

The Book of Hebrews

Lesson #2, Gerald Cumby



The Author of Hebrews

- ❖ *The certain identity of the author remains an enigma (unknown).*

Just as we can identify some people on the phone with just a few words spoken, we can surmise who the writer of Hebrews might be by some significant statements or by the style of writing that was presented in this fascinating book.

- ❖ *Although most scholars believe Paul penned Hebrews, others say it was not because:*
 - *Missing is Paul's customary salutation common to his other works.*
 - *The suggestion that the writer of this epistle relied upon knowledge and information provided by others who were actual eyewitnesses of Christ Jesus (2:3) makes Pauline authorship doubtful. Although Paul lived in Jesus time, he did not walk with Jesus and see the miracles performed. In fact, Paul was a staunch Pharisee who was more apt to see those following Jesus in prison or worse (dead). Then he met Jesus!!!*
 - *Some attribute Luke as its writer (due to the exquisite and grammatically accurate penmanship in Luke's other writings).*
 - *Others suggest Hebrews may have been written by Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, Philip, or Aquila and Priscilla.*

NOTE: *There is still much evidence that Paul wrote the letter.*

- ✓ *The most compelling comes from Scripture itself. Remember that Peter wrote to the Hebrews (that is, the Jews; see Galatians 2:7 and 1 Peter 1:1). Peter wrote: "...just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him [emphasis added]" (2 Peter 3:15). In that last verse, Peter is confirming that Paul had also written a letter to the Hebrews!*
- ✓ *Although it is a small detail, this epistle makes mention of Timothy (Hebrews 13:23), and Paul is the only apostle known to have ever done that in any letter (Paul was a mentor of Timothy).*
- ✓ *The theology presented in Hebrews is consistent with Paul's. Paul was a proponent of salvation by faith alone (Ephesians 2:8, 9), and that message is strongly communicated in this epistle (Hebrews 4:2, 6:12, 10:19-22, 10:37-39, and 11:1-40).*
- ✓ *Either Paul wrote the epistle, or the writer was trained and instructed by Paul.*

In some of Paul's 13 books (letters to individuals and churches), one finds evidence of a secretary (one who takes Paul's words [dictated] and writes for Paul. Take Romans, for instance. The letter begins by stating, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1). Yet, at the end of the letter, one reads, "I Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord"

Evidences for a secretary or one who writes for Paul and/or his companions are found in 1 Corinthians 1:1 and 1 Corinthians 16:21, 2 Corinthians 1:1, Ephesians 6:21, Colossians 1:1, among many other places.

At this time, it might be important to look at Paul's "Thorn in the flesh."

2 Corinthians 12:7b-10, "...in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Theories as to "the thorn in the flesh":

1. **Spiritual temptations**---the temptation to doubt his mission...and to shirk his duties...sting of conscious when temptation conquered. (Calvin's view)
2. **The opposition and persecution which he had to face, the constant battle with those who tried to undo his work.** (Luther's view)
3. **Carnal temptations...** when monks and hermits locked themselves up in their monasteries, they found that the last instinct that could be tamed was that of sex. This was the view of the Roman Catholics.
4. **Paul's physical appearance.** "His bodily presence was weak" 2 Cor.10:10 ...but what about the pain that was there...true pain in the flesh?
5. **Epilepsy...painful and recurrent...sometimes it produced trances and visions.** Paul seemed to have been in a trance at times (at least to the person observing Paul's actions).
6. **Severe headaches....migraine type headaches..** Tertullian and Jerome believed that.
7. **Suffered from chronically recurrent attacks of virulent malarial fever which haunted the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean.**
This was an extreme pain... "like the grinding, boring pain in one's temple" ...like the dentist's drill (sometimes reaching the extreme point of human endurance).
8. **EYE trouble.... when he was blinded, he never fully recovered.** Paul stated in Galatians...that they would have plucked out their eyes and would have given them to him (Galatians 4:15) ...End of Galatians Paul writes "See in what large letters I am writing to you" Galatians 6:11....as if he was saying of himself... "I am having a difficult time seeing."

VERY IMPORTANT!

Regardless of the human hand that held the pen, the Holy Spirit of God is the divine author of all Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16); therefore, Hebrews speaks with the same canonical authority as the other sixty-five books of the Bible.

Date of Writing:

I believe the date is somewhere between A.D. 60 and A.D. 69, perhaps about A.D. 65.

- *The letter to the Hebrews had to have been written sometime after Christ's ascension (about A.D. 30) and sometime before the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) because the Temple was still standing.*
- *There had to be time for the apostolic missionaries to evangelize the area. We know that apostolic missionaries were not sent out from Jerusalem for at least seven years after the church had been founded. It was sometime after those seven years before this Jewish community was reached.*

- *There also had to have been a certain amount of time for this community to grow spiritually. Hebrews 5:12 says, "When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God." The writer was saying that they had enough time to be mature, but were not.*

They should have been mature, but they weren't.

- *They had no confidence.*
- *They were in danger of returning to the patterns of Judaism. They might have accepted Jesus as the Savior, but they were looking back to their old pattern of life-style.*
- *They were in danger of confusing their salvation with legalism.*
- *They couldn't make a clear-cut break between the New Covenant in Christ and all the ceremonies and patterns of their old life in Judaism.*

The Hebrew Christians were still hung up on Temple ritual and worship. That's why the Holy Spirit tells them about a new priesthood, a new temple, a new sacrifice, and a new sanctuary that are better than the old ones. These people had gone beyond Judaism by receiving Jesus Christ, but they were still hanging on to many of the Judaistic rituals that had been so much a part of their life. That's understandable when their friends and countrymen were persecuting them. They were in great danger of creating a ritualistic, legalistic Christianity. They had become a congregation of weaker brothers (Rom. 14:2), who were still calling unclean what the Lord had sanctified (Rom. 14:14).

A Lesson of Encouragement from the Past:

God's "faith heroes"

- *Rich in foundational Christian doctrine, the epistle to the Hebrews also gives us encouraging examples of God's "faith heroes" who persevered in spite of great difficulties and adverse circumstances (Hebrews 11).*
- *These members of God's Hall of Faith provide overwhelming evidence as to the unconditional surety and absolute reliability of God.*
- *Likewise, we can maintain perfect confidence in God's rich promises, regardless of our circumstances, by meditating upon the rock solid faithfulness of God's workings in the lives of His Old Testament saints.*
- *We Christians today have the writings of the Apostles and the Church fathers...therefore, we can go to the Scriptures and know that what is said in the Word of God is real, true, and is based on actual facts. The new Christian converts relied on what they experienced, what they had heard, and what they were hearing from the excited and convincing members of the Christian "Way".*

Key Verses:

Hebrews 1:1-2: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."

Hebrews 2:3: "How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation..."

Hebrews 4:14-16: "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. 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. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

Hebrews 11:3, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

Hebrews 12:1-2: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

"Everything's Gonna Be Alright" by Al Green

Don't let this world mislead you...Don't you ever go astray
Trust in God's word and believe it 'cause it'll never pass away
We will see Him in his glory riding on the clouds of joy
Greeting us with open arms and peace forever more

I know that everything is gonna be all right...He's coming back
Like he said He would...Yeah, it's gonna be alright
He's coming back For the true and good

Now when the sky is darkened...There will be no moonlight
We'll know the time has finally come...And he'll change the wrong to right
So if you're always searching...Trying to find the bottom line
Just give your love and life to God...He'll give you a peace of mind

I know that everything gonna be all right. He's coming back...Like he said he would!!!
We know He's the beginning and we know that He is the end
There's no one better if you really need a friend...So don't you ever worry 'cause he gave the guarantee...That he'll return to take us home and fulfill the prophecy.