

New Testament Survey
(Part Ten: Philemon and Hebrews)

I. Philemon.

A. Title:

1. Named after Philemon, the person to whom the letter is addressed (1:1).
2. Philemon was “an inhabitant of Colosse, and apparently a person of some note among the citizens (Col. 4:9; Philemon 1:2). He was brought to a knowledge of the gospel through the instrumentality of Paul (Philemon 1:19) and held a prominent place in the Christian community for his piety and beneficence (Philemon 1:4-7). He is called in the epistle a ‘fellow-labourer,’ and therefore probably held some office in the church at Colosse; at all events, the title denotes that he took part in the work of spreading a knowledge of the gospel” (Easton).

B. Author: Paul identifies himself as the author (1:1).

C. Date and Occasion:

1. The letter to Philemon “was written from Rome at the same time as the epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians, and was sent also by Onesimus. It was addressed to Philemon and the members of his family. It was written for the purpose of interceding for Onesimus (q.v.), who had deserted his master Philemon and been ‘unprofitable’ to him. Paul had found Onesimus at Rome, and had there been instrumental in his conversion, and now he sends him back to his master with this letter.”
2. “This epistle has the character of a strictly private letter, and is the only one of such epistles preserved to us. ‘It exhibits the apostle in a new light. He throws off as far as possible his apostolic dignity and his fatherly authority over his converts. He speaks simply as Christian to Christian. He speaks, therefore, with that peculiar grace of humility and courtesy which has, under the reign of Christianity, developed the spirit of chivalry and what is called “the character of a gentleman,” certainly very little known in the old Greek and Roman civilization’ (Dr. Barry)” (Easton).

D. Structure and Content.

1. Salutation (1:1-3).
2. Thanksgiving for Philemon (1:4-7).
 - a. For his love for the Lord and the saints (1:4-5).
 - b. Prayer for greater love (1:6).
 - c. Joy that the saints have been refreshed through him (1:7).
3. Paul’s plea for Onesimus (1:8-21).
 - a. Not by command, but appeal (1:8-9).
 - b. Begotten in Paul’s imprisonment (1:10).
 - c. Formerly useless, but now useful to both (1:11).
 - d. Wished to keep him, but sent him back (1:12-13).
 - e. Didn’t want to keep him without Philemon’s consent (1:14).
 - f. Perhaps parted that he might be returned forever (1:15-16).
 - g. Receive him as you would me (1:17).
 - h. Charge any wrong to my account (1:18-19).
 - i. You will do more than I say (1:20-21).
4. Prepare a lodging for me (1:22).
5. Greetings (1:23-24).

6. Benediction (1:25).

II. Hebrews.

A. Title: Written to those of Jewish descent: “Plainly it was intended for Jewish converts to the faith of the gospel, probably for the church at Jerusalem” (Easton).

B. Author:

1. “Who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews still remains the greatest single problem for the student of this book. The apostle Paul, Apollos, Barnabas, Luke, Timothy, Aquila and Priscilla, Silas, Aristion, and Philip the deacon have all been proposed for authorship, with supporting arguments. Examination of the tradition of the early church and of the church Fathers, both East and West, proves only that opinions vary” (Introduction).
2. “A considerable variety of opinions on this subject has at different times been advanced. Some have maintained that its author was Silas, Paul's companion. Others have attributed it to Clement of Rome, or Luke, or Barnabas, or some unknown Alexandrian Christian, or Apollos; but the conclusion which we think is best supported, both from internal and external evidence, is that Paul was its author. There are, no doubt, many difficulties in the way of accepting it as Paul's; but we may at least argue with Calvin that there can be no difficulty in the way of ‘embracing it without controversy as one of the apostolical epistles’” (Easton).

C. Date and Occasion.

1. “It was in all probability written at Rome, near the close of Paul’s two years’ imprisonment (Heb. 13:19, 24). It was certainly written before the destruction of Jerusalem (Heb. 13:10).”
2. “Its design was to show the true end and meaning of the Mosaic system, and its symbolical and transient character. It proves that the Levitical priesthood was a ‘shadow’ of that of Christ, and that the legal sacrifices prefigured the great and all-perfect sacrifice he offered for us. It explains that the gospel was designed, not to modify the law of Moses, but to supersede and abolish it. Its teaching was fitted, as it was designed, to check that tendency to apostatize from Christianity and to return to Judaism which now showed itself among certain Jewish Christians. The supreme authority and the transcendent glory of the gospel are clearly set forth, and in such a way as to strengthen and confirm their allegiance to Christ” (Easton).

D. Structure and Content.

1. “It consists of two parts: (a) doctrinal (1-10:18) (b) and practical (10:19-ch. 13). There are found in it many references to portions of the Old Testament. It may be regarded as a treatise supplementary to the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and as an inspired commentary on the book of Leviticus” (Easton).
2. Detailed outline:
 - a. Introduction: Christ superior to the prophets (1:1-3).
 - (i) God has spoken through His Son in the last days (1:1-2).
 - (ii) He is the exact representation of His nature (1:3a).
 - (iii) He sits at the right hand of God (1:3b).
 - b. Christ superior to the angels (1:4-2:4).
 - (i) He has a more excellent name (1:5-6).
 - (ii) The angels commanded to worship Him (1:6).
 - (iii) The angels are ministering spirits (1:7).
 - (iv) Christ exalted on the throne forever (1:8-9).
 - (v) Christ the Creator and eternal (1:10-12).
 - (vi) Christ is King, the angels servants (1:13-14).
 - (vii) Warning to listen to Him (2:1-4).

- (a) The Word given through angels was upheld (2:1-2).
 - (b) How much more Christ's Word (2:3-4).
- c. Christ, a faithful high priest (2:5-18).
- (i) World subjected to Christ, not angels (2:5-8).
 - (ii) Crowned with glory because of His suffering (2:9).
 - (iii) Perfected through His sufferings (2:10).
 - (iv) Christ not ashamed to call His people brethren (2:11-13).
 - (v) Through death He defeated the devil and death (2:14-15).
 - (vi) He helps Abraham's descendents, not angels (2:16).
 - (vii) Knows what His people go through (2:17-18).
- d. Christ superior to Moses (3:1-6a).
- (i) Christ faithful, as Moses (3:1-2).
 - (ii) Moses faithful as a servant, Christ as a Son over His house (3:3-6a).
- e. Exhortation: We are God's house, if we believe (3:6b-19).
- (i) We must hold fast to the end (3:6b).
 - (ii) Warning from the example of the wilderness generation (3:7-11).
 - (iii) Beware an evil, unbelieving heart (3:12).
 - (iv) Encourage one another not to become hardened (3:13).
 - (v) We are partakers of Christ, if we hold fast (3:14).
 - (vi) They did not enter because of unbelief (3:15-19).
- f. Exhortation: Christ's rest superior to that Joshua gave (4:1-16).
- (i) Don't fall short of God's rest (4:1).
 - (ii) Those who believe enter God's rest (4:2-4).
 - (iii) David speaks of the possibility still (4:6-7).
 - (iv) Joshua did not give the promised rest (4:8).
 - (v) There remains a Sabbath because Jesus entered His rest (4:9-10).
 - (vi) Be diligent to enter that rest (4:11).
 - (vii) God's Word will reveal what is in our hearts (4:12-13).
 - (viii) Our great High Priest has entered heaven: draw near with confidence (4:14-16).
- g. Christ's priesthood superior to Aaron's (5:1-7:28).
- (i) Christ is a priest (5:1-10).
 - (a) Every high priest is taken from men (5:1).
 - (b) Because of his weakness, he can deal gently with others (5:2).
 - (c) He must offer sacrifices for himself and them (5:3).
 - (d) One must be called to this office (5:4).
 - (e) Christ was called by His Father (5:5-6).
 - (f) Christ prayed and was heard because of His holiness (5:7).
 - (g) He learned obedience through His suffering (5:8).
 - (h) He is the source of salvation to those who obey (5:9).
 - (i) He is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek (5:10).
 - (ii) Exhortation to grow in grace and knowledge (5:11-6:20).
 - (a) By this time you should be teachers (5:11-14).
 - (b) Press on to maturity (6:1-3).
 - (c) Do not fall away (6:4-8).
 - (d) Be diligent to realize the full assurance of faith (6:9-12).
 - (e) God's promise and oath our guarantee (6:13-19).

- (f) Christ our forerunner (6:20).
- (iii) Christ a priest according to the order of Melchizedek (7:1-28).
 - (a) Who is Melchizedek? (7:1-3).
 - (b) Melchizedek greater than Abraham (7:4-10).
 - (c) Christ's priesthood superior to Aaron's (7:11-25).
 - (1) Aaronic priesthood not bring perfection (7:11).
 - (2) Christ's coming abolished Aaronic priesthood (7:12-17).
 - (3) He brought in a better hope (7:18-19).
 - (4) Christ, made priest by oath, brings a better covenant (7:20-22).
 - (5) Unlike Aaronic priests, He lives forever, able to save those who draw near (7:23-25).
 - (6) Made one sacrifice for all time (7:26-28).
- h. New Covenant superior to the Old Covenant (8-10:18).
 - (i) A superior priest (8:1-6).
 - (ii) Superior promises (8:8-13).
 - (iii) Superior sacrifices (9:1-10:18).
 - (iv) Exhortation to press forward (10:19-39).
 - (a) Hold fast your confession (10:19-25).
 - (b) If you turn from Christ, there is no sacrifice (10:26-31).
 - (c) Do not throw away your confidence/faith (10:32-39).
- i. Old Covenant saints approved by faith (11:1-40).
 - (i) What is faith? (11:1-2).
 - (ii) Examples of faith (11:4-40).
- j. Exhortation to press forward (12:1-13:17).
 - (i) Fix your eyes on Christ's example (12:1-3).
 - (ii) Submit to God's discipline (12:4-13).
 - (iii) Seek peace with all men (12:14-17).
 - (iv) Encouragements of Mount Zion (12:18-24).
 - (v) An unshakeable kingdom (12:25-29).
 - (vi) Elements of a holy life (13:1-17).
 - (a) Let love continue (13:1).
 - (b) Do not neglect to show hospitality (13:2).
 - (c) Remember the prisoners (13:3).
 - (d) Protect marriage (13:4).
 - (e) Be content with what you have (13:5-6).
 - (f) Imitate your leaders (13:7).
 - (g) Christ, His character, doesn't change (13:8).
 - (h) Don't turn back to Judaism; hold fast to Christ (13:9-14).
 - (i) Spiritual sacrifices (13:15-16).
 - (j) Obey your leaders (13:17).
- k. Pray for us (13:18-19).
- l. Benediction (13:20-21).
- m. Exhortation to listen (13:22).
- n. Timothy's release (13:23).
- o. Greetings (13:24).
- p. Desire that God would bless them (13:25).