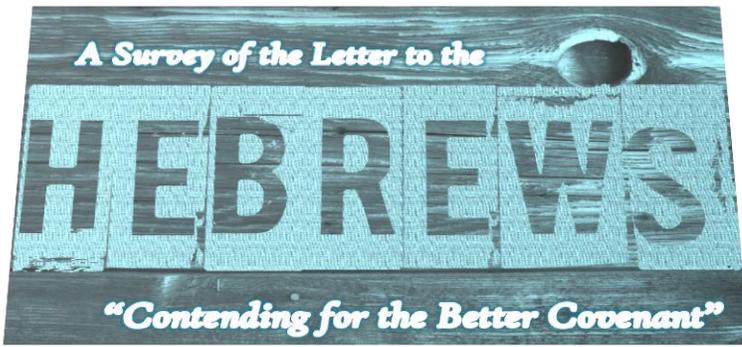




## **GULF SHORES CHURCH OF CHRIST** ***Bible Class Study Guide***

*“God’s word is alive and working and is sharper than a double-edged sword. It cuts all the way into us, where the soul and the spirit are joined, to the center of our joints and bones. And it judges the thoughts and feelings in our hearts. Nothing in all the world can be hidden from God. Everything is clear and lies open before Him, and to Him we must explain the way we have lived.”*  
*(Hebrews 4:12-13 - New Century Version)*

*Prepared by Ray Reynolds*



GULF SHORES CHURCH OF CHRIST  
Gulf Shores, AL

AUDITORIUM BIBLE CLASS  
SUNDAY MORNING

By Ray Reynolds

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## INTRODUCTION

### Author:

The book of Hebrews is different. There may not be a more debated book, in regards to authorship, date, and audience greater than the book of Hebrews. This book, the letters of John, the gospels, and Acts are the only books in the New Testament with no name attached. Therefore, we have to err on the side of tradition if we hope to establish authorship. Of course, with the aforementioned books scholarship and tradition are usually in agreement. With Hebrews, things are much different. Origen was once quoted saying, "God alone knows who wrote Hebrews." However, that doesn't stop us from speculating.

Since it is an anonymous book almost everyone mentioned in the New Testament has been nominated as its author. Tertullian nominated Barnabas (as a close associate of Paul's this has merit). Clement of Alexandria and Origen suggested Luke as the translator (the fantastic grammar and language gives this merit), but eventually concluded it could have been Paul. Martin Luther suggested Apollos who was an Alexandrian Jewish convert with much influence in the first century. A. Harnack and modern day scholars believe the letter is anonymous because a woman wrote it. Therefore, they nominated Priscilla (and Aquila). Even others have suggested Timothy, Clement of Rome, or another disciple. Many will argue that it could have been Paul (Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas), but this seems doubtful. Why is it unlikely that Paul wrote this letter? Paul always identified himself in the introduction or benediction of his letters to prove its authenticity. The style is different. The book deals with lots of theology, which Paul avoided. The fact is that it was inspired by the Holy Spirit (II Timothy 3:16-17).

### Date:

It is generally accepted it was written in the mid 60's AD. A latter date is unlikely because the book seems to be written by an eyewitness to Christ's death or acquainted with those who walked with Jesus (Hebrews 2:3-4). The writer encourages the readers to remember the former days (Hebrews 10:32), showing that the church was still in its infancy. It seems that the first leaders, possibly the apostles, were dead (Hebrew 13:7-9) and now new leaders had taken oversight (Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24). The word used here means to lead or guide (Matthew 2:6, Luke 22:26, Acts 7:10, 14:12, 15:22). It seems, therefore, that the author is helping congregations see the transition from the leadership of the apostles to local elderships.

Theme:

This book is about the supremacy of Christ, especially the first seven chapters. Christ is greater than the prophets and angels (**Hebrews 1:4-14**), greater than Moses and Joshua (**Hebrews 3:1-4:13**), and greater than the Levitical priesthood (**Hebrews 4:14-7:28**). Specifically, the priests were to come from the tribe of Levi but Christ came from the priesthood of Melchizedek (**Hebrews 7, Genesis 14**).

This letter is about how life can be better in Christ, compared to Judaism. It is often classed with Romans and Revelation as one of the most difficult. It demands an accurate knowledge of the Old Testament, especially the Hebrew sacrificial system. The reader must understand the five books of Moses and how they compare with the transition Jesus describes in the Sermon on the Mount. The old law was being fulfilled and a new law was ushering in a new covenant (**Hebrews 8-10**).

Audience:

The letter is traditionally titled “Hebrews” because it seems to be addressed to Jewish Christians. It is hard to know who it was intended for and why it was written, but clearly much preparation went into it. Between the scholarship and language it is a fascinating book and it would have been well circulated in Jewish circles.

The last three chapters discuss how practical and faithful living is required of all disciples. The author described how life in Christ requires suffering. If the Christians who received this letter had not yet felt the effects of Roman persecution, they were suffering at the hands of the Jews. Clearly, the author wants them to realize that this would continue to get worse.

Heroes of the faith are put on a pedestal in the book. The author includes a brief synopsis about Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and others who conquered kingdoms and accomplished great things because of their faith in God (**Hebrews 11:32-40**). Then, in chapter 12 the author tells of how those who have gone before us now stand as witnesses to our Christian race. The suffering of Christ and the final victory of his immovable kingdom are now our focus. This is why the author expresses the necessity of being thankful to God for salvation in Christ. Because of what God has done, and will do, we should live by faith, be kind to our neighbor, pray for our government, and be loyal to the church leaders.

Key Verses:

**Hebrews 1:1-2, 2:3, 2:14-18, 3:16-19, 4:1-3, 4:14-16, 5:12-14, 6:4-6, 6:13-18, 7:11-13, 7:26-28, 8:3-6, 9:1-5, 9:23-28, 10:19-25, 10:30-31, 11:1, 11:6, 11:32-40, 12:1-2, 12:12, 12:28-29, 13:1-3, 13:7, 13:17, 13:22-24**

Outline:

**I. The Basis for Christ's Superiority (1:1-10:18)**

- A. *Christ is Superior to the Prophets (1:1-4)*
- B. *Christ is Superior to the Angels (1:5-2:18)*
- C. *Christ is Superior to Moses (3:1-4:13)*
- D. *Christ is Superior to Aaron (4:14-7:28)*
- E. *Christ's New Covenant is Superior to the Old Covenant (8:1-10:18)*

**II. The Practicality of Christ's Superiority (10:19-13:17)**

- A. *Exhortation to Enter the New Sanctuary (10:19-31)*
- B. *Exhortation to Endure Persecution (10:32-39)*
- C. *Exhortation of Heroes of the Faith (11:1-40)*
- D. *Exhortation to Endure Chastening (12:1-29)*
- E. *Exhortation for Christian Living (13:1-17)*

**III. The Concluding Instructions (13:18-25)**

- A. *The Request of the Author for Prayer (13:18-19)*
- B. *The Readers of the Letter are Blessed (13:20-21)*
- C. *The Readers of the Letter are Exhorted (13:22)*
- D. *The Release of Timothy (13:23)*
- E. *The Romans Send Their Greetings (13:24-25)*



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## *I. The Basis for Christ's Superiority (1:1-10:18)*

### *A. Christ is Superior to the Prophets (1:1-4)*

How has God spoken in the past?

How does God speak today?

Why are these points important for this specific audience?

From the first few verses, can we see the intended purpose of this letter?

Why would the writer begin by talking about the incompleteness of the old law?

As the writer moves forward, he will give seven warnings: (1) The warning against drifting - Hebrews 2:1-4, (2) The warning against departing - Hebrews 3:12-15, (3) The warning against disobedience - Hebrews 4:11-13, (4) The warning against dullness - Hebrews 5:11-6:6, (5) The warning against destruction - Hebrews 9:23-28, (6) The warning against despising - Hebrews 10:26-39, and (7) The warning against defying - Hebrews 12:25-29. What is the significance of these warnings related to the theme?

In what ways can we view Jesus' superiority over prophets as spokesman?

What are some of the descriptions the writer gives concerning the son of God?

B. *Christ is Superior to the Angels (1:5-2:18)*

Who has bestowed these great privileges upon Jesus? Why?

How are the role of angels different from the role of the saints?

How can we know that Jesus is superior to the angels?

What is the intended role of an angel? Why should that be emphasized?

There are several Old Testament passages referenced in this chapter. What are those references? And why are they included here?

What can a Christian do to avoid drifting away from the Lord?

How can we escape judgment if we neglect our great salvation? Explain.

How can we confirm our salvation? Can we truly know we are saved?

Two Psalms referenced in this section concerning creation are Psalm 102:25-27 and Psalm 8:4-6. What do those Psalms reveal about the creation of man?

What role did Jesus play in the creation of the world?

What authority did God give to man in creation? Has that changed?

What are some of the descriptions the writer gives concerning the authority of son of God and His superiority over the angels?

C. *Christ is Superior to Moses (3:1-4:13)*

How are Christians called? Who calls them? Where does the calling come from?

Both Moses and Jesus are described in this section as being faithful. Why? In what ways can they be described as faithful and worthy of glory?

What is the significance of the house we are in? Explain.

The writer describes the rebellion of the Israelites and the hardheartedness that led to the back sliding of God's people. One might call this "falling" from grace. Why is this an important point moving forward in this book? How does it add to the theme?

What circumstances lead to one falling away or backsliding?

What can we do to prevent these things from happening?

If Moses could not stop rebellion, what hope is there for the shepherds today?

What can we do as Christians to reach church family members that have slipped?

The writer talks about the promise of rest, but he also identifies our fear. Why?

Did the "word of God" fail with the Israelites rebelled? How is the word of God described? Why is that important? Explain.

What are the three different kinds of "rests" described in this chapter?

What are some of the descriptions the writer gives concerning the authority of son of God and His superiority over Moses?

*D. Christ is Superior to Aaron (4:14-7:28)*

The Hebrew writer transitions from Christ's superiority over prophets, angels, and Moses, but now discusses superiority over the Aaronic priesthood. Why is this an essential argument before he gets into the superiority over the new covenant?

What are the qualifications for the high priest? What duties does he fulfill?

Who chose Jesus as the High Priest? Why?

What is the significance of handling the "milk" and "meat" of the word of God?

What are the elementary principles of Christ in the doctrine of Christ?

It is sad that some have experienced the blessings of Christ, but walked away. What is the Hebrew writer say about their experiences and their eternal condition?

What is the significance of our hope? How is that connected to the nature of God?

What is the impact of the order of Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18-20, Psalm 110:4)? What are the similarities between Melchizedek and Jesus?

How can Melchizedek be viewed as greater than Abraham and Levi?

Why did the priesthood undergo a spiritual change after Jesus ascended into heaven?

What are some of the descriptions the writer gives concerning the authority of son of God and His superiority over Aaron and the priesthood?

E. *Christ's New Covenant is Superior to the Old Covenant (8:1-10:18)*

Where is Jesus seated? What is He doing today? Why is this important?

Why is it important to remember that Jesus has to reign as our eternal High Priest in heaven and cannot physically touch the earth? Would He become disqualified?

The prophets had much to say about the change in the covenants. What was the purpose of the first covenant? What is the purpose of the second covenant?

What were the contents of the tabernacle of Moses? What about the temple?

What were the limitations of the earthly tabernacle? What about the temple?

How is the sacrifice of Christ superior to the sacrifices under the old covenant?

Each of us are appointed a time to die and we will face judgment. What is that tell us about our accountability to following the new law and accepting the sacrifice of Jesus?

What impact will Jesus have when He comes again?

The sacrifices under the old law became a yearly reminder of the sins of man and the need for redemption. While Christ's perfect sacrifice has eliminated the need for the shedding of blood from bulls and goats, what can we do yearly, monthly, daily to remind ourselves of Jesus's sacrifice for our sins?

Jesus nailed the old law to the cross, but does that mean it is not valuable anymore?

What are some of the descriptions the writer gives concerning the authority of son of God and the superiority of the new covenant over the old covenant?



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## II. The Practicality of Christ's Superiority (10:19-13:17)

### A. Exhortation to Enter the New Sanctuary (10:19-31)

The Hebrew writer takes a moment to summarize the work of Christ. What can we learn from this summary?

What does Christ's superior work have to do with our personal conviction, our faithfulness, and the condition of our heart?

What does Christ's superior work have to do with our fellowship and work with other Christians?

What does Christ's superior work have to do with church meetings?

What is the danger in forsaking the things appointed to us by God?

For those who sin "willfully," what will happen? What are the consequences? What has the Hebrew writer already referenced concerning this kind of rebellion?

If we persist in willful, rebellious sin, what charge can be leveled against us? Why should that cause a Christian to fear?

Why should we be attentive to this exhortation?

B. *Exhortation to Endure Persecution (10:32-39)*

How are we “illuminated” after we follow Christ? What implication is there to living in the light?

Clearly those who would read this letter were facing immense persecution. These hardships were especially difficult because many Christians were raised as Jews. Why do you think the writer chooses to discuss sufferings and trials?

How can Christians be made to become a spectacle of reproach after their conversion?

The writer of the book of Hebrews clearly faced hardship himself. The author, obviously known to the audience, faced prison time. Why is that noteworthy?

The writer of this book seems to be familiar with some of Paul’s writings, which is evident in this section (Romans, Galatians, Thessalonians). Why is that notable?

In order to receive the promise of God, they had to have confidence, endurance, and faith. What does that tell us about Christians today?

Was the greatest benefit to having confidence and boldness in Christ?

How can endurance be seen as a byproduct of a strong faith in Christ?

What reward will be given to the faithful when Jesus comes again?

How can the just live by faith (Habakkuk 2:3-4)?

Why should we be attentive to this exhortation?

C. *Exhortation of Heroes of the Faith (11:1-40)*

How is “faith” defined in this chapter? Explain.

This chapter describe the lives of faith including elders, prophets, patriarchs, and many notable characters in the Old Testament. Why reference these individuals?

What can we understand by faith concerning the framing of this world?

Consider the individual stories of the Old Testament saints (READ): Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Israel, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. Why are they called heroes?

What did each of these characters look forward to receiving? Why?

What are some that remarkable things accredited to the saints?

What did they obtain for their reward? Why did they obtain it?

The writer seems to be familiar with the book of James, or at least the concept taught in the Jerusalem church, that faith without works is dead. Why is this significant?

What did these saints have to endure in order to receive their rest?

Why were these saints willing to endure suffering, affliction, hardship, and reproach?

What is the purpose of having a good testimony?

Why should we be attentive to this exhortation?

*D. Exhortation to Endure Chastening (12:1-29)*

How is our Christian living described in this chapter?

Why is it important for Christians to lay aside things in order to run their race?

Whom should we look to when we run? Why?

If we stray from the path, how can God's discipline bring us back?

What should we pursue as we run our Christian race?

What danger should we avoid in running our Christian race?

The writer describes Christian standing before the mountain of God! How is that perceived by the readers? What implication to the covenants?

What comes to your mind when you read vs.22-24?

Why are we encouraged not to refuse God and His word?

What kind of a kingdom are we receiving? How does this give us hope?

What description is given of God in this context? Why?

How did the Hebrew writer hope we would respond to this description of God?

Why should we be attentive to this exhortation?

E. *Exhortation for Christian Living (13:1-17)*

Why are we often “commanded” to love each other? Shouldn’t that be natural?

What is the significance of our hospitality? What consequences might arise?

How should we treat those in prison, especially those chained because of their faith?

What can we learn about marriage from this context?

Those who live in Christ should do so without covetousness. How is that possible?

Why is it so difficult for Christians to find contentment?

One of the greatest promises of God is described in this section. The Lord has promised never to leave us or forsake us. He has promised to help us and walk beside us. Why is it that we still have fear in spite of these promises?

The writer mentions three times in this chapter to honor, respect, and pray for those who shepherd the kingdom. Why is this valuable advice to the Hebrews?

There seems to be a genuine anxiety over strange doctrines and false teaching in most of the New Testament books. How can we ensure we are being taught the truth?

Why is it important for us to do good to others and share with others?

What should Christians be seeking after to help us in our daily living? Why?

Why should we be attentive to this exhortation?



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### III. The Concluding Instructions (13:18-25)

#### A. The Request of the Author for Prayer (13:18-19)

What can we learn from the author's prayer request?

Why is it imperative to believe in the power of prayer?

#### B. The Readers of the Letter are Blessed (13:20-21)

How is God described in this text? What can we learn from these descriptions?

Why should we seek completeness and fullness in Christ? How can this bless us?

#### C. The Readers of the Letter are Exhorted (13:22)

What is the final appeal of the author? Why?

How can we know the writer had much more that he wanted to say to these brethren?

#### D. The Release of Timothy (13:23)

Who does he exhort and say is coming to the brethren? Why is this substantial?

What kind of a relationship did he have with the early Christians? Why?

#### E. The Romans Send Their Greetings (13:24-25)

How can Christians encourage one another in the same way the author does here?

What do you think the author would want us to take away from this letter?