

A Study of the Epistle to the Hebrews

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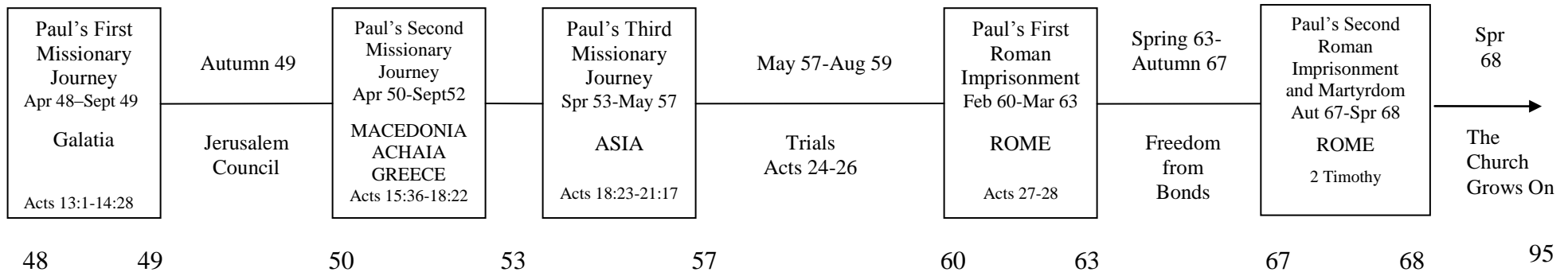
Summary of Hebrews, the General Epistles and Revelation

Book	# of Chapters	Author	Theme	Place Written	Date Written	Recipients
Hebrews	13	Unknown (Luke?)	Jesus: God's final and complete revelation	Unknown (Rome?)	65-69	Unstated (former Jewish priest?), clearly a Jewish audience
James	5	James, brother of Jesus	Faith that works	Jerusalem?	45-50	The twelve tribes dispersed abroad
1 Peter	5	Peter	Suffering unto glory	Rome	64	Those who reside as foreigners in this world
2 Peter	3	Peter	Beware of false prophets	Rome	65-66	Those who have received a faith the same as ours
1 John	5	John	Joy and fellowship with God	Ephesus	80-95	My little children
2 John	1	John	Truth and love in balance	Ephesus	80-95	The chosen lady and her children (local church)
3 John	1	John	Four men and their reputation	Ephesus	80-95	The beloved Gaius
Jude	1	Jude, brother of Jesus	Fight for the faith	Unknown	67-68	Those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ
Revelation	22	John	The Lamb upon the Throne	Patmos	90-96	The seven churches in Asia

The Place of Hebrews, the General Epistles and Revelation in the New Testament History

“Unto the uttermost part of the earth...” (Acts 13-28)

13 14 15 16 18 21 22 24 27



James
 Place: Jerusalem
 Date: 45-50

1 Peter
 Place: Rome
 Date: 64

Hebrews
 Place: Unknown
 Date: 65- 69

1 John
 Place: Ephesus
 Date: 80-95

2 Peter
 Place: Rome
 Date: 65-66

Jude
 Place: Unknown
 Date: 67-68

2 John
 Place: Ephesus
 Date: 80-95

3 John
 Place: Ephesus
 Date: 80-95

Revelation
 Place: Patmos
 Date: 90-96

Hebrews

Theme: Jesus Christ: God's Final and Complete Revelation

Author: Unknown (possibly Luke)

Recipients: Jewish believers of some kind

Date of Writing: c. A.D. 65-69

Place of Writing: Rome (?)

Key Word: "Better"

Purpose for Writing:

To exhort a Jewish Christian audience to press on to maturity through obedience to God's word.

HEBREWS

Author: Unknown (possibly Luke)

Date: c. A.D. 65-69

Theme: The Superiority of Jesus Christ

Prologue:	Better in His Person	Better in His Priesthood	Better in His Pattern		Epilogue:
“God . . . has spoken to us by His Son” 1:1-4	Better Than: Prophets Angels Moses Joshua The Sabbath 1:5—4:13	Greater Than: Earthly Priests Aaronic Priesthood Old Covenant (Mosaic Law) Animal Sacrifices Daily Offerings 4:14—10:18	Let Us Have: Boldness to enter the Holiest (10) Faith to trust God (11) Jesus as our example (12) Love to bless others (13) 10:19—13:21		“I appeal to you . . . with the word of exhortation” 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 . . .”		“Greater 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

Introduction

1. Authorship

There is no consensus concerning the author of Hebrews. The book itself is anonymous. The text makes no direct reference to the author and there is no explicit evidence as to who the author might be. The author must have been a Jew who was very familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures and the practice of first-century Jews. Several suggestions have been made concerning who the author might have been.

- a. Paul. Many have argued that Paul was the author. Several reasons are given: (1) Faith is a very important topic in the book; (2) The writer was associated with Timothy (Heb. 13:23); (3) Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted three places in the New Testament—Rom. 1:17, Gal. 3:11, and Heb. 10:38; and (4) There is a strong emphasis on the person and work of Christ. However, there are important elements of the book that do not seem to be Pauline. The author never uses his name, which is contrary to Paul's style. The writer seems to put himself outside of the circle of the New Testament Apostles (Heb. 2:3-4). The style of writing is much more classical than Paul's style (like Luke). The stress on the priesthood of Jesus is not found in any Pauline material.
- b. Silas. Some have maintained that there are similarities between 1 Peter and this epistle and note that Silas was the amanuensis of that letter.
- c. Barnabas. Tertullian thought that Barnabas must have been the author. Barnabas was a Levite (Acts 4:36), and he would have been well versed in the Old Testament system of worship. Barnabas, the "son of encouragement," could have written a book, which is full of encouragement (cf. 13:22). Some of the Pauline ideas and phrases could be explained on the basis of Barnabas' close association with Paul.
- d. Apollos. This was the view of Luther and also W. A. Criswell. There is no early support for this position. Apollos was gifted in the explanation of the Old Testament Scriptures that would be a prerequisite for the authorship of Hebrews.

- e. Luke. David Allen of Southwestern Seminary, has proposed that Luke is the author of Hebrews and that he wrote to the many former Jewish priests who had become “obedient to the faith” as recorded in Acts 6:7.

1) Patristic Evidence

Clement of Alexandria (c. 155-220) is quoted by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, VI. 14) as saying that “the Epistle to the Hebrews is the work of Paul, . . . it was written to the Hebrews in the Hebrew language; but . . . Luke translated it carefully and published it for the Greeks, and hence the same style of expression is found in this epistle and in the Acts.”

Origen (c. 185-254) is quoted by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History*, VI. 25) as saying “but who wrote the epistle, in truth, God knows. The statement of some who have gone before us is that Clement, bishop of the Romans, wrote the epistle, and of others that Luke, the author of the gospel and the Acts, wrote it.”

2) Lexical Similarity

1. Fifty-three words unique to Luke, Acts, and Hebrews in the New Testament.
2. Similarity of vocabulary in Luke, Acts, and Hebrews to 2 and 3 Maccabees.

3) Stylistic Similarity

1. Near-Classical style of the prologues of Luke, Acts, and Hebrews.
2. The conjunction *te* is used most frequently in Luke’s writings and Hebrews.
3. The use of the phrase *en gar to* is found only in Hebrews 2:18 and Acts 11:15.
4. The particle *kaitoi* is found only in Hebrews 4:3 and in Acts 14:17 and 17:27.

5. The infinitive *prosechein* followed by the dative case is found only in Hebrews 2:1 and Acts 16:14.
6. *os* with the infinitive is found only in Luke 9:52, Acts 20:24, and Hebrews 7:9.
7. *othen* is used frequently by Luke and Hebrews, but never by Paul.
8. The future infinitive occurs only in Acts and Hebrews.
9. The future participle to express purpose is found only in Acts 8:27 and Hebrews 13:17.
10. The use of the phrase “how much more” is common to Luke and Hebrews.
11. The ratio of participles to total occurrences of verbs and verbals is identical in Hebrews and the last half of Acts (chapters 16-28).
12. Luke, Acts, Hebrews make almost exclusive use of the LXX (the Greek trans. of the O.T.) instead of the Hebrews text in quoting the O.T.
13. The employment of quote formulas is similar in Luke-Acts and Hebrews (cf. especially Acts 13:35 and Hebrews 5:6).
14. B. F. Westcott says in his commentary on Hebrews, “It has been already seen that the earliest scholars who speak of the Epistle notice its likeness in style to the writings of St. Luke; and when every allowance has been made for coincidences which consist in forms of expression which are found also in the LXX or in other writers of the N.T., or in the late Greek generally, the likeness is unquestionably remarkable” (*The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. lxxvi).

4) Theological Similarity

1. Christology

- a) Emphasis on the humanity of Christ is strong in both Luke and Hebrews.
- b) Enthronement Christology is prominent in both Luke-Acts, and Hebrews.
- c) Christ as God's final revelation is central to Luke's gospel (especially chapters 1-2) and Hebrews (especially 1:1-4).
- d) The perfection of Christ is emphasized in both Luke-Acts and Hebrews.

2. Angelology

Luke records more instances of angelic activity than any other N.T. writer and the author of Hebrews is the writer most interested in their theological status.

3. Approach to Old Testament History

Cf. Acts 7 and Hebrews 11, the two longest expositions of Old Testament history in the New Testament.

5) Evidence from Discourse Analysis

1. The prologues of both Luke and Hebrews are very similar in structure.
2. Both Luke and the writer to the Hebrews make use of chiasmus as an overall framework for their works.

6) Historical Reconstruction

- | | | |
|----|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. | Author | Luke |
| 2. | Recipients | Former Jewish Priests (Acts 6:7) |
| 3. | Date of writing | c. A.D. 65-69 |
| 4. | Place of writing | Rome |
| 5. | Place of recipients | Antioch (Syria) |

7) Purpose of Luke-Acts and Hebrews

Hebrews 2:3-4 can be seen as a summary of the entire book of Acts.

2. Date.

The date of the epistle is directly related to the author and the destination of the letter. There are several things that should be noted about the possible date.

- a. The letter must have been written before A.D. 96 because Clement of Rome quotes from the letter at that time. If the letter was written to Palestine, Cyprus, or North Africa, then it would have had to have been written well before 96 in order to have had such wide circulation by that time.
- b. The letter must have been written before A.D. 70 because the priestly service was still functioning (Hebrews 8:4; 9:6; 10:1-2; 13:10). It would seem strange that the letter would not mention the fact that the worship had been cut off if the letter was written after A.D. 70 and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.
- c. If the letter was sent from Rome, then the letter was probably written A.D. 65-69 during the persecutions that began in earnest against the Christians during the reign of Nero. It would seem strange that there was no mention of persecution if the letter was written after that time.

3. Recipients.

There is no question in the minds of most interpreters that the recipients of the epistle were Jewish. The question is, what kind of Jews were they and where did they live?

- a. The recipients were Jewish. Some of them were inclined to remain in or return to Jerusalem (13:13). They were well acquainted with the Old Testament and its rituals.
- b. They may have been Hellenistic Jews because all of the quotations come from the Septuagint (LXX) and related texts.
- c. It has been suggested that the people lived in North Africa or in Cyprus, people who had an ascetic lifestyle similar to the Qumran community. Evidence from Qumran suggests that they

had a highly developed doctrine of angels that would fit in very nicely with the thought of the author of Hebrews.

- d. It has been suggested that these were Jews who lived in Rome.
- e. A better suggestion is that the recipients were dwellers in Palestine or Antioch (Syria) and were involved still in temple worship, even though they were believers. The warning passages then would admonish them to stay away from a mindset that the Jewish rituals were necessary for salvation and sanctification.

Another question about the recipients that must be faced is the spiritual condition of the community to which the author was writing. There are three main views.

- a. Some maintain that these are all believers who are being tempted to go back under the umbrella of Judaism. The warning sections would charge them to refrain from putting themselves back under the bondage of Judaism.
- b. Others maintain that the recipients were Jews who were a mixed group. There were true believers and there were “professors”—people who said they were believers but were not. The warning sections in this view would be to those who were not really believers. They would receive the warnings of the author against lapsing back into Judaism which would show that they really did not have faith in Jesus Christ.
- c. It is possible that the warning passages were intended to apply to both believers and unbelievers, challenging both to move forward “to” or “in” the superior way made possible by Jesus Christ.

Simple Outline

- I. The superiority of the person of Christ 1:1 – 4:13
- II. The superiority of the priesthood of Christ 4:14 – 10:18
- III. An exhortation and encouragement to keep on with the faith 10:19 – 13:25

Hebrews: A Summary

BACKGROUND

Jews under persecution (by Judaism and possibly Roman-Nero)

10:32-34; 12:4; 13:13-14.

Second generation Christians (true believers, perhaps converted priest)

3:1

False teachers 13:9

Spiritually immature 5:13; 6:1; Slack in worship 10:25

MAJOR THEMES

1. Exhortation to progress (13:22) by hearing and heeding the word (“To live by faith” cf. chapter 11).
2. Superiority of Christ!!!
3. Evaluation of present spiritual state.
4. Expectations for the future.

KEY WORDS

1. “Better” (13 times) 1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24.
2. “Perfect” (14 times) 2:10; 3:9, 14; 6:1; 7:11, 19, 28; 9:9, 11; 10:1, 14; 11:40; 12:2, 23.
3. “Eternal” (9 times).
4. “Established” (8 times) 2:2; 6:19; 12:28; 13:9.

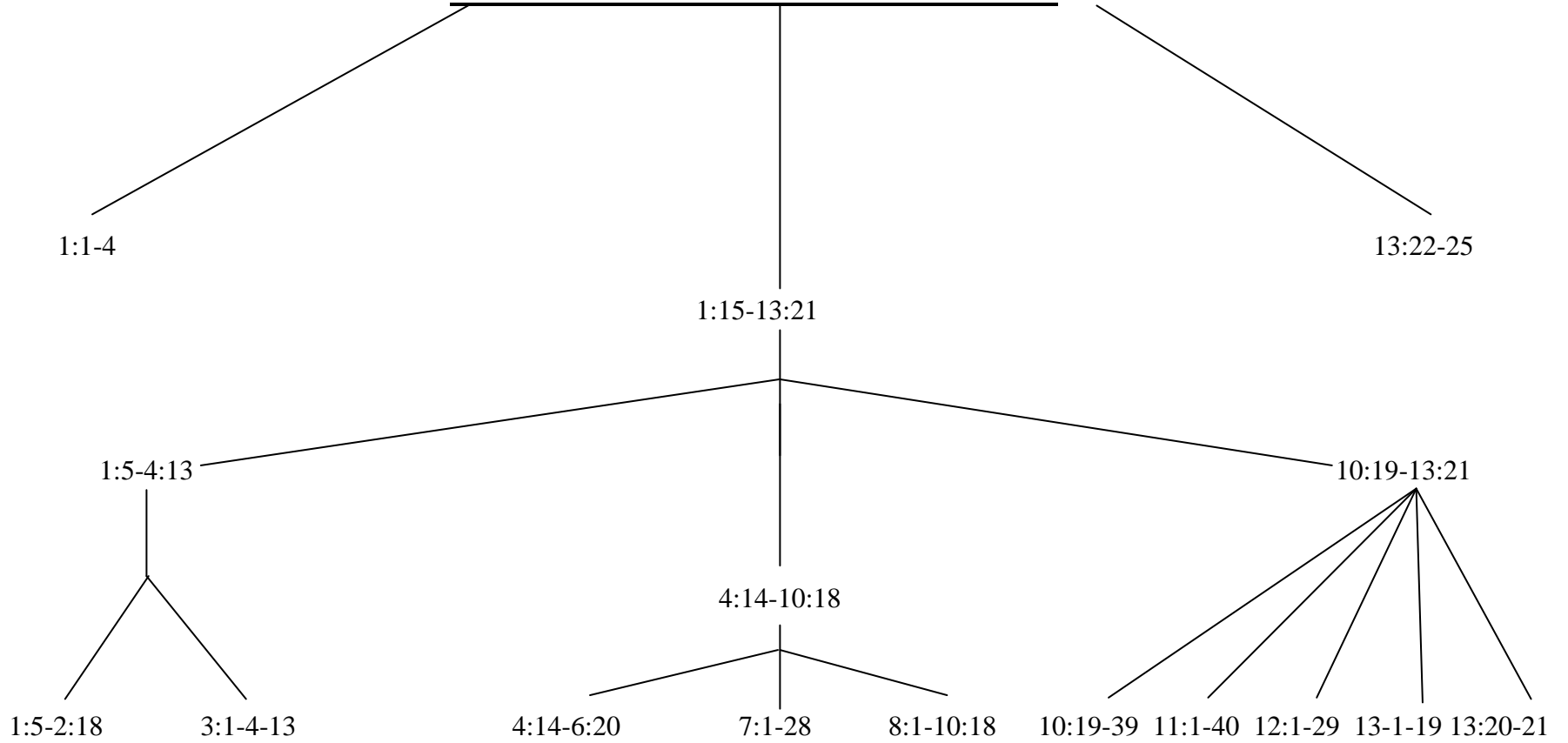
KEY CONCERN OF HEBREWS: THE WARNING PASSAGES (5)

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. 2:1-4 | Drift |
| 2. 3:7 – 4:13 | Doubt, cf. Romans 10:17 for reason |
| 3. 5:11 – 6:20 | Dull |
| 4. 10:26-39 | Despise |
| 5. 12:14-29 | Defy |

Are they for:

1. Believers in danger of losing salvation?
2. Professing church members but not possessing church members?
3. Believers in danger of losing earthly blessings and heavenly rewards by turning back?
4. Hypothetical cases to warn and encourage believers to press on?
5. Combination of views 2 and 3?

STRUCTURAL OUTLINE OF HEBREWS



A PROFILE OF JESUS

(Based upon the Assertions about Him in the Book of Hebrews)

- | | | |
|-----|---|---------------------|
| 1. | He is God's agent of creation. | 1:2 |
| 2. | He sustains the physical universe. | 1:3 |
| 3. | He is the Son of God. | 4:14; 5:5, 8; 6:6 |
| 4. | He is higher than any created beings. | 1:4, 9; 2:8, et al. |
| 5. | He is altogether transcendent. | 7:26 |
| 6. | He is eternal in every way. | 6:20; 7:24, 25, 28 |
| 7. | He is unchanging (immutable). | 13:8 |
| 8. | He is called "God," and has eternal kingship. | 1:8 |
| 9. | He is worshipped by heavenly beings. | 1:6 |
| 10. | He is God's "First Begotten" (most exalted). | 1:6 |
| 11. | He became altogether human. | 2:16, 17, 18; 4:15 |
| 12. | He was altogether sinless. | 4:15; 9:14 |
| 13. | He was the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. | 9:26; 10:10, et al. |
| 14. | He is our "sin bearer." | 9:28 |
| 15. | He "destroyed the devil" by his own death. | 2:14 |
| 16. | He rose from the dead. | 13:20 |
| 17. | He sits at God's right hand. | 1:3; 8:1; 12:2 |
| 18. | He is fully understanding. | 4:15 |
| 19. | He intercedes for us when we sin. | 7:25 |
| 20. | He is coming again. | 9:28; 10:37 |
| 21. | He will ultimately triumph over all. | 10:13 |
| 22. | He was the fulfillment of the Old Testament system. | 9:9 ff |
| 23. | He makes God directly accessible to us. | 4:16; 10:19-22 |
| 24. | He is always with us. | 13:5 |
| 25. | He is our Example. | 12:2 |
| 26. | He is our "Priest." | 3:1; 4:14, et al. |
| 27. | He is our "Apostle" (the One sent to us). | 3:1 |
| 28. | He is our Brother. | 2:11, 12, 17 |
| 29. | He is the whole substance of our Faith. | 12:2 |
| 30. | He is the mediator of the New Covenant. | 12:24 |
| 31. | He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. | 13:8 |
| 32. | He is the Great Shepherd of the sheep. | 13:20 |

Doctrinal Affirmations in the Book of Hebrews

1. The Eternity of God. 1:11
2. The Ultimate Perishing of the Physical World. 1:11-12
3. Angels are Ministering Spirits. 1:14
4. The Old Testament Inspired by the Holy Spirit. 3:7; 9:8; 10:15
5. God Takes Note of our Good Deeds. 6:10
6. God Cannot Lie. 6:18
7. Our Hope Anchors our Faith. 6:19
8. The Old Testament Religion was Temporary. 9:8-10; 10:9, 18
9. Salvation is Secure. 7:25; 9:12,15;
10:14; 13:20
10. Death and Judgment are Decreed for Every Man. 9:27
11. The Old Testament Law as Preparatory of the
New Testament Gospel. 10:1-4
12. The Old Testament Law Never Saved Anyone. 10:4-8
13. Our Sins are Blotted out in Christ. 10:17
14. Christians are Admonished to Attend Church. 10:25
15. To Sin Against Knowledge of the Truth is
Most Dangerous. 6:4; 10:26; 10:32
16. Salvation is by Faith Alone. 10:38
17. The Saints Do Persevere. 10:39
18. Creation by Divine Decree *ex nihilo*
("out of nothing") 11:3
19. Salvation is Offered to Everyone. 11:6
20. Life Here is a "Sojourn." 11:13; 13:14
21. Heaven is a Real Place. 8:1-2; 9:11-12, 23-24;
10:14; 11:16; 12:23
22. There is a "Rest" for the Saved. 4:9
23. The Convicting Power of the Word of God. 4:12

- 24.The Omniscience of God. 4:13
- 25.The Resurrection of the Dead. 11:19; 11:35
- 26.God Chastens the Saved. 12:5-11
- 27.The Saved are Called “Sons” of God. 12:5-11
- 28.Angels are Innumerable. 12:22
- 29.The Names of the Saved are Written in Heaven. 12:23
- 30.Christians are to Respect Leadership in the Faith. 13:7, 17
- 31.Audible Praise is our “Sacrifice.” 13:15
- 32.Old Fashioned Virtues are Encouraged, e.g., Hospitality (13:1), Compassion (13:2), Sexual Purity (13:4), Honesty (13:5), Confidence (13:6), Adherence to the Basics of the Faith (13:9), Good Deeds (13:6), Sharing (13:6), Respect for Civil Authority (13:7), etc.

There Is Nothing Better Than Jesus

Hebrews 1

- I. Jesus Is Better Than Any Prophet. 1:1-3**
- 1) To hear God listen to Jesus. 1:1-2
 - 2) To see God look to Jesus. 1:2-3
- II. Jesus Is Better Than The Angels. 1:4-14**
- 1) He is the Son not a servant. 1:4-5
(Ps 2:7; 2 Sam 7:14)
 - 2) He is worshipped not a worshipper. 1:6-7
(Ps. 89:27; 97:7)
 - 3) He is the Master not a minister. 1:7
(Ps 104:4)
 - 4) He is infinite not finite. 1:8-9
(Ps 45:6-7)
 - 5) He is changeless not changed. 1:10-12
(Ps 102: 25-27)
 - 6) He is exalted not the enemy. 1:13-14
(Ps 110:1)

How To Rest In Jesus

Hebrews 4

I. We Must Mix The Word With Faith. 4:1-10

II. We Must Be Obedient Knowing We Will Give An Account. 4:11-13

III. We Must Draw Near To Our High Priest Jesus In Order To Find Mercy And Grace. 4:14-16

Messiah Jesus: The Great King-Priest

Hebrews 7

- I. Jesus is a great King-Priest of a better heritage. 7:1-10

- II. Jesus a great King-Priest of a better priesthood. 7:11-17

- III. Jesus is a great King-Priest of a better hope. 7:18-19

- IV. Jesus is a great King-Priest of a better covenant. 7:20-22

- V. Jesus is a great King-Priest of a better life. 7:23-25

- VI. Jesus is a great King-Priest of a better sacrifice. 7:26-27

VII. Jesus is a great King-Priest of a better person. 7:28
Jesus: Provider of the New Covenant

Hebrews 8

I. Jesus is a superior priest. 8:1-2

1) He sits at God's right hand. 8:1

2) He serves in a heavenly tabernacle. 8:2

II. Jesus serves in a superior place. 8:3-5

1) This sanctuary required one sacrifice. 8:3

2) This sanctuary is located in heaven. 8:4-5

III. Jesus mediates superior promises. 8:6-13

1) Jesus has a superior ministry. 8:6

2) Jesus made possible a better covenant. 8:7-13

The Perfect Sacrifice For Sin: Part 1

Hebrews 9

- I. The Holy Spirit revealed in the Old Covenant that a better sacrifice was coming. 9:1-10

- II. Jesus Christ made a better sacrifice by shedding His own blood. 9:11-14

- III. The better sacrifice of Jesus provides an eternal inheritance and full forgiveness of sins. 9:15-22

- IV. Our Savior made a once for all sacrifice for sin never to die again. 9:23-28

The Perfect Sacrifice For Sin: Part 2

Hebrews 10

We need Jesus as our sacrifice because:

- I. The Law cannot make us perfect. 10:1-4

- II. Only He obeyed perfectly the will of God. 10:5-10

- III. He offered for all time the perfect sacrifice for sin. 10:11-14

- IV. He puts God's laws in our hearts. 10:15-18

- V. He makes it possible for us to come near to God. 10:19-25

- VI. There is no other sacrifice for sin. 10:26-31

- VII. He gives us the strength necessary to perseverance. 10:32-39

God's Hall Of Faith

Hebrews 11

- I. Faith in God enables us to believe what we cannot see. 11:1-3
- II. Faith in God enables us to sacrifice in a more excellent way. 11:4
- III. Faith in God enables us to live a life pleasing to God. 11:5-6
- IV. Faith in God enables us to act with godly fear. 11:7
- V. Faith in God enables us to obey when we don't know where we are going. 11:8-10
- VI. Faith in God enables us to gain strength against all odds. 11:10-12
- VII. Faith in God enables us to desire a better life in heaven. 11:13-16
- VIII. Faith in God enables us to put on the altar what is precious to us. 11:17-19
- IX. Faith in God enables us to bless those who follow after us. 11:20-22
- X. Faith in God enables us to trust God in every detail of life. 11:23-29
- XI. Faith in God enables us to see God do the extraordinary. 11:30-35
- XII. Faith in God enables us to obtain a good testimony no matter

“Nine Marks Of A Healthy Christian”

Hebrews 13

- I. He Will Consistently Love Others. 13:1
- II. He Will Care For Those In Need. 13:2-3
- III. He Will Honor The Divine Institution Of Marriage And Family. 13:4
- IV. He Will Have An Unshakable Faith In God’s Providence And Care. 13:5-6
- V. He Will Respect Those In Spiritual Authority Over Him. 13:7, 17
- VI. He Will Not Be Moved Away From Christ-Centered Doctrine. 13:8-14
- VII. He Will Be Characterized By The Spiritual Sacrifices Of Praise, Thanksgiving And Service. 13:15-16
- VIII. He Will Seek A Good Conscience And Live Honorably. 13:18-19
- IX. He Will Look To Jesus As His Great Shepherd To Perfect Him

In Good Works.

13:20-25