

AN ARGUMENT PAPER ON
THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

Submitted in partial fulfillments
of the course requirements for
Acts and General Epistles

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November 15, 1984

I. Introductory Items

Authorship: This is a frequently debated issue. Some have suggested that Luke wrote Hebrews or at least translated it, such as Clement of Alexandria in the third century.¹ Some have held that it was Silas, the companion of Paul and one of the chief men among the brethren (Acts 15:22-40). Others have thought that it was Barnabas, Paul's companion on his first missionary journey (Acts 13); this was held by Tertullian.² Still a number held that Aquilla and Priscilla co-authored the book of Hebrews.³ Others have believed that Apollos wrote it; Luther was the first to advocate this. Many have thought that this was definitely a writing of Paul; this is probably the most popular view by far. All of this is to say that the author is not named in the text, but continues to be often speculated about.

Date: The Broadman Bible Commentary says, "*There is no clear historical evidence within the body of Hebrews to assist us in setting the exact date of its composition.*"⁴ The Book of Hebrews had to be written before it was quoted

1. Clifton, J. Allen. The Broadman Bible Commentary, Broadman Press, Nashville, Tennessee, Vol. 12, 1972, p. 3.

2. Ibid., p. 5.

3. Ibid., p. 5.

4. Ibid., p. 5.

by Clement of Rome in his Corinthian letter around A.D. 95 or 96. The sacrificial system was also still taking place (Heb. 8:4; 9:6; 10:1, 2; 13:10) so Hebrews must have been written before Titus destroyed the Temple in A.D. 70. Otherwise, Hebrews 8:13 would not have said that the first old covenant "*which decayeth and groweth old is reading to vanish away.*" It would have stated that it had already vanished or gone. This would have strengthened his argument even more. Gaebelein writes, "*A date before A.D. 70 is indicated, but how much before that we cannot say. Some passages in the epistle gain in force if we think of a time not long before, when there was a compelling call to loyal Jews to cast in their lot with those fighting against Rome. So perhaps we should think of a date near or even during the war of A.D. 66-70.*"⁵ Many dates have been speculated about with the majority between A.D. 60-70. This is probably as close as we can narrow it for the present, but the important factor here is that it occurs shortly before the temple and its worship is destroyed in A.D. 70.

Recipients: The title "*to the Hebrews*" would seem to suggest an only Jewish group of recipients. This is easily supported within the context of the book. It reviews much Old Testament (OT) history, it quotes many OT passages, and

5. Gaebelein, Frank E. The Expositor's Bible, Zondervan Publishing House, Vol. 12, 1981, p. 8.

it deals with many things particularly pertaining to Old Testament worship which would suggest either a Jewish population or a strong familiarity with the Jewish people of history. Much speculation about the specific Jews addressed has been ventured, but nothing seems to be conclusive. Many have thought that this letter was sent to Alexandria, Palestine, or even Italy, but it is not really known.

Others also hold that Hebrews was written to Greeks and even argue by the elegant Greek in which it was written and also the fundamentals of Hebrews 6:1-2 point to the Gentile mission in the Church. Another view sees both Jews and Gentiles as the recipients of the book. Gaebelstein, writing on this topic, states, "*And when we are through, we may conclude that it cannot be proved beyond any doubt that Hebrews was written for either Jews or Gentiles.*"⁶ By the subject in Hebrews, it would seem that the recipients would have been primarily Jews, but it could include some Gentiles possessing a predominantly Jewish background or familiarity. The readers of whatever racial origin were also predominantly Christians (3:1; 4:16; 5:12; 6:12; 10:19-22, 32-34; 12:7; 13:1, 18, 20-22). It would seem as in any church or Christian meeting that most if not all would profess Christianity, but some would later prove otherwise. The recipients of the Book of Hebrews seem no exception.

6. Ibid., p. 5.

Occasion: The occasion and setting of Hebrews is during a critical time in the history of the Church. Since the apostles first began to spread the good news of Jesus, strong opposition was very evident. At first, Christianity was under the wings of Judaism, which was an accepted religion of the Roman Empire. The strong clashes between Judaism and Christianity were all considered a part of the Jewish religious system to the Romans (see Acts 18:12-17). As Christianity began to grow, its persecution and opposition also grew, not only with Judaism, but also with Rome as the distinction became more evident. Neil states:

Part of the trouble is state interference. The conflict between Church and state which resulted in widespread persecution and martyrdom, until the Roman Empire became officially Christian under Constantine in A.D. 313, showed signs of developing almost from the beginning of the Church's history.⁷

Remember, the date of the Book of Hebrews was just prior to the destruction of the Temple and the crushing of all who opposed Rome. Scofield says:

The occasion of the Epistle was the need of special exhortation for Hebrew readers who had professed faith in Jesus as the Messiah, some of whom were wavering in their attitude. Hence, the exhortation is to "hold fast" (3:6) and to "go on to maturity" (6:1, lit.).⁸

7. Neil, William. The Epistle to the Hebrews, SCM Press, Ltd., Great Britain, 1959, p. 18.

8. Scofield, C. I. The New Scofield Reference Bible, New York, Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 1311.

II. Purpose of the Book

Buttrick says this about the purpose of argument in Hebrews:

As it stands, then, Hebrews is an argument for the finality of Christianity resting on the valid foreshadowing in the Old Testament institution of sacrifice of the fundamental need for access to God, which has been brought out of the shadows for all men, Jew and Gentile alike, in the sacrifice of Christ. The Jewishness of Hebrews belongs to the form rather than to the substance of its thought.⁹

The purpose of Hebrews is to reveal Christ and His superiority of person and work (especially as High Priest and Sacrifice), and then as a result, cause its readers to believe and hold fast in their belief unto maturity and a right relationship with God through Christ. There is a sharp contrast between the many parallels drawn between the Old Testament "*figures*" (9:9, 24) in worship and the better New Testament "*realities*" (used 13 times) capsulated in Christ. The author frequently makes use of comparisons and contrasts to drive home his point. The Book contains constant appeals to have faith in God and the promises (or its derivative, used 18 times), which He has given. Encouragement is given, including references of reward and a future inheritance. The appeal continues by the frequent use of "let us" and "hold fast" among other commands of endurance. Then the author exhorts us with many warnings by the use of "lest" and many passages of judgment. There are five passages

9. Buttrick, George Arthur. The Interpreter's Bible, Abingdon Press, New York, Nashville, Vol. XI, 1955, p. 590.

incorporating strong warnings (listed in the attached outline). Many believe that these warning passages are a warning to not lapse back into Judaism, while others believe they are challenges to go on to maturity so as not to lose rewards. It seems that Hebrews includes some of both ideas if you incorporate all the warnings. The first view (Judaist lapsing) can be seen by those professing faith in Christ, but if they later fall back to Judaism, they are demonstrating that their so-called faith was not genuine at the beginning. This view is also a warning for the true believers to persevere, giving themselves "*hope*", "*assurance*," and "*confidence*" of their genuine faith by their mature lifestyle. The second view (Maturity leaping) sees only the truly saved and their gain or loss of reward and shaming of Christ (they usually view certain passages as hypothetical). Both views seem appropriate, but must be determined within each context. All should be greatly motivated as they see the superiority of Christ and all that He has provided, as contrasted with the former "*figures*" (9:19, 24) of that "*which decayeth and groweth old and is ready to vanish away*" (8:13).

III. Outline

I. The superiority and finality of Christ (1:1-10:18)

A. God's revelation (1:1-3)

1. In the past by prophets (1:1)
2. In these last days by His Son (1:2, 3)
 - a. Christ is superior in credentials (1:2, 3)
 1. Appointed heir of all things (1:2)
 2. The agent through which God made the world (1:2)
 3. The brightness of God's glory (1:3)
 4. The express image of God's person (1:3)
 5. Upholding all things by the word of His power (1:3)
 6. By Himself, purged our sins (1:3)
 7. Sat down on the right hand of the Father (1:3)

B. Christ's superiority to angels (1:4-14)

1. By Christ's more excellent name - "Son" (cf. Ps. 2:7; II Sam. 1:4-6; 7:14)
2. By angels' worshipping Him (1:6) [cf. Ps. 97:7]
 - a. Angels were created (1:7)
 - b. Angels are not eternal (1:7)
 - c. Angels are His ministers (1:7)
3. Christ is God (1:8) [cf. Ps. 45:6-7]
4. Christ has an eternal throne and kingdom (1:8) [cf. Ps. 45:6-7]

5. Christ is righteous and God-appointed (1:9) [cf. Ps. 45:6-7]
 6. Christ created the heavens and the earth (1:10) [cf. Ps. 102:25]
 7. Christ is eternal and changes not (1:11, 12) [cf. Ps. 102:26-27]
 8. Christ finished His work for us (1:13) [cf. Ps. 110; Mt. 22:44; Mk. 12:36-37]
 - a. Angels still minister (1:14)
- C. Christ's superiority to angels and men (2:1-18)
1. Appeal and warning (2:1-4)

[This is strong warning number one.]

 - a. Word of angels (2:1, 2) [See Deut. 33:2; Ps. 68:17; Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19.]
 - b. Word of Christ and men that heard Him (2:3)
 - C. Witness of signs, miracles, and gifts (2:4)
 2. Man's failure to subject what God put under him (2:5-8)
 3. Christ takes on Him the seed of man and succeeds for man (2:9-18)
 - a. By suffering unto death (2:9-10)
 - b. For salvation and satisfaction for [those who believe] (2:10-13)
 - C. By becoming the God-man (2:14, 16-18)
 1. The faithful high priest (2:17-18)
 - a. To make reconciliation (2:17)
 - b. To help those tempted (2:18)
- D. Christ's superiority to Moses (3:1-6a)
1. As apostle and high priest of our confession (3:1) - not the mediator of the law

2. As creator [over the house] (3:2-4) - not creature [in the house]
 3. As son (3:5-6a) - not as servant
- E. Christ's superior promised rest (3:6b-4:13) [cf. Ps. 95:7-11; Ex. 17; Num. 14] (superior to the common Sabbath rests under Moses and Joshua)
1. Appeal and warning (3:6b-4:13)

[This is strong warning number two.]

 - a. Hold fast (3:6b, 14)
 - b. Hear God's voice (3:7, 15, 16)
 - C. Harden not your hearts (3:8, 10, 12, 13, 15)
 1. In disbelief (3:12, 18, 19)
 - a. Departing from God (3:12)
 - b. Deceived by sin (3:13, 17)
 - d. Works of belief lead to rest (4:9-11a)
 - e. Works of unbelief lead to judgment (4:11b-13)
- F. Christ's superior priesthood (4:14-7:28)
1. Christ, our great high priest (4:14-16)
 - a. In heaven (4:14)
 - b. Without sin (4:15)
 1. Has been tempted in all points (4:15)
 2. Gracious and merciful (4:16)
 2. Man's imperfect priesthood (5:1-4)
 - a. Offers gifts and sacrifices to God (5:1-3)
 1. For the sins of others (5:3)
 2. For the sins of himself (5:3)
 - b. Ordained of God (5:4)

3. Christ, our eternal high priest (5:5-10) [cf. Ps. 2:7; 110:4]
 - a. Is God's Son (5:5, 8)
 - b. Is made after the order of Melchizedek (5:6, 10)
 - C. Is perfect (5:9)
 - d. Is an eternal priest who brings eternal salvation (5:6, 9)

4. Appeal and warning (5:11-6:20)

[This is strong warning number three.]

 - a. Listen, use, and grow in the Word (5:11-14)
 - b. Go on to maturity (6:1-2)
 - C. Don't fall away (6:3-8)
 - d. God promises to bless (6:9-20) [Encouragement]
 1. God righteously remembers your work (6:9-11)
 2. So by faith and patience endure (6:12)
 3. Abraham patiently endured by faith, obtaining God's promise (6:13-15) [cf. Gen 22:10-18]
 4. God's promise is sure, giving us hope because of our high priest (6:16-20)
 - a. A high priest forever (6:20)
 - b. After the order of Melchizedek (6:20)

5. To Melchizedek's great priesthood (7:1-10) [cf. Gen. 14]
 - a. Abraham gave him tithes (7:1, 2, 4-10)
 - b. Melchizedek, the King of Salem, means King of Righteousness and Peace (7:2)

- c. Who had no known beginning or end and likewise his priesthood (7:3)
 - d. Who was similar to Christ (7:3)
 - e. Who was greater than the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood (7:4-10)
6. To the old priesthood and the law (7:11-28)
- a. Old priesthood and the law changed (7:11-28)
 - 1. The law established that priesthood and neither could bring perfection because of its weakness and the death of the priests (7:11, 12, 16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 27, 28)
 - 2. God established Christ's priesthood (after the order of Melchizedek) which brings perfection because of its power and He lives as a priest forever by God's promise (7:13-17, 19-28)
 - a. Because of His eternal life and changeless priesthood (7:16, 17, 21, 24, 25, 27, 28)
 - b. Because of His continual intercession, but one time offering of Himself (7:25, 27)
 - c. Because He is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners (7:26)
 - d. Because He is high above the heavens and consecrated forever by God (7:26, 28)
- G. Christ's superior ministry as priest (8:1-10:18)
- 1. On God's right hand in heaven (8:1)
 - 2. Of the true tabernacle made by God (8:2-5)
 - 3. As mediator of the promised better covenant, the new covenant (8:6-13) [cf. Jer. 31:27-37]

- a. The first covenant had faults and Israel didn't obey it (8:7-9, 13)
- 4. To the old (first) covenant (9:1-10)
 - a. With its earthly tabernacle, furniture, high priests, and carnal ordinances (9:1-10)
 - b. Which could not make perfect (9:9)
 - C. Which was a "*figure*" of the better covenant (9:9)
- 5. With Christ mediating by His own blood (9:11)
 - a. Once to obtain eternal redemption (9:12-14)
 - b. The New Testament (new covenant) (9:15-28)
 - 1. To cover those under the old covenant (9:15)
 - 2. Required the testator's death and bloodshed (9:16-22)
 - 3. Required a better sacrifice to appear before God in heaven itself (9:23-24)
 - 4. Offered once to take away the sins of many to take their death (9:25-28)
- 6. In doing God's will by removing sin (10:1-18)
 - a. The law continually failed by its sacrifices (10:1-8)
 - b. Christ succeeded by offering once Himself (10:9-18)

II. The superiority of a life of faith (10:18-13:25)

- A. Christ, our object, gives us boldness (10:18-25)
 - 1. To draw near in assurance of faith (10:22)
 - 2. To hold fast our confession of faith (10:23)
 - 3. To motivate our brothers of faith (10:24, 25)

- B. Appeal and warning (10:26-31)
[This is strong warning number four.]
 - 1. Don't sin willfully after receiving the truth (10:26)
 - a. Those who despised the old covenant were judged **(10:28)**
 - b. Those who despise Christ's new covenant will be judged (10:29-31)
- C. Encouragement to faith (10:32-39)
 - 1. Remember past endurance (10:32-34a)
 - 2. Look forward to future rewards (10:34b-39)
 - a. Christ is coming (10:37)
 - b. The just shall live by faith **(10:38)** [cf. Hab. 2:4]
- D. Evidenced by the lifestyle of many who believed God and acted by it (11:1-40)
- E. Looking unto Jesus (12:1-4)
 - 1. The author of faith (12:2)
 - 2. The perfecter (finisher) of our faith (12:2)
 - 3. Consider Him lest you tire, and run with patience (12:1-4)
- F. Involves chastening by God (12:5-29)
 - 1. Don't despise it (12:5)
 - a. Because God loves whom He chastens (12:6)
 - b. Because all His children are chastened (12:7-8)
 - C. Because it is for our own good (12:9)
 - 1. To make holy (12:10)
 - 2. To bring righteous fruit (12:11)

2. To encourage (12:12)
 3. To challenge (12:13-24)
 - a. Don't be defiled by the old things (12:13-21)
 - b. Seek the heavenly better things of Christ (12:22-24)
 4. Appeal and warning (12:25-29)

[This is strong warning number five.]

 - a. Refuse Him not that speaketh from heaven (12:25-27)
 - b. Serve God acceptably (12:28)
 - C. God is a consuming fire (12:29)
- G. Is evidenced in various ways (13:1-25)
- I. Relationships (13:1-9)
 - a. Christian love (13:1)
 1. Strangers (13:2)
 2. Those suffering (13:3)
 3. Marriage (13:4)
 - b. With possessions and needs (13:5-6)
 1. With Godly leaders (13:7)
 - C. With Jesus who doesn't change (13:8)
 - d. With doctrine (13:9)
 2. Sacrifice (13:10-21)
 - a. Christ's suffering and shed blood (13:10-12)
 - b. Our continual praise and thanksgiving (13:13-19)
 1. By doing good and sharing (13:16)
 2. By obeying and submitting to authority (13:17)

- 3. By prayer (13:18)
- C. God's eternal covenant and work of sanctification through the willing believer (13:20-21)
- 3. Conclusion (13:22-25)
 - a. Exhortation (13:22)
 - b. Greeting (13:23-25)

IV. Argument Developed

So very briefly, the purpose is to show Christ's superiority over all and cause the readers to respond in faith. The author accomplishes this by revealing Christ's superiority, and encouraging or warning the readers to respond in faith to the truth. The major portion of the book (1:1-10:18) primarily pictures Christ and His work as being superior and final. It begins by comparing God's revelation in these last days in Christ as far more superior than the Jews' highly regarded prophets of the past (1:1-3). Seven superiorities of Christ are then listed. These begin by listing His appointment, His creative power, His glory, His deity, His sustaining power, His redeeming power, and His finished work and position. These are listed to overview and review Christ's person and work in history and to demonstrate His superior worthiness. So, here Christ is seen as the superior revelation of God.

Next, Christ is pictured as superior even to the angels (1:4-14). Many Old Testament references are quoted as demonstrating Christ as the fulfillment and culmination in His person of work. He has a better name (Son), angels worship Him because He is deity, His throne and kingdom are eternal, He is righteous and appointed by God, He created all, and He finished His work. So, here Christ is proved better than the angels, which were often worshipped by cults of the day.

In Hebrews 2:1-18, Christ is seen as superior to both men and angels. After such an extensive revelation of Christ and His superiority over all things, the first of the five strong warnings is given. This warning warns against neglecting the "*great salvation*" (2:3), which God has revealed through Christ. For a further understanding of the word "*salvation*" (*soteria*), see The Bible Knowledge Commentary, pp. 782-783.

Some see this warning as rhetorical or hypothetical because of the word "*if*" in 2:2 and 2:3, thus being addressed to true Christians. Others see it as a turning from the truth heard without true faith - the "*we*" in 2:3 is viewed as "*professing believers*." This passage is clearly hereafter such an extensive revelation of Christ as a challenge to respond in either salvation or maturity. Such an extensive witness also gives more weight to the author's appeal (the word of angels, Christ, men, God, the Holy Spirit, signs, miracles, and gifts).

The inheritance of the promised kingdom seems to be an incentive throughout the book. Hebrews 2:5-8 shows man's failure to subject the world that God had placed under him. Hebrews 2:9-18 shows Christ taking on the seed of man and, by suffering unto death, He succeeds where man failed. In this God-man state, where Christ (God) took on humanity, He was able to destroy death and deliver man. He reconciled man as our faithful high priest providing salvation for those who believe. In this God-man state, He was tempted and is now able to help men as we are tempted. This section was here to show how such a

superior Christ could reconcile us positionally and relationally in His becoming man's High Priest.

Even faithful and revered Moses came up short when compared to Christ (3:1-6a). Moses is seen as only a servant in "*the house*" looking forward to the coming reality. Christ is seen as the Son over the house, who was the substance of that prefigured reality. But this was written to do more than just show Christ's superiority over Moses and the law. Christ's superiority should lead to faithfulness, even as Christ and Moses were faithful. This challenge to faithfulness is exemplified in the superior object of our faith, Jesus Christ.

This leads to Hebrews 3:6b-4:13, where faith leads to Christ's superior promised rest. This second major warning passage specifically deals with rewarded faithfulness. He exhorts believers to hold fast, hear God's voice, and to not harden their hearts in unbelief. The author refers to Psalms 95:7-11, Exodus 17, and Numbers 14 to support his argument. This passage includes references of the promised Canaan rest, which became delayed due to lack of faith, but was partially realized (Heb. 4:8) under Joshua (Heb. 3:11, 18, 19; Deut. 12:9; Josh. 11:23; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1). It also pictures the Sabbath rest in Hebrews 4:4, 10 as incomplete. It promises (to those of faith) that they will enter into the better promised rest (4:3, 8-11), which could partially be fulfilled in the millennium. Some see this rest as only millennial, but it seems that the complete rest from all enemies will only be fully realized in the eternal state, with the millennial rest paralleling

closely to the rest by Joshua (an often-considered a type of Christ). So, this is an encouragement as well as a warning to respond by faith to that which they hear from God (cf. Heb. 3:7, 15; 4:2, 6). In Hebrews 4:11b-13, unbelief leads to judgment. For the believer, this could parallel his chastening (12:5-11) or the loss of reward by missing what God has for him. For the person in "*the congregation*" who professes salvation, but who really doesn't believe in God - eternal unrest.

Now we come to Christ's superior priesthood (4:14-7:28). Since Christ has finished His work and "*passed into the heavens*" (4:14), we should hold fast to our profession of faith. Also, our "*great high priest*" can identify with our weakness because He was tempted like us. Yet again demonstrating His superiority and worthiness, He was without sin. Because of this, we should evidence our faith in Him by prayer for our needs. Then we see that man's priesthood was temporary and had to offer sacrifices even for his own sins (5:14). Again, we see the superior Jesus, who is eternal, perfect, God's Son, made after the order of Melchizedek, and brings us salvation (5:5-10).

In Hebrews 5:11-6:20, probably the strongest appeal and warning is written. After the author had again in detail demonstrated Christ's superiority, he claims they were dull of hearing and should be teachers by now. Neil says:

The evidence of the epistle points to this as one of the factors which made this WORD OF EXHORTATION necessary. It is to encourage men and women who were holding fast to their faith against all opposition, and to warn those who were in danger of compromising. The author meets this problem by holding up the example

of Jesus, who had to suffer as they were suffering, but who showed how suffering should be borne, and who by his victory over death had ensured a like victory for his people. To deny him now would be to crucify him afresh (6:6).¹⁰

This passage has various interpretations, ranging from a saved person trying to be saved again and again, to a believer losing their salvation, to believers' works and rewards, a hypothetical sense ("*It is impossible*", "*if...*"), those professing faith in Christ, but not genuine and "*fall away*" (including many who hold this as "*blasphemy against the Holy Spirit*"). It seems he was using an argument to convince Christians to grow up with the absurdity of being deceived back to a Mosaic or seemingly works-based system - which would never work as rejecting Christ's death when you know better can't bring another public shaming and crucifixion of God's Son. So, someone could be tempted to legalism as we all pridefully would like to depend on ourselves and could be backslidden or a baby Christian and to them he says, grow up, mature. Or the other case could be a person professing to be a Christian, but actually is an unbeliever as they rejected Christ's grace over the Jewish Law or Sacrificial system that Christ Himself fulfilled.

10. Neil, William. *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, SCM Press, Ltd., Great Britain, 1959, pp. 18-19.

Without spending too much time, 6:1 starts with *"leaving the principles of Christ"* (the simplicity of how you got saved), *"let us go on unto perfection"* (maturity), *"not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works"* (those works Jews tried to reach God, but now have been already been paid for by Christ), and *"faith toward God"* (how one gets saved). So, he says let's not talk about salvation, let's talk about maturing.

It also seems much clearer with the switch from "we" and "us" to "them" and "they" in Hebrews 6:4-8, and then the return to "we" and the encouragement that follows that he was talking about believers and unbelievers. This is definitely a call to maturity for rewards and for our own assurance of God fulfilling His promises. He even says after the warning of 6:6-8, in verse 9, *"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak."* He could not be clearer that the author doesn't believe that could happen to those saved, though he warned them thus about moving forward to maturity and not desiring to go backward to the legalistic lifestyle and mindset they had once embraced, but were now free.

In Hebrews 6:13-18, the author even quotes and recalls the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant from Genesis 22:16-17, where God had promised Abraham great future blessings without him having to do anything. After talking about God's promises, in 6:18-19 he says it is *"impossible for God to lie"* (even

though man may), but then says, "we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." Our hope is put to rest as it is shown to rest in Jesus our "forerunner" and superior "high priest forever" (Heb. 6:19, 20).

Next, Melchizedek, the great high priest, is shown to be similar to Christ (7:1-4). Then Melchizedek is shown to be greater than the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood (7:4-10), which is closely linked and tied to the law (7:11). Christ is seen "after the order of Melchizedek" but far superior (7:11, 17, 21). The law and Christ are now contrasted, with, of course, Christ being highly superior. Christ's qualifications are listed again to evidence Him as the perfect high priest of the "better hope" (7:19) and the "better testament" (7:22). The law was looking forward to Christ and Christ died once (7:16, 27) and "by the power of an endless life" perfected forever them "that come unto God by Him" (7:25). God consecrated Christ by an oath (Heb. 7:20-28) as our high priest forever where "He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (7:25). So, Christ's eternal priesthood is shown here for the purpose of demonstrating its superiority to all other temporal and imperfect priesthoods, and is powerful enough to save from sin and help during time of temptation.

This next section in Hebrews demonstrates even further Christ's superior ministry as priest. The author begins by

saying that Christ's work is finished and He now possesses majesty (8:1). In Hebrews 8:2-5, he says that the earthly temple is only a shadow of the true temple in heaven where Christ entered. This shows us the futility of "earthly" worship apart from the "heavenly" worship of Christ.

Hebrews 8:6 demonstrates Christ's superior ministry as a mediator of a better covenant. Hebrews 8:7-10:18 elaborates on the contrasts and superiority of Christ and the new covenant and the old covenant and its institutions. Hebrews 8 quotes the new covenant and is the fulfillment of the promise spoken of in Jeremiah 31.

The old covenant had faults because man's sin kept him from obeying it. It was carnal and couldn't make anyone perfect because of their weaknesses. The old covenant was a figure of the better covenant (9:9, 24).

Christ brought in the new covenant by the one-time offering and shedding of His blood, which obtained eternal redemption (9:11-15). This covenant (testament) required a better sacrifice that would enter into heaven itself (9:16-28). The continual sacrifice of the blood of bulls and goats was never sufficient to pay for sins; but Christ offered His own blood once, and paid for the sins of all who put their faith in Him (10:1-18).

So, the law (10:1), the sacrificial system (8:2-4), and all that was under the old covenant was a shadow of the good things to come - which were fulfilled in Christ. Therefore, we must accept Christ by faith and live by faith because this is it

-there is nothing or no one greater to come. Jesus was the final fulfillment. He alone could and did accomplish God's will. This section concludes by saying that, now that forgiveness is brought, there is no more sacrifice (or its need) to pay for sin (10:18).

This section conclusively shows Christ as the final and complete revelation, sacrifice, and high priest who is superior to all before and after Him. He is also the fulfillment and far superior to all that the Old Testament looked forward to.

The second section primarily shows the superiority of the life of faith (10:18-13:25). This is obvious even without the author's arguments but to all that we have seen about the object of our faith. So, naturally, it begins with, "*Having, therefore, brethren*" (10:19); then a series of "*Let us*" (10:22, 23, 24). These commands include: Let us draw near in full assurance of faith; let us hold fast the profession of our faith; let us encourage one another in love to good works.

Then the fourth strong appeal and warning is seen in Hebrews 10:26-31. It says that we should not sin willfully after receiving the truth (10:26). The author then says that those who despised the old covenant were judged (10:28), and those who despise the truth of the new covenant will be judged (10:29-31). Why is this here? Well, it seems that after ten and a half chapters of giving the truth of the superiority of Christ in all areas, that "*if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins*" (Hebrews 10:26). How could there be ano-

ther sacrifice, if we willfully rejected the only true sacrifice by Christ (10:18)? All the other sacrifices didn't save; they only pointed to the sacrifice of Christ! Their faith in what God had promised (paid for by Christ's sacrifice) is what saved them; they manifested their faith in God by obeying the old covenant. Now, what the old covenant had looked forward to, had come. Now, the better new covenant has been established. That is why Hebrews 1:1-2 becomes so important about God's revelation (by Christ) in these last days. If they reject that revelation of the truth, there is no more. So, naturally, judgment would come.

In Hebrews 10:32-39, believers are encouraged to faith. They are reminded of their past endurance (10:32-34a). They are encouraged to look forward to future rewards for a patient lifestyle evidencing faith (10:34b-39). The author even reminds them of Christ's imminent return so they should really be motivated to good works. Then he encourages them with an Old Testament quote from Habakkuk 2:4: "*The just shall live by faith*" (10:38). This is sometimes used to support a Pauline authorship since Paul quotes it a couple of other times in Galatians and Romans. Hebrews 10:39 says, "*But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition [destruction] but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*"

Now we come to Hebrews 11:1-40, where the superior life of faith is evidenced. This is the famous chapter on faith in the Bible where it is mentioned twenty-five times. Various Old

Testament characters are cited believing and acting upon God's promises. Hebrews 12:1-4 tells us why all these examples of faith are listed. It says that, since we have all these witnesses of faith, we should endure and press on to maturity.

Then it says that we should look again at our supreme example of faith, Jesus, who is the author and perfecter of our faith, and who endured for us.

The author then explains that the life of faith will involve chastening by God (12:5-11). This is here to get rid of the Pharisaical idea that was prevalent during this time - that a person might not be saved if God is allowing hardships in a person's life. He then quickly goes on to exhort and challenge his readers not to be defiled by old things (12:13-21) but to "*diligently*" seek the better heavenly things of Christ (12:22-24).

Now the fifth and final of the strong appeals and warnings is seen in Hebrews 12:25-29. It is like the other warning passages beginning with a statement or command and ending with judgment. It says, "*refuse not Him that speaketh*" (12:25). We have already seen God's revelation of Christ. If we refuse Him and His revelation, what should a person expect? The unsaved should expect hell, and the saved a loss of perspective and rewards [cf. 1 Cor. 3:11-15]. This again should motivate us negatively and positively. As Hebrews 12:28 says, "*we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*"

Hebrews 13:1-25 shows the superiority of the life of faith evidenced in various ways. First, the author begins with relationships with people and possessions, as a result of our relationship with God through Christ (13:1-9). Then he speaks of our sacrifice, which should result because of what Christ has done for us (13:10-21). Then he concludes by saying,

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Hebrews 13:20, 21).

That really sums up the book's purpose and then the author greets a few friends and closes.

This chapter in Hebrews was basically there to demonstrate certain practical manifestations of true faith and a right relationship with Christ.

In conclusion, the purpose of Hebrews was to bring the readers into a right relationship with God. The book reveals God and His will by the revelation of the person and work of Christ and His desire for man. The purpose was to be accomplished by the revelation of the superiority of Christ and a constant appeal and warning from rejecting this. The relationship was made possible by Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and was to be simply accepted and responded to by faith.

First, we saw God's final revelation unfolded in the superior person of Christ. Then we saw His superior work in providing what man could not achieve. He encouraged us to respond throughout the book by rewards of rest and eternal reign. His priesthood and priestly ministry are stressed greatly because that is what makes our life of faith a reality. Then Christ's superiority is seen over all the Old Testament institutions, which prefigure Him as their fulfillment.

The new covenant is made possible by Christ's mediation on our behalf to God. Finally, the superior Christ is seen with His work and sufferings fulfilled. Many witnesses challenged all professing believers to faith. The Book concludes by the manifestations of faith a genuine Christian should evidence. Our challenge is to respond in faith and endure to the end because of Christ and His new and better way.

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