A PASSAGE THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT

Part Nine
“The Hebrew Epistle”

by J. S. Smith
The Epistle to The Hebrews
Author: Uncertain • 60s A.D.

The Hebrews is the group to whom this epistle is addressed. They were Christians that were ethnically Jewish, but had turned to Christ, unlike so many who rejected Him. They were most likely located in Judea, around Jerusalem and Palestine.

The author is not named in the letter. It has been surmised and accepted from the earliest records that the writer is Paul. Some suggest Barnabas, Apollos, Philip and Priscilla, but internal evidence is so strong for Paul. It was about this time in the early sixties that James the elder of Jerusalem was killed, according to secular history and the persecution of Jewish Christians like him for the backdrop for this letter of warning.

The purpose of this epistle is to steady these Jewish Christians who were being tempted to give up the faith and its persecutions to return to Judaism, which carried no such dangers at the time. As they reeled from horrifying events all around them, the writer also seeks to prepare them for something shocking, the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.

The message throughout the letter, however, is one of comparison between old and new. The new covenant of Jesus Christ is better than the old covenant of Moses. The letter is in some ways a counterpart to the letter to the Romans. The key word to understanding Hebrews is “better.” The Hebrew Christians were in danger of reverting to the law of Moses, giving up their faith, and falling away.

The writer of this book shows these Christians that everything about the gospel is better than that of the law.
Lesson 1: Spoken Through Jesus
Hebrews 1:1-14

1. Who wrote the book of Hebrews? To whom was it written?

2. (1:1-4) By whom did God speak unto the fathers in times past? By whom has He spoken in these last days?

2. List seven things said about Jesus in verses 2-3.
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.
   e.
   f.
   g.

3. (1:5-14) This passage is composed of a number of Old Testament quotations which predicted certain things about the Messiah, which were fulfilled in Jesus. How do we know that Jesus is higher than the angels?

4. To what event does this “begetting” refer (Acts 32-35)?
5. What phrase in verses 8 and 9 solidifies our knowledge that Jesus was and is deity?

6. What tells us of the preexistent nature of Christ?

7. What is the role of angels toward believers?

8. How do they accomplish this work?
Lesson 2: So Great A Salvation
Hebrews 2:1-18

1. (2:1-4) What can we do to prevent ourselves from drifting away?

• We must give more earnest heed to the things we have heard and been taught through our Master.

2. What will happen if we fail as Christians to maintain our loyalty to Christ?

• We will drift away and be punished.

3. How has God borne witness that this word is true?

• He bore witness through signs, wonders, miracles and gifts done by the apostles and other inspired men.

4. (2:5-9) How and why was Jesus “made lower than the angels”?

• He was made lower through his incarnation in human flesh so that he could taste death in order to make grace possible for all men.

5. Was his death foreknown by God before his nativity (2 Peter 1:17-21)?

A Passage Through the New Testament
6. (2:10-13) How was the captain of our salvation made perfect? How is Christ made unashamed to call us his brethren (cf. John 17:17)?

7. (2:14-18) How is man’s attitude toward death changed because of the work of Christ?

8. How is he particularly qualified to be the high priest of our faith?
Lesson 3: Better Than Moses
Hebrews 3:1-19

1. (3:1-6) What is the difference between Moses and Jesus?

2. What does the word “apostle” mean? How is Jesus an apostle?

3. How do we remain in Christ’s house?

4. (3:7-15) How does this passage teach that apostasy is possible?

5. What things made the Hebrews fall away during the Exodus (1 Cor. 10:1-12)?

6. (3:16-19) Why did many of the Exodus pilgrims fall short of the promised land? How could this happen to us?
1. (4:1-10) What attitude is necessary lest we fall short of God’s promised rest?

2. Why does the gospel not benefit all who hear it?

3. How is a hardened heart expressed today (cf. Eph. 4:17-19)?

4. At what point may the Christian retire from life’s good works?

5. (4:11-13) What type of effort is required to enter that rest?

6. How does the writer describe the power of God’s word in these verses?

7. (4:14-16) Why can Jesus sympathize with our weaknesses?

8. What opportunity does this afford us in time of need?
Lesson 5: A Superior High Priest
Hebrews 5:1-14

1. (5:1-4) What limitations of character did human high priests have under the law of Moses?

• They were subject to weakness and sin and had to offer sacrifices even for their own sins.

2. Did one make himself a high priest?

• No, he was appointed by God, as Aaron was.

3. (5:5-11) According to which order is Christ a priest?

• Not Levitical, for he was a Jew, but of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4).

4. Why was Jesus heard?

• Because of his godly fear.

5. How did he learn obedience?

• By suffering.

6. How did Jesus become the author of eternal salvation?

• He became its author by suffering on the cross to make it possible.

7. Why was the author reluctant to explain the priesthood of Melchizedek to this audience?

• They had become dull of hearing and were unprepared to deal with a difficult subject like this one.

8. (5:12-5:14) What was their shortcoming?

• They were not growing beyond "milk" knowledge and were thus unable to handle such a meaty subject as Melchizedek. They should have been teachers by this time.

9. How does one gain the ability to discern right from wrong?

• Exercise, that is applying God's word to every decision of morality.
Lesson 6: Hope
Hebrews 6:1-20

1. (6:1-3) List the elementary principles identified in this passage.
   a. repentance from dead works
   b. faith toward God
   c. baptisms
   d. laying on of hands
   e. resurrection of the dead
   f. eternal judgment

2. Since they are elementary principles, it should be simple to say a few things about each. Do so.
   a. repentance from dead works: necessary to salvation (Acts 2:38)
   b. faith toward God: necessary to salvation (Mark 16:16)
   c. baptisms: only one in force today, water immersion for remission of sins (Acts 2:38, Eph. 4)
   d. laying on of hands: practice whereby spiritual gifts were imparted in age of miracles
   e. resurrection of the dead: promise that all will be raised as Jesus was to face judgment
   f. eternal judgment: decision of God to reward or punish according to a man’s works

3. (6:4-8) What was the danger in falling away?

   • They would forfeit their eternal inheritance in heaven for a life of less peril now.
4. (6:9-12) What did Paul require of these Christians?

5. (6:13-20) How firm should our faith be?

6. By what two things did God confirm his word?

7. Into what has Jesus gone to minister for us? What promise does this hold for us?
Lesson 7: Melchizedek
Hebrews 7:1-28

1. (7:1-10) List three mysterious things said about Melchizedek which also apply to Jesus.
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

2. List three things that show Melchizedek was greater than Abraham.
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

3. (7:11-17) What change was necessitated that Christ could become a priest? Why?

4. How does this principle establish the importance of the silence of God regarding authority?
5. (7:18-25) Through what do we draw near to God?

6. What does Christ ever live to do?

7. (7:26-28) How did Jesus make offering for our sins once for all?
Lesson 8: Covenants
Hebrews 8:1-13

1. (8:1-6) What is the main point of this discussion?

2. What is one reason that Christ’s new covenant is better than the old covenant of Moses?

3. Of what were the Old Testament things mere shadows and copies?

4. Why are patterns important?

5. (8:7-13) What was wrong with the old covenant?

6. How had Jeremiah described the new covenant according to the quotation of him in verses 10-12 of this chapter?

7. How is it true of the church that no one in it needs to be taught to know God?

8. According to verse 13, what was the status of the old covenant as the writer held his pen?
Lesson 9: Appointed to Die
Hebrews 9:1-28

1. (9:1-5) What were the two main parts of the tabernacle? How were they separated?

2. (9:6-10) What was the Holy Spirit indicating by sending the high priest into the second part alone once a year?

3. (9:11-15) What promise does the work of Christ hold for those who lived before his incarnation?

4. (9:16-22) Did the New Testament take effect before the cross? Why or why not?
5. What four things are specifically mentioned which Moses sprinkled with blood?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
   d. 

6. (9:23-28) Where has Jesus gone now? What does he do there?

7. What happens to men after they die? Reincarnation? What should be the attitude of the living toward Christ’s return?
1. (10:1-4) What was the primary shortcoming of the Old Testament sacrifices?

• There is a reminder every year of sins for it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

2. (10:5-10) According to verse 5, for whom was the body prepared?

• The body was prepared by God for Jesus. The Son, a spirit, entered the body and tabernacled therein.

3. (10:11-18) What did the priests of the Old Testament do daily? What did Christ do after offering one sacrifice for sin?

• The priests continued offering for sins repeatedly; Jesus sat down at the right hand of God, waiting for enemies to be made footstool.

4. (10:19-25) What can we now enter? How?

• We can enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus with boldness (a joyful confidence according to the Greek word, parresian).

5. List the three commands that begin “Let us” in this passage.

   a. draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith (22)
   b. hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering (23)
   c. consider one another in order to stir up love and good works (24)

6. What good works are neglected by those who forsake assembling with the saints?

   • They fail to consider one another in order to stir up love and good works. They fail to exhort one another so much more as the day approaches.
7. (10:26-31) What kind of sin is forsaking the assembling? What loss results from willful sins?

8. What crimes are committed in willful sin according to verse 29?
   a.
   b.
   c.

9. What will become of Christians who fall into this condemnation?

10. (10:32-39) Summarize what these Christians had suffered in their walk with Jesus so far.

11. Why had they suffered these things with endurance?
Lesson 11: Hall of Faith
Hebrews 11:1-12:2

1. (11:1-3) How does the writer describe faith?

• Is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

2. (11:4-31) Complete the following chart of members of the Hebrews 11 catalog of faith:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERSES</th>
<th>CHARACTER</th>
<th>COMMENDATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Abel</td>
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<td>5-6</td>
<td>Enoch</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Noah</td>
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<td>8-10</td>
<td>Abraham</td>
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<td>11-12</td>
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<td>Moses</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Rahab</td>
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3. (11:32-40) Why did such people not accept deliverance?

• They were interested in a better resurrection and would have forfeited that by recanting their faith in order to save their lives.

4. (12:1-2) What two things are we instructed to lay aside? To whom should we look for encouragement and example?
We should lay aside our side and every weight that we might run with endurance and look to Christ.
Lesson 12: Suffering
Hebrews 12:3-29

1. (12:3-11) How should the Christian respond to God’s chastening?

2. (12:12-17) What two things should Christians pursue? Which is more important and should take precedence over the other?

3. How can a Christian be made to fall short of God’s grace?

4. Explain the lesson in Esau’s negative example.

5. (12:18-24) In one word, describe the reaction of Israel to the presence of God and his authority. What should be our response to Christ and his authority in the New Testament?

6. How does the writer describe the church of Christ?

7. (12:25-29) How does the writer characterize our service in the ideal?

8. Why should we strive to serve God acceptably?
Lesson 13: Exhortations
Hebrews 13:1-25

1. (13:1-3) How can brotherly love continue?

2. (13:4) How has modern society’s acceptance of multiple marriages and free sex changed God’s standing?

3. (13:5-6) How can covetousness cause us to distrust God?

4. (13:7-9) Who are the likely objects of this remembrance?

5. (13:10-16) What did it mean for a Jew to go “outside the camp” to be with Jesus?

6. (13:17) Are church rulers (certainly elders are meant) accountable for their service? To whom?

7. What are our responsibilities to them?

8. (13:18-25) What does the writer ask them to do regarding his word of exhortation in this letter? Why?
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