

# *Hebrews-*



## *Navigating the Journey*

**Bible Study by Rhonda Graham**

# *Navigating the Journey*

## *A Study of the Book of Hebrews*

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## *A Study of the Book of Hebrews*

Are you looking for something better? Something better than the world offers. Something better than the substitutes and alternatives you've tried. The book of Hebrews proves that Jesus is superior. He is better than anything you've ever tried before. Every alternative and substitute is stripped away until only Jesus remains as the One sufficient for your deepest needs. Everything and everyone else pales in comparison. Hebrews presents Jesus as your great high priest—the source of strength for your present situation, for resisting temptation, and to conquer your fears and doubts. Hebrews proves Jesus is sufficient for you because He is better!

### How to Use This Book

I believe every one of us needs to open our Bibles every day to allow God to speak to us personally. Commentaries, books about God, sermons, and teachings can not take the place of reading God's Word for yourself. Enduring Word Bible Studies are designed to get you into God's Word every day so the Holy Spirit can speak to you.

These studies can be used for formal classes and informal group studies as well as individual study. They are suitable for those new to the Bible as well as those who have studied God's Word for years.

The study begins with an Introduction followed by the first week's study questions. Before you begin each lesson, pray for God's guidance and the illumination of the Holy Spirit. In a group study, you will come together each week to discuss your responses to the questions. A group facilitator or teacher can keep the group focused on the passage and help the group avoid discussions that distract from the week's lesson. In a formal study, the group discussion can be followed by a lecture from a Bible teacher who will clarify the passage and enhance the week's lesson. The commentary notes included with each lesson will further clarify the passage and bring to your attention the truths I don't want you to miss.

The ultimate goal of this study is not to simply fill your head with knowledge of the Bible but to fill your heart as you apply the truths you learn and grow in a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

*- Rhonda Graham*

# Introduction To Hebrews

Do you ever have times of doubt? “If Jesus was who He said He was, then why do my friends and family members not see it? Why am I always in the minority?” Do you find yourself surrounded by the slippery slopes of New Age philosophies, constant threats to Biblical marriage and sexuality, and mainstream acceptance of evolution and abortion? Maybe you question how your faith fits in with what’s happening around you. Maybe you wonder how you can stand firm in your faith rather than slide down the slippery slope. Maybe you need help to stand firm when you really feel like cowering in the corner!

This study of Hebrews is for you! Hebrews is contemporary and relevant because it tells you what Jesus is doing right now. Hebrews presents Jesus as He is right now—serving as your great high priest at the right hand of God the Father and Hebrews reveals how you can have confidence to call upon your great high priest for help with your daily struggles, your doubts, and your opposition.

Do you ever wish you had someone who would go to bat for you? Someone you could count on to be there for you even when you’re whining, even when you’re in a mess of your own making, even when your friends think you’re singing the same song, second verse? You have a *personal* advocate, counselor, and intercessor! Hebrews removes every feeble alternative and every poor substitute until only Jesus remains as the only One sufficient for your needs especially if you are struggling to hold on to your faith when pressed by our culture or stressed by your circumstances.

You don’t have to cower in the corner or slide down the slippery slope. Hebrews will give you the confidence to declare, “*But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved*” (Hebrews 10:39). The choice is clear for one who studies the book of Hebrews. Jesus is better than anything you may try to replace Him with today. There is no substitute. There is no alternative. Jesus is better!

## The Author

In school, before we read any piece of literature, we had to read a biographical sketch of the author. That’s difficult to do with a study of Hebrews. Scholars have debated the authorship of this book for centuries. Several possible writers have been suggested.

### ● Paul

When the King James Version of the Bible was published, Hebrews was given the title “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews”. However, Paul’s name was not connected with Hebrews until over 130 years after Paul’s death. Many scholars take issue with the writing style, use of the Greek language, and absence of Paul’s usual personal salutation.

### ● Barnabas

Barnabas was a respected leader of the early church who is said to have been linked to the book long before Paul. As a Jew of the tribe of Levi, he would have knowledge of the sacrificial system and the priesthood. He was from Cyprus so he was very educated in the Greek language. However, Barnabas himself wavered in his own faith. Paul wrote that Barnabas was once led astray by hypocrisy (Galatians 2:13).

### ● Apollos

Apollos, a Jew from Alexandria, would have been knowledgeable of Judaism and the Greek language. He was said to have a “thorough knowledge of the scriptures” (Acts 18:24).

In addition to those listed above, Peter, Philip, Luke, Silas, Titus, Priscilla, Aquila, and even a few others have been suggested. The identity of the writer remains a mystery. Does it matter? You can have confidence in the Word of God because it was breathed by God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and presented faithfully by God’s chosen human instrument.

*2 Peter 1:21, “...men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”.*

*1 Corinthians 2:13, “This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit...”*

The Holy Spirit is the true author of all scripture.

## The Date

Being a history buff, I always think dates are important. The date Hebrews was written is especially important to give us additional confidence in its message. Were eyewitnesses who could refute any false or inaccurate teaching still alive at the time the early Church accepted Hebrews as divinely inspired Scripture?

Hebrews was likely written less than a generation after the crucifixion, perhaps between AD 64 and AD 70 or even earlier. The temple in Jerusalem, which was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, was apparently still standing at the time Hebrews was written (Hebrews 8:3-5, 13:11-12).

Secondly, it seems these believers had for a time experienced intense persecution. Roman Emperor Claudius began persecuting Christians around AD 49, followed in AD 64 by extreme persecution under Nero. The second wave of intense persecution started under Domitian in AD 85. Therefore, it is possible that Paul and Peter, who were executed around AD 68, may have been alive when Hebrews was written. The apostle John and early church leaders Silas, Luke, Barnabas, and many others were still living. They would have refuted anything false in the teachings of Hebrews.

## The Audience

Hebrews was apparently written to second generation Jewish Christians who had not heard or seen Jesus in person (13:7). Maybe you can relate to these believers. They were in a faith crisis. Can you relate to the causes of their faith crisis—lack of maturity and persecution?

### ● Lack of maturity

They had been Christians long enough that they should have been mature in their faith, strong enough to withstand the barbs of doubt and uncertainty. But they were still clinging to their past—either to their old sin nature or to useless rituals and ceremonies.

Are you still clinging to the past? To past sins that you could confess, turn from, and accept the forgiveness and removal of guilt the Lord Jesus offers you? Are you still clinging to empty rituals and ceremonies? Adding this good work or that ceremony to your faith just in case faith in Christ Jesus isn't enough?

### ● Persecution

Jewish converts to Christianity lost friends, family, and often their businesses due to persecution. Opposition and adversity caused them to question their faith. If Jesus was who they thought He was, would He allow them so much trouble?

Did your social life change when you became a follower of Jesus? Did you lose some friends or maybe even family? Maybe you sacrificed your income to run your business in a way that honors Jesus. Maybe you lost business or sales because you refused to participate in dishonest practices. Maybe you're trying to raise children in a world that lives apart from God. Could you use a word of encouragement? God sent His Word of encouragement in the book of Hebrews.

## The Theme

### ● Jesus is your access to God!

The writer of Hebrews knew that you and I, like the Jews of ancient Israel, crave access to God whether we admit it or not. *Psalm 42:1*, "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God." In the book of Hebrews, the Holy Spirit will show you how Jesus opens the way for you into the very presence of God. *Hebrews 10:22*, "...let us draw near to God..."

Is that what you're looking for right now in this season of your life—a time to draw near to God?

### ● Jesus is your great high priest!

"...but we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved" (*Hebrews 10:39*). Are you tempted to shrink back in your faith because of social or cultural pressure?

Do you completely trust what Jesus did on the cross for your salvation or are you looking for some act, some good work, or some ritual to use as a safety net just in case? Do you seek Him out as your high priest as you resist temptation? As you conquer your fear? As you stand firm in a cultural landscape pitted with slippery slopes? As you triumph over your difficult circumstance?

● **Jesus is better!**

When I was in a faith crisis in my own life, I attempted to ignore the role of faith in my life. I certainly ignored the work of the Holy Spirit! The result was an intense feeling of emptiness. Something was missing. Of course, I wouldn't admit that it was Jesus who was missing! I simply tried to replace Him with other things. I tried climbing the corporate ladder, social activities, and busyness. Nothing satisfied. Jesus is irreplaceable in the human heart.

God's Word of encouragement in Hebrews can be summed up with three words, 'Jesus is better'. Jesus is superior to anything with which you and I may try to replace Him. There is no substitute. There is no alternative. Jesus is better.

Is this the word of encouragement you need? That Jesus Christ is better than anything you've ever tried before? That joy, fulfillment, and true contentment are found in Him? Then continue with me in this study of Hebrews as we learn that Jesus is all sufficient for you because Jesus is better!

# Hebrews—Lesson 1

## **First Day: Read the Introduction to Hebrews and Hebrews Chapter 1.**

1. What did you find interesting, new, or helpful from the Introduction notes or lecture?
2. How did you apply what you learned in last week's lesson to your own life this week?
3. What can you expect from Hebrews according to Hebrews 13:22? Find a definition of 'exhortation'.
4. What are you looking forward to getting from this study?

## **Second Day: Read Hebrews 1:1-4.**

5. Through whom did God speak to His people in the past?
6. Can you think of some of the "various ways" God spoke in the past?
7. According to verse 2, how does God speak now?
8. This passage teaches that God spoke through the prophets and then through His Son, the Lord Jesus. How can you guard against modern day false teachers who claim to have a new or different revelation from God?
9. According to verse 2, Jesus is God's appointed heir. Who else are heirs of God according to Galatians 3:29?

### **Jesus is better than the prophets.**

Lawyers talk about the 'weight of the evidence'. Hebrews gives us weighty evidence, proof that of all the authorized messengers God used in the past, Jesus is superior. *"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways."* God spoke through the prophets and then through Jesus and today through the Holy Spirit and His written Word so you would hear Him and be drawn into a relationship with Him.

Notes:

When God spoke through each prophet, He did not fully reveal His character. The prophets gave us a glimpse of the nature of God. Jesus, however, *was* the very nature of God. “*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped...*” (Philippians 2:5-6).

What will you have to change in order to hear from God over the next 12 weeks? I sometimes struggle with procrastination. Do you? Do you suddenly realize that Bible study is the next day and you haven’t done the lesson so you don’t go to class or show up unprepared? Let’s agree to form a new habit of carving out a daily time for God’s Word. After all, we make time for eating out, watching our favorite TV show, getting our hair cut, or our nails done. Regular study of God’s Word can be habit forming!

**Third Day: Reread Hebrews 1:1-4.**

10. How do verses 2 and 3 describe God’s Son and His work?

11. How does John 1:1-18 describe Jesus Christ and His work?

12. What did Jesus do according to Philippians 2:5-11?

13. Since Jesus is the exact representation of God, what characteristics of Jesus do you find in these verses?

Matthew 28:18-20

Hebrews 1:12

Hebrews 13:8

Revelation 1:8

14. According to verse 3, Jesus provided purification for sins. What do you learn about God’s forgiveness of sin in these verses?

Isaiah 44:22

Psalms 103:12-14

15. Do you carry a burden of guilt from past sins? How do the verses above encourage you?

### **Jesus is better than your 'old things'**

Notes:

Jesus is not just another spokesperson for God. Jesus is *the* Son. The claim that God had a Son equal to God was a difficult issue for the Jews who worshipped one God. It's a major issue today and the most important question you will ever answer. Is Jesus who He says He is? If so, He is the only one who speaks for God and reveals God through the Holy Spirit. His words should be the authority in your life.

The cross qualifies Jesus to speak for God the Father. An acceptable sacrifice for sin had to be perfect and unblemished and this could not be said about Moses, Abraham, Jacob, or any of the prophets. Jesus is the acceptable sacrifice for your sins past, present, and future because He was the sinless Lamb of God.

*John 8:36, "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."* Freedom from the penalty of sin and the guilt of sin comes only through Jesus. Are you living with guilt? Sometimes the burden of unconfessed sin and guilt seems almost like a physical weight, doesn't it? Like you're walking around in concrete shoes! Those 'old things' you may be relying upon can not take away the weight of guilt. Only Jesus Christ, the Son, can set you free!

For the Jews, the prophets were their "old things"; Jesus was the better thing. What things are your "old things"? My friend received a call from her mother who urged her to purchase a car that day because her horoscope said that was the day to do so. To whom do you listen—God's Word or the latest New Age philosophy? God's Word or the advice of your friends or your co-workers? God's Word or the latest best selling self-help book?

Maybe the way you spend your time is part of your 'old things'. Do you spend your time shopping, surfing the Internet, or watching hours of TV when you could be building a relationship with someone who doesn't know Jesus, stepping out into the area of service you say you don't have time for, or spending time in community with other believers?

Maybe your conversation is part of your 'old things'. Is your conversation truthful and encouraging or do you always find a way to get in a subtle jab? Be honest. What action or attitude is an "old thing" that should be replaced by a new Christ-like action or attitude?

### **Fourth Day: Read Hebrews 1:5-14**

16. To whom is Jesus superior according to verse 4? What reasons for His superiority are given in verses 5-14?

17. What would you say to someone who is overly interested in angels?

18. What warning do you find in these verses?

Colossians 2:18

Revelation 19:9-10

19. What things or what person have you substituted for Jesus to comfort you, to fulfill your needs, to ease your loneliness, or to fill the empty places in your heart? Will you share how Jesus is superior to anything you may have tried in the past?

### **Jesus is better than the angels.**

After proving Jesus to be clearly superior to God's prophets, the writer turns to God's angels. The Jews were very interested in angels. They craved access to God but they were taught that it was dangerous to get too close to God so they looked for intermediaries, such as angels, to safely close the distance between themselves and God.

The word 'angel' means 'messenger' in the Greek and 'to send' in the Hebrew. The primary function of angels in the Bible was to deliver messages from God to man. Isaiah saw them as awesome and frightening beings whose purpose is to worship and praise God. Angels also ministered to Jesus after His temptation in the wilderness, aided Peter's escape from prison, and served as God's instrument of judgment.

Interest in angels and even angel worship remains part of our culture today. Most people are primarily interested in the connection between angels and physical protection—the idea of having a guardian angel. *Psalm 91:11*, "For he will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways." Interest in angels becomes a danger when it turns to worship or is thought to be a way to approach God apart from Jesus Christ.

The Hebrew writer presents Jesus as superior to the angels by quoting seven Old Testament passages that give the Son a higher place than was ever given to any angel. Angels are very special servants of God but our adoration and devotion belongs only to Jesus. The angels themselves worship Him (1:6).

Often we may not even realize that we have turned to another person or substituted charity work, family commitments, career, or busyness to satisfy the desire of our heart. Something will happen that shows us the temporary nature or the inferior nature of that substitute. Jesus is Counselor, Deliverer, Helper, Rock, Redeemer, and Savior. Can any other person do all that? No, they can not because Jesus is superior. Jesus is better.

### **Fifth Day: Reread Hebrews 1 if necessary.**

20. What do you learn about God, the Creator, from verses 2, 3, and 10?

Notes:

21. What will eventually happen to the earth according to these verses?

Hebrews 1:11-12

Isaiah 51:6

2 Peter 3:10

Revelation 21:1

22. What does it mean to you to know that the Lord will “remain the same” (verse 12)?

23. What will be the ultimate fate of the Lord’s enemies according to verse 13?

24. What enemies are you currently facing or have you faced in the past? Is there a verse of scripture that helped you? (One of my favorites is Philippians 4:13.)

### **Jesus and Creation**

Jesus was involved in the creation of the universe. *God “...has spoken to us by his Son...through whom he made the universe” (1:2). John 1:1-3, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”*

A prophet lived a fixed life span while Jesus was with God from the beginning of time. Who better to save you than the one who created you?

Verse 12 promises that the Lord “remains the same”. He is unchangeable. Who or what in your life can promise to remain the same? Not your family. Children grow up. Parents grow old. Not your job. Companies hire and fire or merge and layoff. God does not change. *“I the Lord do not change” (Malachi 3:6). “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).* You can count on the consistency and constancy of God.

What does this mean for you? Whatever God did in the Bible, He can still do. Whatever God promised in the Bible, He still promises. The God who could control creation, transform people, and change circumstances, still can because He does not change; His ability does not change.

Notes:

**Sixth Day: Reread Hebrews 1 if necessary.**

25. What is one purpose of angels according to verse 14?

26. What do these verses teach about the inheritance of a believer?

Galatians 4:7

I Peter 1:3-5

27. In what other ways do angels serve God according to these verses?

Psalm 91:11

Luke 1:18-19

Acts 12:23

28. As you studied the superiority of Jesus this week, did you discover anything encouraging to you in your present circumstance? Did the Holy Spirit reveal a 'weak thing' you may be substituting for the better, superior Lord Jesus?

29. Maybe you're already convinced of the superiority of Jesus. How can you encourage your friend, co-worker, or family member who may be relying on weak things?

### **Jesus does not change!**

Angels are called ministering spirits but the Lord Jesus is called King of kings! Jesus has a throne, a scepter, and a kingdom (1:8-12). Hopefully, unwarranted interest in angels is not a problem for you. Still, be alert for anything that threatens to take Jesus off the throne of your life. That could be something as noble as your children or the career you're building. If you look to Hollywood, the media, or today's culture for advice and values instead of God's Word or if your time, energy, and money is more devoted to sports, beauty, or hobbies than to the Lord and His work, please learn from this lesson that Jesus is better! Anything or anyone else is inferior and weak. No other use of your time, energy, and resources are as worthy of first place.

Because God is unchanging, the same God who was faithful, compassionate, forgiving, and generous in the Bible is still faithful, compassionate, forgiving, and generous today. Does it encourage you to know that there is one thing, one person you can count on to be constant in your life? Your health may change, your marriage may change, your income may change, but God will not change in His love, compassion, and care for you. Who He was in the Bible, He still is. What He did in the Bible, He can still do. What He promised in the Bible, He still promises. Jesus is better!

Notes:

# *Navigating the Journey*

## *A Study of Ephesians*

Are you looking for something better? Something better than the world offers. Something better than the substitutes and alternatives you've tried. The book of Hebrews proves that Jesus is superior. He is better than anything you've ever tried before. Every alternative and substitute is stripped away until only Jesus remains as the One sufficient for your deepest needs. Everything and everyone else pales in comparison. Hebrews presents Jesus as your great high priest—the source of strength for your present situation, for resisting temptation, and to conquer your fears and doubts. Hebrews proves Jesus is sufficient for you because He is better!

### *About The Author...*



**Rhonda Graham**

The Enduring Word Bible Study is written and taught by Rhonda Graham. Rhonda has been teaching the Bible for over 12 years. After graduating from college in Louisiana, Rhonda began a career in accounting. After working for 21 years, she left the workforce to focus full time on her family and teaching the Bible. Rhonda jokes that her current job is a Bible salesman. She loves to 'sell' people on the truth of the Bible and the God of the Bible. Rhonda teaches weekly classes of men and women of all ages, speaks to women's groups on various topics, and writes Bible studies. Her studies on Romans, Revelation, and Galatians are also available.

**To have Rhonda speak at your next event or  
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