

An Overview of the Book of Hebrews

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)

Introduction to Hebrews:

- A. Hebrews is unique
 - 1. It begins as an "essay" - 1:1-2
 - 2. It progresses as a "sermon" - 2:1-4
 - 3. It ends as a "letter" - 13:23-25 (Copeland)
- B. Hebrews is not impossible, just unusual
 - 1. Many find it difficult; some equate its difficulty with Revelation and Romans.
 - 2. Solution: proper study, prayer, and meditation on its contents
- 3. The theme of the book is the superiority of Christ as High Priest and Sacrifice and the superiority of His covenant over that of Moses and the old law, followed by admonitions to steadfastness.
- 4. Highlights:
 - a. Christ is both God and man, our perfect Advocate
 - b. Growth is the only way to persevere
 - c. The mystery of Melchizedek
 - d. The obsolescence of the Law
 - e. Assembling
 - f. Faith's Hall of Fame
 - g. Chastening of the Lord

I. BACKGROUND

(It is strongly recommended that students read the historical analysis of the book found in the introduction of a reliable commentary and then draw their own conclusions on authorship and date of writing.)

- A. Author - the author does not identify himself by name
 - 1. I believe it to be the apostle Paul
 - a. Some see this as unlikely in view of author's statement: "was confirmed to us by those who heard Him" - 2:3
 - b. Paul declared that he had not received the gospel from men, but directly from Christ - Gal. 1:11-12
 - c. Arguments which favor Paul as the author (Jesus Christ Today, Neil Lightfoot, p. 19-24; Commentary on Hebrews, Robert Milligan, p. 5-19).
 - 2. Other names have been proposed over the years:
 - a. Barnabas (Tertullian)
 - b. Apollos (Luther)
 - c. Priscilla (Harnack)
 - d. Silas, John Mark
 - 3. Scholars who posit Hebrews as written by Paul: Pantaenus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Council of Antioch (269), Eusebius, Jerome, Augustine

4. Internal evidence
 - a. The name omitted - the only writer who could accomplish more in a letter to the Jews by omitting his name is Paul
 - b. Style, language, structure (See comments on 13:23,24 - Milligan)
- B. Recipients - Christians of a Hebrew heritage
 1. The recipients were in Palestine and the author in Rome - 13:24
 2. The author knew them personally - 10:34, 13:19
- C. Date - Prior to 96 A.D., Clement of Rome quotes from Hebrews
 1. Prior to 70 A.D.
 - a. There is no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem
 - b. Writes as though priests still offering sacrifices - 8:4, 10:11
 2. Jewish Christians were in Palestine, before the beginning of the Jewish Wars (66-70 A.D.); in light of 12:4 could be 63-65 A.D.

II. BASIC OUTLINE

- A. Introducing the paradoxically powerful God the Son who became Jesus Christ, the sacrificed man - 1:1 - 2:18
- B. Jesus Christ, the superior Apostle and High Priest of our calling - 3:1 - 8:6
- C. The superior New Covenant that removes all sin forever - 8:9 - 10:18
- D. Boldness and endurance: Changes mandated by the superior High Priest and the New Covenant - 10:19 - 13:25

III. MESSAGES TO THE HEBREWS

- A. Superiority of Christ - 1:1 - 8:6
 1. Better than the prophets, as the Great Spokesman - 1:1-3
 2. Better than the angels, by virtue of His Deity and humanity - 1:4 - 2:18
 3. Better than Moses, as the Son who provides a heavenly rest - 3:1 - 4:13
 4. Better than Aaron, as His priesthood is a superior one - 4:16 - 8:6
- B. Superiority of the new covenant - 8:7 - 10:18
 1. Based upon better promises - 8:7-13
 2. Based upon a better sanctuary - 9:1-28
 3. Based upon a better sacrifice - 10:1-18
- C. Resultant exhortations - 10:19 - 13:25
 1. Draw near to God and hold fast - 10:19-39
 2. Run the race of faith with endurance - 11:1 - 12:29
 3. Closing exhortations - 13:1-25

IV. WARNINGS

- A. Against drifting - 2:1-4
 1. The solution - give the more earnest heed to the things heard
- B. Against departing - 3:12-15
 1. The solution - exhort one another daily and remain steadfast
- C. against disobedience - 4:11-13
 1. The solution - diligence and heeding the Word of God
- D. Against dullness - 5:11 - 6:6
 1. The solution - pressing on to spiritual maturity

E. Against despising - 10:26-39

1. The solution - hold unto our confidence in Christ

F. Against defying - 12:14-29

1. The solution - look diligently to the grace of God, serve reverently

V. HEBREWS VS THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF APOSTASY

(An illustration of the practical uses of the Book of Hebrews)

A. 2:1-4 - "Lest we drift away"

B. 3:12 - "Lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief"

C. 3:13 - "Lest anyone of you be hardened by... sin"

D. 4:11 - "Lest anyone fall..."

E. 12:3 - "Lest ye be weary and discouraged in your souls"

F. 12:15 - "Lest anyone fall short of the grace"

G. 12:15 - "Lest bitterness spring up"

Acknowledgements:

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