

1. The author of Hebrews does not identify himself. It is probably not a letter, but the written transcript of a sermon. Since he was there, he would not have identified himself. Paul has traditionally been the accepted author. Barnabas and Apollos are possible. The Holy Spirit superintended the writing of it.
2. The intended recipients were Jews. A main concern is that the hearers of this sermon not return to the sacrificial system of Judaism.
3. The date of the book has to be before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D.
  - A. After that, there were no sacrifices as the Temple was destroyed.
  - B. Judaism and Christianity were seen as related but definitely separate systems in the book.
  - C. Persecution is alluded to - could place it around the time of the persecutions by Nero.
4. The Key Idea: Christ is Better! The words “better” or “superior” appear 15 times in the book. Now that you have begun with Christ, there can be no turning back. Chapters 1 and 2: Christ is better than the angels. The theme of Chapter 3: Christ is better than Moses.
5. There are 4 passages in the New Testament that can be turned to when called upon to defend the Doctrine of Christ (to explain who He is and why we believe He is God Incarnate).
  - A. John 1:1-18
  - B. Philippians 2
  - C. Colossians 1
  - D. Hebrews 1
6. Hebrews 1 and 2 - What do they tell us about Jesus Christ?
  - A. He is the heir of all things.
  - B. He is the Creator of the universe.
  - C. He is the radiance of God’s glory.
  - D. He is the exact representation of His being.
  - E. He is the sustainer of the universe.
  - F. He is the one who made purification for our sins.
  - G. He is the one enthroned at God’s right hand.
  - H. He is the one the Father calls “Son”.
  - I. He is the one the angels worship.
  - J. He is the one addressed as “God” in the quotation from Psalm 110:1.
  - K. He created the earth, and in the end will “uncreate” it.
  - L. Everything is in subjection to Him.
  - M. He tasted death for everyone.
  - N. He freed us from slavery.
  - O. He made atonement for our sins. P. Because he has suffered, He is able to help us in times of temptation.
7. Jesus is one person with 2 natures - fully God and fully man.
8. There are 5 warnings in the Book of Hebrews. The first is in Hebrews 2:1-4. “How shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?”
9. Christmas text: Hebrews 1:6; Easter text: Hebrews 2:14b
10. The 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 5 warnings: Hebrews 3:12ff: “See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart...” - a warning against a false sense of assurance.
11. Extraordinary number of Old Testament quotes (mostly from the Psalms) - the author of this sermon was a person whose heart and mind was thoroughly saturated with Scripture.

1. The theme of “rest” (here in Hebrews 4:1) is prominent throughout Scripture.
  - A. In Genesis - God rested.
  - B. In Exodus - Instructions for God’s people to observe a Sabbath rest; Israel was being led to the Promised Land - the place of rest.
  - C. In Leviticus - The land itself must have a rest every 7<sup>th</sup> year.
  - D. In Revelation - Those who die in the Lord rest from their labors.
  
2. Spiritual Rest: God’s purpose is to bring us into the rest purchased for us by Jesus’ sacrifice.
  
3. Jesus is one person with 2 natures - fully God and fully human.
  - A. The humanity of Jesus:
    - 1) Because He was fully human, He can truly represent us as our High Priest before God. (4:14)
    - 2) Because he was fully human, He can completely understand us. (4:15)
    - 3) Because He was fully human and yet sinless, He is able to pay our penalty.
  
4. Hebrews 4:16: “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace in time of trouble.”
  - A. “The picture painted here is one of an ancient throne room.” Only the son and heir of the king could approach the throne uninvited (as in the story of Esther.)
  - B. God has extended to us the right of the heir and son of the king to come before Him with confidence - think about this!
  
5. Jesus is a better priest than Aaron. The contrasts between Aaron, the first High Priest, and Jesus:
  - A. Aaron was from the tribe of Levi - Jesus was the Son of God
  - B. Aaron offered repeated sacrifices - Jesus was Himself the sacrifice.
  - C. Aaron was a sinner himself - Jesus was able to save.
  
6. Hebrews 4:12 - Never underestimate the power of God’s Word!
  
7. Hebrews 12:13 - God’s omniscience
  
8. The 3<sup>rd</sup> warning of the Book of Hebrews:
  - A. It speaks about spiritual immaturity.
  - B. 4:4-6 is the heart of the warning.
  - C. A difficult passage - but it takes us back to “the perseverance of the saints”
    - 1) Example: Simon Magus in Acts 8
    - 2) Jesus words in Matthew 7:21

1. Leviticus 7-9: Provides a tremendous contrast between the OT and NT in regards to worship and provision for forgiveness of sin.
2. “Christ is better” than the sacrificial system. Because of Christ, we are now able to come boldly before the throne of grace.
3. Some Jewish Christians may have felt it was safer (Judaism was protected by Rome) to return to practicing Judaism (and therefore sacrifices) than to be a Christian (persecution).
4. The nature of worship under the Mosaic Covenant:
  - A. The burnt offering - voluntary, burned completely on the altar in an act of dedication to God - bull, ram or dove
  - B. The sin offering - mandatory - bull for the High Priest, male goat for a leader, female goat or lamb for the ordinary people, dove or ephah of flour for poor people - covering for specific sins
  - C. The guilt offering - ram or lamb - involved restitution - the priests kept and ate a portion of the sin and guilt offerings
  - D. The grain offering - voluntary - grain, fine flour, baked bread - act of devotion recognizing God’s goodness
  - E. The fellowship offering - any perfect animal - act of worship which always included a communal meal
5. The ordination of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood:
  - A. The offering of expiation - to take away sin
  - B. The offerings of dedication (burnt and grain)
  - C. The offerings of fellowship - a relationship between God and man established
6. Each sacrifice pictures an aspect of our relationship to God.
  - A. The need for forgiveness of sin always comes first.
  - B. The need for commitment on our parts follows.
  - C. The result is the reality of full, free fellowship with the holy God of creation.
  - D. OT - the process, cost, blood, smoke, smells, ritual - and still the need for the priest to be the intermediary between the person and God
  - E. NT - on the basis of what Christ has done, we are told to come boldly before the throne of grace - like the firstborn son of the king.
7. Because of what Christ did on Calvary, we are all priests; we can all approach God boldly; we are invited into the presence of God. One sacrifice - one propitiation - did it all.
8. Not just the “professional” clergy are set apart for God’s use - all Christians are. We might see the baptismal service as an ordination service in which men and women are set apart for the exclusive work of God.
9. Representing God - being a priest - is very serious work, and God tells them to take it seriously. It means being fully consecrated.
10. At the ordination of Aaron and his sons, the fire of God consumed the offering and His visible presence was seen. We need the visible, evident presence of a holy God in the midst of His people. We can have it if we, His priests, are pure, committed and in fellowship with God.

1. Leviticus 11 and 12 is difficult.
2. The distinction between “clean and “unclean”: (from S. Schultz, Leviticus)
  - A. Animals and food were either clean or unclean by nature. This could not be altered and it was not contagious. Persons and objects could become ritually unclean - temporary and contagious - required cleansing rituals.
  - B. Clean = pure. It connotes normality. Uncleaness = the opposite.
  - C. Clean things had the potential of becoming holy when they were sanctified, or becoming unclean when they were polluted.
  - D. Cleaness is the norm; sanctification elevates cleaness to holiness; pollution degrades it into the unclean.
3. So, the Israelites had the potential for attaining holiness and approaching a holy God as they maintained a proper reverence for God.
4. Leviticus 11 - list of clean and edible creatures:
  - A. Cud-chewing, cloven-hoofed animals (like sheep or goats)
  - B. Water creatures with fins and scales
  - C. Clean birds (did not feed on carrion)
  - D. Flying insects with jointed legs for hopping (locust, katydid, cricket, grasshopper)
5. Water, vessels and people became unclean if they came into contact with a dead creature (except those that had been ritually slaughtered).
6. Explanations for the dietary prohibitions and regulations:
  - A. Cultic view - the animals forbidden were used in pagan religions.
  - B. Hygienic view - God was protecting the Israelites from eating what could harm them.
  - C. Symbolic view - the “clean” animals’ behavior and habits were illustrations of how the Israelites should live.
  - D. Arbitrary view - the reasons are hidden in the sovereign will of God.
7. The NT removes all the dietary restrictions.
  - A. Peter’s vision on the roof of Simon the Tanner’s house in Joppa in Acts
  - B. There are no longer sacrifices, so the issues of ceremonial uncleaness do not apply to us now.
  - C. The regulations no longer apply but the principles do.
    - 1) God is still a holy God and our lives must reflect His holiness.
    - 2) We cannot be holy without a concern for purity in our lives.
    - 3) We are still called to be different, as the Israelites were called to be different from the nations around them.

1. Leviticus 13 and 14 reads like a medical manual.
2. Leprosy was incurable, progressive and highly contagious. Once you knew you had it, all hope was gone and you were an outcast for the rest of your life.
3. Allergies, skin rashes and temporary infections would put a person in isolation. When the symptoms were gone, they could present themselves to the priest and undergo the rituals for cleansing and restoration.
4. Jesus healed the man with leprosy and told him to go present himself to the priest, following the Mosaic Law. He also healed the 10 lepers.
5. Leprosy is always understood to be symbolic of sin. Uzziah, Gehazi, Miriam (God healed her) had leprosy as a result of sin. Sin is incurable (apart from God), progressive and highly contagious. Leprosy is a 'type' of sin.
6. The uncleanness that came from leprosy and other skin diseases cut a person off from normal society, the Temple (Tabernacle), the sacrifices, worship...in this way, leprosy as a 'type' of sin also holds.
7. The ceremony the priest was to perform to restore the one cleansed to full fellowship is perplexing:
  - A. The 2 birds and the sprinkling of the person with the blood of the killed bird; the other bird is released after being dipped in the blood and water mixture.
  - B. The person then washes his clothes, shaves off all his hair, bathes in water. He could return to the camp, but not enter his tent for 7 days, and not before he washes, shaves and bathes again. He can now worship at the Tabernacle again.
  - C. The ritual takes place outside the camp.
  - D. "The focus of this unique rite was the blood that was applied to the other bird and to the cured person...that application of blood brought home to him the fact that a life had been given, so that he could be released from his exile from the camp...it was the sprinkled blood that assured the cured man that he was clean and acceptable to God as one of the covenant congregation." (from Samuel Schultz, Leviticus, p. 82)
  - E. The one cleansed from the skin disease was required to begin his worship with a guilt offering (associated with restitution) and a sin offering. It was unusual for both to be offered.
  - F. The application of blood to the right ear, thumb and toe of the worshipper was not usually associated with a guilt offering (except when Aaron and his sons were ordained).
8. The expression in Hebrew denoting infectious skin diseases is used in the curious regulation regarding mold and mildew. It literally says that the priest is to examine "the infectious skin diseases of linen, wool, leather, and horses."