

WOOLHAMPTON PARISH

‘THE GOD WHO SPEAKS’ – YEAR OF THE BIBLE

BRIEF GUIDE TO BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

**LETTER TO THE HEBREWS**

This anonymous letter, placed immediately after the letters of Paul, was entitled (in the second century) “To the Hebrews” because it would be apt as **a letter to Christian Jewish priests who still hankered after the old Jewish rituals.**

*It uses scriptural passages and Jewish patterns of interpretation to show that the sacrifice and covenant of Christ fulfill God’s promises and bring the faithful to perfection, contrasting them with those of the old dispensation.*

It contains **a rich theology not only of Christ’s effective priesthood but also of his divine and human nature**, a human nature that enabled him to share in and sympathise with the agonies of human suffering.

Explanations of Christ’s priesthood alternate with passages of moral exhortation and warnings. The author stresses that the pilgrimage of the Israelites through the desert was only an image of the Christian pilgrimage to the final place of rest, and that the faith of the great patriarchs was a model of Christian faith and perseverance.

Focus on Jewish ritual need not imply that the letter was written before the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, for there had been temporary interruptions of the ceremonial on previous occasions, and the author might well guess that the ritual would eventually resume.

(From *The Bible – A Reader’s Guide* by Henry Wansborough OSB)

**Now read chapter 11**

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