

Verse 23 of this chapter speaks of the “church of the firstborn.” This is the only mention of the church in Hebrews in nearly all translations (and some have “assembly of the firstborn” even here).

So the book of Hebrews speaks very little of the church. Why not? The church is the bride of Christ, the union of Jews and Gentiles as a new people, the venue where the gifts of the Spirit are exercised, the pulpit from which the gospel is proclaimed, the guardian of sound teaching, and the testimony of God to the world. It is in no way unimportant.

But Hebrews is the book of “better” and the church is not a better *system* than Judaism. It is not a new and improved reorganization of the temple and tabernacle. Out of the old system, the sacrifices and the priesthood have found their fulfillment in Christ. But all the remaining apparatus of the Jewish religion – the Sanhedrin, the divisions of temple priests, the temple guards, the Levites, the hewers of wood and the bearers of water, right down to the money changers – have no counterparts in the new covenant. The church is a living body, not an organization.

The writer of Hebrews and the Almighty Himself does not call people to come to the church (much less *a* church). He calls them to come to Christ, a person and not a system, the only mediator of the new covenant. They will then automatically become members of the church and receive instruction on their conduct in the church, as in the next chapter, but the call, the focus, and the head is always Christ.

Questions:

1. What is “better” in this portion?
2. The terrifying description of Mount Sinai comes from Exodus 19. How does it symbolize the whole system of the law of Moses?
3. What is the heavenly Jerusalem? In what way are we part of it?

4. What is the Zion of verse 22?

5. What is the church or assembly of the firstborn in verse 23?

6. How does the blood of Jesus blood speak a better word than the blood of Abel?

7. In Heb. 10:29 ignoring the gospel was perilous because it rejected the Son of God. In this portion, what is fact that illustrates the danger of ignoring God's warnings?

8. What are verses 26-27 saying? How does this fit into the overall theme of Hebrews?

9. What is acceptable worship of God?