

Introduction to hebrews: superiority of christ

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



The Bible is a distinct tool, of which, when used correctly can literally shield evil from tormenting and therefore, cast out the devil and his evil schemes. Ephesians 6: 10-18 is a reminder of the power of which the Lord and His Word has upon the World. The belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, helmet of salvation, sword of the Spirit, and shield of faith are resources readily available for humans to tap into. A big part of faith is formed through dissection of the Bible. Paul the Apostle wrote numerous books of the Bible and specifically spoke truth to many populations. This paper is going to capture a piece of the New Testament, specifically Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews; taking the time to seek out major and megathemes which can be used as an apologetic device and also help to further one's own personal connection to Jesus Christ.

Who is Paul?

The Bible beautifully documents the life and character of Paul. Paul, who was first called Saul, was known for his hatred against Christianity. He actually persecuted faith-filled believers and lead many people in rebellion against the Father. There was a scenario which could be looked at as the 'turning point' in his life. The pivotal passage in Paul's story is Acts 9: 1-22, which recounts Paul's meeting with Jesus Christ on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus. During this encounter, Paul's heart was transformed and his leadership was purified through the sanctification of the Spirit. He was thirsty for more of God and pursued an extremely evangelistic character. Paul began going on extensive missionary journeys and devoted his whole life to saving the lost and transforming the broken; giving all the glory and power to Christ alone.

Paul plays a major role in Hebrews for multiple reasons. Firstly, it is believed that Paul wrote the majority of Hebrews. The specific author is not given in the Biblical text but it is suggested because of Hebrews 13: 23, “ I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you”. Paul disciplined Timothy and often spoke of him in this manner [brother]. Because he is known as the author, it helps the reader interpret the language and background behind the text. Paul’s epistles fall into two categories: nine epistles written to churches (Romans to 2 Thessalonians) and four pastoral and personal epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon). This is then followed by eight Hebrew Christian epistles (Hebrews to Jude). Naturally, many questions would arise as to the meaning and application of the gospel for Christians. Thus, the Epistles answer these questions, give the interpretation of the person and work of Christ, and apply the truth of the gospel to believers. Paul didn’t even intend on these letters to be kept for generations to come. He wrote them to communicate with distant churches, to encourage, to cajole, to inform, and to respond to events that he had heard about. The reason they have been kept is because they are full of timeless wisdom, as well as being the earliest writings of the Christian church.

Introduction to Hebrews

Hebrews is a New Testament book, which is found in the latter half of the Bible. It isn’t a lengthy text whatsoever, and it is fairly easy to read. It is called a “ letter” in Hebrews 13: 22 but it’s overarching form reads more as a sermon which could be why people often resort to it for quotation, devotions and in sermon content. The book was written for the two groups of people:

first to the Hebrew Christians and secondly for all believers in Christ. The Hebrew people who had faith may have been considering a return to Judaism, perhaps because of immaturity. This immaturity was stemming from a lack of understanding of Biblical truths. The text exudes an urgency for the Hebrew people. At this time, Jewish Christians were probably undergoing fierce persecution, socially and physically; It was from both Jews and Romans. Christ had not returned to establish His Kingdom, and the people needed to be reassured that Christianity was true and that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

Those who accepted Jesus at this time, often found themselves slipping back to their old ways and living an extremely hybrid faith. The message of Hebrews is that Jesus is better, and Christianity is superior. Christ is supreme and completely sufficient for salvation. A simple message, yet the Hebrews at this time and even readers today, over complicate[d] it's beautiful and simplistic nature. Paul's writing is direct and exactly what was needed to be heard during this time for the Hebrews.

Main Theme: Superiority of Christ

As stated in the portion above, the main theme of Hebrews is to present the sufficiency and superiority of Christ. Try as they may, other religions cannot surpass the supreme truths and evidences that Jesus Christ manifests. It would be very difficult to find anything better than Christ alone. All competing religions are deceptions or imitations. The idea of superiority can be broken down in two ways. First, would be the superiority of Christ and then secondly, the superiority of faith.

The superiority of Jesus Christ is demonstrated between Hebrews 1: 1-10: 18. The author starts off the discussion with the truths that “ The Son is Superior to the Angels”. In this section, one can see the consistency of Christ in His absolute authority. He says to the angels, “ sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet” (1: 13). He goes on to explain the importance of angels, which could be thought as a ‘ side-kick’ to which are sent to serve those who are to inherit salvation. There is a utmost respect for angels in this portion of scripture which reveals Christ’s character even to a greater extent: His love of partnership. Next is the section titled “ Jesus is Greater than Moses” (Hebrews 3). Moses is compared to Jesus, yet the complete seniority of Christ comes to surface in Hebrews 3: 3-4, “ Jesus has been found worthy of greater honour than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything”. Again the scriptures report of His Holiness with beautiful recognition to those who serve the Kingdom, such as Moses. Thirdly, Hebrews 5 talks about “ Jesus as the Great High Priest”. It is important to note that every high priest is selected from the people and appointed to represent matters related to God. Though there still may not be a designated ‘ high priest’ in every nation and land, this chapter focuses on the ultimate priest, Jesus Christ. God distinctly announces His ultimate glory as high priest, “ you are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (5: 6). Melchizedek was both the King of righteousness and peace (7: 2), therefore the fact that Christ’s power triumphed his reputation speaks volumes to the superiority of Jesus. Lastly, Hebrews testifies that the new covenant is greater than the old covenant. Hebrews 8: 1-2 says, “ Now

the main point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by a mere human being". At this time, this was groundbreaking discovery. By calling this covenant " new", He had made the first one obsolete. Hebrews 8: 13 is a powerful reminder that what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear. There is no need for a designated ' high priest' any longer, instead the reigning power of Jesus Christ is forevermore, which makes Him superior to all.

There is a continuity of the first, Christ as superior, to the second portion of this main theme: the superiority of faith (10: 19-13: 25). Jews at the time Hebrews was written, were known for falling back into their old habits of Judaism, rather than remaining strong in their own Christian faith. The main reason for this, was that there was security in customs, the fear of persecution and an overarching uncertainty that Christianity was associated with. There is a similarity in today's culture, the fear of the unknown often leads people to stay away from encountering the absolute truth which transforms hearts and solidifies faith. The idea of fulfilling religious requirements instead of pressing into a genuine faith with Christ hinders society today from understanding the hope found in a superior faith journey. Chapter 10 is a reminder of the call to persevere in one's faith; " Remember those earlier day after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering" (10: 32). There is a need to persevere when the Will of God has been done, because then promises will be fulfilled and

one's faith will increase. It is all to better the individual; God does not do anything by accident but with an ultimate purpose in mind.

In reflection, Jesus alone is the only one who can forgive our sins. His death on the cross secured our forgiveness and salvation. By believing in God, we can tap into a peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4: 7). His superiority creates a new found meaning for the world which is only found when believing in Him. It is impossible to substitute His authority over our lives in the process of seeking meaning on earth. The superiority of Christ and the Christian faith is the overarching theme of the book of Hebrews.

High Priest

While the superiority of Christ reigns as the overall theme of the book of Hebrews, there are many megathemes that come to light while reading. The idea of the high priest was a commonly talked about topic. In the Old Testament, the high priest represented the Jews before God. To communicate to God in any other way was "impossible". One had to use the high priest to reach the Father in Heaven and hear His voice. Because of the perfect character and sinless life of Christ, He is the perfect sacrifice for the world's sin. He is the ultimate representative with God who is readily available to connect with His people. This understanding found in the New Testament transformed the way creation viewed Christianity and subsequently viewed Jesus. Many believed, while others were skeptical. Jesus guaranteed access to God the Father. He intercedes for the people so everyone can boldly come to the Father with needs. It allows the weak to come confidently to God and ask for forgiveness and for His help. There was no longer any need for a high priest, and Hebrews reinforced that idea.

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Sacrifice

The word sacrifice manifests in the behaviours of Christ which embodies the scriptures of Hebrews. Christ's sacrifice is the ultimate fulfilment of what the Old Testament represented, God's forgiveness of sin. Because Christ is the perfect sacrifice for sin, the sins of the world is completely forgiven (past, present and future). Hebrews 10 is evidence of the sacrifice of Jesus' love. Verses 5 to 7 reminds the reader of the purpose of sacrifice: " Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: ' Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ' Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, my God'". Sacrifice was no longer viewed as animal or human sacrifices, but rather a the ultimate sacrifice came when Christ died on the cross for the sins of the world. That shift registered again by the words embedded throughout Hebrews saying, " now that sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices" (10: 18).

Automatically, this new idea of sacrifice generates a cleansing atmosphere for the people who believe in Christ. Christ removed sin, which barred us from God's presence and fellowship; we must accept His sacrifice for us. By believing in Him, we are no longer guilty but cleansed and made whole. His sacrifice clears the way for us to have eternal life. Hebrews reinforces a theme of sacrifice which was first introduced anew in the gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John).

Maturity

Maturity is about going deeper in ones faith and growing to enhance a closeness to the Father. Another megatheme found in the book of Hebrews is

the idea of maturity. Now, with an understanding the depth of sacrifice which remains true throughout the New Testament, it is up to faith-filled believers to advance their relationship with Christ. In a healthy relationship with Christ, one can live a blameless life and be set aside for His special use which develops maturity. There is a call to persevere in faith which many fail to do. Hebrews 10: 24-25 reminds us of this command, “ let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another, all the more as you see the Day approaching”. Verse 25 is talking about the importance of growing in community. As we get closer to the day when Christ will return, we will face many spiritual struggles, and even times of persecution. Difficulties should never be excuses for missing church services, mentoring sessions, small groups and healthy community. Rather, as difficulties arise, we should make an even greater effort to be faithful in attendance, for perseverance produces maturity in an individual.

The process of maturing in our faith takes time. Daily commitment and service, results in maturity. When we mature in our faith we are not easily swayed or shaken by temptations or worldly concerns. Hebrews is a book which encourages spiritual, mental and physical maturity, for it warns of the dangers of neglect in those areas.

Faith

The next megatheme is faith, which coincides with maturity quite nicely. Faith is confident trust in God’s promises. God’s greatest promise is the sanctification through Jesus Christ. Though Hebrews overall outlines the importance of faith, chapters 10 and 11 have a set focus on faith. Chapter 11

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reveals faith in action found in the Old Testament. For example, it touches on the character of Noah saying, “ by faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith” (11: 7). Noah was just one of the many examples of steadfast faith; Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Esau and Moses are a few more which are mentioned. Their testimony’s live on because of the writings in Hebrews. If we trust in Jesus for our complete salvation, He will transform us completely. A life of obedience and complete trust is pleasing to God.

Endurance

Living a life of faith, automatically produces endurance which is the next theme in Hebrews. Faith enables Christians to face trials. Genuine faith includes the commitment to stay true to God when we are under extreme pressure. Endurance builds character and ultimately leads to victory. Victory can be a result of trials if we do not give up or turn our back on Christ. It is important to stay true to Christ and constantly pray for endurance through it all. The themes in Hebrews all work together to better the individual. For example, the understanding of sacrifice produces maturity, maturity encourages faith-filled believers, and strong faith requires an all-encompassing endurance.

Hebrews and Today

The book of Hebrews displays a collection of megathemes which fundamentally can transform someone’s life if used properly. For myself, reading through Hebrews was an extremely liberating experience. Being able to dive into the meaning of the verses and chapters, challenged the way I

am actually living out my own personal life. For example, I was humbled when seeing the main theme: superiority of Christ. It is a constant reminder of my human value and how Christ is the actual King of all. The idea of Christ as King is something that you hear all the time, but when God speaks to you, He makes the reality of His superiority so clear and puts you in your place.

People from vast walks of life have the privilege of pulling out the Bible as a constant reminder of the love of Christ. In a sense, the Bible can be used as a self-help text book which can transform anyone who is open to it. Do I think people look to Hebrews today to be challenged and uplifted? Yes. Do I think it is used to the extent that it could be? Not at all; even just meditating on the themes of this book took me a month to digest. It takes patience to read the Bible. Some days the words just jump off the page, while others it can be difficult and frustrating. Nevertheless, there is something that God wants to teach you, even if it doesn't come easy. Hebrews is a book which produces character and pushes the reader to absolute greatness. Understanding came through the pages of Hebrews; I am being pursued by the one who loves me most and wants the very best of me. This is just a couple of the lessons I learnt through my readings.

Reading Hebrews is a literal history lesson of the promises that God presents to His people. The perspective of Christ is revealed through the chapters which shape one's character. It serves as an alter call for His people when the megathemes are absorbed into your heart: the superiority of Christ, the idea of the high priest, what maturity looks like, ultimate faith and unwavering endurance. Whatever you are considering as the focus of life,

Christ is better. He is the perfect revelation of God, the final and complete sacrifice for sin, the compassionate and understanding mediator, and the only way to eternal life. Hebrews skims the surface on the promises Christ gives to the ones He adores most.