

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

The Epistle to the Hebrews is a unique book in the New Testament. Its contents are profound and challenging. Some equate its difficulty with the book of Revelation. But for Christians who are willing to take the time to read and reflect upon it, they are reminded of how blessed they are to have trusted in Christ. They are impressed with the superiority of Christ and His New Covenant over Moses and the Old Covenant. They are warned of the danger of apostasy and the need for steadfastness in their faith.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE EPISTLE:

The brethren were down and discouraged, but not yet defeated. Persecution had disheartened many of the Hebrew saints. Their faith and enthusiasm had wilted. Some had already left Jesus to return to the Old Testament Law. They had quit the Lord and had forsaken the practice of assembling with the Lord's people.

The author of Hebrews tries to rescue those who have backslidden, and at the same time, renew the courage of those who were weak. It is worthy of note that he does not appeal to them on the basis of "You have left the church," or "You need to come back to the church." He knew that the real issue was their relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, not merely their relationship with a group of saints. In his attempt to draw them back from their unfaithfulness, he pleads for them to "look unto Jesus." He portrays Jesus in all His magnificence and glory; he represents Him as our great Prophet, Priest and King. If these wayward disciples can see Jesus in His awesome power and majesty, perhaps they will return to Him. If they do not, then there is no other hope for them.

No other book in the New Testament deals with "quitting Christians" the way Hebrews does. The writer shows that a backslider doesn't merely quit the church; he quits Jesus. If he repents, he doesn't merely return to the church, he returns to Jesus. A disciple's spiritual state is not measured only by his relationship to an assembly of saints, but rather by his personal commitment and dedication to Jesus as his Lord. One can be a "church member" and not be the Lord's servant; but, he cannot be the Lord's servant without being a responsible, reliable part of the local family of God.

A personal, irrevocable commitment to Jesus, the Son of God and His right to rule in our lives--that is the heart of discipleship--the one and only key to steadfastness. That's what the Hebrew saints needed. It's what we need.

THE AUTHOR:

In the final analysis, it makes little difference who the human instrument was. The author does not identify himself. Many of the leading men who lived in the second, third and fourth centuries declare Paul to be the author. Clement of Alexandria (150 A.D.), Pantaenus (180 A.D.), Origen (185 A.D.), Eusebius (264 A.D.), Jerome and Augustine (both 392 A.D.), all record their conclusions that Paul was the author of Hebrews.

The manner of composition is similar to other books we know were written by Paul. Additionally, the writer seems to have Timothy as his co-worker. See Hebrews 13:23. It is well known that Timothy was the constant companion of Paul from the beginning of the work in Acts 16:3 until the time of Paul's martyrdom. See 2 Timothy 4:9-21.

The statement in Hebrews 13:24 suggests the possibility of Paul having written this epistle while in Rome.

It is evident that the author was formerly a Jew and was learned in the Jewish system. This harmonizes with Paul's background. The theme of the superiority of Christianity over Judaism is a subject in many of Paul's writings. Hebrews is comparable to Romans and Galatians, which have similar themes.

If Paul is not the author of Hebrews, then we have no idea who is. Some have suggested Barnabas (Tertullian), Apollos (suggested by Luther), even Priscilla (suggested by Harnack). In the end, we can only say with Origen, "But who wrote the epistle, to be sure, only God knows." In view of divine inspiration, human authorship is a secondary matter.

THE RECIPIENTS:

It is apparent that this letter was written to Jewish Christians. Most believe the recipients were in Palestine, and the author in Rome. They were Jewish Christians whom the author knew personally, Hebrews 10:34; 13:19.

THE DATE OF WRITING:

Some of the expressions within the book imply that it was written some considerable time after the establishment of the church. See Hebrews 5:12; 8:13; 10:25 as examples. The two latter passages would indicate it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem. The references to the temple sacrifices would further indicate that the temple was still standing, Hebrews 8:4; 10:11.

If Paul was the author, it was likely written in about 63 A.D. Paul was in prison at that time, but expected to be released soon. See Philippians 1:21-26 and Hebrews 13:19,23.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS EPISTLE:

As stated earlier in the "background," it was written to encourage those saints who were discouraged. The author's purpose is to prevent his readers from abandoning their faith in Christ, Hebrews 2:1-4.

He writes to encourage his Jewish brethren not to go back to the Old Law. He does that by showing the superiority of Christ and His Covenant, Hebrews 8:1-2,6. A key word found throughout the epistle is "better." Christ is "better than the angels," Hebrews 1:4. We enjoy "a better hope," Hebrews 7:19. There are many more "better things." These two will suffice for now.

The ordinances of the Law of Moses are treated as types which find their fulfillment in Christ, and as shadows which find their substance in Him. The infinite superiority of Christianity over Judaism is demonstrated by pointing to the fact that everything about the New Covenant is "better" than the Old Law.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

- I. The superiority of the Son, *1:1-8:6*.
 - A. Better than the prophets, as a superior spokesman, *1:1-3*.
 - B. Better than the angels, *1:4-2:18*.
 1. Superior in name, exaltation and power, *1:4-14*.
 2. He became lower than the angels, *2:1-18*
 - C. Better than Moses, *3:1-4:13*.
 1. As a Son over His own house, *3:1-6*.
 2. The unbelief of Israel under Moses, *3:7-19*.
 3. The rest that remains under Christ, *4:1-11*.
 4. The word by which all shall be judged, *4:12-13*.
 - D. Better than Aaron, as His priesthood is superior, *4:14-8:6*.
 1. The nature and character of His priesthood, *4:14-5:10*.
 2. A warning about ignorance and apostasy, *5:11-6:20*.
 3. Superiority of Christ's priesthood over Aaron, *7:1-8:5*

- II. The superiority of the New Covenant, *8:6-10:18*.
 - A. The New Covenant is based upon better promises, *8:6-13*.
 - B. The New Covenant is based upon a better sanctuary, *9:1-28*.
 - C. The New Covenant is based upon a better sacrifice, *10:1-18*.

- III. Exhortations drawn from the superiority of Christ, *10:19-13:25*.
 - A. Encouragement to draw near to God and hold fast, *10:19-39*.
 - B. Encouragement drawn from examples of faith, *11:1-40*.
 - C. Encouragement to run the race of faith with endurance, *12:1-12:29*.
 - D. Concluding exhortations to love and faithfulness, *13:1-25*.

KEY WARNINGS IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Note the following important warnings found in the book:

1. Against drifting, Hebrews 2:1-4. Through neglect we can easily drift away. The solution is to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard.
2. Against departing, Hebrews 3:12-15. Through sin's deceitfulness we can be hardened, lose our faith and depart from God. The solution is to encourage one another daily.
3. Against disobedience, Hebrews 4:11-13. Like Israel in the wilderness, we can fail to enter our rest through disobedience. Our defense is to diligently heed to God's Word.
4. Against dullness, Hebrews 5:11-6:6. Dull hearing causes us to fail to appreciate our blessings in Christ, and can make us fall away. We must press on to maturity.
5. Against despising, Hebrews 10:26-39. 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. The solution is to hold to our confidence in Christ, and believe with endurance.
6. Against defiance, Hebrews 12:14-29. It is possible to refuse to hear the One who now speaks from heaven! 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.

STUDY QUESTIONS ON THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

The questions are laid out with the same general outline found in the introduction of this book. A very brief commentary has also been added to each section to facilitate your study. We have not prepared questions on every verse; instead, we have tried to focus on the major thoughts of each section. Please study each lesson and answer the questions before class time.

I. The superiority of the Son, 1:1-8:6.

This first division of the book of Hebrews is the largest of the three. It seeks to make one point: The superiority of Jesus. Whether He is compared to prophets, angels or priests, He is superior to all who came before Him. His superiority is offered as reason for staying with Him as opposed to going back to Judaism or simply abandoning Christ for the world.

A. Better than the prophets, as a superior spokesman, 1:1-3.

The author introduces the book in the form of an essay. He begins by acknowledging the fact that God has indeed spoken in times past through the prophets. But now, God no longer calls upon the prophets of old as His spokesmen. He speaks through One who is infinitely superior to Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah and all the prophets. This is the reason why His message must not be rejected.

1. What were some of the various manners by which God spoke to the prophets?
2. What is meant by "these last days"? Can you find another text that uses similar language?
3. How many statements can you find in verses 2-3 that show the superiority of the Son over the prophets of old?

B. Better than the angels, 1:4-2:18.

Though angels are magnificent in power and being, they are inferior to the Son. In our time, the subject of angels has certainly become very popular. Bookstores are filled with books dealing with angels. TV shows and movies depict angels working in the lives of men: "Highway To Heaven," "Touched By An Angel," "The Preacher's Wife," "It's A Wonderful Life." Angels played an important role in the Jewish nation. They assisted in the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai, Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalm 68:17; Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19. They appear throughout the history of Israel, coming to Abraham, Daniel, and many others. However important they may be--especially with regard to communicating God's messages unto men--they are inferior to the Son. God's message for today is not through angels (as at Sinai) but is through His Son. It would be good if men were as curious about Jesus as they are about angels!

1. Superior in name, exaltation and power, 1:4-14.

The premise is clearly stated that the Son is "so much better than the angels." The reason is also clearly stated: "He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." He is greater in name, position and power. That name is "Son." It is a special title that only Jesus can properly wear. While it is true that both men and angels are called "sons of God" (see 1 John 3:1; Job 1:6), none may wear this title in the special and unique sense that Jesus does.

1. List at least five things in this section that argue Jesus is superior to angels.

2. Verse 9 says He has been anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Who are His fellows?

3. How is Jesus represented in verse 10? What verse, earlier in the chapter, does this relate to?

2. He became lower than the angels, 2:1-18.

Though Jesus is infinitely superior to the angels, when He came into the world, he came in a form that was lower than the angels. This, however, does not mean His message can be lightly regarded. To the contrary, we must give more earnest heed to His word. If the word given by angels in the Old Testament had to be respected, how much more the word given by the One who is superior to the angels! The dignity, humility, sacrifice and power of God's Spokesman says we must listen to Him!

1. What are some things today that can cause us to "drift away"?

2. What are some things that make our salvation "great"?

3. How was the gospel message confirmed to mankind?

4. For what purpose was Jesus made a little lower than the angels?

5. What "perfected" the captain of our salvation?

6. What family relationship do we sustain with Christ?

7. In what did Christ share with us?

8. What act of Christ showed he overcame the devil?

9. What does Christ being a high priest enable Him to do which only a high priest could do?

10. What does it mean to "aid" (NKJV) ("succor"—KJV)? What enabled Christ to do that for us?

C. Better than Moses, 3:1-4:13.

The writer now contrasts Christ, as the Apostle of the New Covenant, with Moses, the Apostle of the Old Covenant. And, while he concedes that Moses was a faithful servant in the house of God, he maintains that Christ is now faithful as a Son over God's house. He argues that Jesus is as much superior to Moses as the builder of a house is superior to the house. A number of contrasts are made between Moses and Christ, one of which is that Christ provides a superior rest for the people of God.

1. As a Son over His own house, 3:1-6.

The contrast between Christ and Moses is not one of faithfulness, for Moses was faithful to his work given him by God. But, Moses was only a servant in the house; Jesus is a Son over His house. Moses as a servant, pointed to Jesus, Deuteronomy 18:15-19. To abandon Christ and go back to the Mosaic system, is to frustrate the purpose of Moses himself!

1. What is meant by calling Jesus an "Apostle" and "High Priest"? What two ministries of Christ are under consideration here?

2. How many things can you think of that show Jesus is superior to Moses?

3. Who constitutes (or makes up) the house of the Lord?

2. The unbelief of Israel under Moses, 3:7-19.

The Hebrew writer quotes from Psalm 95, where the Spirit warned Israel not to be like their fathers in the wilderness. This warning was just as necessary for the Hebrew Christians. In the wilderness, the Israelites hardened their hearts and rebelled against God. They tested (tried) God with their lack of faith. Because of their unbelief, they did not enter God's rest. Of those over the age of 20 when they departed from Egypt, only Caleb and Joshua entered the Promised Land. The rest (more than 600,000 men) died in wilderness!

1. What was the "rest" God had prepared for the people of Israel?

2. Is it possible to depart from God? If not, why not? If so, what causes it?

3. In what ways is sin deceitful?

4. What are some things we can do to avoid being deceived by sin?

5. What will we share in if we hold fast to our confidence?
6. What was the cause of the disobedience of Israel in the wilderness? What is the cause of disobedience today?

3. The rest that remains under Christ, 4:1-11.

Chapter four continues the warning with a focus on the promised “rest” which awaits the faithful Christian. This promised “rest” is actually one of several “rests” found in the scriptures. It is a “rest” that Moses and Joshua did not provide; this is just another reason why the Hebrew Christian should not forsake Jesus and return to Judaism. It is the “rest that remains” for the people of God today.

1. What should we fear happening to us if we do as Israel did in the wilderness?
2. What must be united with hearing the truth in order to profit the one who hears?
3. Who does God say enters into His rest?
4. What rest(s) did the Jewish nation have?
5. Does there remain another “rest” that God’s people have not yet entered into? If so, what is it?
6. What must we do to enter into our rest?

4. The word by which all shall be judged, 4:12-13.

To stress the need for diligence, we are reminded of the power of the word of God. The word of God provided the example of the Israelites’ disobedience. That word now warns the Hebrews not to emulate the Israelites’ example. In this text, the word of God is described in pointed terms that speak of its awesome character. We live in a time in which God’s Word is so often neglected--even by some Christians. Perhaps we should take time to reflect upon what is said in this text--with a desire to renew and increase our appreciation for the power of God’s word!

1. To what instrument is the word of God compared? What does this tell us about the word?
2. To what extent is the word of God able to pierce our lives?

3. How much does God know about us? Are there any mysteries in God's mind--that is, things He is trying find out about us?

D. Better than Aaron, as His priesthood is superior, 4:14-8:6.

A recurring theme in Hebrews is that of Jesus as our High Priest. He has been described as a "merciful and faithful High Priest" (Hebrews 2:17); the "High Priest of our confession" (Hebrews 3:1); a "great High Priest who has passed through the heavens" (Hebrews 4:14); a High Priest who can "sympathize with our weaknesses" (Hebrews 4:15). This is in keeping with the overall purpose of the epistle--to show the superiority of Jesus and His New Covenant. We have seen Jesus' superiority to the prophets, to angels and to Moses; it is only natural that a comparison to Aaron and his priesthood be made.

1. The nature and character of His priesthood, 4:14-5:10.

The actual comparison with Aaron will follow later in chapters seven and eight, but first there is a need to review the qualities required in high priests and establish that Jesus does indeed qualify as a High Priest. A High Priest must have identification with and sympathy for those he ministers for. He must be divinely appointed, for no man can take the High Priesthood unto himself. Jesus indeed is divinely appointed, and has identification with and sympathy for those under Him. Note also that, in this section, we are introduced to Melchisedec. He served as a king and priest in the time of Abraham. While we are only introduced to him here, we will see later that the writer compares the priesthood of Jesus to this Old Testament character.

1. Where does Jesus minister as our High Priest?
2. What enables Christ to "sympathize with our weaknesses"?
3. We are urged to come boldly before the throne of grace. What gives us such access unto God?
4. What do we receive from the throne of grace?
5. Why were High Priests appointed? What was their function?
6. According to Hebrews 5:2, what must the High Priest be able to do in order to serve?
7. By whom was the honor of priesthood bestowed?
8. What Old Testament text is quoted in Hebrews 5:6? To whom does this text apply?

9. In what sense was Jesus made “perfect.” Hasn’t He always been sinless? If so, what is the point?
10. To whom is Christ the author of eternal salvation?

2. A warning about ignorance and apostasy, 5:11-6:20.

At this point, the author of Hebrews, digresses from his theme about the priesthood. The Hebrew Christians were unable to digest the meaty matters about Melchisedec. Why? Because they were not growing. Just because one has been a Christian for many years, does not mean he is mature. The lack of spiritual growth--remaining spiritually immature--is a dangerous thing. There may be blessings to be enjoyed in Christ that only the mature Christian can truly understand and appropriate. If one remains spiritually immature, he does not come to fully appreciate the standing and blessings that he has in Christ! Deprived of a greater understanding, he is more susceptible to the wiles of the devil! The Hebrew writer found himself faced with this problem: He had much to say about Christ as our High Priest, but the spiritual immaturity of his readers made it difficult. He warned them that their ignorance was dangerous!

1. Were the Christians under consideration here new converts? How do you know?
2. What should their time of service have qualified them to do?
3. What is the difference between the “milk” and “meat” of the word?
4. Answer the following question only for yourself: Is your appetite and capacity for milk or meat?
5. What does it mean to “have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”?
6. What does the writer mean when he says “leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ”? Does he mean these things are unimportant?
7. Is it possible to fall away from Christ?
8. If we fall away, is it possible to return to Christ? Explain Hebrews 6:4-6.
9. How does the writer illustrate his point about one who rejects Christ--though he was once blessed by Him?
10. What will God not forget about the faithful?

11. How long is faithfulness required?
12. In your understanding, what constitutes faithfulness to Christ?
13. What two things did God do regarding Abraham that guarantees His word?
14. What did Abraham do after God made His promise to him?
15. Why is it impossible for God to lie?
16. In what sense does hope serve as an anchor for the soul?
17. What does the expression “behind the veil” mean? What is behind the veil?
18. When did Jesus enter behind the veil? How does this relate to His priesthood?

3. Superiority of Christ’s priesthood over Aaron, 7:1-8:5.

Thus far in our study, we have seen the writer only mention Melchisedec. We have learned that Jesus is a priest “according to the order of Melchisedec.” It has only been a brief mention, for the dullness of the readers required a necessary digression. But now the writer returns to his theme concerning Melchisedec, in which he establishes the greatness of Melchisedec, and shows there was no other priest ever like Him--except Jesus! Several points are made that illustrate how Melchisedec was greater than Aaron (the High Priest under the Jewish system). Since Jesus is a priest like Melchisedec, and since Melchisedec is superior to Aaron, it must follow that the priesthood of Jesus is superior to that of Aaron.

1. Where was Salem? (Consult a Bible dictionary.)
2. According to Hebrews 7:2, Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec. What point is the writer demonstrating for us by the matter of tithing?
3. Melchisedec is said to be “without father, without mother, without genealogy.” Are we to understand this literally? If not, why not?
4. What was the unusual characteristic about Melchisedec’s priesthood?
5. Hebrews 7:4-10 proves the priesthood of Melchisedec was superior to that of Levi. See if you can explain the argument in your own words.

6. Was perfection found in the Levitical priesthood? Explain your answer.
7. Since the priesthood was changed (Hebrews 7:12), the _____ had to be changed. Why was this so?
8. Why could Jesus not serve as a priest under the Law of Moses?
9. What does the term “annulling” mean? Why was the old law annulled?
10. Hebrews 7:19 speaks of “a better hope.” What gives us a better hope?
11. How many “better things” can you find in Hebrews?
12. Was Christ made a priest by an oath? If so, whose?
13. Hebrews 7:22 says Jesus is a “surety.” What does that term mean?
14. According to Hebrews 7:26, what are some of the characteristics of our High Priest?
15. Why does Christ not have to offer daily sacrifices?
16. What two words in verse 28 summarize the contrast between Aaron and Christ?
17. According to Hebrews 8:1, what is the chief point the writer makes thus far?
18. What is the “true tabernacle”? Does this mean the old was a “false” tabernacle?
19. If Jesus were on earth today, could He serve as our High Priest? Why, or why not?
20. What does Hebrews 7:5 teach about the priests under the Jewish system?

II. The superiority of the New Covenant, 8:6-10:18.

Up to this point, the focus of “The Epistle To The Hebrews” has been on Christ. We have seen His superiority to prophets, angels and Moses. We have learned of the superiority of His priesthood to the Levitical priesthood. But, at this point there is a major shift in the book. Notice the transition in Hebrews 8:6. The transition is from Christ to the New Covenant made by Christ. In Hebrews 7:22, we saw Jesus as the “surety” (guarantor) of a better testament. Now we see Him as the “mediator” of a better covenant, Hebrews 8:6. “Better” is a term of contrast. Better than what? Better in what way? In the upcoming section we learn the answer.

A. The New Covenant is based upon better promises, 8:6-13.

The Old Covenant itself made the promise that a better covenant was to come. The old system was inferior and had elements that could never satisfy man’s need. Those who lived under the law had flaws that the old system could not compensate for. Thus, the need for a New Covenant. The new system is better in every respect. The writer begins this section by discussing the better promises of the gospel. The old system anticipated these better promises. Anyone who accepts the truth of the old system, must acknowledge that it says the new would be better.

1. What three things does verse six mention as elements of superiority of the New Covenant?
2. What was it that was faulty about the Old Covenant and the people under it?
3. What Old Covenant passage is quoted by the Hebrew writer?
4. When did the “days come” when the New Covenant became of force?
5. Can we be under both covenants at the same time? Explain your answer.
6. What are some of the distinct features that make the new different from the old?
7. Was the new law to be limited to one nation?
8. Why does verse 11 say “None of them shall teach...know the Lord”?
9. Verse 13 calls the first covenant “obsolete” and “old.” Is that because of the number of years it lasted? Explain your answer.
10. According to verse 13, what was about to happen to the old law?

B. The New Covenant is based upon a better sanctuary, 9:1-28.

In chapter nine, our attention is drawn to the matter of the “better sanctuary” provided by the New Covenant. To appreciate the author’s argument, we must be acquainted with the sanctuary of the first covenant. Therefore, we find a brief discussion concerning the earthly sanctuary in Hebrews 9:1-10. The Old Covenant sanctuary served as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things which were to come. These involved fleshly ordinances that were temporary in nature and were therefore limited in their ability to provide what man truly needed! In the second half of the chapter, we are introduced to “the heavenly sanctuary” of the New Covenant. This is the true tabernacle in which Christ is the minister, that which the Lord erected, and not man.

1. Name all the furniture that was found in the tabernacle (sanctuary).
2. Into what two main parts was the sanctuary divided?
3. What separated the two parts of the tabernacle?
4. In which part of the tabernacle was found the ark of the covenant?
5. In Hebrews 9:5 (KJV) it speaks of “cherubims.” Other translations use “cherubim.” What is a cherub?
6. According to Hebrews 9:6-7, where did the priests minister in the tabernacle?
7. What did the Holy Spirit signify by such a system?
8. According to Hebrews 9:11, how does the new tabernacle compare with the old?
9. What kind of blood was offered in the new tabernacle?
10. According to Hebrews 9:15, how did people of the old system obtain redemption?
11. What is necessary for a testament to become effective? How does this apply to Jesus?
12. What kind of blood was used to dedicate the first testament?
13. According to Hebrews 9:24, where is the holy place Christ has entered?

14. What contrast is found in Hebrews 9:25-28 regarding the sacrifices that were made?
15. What does “offered once” mean? Is it possible to offer His sacrifice again?

C. The New Covenant is based upon a better sacrifice, 10:1-18.

No matter what may be said about salutary elements of the Old Covenant, there is one thing it was lacking that left it as an imperfect system. It could not take away sin because it had an imperfect system of sacrifices. The blood of animals cannot take away the sins of a man! This imperfection was not a mistake on God's part, but was planned by Him. God wanted men to see their need for a perfect sacrifice. He wanted men to see how serious their sins were and that they might know that the offering of animals was futile as far as making a perfect atonement for sin. The sacrifices under the Law pointed forward to a better sacrifice. Men of faith, who offered the blood sacrifices, looked not to the animals for atonement, but looked to the future when God would provide a perfect sacrifice.

1. What does the writer call the things of the Law in comparison to the “things to come”?
2. What could the sacrifices of the old system not do?
3. Hebrews 10:5 speaks of “A body You have prepared for me.” Explain who or what is under consideration in the three words I have italicized and underlined.
4. Why did Jesus say God had no pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin?
5. According to Hebrews 10:9, why did Jesus come into the world? What was accomplished by His coming?
6. According to Hebrews 10:10, we are sanctified by what?
7. How many offerings did Jesus have to make to perfect (completely forgive) those who follow Him? What is the significance of this?
8. When there is complete remission of sins, what is no longer needed?

III. Exhortations drawn from the superiority of Christ, 10:19-13:25.

This is the third and final major division of Hebrews. You will note that Hebrews 10:19 begins with "Therefore..." This indicates the writer is going to draw conclusions based on what has gone before. There are several practical considerations that follow from having such a Savior and such a sacrifice. Christianity is not merely a theoretical religion. It is practical; that is, its principles are to be put into practice. Based on what we know and understand about Christ, about the New Testament, about the judgment to come and heaven and hell, there are certain things we must do. We must draw near to God and hold fast to Him; we must follow the examples of faith of those who have gone before us; we must run the race of faith with endurance; we must love our brethren and be faithful to our Lord Jesus. All these things, the Hebrew writer discusses in this final division of the book.

A. Encouragement to draw near to God and hold fast, 10:19-39.

In this first of the series of exhortations, we find the writer calling us to draw near to God, to hold fast our faith and to stimulate one another in love and good works--all based upon what Christ has done and will do for us! Each aspect of the exhortation is based upon God's wonderful grace bestowed upon us through Christ, and it reflects the tone of the author as he makes his heartfelt appeal. Yet, immediately following this exhortation, we find an ominous warning against willful sin. It speaks of reaching a terrible state in which "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." There is "a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fiery indignation." Let us receive the exhortation; let us heed the warning.

1. What do we have boldness to do according to Hebrews 10:19? What is the holiest?
2. According to Hebrews 10:22, what kind of disposition ought we to have as we draw near to God?
3. To what are we to hold fast? And without _____.
4. According to Hebrews 10:24, what are we to do for each other?
5. According to Hebrews 10:25, what are we to do for each other?
6. Why are we commanded not to forsake the assembling?
7. What is the state of the person who goes right on sinning after having received the knowledge of the truth? What remains for him?
8. What resulted when a man despised Moses' Law?

9. What is the consequence when a man despises Christ?
10. Are these warnings given to Christians, or to those who have never followed Christ?
11. What do these warnings do to the doctrine of “once saved, always saved”?
12. In verses 32-37, he asks them to recall the former days. Why? What had happened? Why was it important to remember these things now?
13. Though the writer has given a stern warning, he makes it clear in verses 38-39 that he does not believe the worst about the Hebrew Christians. He has confidence in them. See also Hebrews 6:9. How should we regard warnings given to us today?

B. Encouragement drawn from examples of faith, 11:1-40.

A key concern in this epistle is that Christians remain strong in their faith. There is a danger of developing “an evil heart of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:12). It was the lack of faith that destroyed Israel in the wilderness (Hebrews 3:16-19). In chapter ten, we saw an exhortation to “draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” In chapter six, we saw an admonition to have a “faith which endures to the end.” But what is this faith which leads “to the saving of the soul”? How does it manifest itself in the lives of those who possess it? In chapter eleven, we find the answer to these questions. This chapter has been called “The Honor Roll of Faith.” It not only tells us what faith is and how it pleases God, but it also gives us many examples from the Old Testament. These examples are not given to discourage us or to set up an unreachable standard. They are given to show that ordinary people, like you and me, are able to do extraordinary things when empowered by God through faith. These examples are given to encourage us. If you are not encouraged by this chapter, you are not reading it properly!

1. In verse one, what two terms does the writer use to describe faith?
2. Who are the elders of verse two?
3. According to verse three, what do we understand by faith?
4. How does Abel, though he is dead, yet speak?

5. What happened to Enoch because of his faith?
6. According to verse six, aside from believing God is, what else must we believe about God? If we do not have this second element, will we please God?
7. What things did Noah do by faith?
8. In verses 8-19, list all the things that Abraham (and Sarah) did by faith?
9. In their lifetimes, did Abraham and Sarah receive all God had promised?
10. What did Isaac do by faith?
11. What did Joseph do by faith?
12. From verses 23-29, list all the things Moses did by faith.
13. The walls of Jericho fell down by faith. Whose faith? What things did the people who had faith do?
14. Verses 32-40 give us a summary and overview of many events in the Old Testament. The number of persons who achieved victory by means of faith are too numerous to mention. These several--and some of their exploits--are listed to encourage us. Notice the final two verses. What is meant by "did not receive the promise" and "they should not be made perfect apart from us"?
15. From this chapter, are there any characters who personally give you encouragement by their faith and circumstances?

C. Encouragement to run the race of faith with endurance, 12:1-12:29.

Being a Christian is like running in a race. In the chapter before us, the writer instructs us to lay aside things that would hinder us, to run with endurance and to keep our eyes on the finish line. These are things a runner must do. A runner needs training and discipline from his coach; he needs to run with enthusiasm; he needs the encouragement of the other runners on his team. He must take care not to stumble and not to be distracted by things outside the race. Most of all, he must run like his life depended on it--do not quit! The Hebrew writer uses many figures drawn from the runner to encourage us to complete the course. Chapter twelve is a chapter of encouragement and warning.

1. Who are the witnesses of verse one? What purpose do they serve?
2. What kinds of things might weigh us down as we run the race?
3. We are to run with "endurance." What does endurance mean in this verse? What is another word you could put in its place?
4. Why is Jesus called the "author" and "finisher" of our faith? What do these two words mean with respect to Him?
5. What does it mean to look unto Jesus? What happens when Christians do not look unto Him?
6. What caused Jesus to endure the cross? Besides the actual cross itself, what else did Jesus endure? How should this affect us?
7. In verses 5-11, the writer talks about the chastening of the Lord. Does God chasten us today? If so, how?
8. Verse 12 seems to paint a picture of a discouraged saint. What are some remedies for discouragement? Do the verses following verse 12 offer any help?
9. When Israel came to Mount Sinai, they heard the voice of God and were terrified. Read verses 18-29. We too, have come to a mountain. What is it? Whose voice have we heard? What is the consequence of not hearing?

10. Our God is a God of love, but He is also a _____ . In view of this, what kind of disposition should we have as we serve God?

D. Concluding exhortations to love and faithfulness, 13:1-25.

With the final chapter, we see the tone of the epistle taking on the characteristics of personal correspondence. As with many epistles in the New Testament, this letter ends with various exhortations. It speaks first regarding the objects of their love (13:1-3). Here, the author practices what he preaches; seeking to stimulate them to love and good works, Hebrews 10:24. He further calls upon them to be content with what they have and to be stable in their service unto God. When Christians learn to do these two things, their lives are made much richer. In verses 18-25, closing words of encouragement are found; they are similar to what you find in most of Paul's epistles.

1. The first three verses of this chapter address brotherly love. In light of the crises the Hebrews faced, why would that be so important?
2. In the context of persecution and apostasy the Hebrews encountered, would the warning in verse four have any particular significance?
3. Verses five and six speak of contentment. In what way is a Christian to be content with what he has? Does this mean he cannot seek to better himself?
4. Stability in faith! It's something that is essential in going to heaven. Verses seven through nine remind the Hebrews of some things that will help them be stable. What kind of things did they face that might rock their faith? What things do we face?
5. Verses 10 through 16 speak of altars, blood and sacrifices. Do those things apply to us as Christians? If so, how?
6. Hebrews 13:17 speaks of the work of elders to "watch" for souls. What is involved in this responsibility? What other responsibilities do elders have that are not mentioned in this text?
7. In verse 18, the author makes an interesting statement: "Pray for us, for we are confident that we have a good conscience..." How much good does it do to ask others to pray for us if we do not maintain a good conscience?

8. Verses 20 and 21 speak of saints being made “complete.” In what sense are we complete (“perfect” – KJV)?

9. What final exhortation does the writer give?

10. What indication do you find that may indicate Hebrews was written by Paul at Rome?

Conclusion: Write a short summary of things you have learned in Hebrews that cause you to have more appreciation for Christ.