

Hebrews – Introduction

Date of Writing – Probably around 68 or 69 A.D. Since the writer regards the sacrificial system as still in effect, the temple would not yet have been destroyed (70 A.D. by Titus).

Author – Paul, Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Timothy, Silvanus, and others have been suggested as the author of Hebrews. Origen made the famous statement, “...only God knows who wrote the epistle...”

The writer had an in-depth understanding of the Old Testament and the religious life of Israel.

- The Wilderness Generation - Deuteronomy
- The Priesthood – 5:1-10, 7:1-28
- The Tabernacle – 9:1-14
- The Sacrificial System – 10:1-25

The writer was also fluent in the Greek language and presents very skillful arguments.

Background and Setting

1. The writer had a history with the readers (10:32-34).
2. The readers were mainly Jewish. There is a heavy emphasis on the Levitical system and many appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures.
3. The readers were under persecution and pressure and were being encouraged to give up their Christian profession and return to Judaism.

Chapters three and four serve as a major keys in understanding the Book of Hebrews. In these chapters we see remarks regarding the Exodus generation, a generation that was spiritually saved (blood on the doorposts), but because of unbelief did not enter into the promised land of Canaan, their spiritual inheritance. (Numbers 13-14, Kadesh Barnea).

Message and Purpose

Hebrews is considered one of the most difficult books of the Bible to interpret, second only to Revelation. Heavy usage of the Old Testament and its application to the Jewish Christians who are considering giving up on their faith has led to many differing understandings of the book.

The readers have come upon hard times and are considering leaving their Christian faith and returning to Judaism. The writer of Hebrews is telling them to “hold on.” In answer to the question, “Is Jesus worth it?” Hebrews answers with a resounding YES!

Theme Verse – 10:35-36

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

Evidence that the writer assumes the readers are believers:

1. They are called *brethren* nine times. 2:11, 2:12, 2:17, 3:1, 3:12, 7:15, 10:19, 13:1, 13:22.
2. He identifies with them by using the term “we” over 50 times.
3. He speaks of their *inheritance* five times. 1:14, 6:12, 9:15, 11:8, 12:17.
4. He speaks of their reward for faithfulness three times. 10:35, 11:6, 11:26.
5. He encourages them to become companions or partakers with Christ. The word for companion or partaker (Greek – *metochoi*) is used five times. 1:9, 3:1, 3:14, 6:4, 12:8.

Conclusion – Hebrews is written to believers!

It is critical that we recognize the difference between *justification* and *sanctification* in Hebrews!

Justification – Salvation from the *penalty* of sin that occurs the moment we believe.

Sanctification – Salvation for the *power* of sin that is a life-long process and is dependent on spiritual growth and maturity.

Outline:

- I. Prologue – 1:1-4
- II. God’s King-Son – 1:5-4:16
- III. God’s Priest-Son – 5:1-10:39
- IV. The Response of Faith – 11:1-12:29
- V. Epilogue – Chapter 13