



## **Hebrews: A Letter of Blessing and Encouragement to the Church**

### **Five (5) Significant Reasons to Study the Book of Hebrews:**

1. *More than any other New Testament book, Hebrews connects the dots between the Old Testament and the New Testament... stressing the importance of the Blood Covenant.*
2. *The Book of Hebrews helps us to understand the relationship between Jewish and Gentile believers, and between Israel and the church,*
3. *Hebrews exalts the person and work of Jesus Christ—prompting the servants of Jesus Christ to draw near to Him,*
4. *Hebrews has many words of hope and encouragement; however, it also has some very sobering words of warning for those who disregard God's Word and draw back from intimate fellowship with our Lord, and*
5. *Hebrews challenges us to press on to deeper spiritual understanding of God's Word and Christian maturity.*

*"Secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those that are revealed belong to us and our descendants forever, so that we might obey all the words of this law," Deuteronomy 29:29.*

*Luke 8:17, "For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light."*

*1 Corinthians 2:10, "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God."*

**Do any of you want to hear God speak to you?**

**Contrary to popular opinion from the outside world (world view),  
GOD HAS SPOKEN!**

**How? Through prophets in the past...and through God's Son—to and for us! Yes...through God's Holy Word.**

**The Book of Hebrews is:**

- **A letter of promise...**
- **A letter to promote practical, yet peaceful Christian living...**
- **A letter of Purpose...**
- **A letter of Praise and Prayer.**

**The Theme of the Book...Christ is Superior!**

**The Title of the Book could have been “The Superiority of Christ.”**

- The writer of Hebrews continually makes mention of the superiority of Christ in both His personage and in His ministering work.
- In the writings of the Old Testament, we understand the rituals and ceremonies of Judaism symbolically pointed to the coming of Messiah. In other words, the rites of Judaism were but “shadow of things to come.”
- Hebrews tells us that Christ Jesus is better than anything mere religion has to offer. All the pomp and circumstance of religion pales in comparison to the person, work, and ministry of Christ Jesus.

*It is the superiority of our Lord Jesus, then, that remains the theme of this eloquently written letter.*

**To Whom was the Book of Hebrews written?**

**The book of Hebrews addresses three separate groups:**

1. **Believers in Christ,**
2. **Unbelievers who had knowledge of and an intellectual acceptance of the facts of Christ**
3. **Unbelievers who were attracted to Christ, but who rejected Him ultimately.**

**Actually, the Book of Hebrews was written to a group of suffering, persecuted Jews somewhere in the east outside of Israel. There are no references to Gentiles. The problem faced in Jerusalem of having both Gentile and Jew in the church is not discussed in Hebrews. The letter was written to Jewish believers and unbelievers to reveal the merits of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant as opposed to the Old Covenant. The question is...Why should the church be addressing the Book of Hebrews if it was for Jews with no reference to Gentiles?**

***Because Scripture is for man to understand the full impact God has on His creation. God has made a covenant with His people (first to the Jew and now to the Church of Jesus Christ and its members).***

***Who are the members? They are:***

- ❑ ***Those that have placed their faith and trust in Jesus, the Son of God, and***
- ❑ ***Have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.***
- ❑ ***Those that have had their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life.***

<b><i>If we want to know Christ and His fullness, to know what our purpose is in life, and to know the full duty and responsibility God has placed on us, then we need to study the Book of Hebrews.</i></b>
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### ***Author of Hebrews: Important:***

- ❖ ***The certain identity of the author remains an enigma (unknown). Just as we can identify some people on the phone with just a few words spoken, we can surmise who the writer of Hebrews might be by some significant statements or by the style of writing that was presented in this fascinating book.***
- ❖ ***Some scholars state that it is the Apostle Paul's writings. While others state that it is not because:***
  - ***Missing is Paul's customary salutation common to his other works.***
  - ***The suggestion that the writer of this epistle relied upon knowledge and information provided by others who were actual eyewitnesses of Christ Jesus (2:3) makes Pauline authorship doubtful.***
  - ***Some attribute Luke as its writer.***
  - ***Others suggest Hebrews may have been written by Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, Philip, or Aquila and Priscilla.***

***NOTE: There is still much evidence that Paul wrote the letter.***

- ✓ ***The most compelling comes from Scripture itself. Remember that Peter wrote to the Hebrews (that is, the Jews; see Galatians 2:7 and 1 Peter 1:1). Peter wrote: "...just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him [emphasis added]" (2 Peter 3:15). In that last verse, Peter is confirming that Paul had also written a letter to the Hebrews!***
- ✓ ***Although it is a small detail, this epistle makes mention of Timothy (Hebrews 13:23), and Paul is the only apostle known to have ever done that in any letter.***
- ✓ ***The theology presented in Hebrews is consistent with Paul's. Paul was a proponent of salvation by faith alone (Ephesians 2:8, 9), and that message is strongly communicated in this epistle (Hebrews 4:2, 6:12, 10:19-22, 10:37-39, and 11:1-40).***

- ✓ ***Either Paul wrote the epistle, or the writer was trained and instructed by Paul.***

***At this time, it might be important to look at Paul's "Thorn in the flesh."***

*2 Corinthians 12:7b-10, "...in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.*

*8Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."*

#### **Theories as to "the thorn in the flesh":**

1. **Spiritual temptations**---the temptation to doubt his mission...and to shirk his duties...sting of conscious when temptation conquered. (Calvin's view)
2. **The opposition and persecution which he had to face, the constant battle with those who tried to undo his work. (Luther's view)**
3. **Carnal temptations**... when monks and hermits locked themselves up in their monasteries, they found that the last instinct that could be tamed was that of sex. This was the view of the Roman Catholics.
4. **Paul's physical appearance.** "His bodily presence was weak" 2 Cor.10:10 ...but what about the pain that was there...true pain in the flesh?
5. **Epilepsy...painful and recurrent...sometimes it produced trances and visions.** People literally turned from the epileptic stating this was demonic....and Satan had control of the person that had it. People spat upon the epileptic in those times.
6. **Severe headaches....migraine type headaches.** It will put you down for a while. Tertullian and Jerome believed that.
7. **Suffered from chronically recurrent attacks of virulent malarial fever which haunted the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean.**  
This was an extreme pain... "like the grinding, boring pain in one's temple" ...like the dentist's drill (sometimes reaching the extreme point of human endurance).
8. **Eye trouble.... when he was blinded, he never fully recovered.** Paul stated in Galatians...that they would have plucked out their eyes and would have given them to him (Galatians 4:15) ...End of Galatians Paul writes "See in what large letters I am writing to you" Galatians 6:11....as if he was saying of himself... "I am having a difficult time seeing."

#### **VERY IMPORTANT!**

***Regardless of the human hand that held the pen, the Holy Spirit of God is the divine author of all Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16); therefore, Hebrews speaks with the same canonical authority as the other sixty-five books of the Bible.***