

Commentary on Hebrews

Review

CONCLUSION of the Study of Sacrificial System:

All the sacrificial typologies find perfect fulfillment in Jesus Christ, as do all the functions of the High Priest. All this in its fulfillment was necessary for man's initial and continued salvation from sin.

As we close this study we say along with Paul: Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!!!
(2 Corinthians 9:15)

Continuation

Introduction to The Book of Hebrews

Our study of the Letter written to the Hebrews:

- 1- Will challenge and clarify your concepts of the entire bible
- 2- Will enrich your appreciation for the priesthood of Christ
- 3- Will set forth the benefits that come from a strong faith and conviction in Christ's present ministry
- 4- Will outline the privileges Christian people enjoy because of who Christ is and what He did

This letter contains:

- 1- The strongest declaration and demonstration of the total removal of the old Hebrew system: its law, its sanctuary, its priesthood, its covenant agreements, and indeed, everything that was a part of the Law of Moses.
- 2- The best demonstration of the limited purpose of the Law of Moses. According to the message of Hebrews, the Law was only a "shadow" of coming realities which Christ introduced.
- 3- A full discussion of the Hebrew system of religion.
 - a. Aaronic priesthood
 - b. Levitical Priesthood
 - c. The Tabernacle
 - d. Sacrificial Worship
 - e. The Law of the Old Covenant
 - i. The Ten Commandments and 613 complementary ordinances and statutes explaining and illustrating the Ten Commandments.
- 4- An explanation of the New World Order in Christ
- 5- Justification for the end of the Old Covenant
- 6- Mentions elements of the New System – New Testament

Themes in the Book of Hebrews

- 1- Shadows
- 2- Old covenant imperfection
- 3- The supremacy of Jesus

Outline of Hebrews

Several topics of interest will be discussed by the author. Not only will we see the failures of the old system, but we will also see the glories of the new. And the glories of the new will cover a number of distinguishing qualities that are characteristic of Christianity. These qualities will be presented in logical order. The topics and their general locations are listed as follows:

1. The deity of Christ — Hebrews 1
2. The humanity of Christ — Hebrews 2
3. The priesthood of Christ — Hebrews 7
4. The covenant of Christ — Hebrews 8
5. The sanctuary of Christ — Hebrews 9
6. The sacrifice of Christ — Hebrews 10.
7. The blending of all these qualities together with an explanation of the Christian privilege under the new order of things — Hebrews 10

Suggestions for properly understanding Hebrews

- 1- Read With the Attitude of a First Century Reader
- 2- Think as a Hebrew
- 3- Recognize the Lack of Knowledge With the Jewish System
- 4- Remember the Topic Within Each Chapter

Background

1- Date

- a. AD 68 or 69
- b. Probably about 35 years after Pentecost, a few months before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 by Titus.
- c. Jews were still practicing the sacrifices of the Law of Moses (Hebrews 10:11)

2- Audience

- a. People of Jewish background
- b. They had heard the Gospel preached during the early days of the church and had witnessed the miracles of the Holy Spirit
- c. Some were genuinely converted, some professed to be Christians but were not regenerated and some flat out rejected the message of salvation.

3- Historical setting

- a. Those who professed to be Christians faced bitter persecution. They needed encouragement to continue onward with full hope restored in their endurance.
- b. Those who were nominal in their faith were in danger of apostasy.

- c. Some were turning back to ritualistic religion, wanting to fit it.

One of the main themes of Hebrews is the absolute supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as revealer and as mediator of God's grace. The prologue (1:1-4) presents Christ as God's full and final revelation, far surpassing the limited preliminary revelation given in the Old Testament.

Hebrews could also be called "the book of better things" since the two Greek words for "better" and "superior" occur 15 times in the letter.

This other outline organizes the ideas from this perspective:

I. Prologue: The Superiority of God's New Revelation (1:1-4)

II. The Superiority of Christ to Leaders of the Old Covenant (1:5-7:28)

A. Christ Is Superior to the Angels (1:5-2:18)

1. Scriptural proof of superiority (1:5-14)
2. Exhortation not to ignore the revelation of God in his Son (2:1-4)
3. Further Scriptural proof of superiority over the angels (2:5-18)

B. Christ Is Superior to Moses (3:1-4:13)

1. Demonstration of Christ's superiority (3:1-6)
2. Exhortation to enter salvation-rest (3:7-4:13)

C. Christ Is Superior to the Aaronic Priests (4:14-7:28)

1. Exhortation to hold fast (4:14-16)
2. Qualifications of a priest (5:1-10)
3. Exhortation to abandon spiritual lethargy (5:11-6:12)
4. Certainty of God's promise (6:13-20)
5. Christ's superior priestly order (ch. 7)

III. The Superior Sacrificial Work of Our High Priest (chs. 8-10)

A. A Better Covenant (ch. 8)

B. A Better Sanctuary (9:1-12)

C. A Better Sacrifice (9:13-10:18)

D. Exhortations (10:19-39)

IV. Final Plea for Persevering Faith (chs. 11-12)

A. Examples of Past Heroes of the Faith (ch. 11)

- B. Encouragement for Persevering Faith (12:1-11)
- C. Exhortations for Persevering Faith (12:12-17)
- D. Motivation for Persevering Faith (12:18-29)

V. Conclusion (ch. 13)

- A. Practical Rules for Christian Living (13:1-17)
- B. Request for Prayer (13:18-19)
- C. Benediction (13:20-21)
- D. Personal Remarks (13:22-23)
- E. Greetings and Final Benediction (13:24-25)

So we can see the Hebrew author making the case that **Jesus of Nazareth Is the True God**. In order to convince the Jews of the truth of this proposition, the writer uses these three general arguments throughout the epistle:

1. Christ is superior to the angels.
2. He is superior to Moses.
3. He is superior to Aaron.

The epistle to the Hebrews is really an answer to the question, *what do you have?* In a word the answer is **Christ**. In Him we have:

- One who is greater than the prophets.
- One who is greater than the angels.
- One who is greater than Moses.
- One who is greater than Joshua.
- One whose priesthood is superior to that of Aaron.
- One who serves in a better sanctuary.
- One who has introduced a better covenant.
- One who is the antitype of the typical furniture and veil.
- One whose once-for-all offering of Himself for sin is superior to the repeated sacrifices of bulls and goats.

Just as the stars fade from view in the greater glory of the sun, so the types and shadows of Judaism pale into insignificance before the greater glory of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus.

Yet there was still the problem of persecution. Those who professed to be followers of the Lord Jesus faced bitter, fanatical opposition. For true believers this could lead to the peril of discouragement and despair. They therefore needed to be encouraged to have faith in the promises of God. They needed endurance in view of the coming reward.

Warnings

For those who were only nominal Christians, there was the danger of apostasy. After professing to receive Christ, they might utterly renounce Him and return to ritualistic religion. This was tantamount to trampling on the Son of God, profaning His blood, and insulting the Holy Spirit. For this willful sin there was no repentance or forgiveness. Against this sin there are repeated warnings in the Letter to the Hebrews.

- In Heb 2:1 it is described as drifting away from the message of Christ.
- In Heb 3:7-19 it is the sin of rebellion or of hardening the heart.
- In Heb 6:6 it is falling away.
- In Heb 10:25 it is the forsaking the assembling, or giving up meeting together.
- In Heb 10:26 it is the willfulness of deliberate sin.
- In Heb 12:16 it is spoken of as godlessness and being sexually immoral, characterized in Esau who sold his birthright for a single meal, to please his carnal desires.
- Finally in Heb 12:25 it is called a refusal to hear the One who is speaking from Heaven.

But all these warnings are directed against different aspects of the same sin—the sin of apostasy.

Sources

The Word of God, Sunset in-depth commentary on Hebrews, NIV Believer's Bible Commentary, NIV Study Bible, Adam Clarke Commentary, James Burton Coffman Commentary on Hebrews