

Introduction to Hebrews

Key Verse

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.” (Hebrews 4:14)

Key Truth

We must never surrender to discouragement, remembering that our Great High Priest is supreme over all and all-sufficient for our needs. Stand firm and persevere."

Who Wrote the Letter to the Hebrews?

In the King James Version, this book carries the title *The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews*. Later Bible translations wisely shorten the title to *The Epistle to the Hebrews* because the oldest and most reliable manuscripts do not name the author.

Early church leaders expressed differing views. Some, such as Origen and Eusebius, believed Paul was the author. Tertullian suggested Barnabas. Clement of Alexandria proposed that Paul originally wrote the letter in Hebrew and that Luke translated it into Greek—a suggestion often raised because Hebrews is written in exceptionally refined Greek.

What we can say with confidence is that the author was well known in the early church, closely associated with Timothy, and deeply grounded in the Old Testament Scriptures. Hebrews 13:23 mentions Timothy directly, and Hebrews 13:24 includes greetings from “those from Italy,” which may suggest the letter was written from Italy, though that conclusion is not certain.

Ultimately, the anonymity of the author directs our attention where it belongs—not to the messenger, but to the message. Hebrews stands as one of the most carefully reasoned, pastorally sensitive, and Christ-exalting books in all of Scripture.

To Whom Was Hebrews Written?

The letter does not name its recipients, but its content leaves little doubt about its audience. Hebrews has a distinctly Jewish character. It explains Jesus Christ in relation to the Levitical priesthood, the temple, and the sacrificial system. It repeatedly quotes the Old Testament and assumes the readers are deeply familiar with it.

The most widely held and reasonable view is that Hebrews was written to Jewish believers, likely living in or near Jerusalem. These believers had placed their faith in Jesus as the Messiah but were struggling with pressure, persecution, and uncertainty—especially as the foundations of Jewish religious life began to shake.

When Was Hebrews Written?

Hebrews was written before A.D. 70, prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Roman army. The author consistently refers to temple worship and priestly sacrifices in the present tense, indicating that those practices were still ongoing at the time of writing.

This timing is crucial. The book addresses believers standing on the brink of a massive historical and spiritual upheaval.

Why Was Hebrews Written?

One of the primary purposes of Hebrews was to prepare Jewish believers for what was coming. After embracing Jesus as the Messiah, many Jewish Christians continued to cling to temple worship and sacrifices, believing that Jerusalem would soon become the center of the Messiah's earthly reign.

Instead, they were about to experience devastation. The city would fall. The temple would be destroyed. The sacrificial system would come to an abrupt end.

Hebrews explains that this was not a failure of God's plan, but its fulfillment. Animal sacrifices were never intended to be permanent. They were shadows—pictures pointing forward to the true and final sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As Hebrews makes clear, the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. Those sacrifices pointed to the One who could.

Jesus Christ fulfilled everything the sacrificial system symbolized. By shedding His blood on the cross, He accomplished what the law could never do. His resurrection declares that He is God, Savior, and Lord. With His finished work complete, God's people are called to look to Christ alone for redemption, forgiveness, and access to God.

Hebrews and Romans: Two Complementary Letters

Romans and Hebrews beautifully complement one another.

Romans was written to believers in the capital of the Gentile world. Hebrews was written to believers connected to the heart of the Jewish nation. God had formed Israel for a purpose—to bring blessing to all nations and to bring forth the King who would rule over all.

- Romans explains the relationship of the King to His worldwide kingdom.
- Hebrews explains the relationship of the King to the nation from which He came.

Together, they reveal the unity of God's redemptive plan centered in Jesus Christ.

Overview

The Book of Hebrews is a powerful, masterful letter written to demonstrate that Jesus Christ is far superior to any Old Testament figure, ritual, or sacrifice. Originally addressed to Jewish Christians who were tempted to slip back into traditional Judaism under the weight of persecution, the author urges them to hold fast to Jesus—our perfect High Priest and the mediator of a vastly better covenant.

Throughout its pages, Hebrews highlights how Jesus perfectly fulfills the Law, outshining angels, Moses, and the ancient Levitical priesthood. By offering Himself as a definitive, once-for-all sacrifice, He replaced the old sacrificial system forever. The letter also features the famous "Hall of Faith" (Hebrews 11), which commends the Old Testament saints who lived by faith. Ultimately,

Hebrews teaches that Jesus is the final, supreme revelation of God, calling all believers to stand steadfast in faith, endurance, and absolute trust in His finished work.

Practical Application for Believers

Hebrews calls us to move forward in faith and not cling to what God has already fulfilled. We are reminded not to place our confidence in religious systems, traditions, or rituals, but in the living Christ. When life shakes what feels familiar, God may be inviting us to trust more deeply in what cannot be shaken.

The challenge for believers today is the same as it was then: hold fast to Jesus. Do not drift. Do not retreat. Do not substitute religious comfort for living faith. Christ is better—better than rituals, better than systems, better than anything we might be tempted to rely on apart from Him.

An Invitation to Believe

If you have never placed your trust in Jesus Christ, Hebrews points you clearly to Him. You cannot save yourself through good works, religious effort, or tradition. Salvation comes only through Jesus, who shed His blood on the cross for your sins and rose again, proving that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

Today, you can come to Him in faith. Turn from sin. Trust fully in what Christ has done. He invites you into a new and living way—a restored relationship with God that lasts not only for this life, but for eternity.