

## Sunday Evening Bible Study: Hebrews

Originally Given: 3/21/2021

This is intended to be the first of many meetings in our study of the *Book of Hebrews*. This study is designed to be great in length and depth, as *Hebrews* is a complex book to comprehend.

**The Author:** There are many different people who have been considered as candidates for having been the author of Hebrews. Paul has, for much of church history, been considered the most likely author of the anonymous book. Apollos, Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Timothy, Epaphras, Silas, and Philip are some of the many names that have been proposed.

**Considerations:** I have listed below a few considerations that we should make about the author.

- Internal evidence seems to suggest that the author was a Hellenistic Jew (Greek speaking)
- Internal evidence seems to suggest that the author may have come to faith through the teaching of the apostles (2<sup>nd</sup> Generation). See Hebrews 2:3

*<sup>3</sup>how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,*  
-Hebrews 2:3

- Reformer Martin Luther believed Paul wrote the letter, but also stated it could have been Apollos.
- Origen: “But who wrote the epistle, in truth God knows.”

References from <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/writer-hebrews/>

**Timing:** Though there are some who seek a date close to the turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> century for this book, internal evidence suggests that the *Book of Hebrews* was written prior to the destruction of the Herodian Temple in 70ad.

**Considerations:**

- The author, though obviously Jewish, makes no mention of the destruction of the temple. Which is unthinkable if the writing occurred after the destruction of Jerusalem, which the Jewish historian Josephus records in great detail. According to Josephus, over 1 million Jews were slaughtered, and the city was razed.
- The author consistently uses “present tense” terminology when referring to the temple and the activities of the priesthood. (Hebrews 5:1-3, 7:23,27; 8:3-5; 9:6-9,13,25; 10:1,3-4,8,11; 13:10-11).

## Entering the Text

### Hebrews 1:1-2

*<sup>1</sup>Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*

#### **Notice the comparisons:**

God spoke

Formerly by the Prophets

Now by the Son;

Then to the Fathers

But now to us;

Then at various times

Now as at the end of the times.

-from *Calvin's Commentaries* (Hebrews)

#### **Thoughts:**

##### **Fulfilment-**

The author of Hebrews is dealing with Jewish believers who are tempted to go back to a form of Judaism. He writes to commend the revelation of Christ to his audience. The phrase “at many times and in many ways” is placed in contrast with the revelation shown through Jesus Christ. In this comparison we see that the manifold ways which God used to bring His word to His people comes to fulfilment in Christ.

##### **Sufficiency-**

The author seeks to show the ultimacy or sufficiency of the revelation brought by Jesus Christ. The phrase, “but in these last days he has spoken to us by His Son”, creates yet another comparison—this time between the prophets and Jesus. The Apostle’s use of “these last days” points to the finality of the revelation brought by Jesus Christ. There is no indication to be found in the New Testament of an insufficient testimony that must be supplemented by further revelation. Christ is the fullest and final revelation to His church. He is the Alpha and the Omega.

##### **Unity-**

The author is careful to show that these revelations, though varied at many points, are the work of God. Notice that “God spoke” and though the times are different, the methods are different, and the degree of revelation is different, the revelation is only from one source—God. This gives the readers an understanding of the flow of revelation as well as the continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament revelations.

