

Hebrews

Verse by Verse teaching on video, audio and with notes:

From 2007-08 →

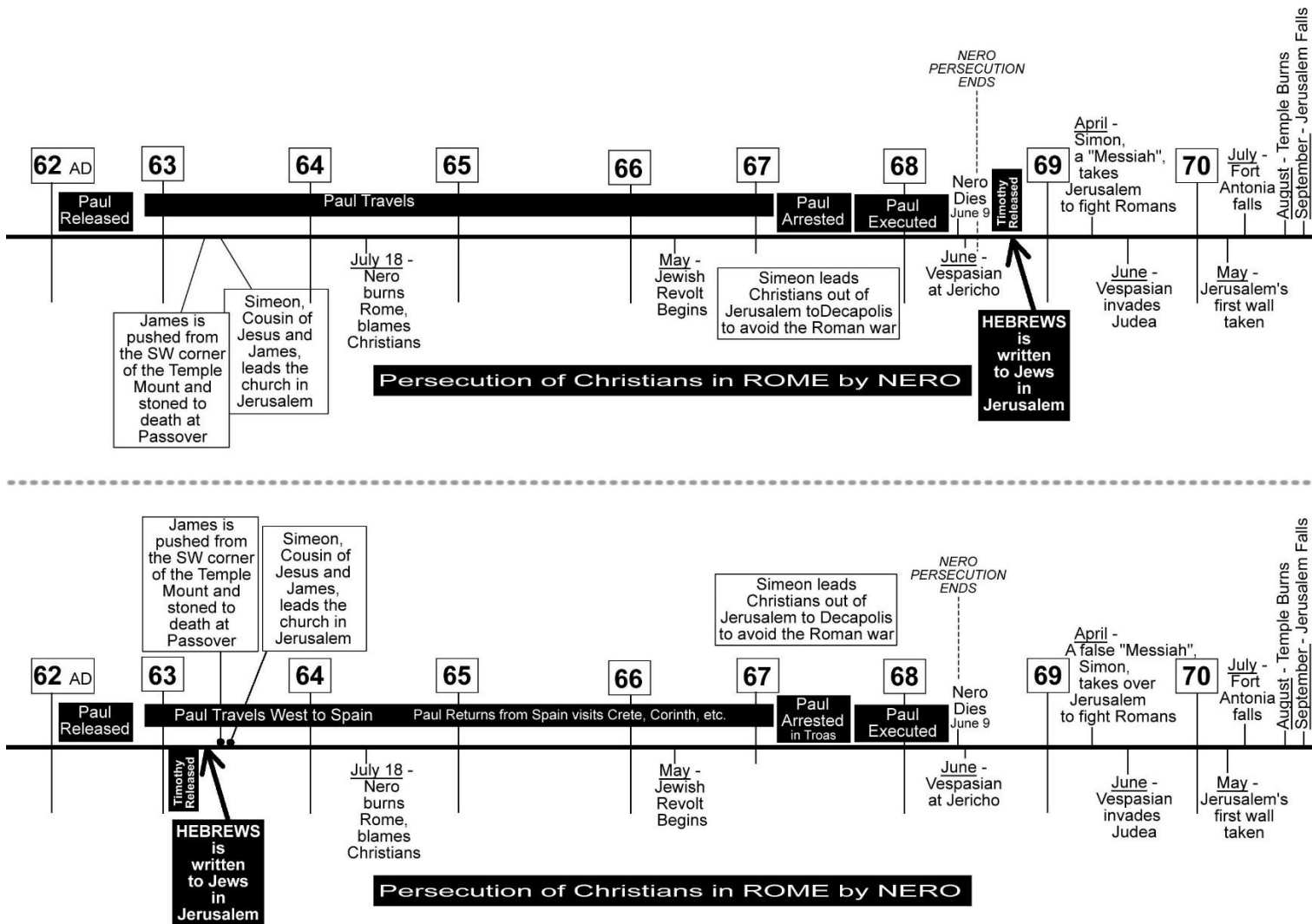
https://www.generationword.com/audio_series/NewT_audio_series_pages/Hebrews_audio_pages/hebrews_2007-08_page_1.html

From 2021 →

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From 2011 “Framework” overview →

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Who Were the People Who Received the Letter?

1. The Title

- a. The title "To (the) Hebrews" (προς ἑβραίους) was not the title it was known by in the first century.
- b. προς ἑβραίους first appears at the head of this epistle at around 180 AD. This Papyri is called the Chester Beatty Papyri. P46 of the Chester Beatty Papyri contains the entire book of Hebrews (along with parts of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians and 1 Thessalonians. On folio 21 the title "To the Hebrews" appears for the first time.
- c. Clement of Alexandria (180 AD) writes that this book was written "for the Hebrews".
- d. Tertullian (220) knows it as "Hebrews"
- e. We do not know if this was the original title and if it was, who were the "Hebrews"? Did they live in Jerusalem? Outside of Israel? Were they following Judaism? or, were they a fringe group?
- f. We must not let the title dictate who received this letter but instead let the context of the letter speak.

2. They are familiar with the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament since this is what the author quotes to them

3. They are Jewish believers

- a. They may from a Greek culture since they use the Septuagint.
- b. They may be a fringe group from Orthodox Judaism (traditional rabbinical) since they have some unique practices that match the Essenes of the Qumran society. (They may have been Hellenistic-Jews who had been influenced by the Qumran
 - i. Ceremonial washings beyond the law were typical of the Essenes. These "washings" are mentioned in 6:2. These washing preceded all rituals and meals.
 - ii. The Essenes were waiting for a messiah of David (royal) and a messiah of Aaron (priestly)
 - iii. The Essenes membership with this community was their New Covenant
 - iv. The Essenes were an eschatological group who were waiting for the Messiah, a priest and a king.
 - v. The Essenes set importance on the role of angels in history and in eschatology

- vi. The Essenes were a group who lived away from the cities and took up residence in the wilderness. They found strength and hope from the Exodus passages about Israel's wilderness experience. The author of Hebrews goes directly after these verses.
- c. They are told they should have been teachers by now (5:12) which may indicate they were not normal Jews but Levites or converts from the priesthood. If they were from the priesthood then these verses would have been a little more pointed:
 - i. 5:12, they should have become teachers in the Christian community as they had been under the law.
 - ii. 3:1, Jesus is "the high priest whom we confess", and not the ruling Jewish high priest.
 - iii. 6:6, "crucifying the Son of God all over again" would mean the priest rejected and killed him the first time and now they are going to do it again.
 - iv. 13:10, concerning their fellow brother priests who continued in the temple service and ate the offerings it says, "We have an altar from which those who minister in the tabernacle have no right to eat."
- d. They had never seen Jesus preach (2:3)
- e. They had once faced persecution early in their Christian life (10:32-34) but martyrdom had not occurred (12:4)
 - i. This could indicate they had not been in Jerusalem since Saul had killed Jewish believers there.
- f. They had shown evidence of their faith by standing with those who had been persecuted. (6:10; 10:34)
- g. They had stopped growing in their faith and had drawing back to the place the instructions would have to begin over. (5:11-14; 10:35-39)
- h. They are believers even though they need further instruction and their faith is deficient. (5:11-6:3)
- i. They would appear to live in a city (13:14)
- j. They had stopped going to church (10:25)
 - i. A Jew who became a Christian would be forsaken by his family, cut off from his inheritance, taken outside the city and banned from the temple.
 - ii. The temptation to renounce their public confession of Christ was great.
 - iii. Attending church and gathering with other believers just added to the problem.
- k. They had some connection with Italy: "Those from Italy send you their greetings."
 - i. The readers were in Italy and there were some native Italians with the writer.
 - ii. The writer was in Italy when he wrote the letter

Conclusion: The original readers of this letter were living in a city. They were Hellenistic Jews who read the Septuagint and had not been mainline Rabbinic Jews. They had instead either been Essenes (Qumran) or been influenced by one of these groups. They had come to the faith through an apostle or an associate of an apostle. They had faced persecution, but not bloodshed and the social rejection was wearing them down. Many of them had started drifting back into their Jewish ways.

Date of the Book

1. Clement of Rome who wrote around 85 AD:
 - a. Quotes from this book in 1 Clement 36:1-5:

"This is the way, dearly beloved, wherein we found our salvation, even Jesus Christ the High priest of our offerings, the Guardian and Helper of our weakness. Through Him let us look steadfastly unto the heights of the heavens; through Him we behold as in a mirror His faultless and most excellent visage; through Him the eyes of our hearts were opened; through Him our foolish and darkened mind spring up unto the light; through Him the Master willed that we should taste of the immortal knowledge Who being the brightness of His majesty is so much greater than angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name. For so it is written 'Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers aflame of fire' but of His Son the Master said thus, 'You are My Son, I this day have begotten you. Ask of Me, and I will give you the Gentiles for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession.' And again He says unto Him, 'Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'"
 - b. Clement's use of Hebrews shows two things:
 - i. Hebrews was in existence before 85 AD
 - ii. Hebrews had already been accepted as an authoritative book which meant it was viewed as having an apostolic connection.
2. Those who accepted the gospel had accepted it from those who heard Jesus speak and they had time to grow and fall away before this book was written. (2:3)
3. Timothy was still alive (13:23) but in prison.
 - a. This is not recorded in Acts or any of Paul's letters.
 - b. Timothy was free when Paul died in 68 AD (2 Tim.).
 - c. The fact that Timothy is mentioned and not Paul suggests that Paul had already died.
4. There had been an early persecution but serious persecution (martyrdom) was still a thing of the future. The minor persecution would have come from the Jewish community rejecting the believing Jews but Nero's persecution that began in Rome in 64 AD would have still been local around Rome and not yet in Jerusalem (but, may have been spreading their way.)
5. The temple service is spoken of as having given way to Jesus but was still spoken of in the present tense as still occurring.
 - a. 5:1-4, "For every high priest who is chosen from among men is appointed. . . to offer. .he can deal gently. . .he himself is beset with weakness. . . .he is bound to offer. . . one does not take . . .but he is called."
 - b. 7:8 – "In one case, the tenth is collected by men who die. . ."
 - c. 7:21, "They have become priests. . ."
 - d. 7:23
 - e. 7:27, "He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily."
 - f. 7:28, "The law appoints as high priests men who are weak."
 - g. 8:13 – "By calling this covenant 'new,' he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear."
 - i. This indicates the old covenant was still functioning but would soon disappear.
 - ii. If the temple had already been destroyed (70 AD) then clearly the new covenant had come spiritually and the old covenant had ceased and disappeared physically.

- iii. 9:6-9 – The verbs are in the present tense (even though the NIV does not translate them this way)
 - iv. 9:13
 - v. 9:25, “the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year.”
 - vi. 10:1-3 concerning sacrifices – “they would have ceased to be offered”
 - vii. 10:11, “Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices.”
 - viii. 13:10 – “We have an altar from which those who minister at the tabernacle have no right to eat.”
 - ix. 13:11 – “. . . the bodies are burnt outside the camp.”
6. If the temple had been destroyed already then two questions need to be asked:
 - a. Why is it still a temptation to resort back to the sacrifices of animals and the temple rituals if they no longer exist
 - b. Why does the author not come right out and say, “Hey, look the temple is gone. What more proof do you need that God is done with the old system??”
 7. The coming Roman armies may be near since 13:13 encourages them to come outside the city. These words echo Jesus warning to flee Jerusalem when you see it being surrounded.
 8. The church must be in the early days yet because no titles such as bishop, deacon, etc. are mentioned. The church still appears to be assembling together for strengthening one another without the hierarchy that was developing even in Paul’s day.
 9. The forty years of the Exodus wandering mentioned in 3:7 may be hinting at the fulfillment of the forty years Jesus warned about in 30 AD.

Conclusion:

- I believe the book of Hebrews was written before 70 AD for a variety of reasons.
- I would venture a guess at a more specific date after Paul’s death which at the earliest was the fall of 67 AD and latest was the spring of 68 AD.
- The Jewish Wars with Rome began in 66 AD.
- Titus and the Roman legions arrived at the northern wall of Jerusalem on Passover 70 AD. Five months later the walls fell and the temple was burned.
- I place the date of the writing of this letter at 68-69 AD as Roman legions were approaching Jerusalem.

Authorship:

What Was the Author Like?

1. The author seems to share a common background and theology base with the readers. If they are Jewish then he may be Jewish. If they are Hellenistic Jews they he himself may have a Greek background.
2. The author quotes from the Septuagint.
3. The author (and, the readers) is fully acquainted with:
 - a. OT persons
 - b. OT institutions especially concerning the temple services
 - c. OT text
 - d. The Mosaic Law
 - e. The Authority of Scripture as God's inspired Word
4. The author uses rabbinic teaching styles and tendencies:
 - a. He establishes points and defends arguments from the silence of scripture (7:3; 14)
 - b. Extra-scriptural traditions (such as the angels giving the Law in 2:2)

Who Wrote the Book of Hebrews?

1. It is interesting to begin by noting that Clement of Rome (in the west) showed his acceptance of it by quoting from it in 85 AD. Clement does not give the author's name but he does mention Paul when he quotes from First Corinthians. We then assume that it was not Paul and that Clement may not have known.
2. In the West;
 - a. The Muratorian Canon:
 - i. a list of the accepted books of the Bible called The Muratorian Canon, a fragment of parchment that has a list of books recognized as scripture and authoritative, is dated to around 170-190 AD. This document leaves out of its accepted books:
 1. 1 and 2 Peter,
 2. James,
 3. Hebrews
 4. 3 John.
 - b. In the West around 200 AD Tertullian writes as though it is commonly known that Barnabas wrote the letter.
 - i. The phrase "word of encouragement" of Heb. 13:22 matches Acts 4:36 description of Barnabas as being the "son of encouragement"
 - ii. The insight and understanding of the Levitical service and the priesthood would fit that of a Levite, which Barnabas was:
"Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet." Acts 4:36, 37
 - iii. Heb. 2:4 says the gospel "was confirmed to **us** by those who heard him (Jesus)" would mean that Barnabas had not personally heard Jesus preach.

3. In the East:
 - a. Clement of Alexandria (around 200 AD)
 - i. Wrote that his teacher, Pantaenus, claimed that Paul wrote Hebrews. He says Paul left off his name because Jesus is the Apostle to the Hebrews and not Paul.
 - ii. Wrote that Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews in Hebrew and that Luke translated it into Greek.
 - b. Origen, who followed Pantaenus as Alexandria's teacher, rejected Paul's authorship of Hebrews but accepted the book as scripture.
 - i. Origen said the thoughts were Paul's but the style of writing was not.
 - ii. Origen said it lacked Paul's rudeness of expression which Paul himself claimed to have.
 - iii. Origen said that he suggested that Luke or Clement of Rome wrote it, but concluded that "God alone knows who wrote it."
 - c. The Eastern Church continued to promote the book as Paul's and continued to accept it.
 - d. In the Chester Beatty Papyrus (200-250 AD) which were found in Egypt, includes the book of Hebrews and places it after Paul's letter to the Romans.
4. 250 AD - Cyprian (d. 258 AD), from Carthage in the west, was a bishop and wrote during the time of persecution. He was one of the first to claim that there was only one true church authority and used the OT priesthood to defend this position and the clergy. In all of his writings he never uses Hebrews since it would not support its position
5. 400 AD - Jerome and Augustine sided with the East in accepting the book and Paul's authorship around 400 AD. The rest followed.
6. 393-419 AD - The Synod of Hippo in 393 and the Third Synod of Carthage in 397 credited Paul with 13 epistles. By the Sixth Synod of Carthage in 419 Paul was given credit for 14 epistles which included Hebrews.
7. 1250 AD - Thomas Aquinas said that Luke translated Paul's Hebrew letter into Greek.
8. 1400's AD - Erasmus (1400's) said Paul could not have written Hebrews.
9. 1520 - Luther suggested Apollos
10. 1550 - Calvin thought it was written (not translated) by Luke or Clement of Rome
 - a. (Clement could not have written it because it was written 30 years before he wrote First Clement to the Corinthians.)
 - b. (The two styles are different with the author of Hebrews is superior to the author of Clement.)
11. Recently Priscilla and Aquila have been suggested.
 - a. The fact that Priscilla was a woman explains why the name was dropped.
 - b. This has support from the fact that:
 - i. they were teachers who taught Apollos
 - ii. they did know Timothy
 - iii. they had lived in Italy so they had friends in Italy and from Italy living elsewhere.

Conclusion:

- The thought of the Epistle is not Paul but it is supported by Paul's teaching
- The language is not Paul
- The technical use of the Old Testament is not Paul
- The author:
 - Had heard the gospel from those who heard Jesus speak
 - Well versed in the Septuagint
 - Interpreted with creative exegetical principle
 - Had a brilliant vocabulary
 - Masterful rhetorical style
 - Powerful in the use of the scriptures
 - He was a Hellenist
- I think the writer was Barnabas because:
 - He was a Hellenistic Jew from Cyprus
 - He was a Levite which means:
 - he would have been exposed to higher Jewish training in scripture,
 - trained for and possibly served in the temple,
 - was by his tribal responsibility a teacher,
 - son of encouragement,
 - taught and traveled with Paul so would have been influenced by him,
 - Taught in many Gentile churches.

The Five Warnings in Hebrews		
2:1-4	Do not ignore this great salvation.	"If the message spoken by angels was binding and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?" (2:2)
3:1-4:13	Do not let unbelief keep you from entering the rest.	"See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. . . We see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief. Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it." (3:12, 19; 4:1)
5:11-6:20	Do not be lazy or slow to learn. (6:12; 5:11, <i>νωθροί</i> means dull, slow, sluggish, lazy)	"We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn . . . you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again," (5:11-12)
10:26-39	Do not keep rejecting Jesus. Do not treat the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing.	"If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God." (10:26, 27)
12:14-29	Do not refuse the Holy Spirit when he calls you.	"See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven." (12:25)

THE GENERAL EPISTLES ARE:

- Hebrews
- James
- First Peter
- Second Peter
- First John
- Second John
- Third John
- Jude

The General Epistles Supplement Paul's Teaching

Paul emphasized FAITH
 The writer of Hebrews encouraged GROWTH
 James stressed DEEDS
 Peter taught HOPE
 John focused on LOVE
 Jude's message was PURITY

HEBREWS	68 AD
<i>"Fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess." 3:1</i>	
Author: Unknown, maybe Barnabas	
Written From: Unknown, maybe Corinth or Asia sent to Rome, or in Rome and sent elsewhere	
Sent To: Jewish Christian leaders probably in a Messianic synagogue in an unknown city, maybe Rome or Corinth.	
Purpose: A "word of exhortation" to encourage believers to continue to grow and mature and avoid returning to Jewish ceremonies, regulations, rituals and sacrifices	
Theme: Jesus is supreme.	
Basic Outline:	
• 1:1 - 4:13 – Superiority of Jesus to prophets, angels, Moses, Joshua • 4:14-7:28 – Superiority of Jesus' Priesthood • 8:1-10:39 – Superiority of Jesus' Covenant, Temple and Sacrifice • 11:1-12:29 – Examples of Persevering Faith • 13:1-21 – Christian Ethics and Behavior	
Healthy Doctrine:	
• The New Covenant • High Priesthood of Jesus • Sufficiency of Jesus • Perseverance	

In chapter one Jesus is introduced as the means by which God spoke to us in these last days. Jesus is superior to the angels and greater than creation.

In chapter two the readers are warned not to drift away from Jesus. The punishment for such a failure would be more severe than the punishment Israel received for disobeying the message of an angel, since this message was brought to us by the Lord himself. Jesus has become a man to fulfill all the righteousness that man needed to fulfill. Jesus lived as a man, suffered as a man and is able to serve as the high priest for men before God.

Chapter three begins by showing that Jesus is superior to Moses even though Moses was faithful. The readers are warned not to be like the exodus generation who did not have faith, but instead, lived in unbelief. The exodus generation did not enter the Promised Land because of disobedience that came from their unbelief.

In chapter four the readers are told that the promised rest still is available through faith in Jesus. More than that, Jesus is introduced as the great high priest for mankind before God. The eternal God who became a man is also our high priest who understands our condition as men and is there to help us.

In chapter five the author begins to show that the Old Testament, even the law itself, promised another priesthood besides Aaron's. The author has more to say about this, but realizes his readers' ability to understand and perceive the revelation of God (which includes the priesthood of Jesus) has faded away.

Chapter six continues the rebuke but informs the readers there is only one way to move – and that is forward. They cannot go back into their unregenerate state. They are believers and will either grow and produce or become a field that is overrun with weeds that produces nothing useful.

In chapter seven the author returns to the priesthood of Jesus and compares it to the priesthood of Melchizedek from the book of Genesis which is also a part of the law. Jesus' priesthood is a better priesthood with a better covenant and better promises. Jesus is a priest who is eternal and has access to God because he is perfect and is God himself. But even more, the fact that he was a man made it possible for him to be offered as the perfect sacrifice for man's sins.

Chapter eight continues to analyze Jesus' priesthood. Here the author explains that Jesus entered the real temple which is in heaven as a high priest and actually dealt with sin. The earthly temple was only a shadow or example of the reality of what Jesus did. The result of this is the new covenant promised in Jeremiah 31:31, which includes three main points:

1. The Law of God written on believers' hearts – they will have a new nature.
2. All believers will know God – they will have a personal relationship with God.
3. God will remember their sins no more – the penalty for sin has been forever paid.

Chapters nine and ten compare the earthly temple (or, tabernacle) and its rituals and sacrifices with the heavenly temple and the work of Jesus Christ. Temple sacrifice in Jerusalem was a routine that had to be repeated because it was never effective. It simply taught of a great reality. This reality was fulfilled when Jesus actually died, paid for sin, and entered into the true temple in heaven. The work of Jesus need never be repeated because it was not a ritual but a real sacrifice that paid for the sins of men.

Chapter ten ends with the author encouraging his readers not to give up hoping in Jesus because his was the only effectual sacrifice and the only way of actual salvation. Many of the readers had been tempted to give up on the gospel of Jesus and return to their familiar Jewish rituals. The author says this would be a mistake since there is no other way. The choice is salvation through Jesus or destruction from God.

Chapter eleven gives a list of men and women of faith who believed the promises of God and continued to trust them even though they did not see them fulfilled in their lives. These people had faith. They trusted God's promises and proved it by how they lived. The list of people begins in Genesis and continues through the Old Testament, even including the time between the testaments, all the way up to the early church leaders (13:7).

Chapter twelve tells the readers it is their turn to live a life of faith and not give up. They are reminded that suffering does not mean the gospel is not true but instead means God is disciplining and training us for the day his kingdom does come. We are not looking for a natural mountain like the people of the exodus, but the heavenly mountain – the city of God which is heaven itself.

In chapter thirteen the author goes through a list of expectations for Christian morality, ethics and social behavior. He reminds them that even Jesus was rejected by the world. The Christian sacrifices are not burnt offerings but instead lips that confess Jesus, praises offered to God, and the doing of good deeds for the world and believers.