

Hebrews 001

Hebrews 1:3

April 19, 2026

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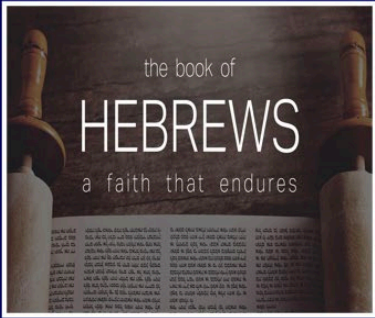
Take your Bibles and open them to Hebrews 1:3. We are starting a new series in Sunday School covering the Book of Hebrews verse by verse.

The subtitle of this series is "A Faith That Endures." I wish that was original with me. That comes from my professor J. Dwight Pentecost and his little commentary on the Book of Hebrews, which I recommend to you if you can get it: J. Dwight Pentecost, "Hebrews: A Faith That Endures."

I think that one of the weaknesses in modern-day Bible study is that we tend to just jump right in and start studying a book verse by verse, which is fine, but sometimes we do not do the background work first. Sometimes if you can understand the background of the book through something that I call "introductory matters," you appreciate the contents of the book a lot more.

INTRODUCTORY MATTERS

- Authorship
- Audience
- Date
- Occasion
- Purpose
- Message
- Outline

The image shows the cover of a book titled "the book of HEBREWS" with the subtitle "a faith that endures". The cover features a dark, textured background with a central image of a scroll or parchment. The text is in a clean, white, sans-serif font. The author's name, J. Dwight Pentecost, is visible at the bottom of the cover.

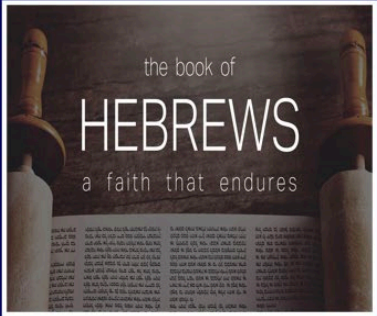
So we are going to begin here with an introduction to the Book of Hebrews. You can see on the screen the issues we are going to try to look at in this introduction. They are actually very pivotal, in this book, to interpreting some areas of the book that Christians many times misinterpret.

So the first thing you ask yourself (you can apply this to any book that you study) is authorship: who wrote the book? And that is not an easy question to answer, because the Book of Hebrews is anonymous.

There are a lot of different people mentioned in the Book of Acts—tons of people. Probably every person in the Book of Acts has been nominated as the author of the Book of Hebrews, other than Dorcas. And with a name like Dorcas—I mean, who would want a biblical author named Dorcas?

AUTHORSHIP

- Apollos?
- Barnabas?
- Paul?



Many, many New Testament characters and figures have been nominated as potential authors of the Book of Hebrews. But the three major ones would be Apollos, Barnabas, and Paul. Let's just spend a little time on this. Why do people think Apollos wrote the Book of Hebrews? Well, the answer is in Acts 18:24, where we learn that Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures:

"Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24).

And there is a lot in Hebrews that some would call an Alexandrian style of writing, going back to Alexandria, Egypt. So a lot of people think that Apollos was the author of Hebrews.

Zane Hodges took the position that Barnabas was the author of the Book of Hebrews, and he thought that because of Acts 4:36 in which Barnabas (and remember, Paul and Barnabas are connected) was called a Levite. Acts 4:36 says,

"Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement)," (Acts 4:36).

So a lot of people think that Barnabas wrote the Book of Hebrews because he was a Levite. From the Levites came the priesthood. Whoever wrote Hebrews demonstrated a lot of knowledge about the priesthood and the temple and the sacrificial system.

Probably the most common view floating around out there is that Hebrews was written by the apostle Paul. Why do people think that Paul the apostle wrote Hebrews? They

have a lot of different reasons. The end of the book mentions Timothy. Look at the very end of the book: Hebrews 13:23. It says,

"Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you" (Hebrews 13:23).

So whoever wrote Hebrews was connected with Timothy. We know from the Book of Acts, beginning in Acts 16, that Paul and Timothy were connected. Timothy traveled with Paul on the missionary journeys, beginning with the second missionary journey. And of course, Paul wrote two letters in the New Testament to this young man named Timothy.

And then if you look at Hebrews 13:24, it says,

"Greet all of your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you" (Hebrews 13:24).

So people say, "Well, the author of Hebrews has to be Paul, because Paul was connected to Rome. He always wanted to get the gospel into Rome, and he was a prisoner in Rome two times."

A lot of people will argue that Hebrews sounds like the things that Paul talked about elsewhere in his writings. In Hebrews there is a great familiarity with Paul's style of writing, lots of references to the Old Testament, lots of references in the Book of Hebrews to Christ's finished work, and lots of references to faith.

And a lot of people think that Paul wrote Hebrews because it fits a structure that you see over and over again in Paul's writings, in which he developed doctrine first, and then he said, "Therefore..." And whenever you see the word "therefore" in the Bible, you ask the question, "What is the word 'therefore' there for?" And typically in Paul's writings, it is to take you out of doctrine into practice.

OUTLINE

- I. Doctrinal section (1:1–10:18)
 - A. Christ's attributes (1:1-3)
 - B. Christ is superior to the angels (1:4–2:18)
 - C. Christ is superior to Moses (3:1–4:13)
 - D. Christ is superior to Aaron (4:14–10:18)
- II. Practical section (10:19–13:25)
 - A. Exhortations and pastoral reminders (10, 12, 13)
 - B. Hall of faith (11)
 - C. Benediction (13:20-25)

So, you see that in the Book of Hebrews. The first section of the book, Hebrews 1:1-10:18 is doctrine. And then in Hebrews 10:19, you are looking for "therefore," and there it is:

"Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus," (Hebrews 10:19).

And the author of Hebrews switched, at that point, from talking about doctrine, and moved into practice. And people say, "Well, that is how Paul wrote." Certainly Paul did that in the Book of Galatians. The first four chapters of the Book of Galatians are doctrine, and then you hit Galatians 5:1, and it says, "Therefore..." and it moves into application.

Paul certainly did this in Romans. Romans 1-11 is doctrine. And then you hit Romans 12:1, and it says, "Therefore..." and moves you from doctrine into application, or daily living: "Therefore...offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, etc." (paraphrase, Romans 12:1). And certainly that is the same thing that happens in the Book of Ephesians.

Ephesians is fascinating. The first three chapters of Ephesians are all doctrine. Did you know that in the first three chapters of Ephesians there are no commands for believers to follow? It is all saying, "This is what you have in Christ by way of your spiritual riches." But then after laying that foundation, in Ephesians 4:1 you see the word "Therefore..." and that switches us from doctrine into practice.

In the second section of Ephesians you have thirty-eight imperatives, or commands, for Christians. There is a preaching methodology today that says that you have to get to the application—you have to get to daily living. And you will notice that Paul had no interest in doing that until he first established believers in solid doctrine.

There is no sense in telling someone to do something unless they first understand their resources in Christ and their riches in Christ. Now, once they understand who they are in Christ, doctrinally, now you are in a position to tell them, "Here is the application."

So there is a lot of homiletics preaching methodology today that I think is just completely anti-Pauline, because they want you to get to the point of application as fast as possible. "What does this mean to me?" I call that "narcigesis" instead of "exegesis." "What is it saying about me, me, me, me?" And Paul had absolutely no interest in application until he first explained doctrine.

So people say, "Well, the Book of Hebrews must have been written by Paul, because it follows the exact same structure." So probably the most common view floating around out there is that Paul was the author of this anonymous book. However, that view also has problems.

Paul always gave his name in every book. He wrote thirteen books. He always identified himself by name. Why would he not do it here in the Book of Hebrews if he, in fact, were the author of the book? Beyond that, the Book of Hebrews has a ton of Old Testament quotations, and every single one of them comes from the LXX, which is the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, Hebrew Bible.

(The Septuagint was translated a couple hundred years before the time of Christ.) You do not find any citation in the Book of Hebrews from the Old Testament, unless it is quoting the LXX, the Septuagint. And Paul did not do that all the time. Paul was not slavishly devoted to the Septuagint the way the author of the Book of Hebrews seemed to be.

A lot of people would say the style of writing in Hebrews is a little bit different from Paul's writing style. And one of the things that leads me away from thinking Paul wrote it is Galatians 2:7-8. It says,

"But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles)," (Galatians 2:7-8).

So Paul said here that Peter was the apostle to the Jews, and Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles. So if Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, why would he be writing a book to Jewish Christians called "Hebrews"?

So, you know, it is not something to start a new church over—this issue of authorship—because the truth is that with everyone you pick up there are going to be problems. So what is my view on this anonymous Book of Hebrews? I agree with Origen on this. Origen was asked, "Who wrote the Book of Hebrews?" and Origen said, "Only God knows." So that is my view.

I have no idea who wrote Hebrews. I am not obsessed with trying to figure out who wrote it, because the author wanted to be anonymous and I respect that. He had a reason for wanting to be anonymous, and so I respect his anonymity. I have written, believe it or not, some anonymous things. And when you want to be anonymous, you have a reason for it. And generally, if anonymity is your goal I will defer to you. I will respect that.

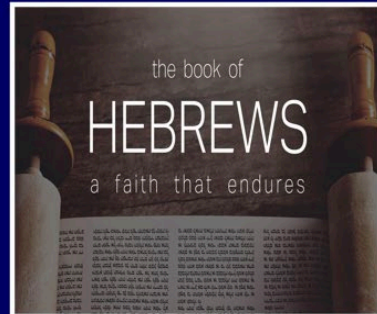
So on this first question, "Who wrote the Book of Hebrews?" my answer is, "I really do not know." How is that for an answer? The far more important issue than authorship is audience. That is the big issue because that will control how you understand, or interpret, the warning passages, which I will introduce you to in Hebrews.

Authorship: Was it Apollos? Was it Barnabas? Was it Paul? Whatever you conclude on that has no bearing on how you are going to interpret the book. But the audience has a huge impact on how you are going to interpret the book. So you spend the most time on introductory matters that bear insight into how you handle the book.

You read commentaries on the Book of Hebrews today, and they go on and on and on about authorship. And they have maybe a sentence or two on audience. And I am like, "You guys got this backwards. The audience is the big deal." So who was the audience of Hebrews? There are four things.

AUDIENCE

- Believers (1:3)
- 2nd generation (2:2-3)
- Jews
- Located in the Land of Israel



I think that the first one is the most important: the audience were believers. This was a regenerated—saved—audience. Why is that such a big deal? Because what people do with the warning passages is they say, "Well, what the author is doing is aiming the warning passages at the unsaved in the midst of the audience." But that does not work if the whole audience was saved.

So let me show you why I think the audience of Hebrews was a saved audience. Notice Hebrews 1:2. It says,

"in these last days has spoken to us in His Son,..." (Hebrews 1:2).

So whatever you are concluding about the audience, you also have to conclude about the author. If the author was saved (we would think so—you cannot have an unsaved author in the Bible) the audience was just as saved as the author was. Look at Hebrews 1:3:

"And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," (Hebrews 1:3).

You get the idea that the audience's sins had been forgiven, and that only applies to a saved person. Notice Hebrews 2:3:

"how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?..." (Hebrews 2:3).

To neglect salvation means that you have salvation to neglect. "Hey, you are neglecting your wife." Well, that means that you must have a wife to neglect, right? "Hey, you are neglecting your upkeep of your home." Well, that means that you must have a home to neglect. So the fact that the author of Hebrews said that the audience was neglecting salvation indicates that they already had salvation.

It is very similar to 1 Timothy 4:14, in which Timothy was told not to neglect his spiritual gifting, meaning that he must have had spiritual gifting for the purpose of neglecting. Notice Hebrews 3:1:

"Therefore, holy brethren,..." (Hebrews 3:1).

The audience sounds like saved people to me. These were brothers in Christ. They were holy. In fact, the word "brethren" is used nine times in Hebrews. Sometimes it refers to Christ's brothers; sometimes it refers to humanity. But six out of the ten times "brethren" appears in Hebrews, it clearly refers to saved people. Those references are Hebrews 2:11; 3:1, 12; 10:19; and 13:23-24 (Hebrews 13:22-24).

Also, the audience of Hebrews needed rest. Look at Hebrews 4:1.

"Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest,..." (Hebrews 4:1).

See that? The audience needed rest in the Lord. They did not need salvation. They needed to learn how to rest on the promises of God. Look at Hebrews 4:3.

"For we who have believed..." (Hebrews 4:3).

In other words, the author was saying, "I believed. You believed."

"For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He had said, 'AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,' although His works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Hebrews 4:3).

So there you see that the audience of Hebrews were fellow believers with the author—

"...we who have believed..." (Hebrews 4:3).

If you look at Hebrews 4:14, the audience had a high priest.

"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (Hebrews 4:14).

So the author was saying, "I have a high priest. You have a high priest. So let us together take advantage of our high priest during a time of difficulty." An unsaved person does not have a high priest. They are isolated and alienated from God, in need of salvation. Also, the audience of Hebrews had access to God's throne. Hebrews 4:16 says,

"Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

So the audience had the total ability to go into the throne room of God by way of intercessory prayer, and to receive grace. An unsaved person does not have that.

According to Hebrews 10:36-38, the audience did not need salvation. They needed endurance. Hebrews 10:36-39 says,

"For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised" (Hebrews 10:36).

That would be a very strange thing to say to an unsaved person. An unsaved person does not need endurance. They need to get saved. But the audience of Hebrews were believers who needed to learn how to endure in their faith. Hebrews 10:22 says that the audience had been sprinkled with blood, leading to a clean conscience:

"let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:22).

Now, you cannot say that of an unsaved person. An unsaved person is still dead in their trespasses and sins, and their conscience is not sprinkled clean.

Back in Hebrews 9:14, the audience was told to serve God. Hebrews 9:14 says,

"how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:14).

You do not tell an unsaved person, "Go serve the living God." They do not even have a relationship with God. You cannot serve a God you do not know.

Hebrews 10:10 indicates that the audience were sanctified. It says in Hebrews 10:10,

"By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).

Unsaved persons are not sanctified.

Hebrews 10:15 says that the audience had the Holy Spirit:

"And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us;..." (Hebrews 10:15).

An unsaved person does not have the Holy Spirit. Paul, in Romans 8:9 said that if we have Christ, we have His Spirit. You cannot have the Holy Spirit inside of you, residing in you, when you are an unregenerate, unsaved, non-born-again person.

Hebrews 12:2 indicates that Jesus was the author and finisher of the audience's faith.

"fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith,..." (Hebrews 12:2).

Does that fit an unsaved person? What faith is there in an unsaved person to perfect?

Hebrews 12:7 says that the audience were sons of God.

"It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" (Hebrews 12:7).

The reason the audience of Hebrews was going through discipline was that they were God's children. You do not discipline people who are not your kids, right? You do not go next door and discipline the neighbor's kids. Now, I have been tempted to do that a couple times, but that is a no-no. That is a parental authority issue. You discipline your own children. The fact that your children are under discipline indicates that they belong to you.

Hebrews 12:28 indicates that the audience were going to receive an unshakable kingdom. Hebrews 12:28 says,

"Therefore, since we receive a kingdom..." (Hebrews 12:28).

See how the author keeps saying "we"? "What is true of me is true of you."

"Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;" (Hebrews 12:28).

So the audience were receiving a kingdom. They will be citizens in the coming Kingdom.

In Hebrews, there are thirty-eight exhortations for Christians to follow, and there is not a single time in the book where the author says, "You all need to trust Christ to be saved." Now, John's Gospel does that. John 20:30-31 says,

"Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30-31).

When John wrote, he was writing to people who had not believed yet. They did not have life in Jesus Christ because they had never trusted in Christ. "You guys need to get saved" is what John was saying in his Gospel. John was very evangelistic because he was writing primarily to unsaved people.

There is nothing like that in Hebrews. We call them altar calls today, although we do not give altar calls here because the Bible never says to walk an aisle to be saved. It says to trust in Christ. If you want to walk an aisle, congratulations, and feel free. But that does not save anybody. It is faith alone in Christ alone that saves.

There is no evangelistic appeal in the Book of Hebrews. There are no altar calls in the Book of Hebrews, which you would think the author would do, if there were people within the group that were unregenerate and unsaved. So file that away in your memory because that is going to be huge when we hit the warning passages. Almost everybody interprets the warning passages as though they were aimed at unsaved people,

because there is no way saved people act like that and come under that form of discipline.

That means that if you are sitting in a church where the preacher says that over and over again—"Now, we are coming to the warning section, but the warning section does not apply to the Christian."—you know what you do when you hit that section of the sermon? You hit the snooze button. "Oh, that does not apply to me. That just applies to the unsaved. Wake me up when he gets out of the warning section."

But if I am telling you that these warnings, although they do not entail loss of salvation, but are very severe, apply to the Christian, suddenly I have everybody's attention in the room. So that is why understanding this analysis of the audience is really where the time should be spent, not trying to figure out trivial things that have no interpretational significance in the book, such as who wrote the book.

So as my professor Dwight Pentecost used to say, "Selah," which is a Hebrew word that you see in the Psalms. It means to consider carefully. And what I have done is not brought my own theology to the book (Hebrews). I have just shown you in the book (Hebrews) how the book itself is obviously written to saved people.

The second thing to understand about the audience of Hebrews is that you are dealing with the second-generation of Christians, and this is why they were weak and being tempted to go back into the sacrificial system, because you are not dealing with the apostolic generation anymore. You are dealing with the next generation, which was not quite as strong as the apostolic generation, obviously.

Now, how do we know the audience of Hebrews were second-generation Christians? Look at Hebrews 2:3.

"how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard,"
(Hebrews 2:3).

So you are dealing here with a generational change. "The salvation was first spoken through the Lord, then it was given to those who heard (those were the apostles) and then from there it went to us (that is the generation following the apostles)" (paraphrase, Hebrews 2:3). "And as the message of Christianity went from the apostles to us, it was confirmed by various signs and wonders" (paraphrase, Hebrews 2:3)—which is one of the reasons that the signs and wonders were taking place so significantly in the Book of Acts.

Signs and wonders have a tendency to cluster around time periods when God is starting something new—a new dispensation, we might say. How do you know it is of God? Because it is confirmed by signs and wonders. So you see signs and wonders in the Bible clustering around the giving of the Law, because God was starting something new there at Sinai.

You see signs and wonders clustering around the Elijah and Elisha stories because God was doing something new there. He was raising up a new office called the prophet. And the prophet was to speak out against corrupt kings of Israel.

There were a lot of corrupt kings of Israel to speak out against, by the way. That is why prophets had short careers, because they were speaking out against the guy who held the levers of political power. So most of the prophets were dead very quickly.

That office (of prophet) that God raised up was confirmed by various signs and wonders. Signs and wonders also have a tendency to cluster around the ministry of Jesus, because He was offering the Kingdom to first-century Israel. He was giving them a chance to receive the offer of the Kingdom. The Millennial Kingdom would have shown up, had Israel not rejected Jesus.

Then signs and wonders cluster around the Book of Acts, because in the Book of Acts, something completely new was happening. Israel had rejected the offer of the Kingdom, and God was raising up the body of Christ called the church. So we have been in that age (the Church Age) for 2,000 years. That is why we do not see the signs and wonders today that we see in the Book of Acts to the same degree: because we are not in a new dispensation.

Now, having said that, I do believe that God performs miracles today. It is just more sparing, and He does it directly, rather than indirectly through an apostle. And if I did not believe that, I would not waste my time praying, because when you pray for somebody, you are obviously praying for God to intervene miraculously.

So I am not ruling all of that out. I am just saying that the signs and wonders that you see in the Book of Acts are not normative today because we are not in a new dispensation today. We have been in the same age of the church for the last 2,000 years.

Now, what is the next "Signs and Wonders Movement" on the horizon? It is going to be entered into by the Antichrist. It is going to come with counterfeit signs and wonders. So this obsession today, that everybody wants signs and wonders, well, the next ones coming are the devil's Signs and Wonders Movements in the Book of Revelation and other places.

Then, once that time period has elapsed, then you enter the Kingdom Age, which will be again accompanied by signs and wonders, instantaneous healing, and everything like that, because once again, we will be in a new age of time. A dispensational change will have happened.

So that is what the author is saying: "The message went from the Lord to those who heard, and then from there it came to us (the author and audience of Hebrews)" (paraphrase, Hebrews 2:3). So you are dealing with the generation that followed the apostles. "And as it came to us, it was confirmed by various signs and wonders" (paraphrase, Hebrews 2:3). So you are dealing with a second generation here, and that shows you why the audience was a little weaker than the apostolic generation.

The second generation, whether it is in a business or in anything, is always a little weaker than the first generation, because the first generation are the ones that did all the sacrifice to get the business off the ground. What does the son or the grandson know about hard work? They are just inheritors. So a lot of times they just do not have the same value system as the founders.

This happens in all kinds of organizations, and this is what was happening here with the audience of Hebrews. This explains why this audience was so susceptible to returning to the Law: because we are dealing with the second generation. So we are dealing with believers and second-generation believers, and then we are dealing obviously with a Jewish audience.

How do we know that the audience of Hebrews was a Jewish audience? Well, does the title give it away? "Hebrews." Those are Jews. Those are physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This group being addressed in the Book of Hebrews were what we would call Messianic Jews—saved Jews—regenerated Jews. The title of Hebrews goes all the way back to A.D. 180. So people trust it to really be the title of this book.

And whoever wrote Hebrews, and whoever received this book, obviously had a lot of knowledge about the Old Testament system, rituals of Judaism, and Jewish history. And you do not find in Hebrews your typical conflicts that you get in early Christianity between Gentiles who are saved and Jews who are saved.

Paul, for example, in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8-10, said things like, "You can eat a food sacrificed to idols, but do not do it in front of someone with a weaker understanding." And Paul was talking there about Jewish Christians who thought that eating food offered to idols was a sin. And if you just partook of food sacrificed to idols, you were stumbling them. That shows you that you have Jew-Gentile tension being addressed in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8-10.

There is nothing like that in the Book of Hebrews. There is no Jew-Gentile tension like that, which is another hint that we are dealing with a Jewish audience. Paul, in Romans 11, said that the fullness of the Gentiles must come in and then all Israel will be saved. And the unnatural branches are not to develop a boastful attitude towards the Jewish branches that have been pushed out of their tree, because God is going to bring the Jewish branches back in one day.

So there is an underlying tension in Romans 11 with Jew-Gentile tensions. But you do not have that at all in the Book of Hebrews. The Book of Hebrews is one of six New Testament books that are very special in the sense that they were written to saved Jewish people. We call these the Messianic Jewish books of the Bible. There are six of these. What are the Messianic Jewish books of the Bible?

Number one, Matthew's Gospel, the first gospel written. Matthew was dealing with Jewish Christians who were asking that if Christ is the King (and they had accepted that), where was the Kingdom? So to understand Matthew, you have to put yourself in

the shoes of a saved Jewish person. And once you do that and you figure out what the Jews were asking, then everything in Matthew makes total sense.

The Book of Hebrews would be number two. James would be number three, because that was written to the twelve tribes—that sounds Jewish to me—those who were saved amongst the twelve tribes (James 1:1). 1 Peter was written to Hebrew Christians because Peter was the apostle to the Jews.

In fact, I will show you the word "diaspora" (διασπορά) in just a minute, which is a word that can only apply to Jewish people. Peter used the word "diaspora" (διασπορά), as did James. So if Peter wrote two books, 1 Peter and 2 Peter, those are Messianic Jewish letters also. And then Jude—when you read Jude, it sounds an awful lot like 2 Peter. There is a lot of literary dependence there. So we think that Jude was also written to a Hebrew Christian audience.

It is not that when, as a Gentile, you read these Messianic Jewish books, you would not be edified and built up. You would. But as far as the original audience is concerned, there are six of these in your New Testament that are Hebrew Christian in orientation. They are talking about things that a saved Jewish person would want to know about. Those are Matthew's Gospel, the Book of Hebrews, the Book of James, the two Peter epistles, and Jude.

Now, where was the audience of Hebrews located? The Jewish Christians were heavily persecuted in the Book of Acts and they got out of town—they got out of Jerusalem. Acts 8:3-4 says,

"But Saul began ravaging the church [they were all Jewish at this point], entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word..." (Acts 8:3-4).

What happened to the Jewish people in the Book of Acts in the city of Jerusalem? Well, they were heavily persecuted, beginning with Saul of Tarsus, and they got out of town. Acts 11:19 picks up on that and says,

"So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen..." (Acts 11:19).

See, Stephen gave the speech in Acts 7, and he condemned first-century Israel. And it was not one of those speeches where they all stood up and said, "Yay! What a great speech." They picked up rocks to kill him on the spot because he condemned first-century Israel as an apostate nation. He said, "You guys are acting like everyone has acted in this nation going back to its beginning."

How would you like a talk like that? Someone comes into your country and says that "you people are apostate and you have always been apostate. All right, let's close in prayer." That would be highly offensive. So the Jews were going to kill Stephen. And they did kill him. Saul was so angry when this happened that he turned on the Jewish

Christians, and that is what pushed them out of Jerusalem. So that is why the Jewish Christians were scattered (Acts 8:3-4; 11:19).

Where did the Jewish Christians go? Well, they went to two places. The first place they went was Babylon, because that was where the Jews, many of them having not returned from the Babylonian captivity in Old Testament times, remained. And we think that James was addressing that group in Babylon. James 1:1 says,

"James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes who are dispersed abroad: Greetings" (James 1:1).

"Dispersed" is the Greek word "diaspora" (διασπορά), which is only used of Jewish people. It means the dispersed Jews. I think it is only used three times in the New Testament. It is used in 1 Peter 1:1, which I have not read yet; in James 1:1; and in John 7 (John 7:35). "Diaspora" (διασπορά) is a technical word that only refers to Jewish people pushed out of their homeland.

James was addressing group one of the dispersed Jewish Christians. The Jewish Christians also went into north central Turkey, the upper north of the Asia Minor area. Peter, the apostle to the Jews, addressed that group of Jewish Christians. He said,

"To those who reside as aliens,..." (1 Peter 1:1).

Why were they aliens? Because they just got kicked out of their homeland.

"...scattered..." (1 Peter 1:1).

"Scattered" is the Greek word "diaspora" (διασπορά), which is used only of Jewish people. Then Peter mentioned those sites (you can find them on a good Bible map in north central Turkey):

"...Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen" (1 Peter 1:1).

So that is what happened to these Jews. They got scattered into those two areas, Babylon and north central Turkey, but some of them stayed in town (in Jerusalem). And those Jews who stayed in Jerusalem are the ones the Book of Hebrews was dealing with. Hebrews was dealing with the believing remnant of Jews who did not leave, and stayed in Jerusalem. We think that because they had a desire to go back to the temple rituals.

Where was the temple located before it was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70? It was located in Jerusalem. So the Jews stayed within the land of Israel.

By the way, the land of Israel is called the land of Israel. It is not called Palestine. When you start using the word "Palestine," you are using nomenclature that the Bible knows absolutely nothing about. Matthew 2:21, the Christmas story, says,

"So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of...[Palestine]" (Matthew 2:21).

It does not say that.

"...to the land of Israel" (Matthew 2:21).

The name "Palestine" does not even come up until the second century, long after the Bible was written. It was a term that was developed by the Emperor Hadrian of Rome, in the second century, about A.D. 117. It is an anti-Semitic term. In A.D. 117, after the Jews were kicked out of their land by the Romans in A.D. 70, Rome was trying to pretend that the Jews were never there.

Does that sound familiar? That is what the Muslims and everybody else do all the time. It is getting harder and harder to do that, because they keep finding all this archeology that shows that the Jews actually were there, just like the Bible says.

The Romans, around A.D. 117, went in and tried to de-Judaize the land. They said, "Let's come up with a new name for this place. Let's call it 'Palestine.'" Why "Palestine"? Because it is related to "Philistine." The Philistines were one of Israel's enemies in the Old Testament. So Hadrian picked a name that the Jews hated.

So when people say "Palestine"—and they say it all the time—they do not really understand that they are using a non-biblical term, and that they are actually using an anti-Semitic slur. And there are a lot of Bibles that are published today—you look at the map and it will say "Palestine." Some people joined us on one of our trips, flying from Rome to join us in Israel. You know how when you are flying, they give you a map of where you are going?

I think they came from Rome. Then they went to an Islamic country as a connecting flight—I cannot remember which one. And then they came to join our group. They took a picture of the map on the plane coming out of an Islamic country. I have a picture of it. I did not bring it in, but it said, over the land of Israel, "Palestinian territories." That is what it said. So even today, people will not acknowledge Israel's place on the map.

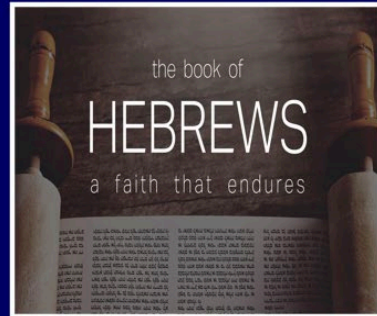
And when I saw that—they showed it to me on their phone—I said, "You have to send that to me." And I have it in my stack of stuff that I like to bring out from time to time, showing you that what Hadrian did is what is going on today. People do not want to acknowledge Israel even being on the map.

That is why, when the former leader of Iran said, "We are going to wipe Israel off the map," I was like, "All right, that is progress. At least you are acknowledging that Israel is on the map to be wiped out." Most of the time, they do not even acknowledge that Israel is there.

So that is where the audience of Hebrews was: Jerusalem, in Israel. When the persecution under Saul happened, some Jewish Christians went to Babylon. James addressed them in his epistle. Some Jewish Christians went to north central Turkey. Peter addressed them. But there was a remnant of Jewish believers that stayed in and around Jerusalem. They were the ones to whom the Book of Hebrews was written.

DATE (A.D. 62–64)

- Before
 - ◆ A.D. 95 (Clement of Rome)
 - ◆ A.D. 70 (Heb 8:4, 13; 9:6; 10:1-2; 13:10)
 - ◆ A.D. 64 (Heb 12:4)
- After apostolic generation (2:2-3)



What was the date of Hebrews' writing? When would we date this book? Well, it has to have been written before A.D. 95, because Clement of Rome quoted it in A.D. 95. You cannot quote something that does not exist, right? And as you go through the Book of Hebrews, there are references to the temple functioning—Hebrews 8:4, 13; 9:6; 10:1-2; 13:10. Let's look at one of those references. Look at Hebrews 10:1. It says,

"For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near"
(Hebrews 10:1).

The author was saying that the sacrifices cannot do for you what Christ has done for you. He made reference to the sacrifices continually being offered (Hebrews 10:1). That gives you the impression that the temple, with its sacrificial system, was still up and running.

We know historically that the second temple was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. So that pushes the date of Hebrews' writing earlier than A.D. 70. There is something said in Hebrews 12:4 which pushes the date of writing even earlier. Look at Hebrews 12:4. The author says,

"You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin;" (Hebrews 12:4).

"You have not resisted to the point of martyrdom" (paraphrase, Hebrews 12:4). Now, once you hit A.D. 64, there was a lunatic on the throne of Rome. If you think leadership today is bad, just study Nero. This guy was an absolute lunatic. He would light Christians on fire and say, "You are the light of the world. How does it feel to be lit on fire?"

Nero was the guy that burned Rome and blamed it on the Christians. He was a pedophile, and everything associated with that. And he was the one who brought in the first Roman imperial persecution against Christianity. Christianity knew persecution. They knew it from unbelieving Israel. But they did not know anything like that. The whole Roman Empire was now against Christianity.

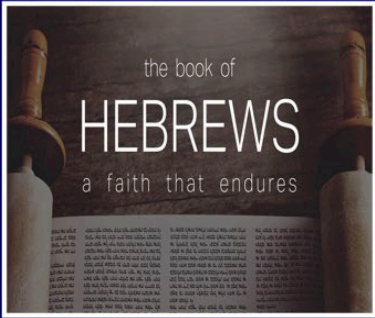
That situation did not get rectified until a guy named Constantine came to the Roman throne and issued what is called the Edict of Milan about A.D. 313. With that edict, Constantine made Christianity the formal religion of Rome, which I think probably hurt Christianity more than Nero ever could, because Christianity became popular. Persecution has the tendency to purify Christianity.

So my point is that Hebrews 12:4—*"You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood..." (Hebrews 12:4)*—is a very weird statement if it was written during the Neronian persecution. So the Book of Hebrews must have been written prior to the Neronian persecution. But you cannot push it too early because, as I said earlier, we are dealing with the second generation of Christians.

So I think a date of A.D. 62 to 64 works really well. It is not too early and it is not too late. It is not so late that it pushes you post A.D. 70, or post Neronian persecution, but it does not push you so early that it does not take into account the fact that we are dealing with a second generation of Christians here.

OCCASION

- A.D. 70
- Heb 3:1 (Christian confession)
- Unbelieving Jews placing audience under duress to return to Judaism
- Audience being worn down
- Temple still standing



So with all of that being said, what is the occasion of the Book of Hebrews? What are the circumstances that gave rise to the letter? Number one, the nation of Israel was under divine discipline, under judgment, that was about to be meted out in A.D. 70 because of her national rejection of her own Messiah.

Daniel said that day would come:

"Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, [that is Palm Sunday and the crucifixion] and the people of the prince who is to come [that is Titus of Rome] will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood;..." (Daniel 9:26).

This is why Jesus was crying on Palm Sunday. Everybody else was waving their palms, and Jesus was crying because He knew Daniel 9:26. He knew the nation was going to reject Him. And when the nation rejected Him, the covenant consequences were going to kick in. And that is why Jesus was always saying that the temple the Jews were so proud of was about to be torn down brick by brick, stone by stone. He was referring to the events of A.D. 70.

This discipline was built into the Mosaic Covenant that God gave to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai. Part of that covenant were national blessings for obedience, and national curses for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28; Leviticus 26). These curses, when Israel was more and more rebellious, would start to roll like a snowball, and they would climax in a foreign power evicting the nation from their homeland. That was spoken of in Deuteronomy 28 in the curses section. Deuteronomy 28:49-50 says,

"The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young" (Deuteronomy 28:49-50).

So when Israel goes away from the Mosaic Covenant, God brings discipline. He has done it four times. He divided the kingdom after Solomon left following the Lord. Solomon woke up one day and did exactly the opposite of what the Book of Deuteronomy said. Deuteronomy said that the king was not to multiply wealth for himself. Solomon did exactly what the book said not to do.

Deuteronomy 17 said that the king was not to amass wives for himself. Solomon went and did the exact opposite. That was the last 40 years of Solomon's life. So God brought discipline in 931 B.C. and the kingdom was divided between the North and the South. The North continued its trajectory of rebellion against God, so God brought the Assyrians and scattered them in 722 B.C., 2 Kings 12 (2 Kings 17).

The remaining Southern Kingdom of Judah did not do much better, so God sent them into the Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. (2 Kings 25). And then at the time of the ministry of Christ, the nation had returned from the captivity and they rejected their King nationally. So, to quote that great theologian Yogi Berra, "It's déjà vu all over again."

Now God was going to bring the Romans to kick the Jews out of their land and send them into the Diaspora. That is why Jesus was crying. That is why He kept making these predictions about the temple being destroyed, etc.

ISRAEL'S JUDGMENTS

- Division of the kingdom in 931 B.C. (1 Kgs. 12)
- Assyrian judgment in 722 B.C. (2 Kgs. 17)
- Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. (2 Kgs. 25)
- Rome *Diaspora* in A.D. 70 (Luke 19:41-44)



So at the time of the writing of Hebrews, you are dealing with a situation when discipline had not yet been imposed, but was about to be imposed. You are dealing with a flock of people living in and around Jerusalem that were believers.

If you look at Hebrews 3:1, it says that the audience of Hebrews had made a public confession of Christ. Hebrews 3:1 says,

"Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;" (Hebrews 3:1).

The audience of Hebrews had publicly confessed Christ as Lord in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation that had rejected Him as King. Now how did the audience of Hebrews make that public confession? It was through their baptism. Once you got baptized, you were basically saying, as a Hebrew Christian, "Israel is wrong to reject Christ, and the church and its message are right." You were taking a public stand.

That is why Peter, in Acts 2, as the baptisms of the believers at Pentecost were occurring—baptism does not save, but it is an outward confession of an inward reality—said things like "Save yourself from this crooked and perverse generation" (paraphrase, Acts 2:40). In other words, "This whole nation is under the disciplinary hand of God. But you can come out of it by trusting in Christ and then publicly acknowledging who Jesus is" (paraphrase, Acts 2:37-41).

So once the Jewish Christians started to do this, the unbelieving Jewish leaders started putting them under duress to return to Judaism. "Stop this nonsense and come back to Judaism. Come back to the temple"—which, by the way, was about to be destroyed. They just did not know it. They could have known it, but they did not know it.

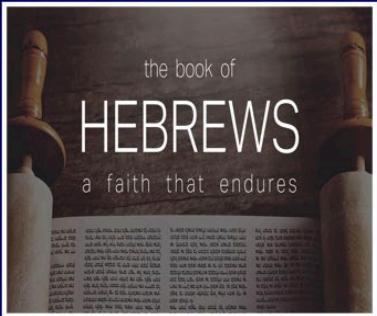
And the audience of Hebrews, through perpetual persecution, were being worn down. They were the second generation of Christians. They were thinking, "You know what, I am just going to get these unbelieving Jews off my back. I am going to go back to

Judaism. I am going to go back to the temple. I am going to go back to the sacrificial system. It will appease my persecutors. It will get them off my back."

And the Book of Hebrews was saying, "Don't do it." The temptation to go back to the temple was completely and totally real, because the temple was still standing. It was only A.D. 62 to 64. So the temptation to return to the temple was very, very real.

PURPOSE

- Encouragement/motivation to not lapse back into Judaism
 - ◆ What believers already have in Christ is superior to every vestige of Judaism (Angels, Moses, and the Aaronic priesthood)
 - ◆ Warnings



That leads to the purpose of the Book of Hebrews. It is an encouragement not to go back into Judaism by explaining that what the audience had in Christ was superior. It was better. "Why go back? And if you do go back, something bad is going to happen to you."

It was not a loss of salvation thing, but some sort of temporal penalty that they were going to experience by going backwards, which everybody says does not apply here because that was supposedly aimed at unbelievers. And I am saying that it was not aimed at unbelievers.

The author of Hebrews was not writing to unbelievers. He was writing to saved people. So there was some sort of temporal consequence that the audience of Hebrews were going to experience by going backward. And that is really what the Book of Hebrews is about.