

**A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY**  
**PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE: HEBREWS**  
**Hebrews 8:6**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. BIBLICAL CONTEXT—THE NON-PAULINE EPISTLES**

1. HEBREWS IS ONE OF 8 EPISTLES—FOLLOWING THE 13 BY PAUL
2. DESCRIPTIVE TERMINOLOGY
  - a. ‘General Epistles’
    1. Used in KJV titles of 5 epistles—James, I & II Peter, I John, and Jude
    2. Not used for 3 epistles
      - a. Hebrews—was addressed to a specific ethnic/national group—the Jews
      - b. II and III John—were addressed to specific people
    3. This heading was not used in earliest manuscripts
  - b. ‘Catholic Epistles’
    1. Term used to describe epistles not addressed to specific churches—but universal
    2. Collectively used for all 8 books
    3. Not accurate—because Hebrews and II and III John were addressed to specific readers
  - c. Non-Pauline epistles
    1. Probably most accurate term
    2. Assuming Hebrews was not written by Paul
    3. Pauline epistles are titled by their addressees
    4. Seven of these epistles are titled by their authors—only Hebrews is titled by addressee
  - d. Subject matter
    1. General themes of Christian theology and practice
    2. Often deal with encroaching heresy—reiterating sound doctrine
  - e. Authors
    1. Seven—were written by early leaders of the Jerusalem church
      - Peter—John—and Jesus’ brothers James and Jude
    2. Hebrews—author is unknown

## **B. TITLE**

1. EARLIEST MANUSCRIPTS = ΠΡΟΣ ΗΒΡΑΙΟΥΣ
2. KJV—ERRONEOUSLY ENTITLES IT

○“The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews”

## **C. TYPE OF LITERATURE—NON-PAULINE EPISTLE**

1. NON-PAULINE EPISTLE
2. NOT A ‘CATHOLIC/GENERAL’ EPISTLE—ADDRESSED TO SPECIFIC GROUP

## **D. AUTHORSHIP AND CANONICITY**

### 1. IN THE EAST

- a. Generally accepted as one of the ‘fourteen’ epistles of Paul
- b. Canonicity universally accepted from an early date

### 2. IN THE WEST

- a. Pauline authorship not accepted—author unknown
- b. This problem delayed acceptance into canon
- c. Support by Jerome and Augustine—secured its canonicity in the 4<sup>th</sup> century

### 3. INITIALLY NOT ANONYMOUS

○**Heb 13:18-24**—tells us the first readers knew identity of the author

### 4. POSSIBLE AUTHORS ASSERTED BY EARLY FATHERS

- Paul
- Barnabas
- Luke
- Apollon
- Silas (Sylvanus)
- Philip
- Priscilla

### 5. ARGUMENTS AGAINST PAULINE AUTHORSHIP

- a. Greek style is more polished in most of Paul’s writing
- b. Second-hand reporting style—contradicts Paul’s claim to be an eyewitness of Christ

**c. Missing Paul’s traditional salutation**

- d. Paul quoted LXX and Hebrew text

- Hebrews quotes only LXX [apparently no knowledge of Hebrew]
- e. Paul referred to Christ with compound titles
  - Hebrews uses only singular titles—Jesus—Christ—Lord
- f. Hebrews focuses on Christ’s present ministry as priest
  - Paul mentions little about this present ministry—looks to future

## E. RECIPIENTS—SETTING—DATE

### 1. RECIPIENTS

#### a. Positive facts

- Believers—**3:1**
- Won to faith by eyewitnesses of Christ—**2:3**
- Not novices—**5:12**
- Had endured hardships for the gospel—**10:32-34**

#### b. Problems

- Had grown ‘dull of hearing’—**5:11**
- In danger of drifting away—**2:1** and **3:12**
- Susceptible to approaching renewed persecution—**12:4-12**
- In need of exhortation—to stop decline—**13:22**

### 2. SETTING

#### a. Internal evidence suggests—not written to Palestinian Jews

- Quoting only the LXX
- Recipients were financially stronger than poor Palestinians
- Some Palestinians were eyewitnesses—does not fit **2:3**

#### b. Possibly written to Jewish Christians in Rome

- *Those in Italy greet you*—**13:24**
- Might be a message from some sending greetings back to home to Rome

#### c. If not Rome—then some other city of Diaspora Jews—Alexandria?—Antioch?

### 3. DATE—PROBABLY MID-60s

- a. No mention of end of Old Testament sacrificial system—ended in 70 AD
- b. Jewish sacrificial system was about to end—**12:26-27**

c. Timothy was still alive—13:23

## F. STYLE

1. MIXES OLD TESTAMENT CONTENT WITH GREEK PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS

2. PLATONISTIC WORLDVIEW

a. Assumes existence of two parallel worlds

- Eternal and perfect realm of the spirit
- Temporal and inferior realm of the changing world

b. Shows how Christ's sacrifice links these two realms

3. MORE OF AN ELABORATE SERMON—RATHER THAN A LETTER

## G. PURPOSES

- To strengthen Jewish Christians in their faith—who are beginning to suffer persecution
- To urge them to mature in Christ and to avoid spiritual dullness
- To prevent their abandoning Christianity and returning to Judaism

## H. THEMES

1. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST'S PERSON AND WORK

2. FIVE WARNINGS AGAINST UNFAITHFULNESS

3. THE CHRISTIAN'S WALK OF FAITH

4. DOCTRINAL EMPHASES ON CHRISTOLOGY AND SOTERIOLOGY

## I. STRUCTURE

1. SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST'S PERSON—1:1-4:13

a. Superiority over Prophets—1:1-3

b. Superiority over Angels—1:4-2:18

- First Warning—Danger of Neglect—2:1-4

c. Superiority over Moses—3:1-4:13

- Second Warning—Danger of Unbelief—3:7-4:13

2. SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST'S WORK—4:14-10:18

a. Superiority of His priesthood—4:14-7:28

- Third Warning—Danger of Not Maturing—5:11-6:20

b. Superiority of His covenant—chapter 8

c. Superiority of His sanctuary and sacrifice—9:1-10:18

### 3. THE CHRISTIAN'S WALK OF FAITH—10:19-13:25

#### a. Exhortation—Hold Firm in Faith—10:19-11:40

- **Fourth Warning—Danger of Drawing Back—10:26-39**

#### b. Endurance of Faith—12:1-29

- **Fifth Warning—Danger of Refusing God—12:25-29**

#### c. Exhortation—to Love—13:1-7

### 4. CONCLUSION—13:18-25

## II. BIBLICAL TEXT—Hebrews 8:6

*1 Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer. 4 Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; 5 who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "See," He says, "that you make all things according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." 6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.*

## III. EXPOSITION

### A. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK—SHADOW OF THINGS

#### 1. PLATONISM—FORM/REAL—vs—COPY/SHADOW—**The Cave**

#### 2. HEBREWS—'SHADOW' AND 'COPY'

##### a. Priests—sacrifices—tabernacle

*8:5—who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things*

##### b. Tabernacle—vessels—sacrifices

*9:23—Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.*

##### c. Law—and sacrifices

*10:1—For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near.*

### B. FOUR BETTER THINGS—IN A MORE EXCELLENT MINISTRY

- BETTER COVENANT—NEW COVENANT
- BETTER PRIESTHOOD

- BETTER SANCTUARY
- BETTER SACRIFICE

### C. BETTER COVENANT

#### 1. NEED FOR—AND PROMISE OF—NEW COVENANT—8:7-13

##### a. Old Covenant

- Law written on stone
- Led to human disobedience

##### b. New Covenant

- Written on hearts
- Shows God's mercy

#### 2. COMPARISON—OLD vs NEW COVENANT—Chapter 9

##### a. Old Covenant

1. Inadequate—incapable of perfect cleansing and reformation—9:1-10
2. The Law made nothing perfect—7:19

##### b. New Covenant

#### 1. Better sacrifice—9:11-14

- Personally by God—Christ
- At the true altar
- Permanently

**9:12**—*but through His own blood He entered the holy place once for all*

#### 2. Christ—as Mediator of the New Covenant

- a. Entered the very presence of God—to true altar—9:24
- b. Offered just once—for sins of many—9:27—[explained in **chapter 10**]

#### 3. NOTE—JESUS IS BOTH PRIEST AND SACRIFICE

### D. BETTER PRIESTHOOD

#### 1. AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK—5:10

- a. Priesthood described—**Gen 14:18-20**
- b. Priesthood prophesied—**Ps 110:4**
- c. Nature of Melchizedek's priesthood—**7:1-20**

- Without previous genealogy—and permanent—**7:3**
- Superior to Moses—and all his lineage afterward—**7:4ff**
- Need for perfect priesthood not of Levitical line—but after Melchizedek—7:11ff

d. Jesus—following this order—fulfills this need—**7:21-28**

1. Not a Levite—but of the tribe of Judah
2. Guarantor of a better covenant—that is effective—**7:22**
3. Permanent priest—unlike others who died—**7:23-25**
4. Makes the perfect and permanent offering—**7:26-28**
5. Brings salvation to those who accept it

## 2. CHRIST'S PERSONHOOD

- a. High priest superior to Moses—**3:1-3**
- b. Exclusive—the one and only true High Priest—**4:14**
- c. Perfect—holy—unblemished in character—qualifying as the only pure priest
- d. Made perfect in obedience and suffering—**5:7-9**
  - Not just 'innocent'—but truly good
  - Tried by temptation—trial—yet perfect—without sin

## E. BETTER SACRIFICE

### 1. SUPERIOR SACRIFICE

- a. The blood of Christ Himself—the God-Man
- b. Made perfect—through suffering—**5:8-9**
  - Animals—do not have conscience—and are not morally invested

### 2. PURER SACRIFICE

- a. Holy, innocent, undefiled—7:26-28
- b. Himself—unblemished—not blood of animals—9:12-14

### 3. UNIQUE AND PERMANENT

- a. Efficacy—one-time offering—no need to repeat—9:25-26
- b. Explained in —10:12-14

## F. BETTER TABERNACLE

1. The Place of Offering—Heaven—in the presence of God —**9: 11, 23-24**

2. His body has become the veil—**10:19-20**

#### **G. BETTER MINISTRY**

1. OF CHRIST TO US

2. OF US TO OTHERS

#### **IV. INVITATION**

##### **TAKE MY LIFE, AND LET IT BE CONSECRATED**

Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.  
Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise.  
Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of Thy love.  
Take my feet, and let them be swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice, and let me sing always, only, for my King.  
Take my lips, and let them be filled with messages from Thee.  
Take my silver and my gold; not a mite would I withhold.  
Take my intellect, and use every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will, and make it Thine; it shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart, it is Thine own; it shall be Thy royal throne.  
Take my love, my Lord, I pour at Thy feet its treasure store.  
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for Thee.