

II. THE TIMING OF HEBREWS

A. The Parameters of Possibility

1. The earliest options
 - a. Written after Timothy's emergence from prison
 - (1) Timothy became associated with Paul ~ 51AD (Acts 16:1-4).
 - (2) He was with Paul in prison in Rome ~ 62AD (Philemon 1, 10).
 - (3) Timothy was "set at liberty" (Hebrews 13:23).
 - b. Written after Paul arrived in Rome
 - (1) Paul had never been in Rome until ~ 62AD (Acts 23:11; Romans 1:10-12).
 - (2) Hebrews was written from Italy (Hebrews 13:24).
 - c. Written after Peter's second epistle
 - (1) Peter mentioned the book of Hebrews in his second epistle (2 Peter 3:15-16).
 - (2) Second Peter is generally dated as being written somewhere between 61 and 67AD.
2. The latter options
 - a. Written before Paul's death
 - (1) On the assumption Paul was the author
 - (2) He was estimated to have died ~ 68AD.
 - b. Written prior the destruction of Jerusalem
 - (1) There "are priests that offer gifts according to the law" (Hebrews 8:4).
 - (2) Speaks of those "which serve the tabernacle" (Hebrews 13:10)
 - (3) "Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Hebrews 8:13)
 - (4) These verses not only speak of a temple service which was in operation, they also warn that this system was to "vanish away." The temple and its service were destroyed in 70AD.
 - (5) Hebrews was written prior to, but not many years before this.

B. The Summary

1. Hebrews had to be written after Paul came to Rome ~ 62AD.
2. Hebrews had to be written before Paul died ~ 68AD.
3. Paul's statement to the Hebrews, "For ye had compassion of me in my bonds" (Hebrews 10:34) sounds like Paul had been in prison, but was not at the time of writing.
 - a. It is estimated that Paul was released from his Roman imprisonment after 64AD (Acts 28:30).
 - b. He may have stayed in Italy (Hebrews 13:24) for a time before he went on his fourth missionary journey (see *Paul's Possible Journeys After Rome* in the Appendix).
 - c. By this accounting, Hebrews was written ~ 64-66AD. This date would fit everything we know about the book of Hebrews.



III. THE RECIPIENTS OF HEBREWS

A. Their Earthly Heritage

1. Title: “to the Hebrews”
2. Statements within the book – Speaks of those who wandered in the wilderness as “your fathers” (Hebrews 3:9)
3. Topics within the book
 - a. The ministry of Moses (Hebrews 3:1-6)
 - b. The wilderness wanderings (Hebrews 3:7-19; Hebrews 4:1-11)
 - c. The priesthood (Hebrews 4:14-16; Hebrews 5:1-14; Hebrews 6:1-20; Hebrews 7:1-28; Hebrews 8:1-5)
 - d. A new covenant (Hebrews 8:6-13)
 - e. The tabernacle, testament, and sacrifices (Hebrews 9:1-28; Hebrews 10:1-6)
 - f. The hall of faith which is a who’s who of Jews and those associated with the Jews (Hebrews 11:1-40)

B. Their Heavenly Heritage

1. They had heard the gospel from the disciples of Christ (Hebrews 2:3-4).
2. They should have been teachers at the time of the writing of this epistle (Hebrews 5:12).
3. They had ministered to the saints (Hebrews 6:9-10).
4. They shared Paul’s hope of salvation (Hebrews 6:19).
5. They suffered for their faith (Hebrews 10:32-34), but not to the point of martyrdom (Hebrews 12:4).
6. They ministered to those who were in bonds (Hebrews 10:34; Hebrews 13:3).
7. Note: While it is obvious that the epistle is addressed to believers, it cannot be argued that there are not appeals and warnings to unsaved Hebrews (Hebrews 2:3; Hebrews 12:25).

C. Their Possible Apostasy

1. Background
 - a. Many Jews had believed in the early days of the gospel (Acts 2:8-11, 41; Acts 6:7).
 - b. Many of these Jewish believers did not immediately give up their practice of Old Testament Judaism (Acts 15:1, 5; Acts 21:20-21).
 - (1) The Old Testament was as much from God as was the New.
 - (2) It was in many cases easier to accept the new than it was to reject the old (Hebrews 8:13).
 - c. In time, some of the believing Jews left their newfound Christian faith and went back to the full practice of Judaism (Galatians 3:1-3; Galatians 4:8-11, 16-21; Galatians 5:1-13; Galatians 6:12-16; Colossians 2:20-23).

2. Warnings
 - a. These Jews were warned that a return to Judaism was a validation that they had not truly trusted Christ alone for salvation (Galatians 4:10-11; Galatians 5:4; 1 John 2:19; Hebrews 4:1-2; Hebrews 6:4-6; Hebrews 10:38; Hebrews 12:15-17).
 - b. These Jews were therefore admonished to be faithful to God and to make sure of their salvation (Hebrews 2:1-3; Hebrews 3:12; Hebrews 4:11; Hebrews 6:12; compare 2 Corinthians 13:5-6).
 - c. These Jews were warned that those who denied the truth after having had the truth would be dealt with more harshly than those who never knew the truth (Hebrews 2:3; Hebrews 6:4-6; Hebrews 10:26-29; 2 Peter 2:20-22).
 - d. Paul spoke encouragingly to the Hebrews telling them that he was convinced that they were true believers (Hebrews 6:9; Hebrews 10:39).
3. Dispensational comparison
 - a. Although there is some comparison to modern problems, Hebrews dealt with an issue quite foreign to most churches and groups of believers today.
 - b. A large body of Jews had accepted Jesus as their true Messiah and had become believers.
 - c. However, since Judaism was a divinely given religion, they did not have to renounce Judaism in order to accept Christ.
 - (1) Jesus Christ fulfilled the law and the sacrificial system (Matthew 5:17).
 - (2) Contrast this with the Gentiles who had to leave their idols and immorality in order to get saved (1 Thessalonians 1:9).
 - d. Because of this, the Jewish believers were given time to understand that Christ was the end of the law (Romans 10:4) and that the law was a schoolmaster to bring men unto Christ so that after faith came men were no longer under the schoolmaster (Galatians 3:23-25).
 - e. The problem came when some of the Jewish believers wanted to go back to a full participation in the law even while they continued to “believe” in Jesus. Both Galatians and Hebrews teach that this was impossible.
 - f. There is much to learn from the warning passages of Hebrews. However, it must be understood that Hebrews deals with a problem prevalent during the transition from one dispensation or people group to another. We cannot directly apply everything in these warnings to situations today.

IV. THE BREAKDOWN OF HEBREWS

A. The Basic Statistics

1. Chapters – Thirteen
 - a. Shares length with:

- (1) Nehemiah – theme: rebuilding the walls
- (2) 2 Corinthians – theme: building on repentance
- b. The number thirteen
 - (1) A number of rebellion (Genesis 13:13; Genesis 14:4)
 - (2) Also, a number of revolution, or complete and radical change especially in government
 - a) One man’s rebellion is another man’s revolution
 - b) The Israelites conquered the land of Canaan with thirteen tribes (although only twelve received an inheritance of land)
 - c) Paul could very well be called the thirteenth apostle. He radically changed things by going to the Gentiles.
 - i) He wrote thirteen epistles to the Gentiles.
 - ii) He wrote thirteen chapters to preachers (First and Second Timothy and Titus).
 - iii) He wrote thirteen chapters to the Hebrews.
 - (3) Key words and phrases that occur thirteen times in Hebrews
 - a) Better
 - b) Let us
 - c) Christ
 - d) Being
 - e) Angels
 - f) Offered
 - g) Law
 - (4) Hebrews 13:13 has thirteen words (compare Genesis 13:13). The verse speaks to the Jewish believers about going to Jesus “without the camp, bearing his reproach.”
2. Verses – 303
 - a. The thirtieth largest book in the Bible (out of 66)
 - b. The ninth largest book in the New Testament
3. Words – 6,905
 - a. Faith – thirty-two times
 - b. After – twenty-eight times; now – sixteen times
 - c. Priest – twenty-six times
 - d. Blood – twenty-two times
 - e. More – twenty-one times; better – thirteen times
 - f. Covenant – fourteen times

B. The Position of the Book

1. Order
 - a. Fifty-eighth book in the Bible
 - b. Nineteenth book in the New Testament
 - c. Note: Psalms is the nineteenth book in the Old Testament.
 - (1) Of the thirty-seven direct Old Testament quotations in the book of Hebrews, nineteen of them are taken from Psalms – the next highest are Genesis and Deuteronomy with four quotes each.

- (2) That means that the nineteenth book of the New Testament quotes the nineteenth book of the Old Testament nineteen times.
 2. Location – The first of what people commonly call the General Epistles; however, this group of epistles (Hebrews through Jude) would probably be better called the Jewish Epistles.
- C. The Relationships of the Book
1. Hebrews and Leviticus
 - a. Although Leviticus is never quoted in Hebrews, Hebrews is the perfect key that unlocks the typical meaning of the door of Leviticus.
 - b. They are certainly companion books.
 2. Hebrews and Psalms
 - a. Hebrews quotes Psalms more than any other book (nineteen times).
 - b. As Psalms is the heart and soul of the Old Testament, Hebrews carries that feeling into the New Testament and connects the two.
 3. Hebrews and Romans
 - a. Hebrews and Romans are the two most doctrinal books in the New Testament.
 - b. Romans emphasizes the *Way of Salvation* while Hebrews deals with the *Person of Salvation*.
- D. The Outline of the Book
1. The person of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1-7)
 - a. A better messenger than the angels (Hebrews 1:1-14; Hebrews 2:1-18)
 - b. A better founder than Moses (Hebrews 3:1-19)
 - c. A better conqueror than Joshua (Hebrews 4:1-16)
 - d. A better mediator than Aaron (Hebrews 5:1-14; Hebrews 6:1-20; Hebrews 7:1-28)
 2. The work of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 8-10)
 - a. The making of a better covenant (Hebrews 8:1-13)
 - b. The offering of a better sacrifice (Hebrews 9:1-28)
 - c. The provision of a better sanctification (Hebrews 10:1-39)
 3. The partaking of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 11-13)
 - a. Partakers of Christ by faith (Hebrews 11:1-40)
 - b. Partakers of Christ in hope (Hebrews 12:1-29)
 - c. Partakers of Christ in love (Hebrews 13:1-25)
 4. Summary found in the word *excellent* (the word only appears three times in Hebrews)
 - a. A more excellent name (Hebrews 1:4) – *the person of Christ*
 - b. A more excellent ministry (Hebrews 8:6) – *the work of Christ*
 - c. A more excellent sacrifice (Hebrews 11:4) – *the partaking of Christ*