

Bible Synthesis VI
(Bible Survey)

**INTRODUCTION TO
HEBREWS**

1. INTRODUCTION

This Epistle has been called “the fifth Gospel,” The first four present His work on earth, this speaks of that, and also His work in heaven.

- (1) These Jewish converts to Christ living in the earliest days of Christianity had many conflicts.
 - 1. The Jewish *temple* with its splendor, and impressive ritual beckoned these converts to come back into its fold.
 - 2. Jewish *traditions*, built into his heart and life still powerfully called him back into Judaism. The grandest names of history were associated with that way.
 - 3. Jewish *ties* of family and nation were very strong.
 - 4. Jewish *teachings* were hard to renounce.
 - This Epistle was written to answer these many problems of the new believer.
—From *Exploring the Scriptures*, John Phillips, Moody.
- (2) Note Paul’s skill in dealing with these things.
 - 1. He shows them the glory of the Person, and the grandeur of the work of Christ.
 - 2. He tells them what they have gained in Christ (note “We have”—4:14; 6:19; 8:1; 10:34; 13:10, 14), and their Christianity is superior Judaism.
 - 3. He shows them they had not suffered as much as others, and especially as much as Christ (12:3-4).

2. AUTHOR

The authorship is uncertain.

- (1) General opinion of Christians since earliest times has been that Paul was the author, though some have denied this from the second century on. Arguments for Paul’s authorship:
 - 1. Peter’s statement (II Peter 3:15, 16; Cf.. I Peter 1:1; II Peter 3:1). The logic in this is that Peter wrote to Jewish believers. See the Introduction to I Peter, “Recipients.”
 - 2. The doctrinal teaching is in line with what Paul writes in other letters.
(Cf. Heb. 5:12-14; with I Cor. 3:2; Heb. 3:12-19 with I Cor. 10:1-11; Heb. 10:38 with Rom. 1:17; and Gal. 3:11; Heb. 9:15 with Rom. 3:25).
 - 3. The writer had been in bonds (10:34), he wrote from Italy (13:24), and was closely associated with Timothy (13:23; Cf.. I Thess. 3:2).
 - 4. The close is typically Pauline (Cf.. 13:25 with Rom. 16:24; I Cor. 16:23, 24; 11 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 6:18; Eph. 6:24; Phil. 4:23; Gal. 4:18; I Thess. 5:28; II Thess. 3:18; I Tim. 6:21; II Tim. 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philem. 25). No other writers use “grace” in their endings, except for Peter in II Peter 3:18, where it is used in the sense of Christian experience rather than divine grace bestowed, “grow in grace.”
 - 5. Hebrews provides last of three commentaries on Habakkuk 2:4, along with Romans and Galatians. Seems God would have used the same writer for the last of the three as for first two.
- (2) Objections center around Paul’s name not being used anywhere in the Epistle, the style of writing and the language used. Objectors (and this includes many reverent scholars) suggest Luke, Apollos, Barnabas, Philip, Priscilla. This is pure speculation (Cf.. II Tim. 3:16).

For some more speculation which has been introduced down through the years:

- 1. Eusebius said that Pantoenus of Alexandria (second century) assigned the authorship to Paul.
 - 2. Tertullian of Carthage (third century) declared that Barnabas was the writer of Hebrews.
 - 3. Luther thought that Apollos had written it. Of course, Luther lived 1483–1546, long after Hebrews was written. He is noted for some wild speculations.
 - 4. Dr. G. Campbell Morgan thought that it bears traces of Paul’s thinking and Luke’s writing.
 - 5. C. I. Scofield thought that we have preserved in this epistle “the method of Paul’s synagogue addresses.” Of course, this could be true, but he does not assign authorship by saying this. He does in fact give Paul credit for having written Hebrews.
- (3) Notice the writer’s skill in dealing with certain matters:
- 1. First he fills their minds with the glory of the Person, and the grandeur of the work of the Lord Jesus.
 - 2. He shows them what they had gained in Christ (note “We have” in 4:14; 6:19; 8:1; 10:34; 13:10, 14) and that their Christianity was superior to Judaism.
 - 3. He shows them they had not yet suffered as much as others.

Note: Coleridge has beautifully pointed out that, whilst the Romans Epistle proved the *necessity* of the Christian religion, the object of Hebrews was to prove the *superiority* of the Christian religion, and this the writer does, *not by slighting the old*, but by showing the new as the fulfillment of the old. They had good things in the old system, but they now have everything “better.” —*The Outlined Bible*, Robert Lee, London.

3. RECIPIENTS

- (1) Originally a group of Jewish Christians (as with James, I and II Peter). Not Hebrew Christians in general, but a particular group in a certain locality (13:7, 17-19, 22-24).
- (2) The recipients were known by the writer personally (5:11, 12; 6:9, 10; 10:32-34:12:4).
- (3) Their precise locality is unknown, but they were familiar with Old Testament and with temple worship, so they were probably in the land of Israel.
- (4) One more idea (relating to their *supposed* spiritual condition): They had made a profession of faith in Christ (3:1; 4:14; 10:23), and they gave some evidence of being truly saved (6:10; 10: 32-34), but they had too much of a tendency to look backward to the old covenant (1:1; 3:5, 6; 7:11; 8:7, etc.). Also they demonstrated a spiritual backwardness and sluggishness that made the writer doubt if some were truly born again (3:12; 5:11-14; 12:25), etc.

The school of interpretation from which this last idea comes “*teaches that the people addressed in the letter were not truly born again believers, but merely professing Christians, who had only come part way to Christ and were in danger of drawing back before they were finally and actually saved. This is the generally accepted view of the Calvinistic school of interpretation.*” To go on, “*The correct interpretation of the book hinges on the answer to this one question, Were the people addressed Christians or unbelievers, saved or lost? A person cannot be half saved. He is either one or the other. To say that they were partly saved is to becloud the entire issue. From the beginning to the end of Hebrews we sincerely believe that the people to whom the letter was written were genuine, born-again, saved individuals.*” —Excerpts from *Hebrews*, by Dr. M. R. DeHaan, Zondervan, 1959, pages 16-17.

4. DATE

Evidently prior to the destruction of the Jewish temple in A.D. 70, as various Hebrews passages indicate clearly that the temple worship was still in progress (8:4; 9:6; 10:11; 13: 10). Probably A.D. 63-68.

5. PURPOSE

- (1) To present the Lord Jesus Christ in His absolute preeminence as the final and complete revelation of God. Christ is pictured as the Son of God who became incarnate that He might be our great High Priest, the one Mediator between God and men. This is the only book which deals fully with the priestly ministry of Christ, His superiority over all previous revelations of God, as well as presenting the new covenant over the old covenant.
- (2) To use this fact of the superiority of Christ and the new covenant in His blood as the basis for encouragement and warning to the readers. Immature Christians are encouraged to go on with the Lord and grow in grace.
- (3) Hebrews presents the third New Testament commentary of Habakkuk 2:4, "... but the just shall live by his faith." The first of these commentaries is found in Rom. 1:17. The second is found in Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38 gives the final one. Romans emphasizes **the just**, Galatians **shall live**, and Hebrews **by faith**. The emphasis of each of these commentaries is borne out in its context. We shall see how this is developed as we proceed through the Epistle to the Hebrews.

6. THEME

"... the just shall live by faith" — Heb. 10:38 [Hebrews 11 is "The Great Faith Chapter"]
 "God has spoken" — ["This is my Beloved Son ... hear ye Him." — Matt. 17:5] — Heb. 1:2
 The superiority of Christ
 Our Great High Priest

7. KEY VERSE:

Heb. 10:38; 4:14

8. KEY WORDS

"*faith*" — 31 times (24 times in chapter 11 alone).
 "*better*" — 12 times. Significant. Christ better than angels or greatest of men. Through Him we have a better covenant, a better sacrifice, a better resurrection, etc.
 "*perfection*" (with verb and adjective) used, 11 times. Not absolute perfection, but maturity in Christian experience contrasted with carnal, immature walk.
 "*eternal*" (and "*forever*") — used 13 times. It contrasts the finality of Christianity with the temporary nature of the old covenant.
 "*heaven*" ("*heavens*," "*heavenly*") — 16 times. Shows that realities of Christian faith are not earthly in Nature (as those of Judaism largely were) but spiritual.
 "*partakers*" — 7 times. Speaking of fellowship and joint participation. We have fellowship with one another and with Christ such as could not be experienced under Judaism. The Christian life is not theoretical, but an actual living experience.
 "*having ... let us*," *leaving... let us*." These phrases are used several times, and they point to importance of going on with the Lord, both to believer and unbeliever. Life must be lived in accordance with knowledge we have.

The word "*lest*" — 11 times in 10 verses. A warning word, *lest* they fail or fall short in some way.

9. SUPPLEMENTAL NOTE

The Outlined Bible (by Robert Lee, London), suggested how the book of Hebrews lends itself to topical study. He suggested the following topics:

- (1) "perfect" — 2:10; 5:9, 14, "full age"; 7:11, 19, 28; 9:9, 11; 10:14; 11:40, and maybe more.
- (2) "heavenly" — 1:10; 3:1; 4:14; 6:4; 7:26; 8:1, 5; 9:23, 24; 10:34; 11:16; 12:22, 23, 25, 26.

- (3) “eternal” — 1:8; 5:6, 9; 6:20; 7:17, 21, 24, 28; 9:12, 14, 15; 13:8, 20, 21.
- (4) “sat down” — 1:3; 8:1; 10:11, 12; 12:2.
- (5) “once” — 7:27; 9:12, 26, 27, 28; 10:2, 10.
- (6) “better” — 1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:6, 35, 40; 12:24.

Note: Some Bible teachers say very dogmatically, “The readers (*meaning, those to whom the Epistle was addressed*) were being tempted to go back to Judaism.” As I stated back in the Introduction to this Epistle, I hesitate to make that assertion. I find no clear statement to that effect anywhere in this Epistle. It may have been true, but we need to see “chapter and verse.”

OUTLINE OF HEBREWS – #1

“One reason why no human name is appended to Hebrews meets us in the first verse, for this is the only epistle which begins with the divine name in the opening sentence. How authoritative and commanding and important this letter should be. And how right and proper it is that all human authors should sink from sight before that name above all names.”

Exploring the Scriptures, John Phillips, Moody Monthly pp. 261-262.

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| 1. THE SUPERIOR PERSON OF CHRIST | — 1:1 – 8:5 |
| (1) Superior in His Majesty | — 1:1 – 2:18 |
| a. To the prophets | (1:1-3) |
| b. To the angels | (1:4 – 2:18) |
| (2) Superior in His Ministry | — 3:1 – 8:5 |
| a. His practical ministry | (3:1 – 4:13) |
| -1. Compared with Moses | (3:1-19) |
| -2. Compared with Joshua | (4:1-13) |
| b. His priestly ministry | (4:14 – 8:5) |
| -1. Compared with Aaron | (4:14 – 5:4) |
| -2. Compared with Melchizedek | (5:5 – 8:5) |
| 2. THE SUPERIOR PROVISIONS OF CALVARY | — 8:6 – 10:39 |
| (1) We have a Better Security | — 8:6-13 |
| The old covenant provided only a temporary security | |
| (2) We have a Better Sanctuary | — 9:1-10 |
| The tabernacle provided only a transient sanctuary. | |
| (3) We have a Better Sacrifice | — 9:11 – 10:39 |
| The offerings provided only a typical sacrifice. | |
| 3. THE SUPERIOR PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT | — 11 – 13 |
| (1) The Powerful Working of Faith | — 11 |
| (2) The Patient Waiting of Hope | — 12 |
| (3) The Perfect Willingness of Love | — 13 |

Ibid., John Phillips, pp. 262-263.

Summary: Hebrews 1-6

(Moody Manna) by J. Arthur Springer

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|-----------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. The Son is better than the prophets | — 1:1-3 |
| 2. The Son is better than the angels | — 1:4-14 |
| 3. The Son's message is of supreme importance | — 2:1-8 |
| 4. The Son to be a High Priest | — 2:9-18 |
| 5. Christ is better than Moses | — 3:1-6 |
| 6. Unbelief hinders God's blessing | — 3:7-19 |
| 7. Christ is better than Joshua | — 4:1-8 |
| 8. Christ is our great High Priest | — 4:9-16 |
| 9. Christ is a Priest forever | — 5:1-7 |
| 10. The Jew's lack of understanding | — 5:8-14 |
| 11. The Jew's extreme danger | — 6:1-8 |
| 12. God's immutable promise | — 6:9-20 |

OUTLINE OF HEBREWS – #2

Robert Lee, London

A. THE ARGUMENT —Heb. 1:1 – 10:18

THE GLORY OF THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST.

- (1) The Lord Jesus GREATER THAN THE PROPHETS –1:1-3
 - a. The prophets were great but the Son is greater, because whilst God spake “by” the prophets, He speaks “in” His Son. Jesus is God’s last word.
 - b. Observe the phrase “sad down,” in verse 3. This is one of the characteristic utterances of Hebrews suggestive of a work perfectly finished.
- (2) The Lord Jesus GREATER THAN ANGELS –1:4 – 2:18
 - a. Angels are great beings, but the Lord Jesus is greater, for (1) He is Son of God. (2) Begotten of God. (3) God never said to them what He says to the Lord Jesus, “Thy throne O God.”
 - b. “The oil of gladness above Thy fellows,” verse 9, proves that our Lord was not only “The Man of Sorrows” but also “The Man of Gladness.”
- (3) The Lord Jesus GREATER THAN MOSES –3:1-19
 - a. How great Moses was! But Jesus is greater. Moses was a faithful *servant*, but Jesus is a loyal Son over His own house.
 - b. This statement would fall with tremendous weight on the Jews of those days, as indeed it does even in our day.
- (4) The Lord Jesus GREATER THAN JOSHUA –4:1-13
 - a. Joshua was a great leader, yet he failed: Jesus is a greater, for He alone can give and lead to real rest.
 - b. Is “the Word of God” in verse 12 the Lord Jesus? Certainly He is the Word of God and is alive (quick) and powerful, and the All-wise and All-knowing One.
- (5) The Lord Jesus GREATER THAN AARON –4:14 – 10:18

Aaron and his successors were great, but Jesus is better, for:

 - [1] He was sinless, whilst they were sinful. –4:15
 - [2] He was Priest after a higher order than the Aaronic. –5:6
 - [3] He is our Forerunner — Aaron never was. –6:20
 - [4] Abraham acknowledged Melchizedek greater. –7:4
 - [5] The order of Melchizedek is an everlasting one. –7:16-17
 - [6] Aaron served the shadows, Jesus the realities. –8:1-5
 - [7] He is the medium of a better Covenant. –8:6-13
 - [8] He ministers in a better sanctuary. –9:1-25
 - [9] And ministers as offering a better sacrifice. –9:25-28

B. THE APPLICATION —Heb. 10:19 – 13:25

THE LIFE WE SHOULD LIVE BECAUSE OF HIS LIFE AND WORK

Like a wise preacher, the writer did not leave the application until the end, but repeatedly drove home the lesson, as 2:1-4; 3:7-19; 6:1-12. But the application proper begins here, and is remarkable for the repetition of the phrase, “Let us.”

- (1) “Be borne along” (literal meaning)–6:1
- (2) “Draw near”–10:19-22
- (3) “Hold fast”–10:23
- (4) “Consider one another”–10:24-25
- (5) Perseverance–10:26 - 11:40
- (6) “Lay aside every weight and sin”–12:1
- (7) “Run with patience”–12:1-2
- (8) “Endure manfully”–12:3-29

- (9) "Let brotherly love continue"-13:1-4
 (10) "Let your conversation be without covetousness-13:5
 (11) "Go forth"-13:13
 (12) "Offer the sacrifice of praise"-13:15

OUTLINE OF HEBREWS – #3

J. Vernon McGee

- I. Christ Better Than Old Testament Economy —Heb. 1 – 10
(Doctrinal)
- A. Christ Is Superior to Prophets — 1:1-3
- B. Christ Is Superior to Angels — 1:4 – 2:18
1. Deity of Christ —1:4-14
2. Humanity of Christ —2:1-18
1st Danger Signal: Peril of Drifting —2:1-4
- C. Christ Is Superior to Moses —3:1 – 4:2
2nd Danger Signal: Peril of Doubting —3:7-4:2
- D. Christ Is Superior to Joshua —4:3-13
- E. Christ is Super to Levitical Priesthood —4:14 – 7:28
1. Our Great High Priest —4:14-16
2. Definition of a Priest —5:1-10
3rd Danger Signal: Peril of Dull Hearing —5:11-14
4th Danger Signal: Peril of Departing —6:1-20
3. Christ our High Priest after Order of Melchizedek —7:1-28
- F. Christ as Our High Priest Ministers in Superior Sanctuary
 by Better Covenant Built upon Better Promises —8:1 – 10:39
1. True Tabernacle — 8:1-5
2. New Covenant, Better than the Old —8:6-13
3. New Sanctuary, Better than the Old —9:1-10
4. Superior Sacrifice —9:11 – 10:18
5. Encouragement —10:19- 25
5th Danger Signal: Peril of Despising —10:26-39
- II. Christ Brings Better Benefits and Duties —Heb. 11 – 13
(Practical)
- A. Faith — 11:1-40
- B. Hope — 12:1-29
1. The Christian Race — 12:1-2
2. Believers Are Now in Contest and Conflict —12:3-14
6th Danger Signal: Peril of Denying —12:15-29
- C. Love — 13:1-25
1. Secret Life of Believers — 13:1-6
2. Social Life of Believers —13:7-14

- 3. Spiritual Life of Believers — 13:15-19
- 4. Benediction — 13:20-25