

# Hebrews

## Consider Jesus

### Hebrews 3:1

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### Hebrews 3:1

#### INTRODUCTION:

Neil asked me last week why I was uncertain as to the authorship of Hebrews. So I am going to begin this morning by touching on that subject. Then we will look at his audience and his message. It is critical for us to understand all three of these in order to interpret the message that the author is trying to make throughout the book of Hebrews.

Although the human author is uncertain, we definitely know the spiritual author. It was the Holy Spirit.

The original audience consisted of Jews who were converted and really gave themselves to Jesus Christ. They have come out of Judaism, at least in the sense of faith. They have been born again. They have become followers of Jesus Christ. And as a result of that, they have been thrown out of the Jewish culture and persecuted relentlessly. Because of this persecution, their faith was very weak and they tended to hold on to the rituals of Judaism.

Then there were some who were **intellectually** convinced but who had never made the step of faith. They believed but they never committed themselves to that faith.

Then there was another group who had not been convinced. They had heard the Gospel but made absolutely no response at all. It is then to these three groups that the letter of Hebrews is written.

If you do not understand this audience, then you will have a terrible time interpreting the book because the different passages may be directed to **any** of those various readers.

Then finally, we will look at the overall message that the Holy Spirit is trying to reveal to not only the various groups of Jews, but also to us today.

**Consider Jesus!**

#### All Stand and Read Scripture

**Hebrews 3:1 (NASB95)**

3 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, **consider Jesus**, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;

#### Prayer

#### **I. The Author.**

The author does not identify himself in the letter, so we do not know, for certain, who wrote the book of Hebrews. Some say it is the apostle Paul and church tradition teaches that Paul wrote the book of Hebrews. But in the 1800's some scholars began to question his authorship. That is because there are things missing in the book and written in the book that does not seem to be consistent with all of the other writings of Paul.

First is the lack of a salutation. Some sort of personal salutation from Paul appears in all of his letters. So it would seem that writing anonymously is not his usual method; therefore, the reasoning goes, Hebrews cannot be one of his letters.

Secondly, the overall composition and style **is of a person** who is a very sophisticated writer. Even though Paul was certainly a sophisticated communicator, Paul stated that he purposely did not speak with a commanding vocabulary.

### **1 Corinthians 2:1 (NASB95)**

2 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.

### **2 Corinthians 11:6 (NASB95)**

6 But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made *this* evident to you in all things.

Thirdly, the book of Hebrews quotes extensively from the Old Testament. Paul, as a Pharisee, would have been familiar with the Scripture in its original Hebrew language. That is referred to as the Masoretic Text. In his other letters, Paul either quotes from the original Hebrew or paraphrases it. However, all of the quotes in this epistle are taken out of the Septuagint (the **Greek** Old Testament), which is inconsistent with Paul's usage.

Finally, and most convincing, Paul was an apostle who claimed to receive his revelations directly from the Lord Jesus.

### **Galatians 1:11-12 (NASB95)**

11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

The writer of Hebrews specifically says that he was taught by an apostle.

### **Hebrews 2:3b (NASB95)**

...After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to **us** (that would be the author and the audience) **by those who heard**, (that would be the apostles).

So, it appears that it was **not** an apostle and Paul claimed to be an apostle and to have been taught through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

So, If Paul did not write the letter, who did?

One possible suggestion is that this was actually a sermon Paul gave and it was transcribed later by Luke, a person who would have had the command of the Greek language which the writer shows.

The earliest known suggestion of authorship is found in Tertullian's De Pudicitia (Day Poo' Dee See Uh) from around 200 A.D. in which he quotes from (**quote**) "an epistle to the Hebrews under the name of Barnabas" (**end quote**).

From the letter itself, it is clear that the writer must have had authority in the apostolic church and was an intellectual Hebrew Christian well versed in the Old Testament. Barnabas meets these requirements. He was a Jew of the priestly tribe of Levi who became a close friend of Paul after Paul's conversion. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church at Antioch commissioned Barnabas and Paul for the work of evangelism and sent them off on the first missionary journey.

However, we do know from Peter in the scripture that Paul did write a letter to the Hebrews (that is, the Jews). We just do not know if it was this one.

We know that Peter, in his epistles wrote to the Jews.

### **1 Peter 1:1 (NASB95)**

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen (that, of course would be the Jews).

Then listen to what he wrote to the Jews...

### **2 Peter 3:15 (NASB95)**

<sup>15</sup> and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, **wrote to you,**

Peter is confirming that Paul had also written a letter to the Hebrews!

Only God knows who the author is. But behind that author, **whoever he may be**, we know is the Holy Spirit. And so I will simply refer to the author of this book as we study the book of Hebrews, as anonymous and coming from the Holy Spirit.

## **II. The Audience.**

Now, the book of Hebrews was written to a community of Jews somewhere outside of the Jerusalem area who had been evangelized by the first apostles and prophets. And as a result the Jewish community ranged from true believers to non-believers. So the Holy Spirit through the human author is going to try to reach out to all of them.

This is indicated to us in many passages in this particular letter. We will not take a lot of time to go over them because we will see them as we continue through the letter. We see the believers who were still hanging on to rituals from the Old Testament in chapter 10 and other places as well.

Paul must have had something like that in mind when he wrote to the Galatians.

### **Galatians 5:1 (NASB95)**

5 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

The new covenant in Christ has set us free from the ritual bondage of the old. The problem was that many of the believers were still trapped by their legalism. So the Holy Spirit writes the letter to strengthen their faith and to show them they can drop the rituals of Judaism and they can let Christ be absolutely sufficient. They need nothing from the old covenant because it has been replaced by the new.

Then secondly, there were a group of Hebrew non-Christians who are intellectually convinced. Several passages in the book deal with them. And they are warned that since they have heard the Gospel and have been convinced, then they need to act upon it lest they fall away and never be renewed again to repentance. Those who know the truth and willfully reject the truth are severely warned that they shall have a much more severe punishment.

### **Hebrews 10:29 (NASB95)**

**29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?**

Then the third group, are the Hebrew non-Christians. They are unconvinced, period. They do not believe in Jesus at all. And to them the Gospel is presented several times in the book of Hebrews. So then there are three in view. And in each context, you must know to whom he writes or you will find yourself terribly confused about the meaning of Christianity.

In every text in the book of Hebrews, no matter who is addressed, the theme is always the absolute supremacy of Christ.

If he is talking to **believers** who are still hanging on to Judaism, he says, "You don't need it. Christ is sufficient."

If he is talking to **unbelievers** who are convinced but not acting on their belief, he is saying, "Come on, put your faith in him. Rest in Christ. He is sufficient."

If he is talking to **unconvinced, unbelieving** Jews, he is saying the same thing, "Christ is superior. He is supreme. He is sufficient."

And to which group was this part of the message directed at? Look back at verse 1. It was directed at the "**holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling**".

So who are the "Holy Brethren"? We were taught back in the second chapter that as believers we are **brothers** with Christ. But I want you to realize that the word "brethren" does not always refer to believing Christians. In the book of Acts, the Jews were also referred to as brethren.

### **Acts 2:29 (NASB95)**

**29 "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.**

So "brethren" does not always refer to believers. But when He says, "**Holy brethren**" then we know whom He is speaking about. So then this passage is written to Christians, to holy Jews, holy brothers in Christ. Just to add emphasis to that, He calls them also "**partakers of a heavenly calling**". Now, they are not holy because of their practice, but

because of their position. They are the real thing. Although they cannot live a perfect life, they are soul brothers who are set apart and made holy in Christ.

### III. The Message.

Next, I would like to reveal the message that is proclaimed throughout the book of Hebrews. So let's look at verse 1 once again.

#### **Hebrews 3:1 (NASB95)**

**3 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;**

Notice the first word "**Therefore**". Any time we see the word therefore, we are to ask what?

What is it **there for**?

He is saying, "Based upon what I have just said, Consider Jesus".

What has the author just told us?

He has told us that Jesus became a **substitute** for us by dying on the cross for our sins and paid the price to have our sins removed.

He is the **author of our salvation**. He blazed the trail for our salvation and a newness of life, and He did it by being perfected through suffering.

He is our **sanctifier**. It was through Him that we were made Holy. Our sins were wiped away and we received His righteousness.

He was our **conqueror over death**. He wiped out our fear of death that Satan was using against us by living a perfect life, raising from the dead, and defeating death.

And finally He is our **supporter**. He became man and faced temptation in order to experience, as a man, what life is really like and be able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

On the basis of what you have just been taught, you ought to consider **Him**, right? Forget about the Jewish rituals that you were brought up with. Jesus has come to **fulfill** the law. He is the reality of the law which was only a foreshadowing of the Messiah to come.

So consider Him. Christ is sufficient!

Then the author says "**consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession**". He has just told them what kind of an apostle He is in chapter 2. He is a faithful apostle or "sent one", as He comes from God to accomplish salvation. He is a faithful high priest, in that He made propitiation for our sins. He paid the unfathomable price for our sins. Unlike the high priests in the old covenant, He was able to wipe away our sins once and for all time.

He is urging the believing Hebrews to focus on the absolute sufficiency of Jesus. "Drop the rest of the stuff. You don't need it. You have got a new high priest sent directly from God. Focus on Jesus. He is all you need."

### CONCLUSION:

So the theme we could say in a nutshell of the book of Hebrews is the perfect Christ, supreme, superior, sufficient. We need nothing in addition to Jesus Christ. This then becomes the pattern of the book and what the letter of Hebrews is designed to do.

Now, if in fact the Holy Spirit is to show that Christ is better than anybody else, and if He is to show that the new covenant provided by Christ is better than the old covenant, the Old Testament Judaistic patterns, then the Holy Spirit must prove that the key character of the new, that is, Jesus Christ, is better than all of those connected with the old, **doesn't he?** If this is a better covenant, it must have a better mediator.

And so he begins to do that. In the first part of chapter 1, He says that Jesus Christ is better than everybody and everything. In chapter 2 then, He says that Jesus Christ is better than angels. In chapter 3, He says Jesus is better than Moses. In chapter 4, Jesus is better than Joshua. And then Jesus is better than Aaron. Then Jesus is better than the old covenant. Then Jesus is better than the Old Testament sacrifices, and on and on and on. The whole point is to show that Jesus is superior, supreme, and sufficient. You need nothing else. That is the key.

So I would like to say to you what the Spirit says: Consider Jesus.

When times get hard and problems arise in your life and everything goes bad, put your focus on Jesus and intently keep it there until all that He is begins to be unfolded before your eyes. The reason that so many Christians are weak and worried is that they do not really know the depths or the riches of Jesus Christ.

Jesus made a classic statement.

### **Matthew 11:28-30 (NASB95)**

<sup>28</sup> “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you **and learn from Me**, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

He didn't say, “Learn about me.” He said what? **“Learn from me.”**

Many Christians do not enjoy Jesus. They are miserable and unhappy. They do not know anything about joy. The only thing the Lord is good for is to cry on. And the reason is because they do not know or recognize His loving grace and mercy.

Let me ask you this.

Do you really enjoy your Christian life? Do you get up every morning and say, “Lord, I just can not wait to get out of this place and see what you are going to do through me today?” Do you stay in constant communication with Him?. Is He always on your mind? Do you just sometimes want to stand up and shout? You ought to enjoy Him that way!

**What a Day That Will Be!**