

Hebrews

Introduction to Hebrews

Jeremiah 31:31-34

INTRODUCTION:

Hebrews 2:3b-4 (NASB95)

Galatians 1:11-12 (NASB95)

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NASB95)

I. Why Should We Study the Old Testament?

II. What are the Differences Between the Old and the New Covenants?

John 4:25-26 (NASB95)

Matthew 5:17 (NASB95)

John 1:25-29 (NASB95)

Romans 3:19-24 (NASB95)

Hebrews 7:23-27 (NASB95)

III. Hebrews is the Bridge that Connects the Old and New Testaments.

CONCLUSION:

Hebrews

Introduction to Hebrews

Jeremiah 31:31-34

INTRODUCTION:

Welcome to the book of Hebrews. The book reads more like a sermon than a letter. The book of Hebrews does not identify its author. Although the early church fathers contributed the writing to Paul, the writer of Hebrews said he received the confirmed message of Christ from "those who heard" Jesus himself.

Hebrews 2:3b-4 (NASB95)

...After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, **it was confirmed to us by those who heard**, ⁴ God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

From this passage it appears that the author was from the second generation after Christ and had been taught by the apostles. We know that Paul claimed his gospel was revealed directly by the Lord.

Galatians 1:11-12 (NASB95)

¹¹ For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but **I received it** through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

So it is doubtful that Paul was the author of Hebrews. What is curious is that from 400 to 1600 A.D. the book was commonly called "**The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews**". Whoever the author was, he knew that his audience had a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament scripture.

About how Abraham's family became the nation of Israel. And how Moses led the people out of Egyptian slavery to mount Sinai where they received the Torah and made a covenant with God. And about the tabernacle that was built where the priest offered sacrifices for sins. And how they wandered through the wilderness on their way to the promised land.

The author expects the readers to know all the details about all of these stories. So the audience was probably made of Jewish Christians. Thus the title of the book: **Hebrews**. Although there are hints that there were some Gentile recipients also. We also have clues in chapter 10 that these Christians were facing persecution and even imprisonment because of their association with Jesus. Some were walking away and abandoning their faith altogether. This explains the structure and the purpose of this letter.

The author had two main goals in his writing. One was to elevate Jesus as superior to anyone or anything else and that He was the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament and that He brought in the new covenant which was also proclaimed in the Old Testament. Showing that Jesus is worthy to receive all of their trust and devotion. The second goal was to challenge the readers to remain faithful to Jesus despite persecution.

Ultimately it does not matter that the identity of the author is now lost. We should be satisfied with the fact that early Christians received the letter as inspired and authoritative Scripture and that its value for Christian discipleship is unquestioned.

Regarding **when** the book was written, it is clear that the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD had not yet occurred. All references to the temple and the priestly activities connected with it are in **present tense**. The destruction of the temple would have been mentioned if it had already occurred, for it would have strengthened the letter's argument about Christ's sacrifice spelling the end of the temple sacrificial system.

The public persecution mentioned in **10:32-34** helps to date the book. We know that the Roman emperors Nero and Domitian persecuted Christians. Most likely Hebrews was written during the persecution under Nero between 64- 68 A.D., perhaps just before the destruction of the temple.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NASB95)

³¹ “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. ³³ “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Prayer

You may be wondering, if we are going through the book of Hebrews, why are we reading from Jeremiah? The simple answer is that Hebrews is uniquely a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. We will explore that bridge later in this message.

I. Why Should We Study the Old Testament?

There are many reasons to study the Old Testament. For one, the Old Testament lays the foundation for the teachings and events found in the New Testament. The Bible is a progressive revelation. If you skip the first half of any good book and try to finish it, you will have a hard time understanding the characters, the plot, and the ending. In the same way, the New Testament is only completely understood when we see its foundation of the events, characters, laws, sacrificial system, covenants, and promises of the Old Testament.

If we only had the New Testament, we would come to the Gospels and not know why the Jews were looking for a Messiah. We would not understand why this Messiah was coming.

And we would not have been able to identify Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah through the many detailed prophecies that were given concerning Him.

Such as His birth in Bethlehem, His manner of death on the cross, His resurrection, and many more details of His ministry.

A study of the Old Testament is also important for understanding the Jewish customs mentioned in passing in the New Testament. We would not understand the way the Pharisees had perverted God's law by adding their own traditions to it, or why Jesus was so upset as He cleansed the temple courtyard, or where Jesus got the words He used in His many replies to adversaries.

The Old Testament records numerous detailed prophecies that could only have come true if the Bible is truly God's Word, not man's.

A study of the Old Testament also helps us understand prophecy. The Old Testament contains many promises that God will yet fulfill. And since He was faithful to fulfill the prophecies concerning the Messiah, we have the assured hope that He will also fulfill the prophecies concerning the second coming of Christ and our eternal future.

In summary, the Old Testament allows us to learn how to love and serve God, and it reveals more about God's character. It shows through repeatedly fulfilled prophecy why the Bible is unique among all holy books—it alone is able to demonstrate that it is what it claims to be: **the inspired Word of God!**

II. What are the Differences Between the Old and the New Covenants?

While the Bible is a unified book, there are differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament. In many ways, they are complementary.

The Old Testament is foundational; the New Testament builds on that foundation with further revelation from God.

The Old Testament establishes principles that illustrate of New Testament truths.

The Old Testament contains many prophecies that are fulfilled in the New.

The Old Testament provides the history of a **people**; the New Testament focus is on a **Person**.

The Old Testament shows the **wrath** of God against sin (with glimpses of His grace); the New Testament shows the **grace** of God toward sinners (with glimpses of His wrath).

In short, the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.

The Old Testament saw paradise lost for Adam; the New Testament shows how paradise is regained through the second Adam (Jesus Christ). The Old Testament declares that man was separated from God through sin and the New Testament declares that man can his relationship to God restored.

The Old Testament predicted the Messiah's life. The Gospels record Jesus' life, and the Epistles interpret His life and how we are to respond to all He has done.

The Old Testament predicts a Messiah and the New Testament reveals who that Messiah is. Remember the Samaritan woman at the well?

John 4:25-26 (NASB95)

²⁵ The woman *said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." ²⁶ Jesus *said to her, "I who speak to you am *He*."

The Old Testament records the giving of God's Law, and the New Testament shows how Jesus the Messiah fulfilled that Law.

Matthew 5:17 (NASB95)

¹⁷ "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

In the Old Testament, God's dealings are mainly with His chosen people, the Jews. In the New Testament, God's dealings are mainly with His church.

Physical blessings promised under the Old Covenant give way to **spiritual** blessings under the New Covenant. Such as the "promised land". The promised land in the Old Testament was Canaan, the promised land in the New Testament is Heaven.

Because God's revelation in Scripture is progressive, the New Testament brings into sharper focus principles that were **introduced** in the Old Testament.

The Passover lamb of the Old Testament becomes the Lamb of God in the New Testament.

John 1:25-29 (NASB95)

²⁵ They asked him, and said to him, "Why then are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" ²⁶ John answered them saying, "I baptize in water, *but* among you stands One whom you do not know. ²⁷ *It is* He who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." ²⁸ These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

²⁹ The next day he *saw Jesus coming to him and *said, "Behold, **the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**

The Old Testament gives the Law. The New Testament clarifies that the Law was meant to show men their need of salvation and was never intended to be the means of salvation.

Romans 3:19-24 (NASB95)

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

²¹ But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²² even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for **all** those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all have sinned and

fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being **justified** as a gift by His grace through the **redemption** which is in Christ Jesus;

Justification is an act of God whereby He pronounces a sinner to be righteous because of that sinner's faith in Christ. **Redemption** is the price that Jesus paid by dying on the cross to have our sins forgiven and fill us with His righteousness.

The book of Hebrews describes how Jesus is the true High Priest and how His one sacrifice replaces all previous sacrifices, which were mere foreshadowings.

Hebrews 7:23-27 (NASB95)

²³ The *former* priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, ²⁴ but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. ²⁵ Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

²⁶ For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the *sins* of the people, because **this He did ONCE for all** when He offered up Himself.

III. Hebrews is the Bridge that Connects the Old and New Testaments.

The book of Hebrews is the bridge that connects the Old Testament to the New Testament. These covenants are completely different and yet many Christians approach God on the basis of Old Testament Law instead of New Testament faith. The entire book is about Jesus and how He is the guarantee of a new and better covenant. **It is essential for every Christian to understand.**

ILLUSTRATION:

When the Royals celebrated their world series win in 2015 a crowd of over 800,000 fans gathered at Union Station. Cars were parked everywhere. I remember that some people had to cross a small creek in order to get to Union Station. Some brave souls tried to jump the creek and often fell short and ended up in the water. Some tried to climb down the bank, walk through the water, and then climb up the other side. And some looked for the bridge that was built across the creek to safely get to the other side.

The book of Hebrews is like this. It is the bridge that believers must understand in order to safely navigate life. **This bridge is the connection piece between the Old Testament and the New.** These covenants are completely different and **yet many Christians try approaching God on the basis of Old Testament Law instead of New Testament faith.** Unless you understand the role of Jesus and the better and more perfect covenant He offers, you will be like those people who tried to jump across the creek and wound up wet and frustrated.

To understand the Old in relation to the New **we must look at it in light of who Jesus is and what Jesus did. This is because Christ changed everything!** His short time on this earth changed the course of history forever. His entrance into humanity was the crowning point of the ages. **He came to show us God in a living and breathing way.** A

way we had not previously understood. **God's true and entire nature was made clear in the person of Jesus Christ.**

The entire Old Testament spoke of and looked forward to the time of Christ. It has always been about Him. The sacrificial system was a symbol of Jesus. Every instruction and ritual was a type and shadow of Christ. And the Law is what Christ would fulfill perfectly in our place. **It is the story of Jesus.** And now that He has come we can appreciate it in a new and wonderful way.

This is why understanding Hebrews will change your perspective in so many ways. It will solve some of the big questions about God that Christians ask. It will reconcile the differences in the covenants and give you a clear and true picture of God.

CONCLUSION:

In the weeks to come we will be going verse by verse through this book **in hopes to gain a deeper revelation of Jesus.** I hope to convey the awesomeness of our faithful high priest and show Jesus as our Messiah, eternal king, Lord, and savior.

The Family of God.