

Hebrews---the book of 'Better's'

Author? *You tell me..* Possibly Paul, Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, Philip, dunno... Lots of problems with Paul—style, form, he signed all his others. Heb 2:3 indicates writer heard gospel from *those that personally knew Him*.

(The point? Not hearsay, but history, with witnesses, confirmations, and worth hanging on to.)

Date? *You tell me.* No reference to the destruction of the temple (70 AD) so probably before it. Not enough historical references.

Audience? *I'll tell you.* Obviously aimed at Jewish believers.

Setup: There was a common expectation that Jesus' return was an '*any day now*' thing. Meantime, believers (including a majority of Jews) were enduring persecution under Nero's rule, and it is believed that many of them were wavering in their faith and returning to full-blown Judaism.

This could have been because they truly were not grounded in their new faith, or because a more Jewish presentation of it might keep them out of persecution of Christians. Others were perhaps just doing it as a 'just in case' sort of backup plan, we are not sure.

Preface: 1:1-4 (Read together)

In times past...spoke to people thru prophets/fathers

In these last days...spoken *by his Son* (remember the Transfiguration)

The Better's—9 of them

- 1) Better than the Angels (1:4)
- 2) Better hope than they had under the law (7:19)
- 3) Better covenant than in the OT (7:22), using blood of animals
- 4) Again, better covenant (8:6) in HIS BLOOD
- 5) Better Sacrifice (9:23) again, in HIS BLOOD
- 6) Better future possession (Heaven negates suffering) (10:34)
- 7) Better country desired (11:16) than where we came from
- 8) Better resurrection (11:35) because they didn't take easy way out
- 9) Better things prepared for us (11:40)

Focus: Chapters 11-13

The writer reminds Jewish believers about how all their heroes (many persecuted, too) died looking toward Messiah, who has appeared. How does that make us look, then, who have experienced Him, to go back to something that is not as good?

Verse 13: These all died *in faith*... holding onto hope that what they saw by faith was as real as if they had seen it with their eyes.

Chapter 11: Faith gives substance to what he hope for, provides solid evidence that our investment in the unseen is valid and worth living AND dying for.

If you don't walk in faith, you won't have hope,

Chapter 12: Hope— (Vs 3... lest you become discouraged in your souls)—remember, a word to persecuted believers
On growing up: Vs 5, 6: *DRSV—Understand the value of God disciplining you and don't be discouraged when He 'gets after you', for He gets after the ones that He has received.*

If you don't walk in hope, you can't display love—what's the point?

Chapter 13: Love towards:

- 1) Love Brothers/sisters in Christ (vs 1) (see 10:25---church)
- 2) Love Strangers—vs 2; some might be angels
- 3) Love your spiritual mentors—vs 7, 17 “*whose faith you follow*”
- 4) Love Truth and stability—vs 9-- (“*every wind of doctrine*”), even at your own expense, remembering ‘the error of Balaam’

If you can't display love, your faith is just noise

Favorite Verses; You guessed it, mine, not yours
On Angels: 1:7, 14—“Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire...14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation?”

On the 'faith mix' (4:1-2)—The Word itself doesn't produce the desired results without keeping it in the context of faith (what is it requiring of, or say about, me?) These were Jews, full of Word already, but ever striving... **Faith brings rest in God.**

On being sure (6:18-19) Because God cannot lie, we can run to Him for refuge to lay hold of hope, which is the anchor (tied to the very Presence of God) of our souls. That is pretty deep stuff.