

# The Book of Hebrews

## 1. Introduction to the Book of Hebrews.

### a) *General Comment.*

- i) Growing in the Christian life. Episode in C. S. Lewis, *Prince Caspian*.  
“Welcome, child,” he said. “Aslan,” said Lucy, “you’re bigger.” “That is because you are older, little one,” answered he. “Not because you are?” asked Lucy. “I am not,” replied Aslan, “but every year you grow, you will find me bigger.”
- ii) This is a helpful insight from Lewis. Why is not Christ “big” before us?

### b) *Reasons for the Neglect of the Study of Hebrews.*

- i) *Its argument seems unfamiliar and difficult to understand.*
  - a) Probably due to our lack of understanding the OT.
  - b) The 5 warning passages (e.g., Heb 6:4-6, etc.)
  - c) The length of the book often leads to discouragement in reading.
- ii) *Its form is unusual.*
  - a) Though Hebrews is grouped with letters of the NT and it is called “The Letter to the Hebrews” the format is not that of the letters typical of the ancient world. It is unlike other NT letters; it is most like 1 John.
    - (1) The writer doesn’t identify himself.
    - (2) There is no opening prayer typical of letters.
    - (3) There is no acclamation of thanksgiving and blessing.
  - b) Many have argued that the form of Hebrews is a sermon.
- iii) *Its authorship is uncertain.* Who wrote Hebrews? Proposed authors.
  - a) Paul? Early advocates – Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, Augustine. See the KJV, following earlier MSS. Problem.
    - (1) Its writing is anonymous. There are no personal allusions in the letter.
    - (2) The author seems to not be an apostle (2:3).
    - (3) The Greek is different than Paul’s other letters.
    - (4) Theological emphases are slightly different.
  - b) Luke? Similarities in style/content of Acts, especially Stephen’s speech.
  - c) Apollos? (Martin Luther). Apollos was the Jewish convert from Alexandria (Acts 18:24, 28). This is possible, but it is hard to know. It is only a guess.
  - d) Barnabus? (Acts 4:36, Heb 13:22). Advocates (Tertullian [200]). Barnabus was a Levite, from Cyprus. Knew Greek culture.
  - e) Priscilla? Mary? Clement of Rome?
  - f) Origen statement: But who wrote the epistle, in truth only God knows.

### c) *Other Questions of Introduction.*

- i) *When was the book written?* We know its readers had been Christians for some time (5:12) and that they had experienced a lot of persecution (10:32-34). Also, we know that some of the early Christian leaders have passed off the scene (13:7). But Timothy was still alive (13:23). So, we know that at least, that a number of decades had passed since the Lord’s death and resurrection. We also know that the book was referred to by Clement of Rome, an early Christian writer, which dates around 96 AD. However most believe that Hebrews was written before 70 AD. Why?
- ii) *Who was the book written to and why?*

- a) Most believe that it was written to Jewish Christians living in Rome in the mid-60's, whose world was literally falling apart. Why Jewish Christians? Why Rome? Because 13:24 gives greetings to several Italian Christians.
  - b) How do we know their world was falling apart? See 10:32-34. Probably under Emperor Claudius (49). But now it is 15 years later. See Hebrews 12:4 (Nero, 64).
  - c) Also, internal problems. They were not meeting together. Danger of going back to their Jewish roots and drifting from the gospel. Unwilling to progress in their Christian lives. In danger of losing out on the promises of God for them.
- iii) *What is the message of the book?*
- d) *Outline of the Book.*
  - i) *Introduction: God's Final Word (1:1-4)*
  - ii) *The Son and the Angels (1:5-2:18)*
    - a) The Son's Superiority to the Angels (1:4-14)
    - b) 1<sup>st</sup> Warning: A Call to Not Drift from the Gospel (2:1-4)
    - c) Why Did God Become Man? (2:5-18)
  - iii) *Jesus as a Merciful and Faithful High Priest (3:1-5:10)*
    - a) The Faithfulness of Christ (3:1-6)
    - b) 2<sup>nd</sup> Warning: A Call to Faithfulness (3:7-4:13)
    - c) The Compassion of Christ (4:14-5:10)
  - iv) *Jesus the Perfected High Priest in the Order of Melchizedek and Source of Eternal Salvation (5:11-10:39)*
    - a) 3<sup>rd</sup> Warning: A Call to Learn and Progress (5:11-6:20)
    - b) The Eternal High Priesthood of Christ (7:1-28)
    - c) The Mediator of the New Covenant (8:1-13)
    - d) The Limitations of the Old Covenant (9:1-10)
    - e) The Achievement of Christ in His Death and Exaltation (9:11-28)
    - f) The Benefits of the New Covenant (10:1-18)
    - g) 4<sup>th</sup> Warning: A Call to Hold on to the Benefits of the New Covenant (10:19-39)
  - v) *Faith and Endurance (11:1-12:13)*
    - a) A Celebration of Faith (11:1-40)
    - b) A Call to Endurance (12:1-13)
  - vi) *Appeals for a God-honoring Life-Style (12:14-13:25)*
    - a) 5<sup>th</sup> Warning: A Warning Against Failure (12:14-17)
    - b) Responding to the Call of God (12:18-29)
    - c) Worship and Everyday Life (13:1-17)
    - d) Personal Messages and Final Blessing (13:18-25)

## 2. **Hebrews 1:1-4: The Thesis of the Book (The Glory and Supremacy of Christ).**