

The Epistle to the Hebrews

Introduction

Authorship and Date Uncertain

The epistle is anonymous and has been ascribed to Paul, Barnabas, Luke, Apollos and various other persons. The most that can be said is that the weight of opinion seems to favor the Pauline authorship.

Purpose

The epistle was apparently written primarily to Hebrew Christians. These converts were in constant danger of relapsing into Judaism, or at least of attaching too much importance to ceremonial observances. The chief doctrinal purpose of the writer was to show the transcendent glory of the Christian dispensation, as compared with that of the Old Testament.

Key Word

“Better” By following this word the reader will discover the main current of thought.

Other recurrent words and phrases:

- “Sat Down” referring to Christ’s finished work, ch. 1:3; 10:12; 12:2
- “Heavenly” calling, ch. 3:1; priest, ch. 4:14; gift, ch. 6:4; substance, ch. 10:34; country, ch. 11:16; city, ch. 12:22
- “Let Us” a series of eleven exhortations
 - “Fear” ch. 4:1
 - “Labor” ch. 4:11
 - “Come boldly to the throne of grace” ch.4:16
 - “Go on” ch. 6:1
 - “Draw near” ch. 10: 22
 - “Hold fast” ch. 10:23
 - “Consider one another” ch. 10:24
 - “Lay aside every weight and run with patience” ch. 12:1
 - “Have grace” ch. 12:28
 - “Go forth” ch. 13:13
 - “Offer the sacrifice of praise” ch. 13:15

The book is divided into two parts Part I Doctrinal, Part II Practical

Synopsis

Part I – Doctrinal

SECTION I – THE PREEMINENCE OF CHRIST

Ch. 1

- (1) **Over the prophets**, because of his divine glory, vs. 1-3
- (2) **Over the angels**
 - (a) Having a better name, v. 4
 - (b) Acknowledged as the only begotten son by the Father, v. 5
 - (c) Angels commanded to worship him, v.6

- (d) Exalted above the angels to the eternal throne at the right hand of God vs. 8-14

Ch. 2

- (e) His message is transcendent in importance, and it is perilous to disregard it, vs. 1-4
- (f) Jesus made a little lower than the angels, dies for mankind that he may bring many sons into his own glory with the Father, and destroy him who had the power of death, vs. 9-14

SECTION II THE PREEMINENCE OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD

Ch. 2 (continued)

(1) **He assumed human nature**

- (a) Preparatory for his work of reconciliation, vs. 16, 17
- (b) His temptation prepared him to succor the tempted, v. 18

Ch. 3

- (2) **An appeal** to consider Christ's priesthood, v. 1
- (3) **His preeminence over Moses**, as a servant, Christ being a son, vs. 2-6
- (4) **Parenthesis, The failure of Israel.**
 - (a) To enter in to the Canaan-rest, vs. 7-11
 - (b) They were excluded because of unbelief, vs. 12-19

Ch. 4

- (c) A warning to the church not to follow the example of unbelieving Israel, but to enter into the rest of faith, vs. 1-8
- (d) The believer looks forward to the rests of God in which he will cease from his labor, vs. 9-11
- (e) The power of the word of God, vs. 12, 13

The Subject of the Priesthood of Christ resumed.

- (1) **The sympathetic priesthood of Christ** an encouragement to steadfastness and prayer, vs. 14-16

Ch. 5

- (2) **The high priest**, his office and work:
 - (a) Taken from among men, vs. 1
 - (b) Sympathetic because of his own weakness, v. 2
 - (c) Presents an offering for himself, as well as for the people, v. 3
 - (d) Divinely chosen v. 4
- (3) **Characteristics of Christ's priesthood**
 - (a) Divinely chosen after a new order, vs. 5, 6
 - (b) He offered up earnest prayers for deliverance in a submissive spirit, vs. 7, 8
 - (c) Became author of eternal salvation, vs. 9, 10
- (4) **Parenthetic rebuke, appeal, warning, and commendation**
 - (d) Rebuke, for dullness and immaturity

Ch. 6

- (e) Appeal for progress in doctrinal truth, vs. 1-3

- (f) A warning respecting those who, having enjoyed the higher privileges of the new dispensation, turn away from Christ, vs. 4-8
- (g) A commendation of the church, and a confidence that believers will continue faithful and inherit the promises. vs. 9-12

The Subject of Christ's priesthood again resumed.

(5) The certainty of the fulfillment of Divine promises.

- (a) Illustrated in the life of Abraham, vs. 13-15
- (b) Confirmed by an oath, vs. 16, 17
- (c) Like an anchor to the soul, vs. 18, 19
- (d) Assured by our heavenly high priest, v. 20

Ch. 7

(6) The priesthood of Melchisedec a type of Christ's

- (a) Having a great name and belonging to an eternal order, vs. 1-3
- (b) Honored with tithes by Abraham and superior to the Aaronic priesthood, vs. 4-10

(7) The summary of the preeminent qualities of Christ's priesthood:

- (a) Like that of Melchisedec, it belonged to an eternal order, and was confirmed by a divine oath, vs. 11-22
- (b) Is unchangeable and infinite in power, vs. 23-25
- (c) Was sinless and perfect, and made on complete sacrifice, vs. 26-28

Ch. 8

- (d) Is now exercised in the heavenly sanctuary, vs. 1-5
- (e) Mediates through a better covenant, vs. 6-13

Ch. 9

- (f) The ancient rites and ceremonies, and the sacrifices performed by the priests were only types, vs. 1-10.
- (g) The redemptive work of Christ, and his blood cleansing from sin, are sublime realities, vs. 11-15.
- (h) The institutes of the old covenant prefigured the perfect sacrificial work of Christ in the new, vs. 16-28.

Ch. 10

- (i) The oft-repeated Jewish sacrifices were not effectual to take away sin. While Christ, by his one great sacrifice, completed the redemptive work for mankind, and "sat down at the right hand of God," awaiting the consummation of the divine plan, vs. 1-18

PART II – CHIEFLY PRACTICAL TEACHINGS AND EXHORTATIONS

- (1) **The privilege of entering into the divine presence** through the sacrifice and priesthood of Christ, vs. 19-21
- (2) Exhortations

- (a) To draw near in worship with full assurance, having prepared the heart, v. 22
- (b) To steadfastness, mutual encouragement, and faithful attendance upon the means of grace, vs. 23-25
- (3) **Warnings** respecting the perils of backsliding.
 - (a) The penalty visited upon despisers, under the Mosaic Law, vs. 26-28
 - (b) The worse fate of those who dishonor Christ's sacrifice and the gracious spirit of God, vs. 29-31
- (4) **A reminder** to the Hebrew believers, of their previous fortitude in enduring afflictions and an exhortation to patience and perseverance, vs. 32-39

Ch. 11

- (5) **A roll call** of the heroes and heroines of faith
 - (a) The sphere of faith, vs. 1-3
 - (b) Notable examples of faith:
Abel, v. 4; **Enoch**, vs. 5, 6; **Noah**, v. 7; **Abraham and Sara**, vs. 8-19; **Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph**, vs. 20-22; **Moses and his parents**, vs. 23-29; **Joshua and Israel**, v. 30; **Rahab**, v. 31; **Others**, vs. 32-40

Ch. 12

- (6) **Spiritual athletics**, the Christian race
 - (a) The audience, the preparation, and how to run, v.1
 - (b) Eyes upon the Master at the goal, remembering his victory, v. 2
 - (c) The inspiration when weary, vs. 3, 4
 - (d) The value of hardship and correction in training, vs. 5-10
 - (e) The good results of hardship and chastening, v. 11
 - (f) An exhortation to sturdiness and straightforwardness, vs. 12, 13
- (7) **Exhortations** respecting peaceableness, purity, and watchfulness against evil influences, vs. 14, 15
- (8) **Warnings** concerning selling out life's blessings, vs. 16, 17
- (9) **A contrast** between Mount Sinai of the Old Testament and Mount Zion of the New
 - (a) Mount Sinai with its awful manifestations of divine power, vs. 18-21
 - (b) Mount Zion with the glorious company within the heavenly Jerusalem, vs. 22-24
- (10) **Solemn warning** respecting the heeding of the heavenly message in regard to the mutability of earthly things and the permanence of God's kingdom, vs. 25-28.

Ch. 13

- (1) **Final exhortations respecting Christian Duties**
 - (a) Social duties, vs. 1-6
 - (b) Duty to religious leaders, v. 7
 - (c) An unchangeable Christ should inspire steadfastness in Christian doctrine, vs. 8, 9
 - (d) The duty of Christian separation, vs. 10-14

- (e) The duty of thanksgiving, benevolence and obedience to rulers, vs. 15-17
- (2) **Concluding words**
 - (a) A request for prayers, and a blessing pronounced, vs. 18-21
 - (b) Final salutation and benediction, vs. 22-25

CHOICE SELECTIONS

Suffering, a preparation for priesthood, ch. 2:9-18

The rest of faith, ch. 4:1-11

Spiritual maturity, ch. 5:12 to ch. 6:2

The New Covenant, ch. 8:8-13

“The Faith Chapter” – The role call of heroes, Ch. 11

The chapter on “Spiritual Athletics and the Christian Race,” Hardship, Correction and Chastening, as a preparation for victory, ch. 12:1-13

Students taking class for college credit have the following additional assignments:

February 24th, 2009 – *250 word paper due discussing any of the “Let Us” passages.

April 7th, 2009 – *500 word paper due (e-mail instructor for assignment by March 3rd)

April 7th, 2009 – Comprehensive take home test (Due at last class April 14th, 2009)

***Note – All papers are to be submitted in electronic form. Each must contain Title Page, Body, and Reference Page. Mandatory minimum of three references accepted. Double spaced and in APA format.**