

I. Intro and Overview of the Book

- A. **Date** - There are roughly 15 present tense references to the Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system suggesting that these were still in operation when the epistle was composed. Since the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, the epistle must have been written prior to that date. It was noted that Timothy had just been released from prison and that persecution from Rome was becoming severe. These details suggest a date for the epistle around A.D. 67–69. By this time, most of the original 12 Apostles had already been killed and this letter was addressing the second generation of believers in Jesus.
- B. **Writer** - Debate abounds upon the authorship. The top opinions of the scholarly world are Barnabas, Apollos, Priscilla with Aquilla, and Clement of Rome. The epistle's vocabulary, style, and literary characteristics are unique and do not match any other writers we see in scripture. Scholars agree that the writer was extremely eloquent in proper high Greek, and both the author and main audience were Hellenistic Jews.
- C. **Genre** - The book of Hebrews is very much a sermon in written form and different from most of the epistles written to address the specifics of regional churches. The writer describes this letter as “a word of exhortation” (Heb. 13:22). (James and Jude)
- D. **Purpose and Recipient** - Christianity was outlawed as it was seen as a sect of Judaism. Roman Emperor Nero valued Judaism for the stability it created and the income that it provided. Many thousands of Christians were ethnically Jewish and deeply rooted in Judaism before converting to Christianity. The beginnings of persecution were boycotting businesses, destruction and seizure of property, and imprisonment. All you had to do to escape persecution was to go to a Synagogue of Judaism, publicly deny Christ, and renounce Christian beliefs and practices and you would be safe and spared from persecution. This was happening in Jewish Christian communities in droves and this letter was written in hopes to stop the surge of persecution-driven apostasy and encourage Christians to hold fast and endure the persecution.
- E. **Message** - This letter is heavily rooted in the temple law and practice found in the book of Leviticus. The breakdown and message of this letter is a flow of strong doctrinal arguments followed by appeals and encouragements based on the arguments. Every argument is aimed at declaring the supremacy “betterness” of Jesus and relating to Him through the new covenant versus over the old covenant law and practices. The letter culminates with the clear warning that to deny Jesus and return to Judaism will result in the losing of eternal salvation in Him. The clear and recurring message of this letter is a clarion call of, “don't go back to Judaism, let's keep moving forward pressing into Jesus, and embracing persecution.”

II. Inductive Outline

A. The Superiority of Jesus Christ's Authority and Position (1:1-4:13)

- a. A Better Word (1:1-3)
- b. Better Than the Angels (1:4-2:18)
 - i. A better messenger (1:4-14)
 - ii. A better message (2:1-18)
 - 1. A better salvation (2:1-4)
 - 2. A better savior (2:5-18)
- c. Better Than Moses (3:1-19)
- d. A Better Rest (4:1-13)

B. The Superiority of Jesus Christ's Priesthood (4:14-7:28)

- a. Christ as High-Priest (4:14-5:10)
- b. Exhortation to Full Commitment to Christ (5:11-6:20)
- c. Christ's Priesthood like Melchizedek's (7:1-28)

C. The Superiority of Jesus Christ's Priestly Ministry (8:1-10:18)

- a. Through a Better Covenant (8:1-13)
- b. In a Better Sanctuary (9:1-12)
- c. By a Better Sacrifice (9:13-10:18)

D. The Superiority of Faith (10:19-12:29)

- a. Saving Faith (10:19-25)
- b. False Faith (10:26-39)
- c. Genuine Faith (11:1-3)
- d. Heroes of the Faith (11:4-40)
- e. Persevering Faith (12:1-29)

E. The Superiority of Christian Life in Christ (13:1-21)

- a. In Relation to Others (13:1-3)
- b. In Relation to Ourselves (13:4-9)
- c. In Relation to God (13:10-21)

III. Heb. 1:1-2

A. “God, who at various times and various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets,” (Heb. 1:1)

1. God Speaks - I think we rarely pause to take in the wonder and beauty of this truth. In many cases we can easily assume an arrogance of demanding God that speak rather than allowing the weight and privilege of this to touch our hearts. God is self-revealed and His constant and varied speech to us declares His great desire to be near and known intimately by us. It is important to note that what is in view here is God's special revelation, not His general revelation.
2. God Spoke in Times Past - Once again, the desire of God to be known is affirmed throughout human history. God created through speaking and then continued to speak all throughout humanity's history. It is important to note that the writer wants to draw our attention to the mode and quality of the way God spoke before the manifestation of Christ.
3. Spoke through Prophets - God spoke in times past primarily through intermediary prophets. Even though prophets spoke through direct inspiration, they still were only a mouthpiece for God. Many times they did not understand Him nor demonstrate His heart and emotions rightly when bringing His word to the masses. Nevertheless, God spoke through prophets and His voice to the questions of the masses was limited to one or two people hearing directly from God per generation.
4. Various Times and Ways - I focus on the word “various”; the original Greek literally means, “in many manners”. God has spoken many times, over and over, through many ways (prophetic lives, songs, acts, and words) so that He would speak through the multiple ways humanity has been created to hear.

B. “Has in these last days spoken to us by His Son,” (Heb. 1:2a)

1. Last days Spoken - All scholars agree that “these last days” is not speaking of the end of the age but rather is speaking of the final days or fullness of God speaking. That is why some translations choose the words “at the end of these days” to reference the days of the various ways and various prophets. Now a final or culminating revelation has happened, the final phase of God's progressive self-revelation to humanity was to speak through His Son.

2. By His Son - In all the original Greek manuscripts the word “His” is not present in order for us to understand we are speaking of the divine second person of the trinity. God's culminating revelation has come through God the Son.
 - a. Fullness of Speech - The revelation from Jesus Himself was unique, because not only was it purely God's message, it was also God's personality through which the message came. The personality of Paul, Peter, John, and other Biblical writers is clear in their writings. Yet in the revelation from Jesus, we see the personality of God. Not only that, His speech is unending and in some cases more clear and powerful through non-verbal display. Many days He did not formally teach but His speech powerfully went forward in His laughter, tears, actions, and intentions.
 - b. Culmination of Speech - This passage, along with many others, make it clear that God the Son is summed up in all previous utterances and demands and that all further forms of speech point to Him and testify of Him. Jesus is God's decisive word to humanity forever. There is nothing to be said apart from or outside of Him.
 1. All continuing prophetic or otherwise revelation, therefore, enhances or brings out a focused aspect of Jesus, but it must always glorify and partner with what Jesus has already said or shown us. It is there to bring us to a greater understanding of who Jesus is and the knowledge of God in Christ.

What would we now enquire of God, or seek any vision or revelation, would not only be acting foolishly, in fact we would be committing an offence against God, by not setting our eyes altogether upon Christ, and seeking no new thing or revelation beside. And God might answer you after this manner; saying: If I have spoken all things to you in My Word, Which is My Son, and I have no other word, what answer can I now make to you, or what can I reveal to you which is greater than this? Set your eyes on Him alone, for in Him I have spoken and revealed to you all things, and in Him you shall find yet more than that which you asked and desired. For you ask for visions, dreams, and revelations, which are the part; but you must set your eyes upon Him, and you shall find the whole; for He is My complete encounter and answer, and He is all My vision and all My revelation; so that I have spoken to you, answered you, and declared to you and revealed to you all you seek when I gave Him to you as a brother, companion, master, ransom and prize.

- St. John of the Cross