Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Worksheet

Hebrews (Introduction)

NKJV

**Author**

Debates about the authorship of the Book of Hebrews continue. However, the discussion is futile. Had God wanted us to know the author, He would have included it in the text. The fact that *“all Scripture is given by inspiration of God…”* is sufficient (see 2 Timothy 3:16).

**To Whom Written and Purpose of the Book**

The Book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrews/the Jews. It, like most pages of Scripture, is Jewish in nature and serves as a thesis on the radical changes that have occurred since Jesus the Messiah finished the work of redemption—fulfilling the law and its sacrificial system. These changes include the annulling of the Old Covenant and the introduction of the New. *“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.Because finding fault with them, He says: ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, “Know the Lord,” for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’ In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away”* (Hebrews 8:7–13). For, *“Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance”* (Hebrews 9:11–15). Jesus is *“the mediator of the New Covenant”* (Hebrews 12:24).

All the Jewish people had been promised (related to the first coming of the Messiah) has been accomplished. Therefore, God inspired this glorious work we call “The Book of Hebrews” to clearly communicate the promises, fulfillments, and associated perfection granted to believers; who through faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone are provided the blessings of the New Covenant. The covenantal change is primary to the purpose of the book. Jesus, as the Great High Priest, has perfectly mediated, on behalf of all men, the redemption and forgiveness of sin the Old Covenant pointed to in types and patterns. Jesus has perfected forever those who are being sanctified by faith alone in His finished work. *“For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, ‘This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,’ then He adds, ‘Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.’Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin”* (Hebrews 10:14–18). The Old Covenant sacrificial system is no more and can never again be embraced as it was in the past.

**Warnings**

A stern warning is provided within the letter. By showing the value *and necessity* of moving from the administration of the Old Covenant to the New, the author points out the certain and dire consequences suffered by those who are tempted to turn back and/or refuse to *“go on to perfection,” “for the law made nothing perfect…”* (see Hebrews 6:1 and 19). He said, *“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God”* (Hebrews 3:12).

Severe persecution provided the Hebrew people a temptation to return to or maintain the “status quo” of the Old Covenant and its administration. However, the author warned that *“… it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame”* (Hebrews 6:4–6). During the Old Covenant Dispensation, the Jews were enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, were partakers of the Holy Spirit, and likewise tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come. However, they were now in need of embracing the finished work of the Messiah and moving forward so they might *“continue in the grace of God”* (Acts 13:43).

The Parable of the 10 Virgins aptly illustrates this. All 10 virgins (Israel) were enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, were partakers of the Holy Spirit, tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come during the Old Covenant Dispensation. However, the 5 foolish virgins illustrate those who refused to obtain the additional “oil” of the New Covenant—therefore forfeiting its blessings.

The covenant people, who had earlier (under the Old Covenant) partaken of all God provided them, must now move forward and embrace Jesus as Messiah—therefore partaking of the blessings and provisions of the “New” and “Better Covenant” (see Hebrews 7:22 and 8:6). The author included himself with his fellow brethren when he said, *“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?”* (Hebrews 10:26–29). *“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins”* (Hebrews 10:4). Therefore, rejection of the New Covenant and/or turning back to the “so-called comforts” of the Old Covenant was not an option.

**By Faith**

The author shows how people of faith looked forward with anticipation to the blessings now available to the Hebrews—and the whole world. For this reason, the author provided an abbreviated list of these “believers” (see Hebrews 11). The faith they longed for, by faith, has now come to fruition. Therefore, he shows that faith is the substance of things hoped for—in particular, the things hoped for in the New Covenant. The *“great cloud of witnesses”* (Chapter 12) are those Old Covenant believers who died *in* faith, anticipating *the* faith now realized.

**Dispensational Application**



The Book of Hebrews fits into the Church Age with many references to the Old Covenant. However, it also contains glimpses and reflections of the future Millennial Reign—known as the Kingdom Age. *“But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom’ ”* (Hebrews 1:8).

The primary doctrinal positions documented in the Book of Hebrews show the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old. However, soteriological (salvation) implications are not the only recognizable features; there are also eschatological (end time) hints. The author recognizes that the blessings of the Kingdom Age, while partially enjoyed now in the Church Age, do not replace the realities of a literal future Kingdom where the promises and blessings will be fully realized. He wrote, *“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”* (Hebrews 12:28).

Within the Book of Hebrews, we read of the better priesthood, the better hope, the better covenant, the better promises, and the better country—*heavenly*. These blessings *are* enjoyed by believers today. However, they will be more completely realized by believers in the future Millennial Kingdom—and beyond: in the new heaven and earth.

The fullness of the timeline and all the associated dispensational changes are not completely delineated within the Book of Hebrews. However, the student of Scripture will learn the fullness as he or she studies all contained in the Holy Scriptures.

**Sabbath Rest (Soteriology)**

One will discover that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Sabbath rest longed for in the Old Covenant, and once one enters into His rest, there is no more striving and/or working in hope of obtaining the rest typified in the Sabbath Day. *“Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, “They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.” So I swore in My wrath, “They shall not enter My rest.” ’ Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion’ ”* (Hebrews 3:7–15).

*“Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: ‘So I swore in My wrath, “They shall not enter My rest,” ’ although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all His works’; and again in this place: ‘They shall not enter My rest.’ Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, ‘Today,’ after such a long time, as it has been said: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.’ For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His”* (Hebrews 4:1–10).

Therefore, the author shows that this Gospel and all its fullness is the fulfillment of what is typified in the Sabbath Day. The believer who has been moved from the Old Covenant to the New (and has fully understood the true Gospel) has entered into *His* rest. The specific legal focus on a particular day of the week is of no more consequence than is the sacrificial system or dietary laws of the Old Covenant. Paul makes this clear in the Book of Romans where we read, *“One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind”* (Romans 14:5).

**Date**

It is uncertain exactly when the Book of Hebrews was written. However, it seems best to suggest a date somewhere between A.D. 65 and A.D. 69. It is certain that it was written before A.D. 70 as the author recognized the then present Temple and the sacrifices that were still being offered when he wrote the book. *“For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law”* (Hebrews 8:4). *“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins”* (Hebrews 10:1–4). In both passages we note the present tense in *“there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law”* and *“which they offer continually.”* Had the Book of Hebrews been written after A.D. 70, the author would have no doubt mentioned the destruction of the Temple and therefore the termination of the sacrificial offerings.

The Book of Hebrews shows the Jewish people what they have not been forsaken and that the arrival of the Messiah has brought to fruition the needed changes promised in the Old Covenant.

*“ ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.’ Thus says the Lord, Who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (The Lord of hosts is His name): ‘If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the Lord, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever.’ Thus says the Lord: ‘If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the Lord’ ”* (Jeremiah 31:31–37).

May the Lord richly bless you as you continually study His word.

Notes: