

Hebrews

Introduction

- I. Author
 - A. The author of this epistle is not named in the letter itself.
 - B. Thus, there has been much speculation about the identity of the author of Hebrews.
 - 1. Apollos
 - 2. Luke
 - 3. Mark
 - 4. Barnabas
 - C. The reason for choosing one of these men (among many others) as the penman of this book is usually because of the thought that it could not have been Paul.
 - 1. The style is different.
 - 2. Paul was not considered the author by the early church in the west.
 - 3. Hebrews 2:2-4 could not have been written by an apostle.
 - D. However, these arguments all have their weaknesses.
 - 1. Differences in style may be due to the audience being addressed.
 - 2. The early church in the east has always considered Paul to be the author (and the Roman Catholic Church agrees today).
 - 3. The language of Hebrews 2:2-4 could be accommodative – Paul identifying with his audience.
 - E. Furthermore, there are internal evidences that suggest Paul as the writer.
 - 1. 13:23 – A close association with Timothy
 - 2. 13:24 – An association with the saints in Italy
 - 3. 10:34 – The writer had been imprisoned
 - 4. There are many similarities with Paul's other writings.
 - F. Though one cannot be dogmatic, it seems possible – if not probable – that Paul was the author of the book of Hebrews.
- II. Date
 - A. There are several important “timestamps” in the book that help to determine the date of its writing.
 - B. References to the Temple and Temple worship indicate that it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.
 - C. A significant amount of time had passed since the Hebrews had become Christians (5:12ff).
 - D. They had endured great afflictions for their faith (10:32ff); thus, it was some time after the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2).
 - E. The great persecution initiated by Nero in AD 64 is not mentioned, suggesting that it had not begun.
 - F. Finally, 13:23 indicates the writer's plan to travel with Timothy to see the brethren—something Paul planned to do after his release from prison (cf. Phil. 1:19, 25-27).
 - G. Thus, it seems that the book of Hebrews was written from Rome around AD 63 (cf. 13:24).

III. Audience

- A. This letter was written to Hebrew Christians living in Israel, likely in Jerusalem.
- B. The name "Hebrew" refers to those "who pass over," and was first given to Abraham (Gen. 14:13).
 - 1. The terms "Hebrew," "Israelite," and "Jew" are often used interchangeably.
 - 2. However, they technically refer to different groups.
- C. In New Testament times, the term "Hebrew" referred specifically to Jews who remained in Israel and continued to speak Hebrew (Aramaic).
- D. Those who moved away and began to speak Greek were called "Hellenists."

IV. Theme

- A. These Christians had been brought up under the Old Testament in a strongly and strictly Jewish society.
- B. The pressure and persecution from their Jewish brethren were causing them to lose faith and to leave Christ to return to the Law of Moses.
- C. This book was written to show that Jesus and His Covenant are superior to all, especially the Law of Moses.
- D. Thus, it is a book of motives that still apply today!
- E. The key word of the book is "better."
 - 1. 1:4
 - 2. 6:9
 - 3. 7:7
 - 4. 7:19
 - 5. 7:22
 - 6. 8:6
 - 7. 9:23
 - 8. 10:34
 - 9. 11:16
 - 10. 11:35
 - 11. 11:40
 - 12. 12:24