# Hebrews and General Epistles

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Hebrews and General Epistles

Introduction

In the preceding Bible LIFEPAC® 608 you studied the apostle Paul: his conversion, his journeys, and his writings. Thirteen Epistles among the twenty-one New Testament Epistles bear the name of Paul as writer. Although in the original manuscripts the Epistle to the Hebrews does not bear Paul's name, much evidence supports Paul's authorship.

In this LIFEPAC you will study the Epistle to the Hebrews and the seven General Epistles: James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude. Your study of this LIFEPAC will help you understand better the place of Hebrews and the seven General Epistles in the structure and message of the Bible.

Recall that the Bible is the revelation of God's plan for man's redemption. The major emphasis of this course has been the plan of salvation and the principles of Christian growth, or life (salvation) and abundant life (Christian growth) as promised by Jesus in John 10:10.

The New Testament, you should recall, contains twenty-seven books. You will be asked to name those books in this LIFEPAC.

### BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>Ephesians</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>Hebrews</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Mark</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Philippians</td>
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<td>John</td>
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<td>Acts</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Romans</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1 Timothy</td>
<td>24</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>1 Corinthians</td>
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<td>2 Timothy</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>2 Corinthians</td>
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<td>Titus</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Galatians</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Philemon</td>
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<td>Revelation</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Objectives

**Read these objectives.** The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAC. When you have finished this LIFEPAC, you should be able to:

1. State some reasons that support Paul's writing Hebrews.
2. Describe the historical occasion of Hebrews.
3. State the purpose of Hebrews.
4. Identify the theme of Hebrews.
5. Describe briefly the content of Hebrews.
6. Name the seven General Epistles.
7. Identify the authors of the seven General Epistles.
8. Describe the historical occasion of the General Epistles.
10. Identify the theme of the General Epistles.
11. Describe briefly the content of the General Epistles.

Survey the LIFEPAC. Ask yourself some questions about this study and write your questions here.
1. HEBREWS

Hebrews is the nineteenth book of the New Testament as the twenty-seven New Testament books appear in our English Bible. In this section you will study the writer and reader of the Epistle and the purpose and content including the theme and message. You will be asked to write the outline given under “content.”

Section Objectives

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. State some reasons that support Paul’s writing Hebrews.
2. Describe the historical occasion of Hebrews.
3. State the purpose of Hebrews.
4. Identify the theme of Hebrews.
5. Describe briefly the content of Hebrews.

Vocabulary

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.

Judaism (jū’ dē iz um). The religion of the Jews, which is based only on the Old Testament.

superiority (su pir’ ē ôr’ u tē). Above the average condition, very good quality; excellent condition.

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAC appear in boldface print the first time they are used. If you are unsure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

Pronunciation Key: hat, āge, cāre, fār; let, ēqual, tērm; it, Tce; hot, ôpen, ôrder; oil; out; cup, pūt, rūle; child; long; thin; /TH/ for then; /zh/ for measure; /u/ represents /a/ in about, /e/ in taken, /i/ in pencil, /o/ in lemon, and /u/ in circus.
THE WRITER AND READERS

Unlike most other New Testament Epistles, Hebrews does not specifically identify either the sender or the receiver, either the writer or the readers, of this Epistle. As a part of the Bible, it is included in those words of Paul to Timothy (2 Timothy 3:16 and 17): “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of

God may be perfect [complete], thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Writer. Such early historians as Clement of Rome (A.D. 30 to 100) and Eusebius of Caesarea (A.D. 265 to 340) recognized the apostle Paul as the writer of Hebrews. For more than eleven hundred years, Paul was accepted by the New Testament churches as the writer of Hebrews. Many Bible scholars still maintain that Paul was the writer of Hebrews.

Read Hebrews chapters 1–3

Notice the similarities in the following passages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>compare</th>
<th>Hebrews 4:1–2 with 1 Corinthians 10:1–6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hebrews 4:1–4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Colossians 1:15–17</td>
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<td>1 Corinthians 15:27</td>
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<td>Hebrews 2:14–17</td>
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<td>Philippians 2:5–8</td>
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<td>Hebrews 8:6</td>
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<td>2 Corinthians 3:4–11</td>
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<td>Hebrews 13:25</td>
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<td>Romans 16:24; 1 Corinthians 16:23;</td>
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<td>2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 6:18;</td>
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<td>Ephesians 6:24; Philippians 4:23;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Colossians 4:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:28;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Thessalonians 3:18; 1 Timothy 6:21;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Timothy 4:22; Titus 3:15; and Phil. 25</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Readers. The title and the content of the Epistle suggest that the receivers of the Epistle, the readers, were believing Jews. Hebrews was not addressed to Jewish believers in general, but to a specific group, to members of a church in a definite location (see Hebrews 10:25 and 13:19 and 23), which is not given.
Complete the following statements.

1.1 Unlike most other New Testament Epistles, Hebrews does not identify either the
   a. ________________________________ or the b. ________________________________ of this Epistle.

1.2 Early historians recognized ____________________________ as the writer of Hebrews.

1.3 The title and the content of Hebrews suggest that the receivers of this Epistle were
   ________________________________ .

1.4 Hebrews was not addressed to a. ________________________________ in general, but to a
   specific group, to members of a b. ________________________________ in a definite
   c. ________________________________ , which is not given.

Complete the following activity.

1.5 Use the numbers 1 (for the earliest book) to 10 (for the latest book) to indicate the order that
   the following books appear in the New Testament.

   a. _____ Jude                     b. _____ Mark
   c. _____ Hebrews                d. _____ 2 Peter
   e. _____ Ephesians              f. _____ Philippians
   g. _____ Acts                   h. _____ Titus
   i. _____ 2 Thessalonians       j. _____ 2 Timothy
THE PURPOSE AND CONTENT

Although the location of the Jewish believers is not given in the Epistle, the purpose of the Epistle becomes clear as the content is studied.

**Purpose.** The Jewish believers addressed in this Epistle may have broken away from the main group in their locality because of persecution. They may also have begun to emphasize their Jewish background and religious practices more than their Christian faith and practice to avoid persecution. The main purpose of this writer was to prevent the Jewish believers from going back to Judaism by proving to them that Judaism had come to an end in Christ.

**Content.** The message, or theme, of Hebrews is the superiority of the Christian faith over Judaism. The comparative word *better* is used thirteen times in Hebrews. The theme of Hebrews is expanded in the following outline of the content.

You will be expected to know this outline and the Scripture references:

I. Christ is better than the prophets and angels (Hebrews 1:1–2:18)

II. Christ is better than Moses and Joshua (Hebrews 3:1–4:13)

III. Christ is better than Aaron and the Old Testament priests (Hebrews 4:14–8:6)

IV. The New Covenant (Hebrews 8:7–13:25)

In chapter 11 the writer defined and illustrated faith. Faith is defined (Hebrews 11:1) as “... the substance [assurance] of things hoped for, the evidence [conviction] of things not seen.” In chapter 6, verses 18–20, the writer presents Christ as our hope, as the anchor of our souls, both sure and steadfast. In Hebrews 13:1, the writer tells his readers to “let brotherly love continue.” (Italics are added for emphasis.)

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**Answer the following questions.**

1.6 What may have caused the Jewish believers addressed in this Epistle to begin to emphasize Judaism more than their Christian faith?
1.7 What was the main purpose of the Hebrews writer? ____________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________

1.8 What is the theme of Hebrews? ____________________________
__________________________________________

Complete the following activities.

1.9 In your own words, write a definition of faith based on Hebrews 11:1. ________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________

1.10 Complete the outline of Hebrews by writing the missing words and references on the lines.

I. Christ is better than the a. ____________________________ and angels (Hebrews 1:1 through b. __________ ).
II. Christ is better than Moses and c. ____________________________ (Hebrews d. __________ through 4:13).
III. Christ is better than e. ____________________________ and the Old Testament priests
__________________________________________
(Hebrews 4:14 through f. __________ ).
IV. The New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant (Hebrews g. ____________________________ ).
Match the following words and references.

1.11 ______ faith  
   1.12 ______ hope  
   1.13 ______ love  

   a. Hebrews 6:18–20  
   b. Hebrews 5:11–14  
   c. Hebrews 11:1  
   d. Hebrews 13:1

Complete the following reading activity.

1.14 Outlining is a reading activity that helps the student to identify main ideas and supporting details: Well-written material has been written according to an outline. An outline is the organization of the material. In outlining, the material is divided into small units. Main topics of an outline should be written in similar form, and subtopics under the same topic should be written in similar form. Scan this section of your LIFEPAC and complete the outline of Hebrews.

```
Topic       Hebrews
Main Topic  I. The Writer and Readers
            A. Writer

            B. ________________________________

Subtopics   II. The Purpose and Content
            a. and

Main topic  A. ________________________________
            b. Subtopics
            c. and

B. ________________________________
```
Answer true or false (each answer, 2 points).

1.01 ________ In the New Testament Epistle to the Hebrews, the writer is identified.
1.02 ________ Early historians recognized the apostle Paul as the writer of Hebrews.
1.03 ________ Both the title and the content of Hebrews suggests the receivers of this Epistle were believing Jews.
1.04 ________ The Epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to Jewish believers in general.
1.05 ________ The main purpose of Hebrews was to prevent the Jewish believers from going back to Judaism.
1.06 ________ Judaism is the religion of the Jews and is based only upon the Old Testament.
1.07 ________ The theme of Hebrews is the superiority of the Christian faith over Judaism.
1.08 ________ Superiority means below the average condition.
1.09 ________ Faith is defined and illustrated in Hebrews chapter 13.
1.10 ________ In Hebrews 6:18–20, the writer presents Christ as the believer’s hope.

Write the correct letter and answer on the blank (each answer, 2 points).

1.011 The writer of Hebrews tells his readers in chapter ________, to “let brotherly love continue.”
   a. 13  b. 11  c. 7  d. 9

1.012 According to Hebrews 1:1–2:18, Christ is better than ________.
   a. the Old Covenant  b. the prophets and angels
   c. Aaron and the priests  d. Moses and Joshua

1.013 According to Hebrews 4:14–8:6, Christ is better than ________.
   a. the Old Covenant  b. the prophets and angels
   c. Aaron and the priests  d. Moses and Joshua

1.014 That all Scripture is given by inspiration of God is stated by the apostle Paul in ________.
   a. 2 Timothy 3:16  b. 1 Timothy 1:16  c. Titus 3:5  d. 2 Timothy 2:17
1.015 The Jewish believers addressed in Hebrews may have broken away from the main group in their locality because of ________.
   a. Judaism    b. persecution    c. sanctification    d. superiority

1.016 Many Bible scholars believe that ______ was the writer of Hebrews.

1.017 Which book is not one of the General Epistles? ________
   a. Jude    b. Revelation    c. 1 John

1.018 The comparative word “______” is used thirteen times in Hebrews.
   a. good    b. better    c. best

1.019 Hebrews 11:1 defines ________.
   a. love    b. hope    c. faith

1.020 In Hebrews 13:1 the writer tells his readers to “let brotherly _______ continue.”
   a. faith    b. love    c. hope

Complete the following statements (each answer, 3 points).
1.021 Early historians recognized ________________ as the writer of Hebrews.

1.022 Judaism, the religion of the Jews, is based only upon the ________________.

1.023 All Scripture is given by inspiration of ________________.

1.024 The title and the content of Hebrews suggest that the receivers of this Epistle are believing ________________.

1.025 Six of the General Epistles are a. ________________, b. ________________,
   c. ________________, d. ________________, e. ________________, and f. ________________.
Answer the following questions (each answer, 5 points).

1.026 Why may the Jewish believers addressed in Hebrews have broken away from the main group in their locality?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

1.027 What was the main purpose of Hebrews?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

1.028 What is the theme of Hebrews?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

1.029 How does the writer of Hebrews present Christ in chapter 6, verses 18–20?
________________________________________________________________________

Match the following items (each answer, 2 points).

1.030 ______ Christ is better than Moses and Joshua.
1.031 ______ Faith is defined and illustrated.
1.032 ______ The new Covenant is better than the Old Covenant.
1.033 ______ Christ is our hope.
1.034 ______ “Let brotherly love continue.”

a. Hebrews 8:7–13:25
b. Hebrews 13:1
c. Hebrews 4:14–8:6
d. Hebrews 3:1–4:13
e. Hebrews chapter 11
f. Hebrews 6:18–20