

Introduction to Hebrews

Scripture: Hebrews 1:1–2

Code: 1600

INTRODUCTION

A good title for the book of Hebrews is "The Superiority of Christ" because that is its message. Jesus Christ is superior to everything and everyone. Hebrews is both a tremendous and difficult book. It has many truths that are difficult to understand if we are not diligent in our study. Apart from having an intimate knowledge of the Spirit of God and a commitment to understand the Word of God, you will not understand Hebrews. Also, my former Old Testament professor, Dr. Charles L. Feinberg, said that you cannot understand the book of Hebrews unless you understand the book of Leviticus because Hebrews is based on the principles of the Levitical priesthood.

A. The Particulars of Hebrews

1. The author

Hebrews was written by an unknown author. Some think it was Paul, some Apollos, and some Peter. I stand with one of the great teachers of the early church by the name of Origen who said, "Nobody knows." One thing we do know, it was written by the Holy Spirit. I personally don't believe it was written by Paul.

2. The community

Hebrews was written to a group of suffering, persecuted Jews somewhere in the east outside of Israel. There are no references to Gentiles. The problem faced in Jerusalem of having both Gentile and Jew in the church is not discussed in Hebrews. The letter was written to Jewish believers and unbelievers to reveal the merits of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant as opposed to the Old Covenant.

We do not know the exact location of these Hebrews. They may have been located somewhere near Greece. We do know that this Jewish community had been evangelized by the apostles and prophets soon after Christ's ascension (Heb. 2:3-4).

Included within the framework of the letter are unbelievers within the Jewish community. Unlike Jerusalem or Galilean Jews, they had never met Jesus. Everything they knew about Him they received second-hand. They didn't have the New Testament as it now stands because it had not yet been put together. Whatever they knew they received directly from the mouths of the apostles and prophets. So the recipients of Hebrews were second-generation Christians as a result of apostolic missionaries.

3. The date

The letter to the Hebrews had to have been written sometime after Christ's ascension (about A.D. 30) and sometime before the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) because the Temple was still standing. I believe the date is somewhere between A.D. 60 and A.D. 69, perhaps about A.D. 65. There had to be time for the apostolic missionaries to evangelize the area. We know that apostolic missionaries were not sent out from Jerusalem for at least seven years after the church had been founded. It was sometime after those seven years before this Jewish community was reached. There also had to have been a certain amount of time for this community to grow spiritually. Hebrews 5:12 says, "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God." The writer was saying that they had enough time to be mature, but were not.

4. The recipients

The critical thing about understanding the book of Hebrews is that there were three basic types of people in view throughout this epistle. For example, if it were written only to Christians, as some have said, then severe problems arise in interpreting passages that could hardly apply to believers. Since it so frequently addresses believers, it could not have been written primarily to unbelievers either. So it must have been written to include both.

a) Hebrews who were intellectually convinced and committed to Christ

There was a legitimate congregation of true believers in Jesus Christ in this community. They had been raised in Judaism, but they received Jesus Christ as their Savior. The result was tremendous hostility from their own people. They were ostracized from their families, persecuted by their own countrymen, and suffered greatly.

(1) Their weakness

They should have been mature, but they weren't. They had no confidence. They were in danger of returning to the patterns of Judaism. They were not in danger of losing their salvation, but they were in danger of confusing their salvation with legalism. They couldn't make a clear-cut break between the New Covenant in Christ and all the ceremonies and patterns of their old life in Judaism.

The Hebrew Christians were still hung up on Temple ritual and worship. That's why the Holy Spirit tells them about a new priesthood, a new temple, a new sacrifice, and a new sanctuary that are better than the old ones. These people had gone beyond Judaism by receiving Jesus Christ, but they were still hanging on to many of the Judaistic rituals that had been so much a part of their life. That's understandable when their friends and countrymen were persecuting them. They were in great danger of creating a ritualistic, legalistic Christianity. They had become a congregation of weaker brothers (Rom. 14:2), who were still calling unclean what the Lord had sanctified (Rom. 14:14).

(2) Their strength

The Holy Spirit directed the book of Hebrews to these weak Christians to strengthen their faith in the New Covenant. They did not need the old Temple, which would be wiped out by Titus Vespasian in a few years, revealing that God was bringing an end to the Old Covenant. They did not need the old Levitical priesthood. They did not need the old day-in, day-out sacrifices. They had a new and better covenant with a new and better priesthood, sanctuary, and sacrifice. The book of Hebrews was written to give confidence to those floundering believers.

b) Hebrews who were intellectually convinced only

(1) Their ego

These people knew the truth about Christ, but never committed themselves to it. You've probably met people like that--they are intellectually convinced that Christ is who He claimed to be, but they're not willing to put their faith in Him. Why? Because they love the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:42-43). They aren't willing to make the sacrifice.

(2) Their exhortation

The Holy Spirit exhorts this group in the book of Hebrews to go all the way to saving faith--to make the necessary commitment.

(a) Hebrews 2:1-4--"We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (vv. 1-3). This group of unbelievers was at the point of belief, but wouldn't make the commitment. They were guilty of the great sin of neglecting to do what they had been convinced was right. They should have known better because the truth had been confirmed by the apostles with miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit (v. 4).

(b) Hebrews 6:4-6--"It is impossible for those who were once enlightened [not saved but intellectually convinced], and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." When a man is totally convinced that Jesus Christ is who He claimed to be, but still refuses to believe in Him, he is without excuse and without hope because he won't put his trust in what he knows to be true. There is nothing else God can do but warn him.

(c) Hebrews 10:26-27, 29--What is the greatest sin a man can commit? Rejecting Christ. Verse 26 says, "If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." If a man receives the truth, understands it, and is intellectually convinced of it, yet willfully rejects Christ, what can God do? The writer continues, "But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.... Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, with which he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (vv. 27, 29). When someone knows the truth and rejects it, he will face severe punishment.

(d) Hebrews 12:15-17--"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and by it many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For ye know how afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." That is the tragedy of making a decision too late--another warning to the convinced individual who has never made a commitment to Christ.

c) Hebrews who were neither convinced nor committed to Christ

This group refers to Israel in general. The Holy Spirit, in addition to strengthening the faith of Christians and exhorting the intellectually convinced to put their faith in Christ, wants to show those who are unconvinced that Jesus is in fact who He claimed to be. In Hebrews 9 He speaks directly to those people: "Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (vv. 11, 14-15). In verses 27-28 he says, "As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Those messages were for the unbeliever who needed to know who Christ really is.

Three groups of people are in view in this epistle. The key to interpreting Hebrews is to determine which group the writer is addressing. If we don't understand that, then we will be confused. He is not for example, telling believers, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb.

9:27). The primary flow of the text is to believers, but periodically there are warnings to two groups of unbelievers: the intellectually convinced and the unconvinced. In a masterful way, the Holy Spirit pulls these three groups together to meet every one of their particular needs and answer their questions in the same letter. There is confidence and assurance for the Christian. There are warnings to the intellectually convinced to receive Christ or be damned by his knowledge. And there is a convincing presentation to the unbelieving, unconvinced Jew that he should believe in Jesus Christ. Hebrews is simply a presentation of Christ as the Messiah--the Author of a New Covenant greater than the one God made in the Old Testament. That is not to say the old one was wrong; it just was incomplete.

5. The theme

The theme of Hebrews is the superiority, or preeminence of Christ. He is better than any Old Testament person, institution, ritual, or sacrifice.

The book of Hebrews begins with the superiority of Christ to everyone and everything. That's a summary of the entire book, and it's contained in the first three verses. From those verses we move on to the superiority of Christ over angels, over Moses, over Joshua, over Aaron and his priesthood, and over the Old Covenant. From that the book moves to the superiority of Christ's sacrifice over the old sacrifices, of Christ's faithful over all the faithless, and of Christ's testimony over the testimony of all others.

B. The Problems of the Jews

1. Looking for the perfect priest

It had always been dangerous for a Jew to approach God. Exodus 33:20 says, "There shall no man see me, and live." Only on the great Day of Atonement, which occurred once a year, could the high priest enter the Holy of Holies where dwelt the Shekinah-- the glory of God's presence. The Jewish people could not see God. They couldn't go near Him except for one day a year, and then only one person could do that.

a) Establishing the Old Covenant

Since nearness to God was not possible, there had to be a basis for some relationship between God and Israel. So God established a covenant, which meant that God, in His grace and sovereign initiative, offered Israel a special relationship with Himself. In a very unique way He would be their God and they would be His people. They could have special access to Him if they were obedient to His laws. But to break the law was sin, and sin interfered with their access to Him. Since they were always sinning, access was always interrupted. So God instituted a system of sacrifices. The Levitical priesthood offered sacrifices to atone for sin, which removed the barrier so that access to God might be resumed.

How many times did the sacrifices have to be made? Incessantly--hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after year. Since the priests were also sinners, they too had to make sacrifices for their own sins just to be able to make sacrifices for the sins of the people. So the barrier between God and the people was continually going up and down. That is proof of how ineffective the system was.

b) Establishing the New Covenant

Mankind needed a perfect priest who could open the way to God once and for all. He needed to perform a perfect sacrifice that didn't just deal with one sin, but took away all sin forever. And that, says the writer of Hebrews, is exactly what Jesus did. He became the mediator of a better covenant--

better because it doesn't have to be repeated every hour, because His sacrifice covers every sin once and for all, and because He's a priest who doesn't need to make any sacrifices for Himself-- He's totally perfect. His perfect sacrifice eliminated sin.

Hebrews 10:10 says, "By which we are sanctified [made pure] through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. " That was something new in the sacrificial system. It was a better covenant because one sacrifice accomplished sanctification. Verse 12 says, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down." That's something no priest could ever do. They had to keep making sacrifices. Jesus made one, sat down, and it was done. Verse 14 says, "For by one offering, He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."

Christ is a better priest making a better sacrifice. That is the message of the book of Hebrews to the Jewish people. To the believer the writer says, "Have confidence in the new covenant." To the intellectually convinced he says, "Receive it; don't fall into perdition when you're only a step away." And to the unbeliever he says, "Look at how much better it is. Receive Christ." All their lives the Jewish people had been looking for the perfect priest and the perfect final sacrifice. The writer tells them He is found in Jesus Christ. The superiority of Christ is the theme of the book of Hebrews.

2. Letting go of the Old Covenant

It was extremely difficult for the Jews to accept the superiority of the New Covenant. It was especially hard for them to make a clean break with the old. The Gentiles didn't have that problem because they had never been a part of the old. They had lost the knowledge of the true God long before and consequently worshiped idols.

a) An uneasy transition

The Jews always had a divine religion and a divinely appointed place of worship. Difficulty arose when presenting the truth to the Jew because he would say, "I already know the truth." It was not easy for him to make the transition because he saw it as a complete forsaking of all his God-authored heritage. It was a natural desire for a Christian Jew to retain some of the forms and ceremonies that were a part of his life when he was brought up. That was part of the problem faced by the writer of Hebrews--confronting the born-again Jew about letting go of his past. That was especially hard for him since the Temple was still standing and the priests were continuing to minister. It was easier after the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70.

b) An intense persecution

Intense persecution added an extra dimension that made it even more difficult for the Jew to give up the Old Covenant. Ananias, the high priest, banished Christian Jews from the holy places. They could no longer take part in God-appointed services. They were considered unclean. They couldn't go into the Temple and take part in the sacrifices. They couldn't communicate with the priests. And they could have nothing to do with their own people. They were cut off from their society. By clinging to their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, they had been banished from everything they had ever known. They were considered worse than Gentiles, but they were actually the only true Jews. For the true Jew is not one outwardly, but inwardly (Rom. 2:28-29).

The Christian Jews were beginning to say to themselves, "This life is rough. We believe in Christ, but it's tough to make the break with the traditions we've held. Is Christ really the Messiah?" Doubt had become a problem. They were spiritually infantile in their thinking, and they didn't have any resources to fall back on.

3. Living a better life

Throughout the book of Hebrews the writer tells the Christians to put their confidence in Christ, who is the mediator of a better covenant and the new, great High Priest. They weren't losing anything; they were gaining something better. They may have been deprived of an earthly Temple, but they

were going to get a heavenly one. They had been deprived of an earthly priesthood, but they had a heavenly priest. They had been deprived of the sacrifices, but Christ gave them one final sacrifice. Everything in Hebrews is presented as something better. These phrases are just a sample of those better things: a better hope, a better testament, a better promise, a better sacrifice, a better substance, a better country, and a better resurrection. Hebrews presents Jesus Christ, and we are presented as being in Him--dwelling in a new dimension: the heavenlies. In Hebrews we can read about the heavenly Christ, the heavenly calling, the heavenly gift, the heavenly country, and the heavenly Jerusalem. Everything is new and better. We don't need the old anymore.

A good summary of the book of Hebrews is in chapter 8, verse 1: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." We have a great High Priest who is seated, and that means His work is done.

The writer of Hebrews wants to show three groups of Jews that Christ is better than anything in the Old Testament and that the New Covenant is better than the old. Everything they have in Christ is infinitely sufficient. The first three verses of Hebrews show us that Christ is superior to every one and every thing. And that is the theme of the epistle. I want you to see three features: the preparation for Christ, the presentation of Christ, and the preeminence of Christ.

I. THE PREPARATION FOR CHRIST (v. 1)

"God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets."

That verse gives us an indication of how God wrote the Old Testament. The purpose of the Old Testament was to prepare God's people for the coming of Christ, whether it be through prophecy, type, principle, or commandment. As marvelous as the senses of man are, they are incapable of reaching beyond the natural world. If we were ever going to know anything about God, it was God who had to speak. Verse 1 says that God spoke (emphasis added). We could never know God if He did not speak to us.

The Religion Box

You and I live in a natural box--we are bound by our existence in time and space. Outside our natural box is the supernatural. Deep down, we know the supernatural exists outside of ourselves, but we can't know anything about it on our own. There are people who want to discover the supernatural, so they start a religion. They run to the edge of the box and try to chisel holes in it. They figure that a hole will let them crawl out of the box and find God. The various religions of the world are all trying to accomplish the same thing-- to escape the natural and enter the supernatural. But there's one problem: No one can do it. The natural man cannot escape into the supernatural.

You can't take your clothes off in a phone booth and come out Superman. You cannot transcend

your natural existence. If you are ever to know anything about God, it will not be because you escaped to God, but that He spoke to you. You cannot discover God anymore than a bug could understand me. We can't even condescend to a bug's level, but God can condescend to ours. He literally became a man and burst into the box to tell us about Himself. That's what revelation is all about.

Every religion in the world is man's backward attempt to jump out of the box. But Christianity takes the opposite approach: Jesus said, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). When God burst into the box, He did so in a human form. The name of that human form was Jesus Christ. That's the difference between Christianity and every other religion in the world. Many people think you can believe in any religion you want. However, you won't find God by doing so. Every religion is man's attempt to discover God. Christianity is God bursting into man's world and telling man what He is like. Man is incapable of comprehending, identifying, or understanding God at all on his own. God must first invade his world. And He did!

A. The Accuracy of the Old Testament

God first spoke through the words of the Old Testament. Men didn't write it; they were simply the instruments. God was the energizing author. Deity is not speechless. The deists have taught that God started the world going and then went away and let it run by itself. But God is not detached or uninvolved. The true and living God, unlike the idols of the heathen, is not a dumb being. The God of Scripture, unlike the impersonal "First Cause" of some philosophers, is not silent. He speaks, and He spoke in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is not the wisdom of man; it is the voice of God.

1. The resource

a) Portional revelation

Hebrews 1:1 says, "God, who at sundry times [Gk. polumeros] and in diverse manners [Gk. polutropos]." That is a play on words by the writer. Those two Greek words mean, respectively, "in many portions" (different books) and "in many different manners."

There are thirty-nine books in the Old Testament. That's many portions! Sometimes God spoke directly to a man and told him to write. Sometimes He communicated through a vision, sometimes in a parable, and sometimes through a type or a symbol. There are different ways in which God spoke in the Old Testament, but it was always God who spoke. The personalities and minds of the men were used, but they were totally controlled by the Spirit of God. Every word they said was what God decided they should say. Some of the Old Testament is history, some is poetry, some is law, and some is prophecy. God speaks through it all.

b) Progressive revelation

The Old Testament was fragmentary and incomplete. It was written over a period of fifteen hundred years by more than forty writers, each book having its own element of truth. The Old Testament is progressive revelation. First Genesis gives some truth, then Exodus, and it continues to build. It is progressive not in that it goes from error to truth, but it goes from incompleteness to a higher state of completeness. It remained incomplete until the New Testament came along. In the Old Testament, God was pleased to dispense His gracious truth to the Jews by the mouths of His prophets in different manners. His revelation started with a lesser degree of light and progressed to a greater degree.

Remember one important thing: Just because the Old Testament was progressive does not mean that it is wrong in any way. There is simply development. For example, the standards of morality established in the Old Testament were totally refined in Jesus. God gave man a progressive revelation. The distinction is not in the nature of the truth; it's in the amount and time of it. Children are first taught letters; then they worry about the words and the sentences. God gave His revelation in the same way. His spelling book began with types, ceremonies, and prophecies and progressed to final completion in Christ.

2. The recipients

Hebrews 1:1 says, "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." God spoke back in the past to the fathers--the Old Testament saints, our spiritual ancestors. He spoke to them by the prophets. They were His messengers. A prophet is one who speaks to men for God; a priest is one who speaks to God for men. The priest took man's problem to God; the prophet took God's message to man.

B. The Affirmation of the New Testament

In verse 1 the Holy Spirit establishes the accuracy of the Old Testament and its divine authorship. And this truth is affirmed throughout the New Testament.

1. 2 Peter 1:21--"The prophecy [the Old Testament] came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

2. 2 Timothy 3:16--"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

The Old Testament is true. It was the progressive preparation for Jesus Christ.

II. THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST (v. 2a)

"Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

A. Final Revelation

This verse describes the finalizing of the revelation. God, who used to speak in many ways and many forms to many people, has finally spoken in one way through one individual--Jesus Christ. The entire New Testament is centered around Christ. The gospels give His story, the epistles comment on it, and the book of Revelation tells about His future. No one prophet was ever able to grasp the whole truth. Only Jesus is the whole truth. The Old Testament was pieces and fragments, but Jesus is full and final revelation.

B. Promised Revelation

Notice in verse 2 the phrase "in these last days." There are several ways to interpret that. The writer could be referring to the last days of revelation, meaning final revelation. There is no question that Christ is the final revelation. He could also be saying that in the last days of revelation, God spoke

through His Son. But better than that is the interpretation that the writer is making a Messianic reference. The phrase "the last days" was very familiar to the Jew. Since he was writing to Jews, we will take it in that context. Whenever a Jew saw the phrase "the last days," he immediately had Messianic thoughts because the promise was given that in the last days, the Messiah would establish His Kingdom (Micah 4:1-2). So the writer is saying Jesus was that Messiah and spoke the final revelation of God. Unfortunately, the Jewish nation as a whole rejected the Messiah. The fulfillment of all the promises of the last days had to be postponed and the age of grace (the church age) intervened instead. In John 4:25 the woman at the well in Sychar said to Jesus, "I know that Messiah cometh, who is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things." She knew that Messiah would unfold the full and final revelation of God--and indeed He did.

C. Complete Revelation

To add anything to the New Testament is blasphemous. Revelation 22:18 says, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." Verse 19 indicates that if someone takes anything away from it, God will take away his part from the tree of life.

God's final revelation was made in one greater than the prophets-- Jesus Christ. The Old Testament was revealed in pieces. To Abraham was revealed the nation of the Messiah; to Jacob, the tribe of the Messiah; to David and Isaiah, the family of the Messiah; to Micah, the town where He would be born; to Daniel, the time when He would be born; to Malachi, the forerunner who would precede Him. To Jonah His resurrection was typified. Every one of those pieces came together in Jesus Christ. Everything is complete in Him (Col. 2:9-10).

Jesus Christ is greater than the prophets and greater than any revelation in the Old Testament because He is the embodiment of all revelation. God has fully expressed Himself in Christ.

In Hebrews 1:2 the Holy Spirit established the superiority of Christ over all the Old Testament prophets--first in character, because the old was fragmentary and the new is perfect; second, the New Covenant is even better because the instruments of revelation in the old were sinful men while the instrument in the new was the Son of God; and third, God's revelation in the past has been completed in the last days. In the first one and a half verses, the Holy Spirit establishes the preeminence of Jesus Christ over all the Old Testament. And that is exactly what the Jewish Christian believers and unbelieving Hebrews needed to hear.

Some of you who read this perhaps have never met Jesus Christ as your Savior. Maybe you have put your faith in money, popularity, prestige, or success. But Jesus Christ is superior to anything and everything. Peter said, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). There is no other way to God. Jesus Christ is superior to any method, any religion, or any philosophy. He is the preeminent One. Unless a man puts his faith in Jesus Christ, he is doomed, for it is Christ alone who provides revelation and redemption from God.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Who wrote the book of Hebrews?
2. When might Hebrews have been written?
3. What is critical to a clear understanding of Hebrews?
4. One group the book of Hebrews was written to was Jewish believers. What was the danger they were facing?
5. Why did the Holy Spirit write Hebrews to this group?
6. Another group whom Hebrews was written to was those Jews who were intellectually convinced about Christ. What did the Holy Spirit exhort them to do?
7. What is the greatest sin a man can commit (Heb. 10:26-27, 29)?
8. What did the Holy Spirit want to show the unconvinced Jews--the third group of people Hebrews was written to?
9. What is the key to interpreting Hebrews?
10. What is the theme of Hebrews?
11. How did God establish a relationship with the nation of Israel when physical nearness to Him was not possible for the people?
12. Why was the covenant that Christ mediated better than the old one?
13. Why was it difficult for many of the Jewish people to accept the New Covenant as superior to the old one?
14. What are some of the better things that the New Covenant in Christ offered the Jew?
15. What is a good summary of the book of Hebrews (Heb. 8:1)?
16. Since man is incapable of reaching beyond the natural world to God, how was man able to reach God?
17. What is the difference between the religions of man and Christianity?
18. How did God first speak to man?
19. What are some of the different ways in which God communicated to the writers of the Old

Testament?

20. Why is the Old Testament considered to be progressive revelation?

21. Describe the difference between a prophet and a priest.

22. What does the phrase "in these last days" refer to in Hebrews 1:2?

Pondering the Principles

1. Since some understanding of the book of Leviticus would be helpful to understanding the book of Hebrews, plan to read Leviticus over the next week. There are twenty-seven chapters you would need to read so you could easily read four chapters each day. If there is an outline of Leviticus in your Bible, follow along with it so you understand the flow of thought. If not, make your own outline as you read.

2. The people of Israel had to offer many continual sacrifices to atone for their sin and restore their relationship with God. But Christ made one final sacrifice that took away all sin and opened the way to God for all of us. Spend time in prayer right now by thanking Christ for His sacrifice on your behalf. Thank Him for the salvation He has given you and the access you now have to God.

3. Throughout Hebrews the writer discusses differences between the new and the Old Covenant. He tells us how much better the new is. Make a plan to read through Hebrews, and as you read, make a list of those things. When you have finished your list, review it. Then thank God for His establishment of the New Covenant in Christ.

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