



## Overview for Hebrews

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**Purpose:** To emphasize the superiority of Christ in relation to the Levitical Law.

**Author:** Due to the absence of any name in the Biblical text, authorship has been ascribed to several people; namely Paul, Luke, Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, Philip, or Priscilla. Although uncertain, commentators generally attribute the Book of Hebrews to Paul.

**To Whom Written:** Hebrew Christians caught in the transition from traditional Hebrew teachings to the radically new teachings of Jesus Christ. Their lives had been changed, but the inclination to go back to what was familiar and comfortable possibly still was very strong.

**Date Written:** Approximately A.D. 70

**Setting:** As second generation Christians, these Hebrew believers were most likely experiencing physical and social persecution. Suffering at the hands of the Romans because they were Jews, they found little help and comfort from their Jewish neighbors because of their newfound Christian beliefs. Somewhat disillusioned that Jesus did not establish His Kingdom as many expected, they needed reassurance to hold onto His teachings.

**Key people:** People of faith from the Old Testament.

**Summary:** Hebrews presents a clearly-defined portrait of Christ and His fulfillment of the Law of Moses. Instead of downplaying the validity of the Law, the author pointed out how Christ emphasized the Law and applied its precepts to the motive behind an individual's actions rather than the action itself.

Judaism in its design was by far the best religion practiced until that day. Through it, God outlined specific commandments and rituals, and used His prophets to reveal His plan of forgiveness and salvation for mankind. The Law involved many rituals that were symbolic of a better way to come, but also assured any obedient Jew of God's blessing. Christ came to fulfill the Law, conquer sin, and offer eternal life to all who would accept His gift.

The early Jews, steeped in their own system of worship and ceremonial practices at the expense of

the Word of God, had difficulty accepting the message of salvation offered by Christ. Although this did not keep all of them from receiving His message, the vast majority rejected it as heresy. To sufficiently strengthen the tenuous foothold of Christianity for these early Jewish Christians, the writer of Hebrews needed to present an argument strong enough to withstand the entrenched theology of Judaism.

The writer establishes Christ's superiority to the angels (1:4–2:18), to Moses (3:1-19), and to the Old Testament priesthood (4:14–7:28). He describes Christianity's superior covenant to that of Judaism (8:1-13), pointing out that it offers a more sufficient sacrifice for sins (9:1–10:18). The writer does not disregard the divine design of the Law, and thus alienate potential Jewish converts, but instead portrays a good way that has become even better.

After establishing the superiority of Christ and Christianity, the writer goes on to examine what it means to truly follow the teachings of Christ. Realizing that the inclination for people under attack is to retreat to what is safe and familiar, he exhorts these Jewish Christians to hold on to their newfound faith, to find ways to encourage each other, and to anticipate Christ's return (10:19-25). He further warns them against rejecting the sacrifice Christ made for them (10:26-31), and reminds them of the rewards of the faithful (10:32-39).

Following these exhortations and warnings, the writer illustrates his points by the use of Old Testament examples of faithful men and women as patterns to follow for these new believers (11:1-40). The Book of Hebrews concludes with a comparison of the old covenant with the new (12:18-29), moral exhortations (13:1-17), an admonition for prayer (13:18-19), and a benediction (13:20-25).

"Better" is the theme that runs through the entire Book of Hebrews. As you read through the Book, keep in mind that the writer was not proposing that the old Law was bad; just that the New Covenant in Christ was much better. Christ is better than angels, Moses, and Joshua. The Christian faith has a better rest, a better Priesthood, a better sanctuary, and a better Sacrifice.

# Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ slightly.

Jesus crucified; Pentecost; Church begun A.D. 30	Stephen martyred; Paul's conversion 35			Peter's ministry in Asia Minor 47	Jerusalem council 50		PAUL IMPRISONED (CAESAREA) 57-59	PAUL'S HOUSE ARREST 60-62	James (Jesus' brother) martyred 62	Peter & Paul martyred 67/68?		Jude martyred 72
	PAUL IN CILICIA & SYRIA 35-46			PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS 46-48	50-52	53-57		Paul's trip to Rome 59				Rome destroys Jerusalem 70
			Holy Spirit falls on Gentiles 41	James (the apostle) martyred; Peter imprisoned 44	<i>Galatians; James 49</i>	<i>1 &amp; 2 Thessalonians 51/52</i>	<i>1 &amp; 2 Corinthians 55</i>	<i>Romans 57</i> <i>St. Mark 58/60</i>	<i>Ephesians; Colossians; Philemon 60</i> <i>Philippians 61</i> <i>St. Matthew; St. Luke 61/64</i>	<i>1 Timothy; Titus; 1 Peter 64</i> <i>Jude 65</i> <i>Acts; 2 Peter; 2 Timothy 66/68</i>		<i>Hebrews 68</i>

# Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at [www.apostolicfaith.org](http://www.apostolicfaith.org).

- I. Introduction (1:1-3)
  - A. The revelation through the Son (1:1-2)
  - B. The person and work of the Son (1:3)
- II. The argument: the preeminence of Christ in His person and work (1:4—10:18)
  - A. The superiority of Christ to the angels (1:4—2:18)
  - B. The superiority of Christ to Moses (3:1-6)
  - C. Parenthesis II: warning against disobedience (3:7—4:13)
  - D. The superiority of Christ to Aaron (4:14—10:18)
- III. The application: the life we should live because of His life and work (10:19—13:19)
  - A. Exhortation to devotion (10:19-39)
  - B. Exhortation to endurance in faith (11:1—12:29)
  - C. Exhortation to walk honorably (13:1-19)
- IV. Conclusion (13:20-25)
  - A. Closing prayer (13:20-21)
  - B. Closing exhortation (13:22)
  - C. Closing greetings (13:23-24)
  - D. Closing benediction (13:25)