

God's Amazing Book

Journey Through the New Testament

STAY WITH JESUS, HE'S THE BEST¹

A Quick Look at the General Epistle to the Hebrews

Fast Facts on Hebrews

Written by? Unknown

Written to whom? Jews

Written when? A.D. 65-67

Written why? To exhort a Jewish audience to go on in the better way made possible in Jesus Christ, God's final and climactic revelation. *The book is for anyone who asks, "Why should I have faith in Jesus Christ?"*

Prologue:	Better in His Person	Better in His Priesthood	Better in His Pattern	Epilogue:	
"God . . . has spoken to us by His Son"	Better Than: Prophets Angels Moses Joshua The Sabbath	Greater Than: Earthly Priests Aaronic Priesthood Old Covenant (Mosaic Law) Animal Sacrifices Daily Offerings	Let Us Have: Boldness to enter the Holiest (10) Faith to trust God (11) Jesus as our example (12) Love to bless others (13)	"I appeal to you . . . with the word of exhortation"	
1:1-4	1:5—4:13	4:14—10:18	10:19—13:21	13:22-25	
Key Verse	"Seeing . . . We have a great high priest . . . Let us hold fast our confession (4:14)				
Major Emphasis	What to Believe		How to Live		
Key Idea	"Better than . . ."		"Therefore let us . . ."		
5 Warnings	Don't Drift 2:1-4	Don't Doubt 3:7—4:13	Don't Grow Dull 5:11—6:20	Don't Despise 10:19-39	Don't Defy 12:14-29

Hebrews begins like an essay, proceeds like a sermon, and ends like a letter. - T. Rees

The book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrews to tell them to stop acting like Hebrews. - Donald Barnhouse

The book of Hebrews in the New Testament is, as it were, a religious Consumer Reports magazine. The author lays out the person of Jesus Christ and what he has done, and then sets him against the Old Testament religious system that was native to most of his audience and to which some were feeling tempted to return. - Mark Dever²

Persecution is a real threat to the Jewish Christians in the newly forming churches intense persecution as they try to live out their newfound faith in Christ while living in Jewish communities where the Old Testament is the focus of religion. The unknown writer of the book of Hebrews believes that many Jewish Christians are in danger of slipping back into Judaism because of growing opposition. They need to mature and become stable in their faith. By demonstrating the superiority of Christ over all the Old Testament rituals and sacrifices, this unknown author exhorts these early believers to stay true to the gospel of Jesus Christ.³

¹ The chart is from Danny Akin, "Hebrews", www.danielakin.com.

² Mark Dever, *The Message of the New Testament*, 414.

³ Jim George, *The Bare Bones Bible Handbook*, pg. 259.

[T]he onset of persecution was prompting them to waver and wonder if the faith was worth all the trouble after all. It appears from the warnings issued in this book that many of these Christians were sorely tempted to desert the faith.⁴

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT HEBREWS⁵

- 1) Hebrews is the only New Testament book with an unknown author.
- 2) Hebrews is the only New Testament book that deals specifically with the present ministry and activities of Jesus Christ as our High Priest.
- 3) More than twenty descriptive phrases are used of Christ in this book (“heir of all things,” “High Priest,” etc.).
- 4) Hebrews is the only New Testament book to give us some typological understanding of the Old Testament feasts and offerings found in Leviticus.
- 5) Hebrews contains five very serious warnings against turning away from the Lord (2:1-4; 3:7-4:13; 5:11-6:20; 10:26-39; 12:25-29).
- 6) Hebrews contains more than 150 Greek words that are unique to this book.
- 7) Hebrews is considered by many scholars and commentators to be the greatest literary work in the New Testament, written in some of the most elegant Greek of the New Testament.
- 8) Hebrews is sometimes referred to the “fifth gospel” because of its emphasis on Jesus’ past work on earth and his present work in heaven (Hebrews 2:9 and 4:14).

7 DANGERS Based on the 5 Warning Passages⁶

- 1) **Ignoring what God has done in Christ (2:1).** Seek to understand who He is and what He has done.
- 2) **Not believing God (3:12, 14).** Having listened, there is still the danger of unbelief.
- 3) **Ceasing to grow (5:12).** Mark Dever states, “Many people have the idea that someone can be a ‘baby Christian’; that somehow a Christian can persist for years and decades in a state of spiritual immaturity. Is that real? There are people I might be tempted to describe that way. But is it a biblical category? You will be hard pressed to find it in the Bible. Rather, severe warnings are given in Scripture to anyone who has heard and claims to believe but who has then stopped and not pressed on. By analogy, we know we are physically alive because we are living, aging, and even growing until our very last breath. The idea that something can be alive even though it has stopped growing is a curious idea, and I am not sure the New Testament is familiar with it.”
- 4) **Not persevering in holiness (10:22; 26; 35-36; especially 12:14!!).** If we remain unholy, we show that Christ’s sacrifice has been ineffective in our lives.
- 5) **Losing faith (11:1; 12:2).** We must persevere in faith.
- 6) **Rejecting discipline (12:10-11).** “If we will not accept God’s discipline, we may not know his love. Disciplining children is so important as a part of showing them love, concern, and care. It is the same with God and his children. And just as it is important for the child to listen to his or her parents while being disciplined, so it is important to cultivate the ability to hear God when he disciplines you. We need to take the filters off Our ears and listen to God even when he says the difficult things we may not want to hear.”
- 7) **Refusing this warning (12:25, 28-29).**

Life Lessons from HEBREWS⁷

- 1) The superiority of Christianity is based on the superiority of Christ.
- 2) Salvation in Christ and freedom from sin are gifts from God, but you are given the responsibility to grow and strengthen your faith and trust in God.
- 3) The process of maturing your faith in God takes time.
- 4) Maturity keeps you from being easily swayed in your beliefs.
- 5) You can have victory in your trials when you keep your eyes focused on Christ.

⁴ Mark Dever, 415.

⁵ Jeff Lasseigne, *Highway 66* (Santa Ana, CA: Calvary Chapel Publishing, 2004), 179-180.

⁶ Mark Dever, *Message of the New Testament*, 420-423.

⁷ Jim George, 262.