

This session will focus on the Letter to the Hebrews, which offers insight into the experiences of early Jewish converts and highlights the supremacy of Jesus.

Weekly outlines and the Zoom link will be sent out each Monday to help you prepare for each study. We encourage you to take some time to read the Letter to the Hebrews. Below is an overview of the book.

Overview

The anonymous book of Hebrews is a unique contribution to the canon of Scripture. Like many other New Testament letters, Hebrews begins without an introduction but closes with blessings and greetings (Heb. 13:23–24). The author refers to his writing as a “word of exhortation” (Heb. 13:22), suggesting a pastoral tone filled with practical exhortations. This has led many to view Hebrews as a single sermon or sermon-like discourse aimed at converts from Judaism who are under pressure to revert to their Jewish faith.

Hebrews is also regarded as one of the most beautifully written and stylistically polished books of the New Testament, showcasing the author as a master of rhetorical debate and persuasion. He demonstrates profound theological insight through his use of imagery, metaphor, allusion, Old Testament analogy, and typology. Throughout the text, the author weaves a rich tapestry of biblical theology to exalt the supremacy of Jesus Christ.

A central motif of Hebrews is the assertion that “Jesus Christ is better” (the words “better,” “more,” and “greater” appear a combined 25 times). In many respects, the glory of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, serves as the gravitational center of Hebrews. Chapters 1–12 outline a compelling theological argument for the superiority of Christ over all created beings and Old Testament counterparts, with a strong focus on encouraging readers to persevere in faith centered on Christ. The author frequently calls the reader to respond to Christ in worship through encouraging words, firm warnings, and contrasting examples.

Placing It in the Larger Story: Hebrews contains 35 direct quotations from the Old Testament, along with numerous allusions and references. With this Old Testament background in mind, the author argues that God’s glory and redemptive plan are ultimately and most clearly revealed in Jesus Christ. The superiority of Jesus is illustrated by his greater status compared to any angel, priest, or Old Covenant institution. Christ is depicted

as the complete atoning sacrifice and the final priest, fulfilling all Old Testament hopes and promises while ushering in the long-awaited new covenant age.

Key Verse: “He [Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...” (Heb. 1:3).

Date and Historical Background: Hebrews was written in the first century, probably prior to AD 70. The author does not disclose his identity, and there has been much speculation regarding who he may be; as the early Christian theologian Origen (d. c. AD 245) noted, “only God knows” who the author is. However, it is evident that the author was familiar with his audience, expressing a desire to be reunited with them (Heb. 13:19) and providing news about Timothy, who was Paul’s second-in-command (Heb. 13:23).

The traditional title “To the Hebrews” reflects the belief that the original audience consisted mainly of Jewish Christians. It is safe to assume that this audience was well-acquainted with the numerous quotations and allusions to the Old Testament. The author clearly addresses professing Christians, urging them multiple times to maintain their confession and faith (Heb. 3:6, 14; 4:14; 10:23).

As You Get Started: What is your current understanding of how Hebrews helps us grasp the overarching storyline of the Bible? Do you recognize how elements of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Hebrews? How does this book contribute to Christian theology? In what ways does it clarify our understanding of major doctrines of the Christian faith? Are there any specific Old Testament imagery or references in Hebrews that are particularly confusing to you? What questions do you hope to have answered through this study?

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