

# Bible Study Notes and Questions on the Letter to the Hebrews

**Summary Notes:** This letter is an exception from all others in the New Testament because the author is not known and there are no greetings mentioned at the start of the letter. There are various views on who could have written this letter including an argument for Paul being the author. For reasons known to God, He has not chosen to reveal the author. What matters is that this letter is the word of God.

The letter was written to many believers who were Jewish. There had been the temptation for many of these Jewish believers to return to Judaism to follow the old life of a religious system with ceremonies and traditions. The Jewish sacrificial system was removed when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD. Hence the letter must have been written some years before the date of Jerusalem's destruction otherwise the author would have mentioned the termination of this religious system. There were serious warnings for anyone who went into apostasy in deliberately falling away to the point of no return when such a person could no longer repent.

The clear message in the letter was to go on to spiritual maturity where believers could enter into the rest of God (**Hebrews 4:1-11**). The question for those believers and even for us today is whether we are going to possess all that we have in Christ or are we going to be content to wander in the wilderness of unbelief with no real desire for the things of God. God desires so much for us to rejoice in His finished work and His faithful work that enables us to know abundant life even now!

We are told to endure persecution looking to Jesus Christ the author and finisher of faith. There is an emphasis on faith as seen in the examples of the Old Testament saints (**Hebrews 11:1-40**) who believed God and acted upon their calling.

The writer stressed that the first covenant or old covenant was about to become obsolete because of the new covenant that would supersede it (**Hebrews 8:8-13; Jeremiah 31:31-34**). Jesus Christ was the mediator (go between) of this new covenant. Men could now know not just ceremonial cleansing of the flesh through the Levitical sacrifices of the first/old covenant but cleansing of the conscience through the one and only sacrifice of Jesus Christ himself. The Levitical sacrificial system was no longer needed.

One of the key words in this letter is the word "better" (**Hebrews 1:4; 6:9; 7:7,19,22; 8:6(x2); 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24**). Jesus Christ was superior to angels, Moses and to Aaron. There is a better priesthood, a better covenant, a better sanctuary and a better way of life being that life of faith (**2Corinthians 5:7**) which will please God (**Hebrews 11:6**).

This letter gives us such a clear picture of who Jesus Christ is and what He has done to save us from sin and to bring us to know forgiveness of sin. We have the confidence to find God is approachable at all times and ready to give us grace and mercy in time of need (**Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:19-23**).

## Summary Notes on Chapters and Questions

**Section One: Chapters 1 and 2:** God's greatest revelation of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ and his superiority to angels and his salvation available to all men.

**Q.1)** How did God speak in the past and how has he spoken today? See **1:1-4**.

**Q.2)** Make a list of what is written in **1:2-4** of who Jesus Christ is and what he has done.

**Q.3)** Read **1:5-14 & 2:2, 5**. Investigate the ways Jesus Christ is so much greater than the angels. Read also **Psalms 2:7; 45:6-7; 89:27; 97:7; 102:25-27; 104:4; 110:1; Colossians 1:15-18**.

**Q.4)** Read again **1:4-14**. What is known of angels and what is their ministry? See also **13:2; Genesis 18:1-33; 19:1-26; Matthew 18:10; Luke 16:22; 22:43; Acts 5:17-21; 12:1-10; Revelation 15:5-16:21; 22:9-10**.

**Q.5)** Why is it essential not to neglect so great a salvation? Read carefully **2:1-4**.

**Q.6)** Read **2:5-8**. Can you see what God created man to be? There are at least four things showing God's original purpose for man. See also **Psalms 8:1-9**. Is this how we see man in today's world? Who can change man into what God intended him to be? See **2:9**.

**Q.7)** Read carefully **2:9-18** and consider why Jesus became human.

**Q.8)** What are the four blessings that come about because of the death of Jesus Christ for all men? Read carefully **2:14-18**.

**Q.9)** How are we tempted and how can Jesus Christ help us when we face temptation? See **2:18** and also **4:15-16 & James 1:2-8**.

**Section Two: 3:1-4:13:** The superiority of Jesus to Moses and Joshua and the need to enter the rest of God.

**Q.1)** Compare the similarities and differences between Moses and Jesus in **3:1-6**. Can you see at least three ways or more where Jesus Christ is greater than Moses?

**Q.2)** Read **3:7-19**. What do these verses tell us not to do if we want to enter God's rest?

**Q.3)** Read carefully **4:1-11**. What is meant by the word "rest"? What is meant by entering into the rest of God and how do we as Christians enter the rest of God? What lessons can we learn from Israel's failure to enter into God's rest? See also **1Corinthians 10:1-12**.

**Q.4)** Make a list of the descriptions of the word of God in **4:12-13** and show what it can do to people.

**Section Three: 4:14-5:10; 7:1-28:** Jesus Christ our great and superior High Priest.

**Q.1)** What ways do we have a great High Priest in Jesus Christ as seen in **4:14-16**?

**Q.2)** Show the differences between Aaron as High Priest and Jesus Christ who was called to be that great High Priest. See **5:1-10**.

**Q.3)** What do we know of Melchisedec? See **7:1-10** and also **5:6; 5:10; 6:20; 7:21; Genesis 14:17-24; Psalm 110:4**.

**Q.4)** Why does the author of this letter use the words: "*For he testifies, You (are) a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec*" (**7:17**)? In what ways does Melchisedec have things in common with Jesus Christ? Read again **7:1-19**.

**Q.5)** Show the ways that prove Jesus was a superior High Priest compared to the Levitical priesthood in **7:11-28**.

**Q.6)** Read again carefully **7:1-28**. Why is the Levitical priesthood no longer needed?

**Section Four: 5:11-6:20:** The call of God to spiritual maturity.

**Q.1)** Describe the spiritual state of many of the people this letter is addressed to in **5:11-14**.

**Q.2)** Look again at **5:11-14** and consider what these verses teach regarding spiritual maturity.

**Q.3)** Read **6:1-3**. What are the six principles of basic teaching for Christians? Why are they so essential and show how they link to Jesus Christ?

**Q.4)** How did the writer give warning, encouragement and instruction to help prevent his readers falling away? See **6:4-12**.

**Q.5)** What can we learn from the promises God made to Abraham in **6:13-15**? It is helpful to read **Genesis 12:1-3, 7; 13:15-16; 15:1-7; 17:8-22; 22:11-19**.

**Q.6)** How do these verses in **6:16-20** encourage us in our hope and faith in God?

**Section Five: 8:1-10:39:** The Better Covenant.

**Q.1)** Read **8:1-6**. Show how Jesus is a far greater High Priest than the priests of Israel.

**Q.2)** Give your reasons why the New Covenant is so much better than the Old/First Covenant. See **8:7-13 & Jeremiah 31:31-34**.

**Q.3)** What are the ordinances of the Old/First Covenant in **9:1-10**? Why did it fall short of what God really required? See also **10:1-4; Exodus 16:33-34; 25:16-22; Numbers 17:1-10**.

**Q.4)** Read **9:11-15**. Show how the ministry of Jesus Christ was so much greater than that of the Levitical priests.

**Q.5)** Study carefully **9:15-23**. What has Jesus Christ achieved by his sacrificial death and why it was necessary. Show the significance of the blood in **9:20-22**. See also **Exodus 24:3-8**.

## Section Five continued

**Q.6)** What are the differences between what the Levitical high priest has done and what Jesus Christ has done in **9:24-28**? Show what happens in the future to Jesus Christ as a result of his sacrificial death and what happens to us after this life. See also **Colossians 3:1-4**.

**Q.7)** Consider carefully again **9:11-28** and show why the heavenly sanctuary is better than the earthly one.

**Q.8)** Read carefully **10:1-18**: **A)** Give reasons why the sacrifice of animals was inadequate.

**B)** Show why the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was all-sufficient only once.

**C)** If possible using a bible with cross references, find out the Old Testament scriptures quoted from these verses.

**Q.9)** What should be our attitude as believers in approaching God and our relationship to each other? Read **10:19-25**.

**Q.10)** Show the warnings in **10:26-31** for those who have known the truth but have turned away to reject the sacrifice that Jesus Christ has done for them.

**Q.11)** Show the evidence of many of the readers of this letter in the past being faithful believers in Jesus Christ. Read **10:32-34**.

**Q.12)** How did the writer encourage his readers to keep trusting in God's promises? Show how these verses apply to us today. Read **10:32-39**.

**Section Six: 11:1-12:4** The Better promises God has given to those who have faith in Jesus Christ.

**Q.1)** What is meant by the word "*faith*" and show how faith pleases God? Read **11:1-6**. See also **Matthew 9:2-8; Mark 2:1-12; 11:22-26**.

**Q.2)** Look at the examples of bible characters in **11:4-31**. How did they show the characteristics of faith in their lives? What can we do as believers today to learn from them?

**Q.3)** Read carefully **11:32-40**. Show the ways these faithful believers suffered and consider their testimony in obtaining "*a good report through faith*" (**11:39**). In view of the many saints who suffered in the past how can we show true faith in Jesus Christ.

**Q.4)** Read **12:1-4**. How should we as believers endure to finish the race? It is helpful to read **1Corinthians 9:24-27 & 2Timothy 4:7-8**.

**Section Seven:** Practical living in preparation to live with God for ever, **12:5-13:5-25**.

**Q.1)** Why does God discipline Christians? List your reasons. Read **12:5-11 & Proverbs 3:11-12**.

**Q.2)** What are the dangers that believers could fall into if they become lazy and careless in following the Lord Jesus Christ? See **12:12-17**. How can we avoid such dangers?

**Q.3)** Read carefully **12:18-24**. Compare the experiences that the Israelites experienced at Mount Sinai (**12:18-21**) with our Christian privileges at Mount Zion (**12:22-24**).

**Q.4)** Read **12:25-29**. What are the warnings in **12:25-27, 29**? How should we respond (**11:28**)?

**Q.5)** Read through **13:1-25**. Make a list of the practical duties that Christians ought to be doing.

**Q.6)** Read again **13:1-25**. Consider the following below:

**A)** Our attitude to leaders in the Church (**13:7, 17, 24**).

**B)** What pleases God (**13:15-16, 21**)?

**C)** Where and when the letter was written from and what is known from **13:22-24**?

**D)** What ways is God at work in us as his people (**13:5, 8, 12, 20-21**)?

**E)** What is known of the writer of this letter (**13:18-19, 22-25**)?

## Miscellaneous Questions

The following questions encourage more individual study over a longer period of time but they can still be covered in a home group study if appropriate.

**Q.1)** Study the entire letter to find out what it reveals of who Jesus Christ is. You can make a list of the various titles given to Jesus Christ. See **1:2, 3, 5, 8; 2:3, 6, 10, 17; 4:14; 5:5, 8; 6:6, 20; 7:22, 26, 28; 8:1, 6; 9:11, 15; 10:29; 12:2, 24.**

**Q.2)** Consider what is known about the readers of the Hebrew letter. Is there evidence that the readers were more likely to be Jewish believers rather than Gentile (non-Jewish) believers? The following verses are helpful to suggest who these Christians could be. See **2:3-4; 3:12; 5:11-14; 6:1, 9-12; 7:11-14; 9:14; 10:25, 32-36; 13:4-5, 7, 17-19, 22-24.**

**Q.3)** What is known about the writer of this letter? Is there evidence to suggest Paul was the writer of this letter? Read **2:3; 10:34; 13:7, 23.**

**Q.4)** The writer of this letter seems to be very concerned about the spiritual condition of the readers of this letter. Make a list of the warnings given in this letter. It is helpful to read **2:1-4; 3:6-19; 4:1, 6, 11; 5:11-14; 6:4-8, 11-12; 10:23-31, 35-39; 12:3-17, 25-29; 13:7, 17, 24.**

**Q.5)** List the main themes of this letter to the Hebrews. You will need to read through the entire letter at least once with care.

**Q.6)** Is it true to say that the writer of the letter has a high regard to the Old Testament scriptures in being the authoritative Word of God? See **1:5-14; 3:7-8; 7:1-21; 8:8-12.** Compare with **Psalms 95:7-11; 110:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31-34.** There are other scriptures you will need to study because the list of references is incomplete.

**Q.7)** What are the **BETTER THINGS** the writer brings out in this letter. It is helpful to read **Chapters 7-10** and look up **1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 25,40; 12:24.**

**Q.8)** Read carefully through this letter to find the evidence of the humanity of Jesus Christ. Read again **2:3-3:6; 4:14-15; 5:7-8; 6:19; 7:14,24-28; 8:1; 9:1,14,24,28; 10:10-14; 12:2-3; 13:12,20.**

**Q.9)** Can you show that the writer has understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit? Read **2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8, 14; 10:15, 29.** Compare with **1Corinthians 12:11.**

**Q.10)** Show whether there are any prophecies in this letter that still need to be fulfilled. It is helpful to read **1:1-12; 2:5-9; 3:7-11; 4:1-11; 8:6-13 (with Jeremiah 31:31-40); 9:27-28; 10:14-18, 25, 37; 11:10, 16, 35; 12:26-29; 13:8.**

**Q.11)** Look up the word "once" and show how significant this word is in the usage in this letter. See **6:4; 7:27; 9:7, 12, 26-28; 10:2, 10; 12:26-27.**

**Q.12)** Show the challenges of the recurring references "Let us...." See **4:1, 11, 14, 16; 6:1; 10:22-24; 12:1(twice); 28; 13:13, 15.** If time allows study other recurrent words such as "more excellent", "high priest", "perfect", "covenant", and "the order of Melchizedec".

**Q.13)** Make a list of the positive exhortations to be found in this letter. It is helpful to read **2:1; 4:1, 11, 14, 16; 6:1; 10:22-24; 12:1(twice), 28; 13:1, 3, 5, 15-18.**

## Bibliography

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