

LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

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This letter tells us more than any other book about what Jesus is doing today. What is He doing today? If we didn't have the Book of Hebrews ... we wouldn't know what He was doing today. His ministry today is representing us and helping us.

Brief Background

Who is the author ... not named. Scholars dispute who wrote it? Paul is the most popular choice ... although it doesn't have his usual salutation. That's not Paul's style ... but it probably is. There are a number of reasons.

The books of the Bible were organised differently in the beginning. Hebrews used to be in the middle of Paul's writings. In the early days ... it looks like they were with Paul's other books.

The book is addressed to Hebrews: Jewish Christians ... Jewish converts to Jesus. They are family. It appears that they were in danger of slipping back ... drawing back ... turning away. Why? There are a couple of reasons:

1. Criticism ... Condemnation ... opposition from ... other Jews ... your culture ... your own family
2. Passage of time ... Prophecies not working out ... they hadn't been fulfilled ... some older saints dying. What happened to the promises?

Paul clearly wants to exhort ... encourage ... people to stick with it.

Look at the conclusion of the letter.

Hebrews 13:22 (NKJV)

22 And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words. (*Relatively few words!*)

Hebrews 13:22 (Message)

22 Friends, please take what I've written most seriously. I've kept this as brief as possible; I haven't piled on a lot of extras.

We'll see much exhortation and encouragement ... Paul tries to paint a beautiful picture ... great hope ... but ... look at the future ... destiny. But there are also warnings of becoming careless ... turning back.

There are some of the strongest warnings in Hebrews:

7 Major Warnings

11 Minor "lest"

13 Exhortation "let us"

If we want to look for a theme ... a way we can understand the big picture ... a foundation ... there's a key word: **BETTER**. Chapter after chapter ... now better than what was before.

Hebrews 1:4 (NKJV)

4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Hebrews 6:9 (NKJV)

9 But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.

Hebrews 7:19 (NKJV)

19 for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a **better hope**, through which we draw near to God.

Hebrews 7:22 (NKJV)

22 by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a **better covenant**.

Hebrews 8:6 (NKJV)

6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a **better covenant**, which was established on **better promises**.

Hebrews 9:23 (NKJV)

23 Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with **better sacrifices** than these.

Hebrews 10:34 (NKJV)

34 for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a **better** and an **enduring possession** for yourselves in heaven.

Hebrews 11:16 (NKJV)

16 But now they desire a **better**, that is, a **heavenly country**. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

Hebrews 11:35 (NKJV)

35 Women received their dead raised to life again. Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a **better resurrection**.

Hebrews 11:40 (NKJV)

40 God having provided **something better** for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

Hebrews 12:24 (NKJV)

24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks **better things** than that of Abel.

And ... things that are more excellent:

Hebrews 1:4 (NKJV)

4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a **more excellent** name than they.

Hebrews 8:6 (NKJV)

6 But now He has obtained a **more excellent** ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

Hebrews 11:4 (NKJV)

4 By faith Abel offered to God a **more excellent** sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

Although not specifically addressed to Hebrews ... Jewish Christians ... this seems clear from the topics discussed.

There are many references to the Old Testament:

1. There are 29 direct quotations
2. And 53 allusions ... indirect ... passing reference . That's 82 altogether

We need to be familiar with the Old Testament to really understand Hebrews ... and Hebrews helps to explain what the Old Testament meant.

CHAPTER 1... A BETTER MESSENGER

There is no introduction. God!

Hebrews 1:1-4 (NKJV)

1 **God**, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, *(good as that was ... we have something better ... God has upped the grade somewhat)*

2 **has in these last days spoken to us by His Son**, whom He has appointed **heir of all things**, **through whom also He made the worlds**; *(This better messenger ... Creator ... Inherits everything)*

3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, *(a complete reflection of The Father ... an exact image of God in heaven)* and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had **by Himself purged our sins**, *(washed/purified of our sins ... Jesus did this by Himself ... Jesus is better messenger!)* sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

4 having become **so much better** than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained **a more excellent** name than they.

Hebrews 1:5-14 (NKJV) There are multiple quotes from the Old Testament

5 For to which of the angels did He ever say:

"You are My Son, *(answer ... no angel heard that)*

Today I have begotten You"? And again:

"I will be to Him a Father,

And He shall be to Me a Son"?

6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says:

"Let all the angels of God worship Him."

7 And of the angels He says:

"Who makes His angels spirits

And His ministers a flame of fire."

8 **But to the Son He says:**

"Your throne, (Jesus has a throne) O God, is forever and ever;

A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Your kingdom.

9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;

Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You

With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

10 And:

"You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,

And the heavens are the work of Your hands. (*Jesus is the creator*)

11 They will perish, but You remain;

And they will all grow old like a garment;

12 Like a cloak You will fold them up,

And they will be changed.

But You are the same,

And Your years will not fail."

13 **But to which of the angels has He ever said:**

"Sit at My right hand,

Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"?

14 **Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?**

Some in those days honoured angels ... the same today ... *people want to contact/communicate with their angels. The Angels are not God ... not Jesus ... they are servants.*

Cp Colossians 2:18 (NKJV) Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind

God is trying reach us ... He has now sent the finest He can send ... Jesus ... to try to reach us. Why? Because God is looking for a relationship. God wants intimacy. He wants to get His word through accurately.

CHAPTER 2 ... A BETTER MAN

Hebrews 2:1 (NKJV)

1 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

The first major warning. Do we give the more earnest heed to that Word that we have heard from God? Valuable ... precious ... How much time do we invest?

Hebrews 2:2-3 (NKJV)

2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,

3 **how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation,** which at the first began to be **spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us** by those who heard Him,

"If" ... major warning number 2! A warning but ... motivated by a desire to encourage. How can you go back?

Hebrews 2:4-8 (NKJV)

4 **God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit,** according to His own will?

5 For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.

6 But one testified in a certain place, saying:

"What is man that You are mindful of him, (why was I born ... why am I here? Is there more to it than that?)

Or the son of man that You take care of him? (*Psalm 8*)

7 You have made him **a little lower than the angels;**

8 **You have put all things in subjection under his feet.**" For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. (*ultimately ... we will be over everything. Moffat: Universe*) But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

Hebrews 2:9 (NKJV)

9 **But we see Jesus,** who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. (*Do we see Jesus? Maybe ... not enough! We don't see what Jesus is doing today. We need to make sure we see Jesus*)

Hebrews 2:10 (NKJV)

10 For it was fitting for Him, (*The Father*) for whom are all things and by whom are all things, **in bringing many sons to glory, (A family relationship ... forever. That includes us!) to make the captain of their salvation perfect** through sufferings. (*Jesus was perfect ... He wasn't imperfect ... but complete. He was enhanced by His physical experiences*)

Hebrews 2:11-13 (NKJV)

11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason **He is not ashamed to call them brethren,**

12 saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; (*brothers and sisters*)

In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."

13 And again:

"I will put My trust in Him." And again:

"Here am I and the children whom God has given Me."

Jesus calls us brothers and sisters. That is exactly what we are. He is not ashamed ... are we of him? Would we deny Jesus in public?

What is brother or sister? God wants RELATIONSHIP!! A Family Relationship.

Is it worth dwelling on? "My Brother is a King"
"My Brother sits on a throne"
"My Brother died for me"

All of these statements are true.

Why do we want relationships? People ... friends. That's what God wants.

Hebrews 2:14-15 (NKJV)

14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Are we important to God? It looks like it. To be a real brother ... Jesus had to share in our fleshly experience ... to be just as we are.

Hebrews 2:16 (NKJV)

16 For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. *(The called ... God's children today)*

Cp. Galatians 3:27-29 (NKJV)

27 For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 **And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.** *(Jesus came to help the called ... The ones that God is reaching and communicating with)*

Hebrews 2:17-18 (NKJV)

17 Therefore, **in all things He had to be made like His brethren, (brothers and sisters) that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God,** to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

18 **For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.**

Without the Book of Hebrews ... we wouldn't know what His ministry was about today.