



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## Choosing the Best

HEBREWS OVERVIEW

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It is amazing how many choices we have available to us in our daily lives. A trip to the supermarket provides an almost overwhelming array of products in every category from which to choose. When it comes to the selection of an automobile, our choices may only be limited by our ability to make the monthly payments. The amount of money spent on advertising is a sure testimony to choices we have before us each day. Of course, with so many choices available, we will often spend a great deal of time determining the best choice. We will look at price, compare features, study labels, or spend time researching online or in Consumer Reports. We always want to make the best choice.

The presence of so many choices has turned us into ultimate consumers. We apply this love of choice to every area of our lives. Some apply it to their families, “choosing” a new spouse or partner when excitement wears off or things get difficult. Even more tragically, many apply this consumerism to their religious faith. They choose what belief simply appeals to them or even believe it makes no difference if they choose nothing at all. The Bible makes it clear; each of us has an important choice to make, a choice that has eternal ramifications. We can choose to ignore God altogether. We can choose to approach Him on the basis of our own good works and morals. Or, we can choose to come to God on the basis of Christ’s work on our behalf as He suffered and died on the cross. It is when we repent and trust Him for salvation that we gain His righteousness and can then have access to God.

This session we have been considering the fact that this message is actually the story or theme of the whole Bible. All of scripture points to Christ and His redemptive work on our behalf. Jesus shared with the disciples on the road to Emmaus how the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms all concerned Himself and were written about Him (Luke 24:27, 44). We have looked at examples from each of these sections of the Old Testament that clearly point to and have their fulfillment in Christ and His work.

There is a book in the New Testament which greatly helps us to understand that the message of the Old is really all about Jesus Christ. This is the book of Hebrews. This book describes for us how Christ fulfilled the Old Testament and shows us clearly how Jesus is the best choice.

### HEBREWS: A CHALLENGING BOOK TO STUDY

The New Testament book of Hebrews can be a challenging book to study. One writer has described it as “the Leviticus of the New Testament”. Just as we might bog down in our reading and study of Leviticus in the Old Testament, we may not spend a lot of time reading and studying the book Hebrews.

There is much we do not know for sure about the book of Hebrews. We do not know who the author is. We do not know precisely to whom it was written or where they lived. But there is much we can learn about the recipients from the letter itself. The title would indicate the readers were of a Jewish background and had made a profession of repentance and faith in Christ. This would have resulted in pressure from families, friends, and members of their communities. Believers were also beginning to experience great persecution from Rome (10:32-34). The Jewish faith was legally recognized by Rome, but those of the Christian faith were already undergoing serious persecution which would soon become even worse. They could escape this pressure and persecution by turning their backs on their profession of faith in Christ and return to the Old Testament ways.

Along with this pressure, there were many teaching that Christians, in order to be right with God, had to maintain adherence to the Old Testament law. This is the issue dealt with in much of Hebrews and in Paul’s letter to the Galatians. This was the teaching that salvation was not only through faith alone in Christ alone, by grace alone, but that it depended on keeping the OT law as well.

So these believers to whom Hebrews was written had a choice. In the face of pressure and persecution, they could choose to turn from Christ. Hebrews was written to challenge these professing believers that this was really not a choice. The writer reminded them that Jesus was the fulfillment of all that was written in the Old Testament. As such, He was the best choice, the only choice as the object of their faith. While there is much in the book of Hebrews that is challenging to understand, the overall message is quite simple. The readers should continue following the Savior Jesus Christ.

We may be dealing with issues different from those who received this letter, but we face the same choice. We may be tempted to reject

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### BIBLE STUDIES

LOBBYIST / STAFF STUDY: **TUESDAYS, 12:00 NOON, TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)**

LEGISLATOR / ELECTED OFFICIAL STUDIES: **THURSDAY 8:00 A.M. THURSDAY 12:00 NOON TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)**

# West Virginia

## Choosing the Best

Christ or turn from Christ for different reasons, but the message is the same. Jesus Christ is the best and only choice. We only have time and space for the briefest of overviews of this letter, but let us quickly consider how the writer of Hebrews demonstrates to his readers that Jesus is indeed the best choice. We see a clear statement of the supremacy of Christ in the introduction to the letter:

***<sup>1</sup>God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, <sup>2</sup>in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. <sup>3</sup>And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup>having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they. Hebrews 1:1-4***

The rest of the letter really goes on to describe in detail how Christ is supreme – the best choice in which to put our faith. If we could sum up the message of Hebrews in one sentence, it would be that Jesus is better. The writer of Hebrews described how the Tabernacle and the work of the priests was a *shadow of heavenly things* (Heb. 8:4-5). He wrote about how the law with its many sacrifices was a *shadow of good things to come* (Heb. 10:1). Paul wrote of the Old Testament issues of food and drink, festivals, new moon celebrations, and Sabbath days – all “a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ” (Colossians 2:16-17). Let us look at just a few of the ways Hebrews describes Jesus as better – actually the fulfillment of the message of the Old Testament.

### JESUS IS THE BETTER MESSENGER

The author of Hebrews wrote of how God spoke in the Old Testament through prophets in many different ways. He makes it clear that now God has spoken through His Son, the clear implication that Jesus is a better messenger. This is the crux of John’s introduction to His Gospel:

***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...***

***And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1, 14)***

Jesus was the better messenger to reveal God to us.

### JESUS IS THE BETTER MESSAGE

The truth of who Jesus is and what He did for us when He suffered and died on the cross is indeed a better message. We should note how many times the description “better” is used in Hebrews. Jesus is better than the angels (1:4). Believers have a better hope than that offered through the keeping of the law (7:19). Jesus is the guarantee of a better covenant or promise of God (7:22; 8:6). Jesus is a better sacrifice than those of the Old Testament (9:23; 12:24). Faith in Christ is a better and lasting possession (10:34). Faith in Christ leads us to a better, heavenly country (11:16). God’s fulfillment of His promises through Christ is better than that experienced by the Old Testament believers (11:39-40).

### WARNINGS AGAINST REJECTING OR TURNING FROM CHRIST

Along with the teachings that Jesus is the better and only choice for salvation, the writer presents serious warnings about what it means to turn from Christ and to reject Him. He warns we will not escape judgment if we drift from the truth and neglect the salvation provided by Christ (2:1-4). He warns we will face God’s wrath if we doubt God and harden our hearts (3:7-19). He shares how those who sin continually and willfully demonstrate they have not genuinely trusted Christ and will face God’s judgment (10:26-31). While he shares the warnings of rejecting the truth about Jesus, he also describes the blessing we have in believing

### THE BLESSING OF BELIEVING THESE TRUTHS AND CHOOSING CHRIST

We can have boldness and confidence in coming into God’s presence (4:16; 10:19). We can grow in our understanding of Christ and His work for us (5:11-14). God can do great things through us by our faith in Him (chapter 11).

- **ARE YOU CHOOSING THE BEST BY PLACING YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST AND DETERMINING TO STAY FAITHFUL TO HIM?**