

## "THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS"

Oct 30, 2024

**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**

**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?**
  - Jesus' superiority over prophets as spokesman [He 1:1-3](#)
  - Jesus' superiority over angels by virtue of His deity [He 1:4-14](#)
2. **How did God speak in time past? How does He speak today? (1-2)**
  - By the prophets at various times and in various ways; by His Son
3. **List seven things that describe the Son. (2-3)**
  - He is the appointed heir of all things
  - Through Him God made the worlds
  - He is the brightness of God's glory
  - He is the express image of God's person
  - He upholds all things by the word of His power
  - He purged our sins
  - He is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high
4. **List five ways that Jesus is superior to the angels. (4-14)**
  - He is the "Son", angels are not
  - He is "the firstborn" who receives worship from angels
  - He is "God" enthroned and anointed, angels are merely servants
  - He is "LORD" (Yahweh) who is the eternal Creator
  - He is "sovereign" seated at the right hand of God, angels are ministering spirits
5. **For whom have the angels been sent forth to minister? (14)**
  - Those who will inherit salvation

6. List the Old Testament passages that are referenced to in this chapter. (5-13)

- [Ps 2:7](#) and [2Sa 7:14](#) in verse 5; [Deut 32:43](#) (Septuagint) in verse 6
- [Ps 104:4](#) in verse 7; [Ps 45:6-7](#) in verses 8-9
- [Ps 102:25-27](#) in verses 10-12; [Ps 110:1](#) in verse 13

Hebrews 1 - Amplified Bible - **God's Final Word in His Son**

**1** God, having spoken to the fathers long ago in [the voices and writings of] the prophets in many separate revelations [each of which set forth a portion of the truth], and in many ways, <sup>2</sup> has in these last days spoken [with finality] to us in [the person of One who is by His character and nature] His Son [namely Jesus], whom He appointed heir *and* lawful owner of all things, through whom also He created the universe [that is, the universe as a space-time-matter continuum]. <sup>3</sup> The Son is the radiance *and* only expression of the glory of [our awesome] God [reflecting God's <sup>[a]</sup>Shekinah glory, the Light-being, the brilliant light of the divine], and the exact representation *and* perfect imprint of His [Father's] essence, and upholding *and* maintaining *and* propelling all things [the entire physical and spiritual universe] by His powerful word [carrying the universe along to its predetermined goal]. When He [Himself and no other] had [by offering Himself on the cross as a sacrifice for sin] accomplished purification from sins *and* established our freedom from guilt, He sat down [revealing His completed work] at the right hand of the Majesty on high [revealing His Divine authority], <sup>4</sup> having become as much superior to angels, since He has inherited a more excellent *and* glorious <sup>[b]</sup>name than they [that is, Son—the name above all names].

<sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did the Father ever say,

“You are My Son,

Today I have begotten (fathered) You [established You as a Son, with kingly dignity]”?

And again [did He ever say to the angels],

“I shall be a Father to Him

And He shall be a Son to Me”?

<sup>6</sup> <sup>[c]</sup>And when He again brings the firstborn [highest-ranking Son] into the world, He says,

“And all the angels of God are to worship Him.”

<sup>7</sup> And concerning the angels He says,

“Who makes His angels winds,  
And His ministering servants flames of fire [to do His bidding].”

<sup>8</sup> But about the Son [the Father says to Him],

“Your throne, <sup>[d]</sup>O God, is forever and ever,  
And the <sup>[e]</sup>scepter of [absolute] righteousness is the scepter of <sup>[f]</sup>His kingdom.

<sup>9</sup>

“You have loved righteousness [integrity, virtue, uprightness in purpose] and have hated  
lawlessness [injustice, sin].

Therefore God, Your God, Has anointed You  
With the oil of gladness above Your companions.”

<sup>10</sup> And,

“<sup>[g]</sup>You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning,

And the heavens are the works of Your hands;

<sup>11</sup>

They will perish, but You remain [forever and ever];

And they will all wear out like a garment,

<sup>12</sup>

And like a robe You will roll them up;

Like a garment they will be changed.

But <sup>[h]</sup>You are the same [forever],

And Your years will never end.”

<sup>13</sup> But to which of the angels has the Father ever said,

“Sit at My right hand [together with me in royal dignity],

Until I make your enemies

A footstool for your feet [in triumphant conquest]”?

<sup>14</sup> Are not all the angels ministering spirits sent out [by God] to serve (accompany, protect) those who will inherit salvation? [Of course they are!]

## Footnotes

- a. [Hebrews 1:3](#) The word “Shekinah” does not appear in Scripture, but has been used by both Christians and Jews to describe the visible divine Presence of God, in such things as the

burning bush, the cloud and the pillar of fire that led the Hebrews in the wilderness, and the Presence of God that rested between the cherubim over the mercy seat of the ark.

- b. [Hebrews 1:4](#) In Greek “name” occurs last in this verse to emphasize that Jesus alone bears the name *Son*. No angel is superior to the Son.
- c. [Hebrews 1:6](#) Most likely a reference to the second coming of Christ when He will be acknowledged as divine and worshiped as the Son of God. Another view suggests that this may be a reference to His incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth.
- d. [Hebrews 1:8](#) The Son is recognized as deity by being addressed by the Father as “God.”
- e. [Hebrews 1:8](#) I.e. symbol of authority.
- f. [Hebrews 1:8](#) Late mss read *Your*.
- g. [Hebrews 1:10](#) The deity of Jesus is acclaimed by the designation “You, Lord.”
- h. [Hebrews 1:12](#) Since He is deity, the eternity of Jesus is recognized.