

# I. INTRODUCTION TO HEBREWS

## A. Authorship and History

The Epistle to the Hebrews is anonymous. The author did not reveal his identity, and there is no sure way of determining who he was. Most scholars consider Paul to be the writer.

If the author, however, were someone other than Paul, then who? Some scholars have suggested Luke, Clement of Rome, Barnabas, or Apollos. Each suggestion, it must be noted, is merely conjecture and, while tenable, without the slightest degree of authority or proof.

Some scholars have determined that the whole Greek style of Hebrews is different from that of Paul's acknowledged writings, and therefore, they reason, cannot be his. But would not a different purpose in writing call for a change of expression? Then too, it is possible that Paul supplied the thoughts of the epistle and another wrote it in its present form as several ancient scholars have pointed out.

In view of the many untenable alternatives, it seems that the most acceptable position is that Hebrews is Pauline in authorship or origin. This study therefore assumes Paul to be the author of this epistle.

From the internal evidence, the date of the writing can be reasonably set between AD 62 and AD 68. The readers are reminded of the "former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions" (10:32); therefore, the epistle was being written long enough after the persecution that they needed to be reminded of it. This, along with other chronological data, causes most scholars to set the earliest date of AD 60.

The Hebrew Christians were yet attracted to the apparatus of approach to God that the Aaronic priesthood and the Temple worship symbolized. Since the writing dealt with the danger of reverting to the practices of the Law, it is evident that the Temple service was yet functioning. Inasmuch as the Temple was destroyed in AD 70, this would be the latest possible date for the writing. Thus, it is reasonable, as was mentioned earlier, to set the probable date of the writing between AD 62 and AD 68.

## **B. Characteristics**

Written in eloquent literary style, Hebrews is the earliest apology, or defense, of the Christian faith. The primary objective of the writing is to *establish Hebrew Christians in the faith* that had been delivered, once for all, to the saints. This is accomplished by a series of comparisons in which Jesus Christ is proven in all respects to be superior: superior to the prophets, angels, Moses, Joshua, and the Aaronic priesthood. Christ's new covenant is superior to the old, His sacrifice greater, and His promises better. Many of the comparisons contrast the real, that is, the heavenly and the eternal, with the apparent, which is earthly and temporal.

The theme of the writing leaves little or no doubt that since Christ's new and living way superseded every other way, it is the only way! To come short of it would constitute apostasy, and the writer, inspired of God, repeatedly warned of the danger, urging believers onward in the faith. Interspersed frequently in Hebrews are grim warnings, sincere exhortations, and numerous references to holy Scripture for authority on these points.

## **SELF HELP TEST**

### **I. Introduction to Hebrews**

**Complete the statements.**

1. Most scholars consider \_\_\_\_\_ to be the writer of Hebrews.
2. Most scholars set the earliest date for the writing of Hebrews as \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

3. The primary objective of the writer of Hebrews is to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Hebrew Christians in the faith that had  
been delivered once for all to the saints.
  
4. The Epistle to the Hebrews deals with the danger of going back (reverting)  
to the \_\_\_\_\_.

**Personal Study Notes**