

Sunday, August 17, 2025—Hebrews: Outline & Place in the Canon

Review

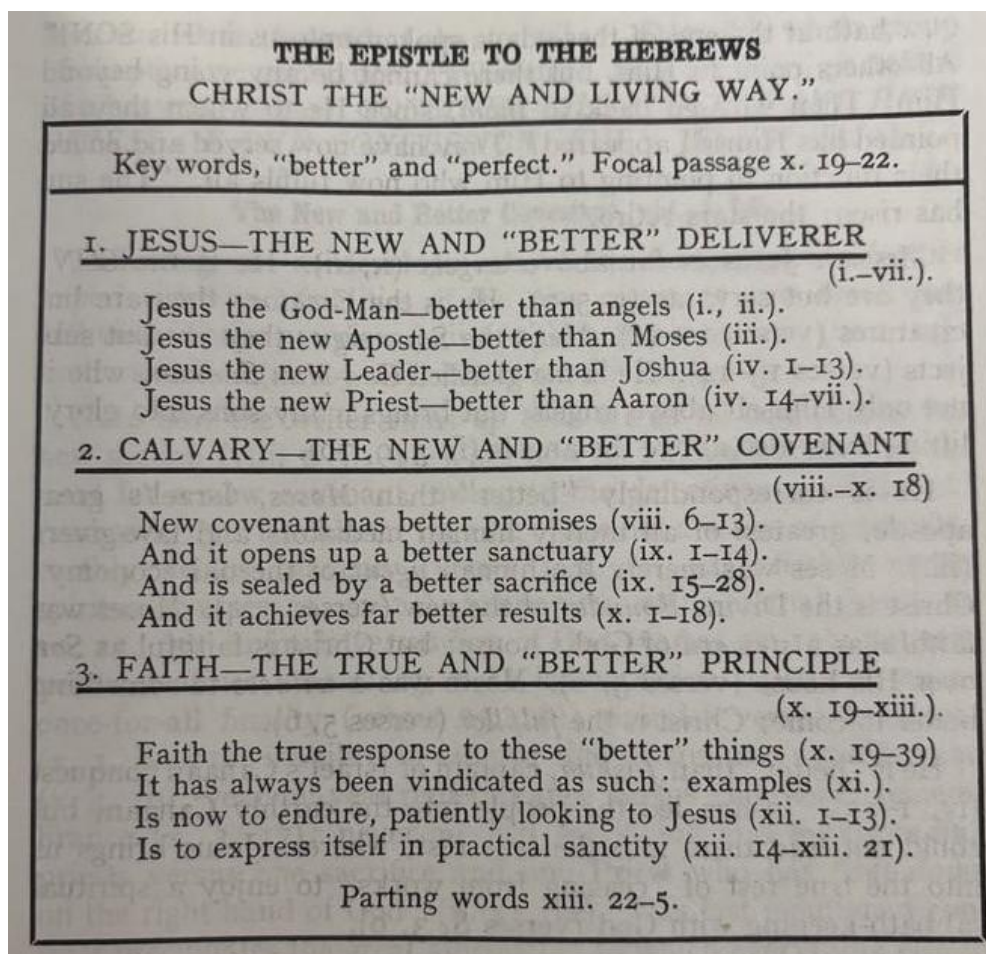
- The basic theme of Hebrews is found in the word “**better**,” occurring 13 times in 12 verses. The word “better” is used to describe the superiority of Christ in His Person and His work.
 - Heb. 1:4; 6:9; 7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24
 - Christ offers better revelation, position, priesthood, covenant, sacrifice, and power.
- **Finality** is a second theme, the finality of Christ, and of the Cross, and of the New Covenant. The word “once” occurs 11 times in 11 verses.
 - Heb. 6:4; 7:27; 9:7, 12, 26-28; 10:2, 10; 12:26-27
- “**Perfect**” is another theme in the book of Hebrews occurring 9 times in 9 verses.
 - Heb. 2:10; 5:9; 7:19; 9:9, 11; 10:1; 11:40; 12:23; 13:21
- “**Heavenly**” is a fourth theme occurring 6 times in 6 verses.
 - Heb. 3:1; 6:4; 8:5; 9:23; 11:16; 12:22
- 20 titles are used to describe Christ’s attributes and accomplishments in the book of Hebrews.

Titles For Christ in Hebrews

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|---|---|
| • Heir of All Things (1:2) | • Lord (Heb. 1:10) |
| • Creator (1:2) | • The One Who Sanctifies (2:11) |
| • Son (Son of God) (1:2, 5, 8) | • Apostle and High Priest of Our Profession (3:1) |
| • The Brightness of God’s Glory / Express Image of His Person (1:3) | • Great High Priest (4:4; 7:26) |
| • Upholder of All Things (1:3) | • Sinless / Holy One (4:15; 7:26) |
| • Purger of Sins (1:3) | • Author of Eternal Salvation (5:9) |
| • Seated at the Right Hand of God (1:3; 8:1) | • Forerunner (6:20) |
| • Firstbegotten (1:6) | • Surety of a Better Testament (7:22) |
| • God (1:8) | • Mediator of a Better Covenant (8:6; 9:15) |
| • King / Enthroned One (1:8; 12:2) | • The Great Shepherd (13:20) |

Outline

- The following outline is taken from J. Sidlow Baxter's *Explore the Book*.



- Regarding the outline/structure of Hebrews, Baxter states the following:
 - “The epistle is a methodical and progressive treatise, more regular in structure and rhetorical in form than any of its predecessors. It has suffered much, we think, at the hands of writers who have worked out clever analysis rather than perceiving the real hinges on which its argument turns, and the focal truths in each of its three main parts.” (Baxter, 268)
- Hebrews 10:19-22—marks a break in the book, according to Baxter.
 - “Up to that point the treatise is almost wholly *doctrinal*, whereas from there onward it is almost wholly *hortatory* [exhortation i.e., the walk of faith in light of the doctrine].” (Baxter, 268)
- Baxter adds the following regarding the outline:

- “It will be noticed, also by any careful reader, that in chapters 1-7 the emphasis is upon the *person* of Christ; that in chapters 8-10 it is upon the mediatorial *work* of Christ; and that from chapter 10:19 to the end of the epistles it is upon faith as the true response toward the person and work of Christ.” (Baxter, 268)

Place In The Canon

- The book of Hebrews marks the first of the Hebrew Epistles (Hebrews to Revelation) sometimes also referred to as:
 - Hebrews Christian Epistles
 - Jewish Christian Epistles
 - General Epistles
- Ephesians 2:7—The “Ages to Come” is the focus of Hebrews through Revelation. These books focus on the final stage of Israel’s prophetic program.
- Israel’s need for the instructions contained in these books was anticipated by the Lord Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry.
 - John 14:25-26; 16:12-13
 - Daniel 12:4—this book will be highly relevant in the “time of the end.”
- The emphasis in Hebrews to Revelation is on the final fulfillment of Israel’s earthly program.
- Hebrews 1:1-2—the people to whom this book is addressed have a history in God’s prophetic dealings.
 - Romans 15:8
 - Acts 2:16-21—Hebrews picks up with where the nation of Israel was in the book of Acts, i.e., facing the fulfillment of the last days of her prophetic Scriptures.
- Hebrews 2:3-4—the context of this book is the earthly ministry of Christ. The salvation spoken of here was first spoken by the Lord and confirmed by signs, wonders, divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- Historically when did these things happen? In the gospels during the earthly ministry of Christ and the early Acts period after the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.
- Hebrews 2:5—the writer explicitly states that he is speaking about the world “to come.”

- James 1:1—who is James writing to?
- I Peter 2:9—who is the royal priesthood, and holy nation?
 - Exodus 19:5-6
- II Peter 3:1-4—Peter instructs his readers to take comfort in the prophetic Scriptures.
 - Matthew 24—the Lord warned about such things in the Olivet Discourse.
- Jude 17-18
- Revelation 1:1-3, 9-10
- In Hebrews through Revelation the time past distinction between Israel and the Gentiles has been reinstated and the “Middle Wall” is back up.
 - James 1:1
 - I Peter 1:1
 - I Peter 2:9-13
 - Revelation 2:9; 7:3-8
- Regarding the placement of the Hebrew Epistles J. Sidlow Baxter wrote:
 - “As we have noted in a former study, these final nine (Hebrews to Revelation) are distinguished from the earlier epistles by their distinctively Hebrew standpoint and atmosphere. Unlike the first nine (Romans to 2 Thessalonians), which are all addressed to Christian churches, not one of these last nine is so addressed. The first of them is clearly to Hebrews, as the opening words show (i.e. “fathers” and “us”). The epistle of James is sent to “the twelve tribes scattered abroad” (1.1). Peter’s two epistles are to “the sojourners of the Dispersion” (1 Pet. 1. 1; 2 Pet. 111.1). Not all of them so specifically address Jewish readers, but they all carry incidental indications of their Jewish direction (see “synagogue” in Jas. i1. 2; “Gentiles” in | Pet. 11. 12, iv. 3; 3 John 7; Rev. x1. 2). The Jewish cast of Jude and Revelation are clear to all.

Again, unlike the Christian Church Epistles, which open up to us the wonderful “mystery” of the Church as the mystic “body” and “bride” and “temple” of Christ, these nine Hebrew Christian Epistles have nothing whatever of such teaching. There is nothing here about the members having died and risen with Christ; nothing of Jews and Gentiles

being one new spiritual organism; nothing of sitting together “in the heavenlies in Christ.”

Then again, there is a provocative contrast (either seeming or real) between the two groups in their attitude to the final preservation of believers. What a difference between the out-and-out guarantee of Romans viii. 29, 30, 38, 39 and the disturbing warning of Hebrews vi. 4-6, x. 26-9!—or between the lovely reassurances of Ephesians ii. 7-10, Philippians i. 6, and 2 Peter i. 10, Revelation xi. 5, i. 5!

Now because of these differentia, i.e. their Hebrew standpoint, their silence on the Church as the “mystery,” and their apparent retrogression as to the ultimate security of the believer, these Hebrew Christian Epistles have been thought to mark a backward rather than a forward step in the unfolding revelation of Divine truth. But to regard them as such is to misunderstand and misappreciate them.

Think again: Israel had now twice rejected Jesus as Messiah-King: first when He offered Himself in the flesh, next when He drew near again through the Pentecostally ended witnesses of His resurrection and Saviourhood. But the crucifixion of Israel’s Messiah had been Divinely overruled to provide salvation for the whole race. “The grace of God that bringeth salvation had appeared to all men” (Titus ii. 11). It was first of all necessary, therefore, that the meaning of the Cross should be expounded for Jew and Gentile alike; and this we have in the first four Christian Church Epistles [Romans-Galatians]. Then, it was time to release the hitherto hidden “mystery” of the Church, uniting Jew and Gentile in the one spiritual organism; and this we have in the next three Church Epistles [Ephesians-Colossians]. Then, to complete the revelation concerning the Church, the two Thessalonian letters devote themselves to the Lord’s return and the Church’s translation. But there is a whole area of vitally related truth still requiring to be unfolded, and this is what we have in these Hebrew Christian Epistles [Ages To Come].

Once this “whosoever” Gospel is propagated among men in general, and the “mystery” of the Church divulged among believers, the question inevitably arises: How does all this relate to Judaism, the religion of the Jews, the one and only authentically Divine religion ever given to men? This question is the more acute because the Saviour Himself as a Jew honoured the covenant observances; the first believers on Him were Jews; and the Gospel itself is “to the Jew first” (Rom. i. 16). The Apostle Paul has already shown the relation of the Gospel to Israel dispensationally (Rom. ix.-xi.); but what of its relation to the ordinances, the offerings, the priesthood, the temple? Is it thinkable that all these Divine institutions are now done away? So the first of these nine Hebrew Christian Epistles takes this up. How instructively it opens the subject and how conclusively it closes the question are best appreciated by those who have explored it most attentively. But that is not all; the Holy Spirit has overruled the discussion to give us (what has nowhere earlier been developed) a most wonderful revelation of our Lord’s heavenly priesthood and intercessory ministry.” (Baxter, 259-261)

- The placement of Hebrews is being messed with in forthcoming editions of the Critical Text (UBS6/NA29). See Peter Gurry's article [Changes to Expect with UBS6/NA29](#).

Changes to Expect with UBS6/NA29

Posted by [Peter Gurry](#) at 12:00 · 27 

While doing some work yesterday on the history of the Nestle-Aland, I decided to take a peek at the upcoming NA29/UBS6 editions. I couldn't find a page for the NA29 at the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft website and the UBS6 isn't set for release until Oct. 19. What is available now is the reader's edition that shares the same text. I've given a screenshot of the page below. Besides the very obvious typographic change (which may be unique to the reader's edition), the most notable updates are these:

- The text adopts the ECM text for all available books. That means Mark, Acts, Catholic Letters, and Revelation. (ECM Matthew is not set for release until December, so it does not include that.)
- The order of books does not follow Erasmus any more but reverts to what is found in earlier MSS (and editions like WH). That means Gospels, Acts, Catholic Letters, Paul (with Hebrews *before* the Pastorals), Revelation.
- Previously “missing verses” are back in the main text with double brackets. This is the most surprising update and one I did not know about until now. Here's how the intro explains it: “Unlike in earlier editions of the Nestle-Aland and the UBS Greek New Testament, including the Reader's Edition, all verses assigned a number within the New Testament are now integrated into the text in double brackets. Previously this was only the case for individual passages which traditionally enjoyed an exceptional position in the church (e.g. Mk 16.9–20; Jn 7.53–8.11).”

You can [read the introduction here](#). Also don't forget about the release of the new *Textual Commentary* that will accompany the UBS6. 2025 is shaping up to be a banner year for NTTC.

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*Suggested new order for the
N.T. books in new Critical
Editions of the Greek N.T.*

NA-29

UBS-6

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