

# Better

**It is vital to understand the original audience in order to comprehend fully the meaning.**

## Who Wrote Hebrews?

Short Answer: We don't really know, (but you know the true author is the Holy Spirit)

We do know that whomever it was:

- Knew the Jewish religious system and ceremonial law very well
- Was known personally by his audience - Evidence of this in Chapters 6 and 13
- Was an excellent writer and thinker with a wonderful command of the ancient Greek language. The organization of the argument is comparable only to Romans and is beautifully communicated.

## When was Hebrews written?

The short answer: We don't really know

But we have clues. Take a look at important dates in history because these will shed light in that some events change history significantly. One such event was the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by Rome in 70AD. It was like our 9-11 moment when everything changed for them. So, the fact that it is not mentioned in the book and the fact that rituals and sacrifices are mentioned as still happening at the temple suggest the book is probably written before 70AD. Many scholars suggest 60-69AD.

Based on this time estimate, we can assume that Apostolic missionaries may have gone out to this congregation, potentially even the apostles themselves, maybe even a second generation going, but even still, it is safe to say that there are really not any mature believers or if there are, they are rare. The church was not very old.

## To Whom was it Written

The short answer: We are not totally sure but...

It seems to be a single congregation of Hebrew Christians, somewhere in the Roman Empire, exact location unsure, who are enduring a degree of persecution-the early stages of it-and experiencing the discomfort of this. They are different than the surrounding culture, and they are different than their families and how they were raised, so there is animosity on both sides and they are living in this tension and tempted to leave their faith and go back to Judaism.

It can be compared to the Exodus. The Jews left home and all that was familiar-plus the legalistic, ritualistic practices- and landed in the wilderness where things were not comfortable-plus somewhat dangerous, and they were tempted to go home. Much like us. The author of Hebrews is encouraging them that they have something better—they have Jesus—they lack confidence and are afraid- but Jesus is better.

We face similar temptations. We also want to return to the familiar when things get tough and need to be reminded that Jesus is better.

### **In What Style was it Written?**

It is an epistle-a letter-it differs from other Biblical books such as the Gospels or historical narratives in that you could say those are giving you landscape views while an epistle is more of a snapshot. It is written to a specific group and it addresses issue(s) with a more narrow focus. The epistles complement the other Biblical books.

Hebrews lacks an opening salutation but does have a closing benediction. It has a very orderly argument and draws heavily on the Old Testament. It is built around a structure of 5 warnings—most starting with the word “Therefore” (see Chapters 2,3,5,10, 12). It will show a cycle / proclaiming how Jesus is better and in light of that, here is what you should be thinking. Remember that this is meant for believers.

### **What is the central theme?**

1. The pre-eminence and superiority of Christ = Jesus is better
2. Hebrews intends to build confidence in your faith and to build steadfastness

You want to try to understand this audience. We tend to be too comfortable in some sense with the God of Zion and forget the God of Sinai. They are the same. There is a tension and a balance between God’s approachability and His transcendence. The fear of the Lord has fallen out of favor in our culture and we forget that He is also a consuming fire.

This audience would have heard the verse: *Draw near in confidence to the throne of grace* and been shocked because all their lives they were taught “no one may see my face and live” and No one may linger in His presence, and only the high priest may enter the Holy of Holies.

### **Jesus is better than:**

- The prophets
- Angels
- Moses
- Aaron
- He is the better sacrifice
- He is the better tabernacle / inhabitator
- He is the mediator of a better covenant

You give up nothing by letting go of the old and taking hold of the new and you gain something infinitely better!  
*Jesus is Better.*

*He Is (The Names of God)* - Eric Ludy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NschCa395-M&t=377s>