

## **The Introduction to Hebrews**

### **1) Author**

We don't know. Most likely in the Pauline circle of friends. See *Heb 13:23* – “*I want you to know that our **brother Timothy** has been released. If he arrives soon, I will come with him to see you.*” Many speculate that Paul influenced the thinking, but either Luke or Clement of Rome did the writing.

### **2) Who and Where were the readers?**

Were the readers in Italy or out of Italy? *Heb 13:24* “*Greet all your leaders and all God's people. **Those from Italy send you their greetings.***”

They were more than likely in Italy and the writer had a group of Italians with him who sent their greetings to those that were in Italy. This is based on the fact that Hebrews was accepted as canonical in Rome long before anywhere else.

### **3) When was it written?**

A generation after the apostles but before the fall of Jerusalem. This is based on the high regard the readers have for Jerusalem and on the fact that the early church did not have a bible and the apostle's authority had begun to suffer.

### **4) State of the readers**

- a) **They are Christians.** *Heb 3:14* *We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.* This verse is to give assurance of faith and if they were not Christians it would not have been needed. In 3:1, 16, 14) The writer calls the readers brothers.
- b) **They are Jewish Christians**
  - A) The writer is having to argue the readers out of a Jewish state of mind.
  - B) The writer uses the concept of the law. This would not have been needed if the readers were not Jewish.
  - C) The readers were sad to be out of the Jewish state.
  - D) Only Jews could commit a sin under the old covenant.
- c) **The readers were Hellenistic Jewish Christians** This is brought out by the fact that the letter is written in Greek and not Hebrew.
- d) **The readers had been Christians for a long time** *Heb 5:14* *But solid food **is for the mature**, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.* By implication, the readers should have had enough teaching to be able to teach.
- e) **They had suffered a great deal in the past** *Heb 13:3* *Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.*
- f) **Writer rebukes the readers for being sluggish**
  - A) Heb 12 - Hold fast to the faith.
  - B) Heb 5:11 - Dull of hearing.
  - C) Heb 5:12 - Back to square one
  - D) Heb 5:14 - Need to exercise
  - E) Heb 10:36 - Need endurance.
  - F) Heb 10:39 - Assurance of faith.
  - G) Heb 10:25 Some had fallen from fellowship.
- g) **Pleasant people** Heb 6:10 speaks about hospitality and Heb 13:10 speaks about 'works of love.'

- h) **Definite community** Heb 13:7 speaks about having leaders.
- i) **Tempted by false teaching** (Heb 1, 2:5, 2:16) shows that the false teaching about angels being more important than Jesus was being taught.
- j) **They were in danger of falling away from the faith** (Heb 4, 6)

5) **The Purpose of Hebrews**

- a) The main purpose of the writer is to get the readers to move forward to works of continuing faith. He wants them to move to 'inherit the promises'.
- b) The second purpose is to emancipate the readers from the old covenant that was keeping them from going forward.

6) **Method of writing.**

The writer intertwines 3 aspects in his letter.

- a) The first thing the writer does is to portray the greatness of Jesus. This book is considered to be the **most Christ centred book** in the Bible.
- b) The second thing that the writer does is to encourage the readers. He does this on the basis that Christ suffered for us.  
*Heb 4:14-15 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. v15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are -- yet was without sin.*
- c) The third aspect of importance is that writer warns the readers often during the letter. (Heb 3:7-4:13, 5:11-6:20)

7) **Outline of the book**

The book has 5 main topics.

Chapter	Topic
1-2	Person of Jesus
3:1-4:13	Jesus and the Mosaic covenant
4:14-7:28	Jesus our Great High Priest
8:1-10:18	High Priestly work
10:19-13:25	An appeal for faith

8) **What makes it a challenging book?**

- a) Extremely significant.
- b) Most important after Romans.
- c) Systematic theologians nervous.
- d) Luther did not like the letter.
- e) No body uses scary passages in counselling.
- f) Themes not dealt with in other scriptures.
- g) Some themes are not fully understood. Like - Entering into rest - Heb 3-4.

9) **Why is it important for us to study this book?**

- a) It deals with the superiority of Jesus in all matters of faith.
- b) It deals with what we are saved for.
- c) Deals with the danger of neglect of salvation.
- d) About getting to a certain point in a Christian life and stop growing.
- e) About the unfinished work of Christ.