



# Hebrews God's Plan For Spiritual Maturity

Written By John Powers  
Edited By Joseph F. Roberts, ThD, PhD

# HEBREWS GOD'S PLAN FOR SPIRITUAL MATURITY

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### **Foreword**

The International Missionary Baptist Ministries Publishing is excited about this first book of the new John Powers Series. Pastor John Powers is currently the pastor of the Cornerstone Missionary Baptist Church in El Paso, Arkansas. IMBM obtained two manuscripts written by Pastor Powers with the John Teague materials upon Dr. Teague's death many years ago. While some of Dr. Teague's manuscripts have been edited and published, this is the first of Pastor Powers.

It is the desire of the Publishers that the reader will gain much insight on the book of Hebrews from this veteran Warrior of the Word.

### **Introduction**

The Book of Hebrews has been called "The Fifth Gospel". The four Gospels describe Christ's ministry on earth, but this book describes His ministry in Heaven at God's right hand. The book of Hebrews exalts the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Our eyes are fixed upon Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). He is set before us "crowned with glory and honor" in the heavens (Hebrews 2:9). When we realize all that we have in and through Him, we have no desire for anyone else or anything else.

This book was written primarily to Jewish Christians at Jerusalem who were wavering in their faith and were in danger of lapsing back into Judaism. Because of the taunts and jeers of their persecutors, the Jewish Christians were beginning to think that they had lost everything—the altar, priests, sacrifices—by accepting Christianity. The writer proved that they had only lost the shadow to be given the substance, the Lord Jesus Christ. They were undervaluing their privileges in Christ, were becoming discouraged and were thinking about going back to Judaism as a form of worship.

The writer was trying to lead them from an elementary knowledge to a mature grasp. He exhorted them to be loyal to Christ. He showed the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant. In this letter, the Christian was admonished to press on to perfection or maturity of full growth in spiritual things, especially in the knowledge and power of the Lord Jesus Christ Who saves us, directs, and intercedes for us.

It is true that Hebrews carries a particular message to the Jewish believers who were faced with problems we do not face today. They were living in the transition period Law and Grace, the transition from the Law of Moses with its ceremonies to the liberty of Grace, the transition from bondage of legalism to grace and truth that makes us free.

As the reader will see, the Book of Hebrews is truly God's plan for spiritual maturity for the child of God.

## Chapter One

### Introduction To The Book Of Hebrews

Hebrews 12:2: *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Hebrews 2:9: *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*

#### Beginning statement:

The Book of Hebrews has been called "The Fifth Gospel". The four Gospels describe Christ's ministry on earth, but this book describes His ministry in Heaven at God's right hand. The book of Hebrews exalts the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Our eyes are fixed upon Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). He is set before us "crowned with glory and honor" in the heavens (Hebrews 2:9). When we realize all that we have in and through Him, we have no desire for anyone else or anything else.

#### TO WHOM THE BOOK OF HEBREWS IS WRITTEN

This book was written primarily to Jewish Christians at Jerusalem who were wavering in their faith and were in danger of lapsing back into Judaism. Because of the taunts and jeers of their persecutors, the Jewish Christians were beginning to think that they had lost everything—the altar, priests, sacrifices—by accepting Christianity. The writer proved that they had only lost the shadow to be given the substance, the Lord Jesus Christ. They were undervaluing their privileges in Christ, were becoming discouraged and were thinking about going back to Judaism as a form of worship.

The writer was trying to lead them from an elementary knowledge to a mature grasp. He exhorted them to be loyal to Christ. He showed the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old Covenant. In this letter, the Christian was admonished to press on to perfection or maturity of full growth in spiritual things, especially in the knowledge and power of the Lord Jesus Christ Who saves us, directs, and intercedes for us.

It is true that Hebrews carries a particular message to the Jewish believers who were faced with problems we do not face today. They were living in the transition period Law and Grace, the transition from the Law of Moses with its ceremonies to the liberty of Grace, the transition from bondage of legalism to grace and truth that makes us free.

#### THE HUMAN AUTHORSHIP

While there are some uncertainty and question about the authorship of the Book of Hebrews, there is much evidence in favor of the Apostle Paul. What we see in this book is that the Personality of Christ is preserved rather than the personality of the writer.



In Hebrews 13:23-24, there is a reference to Timothy. From both Philippians and Colossians, we know that Timothy was with Paul in Rome during the Apostle's imprisonment there. In Philippians 2:19, we read that Paul was sending Timothy from Rome to Philippi to visit the church and to encourage the Christians there. In Hebrews 13:23, we learn that the author of the letter to the Hebrews was expecting Timothy's soon return (See 2 Timothy 4:9, 21). Certainly "they of Italy" (Hebrews 13:23) refers to the city of Rome. Certainly, the epistle to the Hebrews was written in Italy, and there is good reason to believe that it was written in Rome.

Hebrews 13:23, 24: ***23***Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. ***24***Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

Philippians 2:19: ***But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.***

2 Timothy 4:9, 21: ***9***Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me:... ***21***Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren.

### THE OBJECT OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

The object of the Book of Hebrews is to set forth Christ, above angels—their Creator, indeed; above Moses—Son, not servant; above Abraham—who paid tithes to Melchizedek; Christ, not connected with Aaron, of wholly different order because the earthly tabernacle, priesthood and sacrifices are done away; not a priest on earth, but Christ our Great High Priest at God's right hand in Heaven itself—Who ever lives to make intercession for us.

Christ is set before the believers as the Son of God, the Son of man, the Great High Priest in Heaven to cause them constantly to occupy their thoughts and worship with God, into whose presence Christ by His blood has brought them.

### THE TIME OF THE WRITING

"Most scholars agree that the Hebrew epistle was written between A.D. 62 and 65. We know it was not written immediately after the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. See Hebrews 2:3-4. But it is also obvious that the epistle was written before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus the Roman in 70 A.D. because at the time of the writing the temple in Jerusalem was still standing (Hebrews 13:11-12), the Mosaic institutions were still being observed, and priests were still offering gifts according to the Law of Moses (Hebrews 8:3-5; 10:11)." (Hebrews, Dr. Oliver Greene).

Hebrews 2:3, 4: ***3***How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; ***4***God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and

*with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?*

Hebrews 13:11, 12: *11For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. 12Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*

Hebrews 8:3-5: *3For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. 4For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: 5Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.*

Hebrews 10:11: *And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:*

Jerusalem was a news gathering center. News coming out of Jerusalem was considered the final word and was more acceptable than from another city.

About Hebrews, Dr. Oliver Greene wrote:

"The epistle to the Hebrews is not light, easy reading. On the contrary, it is extremely deep in spiritual truth, and the believer who would understand this epistle must not only read it, but re-read it again and again, studying vigorously and looking to the Holy Spirit to open the treasure and reveal the deep truths contained in the words of this extraordinary epistle. There is no other book like it in all the Word of God....The believer who studies this epistle and abides in the teaching therein set forth, is led, spiritually speaking, from childhood to maturity; and his knowledge of Christian truth and Christ Himself is greatly enlarged. The believer who abides in Hebrews is going on unto perfection of spiritual maturity."

Of Hebrews, Dr. H C Mears wrote:

"How often when you take a trip for the first time over a new road, you drive straight along anticipating where it will lead and what difficulties you may encounter. It seems to be the thing to do. Coming back over the same road, you took around and notice things. Do this in studying the Book of Hebrews. Read it through, and do not be overanxious about thing you cannot understand. Then you can go back over the road in your reading and take notice of the many things along the way. You could spend months in Hebrews. It presents so many wonderful truths. At the first reading, you will be impressed by one fact above all others: that Jesus Christ is prominent on every page. This is not true in all the other books of the New Testament. In Acts, the apostles, disciples, the Jews, and pagans are predominant. In Romans, a great doctrine attracts our attention. In the other letters,

the church and its problems are considered, but here it is our Lord Himself." (What The Bible Is All About, Dr. H. C. Mears, p584).

WE as Christians have that which is BETTER—better in every way. The KEY WORD to the Book of Hebrews is better and is used 13 times as the writer shows the superiority of Jesus Christ and his salvation over the Hebrew system of religion.

Another word that is repeated in this book is perfect. It means a perfect standing before God. The terms eternal and forever are important terms in the message of Hebrews. When we combine these four important words, we discover that Jesus Christ and the Christian life He gives are better because these blessings are eternal, and they give us a perfect standing before God. The religious system under the Mosaic Law was imperfect because it could not accomplish a once-for-all redemption that was eternal.

### **THE DIVISIONS OF THE BOOK OF HEBREWS**

The Book of Hebrews has two major parts: Doctrinal Chapters 1:1—10:18 and Practical Chapters 10:19—13:25.

#### **THE DOCTRINAL MESSAGE**

1. Christ as the Son of God is better than the angels (Chapter 1:4-14).
2. Jesus as the Son of man is better than the angels (Chapter 2:5-18). Verse 9 reveals the purpose of His being made lower than the angels.
3. Jesus Christ is better than Moses (Chapter 3:1-6).
4. Jesus our High Priest is better than Aaron (Chapters 4:14-5:10).
5. The new Priesthood after the order of Melchizedek (Chapter 7).
6. The new sanctuary and the new covenant are better than the old (Chapter 8).
7. Christ's blood has power to inaugurate the new sanctuary and the new covenant (Chapter 9).
8. The new way into the holiest is through Jesus (Chapter 10:1-18).

#### **THE PRACTICAL MESSAGE**

It deals with our living and our privileges as Christians. This division begins with the words, "Having therefore," (Chapter 10:19). The term therefore means "because of the preceding, the following is or should be true." Here, the word denoted the responsibility of the individual believer toward the Lord Jesus Christ because of what He has done for us in such a marvelous way.

1. Entering the Holiest and dwelling there in fellowship with God (Chapter 10:9-25).
2. The privilege of the fullness of faith (Chapter 11).
3. Of the patience of hope (Chapter 12:1-13).
4. Of love and good works (Chapter 13).

#### **THE FIVE WARNINGS**

These warnings present one message: "Heed God's Word." The writer calls this book "the word of exhortation." (Hebrews 13:22). The Greek word "paraklesis" translated "exhortation" simply means encouragement. This book is not written to frighten people but to encourage them. The purpose of the warning is to encourage us to trust God and heed His Word. (Exhort, Chapter 3:13; 10:25; 12:5).

Hebrews 3:13: *But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

Hebrews 10:25: *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

Hebrews 12:5: *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:*

"The Epistle to the Hebrews opens with an important declaration: 'God... has spoken to us by or through His Son (Chapter 1:1-2). In Hebrews 12:25, the writer states: 'See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.' In other words, 'God has spoken; we have His Word. What are we doing about it?'"

"With this in mind, we can now better understand the significance of those five 'problem passages' or warnings in Hebrews. Each of these passages encourage us to heed God's Word by pointing out the sad spiritual consequences that result if we do not." God has spoken, let us heed His words. (W. W. Wiersbe)

The five warnings:

1. Drifting from or disregarding the Word. (Chapter 2:1-4). Neglect.
2. Doubting the Word (Chapter 3:7-4:13). Hard Heart.
3. Dullness toward the Word. Sluggishness,
4. Despising the Word (Chapter 10:26-29). Willful sin.
5. Defying the Word (Chapter 12:14-29). Refusing to hear.

The natural progress entailed in the five exhortations or warnings. If we do not listen to God's Word and really hear it, we will start to drift. Neglect always leads to drifting in things material and physical, as well as spiritual. As we drift from the Word, we start to doubt the Word, because faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). We start to get doubting or hard hearts, and this leads to spiritual sluggishness which produces dullness toward the Word. We become "dull of hearing", lazy listeners. Dullness leads to a spiteful attitude toward the Word to the extent that we willfully disobey God. Willful sin gradually develops into a defiant attitude—we almost "dare" God to do anything about it.

Romans 10:17: *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Now what does God do while this spiritual regression is going on? He keeps speaking to us,

encouraging us to get back to the Word. If we fail to listen and obey, then God begins to chasten us. This chastening process is the theme of Chapter 12, the climatic chapter in Hebrews. Hebrews 10:30 states, "***The Lord shall judge His people.***" God does not allow His children to become "spoiled brats" by permitting them willfully defy His Word. He always chastens in love.

These five exhortations or warnings are addressed to people who are truly born again. Their purpose is to get the readers to pay close attention to God's Word. While there is some stern language in some of these passages, there is no threat to the readers that they may lose their salvation. If we persist in defying God's Word, we may lose our lives. Hebrews 12:9, "***Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?***" The inference is that if we do not submit, we might die. But if Hebrews teaches anything, it teaches the assurance of eternal life in a living High Priest Who can never die (Hebrews 7:22-28).

Hebrews 7:22-28: ***22By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. 23And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: 24But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. 25Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. 26For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; 27Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. 28For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.***

### Conclusion

Some try to explain away these warning by claiming that the readers were not truly born again but were only professors of the Christian faith. However, the way the writer addresses them would eliminate that approach. He called them "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Hebrews 3:1). He told them that they had a High Priest in heaven (Chapter 4:14), which he would not have written if they were lost. They had been "made partakers of the Holy Spirit" (Chapter 6:4). The admonitions in Hebrews 10:19-25 would be meaningless if addressed to the unsaved.

Hebrews 10:19-25: ***19Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21And having an high priest over the house of God; 22Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. 23Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) 24And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.***

The Epistle to the Hebrews proves that Jesus Christ is much better than anything the Law of Moses has to offer. The epistle is also a book of exhortation, urging its readers to hear and heed the Word of God, lest they regress spiritually and experience the chastening hand of God.

## Chapter Two

### God Has Spoken To Us

Hebrews 1:1-4: *1God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; 3Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; 4Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*

### Introduction

One of the great truths given in the Bible is that the Holy God, Who created all things and knows all things, has spoken to humanity.

There are two ways in which God has spoken and revealed Himself to mankind. God spoke to mankind even though he rebelled and sinned against Him.

1. He has spoken through men.
2. He has spoken through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Mankind would be wise and well served if he would listen to what God has said and give heed to His message.

### THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES Verses 1, 2

What does the Bible say about the Word of God?

2 Tim. 3:16-17: *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."*

Acts 3:18-21: *"But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."*

2 Peter 1:21: *"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."*



God spoke through men in time past to the fathers (Verse 1). God spoke to men through Noah, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and the prophets. God has spoken to us through His Son (Verse 2). Jesus spoke to the people while He lived here upon the earth. He has spoken to us today through the writings of many of those who heard him speak.

### THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE TWO REVELATIONS

In time past. THE OLD TESTAMENT. In these last days. THE NEW TESTAMENT. God has spoken in both. Verse 2.

#### THE OLD TESTAMENT CHARACTERIZED

It was Ancient. "In time past unto our fathers." "Since the world began" (Acts 3:21). It has been four thousand years since God began to speak. It has been fifteen hundred years since the first part of the Old Testament has been written. It has been four hundred years since God had ceased speaking through men.

*Acts 3:21: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.*

It was given by or through the prophets (2 Peter 1:21; Acts 3:21). The primary meaning of prophet (Gr. prophetes) is "he who declares things before they come to pass. This foretelling or fore-announcing may be, and often is, of the office of the prophet, but is not the essence of that office." (Wuest).

*2 Peter 1:21: For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

*Acts 3:21: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.*

The prophet (Gr. prophetes) is "our speaker; he speaks out the counsel of God with clearness, energy, and authority which springs from the consciousness of speaking in God's name and having received a direct message from Him to deliver." (Wuest). Thus, the prophets were the mouth pieces of God and for God.

It was Fragmentary. "At sundry times or at various times." It was given little by little, part by part. It was given first by oral communication and later by writing. It was given in connection with temporary dispensations—the Adamic, the Abrahamic, and the Mosaic dispensations.

It was in Multiform, "In Divers" or various manners. God spoke in:

1. Dreams: Jacob (Genesis 28:12-16); Joseph (Genesis 37:5-11); Pharaoh (Genesis 40-41); Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel, 2 & 4); and Joseph (Matthew 1:18-25).



2. Visions: Abraham (Genesis 15); Jacob (Genesis 46); Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37); Ananias (Acts 9:10-16); Cornelius (Acts 10:1-6); Peter (Acts 10:9-20; 11:4-11); and Paul (Acts 16:9-10).
3. Voices: Adam and Eve (Genesis 3); Samuel (1 Samuel 3); and at the baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-18).
4. Through Angels: Daniel (Daniel 9:20-27); Zacharias (Luke 1:10-20); Joseph (Matthew 1:18-25); Mary (Luke 1:26-36); and Philip (Acts 8:26).

### THE NEW TESTAMENT CHARACTERIZED

It was recent and final. Verse 2, "In these last days has spoken to us." It was given in His Son. Verse 2, "Hath....spoken unto us by His Son." God manifested in the flesh (John 1:1-3, 14). Jesus was declared to be the Son of God (Matthew 3:16-17; 17:1-5).

*John 1:1-3, 14: 1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2The same was in the beginning with God. 3All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made....14And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

*Matthew 3:16-17: 16And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: 17And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

*Matthew 17:1-5: 1And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, 2And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. 3And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. 4Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 5While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*

It was complete and perfect. Prophecy was fulfilled in the Son.

*Acts 10:43: "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive the remission of sins."*

*Luke 16:16: "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."*

*Luke 24:44: "And He said unto them, These are the words which I spoke unto*

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