the author finds it necessary to extend the **fourth** warning, this one against **dullness** due to spiritual immaturity (**11-14**).

### Points To Ponder

- How Jesus qualifies to be our High Priest
- Signs of being dull of hearing (spiritually)

### Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**
- 2) **What qualifications are necessary to serve as high priest? (1,4)**
- 3) **What duties are performed by the high priest? (1-3)**
- 4) **Who chose Jesus Christ to become High Priest? (5-6,10)**
- 5) **In the flesh, what did Jesus experience? What did He learn? (7-8)**
- 6) **What did Jesus become through such suffering? For whom? (9)**
- 7) **What made the author's subject difficult to continue and explain? (11)**
- 8) **What should his readers been capable of at that time? (12)**
- 9) **What did they need instead? Why? (12-13)**
- 10) **Who is capable of handling the "meat" of the Word? (14)**

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## Chapter Six

The interruption of the discussion regarding Jesus as High priest continues with a solemn warning regarding spiritual progress, and the need for diligence, faith and patience in order to inherit the promises (1-12). The certainty of God's promises upon which our hope is based serves as an anchor of the soul that reaches into heaven itself, where Christ is now our High Priest according the order of Melchizedek (13-20).

### Points To Ponder

- Elementary principles in the doctrine of Christ
- The very real danger of crucifying again the Son of God
- The basis of our hope that serves as an anchor of the soul

### Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**
- 2) **What six things are mentioned as elementary principles of Christ? (1-2)**
- 3) **What five blessings were experienced by some who had fallen away? (4-5)**
- 4) **As those once blessed persist in their sin, what is their condition? Why? (6)**
- 5) **What confidence did the author have for his original recipients? Why? (9-10)**
- 6) **Even so, what qualities did he desire of them? (11-12)**
- 7) **Upon what two immutable things does our hope lie? (13-18)**
- 8) **As what does our hope serve? To where does it reach? (19-20)**

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## Chapter Seven

Resuming the discussion of Jesus as High Priest, the superiority of Melchizedek to Abraham and Levi is first demonstrated (1-10). Reasons are then given why a new priest after the order of Melchizedek was necessary, which also required a change in the Law (11-19). Finally, the greatness of Jesus as our new High Priest is explained (20-28).

### Points To Ponder

- The superiority of Melchizedek to Abraham and Levi
- The change in the priesthood and the annulment of the law
- The superiority of Jesus' priesthood to the Levitical priesthood

### Review Questions

- 1) What are the main points of this chapter?
- 2) Where in the Old Testament can we read about Melchizedek? (1)
- 3) What do Melchizedek and the Son of God appear to have in common? (3)
- 4) Why is Melchizedek greater than both Abraham and Levi? (4-10)
- 5) Why was there a need for a change in the priesthood? (11)
- 6) What was required for there to be a change in the priesthood? (12,18)
- 7) What evidence is there that the Law has been changed? (13-17)
- 8) List some of the qualities of Jesus' priesthood. (20-28)

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## Chapter Eight

Having demonstrated Jesus' superiority to prophets, angels, Moses, and Levi, the author summarizes: we have a High Priest at God's right hand who is Minister and Mediator of a better covenant established on better promises (1-6). Our attention is then directed toward that New Covenant which has replaced the Old Covenant (7-13).

### Points To Ponder

- The main point of all that has been said: "We have such a High Priest..."
- The two covenants (the first and old, replaced by the second and new)

### Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**
- 2) **Where is our High Priest? In what does He minister? (1-2)**
- 3) **If Jesus were on earth, what could He not be? (4)**
- 4) **What served as a copy and shadow of the true tabernacle? (5)**
- 5) **In what way has Jesus obtained a more excellent ministry? (6)**
- 6) **Why was it necessary to replace the first covenant with the second? (7-8)**
- 7) **Which covenant was the first, old covenant? (9)**
- 8) **List characteristics of God's new covenant foretold by Jeremiah. (10-12)**
- 9) **With the new covenant, what happened to the old covenant? (13)**

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## Chapter Nine

To appreciate the difference between the two covenants, their respective sanctuaries and divine services are compared. First the earthly sanctuary and the limitations of its divine services are reviewed (**1-10**); then the greater and more perfect heavenly sanctuary with emphasis on its better sacrifice, the blood of Christ Himself (**11-28**).

### Points To Ponder

- The symbolism of the earthly tabernacle and its divine services
- The superiority of the heavenly High Priest and His sacrifice

### Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**
- 2) **Describe the two parts of the earthly tabernacle and what they contained (2-5)**
- 3) **What were the limitations of the earthly tabernacle and its services? (9-10)**
- 4) **Of what was Christ the High Priest? (11,24)**
- 5) **What sacrifice did Jesus offer? (12,14)**
- 6) **What does the sacrifice of Christ accomplish? (12,14-15,26,28)**
- 7) **When did the new covenant (testament) come into force? (15-17)**
- 8) **What is appointed for men? (27)**
- 9) **For whom will Christ appear a second time for salvation? (28)**

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## Chapter Ten

The animal sacrifices of the Law (the first covenant) are shown to be insufficient, while the death of Christ fulfills the will of God and perfects those who are being sanctified (1-18). A three-fold exhortation based on what Christ has done (19-25) is followed by the **fifth** of six warnings, this one against despising God's grace with willful sin (26-39).

### Points To Ponder

- Why Christ's sacrifice is superior to animal sacrifices
- The importance of drawing near to God, and assembling with brethren
- The terrifying condition of Christians who persist in willful sin

### Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**
- 2) **Why were animal sacrifices insufficient? (1-4)**
- 3) **In coming to do the will of God, what has Jesus done? (9)**
- 4) **What distinguishes Christ's sacrifice from those of OT priests? (11-14)**
- 5) **What three-fold exhortation is based on what Jesus has done? (22-24)**
- 6) **What should we not forsake? (25)**
- 7) **What's meant by "sin willfully"? What's the consequence of doing so? (26-27)**
- 8) **Of what is one guilty when they persist in sin? Why should one be afraid? (29-31)**
- 9) **What three things do we need to receive the promise of God? (35-39)**

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## Chapter Eleven

Having stressed the importance of faith for salvation (**He 10:39**), the author defines faith (**1-3**) and then illustrates faith's role in the lives of many Old Testament saints (**4-40**).

### Points To Ponder

- The meaning of faith for New Testament Christians
- The examples of faith in Old Testament believers

### Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**
- 2) **What is faith as defined in this chapter? (1)**
- 3) **What we do understand by faith concerning the worlds? (3)**
- 4) **List the names of Old Testament saints mentioned in this chapter (4-32)**
- 5) **What did these "heroes of faith" look forward to receiving? (13-16)**
- 6) **List some of the amazing things done by faith. (33-35)**
- 7) **List some of the things these people of faith endured. (35-38)**
- 8) **What did these "heroes of faith" obtain? What did they not? Why? (39-40)**
- 9) **From this chapter, what do we learn about faith and works?**



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## Chapter Twelve

With the “heroes of faith” like a cloud of witness cheering us on, we are to run the race of faith, looking to Jesus’ example for endurance and to God’s loving discipline lest we fall short of His grace (1-17). Coming not to Mt. Sinai but to glorious Mt. Zion (18-24), we are given the **sixth** warning: not to refuse or defy Him who speaks from heaven (25-29).

### Points To Ponder

- How Jesus was able to endure the cross
- The role of discipline in the life of the Christian
- The danger of defying Him who speaks from heaven

### Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**
- 2) **How are we to run the race of faith? (1-3)**
- 3) **If we experience hostility striving against sin, how should we view it? (4-9)**
- 4) **What can chastening from God accomplish? (10-11)**
- 5) **As we run the race of faith, what should we pursue and how? (12-17)**
- 6) **How did Mt. Sinai appear to Moses and the Israelites? (18-21)**
- 7) **To what have we come? (22-24)**
- 8) **List four reasons we should not refuse Him who speaks from heaven? (25-29)**

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## Chapter Thirteen

The epistle concludes with miscellaneous moral and religious exhortations regarding their conduct as Christians (1-19), followed by a benediction, a final exhortation, and a farewell that mentions Timothy along with greetings from those who are from Italy (20-25).

### Points To Ponder

- How we should live as Christians
- How God makes us complete in every good work

### Review Questions

- 1) **What are the main points of this chapter?**
- 2) **List the moral exhortations given in this chapter. (1-5)**
- 3) **Since God promises never to leave or forsake us, what can we say? (6)**
- 4) **List the religious exhortations given in this chapter. (7-19)**
- 5) **What should we be looking for? (14)**
- 6) **What does the author pray for in behalf of his readers? (20-21)**
- 7) **What is the final appeal made to his brethren? (22)**
- 8) **With whom does he hope to soon see them? (23)**