



Hebrews Lesson 1 Intro and Chapter 1

Background

Though the epistle to the Hebrews doesn't identify its author or its recipients, the intent of the author of the letter is clear. The people the letter is addressing are struggling with persecution from outside and lack of faith and hope on the inside. Though they had not "suffered to the point of shedding blood in striving against sin," (12:4) they were battling with unbelief and in danger of "falling away from the living God" (3:13). They were in desperate situations and in need of encouragement so as not to allow their hearts to be hardened (3:13-15). The recipients were most likely Jewish believers because of the multiple quotations from the Old Testament referencing Jewish laws regarding the customs of Temple worship and examples of God's deliverance through Moses. Chapter 11 is an extensive list of Jewish people of faith that set an example of suffering for God. The author is using these to parallel the new covenant through Christ and its superiority to the old covenant. These Jewish believers were apparently being tempted to fall back into the snare of the Judaizers who were convinced that Christ was only an addition to the requirements of the Law, not the fulfillment of it. The readers needed to hear that faith in Christ as Messiah was reasonable and true. If the author was addressing Gentiles who were suffering for their faith, these examples would not have been helpful to encourage them to faithfulness.

Date

Since the author or the destination of the letter isn't identified, a date can only be assumed through internal evidence. The multiple references to temple worship and customs infers that the Temple is still standing. This puts the probable date of the letter before 70 A.D. The destruction of the Temple would have been mentioned in that the sacrificial system was no longer available. The whole makeup of Jewish life would be radically changed. This is not something that would have been overlooked when the author was making such use of Jewish worship in his illustrations.

Possible Authorship

Though tradition identifies Paul as the author of the epistle, there are a few possible alternatives as well. The unique writing style of the treatise points to someone highly educated and very informed in the Old Testament scripture. All of the Old Testament references were quoted from the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew text. Martin Luther made the argument for Apollos as the author. Acts 18:24-25 identifies Apollos as an eloquent man who was mighty in the Scriptures who was teaching and speaking accurately about Jesus. He was born in Alexandria, Egypt and would have been fluent in the Greek language. Another

Possible Authorship cont.

possibility is Barnabas. Tertullian, who was known as the “father of Latin Christianity” attributed to epistle to him. Though the author is unknown, the solid theological and Christological content of Hebrews makes it fully qualified as a part of the canon of Scripture.

Theme

The thread that ties all of Hebrews together is the author’s comparison/contrast of the old covenant of Law to the new covenant of faith in Christ. He takes several of the significant features of the old covenant and describes how Christ is superior to all of

them. Christ is better than angels (Chapter 1), better than Moses (Chapter 3), better than the High Priest (Chapter 4), better than the Levitical priesthood (Chapter 7), and His covenant is founded on better promises (Chapter 8). Though the author’s intent is not to diminish the significance of the old covenant, he is intentional in his explanation of the superiority of the new covenant.

Introduction Questions

1. Write the similar statements made in the following verses from Hebrews that express the writer’s main idea.

3:3

7:19-20

7:22

8:6

9:23

10:34

11:40

12:24

2. Compare the last two verses of Hebrews to the last two verses of each book from 1 Corinthians through Revelation. Look for commonalities and differences. How might those influence the identification of authorship? Compare the first verse of Hebrews with the first verse of Romans through Philemon. How might that influence the idea that Paul did not write Hebrews?

3. *What do we know about the author from Hebrews 13:23?*

4. *How do Hebrews 2:1, 3:12, 5:11, 10:26, and 12:25 identify the author's concern for these believers?*

READ CHAPTER 1

5. *From the following verses, what are some of the ways God spoke to the forefathers and prophets?*

Genesis 16:7-13

Genesis 18-19:1

Genesis 37:5-11

Genesis 41

Exodus 3:1-6

Numbers 27:21

1 Samuel 28:6

1 Kings 18:36-38

Isaiah 6:1-7

Ezekiel 1:1-3, 27-28; 8:3

Acts 9:3-7; 10:1-3

6. *How is the way He speaks through Jesus different? 1:1-2*

7. *How is Jesus the “radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His nature?” Vs. 3; John 1:14-18; Eph. 1:18-23; Col.1:15, 2:9*

8. *What 7 things do verses 2-3 establish about who Jesus is and what He has done?*

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)



To be seated at the right hand of a ruler or host meant occupying a place of high honor. The position would indicate the power and authority of the one holding it. Archeological Study Bible

9. *From verses 5-13, what are some of the differences that the author identifies between Jesus and the angels?*

10. *What is the main responsibility of angels? Vs. 14 Give some examples of that from Scripture.*

Prayer requests:

Group time notes:
