

# **Introduction to the Book of Hebrews**

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# Prayer Before Reading Scripture

Shine within our hearts, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge and open the eyes of our minds that we may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments, so that having conquered all sinful desires, we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the light of our souls and bodies, and to You we give glory together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all holy, good, and life giving Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

# Objectives of the Class

- To behold in our hearts the glory of Christ
- To participate more deeply in life in the Spirit
- To become more conformed to His likeness
- To pray for and encourage one another

# Format of the Class

1. In-Depth Study of the current passage (30 minutes)
2. Questions and Answers (15 mins)
3. Sharing of how we are doing (10 mins)
4. Prayer for one another (5 mins)

# Resources for the Class

1. <https://theColburns.us>
2. Click on "Classes", then "Hebrews Bible Study"
3. Youtube Video available next day. *Note: Q&A and prayer requests are not placed on Youtube.*
4. Fr. Lawrence Farley. 2013. The Epistle to the Hebrews.
5. Orthodox Study Bible (NKJV for NT)

# Purpose of Hebrews

- To "exhort" (encourage) the readers to remain faithful to Christ
  - "I appeal to you, brethren, bear with my word of exhortation...." (Heb. 13.22a)
- Alternating discourse, exhortation

# Purpose

- **1.1-4 Intro (Final revelation through God's Son)**
- **1.5-14 Discourse (Christ superior to angels because He is God)**
- **2.1-4 Exhortation (Call to not drift away from the faith)**

\*outline adapted from Hagner, 2002/2013

# Purpose

- **2.5-3.6 Discourse (Christ superior to angels and Moses)**
- **3:7-19 Exhortation (Call to not harden their hearts)**

# Purpose

- **4:1-13 Discourse (the promise of rest)**
- **4:14-16 Exhortation (Hold fast, draw near)**
- **5:1-10 Discourse (High priesthood of Christ)**
- **5:11-6:12 Exhortation (become mature, don't fall away)**

# Purpose

- **6:13-10:18 Discourse (Superiority of Christ's Priesthood)**
- **10:19-39 Exhortation (be faithful, danger of apostasy, call to endure)**
- **11:1-40 Discourse (examples of faithful men and women)**
- **12:1-17 Exhortation (call to faithfulness, endurance, holiness)**

# Purpose

- **12:18-24 Discourse (the glory of our status)**
- **12:25-13:17 Exhortation (don't reject the One warning us from Heaven, offer acceptable worship, walk in love and holiness)**
- **13:18-25 Closing**

# Genre

- **Hebrews does not open like a letter (epistle)...**
  - "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." (Heb 1:1-2)
- **But, Hebrews closes like a letter...**
  - "I appeal to you, brethren, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly." (Heb. 13.22)
  - "Greet all your leaders and all the saints." (Heb 13:24)
  - "Grace be with all of you. Amen." (Heb 13.25)

# Date: Earliest Known Citation



- **1 Clement (Letter to the Corinthians)**
- **Quotes Hebrews Two Times**
- **Conclusion: Hebrews written before 96 AD**

**Clement of Rome +99**

# Date: Internal Evidence



- After persecution of Jews by Claudius (49 AD)

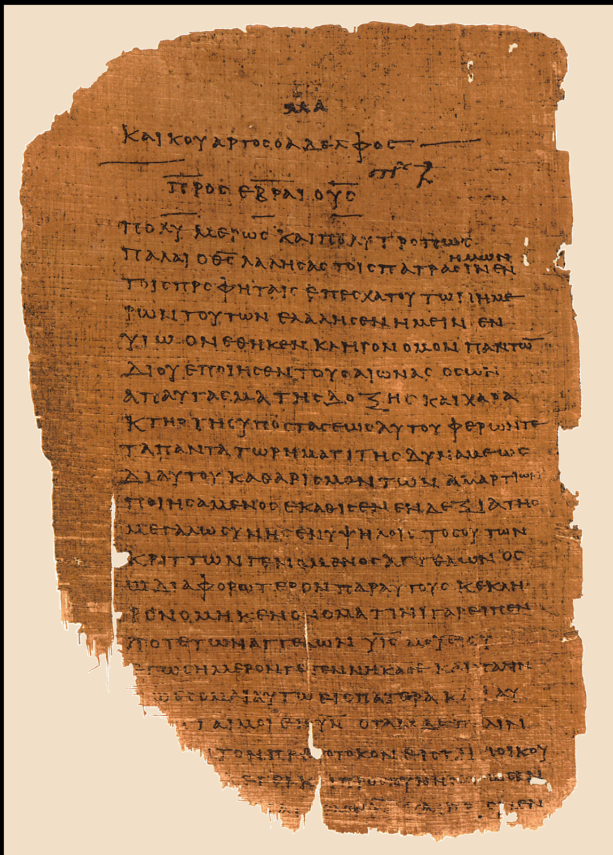
- Before destruction of Jewish temple (70 AD)



# Audience: Internal Evidence

- "...you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven." (Heb. 10.34)
- "Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly." (Heb. 13.23)
- "Those from Italy greet you." (Heb. 13.24b)

# Authorship: External Evidence



- **P46: earliest known manuscript containing the writings of St Paul**
- **Romans to 2 Thessalonians**
- **Hebrews placed after Romans**
- **Conclusion: the scribe considered Hebrews to be written by St Paul**

**Papyrus 46 c. 175–225**

# Authorship: External Evidence

- **Eusebius +340 quotes:**
  - **Clement of Alexandria +215**
  - **Origen of Alexandria +253**
- **St John Chrysostom +407**



# Authorship: Internal Evidence

- **Author and audience knew each other**
- **In Pauline circle (Heb 13.23) Cared about his audience**
- **Highly educated in Greek rhetoric**
- **Highly educated in Jewish Scriptures and Rabbinic argument (midrash)**
- **Not an eyewitness of Christ? (Heb 2.3)**

# Summary

- **Author:** probably a very well educated Hellenistic Jew, possibly an associate of the Apostle Paul, but not an eye-witness of Christ. Educated in both Greek rhetoric and Jewish methods of exegesis.
- **Date:** after (49 AD persecution by Claudius) and before 70 AD (destruction of Jerusalem)
- **Audience:** Hellenistic Jewish Christians who were tempted to abandon Christianity and go back to Judaism.
- **Purpose:** to encourage the audience to remain faithful to Christ.

**Questions?**  
**Comments?**