

The Book of Hebrews—an overview

Jesus—God’s Son—Greater, Better, Above and Beyond

Introduction to studying the book of Hebrews

The book of Hebrews is a valuable guide to understanding the New Covenant (Testament) as fulfillment and replacement of the Old Covenant (Testament), often referred to as the Law of Moses. The New Covenant opened up a new relationship with God for all people.

The focus of the book's instruction is the superiority and sufficiency of Jesus the Messiah (Christ). Jesus' supremacy is made clear in a progressive series of comparisons to the Old Testament (OT) prophets, angels, Moses, and others. His reconciling work on the cross, and as the ultimate High Priest, provides great assurance He is the Savior for all humanity.

Hebrews was originally written to encourage, exhort, and warn Christian believers with Jewish origins to continue trusting in Jesus rather than reverting back to their religious heritage, the Law of Moses.

Today it provides clear insight to remind us why no one can rely upon their own efforts to be *good enough* for God. A trusting faith in Jesus—who He is and what He did and continues to do—is more than sufficient to bring us into the very presence of God.

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- **The first 4 verses give us the foundation of the focus and theme of Hebrews**
 - Vs 1 reveals how God spoke to His people in the past through the OT prophets—*His spokespersons*—at various times and ways
 - Vs 2 declares how God spoke more directly and personally through His Son—*in these last days*—the last days begin with the Lord’s death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead to establish the New Covenant
 - Vss 2-3 reveal the essence—*nature*—of who Jesus is (refs— John 1:1, 14; Col 1:15-20) and the Essential Gospel— *He Came, He Died, He Rose* (see Acts 2:22-24; 1 Cor 15:1-8)
 - Vs 4 establishes the superiority of Jesus and the New Covenant He established through His life, death, and resurrection.
 - Vss 1-4 declare the first 2 ways that Jesus is *Greater, Better, Above, and Beyond*—that is, His supremacy
 - Jesus is greater than the OT prophets
 - Jesus is greater, better, higher than the angels
 - From these first 4 verses, a progressive theological argument—like a lawyer’s case or philosophic thought—is made throughout the first 10 chapters of the supremacy of the Lord Jesus’ person and work as the Son, Messiah, our High Priest, and Atonement.
 - **The progressive argument for the supremacy of Christ is also connected to 5 warnings found in the following chapters—**

- **2:1-4– Warning #1**– pay attention / don’t drift away or neglect the Gospel message to return to the Law
- **3:7–4:13– Warning #2**– don’t let anything keep you from entering the Lord’s rest (grace versus works)
- **5:11–6:12– Warning #3**– don’t fall away but move forward by faith
- **10:19-39– Warning #4**– no other sacrifice for sin(s) beyond Christ’s atonement, so endure and continue in your confidence in Christ
- **12:25-29– Warning #5**– don’t refuse Christ who personally speaks to us (1:1-2)
- **2 important theological studies can be traced throughout Hebrews**
 - **Christology**– the nature and person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God
 - Look for references to the Lord’s humanity and divinity
 - **Soteriology**– our redemption / salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus
 - The New Covenant relationship with God in Christ

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8 GW)

- Hebrews is like a NT commentary (or explanation) of the OT and uses considerable figurative language including Typology.
- **Here are some guidelines for understanding the use and purpose of Typology—**
 - Types are representative symbols with a historical base or point of reference (usually in the OT) and related to represented by some—*act, event, thing, or person*
 - Types are a *pattern, copy, or shadow* of the True (called the anti-type) it represents or pre-figures
 - Types are like a concrete / tangible illustration (something known) of a spiritual truth or reality
 - There may be many parts or details of one Type, so take one of the details or parts of a Type as a separate type of its own because they don’t have their own symbolic meaning separately
 - Types often deal with eschatological elements since the “last days” begin from Christ / Messiah’s first appearance
 - Types are prophetic and have a future fulfillment in the True (anti-type)
 - EX– Gal 3:16– Abraham’s Seed) \simeq Gal 4:24-25– 2 Covenants
 - EX– Heb 7:12-17– Melchizedek \simeq Christ as High Priest
 - EX– Heb 9:11-15; 10:1– OT sacrifices \simeq Christ’s atoning blood

Study Questions for Hebrews

Chapter 1:1-3

1. How are the 3 basic elements of the Essential Gospel expressed here (IYOW)?
2. To whom is Jesus declared to be superior and how does it show Him as greater?
3. What specific things are expressed in declaring who He (Jesus) is?

Chapters 1:4–Chapter 2

1. How are the references to Christ's deity and humanity related in comparison to angels?
2. Note the OT quotes, does their original context seem to support the interpretation given here?
3. Who is this second group of persons Christ is declared to be greater than?
4. How is the warning in Chap 2 related to Christ's superiority over the angels and prophets? IYOW!
5. Why are Christ's Deity and Humanity important to our understanding of Soteriology?
6. How would you define Soteriology and Christology IYOW (In Your Own Words).

Chapter 3

1. What are the characteristics or earmarks of an "unbelieving heart"? (IYOW!)
2. How does sin harden our hearts? What kind of things hardens our hearts?
3. In what ways are our hearts hardened?
4. Why do we allow ourselves to be deceived by sin? (see Rom 1 and Jam 1:13-15)
5. What is the remedy or cure for an unbelieving heart? (IYOW!)
6. How would you define unbelief IYOW?
7. Read all the "ifs" in Chap 3– What are the conditions these "ifs" speak about?
8. What are the consequences of these "ifs"?

Chapter 4

1. How would you explain the "Rest or Sabbath-rest of God" IYOW?
2. How is Jesus greater than Joshua? How does this relate to our salvation?
3. Why can we approach God's throne with confidence? (be specific– IYOW!!!)
4. How is Christ compared to other high priests and shown to be a high priest?
5. How do vss 12-13 relate to the context of Chap 4 and the progressive argument?

Chapter 5

1. How did Christ learn obedience? Why was this necessary?
2. How was Christ made perfect? Why was this necessary, wasn't He already perfect?
3. What is "meat or solid food" as expressed here? (be specific, IYOW!!!)
4. How can we "train" ourselves to discern good from evil?

Study Questions for Hebrews

Chapter 6

1. What is this “impossibility” and why is it “impossible”? (be specific, IYOW!!!)
2. Is there a risk of losing our salvation in Christ?
3. What assurances do we have about our salvation by grace? (IYOW!)
4. What are the key verses which put this warning in perspective?
5. What is the “solution” to their “problem” as expressed in this passage? (be specific)
6. What 2 “unchangeable things” are we to be “greatly encouraged” by?
7. What do vss 19-20 tell us of our “hope” in Jesus? (be specific and IYOW)

Chapter 7

1. What are the specific details regarding Christ’s superiority as represented in Melchizedek?
2. What is the result of Christ’s ministry as a high priest in the “order of Melchizedek”?
3. Why is this chapter so important for our study of Christology? (explain IYOW)

Chapter 8

1. What is the relationship of this chapter with those before it and with Chaps 9–10?
2. Why is this chapter so important to the overall “argument” being made in this epistle?
3. What are the 4 Types and “Trues” (Anti-Types) found in this chapter? (be specific IYOW and give verse locations)
4. IYOW– What is *new* about the New Covenant as expressed here?

Chapter 9

1. What is the centrally most important phrase found and repeated in this section? Why is it so important?
2. How would you explain the “Blood of Christ” IYOW and its importance to an unbeliever?
3. What are direct comparisons between the Earthly high priest and the Heavenly One?
4. What are details of comparison (specific qualities and benefits) between the Old Covenant blood sacrifices and Christ’s Atoning Blood? (make a list with vs refs)
5. There are at least 5 Types and Trues in this section, what are they? (be specific and IYOW)
6. How would you summarize all the differences between the Old and New Covenants?
7. IYOW— Using the text of 9:23–10:18— how would you explain how and why Christ’s work on the Cross is sufficient and our salvation is complete in Him?—
 - a. How would you explain this to someone in a cult or (pseudo-Christian sect) in a systematic, clear, and simple explanation IYOW!

Study Questions for Hebrews

Chapter 10

1. How would you explain vss 10 and 14 of Chap 10 IYOW?
2. How do these 2 verses relate? Is there any contradiction?
3. What are the meaning, significance, and relationship of all the descriptive phrases in the exhortations of 10:19-25? (there are at least 14 phrases!)
4. What are the key verses and main issue in Warning #4– words of warning? words of encouragement?
5. How would you explain (IYOW) the text of 10:26-39– to a believer who thinks they've fallen away forever? to a believer who thinks they can never fall away?

Chapter 11

1. What are the primary elements of faith as expressed in Chap 11?
2. What phrase is repeated throughout Chap 11? What does this mean (IYOW)?

Chapter 12

1. What are the exhortations beginning with “let us” and “consider”?– Explain (IYOW) what we are to do and how we're to do it (be specific)
2. How does the text in 12:1-13 relate to the previous teaching on Christology and to the previous warnings? (explain what links them together specifically)
3. What are some of the ways God disciplines us (IYOW)? be specific!
4. What is the meaning and relationship between the figurative language in 12:14-24 and the final warning?
5. How is the final exhortation and warning different than the previous ones?

Chapter 13

1. How many different subjects are mentioned in the exhortations of 13:1-13?
2. What are they? (specifically, list and describe IYOW)
3. How would you explain the text of 13:9-14 IYOW?
4. What is the literal meaning of this figurative language?
5. What specific things in the blessing of 13:20-21 are related directly to the teaching and warnings of Chaps 1–12? (give vs references and explain IYOW)

Study Questions for Hebrews

◆ **Review of Hebrews**— what you should be able to recognize and remember after a thorough study of the Book of Hebrews

1. Be able to summarize each section of the text of Chaps 1–8 using 1 complete sentence for each Section of your outline— be clear, specific, complete, but brief
2. Be able to show the relationship (connection) between the Christological truths and the 5 Warnings and Exhortations in Hebrews— be clear, specific, and complete
3. Be able to summarize each section of Hebrews (1–1:1-3 / 1:4– 2 / 3:1–4:13 / 4:14–5:10 / 5:11–6:12 / 6:13–7:28 / Ch 8 / 9:1–10:18 / 10:19–11 / Ch 12 / Ch 13) using 1 complete sentence for each section— be clear, specific, complete, but brief
4. Be able to take 1 Type (major) and 1 Warning (from #1-5) and explain them in relation to the whole book (its importance and place in the overall argument)
5. Be able to relate 5 of the Titles or Descriptions of Christ— showing his humanity and deity— and explain the Christological truths they express (IYOW)