



Intro to the New Testament:

Hebrews

Session Five

Theme

- The author portrays Jesus Christ distinctively as a priest who has offered himself as the completely sufficient sacrifice for sin and who now ministers in the heavenly sanctuary
- The purpose of this portrayal of Jesus is to emphasize Christ's superiority over every aspect and hero of the Old Testament to ensure the letter's recipients do not return to a form of Judaism

Authorship

- The question of authorship continues to this day
 - *Paul*:
 - in the eastern part of the Roman Empire Paul was usually regarded as the author of Hebrews
 - Its theology does resemble his:

Theology	Paul	Hebrews
Preexistence and creatorship of Christ	Colossians 1:15–17	1:1–4
Humiliation of Christ	Philippians 2:5–8	2:14–17
New Covenant	2 Corinthians 3:4–11	8:6
Gifts of the Holy Spirit	1 Corinthians 12:11	2:4

Authorship

- Paul
- Barnabas
- Luke
- Apollos
- Silvanus & Philip
- Priscilla
- Clement

Recipients

- Even though the letter is titled to the Hebrews some have thought it was originally addressed to Gentile Christians due to its polished Greek style and its extensive use of the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures)
- However, this doesn't tell us anything about the original recipients, only about the author's background
- The frequent appeal to the OT, the presupposed knowledge of Jewish ritual, warning not to return to Judaism, and early traditional title all point to Jewish Christians as the original recipients
- Some scholars believe them to be the converted Jewish priest in Jerusalem (Acts 6:7) or with the converts from Qumran

Destination

- Initially, it might seem logical that these Jewish Christians lived in Palestine however the letter says they never saw or heard Jesus which Palestinian Jews likely would have
- As well, the letter says they financially helped other Christians where the Palestinian Christians were poor and in need of assistance
- As well those addressed have knowledge of Jewish ritual from the Septuagint rather than attending temple services in Jerusalem
- Finally, the statement that those from Italy greet you implies that Italian away from home are sending back greetings which would make Rome the probable destination

Purpose & Date

- The recipients of the letter are well known to the author; he writes about their generosity, their persecution, their immaturity, and his hope of revisiting them soon
- Notably they are exhorted to greet their leaders and fellow Christians in their assembly, but also all the saints as well they are rebuked for not meeting often enough
- The purpose of the letter then is to prevent this apostasy and to restore them into mainstream Christian fellowship

Date

- We cannot date Hebrews precisely, but it is possible it was written before A. D. 70 as it seems likely the author would have claimed the temple's destruction as a divine indication that the OT sacrificial system had become outmoded

Christ's Superiority

- Over Prophets
- Over Angels
- Over Moses (and Joshua)
- Over Aaron
- Christ compared with Melchizedek

Exhortation and Greetings

- Author urges readers to approach God through superior method of Christ rather than OT
- He warns of judgment that comes on those who deny Christ but also states confidence based on their past endurance of persecution that they will not deny
- He commends the heroes of faith, citing Jesus as ultimate example of patient endurance to receive reward where Esau is a negative example
- He exhorts mutual love, sympathy, moral use of sex in marriage, avoiding avarice, imitating godly leaders, avoid false teaching, accept persecution, thanksgiving, generosity, obedience to church leaders, and prayer

Outline

- I. Christ's superiority over OT Prophets (1:1–3a)
- II. Christ's superiority over angels (1:3b–2:18)
 - A. Warning against apostasy (2:1–4)
- III. Christ's superiority over Moses (3:1–6)
 - A. Warning against apostasy (3:7–19)
- IV. Christ's superiority over Joshua (4:1–10)
 - A. Warning against apostasy (4:11–16)
- V. Christ's superiority over Aaronites and warnings against apostasy (5:1–12:29)
 - A. Christ's human sympathy and divine appointment to priesthood (5:1–10)
 - B. Warning against apostasy with exhortation to mature (5:11–6:20)
 - C. Melchizedek pattern of Christ's priesthood (7:1–10)
 - D. Transitoriness of Aaronic priesthood (7:11–28)
 - E. Heavenly realities of Christ's priesthood (8:1–10:18)
 - F. Warning against apostasy (10:19–39)
 - G. Encouragement from heroes of OT faith (11:1–40)
 - H. Encouragement from Christ's example (12:1–11)
 - I. Warning against apostasy with example of Esau (12:12–29)
- VI. Practical exhortations (13:1–19)
- VII. Conclusion: greetings, news of Timothy's release, and benedictions (13:20–25)