

Our Great High Priest

Our Lord Jesus is our merciful and faithful high priest and this elegant and rich truth about Jesus is one that Christians rarely hear about. It is wonderful to know that Jesus is our God, Savior, Lord, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace, the Anointed One, Son of Man, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and the great I Am. But would you like to understand Jesus better and know what it means that Jesus is our high priest? Come and study the book of Hebrews with us. This is the only one of its kind in the New Testament, and it gives us new, rich insights into Jesus.

The book is written to Jews who were thinking about leaving their new faith. So the Holy Spirit encourages them to “hold on” to their faith in Jesus. He tells them that Jesus is better than anything and anyone including the angels, Moses, Aaron, and any high priest. There is no other book like Hebrews. It will open your eyes to Jesus as our Great High Priest.

The book is also very practical and helps us to know how well we are “running the Christian race.” Here are just a few questions to be answered: “Am I a mature Christian?” “Can I lose my salvation?” “Does the Law still apply today?” “How do I live by faith?” What are the dark, warning sections in Hebrews about? What are the keys to becoming a mature, spirit-filled saint in the Lord?

AUTHOR. The book of Hebrews was written by two authors. The Holy Spirit was the primary author, and the other author was human (2 Peter 1:20-21). We are not sure who the human author was. Many have speculated as to who he was but we do not know. Hebrews 2:3-4 seems to imply that the writer was not an apostle.

After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs

and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. (NASB) Hebrews 2:3-4

In this verse, the author says, “. . . it was confirmed to us by those who heard . . .” and he then refers to the miracles, signs and wonders performed by the apostles. This would seem to imply that the author is not an apostle. He is not Paul. So who could he be? There are many opinions but no agreement. John Calvin summarizes it well with, “I can adduce no reason to show that Paul was its author.” Origen says, “But who wrote the epistle, in truth God knows!” All that really matters is that the Holy Spirit wrote it. The opening two verses of the book clearly reveal that God wrote it.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. Hebrews 1:1-2 (NASB)

DATE. Hebrews was written around the time of the apostles (Heb. 2:3-4) and during the life of Timothy, Paul’s friend. Hebrews 13:23 says that



The High Priest

Timothy was released from prison. This places the epistle in the first century. Clement of Rome quotes from Hebrews (A.D. 96). This means Hebrews already existed by A.D. 96. We know from history that Rome persecuted the Christians under Nero during A.D. 65-68 and Jerusalem, along with the temple, was destroyed in A.D. 70. The epistle implies the sacrifices were still going on and speaks of persecution and suffering (Heb. 10:32-34). This means the book of Hebrews was written before Jerusalem was destroyed and during the persecution. So it safe to say that Hebrews was written about A.D. 65-69.

MESSAGE. Hebrews has several themes. You may also want to see the outline of the book and the PDF file of the outline. The primary one is that Jesus is our faithful and merciful high priest, but the reason the epistle was written was to encourage the Jewish readers to endure in their faith: to hang on, endure, “hold fast” to Jesus. They were in danger of going back to Judaism. So the Holy Spirit writes a stunning book to call them and us to faithfulness to our Lord Jesus, to understand Jesus in a unique way, to mature in the faith, and to fix our eyes on Jesus!

APPLICATION. For years, the deepest desire of my heart

has been to know Jesus more and more. I have found that the most meaningful times in my life are not sporting events, nor money, nor a movie; but when I can see Jesus in new ways in the pages of scripture, when He comes alive, or when I see Him in majesty. That is what Hebrews is all about. Jesus IS our majestic high priest. This reminds me of Luke 24:27, 31-32.

And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures . . . And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?” (NASB) Luke 24:27, 31-32

As you study Hebrews, ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and put passion in your heart for Him as you seek to experience Him, as you seek to know Him as your faithful and merciful high priest.

Who Is The Author?

The author of the book of Hebrews is unknown. There have been many opinions as to who wrote the book. Men from ancient times to today have guessed. The book of Hebrews does not give us the name of the author such as occurs in the epistles of Paul (For example see Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1) or Peter (1 Pet. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1). So we cannot know. In the chart below you can read the opinions of others as to who they believe is the author of Hebrews and it gives us new, rich insights into Jesus.

Church Father	His Opinion	Comments
Clement of Alexandria	Paul	
Origen	Paul	
Eusebius	Not Paul	Someone else wrote it: Luke or Clement of Rome
Tertullian	Barnabas	
Irenaeus	Not Paul	
Jerome	Paul	
Augustine	Paul	
Hippolytus	Not Paul	
Gauis of Rome	Not Paul	
Thomas Aquinas	Paul	
Erasmus	Not Paul	
Calvin	Paul	Luke translated it into Greek.
Luther	Paul	

Again, we do not know who is the human author of Hebrews. All that really matters is that the Holy Spirit wrote it and the early church accepted Hebrews as scripture. wrote it.

Should Hebrews Be In The Bible?

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS BELONGS IN THE BIBLE. Many believe that it took years and years for the church to decide which books belonged in the Bible. This is contrary to the facts. First, the apostles knew which letters or books were sacred scripture. Peter knew that Paul the apostle wrote scripture (2 Peter 3:15-16) and Paul validated Luke in 1 Tim. 5:17 (see Luke 10:7). Second, the letters were passed from church to church for all to read (Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27). Finally, historical documents such as the Muratorian Canon, written about A.D. 170, demonstrate the early church had already accepted the books contained in our current version of the New Testament. The Muratorian Canon identifies all of the New Testament books except Hebrews, James, and 1 & 2 Peter. It appears these books are missing due to a tear in the document where the books should have been named. Subsequent historical documents show that Hebrews was recognized as belonging in the Bible.

Books of the New Testament	Marcion (A.D. 140)	Muratorian (A.D. 170)	Baroccio (A.D. 260)	Apostolic (A.D. 300)	Athanasius (A.D. 367)
Matthew		✓	✓	✓	✓
Mark		✓	✓	✓	✓
Luke	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
John		✓	✓	✓	✓
Acts		✓	✓	✓	✓
Romans		✓	✓	✓	✓
1 Corinthians	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2 Corinthians	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Galatians	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ephesians	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Philippians	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Colossians	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1 Thessalonians	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2 Thessalonians	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1 Timothy		✓	✓	✓	✓
1 Timothy		✓	✓	✓	✓
Titus		✓	✓	✓	✓
Philemon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hebrews		✓	✓	✓	✓
James			✓	✓	✓
1 Peter			✓	✓	✓
2 Peter			✓	✓	✓
1 John		✓	✓	✓	✓
2 John		✓	✓	✓	✓
3 John		✓	✓	✓	✓
Jude		✓	✓	✓	✓
Revelation		✓			✓

It appears these books are missing because of a tear in the manuscript.

The Message of Hebrews

While the book of Hebrews focuses on Jesus as our high priest, the message of the book is a warning to “hold on.” It is a book rich in doctrinal truth that gives us deep insights into our salvation from many different perspectives. It is a book about living the Christian life, faith, discipline, leaders, marriage, thankfulness, Jewish culture, the Mosaic law and about enduring to the end. Here is an illustration that presents the flow of the message of Hebrews.

***Jesus
Our Great High Priest***

- is superior to everyone & everything
- is faithful, sympathetic, eternal and perfect
- ushered in the New Covenant

Hebrews reveals:

- *How to know you are a believer.*
- *Marks of one who is running a good race.*
- *How to live a life of faith . . .*
- *How to endure!*

The Outline of Hebrews

The outline of the book of Hebrews is shown below. The first ten chapters of the book are doctrinal and the last three chapters are heavy application. There are several doctrinal themes in the book which are shown in the first or green section of the outline. Throughout the book, the Holy Spirit tells us that “Jesus is better than”, “since He is . . .” The reasons and meaning are given starting from left to right for the different chapters. For example, Christ is better than the ministering angels since He is the Son of God, the divine rabbi and the Son of Man, “even though” He was made like us for a little while. Therefore, He is able to be our merciful and faithful high priest. There are also five warning sections in Hebrews. These are shown with the black bars with the gray background. These are serious warnings. They talk about unbelief and judgement. The last section, “Therefore,” is a call to respond correctly. The outline of Hebrews is presented on the next page.

Outline of Hebrews

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1
Doctrine	Christ Is Better Than	Ministering angels 1:4-2:18	Faithful Moses 3:1-4:13	The non-Levitical high priest Melchizedek 4:14-7:28	Any earthly Levitical high priest 8:1-10:18	The saints lived by faith focusing on the future promises		You are not suffering like the saints - endure						
	Since He Is . . .	Son of God Divine Rabbi Son of Man 1:4-2:18	Faithful Son 3:1-4:13	Appointed a priest after the order of Melchizedek 4:14-7:28	Such a high priest 8:1-10:18									
	Even Though	He was lower than the angels 2:9	He suffered for us 3:5-6	He is the appointed Son who is perfect forever 7:11-14	He died to provide us better promises 9:14-15 & 10:10									
	This Means He Is . . .	Our merciful and faithful high priest 2:17	Our Great High Priest 3:14 & 8:1	Our Great High Priest 7:11-14	Our mediator of a better covenant 8:6									
Warning	Be Careful And	"do not drift away" 2:1-4	"Do not have an evil unbelieving heart in failing away from the living god" 3:7-4:13	"Do not fall away for it is impossible to renew [you]" 5:11-6:12	"Do not go on sinning" 10:26-39	"Do not throw away your confidence" 10:26-39								"Do not refuse
	So You Must	"Pay close attention to what you have heard" 2:1-4	"Consider Jesus" 3:7-4:13	"Be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" 5:11-6:12	"You have need of endurance, so that . . . you may receive the promises" 10:26-39	"Be faithful and show your gratitude" 12:25								