

HEBREWS

*Jesus is greater than the old covenant*

WRITTEN

Approx. 64 AD

KEY VERSE

*"But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises."*

8:6

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PURPOSE

Prevent Jewish Christians from choosing to walk away from their faith in Jesus.

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## INTRODUCTION

The letter to the Hebrews is anonymous but was associated with Paul early on, although this does not necessarily mean that it was Paul himself who wrote it. The author was probably in the same circle as Paul since he knew Timothy (13:23), and the letter was therefore considered "apostolic". It appears to have been written to Jewish Christians in Rome who were persecuted by Nero in AD 64-68. Perhaps they considered returning to Judaism to avoid persecution.

The author often quotes the OT and has great insight into the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. He makes use of many "typologies" (persons, events, etc. in the OT that point toward and find their fulfillment in Jesus) to show how Jesus surpasses everything in the old covenant. The main point is that the new covenant is better than the old in every way (8:6) and that the law only contained a shadow of all the good things to come, not the true picture of things (10:1). Perhaps the most important text for the author is Psalm 110, to which he refers several times.

Since everything pointed to Jesus, who surpasses the old covenant in all areas, it is no small thing to make a "strategic" apostasy to avoid persecution for a period or to deliberately opt out of faith for other reasons. Therefore, we find many calls to take the faith seriously and not become lethargic, and a couple of extra powerful passages where he describes the seriousness of apostasy (6:4-6, 10:26-31).

In chapter 11, he encourages them by telling them about many people in the OT who had faith and trusted in God even though they did not see the promise of God's eternal city (11:10) being fulfilled. He also encourages them to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus, who has gone before them (12:1-3), and to see the difficulties as God's discipline for their own good (12:10).

### AUTHOR?

**Paul?**

Listed among the letters of Paul in the oldest manuscripts…

**Barnabas?**

Tertullian (160 – approx. 240)

**Luke?**

Possibly Paul's secretary, or translated from Paul (Clement of Alexandria (150 – approx. 215), Eusebius (264 – approx. 340))

**Clement of Rome (ca. 35-99)?**

Hippolytus (approx.170–235). Possible quotations in 1 Clement.

**Apollo?**

*"He spoke with great fervor"* (Acts 18:25). Luther and many today believe Apollo was the author.

**Silvanus?**

Wrote 1 Peter. Advanced Greek.

**Priscilla?**

But: *"And what more shall I say?"* in 11:32a = masculine participle

**PAUL?**

Arguments against:

* Not an eyewitness himself (2:3) - vs. Gal 1-2.
* "Higher" Greek than in Paul's letters.
* The images used are not typical of Paul.
* Mentions himself unusually little.

2-3 AD: Irenaeus, Gaius of Rome, and Hippolytus thought Paul was not the author. Jerome put it last among Paul's letters in the Latin Bible (Vulgate) because of the authorship question.

**KNOWS PAUL?**

Knows Timothy (13:23), several similar words and expressions as Paul...

Was used early, but for the Western Church (Rome), it was a problem that it was anonymous - even if the content is theologically correct.

* Origen (185 - approx. 254): Defends its canonicity on the basis that "the thoughts in the letter are wonderful".

The Eastern Church linked it to "a Pauline circle" towards the end of the 100th century. The Western Church followed suit and accepted it as canonical towards the end of the fourth century.

Conclusion: Pauline, but not necessarily by Paul. Had apostolic authority even though it did not come directly from Paul.

### STRUCTURE

1:1-3 Jesus is greater than the OT prophets

Ch. 1-2 Jesus is greater than the angels and the Law of Moses

Ch. 3-4 Jesus is greater than Moses and the promised land

Ch. 5-7 Jesus is greater than Abraham and the high priest

Ch. 8-10 Jesus is greater than the sacrifices in the old covenant

Ch. 11 Role models from the OT

Ch. 12 Hold on and fix your eyes on Jesus!

Ch. 13 Conclusion

### TYPOLOGY

Consists of a *typos* (example/model in the OT) and an *antitypos* (the equivalent in the NT).

The model points forward in time toward fulfillment, which also surpasses the model.

Can be persons (Adam, Melchizedek), events (the flood, the bronze serpent), institutions (temple, festivals), places (Jerusalem, Zion), objects (altar of burnt offering), and positions (prophet, priest, king).

Everyone has their fulfillment in Jesus.

### RECIPIENTS?

The heading "To the Hebrews" is not original but is from approx. 200 AD

A lot of OT material 🡪 probably Judeo-Christians (agreement on this until the end of the 19th century)

But he uses only the Greek translation of the OT (Septuagint)

13:19: The author knows them

13:24: *"Those from Italy send you their greetings."* Are they greeting *from* Italy or sending greetings home *to* Italy?

* They know (of) Timothy (13:23), and so did the church in Rome (Rom 16:21)

Most common view: Jewish Christians in Rome

### WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN?

Probably written before AD 70 because the destruction of the temple would have been a very good argument that the old covenant was over and done with.

He says that the sacrifices are still offered (9:9, 13:10-11)

The argument about Jesus vs. the old covenant…

+ Jewish Christians in Rome as recipients

+ probably before the year 70

= the traditional view:

Probably written to prevent Jewish Christians in Rome from reverting to Judaism to avoid persecution under Emperor Nero in 64-68 AD. (2:1-3, 3:1-2, 12, 14, 4:1, 11, 14, 5:11, 6:4-6, 11-12, 10:23, 26-29, 35-39, 12:1-3, 15-17, 25)

### WARNING AGAINST WAIVER

2:1-3 *"We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away…how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation?"*

3:12 *"See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God."*

3:14 *"We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end."*

4:1 *"…let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it."*

4:11 *"…that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience."*

4:14 *"…let us hold firmly to the faith we profess."*

5:11 *"…you no longer try to understand."*

6:4-6 *"It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance."*

10:26-29: *"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..."*

10:35-39: *"But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed..."*

12:15 *"See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God…"*

12:25 *"See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks…"*

*"The Lord says to my lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion, saying, 'Rule in the midst of your enemies!'"* Psalm 110:1-2

*"The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.'"* Psalm 110:4

*"I will proclaim the Lord’s decree: He said to me, 'You are my son; today I have become your father. Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.'"* Psalm 2:7-8

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **WHAT GOD SAID** | **WHAT GOD IS SAYING NOW** |
| God spoke | God has spoken |
| in earlier times | in these last days |
| to the fathers | to us |
| through the prophets | through the Son |
| [incomplete] | [complete according to the tense of the Greek verbs] |

## CHAPTER 1

*"In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs."* (1:1-4)

Psalm 2:8: *"Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession."*

Psalm 110:1: *"Sit at my right hand"*

Because only he:

* is the Son of God (v. 5)
* sits at the right hand of God

🡪 worshiped as God and served by angels (vv. 6-14)

## THE OT QUOTATIONS IN CHAPTER 1

v. 5a: Psalm 2:7 - about the king from David's lineage, the Messiah.

v. 5b: 2 Sam 7:14 - about Solomon, but Jesus is the son of David everything pointed towards.

v. 6: Deuteronomy 32:43 (LXX) - about God, used here about Jesus.

vv. 8-9: Psalm 45:7-8 – a king's hymn where the king is called God and his throne is eternal

vv. 10-12: Psalm 102:26-27: About Yahweh, used here about Jesus as the world's creator and eternal.

Jesus is not an angel but God, and therefore *"much greater than the angels"* (v. 4).

## JESUS IS GREATER THAN THE ANGELS BECAUSE:

* He alone is the Son of God (Ps 2:7, 2 Sam 7:14)
* He is worshiped by the angels (Deuteronomy 32:43 LXX)
* He is the eternal creator while the angels are servants that will perish (v. 11, Ps 104:4, Ps 45:7-8, 102:26-27)
* Only he sits at God's right hand (Psalm 110:1)
* He is Yahweh in the OT (Deuteronomy 32:43 LXX, Psalm 45:7, 102:26-27)

## Psalm 8 🡪 2:6-9

About man in general, or Jesus?

* Also used about Jesus in 1 Cor 15:25-27, Eph 1:20-22 (both together with Ps 110:1), Phil 3:21, and 1 Pet 3:22.

2:7 Gr.: *"for a short time lower than angels"*

2:7 Heb.: *"a little lower than God"*

Jesus is the perfect man who fulfills God's plan for mankind.

No one can claim that he is lower than the angels because this was only temporary.

The point: Jesus identified himself with the people (vv. 14-18). He suffered and was *"for a short time"* lower than the angels, but is now crowned with glory (Heb 2:9) as all believers will also be (Heb 2:10).

God has not abandoned them even though life is difficult. Jesus can identify with their suffering and problems.

## JESUS IS GREATER THAN MOSES (3:1-6)

* Both Jesus and Moses were faithful to God, but Jesus gets greater honor because Moses and his task pointed towards and was fulfilled by Jesus.
* Moses was a servant in God's house, while Jesus is set to rule God's house, the church.
* Jesus is greater than Moses as a son is to a servant. He has a higher relationship with God.
* Jesus is greater than the angels who gave the law but also greater than Moses who received the law.

## DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS (3:7-19)

vv. 7-11: From Psalm 95:7-11 (about Exodus 17 and especially Numbers 13-14)

* v. 8: *"harden your hearts"* = despise God and do not believe, despite all the signs (Numbers 14:11)

v. 14: They are saved now, but it is still possible to fall away and not enter the "rest".

vv. 18-19: unbelief = disobedience

* *"Unbelief"* in Numbers 14 is not the same as not believing that God exists but not trusting God. The opposite of faith in the Bible is mistrust, often associated with fear.
* They must hold on to Jesus, God's last word, trust him, and be obedient to him. Returning to Judaism would be disobedience.

## 4:1-13

*"my rest"* (v. 11): God's own Sabbath rest has always been available by faith since the world was created. Many were given the opportunity in the OT, symbolized by the Promised Land, but did not enter due to unbelief/disobedience. Rest is still available to those who believe.

The promised land is used as an earthly picture of salvation.

Salvation is compared to a Sabbath rest.

Hebrew and Greek: Joshua = Jesus

* The rest Jesus II gives surpasses the rest Jesus I could give (if they had believed)

It has always come down to faith.

## 4:12-13

*"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account."*

God's word = What God says

They must not harden when they hear God's voice in God's word (Psalm 95, etc.), even if it is many hundreds of years later.

God sees *all*, and His word penetrates *all*.

He quotes God's word to speak to them and prevent them from resisting God and falling away. Perhaps a camouflaged apostasy?

Can now be applied to the entire Bible as God's word still speaks to us.

It is important to listen (=obey) to God's words in the Bible.

**THE WORD OF GOD IS ALIVE AND ACTIVE…**

*"If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God."* 1 Peter 4:11

*"Our responsibility is to get God's word to their ears. Only God can get the word from their ears to their hearts."* Al Mohler

*"Our preaching is not the reason the Word works. The Word is the reason our preaching works."* H. B. Charles Jr.

## 6:4-8

It is impossible for those who:

* have once (for all) been enlightened
* and have tasted the heavenly gift
* and have shared in the Holy Spirit
* have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age
* and have fallen away to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

They are in danger of rejecting Jesus as deliberately as those who killed him did. They place themselves among God's enemies, but in addition, they believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

He emphasizes the seriousness of what they consider. They must not take salvation lightly and think that it is just to return later.

## IMPOSSIBLE TO BE BROUGHT BACK TO REPENTANCE? (6:6)

**Does it depend on God?**

*"God will not renew them even if they repent, since they crucified Jesus again and mocked him."* Koester (cf. 12:15-17)

*"This is an unpardonable sin because it undermines the foundation of salvation. It is impossible for true apostates to experience repentance again. God will not force them into His kingdom."* Hagner

*"A slight rhetorical exaggeration without saying firmly that this is impossible for God."* Witherington

**Or have they hardened themselves too much to repent again?**

*"Impossible since they have shown that they are capable of turning away from their biggest and most life-changing experience."* (Johnson, the quote has been translated)

*"Impossible because one cannot repent without acknowledging Jesus, which these people will not do."* (Lane, the quote has been translated)

*"Nothing is impossible for God, but he does not give us much hope of bringing back those who adopt a permanent and hardened opposition to God. They may have reached a point where they are too hardened for anything to happen."* (Peterson, the quote has been translated)

## 6:4-8

**The main point:**

CONSCIOUSLY DEPARTING FROM CHRIST IS VERY SERIOUS.

It has happened that people have fallen away and come back, but was it a falling away on purpose without any faith crisis?

## SO FAR…WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO YOU?

The goal is glory, but there can be suffering along the way. Jesus became the model for this, so we can't expect anything else. But consequently, he can also identify with our weaknesses.

Unbelief is not wanting to trust God. It is not the same as doubt.

Jesus is God's last word, and the Bible is God's word that still speaks.

## MELCHIZEDEK: TYPOLOGY OR CHRISTOPHANY? (7:1-10)

Genesis 14:17-18: *"After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley). Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything."*

Melchizedek means *"King of Righteousness"* (Heb 7:2)

Does *"Salem"* mean Jerusalem? Or Salim? (John 3:23)

🡪shalom: *"King of peace"* (Heb 7:2)

Melchizedek was not of the tribe of Levi and thus not a descendant of Abraham, as all the priests under the old covenant were. (Heb 7:6)

He blessed Abraham. *"The lesser is blessed by the greater"* (7:7)

The priests, descendants of Abraham, received tithes from the people. Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham earlier than both Abraham's descendants and the priests. (Heb 7:5-6, 9-10)

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| **Melchizedek** |  | **Jesus** |
| No priestly lineage | *"Without father or mother, without genealogy"* (v. 3) | This is also literally true about Jesus. |
| His birth/death is not mentioned in scripture 🡪 nor that his priesthood ended | *"without beginning of days or end of life"* (v. 3)  | This is also literally true about Jesus. |
| resembling (“is made equal”): is not equal to, but equal in the priesthood. | *"resembling the Son of God"* (v. 3) | Equal in priesthood |
| Greater than Abraham | *“Just think how great he was”* (v. 4) | The only one who is "great" in the letter is Jesus |

**Melchizedek**

* A priest who was not a Levite.
* A priesthood older than the high priest arrangement of the old covenant.
* This priesthood is greater than the Levitical one since he receives tithes from Abraham and blesses him.
* The first priest mentioned in the Old Testament who was also a king.

*"The Lord says to my lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.' The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion, saying, 'Rule in the midst of your enemies!' … The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.'"* Psalm 110:1-2,4

Before the law separated priests and kings. In 1 Sam 13 God is displeased with that King Saul takes the role of the priest and makes a sacrifice. Based on Psalm 110, it was expected that the Messiah would be both king and priest at the same time (as in Zech. 6). The priesthood of Melchizedek in Psalm 110 is the only one attributed to a Davidic king.

Jesus' priesthood is greater than the Levitical one.

7:22: *"Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant."*

8:6: *"But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises."*

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| **The Great Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)** | **NT** |
| The high priest had to offer sacrifices first for himself | Jesus is the holy and perfect high priest and does not need to do that (Heb 7:26-27) |
| The high priest entered the sanctuary with the blood of the bull and the goat | Jesus entered the heavenly sanctuary with his own blood (Heb 9:12) |
| The blood of goats and bulls makes holy and clean on the outside (Heb. 9:13) | Jesus' blood cleanses the conscience (Heb 9:14) |
| The high priest presented flawless animals | Jesus presented himself as a faultless sacrifice (Heb 9:14) |
| The blood was carried into the sanctuary, but the animals were burned outside the camp. | *"And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate…"* (Heb 13:12) |
| The scapegoat took away the sins of the people | Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29) |
| The high priest entered the Most Holy Place once a year.  | Jesus entered the Most Holy Place once and for all (Heb 9:12) |
| God appeared in the cloud above the place of atonement, which was the lid of the Ark of the Covenant | God comes to us through Jesus, who is the new place of atonement (Romans 3:25) |

## 9:15-17

*"For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant. In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living."*

*diatheke* = covenant, testament

The new covenant entered into force through the cross (incl. the resurrection)

## 10:1-4

*"The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves."* (10:1)

Repeated sacrifices = not perfect sacrifices 🡪 Jesus' perfect sacrifice once and for all

Repeated sacrifices = reminder of sin 🡪 Jesus' sacrifice that cleanses the conscience by also taking care of the root of the problem.

In the deepest sense: the sacrifices were not supposed to take away sin but to show how sin destroys the relationship with God and points toward Jesus. In any case, it was always faith that saved, also in the OT.

## 10:5-7

*"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."*

Psalm 40: *"For the director of music. Of David. A psalm."*

Psalm 40:6-8a: *"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire— but my ears you have opened— burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. Then I said, “Here I am, I have come— it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, my God"*

David says *"me"* (Psalm 40:8) about Christ because he was *"the anointed one"* (= Christ).

*"my ears you have opened"* (Psalm 40:6) 🡪 *"a body you prepared for me"* (10:5): Because the ears are part of the body? A Hebrew expression made comprehensible in Greek?

*"Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said…"* (10:5): Jesus is the goal of Scripture. The fulfillment in Jesus enables him to interpret the OT Christologically.

*"Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water."* Hebrews 10:19-22

## 10:26-31

*"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. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*

This section picks up the thread from 6:4-8.

*"deliberately keep on sinning"* (v. 26): pres. part.: a continuous action

*"no sacrifice for sins is left"* (v. 26): There will be no more sacrifices after Jesus. Everything points toward him. Does it preclude repentance later?

*"judgment"* (v. 27): *"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son."* John 3:18

*"the enemies of God."* (v. 27): Willful sin = rebellion against God. Like the world in general. Verse 30 warns of the consequences if they do not repent: *"It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*

*"How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished…"* (v. 29): Logical, since the new covenant is greater, better, and more glorious than the old.

*"trampled the Son of God underfoot"* (v. 29): = counted as worthless, useless (Matthew 5:13, 7:6)

*"unholy"* (v. 29): regarded as worldly/unclean

*"insulted the Spirit of grace"* (v. 29): In practice, apostasy (only then is forgiveness impossible, Matt 12:31)

## "DO NOT THROW AWAY YOUR CONFIDENCE; IT WILL BE RICHLY REWARDED" (10:35)

A biblical pretext for being ongoing and almost rude?

3:6: *"And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory."*

4:16: *"Let us then [since we have a high priest who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin] approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."*

10:19-20: *"Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body"*

Jesus' work of salvation gives us a clear conscience and the boldness to come before God in his presence, in the innermost of the Most Holy Place. Don't throw it away by rejecting Jesus.

*"When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit and trust the engineer. Trust God today, no matter how dark your situation. God says, 'you are coming out'."* Corrie Ten Boom

## 11:1-3

**"faith" in the dictionary (sorted from big to little faith):**

be convinced of, feel sure of, be almost sure of, trust in, have faith in, think, imagine, assume.

**"faith" in Bauer's Greek lexicon**

* To consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one's trust
* To entrust oneself to an entity in complete confidence
* Entrust something to someone
* Be confident about
* Think/consider (possible) (Rom 14:2, John 9:18, Acts 9:26)

In the Bible, faith is being rationally convinced that something is true.

11:1-3: *"Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible."*

He is talking about the hope we have for the future, not "blind faith". Chapter 11 is about the heroes of faith who did not see the promise fulfilled but still trusted in God.

Christianity is future-oriented. We have hope for the future that we cannot see but that we believe in. Our hope is based on other factors that make God, the Bible, and the Gospel credible and from which we orient our lives.

*"Faith looks forward and acts in the present in light of that future."*

## 12:1-3

*"The Pilgrim's marathon has entered the final stage at the stadium, and now the faithful are encouraged to run, and with it to follow Jesus' example, in the presence of the "witnesses" who have run before them and who are now spectators and who are probably cheering on them."* Ben Witherington III (the quote has been translated)

## 5 IMPORTANT TRUTHS FROM THE LETTER OF HEBREWS

**1. TAKE YOUR FAITH SERIOUSLY**

Do not become dull and indifferent (6:11-12, 12:3). Watch out and do something about it!

1. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus (12:1-3)
2. Fellowship with other Christians (10:25)
3. Read God's word, which still speaks (3:7, 4:7-13, 12:25)

Encourage one another (10:24) and see that no one departs from God's grace (12:15).

**2. GOD STILL SPEAKS THROUGH THE OT**

Texts from the Law (4:4 🡪 narrative text from Genesis 2:2), the Prophets (8:8, 10:15), and the Scriptures (1:7,8,10, 3:7...) are all received as God's own words.

An inspiring and refreshing view of the Bible. The OT is God's own words even when it is not a quote from God. Therefore, he is not concerned with the human author. We can have faith that the OT is the word of God.

Although the OT pointed to and was fulfilled by Jesus and must be interpreted "through Jesus", God still speaks through what he has said before. God's word is alive and active (4:12), and we must let it speak to us.

**3. DON'T BE TOO CONCERNED WITH JUDAISM**

We have something much better (7:22, 8:6), which everything pointed toward: *"the new order"* (9:10) and *"the realities themselves"* (10:1). We have the fulfillment and the very point.

Knowledge of OT Judaism helps with understanding but does not bring you closer to God. We have everything we need in Jesus, including the confidence to approach God’s throne.

God has moved forward and will not move backward again. The temple will probably not be rebuilt. God delights in the confession of faith and charity (11:5-6, 12:28, 13:15-16), not sacrifices (10:6,8).

**4. DON'T THROW AWAY YOUR COURAGE**

We have the boldness to come before God with a cleansed conscience (10:19-22) because of Jesus' work (9:14, 10:2). God wants us to have a good conscience.

Do not waste this boldness by staying away from God because of a bad conscience or because you think God cannot forgive what you have done. You will never be rejected, nor will you have to "do penance", because Jesus' sacrifice was good enough.

**5. JESUS IS GOD'S LAST WORD**

There will be no more revelations. There will be no new teaching.