



HEBREWS: Jesus is Better

Today we begin a deep dive into “Hebrews”, where we will discover that **Jesus is Better!** Uncover how the mysteries of the Old Covenant (Testament) are fulfilled by Jesus the Messiah, as revealed in the New Covenant.

teachingnotes

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* All Scripture is from NLT (New Living Translation)

The Hebrew people had long appreciated the images God had given that pointed to His love for them.

The Temple was a physical reminder of God's Presence and purity, but it wasn't where God really lived. King Solomon wrote this when he built the 1st Temple:

2 Chronicles 6:18 (NLT) But will God really live on earth among people? Why, **even the highest heavens cannot contain You**. How much less this Temple I have built!

Priests were mediators between God and His people, speaking to/for God, and offering sacrifices of thanks and sacrifices for sin on their behalf. But priests were people too, men who sinned and men who died. As such, no priest served forever and all priests were replaced over the course of many generations.

Sacrifices for sin were continual reminders that while God wanted to cover and forgive sin, the need for ongoing sacrifices proved the blood of animals was never enough to pay the price for their sin once and for all.

🕒 Disciples of Jesus were claiming the Temple, priests, and sacrifices were only SHADOWS that pointed to and now been FULFILLED by the SAVIOR - Jesus. The 1st followers of Jesus and the writer of Hebrews makes the claim that **JESUS IS BETTER**.

- **Jesus is better than the beautiful Temple** that stood in Jerusalem and represented the Presence of God. Jesus IS the Presence of God who stood in their midst!
- **Jesus is better than the thousands of human priests** who had served faithfully in the past.
 - ✓ They were sinners who needed a Savior, but He IS that Savior!
 - ✓ They were temporary mediators between God and people, but Jesus IS the permanent mediator.
- **Jesus is better than the thousands of sacrificial animals** that had been slaughtered for the sins of the Hebrew people. Jesus was sacrificed once, for all people, for all of time!

Hebrews, a New Covenant writing, **continually points to the Old Covenant** (Testament) writings to demonstrate that Jesus is the New Covenant fulfillment of the Old Covenant images. They were all pointing to Him! This explains why Hebrews quotes from the Old Testament far more often than any other writing in the New Testament.

The Latin Vulgate translates “Covenant” as **testamentum** hence our English term of “Testament”

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DATE & AUTHOR

Hebrews seems to be written before A.D. 70, as the author often uses imagery of the priests working in the Temple. If Hebrews is written after A.D. 70 (when the Temple was totally destroyed) it is strange that the author doesn't use this fact to demonstrate that God is done with the Temple, priests, and sacrifices.

Who is the author of Hebrews? No one knows. The early church fathers through contemporary scholars guess at some of these names: Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, Luke, & Clement.

Although the KJV (King James Version) cites Paul as the author, there is no name attached to the Greek text in the early manuscripts and no clear conclusion on who wrote it. If Paul wrote this, why is it so different than the rest of his writings? For example, **Paul ALWAYS begins with his name as the 1st word in his letters.**

Here are some examples:

- **“Paul**, called as an apostle of Christ Jesus by God’s will...” (1 Cor 1:1a)
- **“Paul** and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus...” (Phil 1:1a)
- **“Paul**, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God’s will...” (Eph 1:1a)
- **“Paul**, an apostle of Christ Jesus by God’s will...” (Col 1:1a)

✗ Yet Paul’s name is never mentioned in this writing (Hebrews).

✓ **Conclusion:** The Human Author is unknown.

☀ **John MacArthur:**

As to the exact human authorship, I stand with one of the great teachers of the early church by the name of Origen, who said simply, “No one knows.” How fitting, since the book’s purpose is to exalt Christ.¹

The purpose of this book has nothing to do with WHO wrote it, but WHO it was written about...

✓ **JESUS IS BETTER** than everything and everyone that came before Him.

AUDIENCE

Like all the other New Testament writings, this one didn’t come with the title attached. As in other writings, we get the title - *Hebrews* - based on the audience it was written to.

- The letter to the Philippians was later called “Philippians”. The letter to the Colossians was later called “Colossians”, etc.
- Hebrews doesn’t name a particular audience who lived in one city, but is obviously written to a Hebrew (aka Jewish) audience.

* The term **“Jews”** came from Hebrews who lived in **Judah**. “Hebrews” and “Jews” can be used interchangeably.

Most scholars believe this letter was written to Hebrew Christians, due to the heavy use of Old Testament quotations and terms they would appreciate (e.g. tabernacle, priesthood, sacrificial system, and many Hebrew heroes).

- Some say Hebrews is written to Jewish Christians around Rome, while others think it might be written to persecuted Jewish Christians in Israel.
- **Some scholars say this letter was tailored to Hebrew priests in Israel.** Josephus (1st century Jewish historian) numbered around 20,000 men in Israel who served as priests.² Out those 20,000, Dr. Joachim Jeremias writes that 7,200 priests were assigned to work in the Jerusalem temple.³

Acts 6:7 (NLT) So God’s message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and **many of the Jewish priests were converted**, too.

- The title **“To the Hebrews”** was first attached to this letter in the late second century.⁴

✓ **Conclusion:** *Hebrews is a sermon written to persecuted Hebrew Christians in danger of turning back to the Old Covenant, penned by an author unknown to us, but known to them.*

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Hebrews, MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), x.

² David L. Allen, *Hebrews, The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 66.

³ Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 198–207.

⁴ Allen, 62.

THEMES

The ultimate theme of this writing? **JESUS IS BETTER!**

- ✓ **Jesus is a Better Priest & Better Sacrifice.** It would have been difficult for Hebrews to view the Temple and priestly sacrifices (which were still occurring until the Temple destruction in AD 70) as unnecessary substitutes since **Jesus - the Perfect Priest and Perfect Sacrifice** - now fulfilled those roles for all time.
- ✓ **Jesus is a Better Future Hope** (Heb 11) beyond the current persecution. Running the race would be difficult, but just **think of WHO is awaiting us at the finish line!**

Better Priest & Better Sacrifice

Hebrews 10:1-4 (NLT) The old system under the law of Moses was **only a shadow**, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship. If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared. But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year. For **it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.**

If **it is impossible** for the blood of animals **to take away sins**, then our sin is still held to our account. Further, since the Temple is now destroyed and there are NO SACRIFICES being offered today, *how could sin be atoned for?*

Hebrews 10:10-11 (NLT) For God's will was for us to be **made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.** Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins.

The same sacrifices over and over again showed that 1) God could forgive sin, 2) it would cost the physical life of a substitute (animals), but 3) this was not yet a full or final payment.

How many Jewish people thought, *"How many more sacrifices? I guess I'll be offering bloody sacrifices for the rest of my life!"*

Priests continued to offer sacrifices for others, but they have to offer sacrifices for themselves as well (Hebrews 5:3).

But not so with Jesus, because **Jesus is better!**

Hebrews 10:12-14 (NLT) But our High Priest **offered Himself** to God as a single sacrifice for sins, **good for all time.** Then He sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand. There He waits until his enemies are humbled and made a footstool under his feet. For **by that one offering He forever made perfect those who are being made holy.**

The sacrifice of Jesus means we can be fully forgiven! Those who turn from sin and trust JESUS have confidence: **"You are no longer responsible for repayment!"**

❓ **Are you chasing shadows/settling for substitutes?**

heretoserveyou

Have questions and need some help? ...real soon...how about now? Please **call** or **text** us soon!

- * Contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), **Christy** (673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon!
- * Or call our **deacons & wives:** Alan & Christy Androski (464-1428), Steve & Debbie Bass (673-7952), Tim & Joni Hughey (464-1156), Mark & Dot Mancil (253-5405), Boss & Amelia Mulkey (464-6717), Jim & Derita Pinkard (464-6188), Fain & Linda Poppell (464-1282), or Tom & Martha Waddail (973-0011).