



Stay Fixated on Hebrews!

Lesson One • Introduction to the Book of Hebrews

Reading the Book of Hebrews: *"Toto, I have a feeling we're not Kansas anymore!"*

The Challenge of Hebrews

- The **OLD** Testament Background.
- The **WARNING** Passages.
- The **THEOLOGICAL** Tensions.
- The **CONTEXT** of the Letter.

The *many unknowns* of this book are a downside but, ultimately, they are an **UPSIDE** for us!

Introduction to the Book of Hebrews

1. What Kind of Letter Is It?

- Begins like a **SERMON** and ends like a **LETTER**. (1:1-14; 13:18-25)

*"But I urge you, brethren, bear with **this word of exhortation**, for I have written to you briefly."* Hebrews 13:22

*"After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, 'Brethren, if you have any **word of exhortation** for the people, say it.' Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, 'Men of Israel, and you who fear God, **listen**:'"* Acts 13:15-16

Purpose of a Sermon-Letter

Meant to be *heard first as a sermon* while being *read as a letter*!

Pattern of the Sermon-Letter

Explanation (interpretation) followed by *exhortation* (application) on repeat!

2. Who Wrote This Sermon-Letter?

We **DON'T KNOW!**

- Many speculations: *Paul, Luke, Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, Philip, Stephen, Jude, Timothy, Clement of Rome, Priscilla, even Mary the mother of Jesus.*

Some of these are a good guess while others are **WILD** speculations.

- What do we know?

Male, likely Jewish, Greek-cultured, well-educated, synagogue-familiar, eloquent speaker, quotes the Greek Old Testament (LXX), second generation believer, leader with a pastor-teacher's heart!

Plus, not one of their local leaders and yet considered one of them! (13:17-19)

APOLLOS is a great guess (Acts 18:24-28) and was Martin Luther's first choice!

- Not knowing keeps the focus on the **DIVINE** Author which is what this “pastor-teacher” does even when he knows who the human author is! (1:5-7, 13; 2:6, 12-13; 3:7)

SERIES: Hupakouw: Hearing to Obey: Master the spiritual skill of listening to God speak through sermons.



3. To Whom Was This Sermon-Letter Delivered?

We **DON'T KNOW!**

- What do we know?
 1. Largely **JEWISH** Christians who heard the gospel from others who heard it from Jesus. (2:3)
 2. Saved **LONG** enough should be disciples but had also endured difficult persecution. (5:11-12; 10:32-35)
 3. About to face more persecution, perhaps even **DEATH**. (12:3-4)
 4. Beginning to **FALL AWAY** from Christ and forsake worshipping together to avoid suffering. (3:12; 10:23-25)
 5. Risked being like the **WILDERNESS** generation that heard God's voice but refused to enter God's rest. (3:12-15; 4:12-3)
 6. But the pastor-teacher believes **BETTER** things and ends with a **BLESSING** regarding God's ability to work in and through them. (6:9; 13:20-21)
- Not knowing reminds us that we are **ALL** weary pilgrims who must trust and obey the Son through our present wilderness until we enter God's future rest!

4. Where Was This Sermon-Letter Delivered?

We **DON'T KNOW!**

- What do we know?

Perhaps to Jewish Christians in **ROME** (13:24). But this could also mean the writer was in Rome writing to Jewish Christians in Palestine!
- Not knowing keeps the Bible in the **FOREGROUND** and forces us to **COMPARE** Scripture with Scripture which is done throughout this “sermon-letter”!

5. When Was This Sermon-Letter Delivered?

We **DON'T KNOW!**

- What do we know?

Likely **after AD 62 or 65** since Timothy has been released from prison (13:23), yet this is never mentioned in Acts or Paul's letters. But **before** the destruction of the Temple in **AD 70**, since sacrifices are apparently still being offered (10:2). So, between **AD 65-70?** Or before Nero's persecution **AD 60-65?**
- Not knowing keeps the focus on **“TODAY”** which is exactly where the pastor-teacher wants us to stay fixated! (1:5; 3:7, 13, 15; 4:7; 5:5; 13:8)!

3-FOLD FOCUS in HEBREWS and 3 HELPS for READING HEBREWS...TODAY!

SEE CHART: Book of Hebrews

HEBREWS: Stay Fixated on Christ's Greater Glory to Hold Fast and Move Forward to God's Future Rest

Book of Hebrews

Begins like a Sermon but Ends Like a Letter!
Background to This "Sermon-Letter" Is Not Revealed!
Like Melchizedek, it is *without* father, mother, or genealogy. So, the focus is on **TODAY** God is speaking. Christ is meditating, and the Spirit is convicting. Be quick to *hear*, quick to obey from the heart by faith in hope with love!

**Stay Fixated on Christ's Greater Glory
to Hold Fast & Move Forward Until We Enter God's Rest!**

"fixing our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfector of faith, who for the joy, set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (12:2) "Therefore, partners of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession." (3:1) "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." (4:14) "Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fail, through following the same example of disobedience." (4:17)

NO GREETING		HOLD FAST		MOVE FORWARD	
1:1	4:13	4:14	10:18	10:19	13:19
STAY FIXATED on Our Calling in Christ! "You are My Son!" (1:5)		HOLD FAST to Our Confession with Confidence! "You are a priest forever like Melchizedek!" (5:6)		MOVE FORWARD with Conviction in Community! "Jesus is the same, yesterday, today, and forever!" (13:8)	
1:1 – 2:18 GREATER than Prophets & Angels Messengers of the Law	3:1 – 4:13 GREATER than Moses & Joshua Mediators of the Law	4:14 – 10:18 GREATER than Aaron, Abraham & Levi's Priesthood Ministry of the Law	10:19-39 LET US DRAW NEAR	11:1-40 By FAITH that WORKS	12:1-29 In HOPE that ENDURES
13:1-19 With LOVE that LABORS	GOSPEL LOVE: SINCERITY of the FIRSTBORN SONS!		GOSPEL LOVE: SINCERITY of the FIRSTBORN SONS!		
SON of GOD		GREATER than MOSES		LET LOVE CONTINUE	
Full Divine Nature (1:1-14) God's Final Revelation Flawless Radiance Firstborn Ruler WARNING! (2:1-4)		Look! (3:1-6) Consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of Our Confession. Hold Fast to the End!		By Relating (1-6) By Imitating (7-8) By Identifying (9-14) By Sacrificing (15-16) By Obedying (17) By Praying (18-19)	
SON of MAN		GREATER than JOSHUA		By Identifying (9-14) By Sacrificing (15-16) By Obedying (17) By Praying (18-19)	
Full Human Nature (2:5-18) Our Family Representative: The Better Last Adam Firstborn Representative: The Better Big Brother Faithful Representative: The Better High Priest		Listen: WARNING! (3:7-4:13) Today Don't Harden Your Heart and Not Enter His Rest. Fear Someone Won't Enter!		By Identifying (9-14) By Sacrificing (15-16) By Obedying (17) By Praying (18-19)	
He is LIKE Us! (2:16-17a)		He is FOR Us! (2:17b)		He is WITH Us! (2:18)	
APOSTATIZING: The Danger of Denying Faith in the Triune God					
Progression increases with a "slow fade" as the punishment intensifies, but the pattern's instructive for pastoral exhortation of potential apostates!					
1 NEGLECTING Danger of Drifting 2:1-4		2 HARDENING Danger of Distrusting 3:7–4:13		3 STAGNATING Danger of Delaying 5:11-6:20	
4 FORSAKING Danger of Departing 10:26-39		5 REFUSING Danger of Defying 12:14-24 / 25-29			
WOEFUL WARNINGS		BETTER BLESSING			
God's Son		Great Shepherd			
By WHOM? WE DON'T KNOW!		To WHOM? WE DON'T KNOW!		WHERE? WE DON'T KNOW!	
Speculations: Paul, Luke, Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, Peter, Philip, Jude, Priscilla, etc. Same likely, others not.		Begins like a sermon, ends like a letter! So, no greeting from author to recipients with their location. We do know: Largely Jewish Christians who heard the gospel from others who heard it from Jesus (2:3). Saved long enough should be disciples yet had endured persecution (10:32-35) and were facing more, perhaps death (12:4). Were beginning to fall away from Christ and forsake worshipping together to avoid suffering. Risked being like the wilderness generation that heard God's voice but refused to enter God's rest.		Perhaps to Jewish Christians in Rome (13:24). But this could mean the writer was in Rome writing to Jewish Christians in Palestine! We do know: There was an expulsion of Jews, including Jewish Christians, from Rome by Claudius (AD 49). And later a more deadly persecution under Nero (AD 64). Not knowing keeps the Bible in the foreground and forces us to compare Scripture with Scripture which is done throughout this "sermon-letter"!	
We do know: Male, Jewish, Greek-culture (JXX), synagoge-familiar, well-educated, eloquent speaker, not an apostle(!), pastor-teacher's heart.		Apollōs is a great guess (Acts 18:24-28)! Favored by Martin Luther.		Not knowing reminds us that we are all weary pilgrims who must trust and obey the Son through our present wilderness until we all enter God's future rest!	
Not knowing keeps the focus on the Divine Author which this "pastor-teacher" does even when he knows the human author (e.g., 2:6)!		Not knowing reminds us that we are all weary pilgrims who must trust and obey the Son through our present wilderness until we all enter God's future rest!		Not knowing keeps the focus on the Divine Author which this "pastor-teacher" does even when he knows the human author (e.g., 2:6)!	
"Since we have a great high priest..."		"We have such a high priest..."		"And since we have a great priest over the house of God..."	
4:14		8:1		10:21	
Great Shepherd		Great Shepherd		Great Shepherd	