



# HEBREWS

A 12-WEEK STUDY

Matthew Z. Capps



**J. I. Packer**

THEOLOGICAL EDITOR

**Dane C. Ortlund**

SERIES EDITOR

“This series is a tremendous resource for those wanting to study and teach the Bible with an understanding of how the gospel is woven throughout Scripture. Here are gospel-minded pastors and scholars doing gospel business from all the Scriptures. This is a biblical and theological feast preparing God’s people to apply the entire Bible to all of life with heart and mind wholly committed to Christ’s priorities.”

**BRYAN CHAPPELL**, President Emeritus, Covenant Theological Seminary; Senior Pastor,  
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“Mark Twain may have smiled when he wrote to a friend, ‘I didn’t have time to write you a short letter, so I wrote you a long letter.’ But the truth of Twain’s remark remains serious and universal, because well-reasoned, compact writing requires extra time and extra hard work. And this is what we have in the Crossway Bible study series *Knowing the Bible*. The skilled authors and notable editors provide the contours of each book of the Bible as well as the grand theological themes that bind them together as one Book. Here, in a 12-week format, are carefully wrought studies that will ignite the mind and the heart.”

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**GRAEME L. GOLDSWORTHY**, former lecturer, Moore Theological College; author,  
*According to Plan, Gospel and Kingdom, The Gospel in Revelation, and Gospel and Wisdom*

“What a gift to earnest, Bible-loving, Bible-searching believers! The organization and structure of the Bible study format presented through the *Knowing the Bible* series is so well conceived. Students of the Word are led to understand the content of passages through perceptive, guided questions, and they are given rich insights and application all along the way in the brief but illuminating sections that conclude each study. What potential growth in depth and breadth of understanding these studies offer! One can only pray that vast numbers of believers will discover more of God and the beauty of his Word through these rich studies.”

**BRUCE A. WARE**, Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

# KNOWING THE BIBLE

J. I. Packer, Theological Editor  
Dane C. Ortlund, Series Editor  
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Matthew Z. Capps

*Knowing the Bible: Hebrews, A 12-Week Study*

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## S E R I E S   P R E F A C E

**KNOWING THE BIBLE**, as the series title indicates, was created to help readers know and understand the meaning, the message, and the God of the Bible. Each volume in the series consists of 12 units that progressively take the reader through a clear, concise study of that book of the Bible. In this way, any given volume can fruitfully be used in a 12-week format either in group study, such as in a church-based context, or in individual study. Of course, these 12 studies could be completed in fewer or more than 12 weeks, as convenient, depending on the context in which they are used.

Each study unit gives an overview of the text at hand before digging into it with a series of questions for reflection or discussion. The unit then concludes by highlighting the gospel of grace in each passage (“Gospel Glimpses”), identifying whole-Bible themes that occur in the passage (“Whole-Bible Connections”), and pinpointing Christian doctrines that are affirmed in the passage (“Theological Soundings”).

The final component to each unit is a section for reflecting on personal and practical implications from the passage at hand. The layout provides space for recording responses to the questions proposed, and we think readers need to do this to get the full benefit of the exercise. The series also includes definitions of key words. These definitions are indicated by a note number in the text and are found at the end of each chapter.

Lastly, for help in understanding the Bible in this deeper way, we urge readers to use the ESV Bible and the *ESV Study Bible*, which are available in various print and digital formats, including online editions at [www.esvbible.org](http://www.esvbible.org). The *Knowing the Bible* series is also available online. Additional 12-week studies covering each book of the Bible will be added as they become available.

May the Lord greatly bless your study as you seek to know him through knowing his Word.

J. I. Packer  
Lane T. Dennis

# WEEK 1: OVERVIEW



## Getting Acquainted

The anonymous book of Hebrews is a unique contribution to the canon of Scripture. Hebrews begins without an introduction, like many other New Testament letters, though it closes with blessings and greetings (Heb. 13:23–24). The author sheds light on the form of Hebrews by referring to his writing as a “word of exhortation” (v. 22). Hebrews is written in a pastoral voice with many practical exhortations, leading many to consider it a single sermon or sermon-like discourse, addressed to converts from Judaism under pressure to revert to Jewish faith.

Hebrews is also considered one of the most beautifully written and stylistically polished books of the New Testament, a literary masterpiece. The author is a master of rhetorical debate and persuasion. He also demonstrates his profound theological prowess with his use of imagery, metaphor, allusion, Old Testament analogy, and typology. Throughout his exposition and exhortation, the author weaves a beautiful tapestry of biblical theology with the aim of exalting the supremacy of Jesus Christ.

The central motif of Hebrews is “Jesus Christ is better” (the words “better,” “more,” and “greater” appear a combined 25 times). In many ways, the glory of God as revealed in Jesus Christ is the gravitational center of Hebrews. The first 12 chapters outline a powerful theological argument for the superiority

## WEEK 1: OVERVIEW

of Christ above all created things and all Old Testament counterparts, with a special focus on encouraging the reader to persevere in the faith that has Christ at its center. Through encouraging words, firm warnings, and contrasting examples, the author often calls the reader to respond to Christ in worship.

### Placing It in the Larger Story

Hebrews contains 35 direct quotations from the Old Testament, along with many allusions and references. With the Old Testament background in mind, the author argues that God's glory and redemptive plan are finally and most clearly revealed in Jesus Christ. The superiority of Jesus is demonstrated in that he is greater than any angel, priest, or old covenant institution. Christ is the complete atoning sacrifice and final priest. In him we see the fulfillment of all the Old Testament hopes and promises, ushering in the long-awaited new covenant age.

### Key Verse

"He [Jesus] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high . . ." (Heb. 1:3).

### Date and Historical Background

Hebrews was written in the first century, probably before AD 70. The author of Hebrews does not name himself. There has been much conjecture as to his identity; as the early Christian theologian Origen (d. c. AD 245) said, "only God knows" who he is. However, we can be sure that the author was familiar with his audience, for he longed to be reunited with them (Heb. 13:19) and is able to give them news of Timothy, Paul's second-in-command (v. 23).

The traditional title "To the Hebrews" reflects the ancient notion that the original audience was primarily made up of Jewish Christians. One can safely assume that the audience was familiar with, and well understood, the many quotations and allusions to the Old Testament. Certainly, the author was addressing professing Christians with this letter; several times the author urges them to maintain their confession and faith (3:6, 14; 4:14; 10:23).

## Outline

- I. Introduction: The Supremacy of Jesus Christ (1:1–4)
- II. Jesus Is Superior to Angelic Beings (1:5–2:18)
  - A. Jesus' status as eternal Son and King (1:5–14)
  - B. Warning one: against neglecting salvation (2:1–4)
  - C. Jesus as the founder of salvation (2:5–18)
- III. Jesus Is Superior to Moses (3:1–4:13)
  - A. Jesus is greater than Moses (3:1–6)
  - B. Warning two: the failure of the exodus generation (3:7–19)
  - C. Entering God's rest (4:1–13)
- IV. Jesus Is the Superior High Priest, Part 1 (4:14–5:10)
- V. A Warning against Apostasy (5:11–6:20)
  - A. Warning three: against apostasy (5:11–6:12)
  - B. The certainty of God's promise (6:13–6:20)
- VI. Jesus Is the Superior High Priest, Part 2 (7:1–8:13)
  - A. The priestly order of Melchizedek (7:1–10)
  - B. Jesus compared to Melchizedek (7:11–28)
  - C. Jesus, a priest of a better covenant (8:1–13)
- VII. Jesus Is the Superior Sacrifice (9:1–10:18)
  - A. The earthly Holy Place (9:1–10)
  - B. Redemption through the blood of Christ (9:11–28)
  - C. Christ's sacrifice once for all (10:1–18)
- VIII. The Call to Faith (10:19–11:40)
  - A. Exhortation to draw near (10:19–25)
  - B. Warning four: against shrinking back (10:26–39)
  - C. By faith (11:1–40)
- IX. The Call to Endurance (12:1–29)
  - A. Jesus, founder and perfecter of our faith (12:1–2)
  - B. Do not grow weary (12:3–17)
  - C. A kingdom that cannot be shaken (12:18–24)

## WEEK 1: OVERVIEW

- D. Warning five: against refusing the speaker (12:25–29)**
- X. Final Exhortations (13:1–25)**
  - A. Sacrifices pleasing to God (13:1–19)**
  - B. Benediction (13:20–21)**
  - C. Final greetings (13:22–25)**

### As You Get Started

What is your present understanding of how Hebrews helps us to grasp the whole storyline of the Bible? Do you have an idea as to how aspects of the Old Testament are shown to be fulfilled in Hebrews?

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What is your current understanding of what Hebrews contributes to Christian theology? How does this book clarify our understanding of the major doctrines of the Christian faith?

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Is there any Old Testament imagery in Hebrews that is particularly confusing to you? Are there any specific questions that you hope to have answered through this study?

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**THE BOOK OF HEBREWS** stands apart from other biblical books in its unique portrait of Jesus Christ as the supreme revelation of God—a portrait bolstered by the author’s skillful use of imagery, metaphor, and Old Testament analogy.

This accessible guide walks readers through the book of Hebrews, one of the most beautifully written and theologically rich books in the New Testament.

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## ABOUT THE *KNOWING THE BIBLE* SERIES

Over the course of 12 weeks, these studies explore books of the Bible and:

- Ask thoughtful questions to spur discussion
- Show how each passage unveils the gospel
- Tie the text in with the whole story of Scripture
- Illuminate the doctrines taught in each passage
- Invite you to discover practical implications
- Help you better understand and apply God’s Word

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**GRAEME L. GOLDSWORTHY,**  
author, *According to Plan*

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BIBLE STUDY

