

# HEBREWS

# BACKGROUND

## HEBREWS

- **Audience:** 1st century Christians who were in danger of giving up
- **Date:** 64-70 AD
- **Purpose:** To encourage them to endure by looking to Christ.
  - Endure like Abraham 6:15
  - Endure like Moses 11:27
  - Endure like Jesus 12:2-3
- **Author:** unknown. Most likely not an Apostle (Hebrews 2:3b)
  - **Barnabas:** Tertullian (155-220 AD)
  - **Silas:** Similarities between Hebrews & 1 Peter (he was a co-author 1 Pt 5:12)
  - **Apollos:** 'eloquent man' from Alexandria who was 'well versed in scriptures' as described in Acts 18:24 (Martin Luther was reasonably sure it was Apollos)

Persecution had grown stronger: physically assaulted, their homes had been plundered; some had been thrown into prison, others had been ridiculed in public because of their faith in Jesus (10:32–34)

Some have seen the events of 10:32-34 as a ref to the Neronian persecution of AD 64. The author gives the impression that sacrifices were still occurring when he wrote this letter (e.g., 8:13; 10:1–3); if sacrifices had already ceased, the author's argument would have had to be cast in a different form.

Heb 2:3b "This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him."

13:24 "Those from Italy send you their greetings."

## HEBREWS OUT LOUD

- The sermon to the Hebrews was probably designed to be spoken aloud:
- 2:5 '...about which we are speaking...'
- 3:15 'As has just been said...'
- 5:11 'We have much more to say...'
- 6:9 'Even though we speak like this...'
- 8:1 'Now the main point of what we are saying is this...'
- 9:5 '...we cannot discuss these things in detail now.'
- 11:32 '...what more shall I say?'

<http://www.esvmedia.org/speeches/ferguson.hebrews.mp3>

At the ESV site you can listen to a recitation of the entire book. The speaker is Ryan Ferguson, who I believe is reciting the book from memory rather than reading from a script.

# THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

TWO MAIN THEMES:  
REVELATION  
REDEMPTION

# THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

## REVELATION & REDEMPTION

- **Revelation:** The Word of God dominates the opening (1-6) and closing (11-13) chapters.
  - Decisive
  - Supreme
  - Compassionate
  - Powerful

# THE DECISIVE REVELATION

## THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

- The diversified message of the OT (1:1) is now decisive in Christ (1:2-3a).
- It deserves our "most careful attention" in order to avoid drifting (2:1-4).
- The faithful heroes of the OT reach perfection only when combined with the new (11:40).
- Don't be 'carried away' by strange teachings of 'ceremonial foods' that contain no benefit now that the new altar has come (13:9-10).

# THE SUPREME REVELATION

## THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

- The Revelation from the Son is above:
  - Angels 1:3-2:18
  - Moses 3:1-6
  - Joshua 4:1-10
- We have a greater voice from a greater mountain (12:18-24):
  - not fearful fleeing but joyful assembly
  - not unbearable commands but unimaginable grace

# A COMPASSIONATE REVELATION

## THE MESSAGE OF REVELATION

- The message is a compassionate appeal (3:7-8, 12-13), but with sober warnings of the dangers of:
  - unbelief (3:12,19)
  - disobedience (3:18, 4:2, 6, 11)
  - laziness (5:11-14, 6:12).
- It is the loving 'word of encouragement' from a father to his children (12:5), but still with the warning to not refuse the message of grace because it is ultimately from heaven (12:25).

# A POWERFUL REVELATION

## THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

- The message is not just persuasive but powerful (4:12).
- It condemns us and convicts us until we acknowledge the seriousness of our sin (4:13) and the immensity of his grace (4:16).
- It is the message of the a 'kingdom that cannot be shaken' (12:28).

# THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

## REVELATION & REDEMPTION

- **Redemption:** The Work of Christ is given priority in the central section of the letter (7-10)
  - Christ & Melchizedek
  - Christ/Melchizedek Priesthood vs. The Levitical Priesthood
  - Humanity of Jesus

# CHRIST & MELCHIZEDEK

## THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

- Hebrews 7:1-10
- OT Background Texts: Genesis 14:17-20 & Psalm 110:4
- **Status (7:1):** Priest: only in Hebrews is Christ precisely referenced as a priest. Though Paul & John make mention of His intercession (Rom. 8:34; 1 Jn. 2:1-2)
- **Authority (7:1):** King: As king he is just, and as priest he justifies all who trust in his atoning sacrifice.
- **Name (7:2):** He is *righteousness* and *peace*, and so is Christ. Relevant & appropriate for peace with God is based upon the righteousness of God .
- **Uniqueness (7:3):** In Genesis there is no background on Mel's genealogy or what happens after the encounter with Abram. So in a sense Mel is timeless (in the silences as well as in the statements' Melchizedek is a fitting type of Christ) .
- **Superiority (7:4-10):** Abraham (and indirectly Levi) offered tithes to and received a blessing from the priest-king (lesser blessed by the greater). Even greater though is the reality of becoming a priest not through ancestry but 'on the basis of an indestructible life' (7:16).

The author of Hebrews does not, as in some typology, use Melchizedek to illustrate the virtues of Christ, but moves his thought in the opposite direction. It is not Jesus who resembles Melchizedek, but Melchizedek who resembles Jesus.

Levitical Priesthood	Order of Melchizedek/Christ
temporary because of death (7:23)	lives forever/has a permanent priesthood (7:24)
subject to weakness and sinful (5:2-3)	holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners (7:26)
offered the blood of goats and bulls (9:13)	offered Himself (7:27)
could effect only a partial cleansing, nothing more than 'outwardly clean' (9:9, 13)	purifies man's conscience (9:14, 10:22)
reminder of sin (10:3)	removal of sin (9:26, 10:11-12)
daily repetition (10:11)	once for all (10:12)

# HUMANITY OF JESUS

## THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

- We are 'of the same family' as Jesus and He is not 'ashamed' to admit it (2:11-12)
- Jesus shared in our humanity—our flesh and blood (2:14)
- He was 'fully human in every way' in order to be a 'merciful and faithful high priest' (2:17)
- He was tempted in every way so He can help those that are tempted (2:18, 4:15)
- Jesus faced life's hazardous experiences and often suffered, but through it all he 'learned obedience' (2:10; 5:8).
- He prayed 'with loud cries and tears', deeply aware of the cost of that sacrifice which was to be offered (5:7; 9:14).
- He was arrested, mocked, humiliated and 'endured the cross, scorning its shame' (12:2) because he knew it to be the will of God for him and the only way He could 'take away sins' and make us holy (10:10, 11, 14).

# APOSTASY

## THE MESSAGE OF HEBREWS

- **Hebrews 6:4-12**
  - Challenges evangelical belief of “once saved always saved”
  - “fall away” here vs. apostles (Mt 26:31-35)
  - “keep on crucifying” & “keep on putting him to open shame”
  - 1st Century Context
- **Hebrews 10:26-35**
  - v. 26 deliberate...v. 29 trampled...insulted
- **Hebrews 12:16-17**
  - Sin like a contagious disease
  - Unpardonable because he is insincere
  - Physical appetites meant more than spiritual privileges

Deut 29:18-

1st Century context of “falling away” back into Judaism involving adopting the viewpoint that Jesus was a blasphemer, not Messiah. Worthy of execution of the worst possible kind. The form of apostasy here envisioned is on par with ‘blasphemy against the Holy Spirit’ (Mt 12:24)

Many character studies in the NT—people who say Lord, Lord—but then turn against Jesus: Judas, Demas, Simon Magus.

2 Corinthians 13:5 “examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves.”

DELIBERATE: choice of continuing in a life of habitual sin

TRAMPLED: sustained rejection and violent antagonism. Mt 5:13 salt that's lost its saltiness...good for nothing but trampled underfoot

INSULTED: deepest kind of insult—outrage:

Self-condemned: denying the only way of forgiveness, make pardon impossible

Esau is a powerful picture of Heb 6 & 10

## WARNINGS

- Neglect – Heb 2:1-4
- Unbelief – Heb 3:17-19
- Disobedience – Heb 4:11-13
- Immaturity – Heb 5:11-6:12
- Rejection – Heb 10:19-31
- Refusal – Heb 12:25-29

# PERSEVERANCE

- Unbelief, disobedience, drifting, or quitting all are not acceptable.
- Jesus knows what it's like – he was made like his brothers. (Heb 2:17-18)
- Grace, mercy, atonement is available! (Heb 2:17-18)
- Sabbath-rest is not for now.... It's for later. Keep going! (Heb 4)
- You ought to be teachers by now (Heb 5:12)
- Let us go on to maturity (Heb 6:1)
- Don't become lazy, taking in the blessings but producing thorns and thistles (Heb 6:7-12)
- Hold unswervingly to the hope (Heb 10:23)
- Spur one another on (Heb 10:24-25)
- Persevere (Heb 10:26)
- Strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees (Heb 12:12)
- Make Every effort, see to it.... (Heb 12)

# RUN WITH PERSEVERANCE

## HEBREWS 12

- "cloud of witnesses"
- "throw off everything that hinders"
- "and the sin that so easily entangles"
- "run with perseverance"
- "fixing eyes on Jesus...Pioneer & Perfecter"
  - "joy set before him he endured"
  - "so that you will not grow weary and lose heart"
- "you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood"
- "have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement"
- "do not make light...do not lose heart"
- "God is treating you as his children"
- "harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained"
- "strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees"
- "so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed"

surrounded by former contestants who are witnesses to us of the faithfulness of God: men and women that testify that faith is worth it. They have finished, now its our turn. They can inspire, but cannot strengthen.

discouragement and despair

lame—not disabled...healed. Quitting has a ripple effect, but so does repentance. See others not quitting, but perseverance inspires the lame to choose healing rather than being disabled.

# LISTEN TO JESUS

HEBREWS 1:1-2:4

- **Why?**

- God's Voice (1:1-2)
- God's Son (1:2)
- God's Heir (1:2)
- God's Creative Agent (1:2)
- God's Radiance & Representation (1:3)
- God's Universal Sustainer (1:3)
- God's Sacrifice (1:3)
- God's Superior Servant (1:5-14)
  - Name (1:4); Dignity (1:5-6); Nature (1:7); Role (1:8); Example (1:9); Work (1:10-12); Achievement (1:13a); Destiny (1:13b)

Who are you listening to?

Dignity: first born son vs servant

# LISTEN TO JESUS CONTINUED

HEBREWS 1:1-2:4

- **THEREFORE: Don't Drift**

"...pay the most careful attention...to what we have heard..." (2:1)

vs.

"...ignore..." (2:3)

- Announced by the Lord
- Confirmed by the Apostles
- Testified to by God

Therefore-Favourite word of the writer of hebrews

"Are you steering or drifting? (borden of yale)