

## Notes on the Book of Hebrews.

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It seems to be self-evident in studying the Word of God that whenever certain details concerning any book are not clear, those details are not essential for understanding the book. This is important to remember in considering the book of Hebrews because we are not absolutely certain as to who wrote it, where it was written, when it was written, or to whom it was written. However, there are certain facts contained in the book which do throw some light on these matters and are worthy of our consideration.

### The Writer:

The Apostle Paul is the one who is generally considered to have been the writer, but this has been questioned from the earliest days of the Church. If Paul wrote it, he did not use his name as he did in his other epistles, and the style is quite different. It should be recognized, though, that the subject matter of the book might demand a change in style. But these are some of the reasons why the authorship of Hebrews is questioned.

Some feel that Paul may have written this epistle in Hebrew and that it was translated by Luke into Greek. Other suggested writers are Barnabas and Apollos, and this does not exhaust the ideas which various men have had with regard to the author.

Many feel that Peter was referring to the book of Hebrews in 2 Peter 3: 15, 16, but there is, of course, no proof. We do not, however, have any other inspired letter from the Apostle Paul especially for Hebrew Christians if it is not Hebrews.

We can only say on this point that we do not know for sure who the writer was, but it is hard to dismiss the idea that it was Paul.

### The Date of the Book:

It would seem from Hebrews 2:3 and 13:7 that those who received this epistle were in the generation following that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Also, the book is written as though animal sacrifices were still being offered in Jerusalem. This being the case, it would have to come before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. These facts, among others, have caused the majority to suggest that Hebrews was written in the middle 60's, probably in 66 or 67 A.D. If Paul were the writer, this would make it only a year or so before the traditional date of his martyrdom: 68 A.D.

### The Place of the Writing:

Hebrews 13:24 certainly suggests Italy as a possibility. Perhaps it was Rome. Verses 19 and 23 of the same chapter seem to point to an imprisonment, which could be another indication that Paul was the writer. We know that Timothy was with Paul in Rome.

### The Destination of the Book:

The most likely recipients were the Hebrew believers living in Jerusalem. The language of Hebrews 12 and 13 seems to indicate that the epistle was sent to a specific group of Hebrew Christians rather than being a general epistle to all Jewish believers.

### The Theme:

No book of the Bible gives us a more marvelous revelation of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ than that which we have in this epistle. He is glorious as the final and complete revelation of God to man. When the writer compares Him with angels and with the great leaders of Israel, our Lord is seen to be far superior to all others. And when His sacrifice on the Cross is compared with the many sacrifices of the Old Testament, they are only the shadow of that once-for-all sacrifice which He made when He "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26). Since His death, the Levitical sacrifices are no longer necessary.

The priesthood of Jesus Christ in the book of Hebrews includes not only His sacrifice for our sins, but also His ministry in heaven for us at the right hand of the Father. See Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2. The emphasis on Christ's present ministry in heaven is greater in Hebrews than in any other book of the Bible.

The epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, and to the Hebrews give us God's answer to those who would bring the people of God today back under the law of Moses. These are the three epistles, and the only three, which quote Habakkuk 2:4, "The just shall live by his faith." See Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38.

### The Outline:

There are two major divisions to the epistle: the doctrinal, and the practical. This emphasizes the importance of doctrine as the foundation of the life of a Christian. Interspersed through the book are five important warnings which are indicated in the outline.

#### I. The Doctrinal Section (Heb. 1:1-10:18).

##### A. The Theme of the Epistle: The Superiority of Christ as the Final Revelation of God and as Final Sacrifice for sins (Heb. 1:1-4).

##### B. The Proof of the Theme (Heb. 1:5-10:18).

1. The Superiority of Jesus Christ over Angels (Heb. 1:5-2:18). This point would be very important to the Jews because the Law had been given to Moses through the ministration of angels (cf. Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19).

Note: Heb. 2:1-4 gives the first of the five warnings of the epistle.

2. The Superiority of Jesus Christ over Moses (Heb. 3:1-4:13). In this passage our Lord is also spoken of as being superior to Joshua (Heb. 4:8, ASV).

Note: Heb. 3:7-4:13, the second warning of the epistle.

3. The Superiority of Jesus Christ as our High Priest (Heb. 4:14-10:18).

- a. Preliminary exhortations concerning Christ, our High Priest (Heb. 4:14-16).
- b. The Credentials of Christ as a Priest "after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. 5:1-10). Basically they are two: (1) He was a man and, as such, has compassion; (2) He was called of God.
- c. The third warning (Heb. 5:11-6:20).
- d. The Uniqueness of Christ's Priesthood "after the order of Melchisedec - The Superiority of Jesus Christ over Aaron (Heb. 7:1-25).
- e. The Superiority of Jesus Christ as the Mediator of a New and Better Covenant (Heb. 8:1-10:18).

II. The Practical Section (Heb. 10:19-13:17).

A. The Three Basic Essentials in the Life of the Believer (Heb. 10:19-25).

These are: faith (v. 22), hope (v. 23, ASV), and love (vs. 24, 25). Cf. Heb. 6:10-12 for the same three things, and note how these are discussed in the last three points of this section.

B. The fourth warning (Heb. 10:26-39).

C. The Discussion of Faith (Heb. 11:1-40).

D. The Discussion of Hope (Heb. 12:1-29).

Note: Heb. 12:25-29, the fifth and last warning of the book.

E. The Discussion of Love (Heb. 13:1-17).

III. The Conclusion (Heb. 13:18-25).