

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews

Introduction

I. THE AUTHORSHIP OF HEBREWS

A. The Opposition to Pauline Authorship

1. The camps opposing Pauline authorship
 - a. “Liberal scholars” – it does not fit their modernistic approach to scripture
 - b. Dispensationalists – it does not fit some men’s dispensational division of the New Testament
2. The arguments against Pauline authorship
 - a. Hebrews does not sound like Paul.
 - (1) The argument – Both those for and against Paul often suggest that this epistle does not “sound” or read like Paul’s other epistles.
 - (2) The problem
 - a) The argument is too subjective.
 - b) The argument excludes God’s involvement.
 - (3) The solution
 - a) Ultimately, God is the author of all scripture.
 - b) God can choose to implement the personality of a man in his writings, but He can just as readily alter a man’s personality in his writings.
 - b. Hebrews was not written to the Gentiles.
 - (1) The argument
 - a) Paul was the apostle and teacher of the Gentiles (Acts 26:15-20; Romans 11:13; Romans 15:16; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11).
 - b) Paul turned from the Jews to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46; Acts 18:5-6; Acts 28:28).
 - c) Therefore, he would not write a letter specifically to the Jews.
 - (2) The problem – The argument assumes the turn to the Gentiles meant that Paul no longer cared about the Jews and that God wanted Paul to neglect the Jews.
 - (3) The solution
 - a) Paul was sent to the Jews also (Acts 9:15-16).
 - b) Paul practiced going to the Jew first (Romans 1:16; Acts 13:5, 14-16; Acts 14:1; Acts 16:12-13; Acts 17:1-3, 10, 16-17; Acts 18:1, 4; Acts 19:9-10; Acts 20:21).
 - c) Paul yearned for the salvation and prosperity of his people, the Jews (Romans 9:1-5; Romans 10:1-3; Romans 11:1-5).

- d) Paul determined to go to Jerusalem and ministered there to Jewish believers (Acts 19:21; Acts 20:22-24; Acts 21:10-13, 17-27).
- e) Paul addressed a passage in the book of Romans to the Jews (Romans 2:17-24).
- c. Hebrews does not include Paul's salutation.
 - (1) The argument
 - a) It does not begin with Paul's name.
 - i) Paul's other epistles begin with his name.
 - ii) Hebrews begins with "God."
 - iii) Hebrews must not have been written by Paul.
 - b) It does not contain Paul's salutation.
 - i) Paul's salutation was evidence of all his writings (2 Thessalonians 3:17).
 - ii) A salutation, by definition, is thought to be the greeting at the beginning of a letter (see Scofield's Bible Outlines).
 - iii) Paul's salutations always included his name, at the beginning
 - iv) Any epistle not beginning with Paul's name was not written by Paul.
 - (2) The problem – This makes an assumption about the identity and purpose of a salutation.
 - (3) The solution
 - a) To not beginning with Paul's name
 - i) Many books (including First John) did not begin with the penman's name.
 - ii) Paul had special cause to use his name when writing to the Gentiles.
 - (a) He was the apostle to the Gentiles and as such had divine authority to give them God's message.
 - (b) He was well-received by the Gentile believers and messages from him would have special influence with them.
 - iii) Paul had special cause not to use his name when writing to the Hebrews.
 - (a) He was hated by the Jews (Acts 13:44-45; Acts 14:19; Acts 17:5, 13; Acts 18:12-13; Acts 22:17-24).
 - (b) He was mistrusted by the Jewish believers (Acts 21:17-30; Galatians 2:10-14).
 - (c) In writing to the Hebrews he based his authority not on his apostleship, but on the Old Testament scriptures and the person and work of the Jewish Messiah (Hebrews 1:1-2).
 - b) To not including Paul's salutation

- i) Paul did not personally pen most of his epistles (see Romans 16:22; compare with Galatians 6:11; and see postscripts of first and second Corinthians).
 - ii) This allowed a letter to be written to the Thessalonians that falsely claimed to be written by Paul (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2).
 - iii) In order to avoid this problem, Paul always wrote the salutation in his own hand (2 Thessalonians 3:17-18; 1 Corinthians 16:21-24; Colossians 4:18).
 - iv) However, Paul's salutation was not at the beginning of his epistles, but at the end. It was like us signing a letter that has been typed for us by someone else. The final signature gives authenticity to the entire letter. This is proven by the fact that all references in the epistles of Paul (including Hebrews) to the words *salute*, *saluteth* or *salutation* occur in the last chapter and usually the last few verses of each epistle.
 - (a) Salute – (i.e., Romans 16:5, 7, 9-16, 21-22)
 - (b) Saluteth – (i.e., Romans 16:23)
 - (c) Salutation – (i.e., 1 Corinthians 16:21)
 - v) Paul's salutation does not always include his name. However, it always includes a blessing of *grace* (see Romans 16:24; 1 Corinthians 16:23; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 6:18; Ephesians 6:24; Philippians 4:23; Colossians 4:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:18; 1 Timothy 6:21; 2 Timothy 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philemon 25; Hebrews 13:25). That is evidently his token in every epistle (2 Thessalonians 3:17-18).
- d. Hebrews does not belong in the church age.
- (1) The argument
 - a) This subject will be covered much more in-depth later in the course.
 - b) However, one general argument is that Hebrews teaches salvation by faith and works. If Paul penned Hebrews, he violated his own warnings (Galatians 1:8-9).
 - (2) The problem – Even if this were true, it is a weak argument against a Pauline authorship.
 - (3) The solution – to be given in the course of the lessons

B. The Proofs of Pauline Authorship

- 1. The ancient testimony of believers
 - a. Hebrews was quoted as scripture by Clement of Rome as early as 96 AD.
 - b. Paul was attested to be the author of Hebrews by men of such diverse opinions as Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Athanasius,

Clement of Alexandria, Basil the Great, Eusebius of Caesarea and Justin Martyr (who lived in the first half of the second century). Every region where churches were planted and every century after the first had those who testified to the fact that Paul wrote Hebrews.

2. The title
 - a. Called *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*
 - b. Much is made of book titles not being inspired. For instance:
 - (1) The title of Acts
 - (2) The title of Revelation
 - (3) The title of Hebrews
 - c. However, the titles are definitely an ancient witness to what was accepted as truth early in church history.
 - d. Also, since God guided the preserving of the books, their titles are very likely providentially placed. By that, we mean that God guided in their being placed as titles of His books and preserved over the millenniums. This would be similar to the authority given to chapter and verse divisions in the Bible. They were definitely added later but God has put a special blessing on them as any student of Biblical numerology can see.
3. The salutation – see notes above
4. The internal evidence of Hebrews
 - a. The author was closely associated with Timothy (Hebrews 13:23).
 - b. The author had suffered in prison (Hebrews 10:34).
 - c. The author wrote from Italy (Hebrews 13:24).
 - d. All these perfectly fit the apostle Paul.
5. The inspired testimony of Peter
 - a. Peter was especially an apostle to the Jews (Galatians 2:7-9).
 - b. Peter wrote his epistles to dispersed Jewish believers (1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 3:1). James (James 1:1) wrote to the same group of people.
 - c. In 2 Peter 3:15-16, Peter testified:
 - (1) Paul wrote to the same people to whom Peter was writing (2 Peter 3:15).
 - (2) This letter to Jewish believers was to be distinguished from Paul's other epistles (2 Peter 3:16).
 - (3) This letter to Jewish believers taught that salvation was based on the Lord's longsuffering (2 Peter 3:15). Note: Although longsuffering is not mentioned by name in Hebrews, one of the themes of Hebrews centers around God's patience with His people both in the Old Testament and in the New.
 - (4) This letter to Jewish believers had wisdom in it that was given to Paul (2 Peter 3:15).
 - (5) This letter to Jewish believers had some things that were hard to be understood and at which the unlearned and unstable would wrest (2 Peter 3:16). Note: History has proven this about Hebrews over and over again.
 - (6) This letter to Jewish believers was scripture (2 Peter 3:16).