

Hebrews—Jesus is κρείττων¹ (Superior)

WEEK 1

I. Introductory Statements

A. Question? Why is Hebrews one of the most neglected books in the Bible?

1. Because we neglect the OT.
2. We don't know how to apply the warning passages.
3. We don't struggle with wanting to go back to OT living.
4. We don't understand that it is imperative to have a High Priest.

B. Jesus is Better—Duh! Of course he's better

1. He's the second person of the trinity
2. He is the creator of the universe
3. He has existed from eternity past with the Father and the Spirit.

C. The author of Hebrews does not fundamentally rely on these arguments.

1. The accomplishments of Jesus as a human provide the
2. The author uses the OT to prove that Jesus is Superior to mosaic Judaism

Irony—The people are struggling with considering abandoning Jesus to return to the OT system of religion, yet the author uses the very thing they want to return to—the OT—to prove that the OT itself points to the superiority of Jesus. It proves that the audience is guilty of not carefully reading their Scriptures. **They are guilty of falling away from God because they weren't reading their Bibles because of laziness. We do it too!**

Questions to ponder:

1. Have you ever been chastised for not being able to explain Jesus' connection to the Melchizedekian priesthood? (5:11-15)
2. When is the last time you encouraged a brother or sister in Christ to perform acts of love and good works because Jesus has fulfilled Yom Kippur? (10:24)
3. When is the last time you meditated on and took comfort in Jesus being our High Priest? (3:1)
4. Do you understandably rejoice in the reality that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father? (1:4-14)

II. Orientation

A. Who is the author talking to?

1. What the preacher says about his congregation.
 - a. ἀδελφός 10x (Brother) that follow Jesus
 - Hebrews: 2:11b—“That is why **he is not ashamed to call them brothers**”
 - 3:1—“Therefore, **holy brothers**, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession

¹ Κρείττων—11 times in Hebrews (13x in NT)

- 10:19—“Therefore, **brothers**, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus”
- b. Jews
- The author assumes that the audience already agrees with Him about the Messiah being the Son of God and that Jesus is the Messiah. Heb. 1:1-14.
 - Hebrews: 3:12-16—“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God... For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?”
 - Use of the OT—the author assumes that His audience has firm grasp of the OT, which explains his unashamed frequent use of the OT to make his point about Jesus’ superiority. (3:7-4:11; 4:14-5:10; 9:1-20)
 - The author uses well know Jewish myths and phrases, such the angels being the mediators of the Old Covenant in 2:1-4 and his use of the phrase “in these last days” in 1:2.
- c. Internal descriptions of the people
- The author and his congregation are second-generation believers. 2:1-4
 - Heavily persecuted. 10:32-34
 - They are $\nu\alpha\theta\rho\acute{o}\varsigma$ (lazy) regarding their spiritual life.

Conclusion: The writer to Hebrews addresses a primarily Jewish audience probably with Gentile “God-fearers.” The audience has suffered great persecution for their faith, but has neglected to study the scriptures and thus is contemplating returning to Judaism. The writer treats them like believers, but like most pastors he probably has some in mind who he considers “not saved.”

B. Where did He send it?

1. Rome?
 - a. 13:24b “Those who come from Italy send you greetings.”
 - b. Persecution of the Jewish people under Nero.
 - c. The first quotation of Hebrews by a Church Father is Clement of Rome in AD 95. Thus he must have had a copy because it originated in Rome.
2. Jerusalem/Antioch in AD 64-70
 - a. The pull to return to Judaism is strong because the temple still stands and the audience was close in proximity.
 - b. Because of the first Jewish revolt, nationalistic fervor superseded party lines. Either you are with us or you’re against us.
 - c. Jesus prophesied that when the city is under siege—flee! (Matt 24:15-16; Luke 21:21; Flee the camp 13:13)
 - d. The war with Rome finally split the Jewish Christians from their Jewish brothers.

C. Who wrote it then?

Personal opinion: the second pastor of the Jerusalem Church—Simon, son of Cleopas.

III. NT Use of the OT---Let me whet your appetite!

The merging of King and Priest roles...

- a. Hebrews 5:5-6 use of Ps 2:7
- b. Jer 23:5
- c. Jer 33:15
- d. Zech 3: 8
- e. Zech 6: 12

By time the OT canon closes, the Messianic expectation was that He would combine the offices of priest and king.