

Hebrews

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[0 : 00] If you will note the scripture sheet before you, we are going to begin an examination of the epistle to the Hebrews. And I'm sure there will be occasions as we work our way through this magnificent letter that you are going to hear me refer frequently to the writing of the Apostle Paul, what he says in this verse or in this chapter.

And in a sense, I guess that could be described as a Freudian slip because, truth be told, we do not know for certain that the Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Hebrews.

However, I'm not prepared to die on that hill. So we will just say that in many respects, it very much looks Pauline, but we cannot be conclusive, and there's that word again, we cannot be conclusive that Paul wrote it.

There are a number of evidences that point to his authorship, but there are some that detract from it as well. So, taking the position that it is the Spirit of God, not man, who is behind everything that is written in the scriptures, for all scripture is given by inspiration of God, that includes the Old and the New Testament, and man is simply used as God's human vehicle for the recording of the word because it provides for it a human dimension.

It humanizes the Bible, but at the same time, it declares the authority that is behind it because it is a divine authority. So we have a beautiful mix in the revelation that God has given, whereas the writing from Genesis to Revelation contains both divine authority and human comprehension or human identification.

[2 : 07] And we find the very same principle played out in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ, who even though he is deity himself, even though he is equal with God himself, he took upon himself the form of a human being, and he became the God-man, the theanthropic person.

Here we have two natures combined into one individual, and we call that individual Jesus Christ, the Son of God. So, the Bible, as well as the person of Christ, has both a human dimension and a divine dimension to it, and that gives it additional, I think, additional understanding and appreciation. If there's anything that I think we can say is conclusive, it is this. The book of Hebrews was written to Jews.

Can anybody deny that? The word Hebrew, to the best of our understanding and the history involving it, is found in the Bible the first time in the book of Genesis, when Abraham is described as Abraham the Hebrew.

This term was assigned to him as best we can determine because in the ancient language, it means the word Habiru, H-A-B-I-R-U, is the way it appears originally.

[3 : 41] Habiru, and it literally means the one who crossed over. So, for all of the people there in the land of Palestine or the land of Israel or the land of milk and honey, whatever you want to call it, Israel, for all of the locals who lived there, when Abraham arrived on the scene down in southern Israel, all of his neighbors referred to him as the Habiru.

He's the guy who crossed over. And what he crossed over was the Euphrates River. It was several miles from there and it was not a small thing to cross the Euphrates River.

And when one did, that was distinction enough to be known as a Habiru. So, the name Habiru eventually morphed into our English word Hebrew.

Hebrew. And that's the origin of it to the best of our knowledge. The word Jew did not come into existence until the intertestamental period.

It is not a word that you will find. Well, let's see. Yes, it is in the Old Testament, particularly in the book of Esther. But it is not found until after the Jewish people are taken into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C.

[5 : 05] Because this is the southern two tribes and they are comprised of Judah and Benjamin. Benjamin was the smallest of all the tribes. Judah was fairly large.

But Judah was the royal line. The kings came through the tribe of Judah. Judah and when Judah and Benjamin were together they were just classified as Judah.

And they were carried into Babylonian captivity and while they were there the name Jew spelled J-E-W began to surface as a shortened term for Judah or a Judahite.

and they just can't be called Jews in general. So that's where Jews got their name and for all practical purposes Jews and Hebrews are one and the same just with a different designation and a little bit of a different history.

This letter is written specifically to the Jewish people who existed at the time it was written.

[6 : 14] This is first century stuff. This is after the death, burial and resurrection of Christ but well before that first century close. And it is made quite apparent as you go through the epistle that the content and the references to the items in it just have Jewishness written all over it.

And the main purpose for the writing of this letter to the Hebrews is to demonstrate that Jesus of Nazareth was and is the Messiah sent by God the one prophesied by Moses and the prophets and he is superior in every way as the mediator of the new covenant to Moses and everything that existed in the old covenant.

This is going to set forth a contrast or a comparison between Jesus as the Messiah and the elements of the Old Testament law and what Moses had to offer.

It is designed to do well let's put it this way throughout this epistle the writer whom I believe to be Paul but I'm not going to fuss with anybody who thinks it was Apollos or someone else but it becomes very very apparent that the writer is addressing three different components in the Jewish community.

One is and this is this is the majority position he is going to be addressing Jews who have already come to the conclusion that Jesus is the Messiah and he is worthy of our worship and our honor and so on.

[8 : 06] They are going to be the principal recipients of this letter. So they are Jews who have already come to faith in Jesus as the Messiah and then the second group will be those who flatly repudiate the idea that Jesus is the Messiah.

They do not believe that and Paul there I am again and the writer of Hebrews is going to have comments addressed to those. They are rejecters of Christ being the Messiah and then the third group Paul is going to address are those Jews who are on the fence.

They can't quite make up their mind. One day they think that Christ is the Messiah the next day they think he is not. So they are vacillating between believing and unbelieving.

All three classes are addressed throughout this epistle by the arguments that are set forth. And it is apparent I think it is very abundantly apparent as you read the epistle to the Hebrews you find constantly references to the law of Moses the sacrificial system the priesthood and everything all of which have pointed references to the Jewishness that he is addressing and I think that is inescapable.

Joe? Mark, you say you're not sure that Paul wrote the Hebrews but John in his pistle says that Paul wrote a letter to the Jews.

[9 : 52] He's talking to the Jews. He said it was in 2 Peter 3 15 that Paul wrote a letter to you. It would have to be some other letter if he did because he says he wrote a letter to him.

Why can't we say it was Paul that wrote Hebrews? Well, Paul, I am quite convinced personally and there's no way that I can prove this, that Paul wrote a lot of other letters that are not in the New Testament canon.

And for instance, I can't put my finger on it now but in his first letter to the Corinthians he makes reference to a previous letter he had written to him.

Well, where is that? Because 1 Corinthians appears to be the first letter he wrote. But in 1 Corinthians he makes reference to an earlier letter that he wrote to the Corinthians.

But we don't have that and we have no idea what became of it. So, in point of fact, 1 Corinthians really should be 2 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians should be 3 Corinthians.

[11 : 09] But here's the difference. There is a huge difference between the letters that Paul wrote and the letters that Paul wrote that were inspired of God.

We have reason to believe that Paul wrote a lot other letters that are not in the New Testament canon. And the reason they aren't is because God did not inspire them.

God was not the author of those where he's using Paul as a human penman. But Paul, as I said, wrote a lot of other things. And you know, there are a lot of gospels that are floating around. We call them the pseudo-canonical gospels. They are gospels, for instance, there's the Gospel of Thomas, but you don't find it in our New Testament.

And if you read the Gospel of Thomas, it'll become pretty apparent why it isn't in our New Testament. As you read it, you can see this just isn't up to par. This isn't on the level with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in any way, shape, or form.

[12:11] So, there are many, many other writings that are not in our Bible. That does not mean they were, by mistake, left out.

That's an accusation that some bring against it, but we believe that everything that God inspired is in the record. And if that is not true, then the whole purpose of Revelation is defeated.

And we cannot have any confidence at all in what God has revealed. So, we take the position that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, but the word Scripture just means writings.

Anybody writing anything is Scripture. But what Paul is talking about when he addresses Timothy in that second letter, when he says all Scripture is inspired of God, he is talking about that isolated segment of Scripture that is breathed of God into the mind and heart of the human penman that enabled him to write.

And it comes with the authority of God himself. So, there are many, many other things that a lot of people wrote that are not in the Bible and they're not supposed to be. But what we have is what God wanted us to have.

[13:33] And this is a very important point because if God does not protect the canon, the canon of Scripture, the canon means, the canon, C-A-N-O-N, the canon refers to those books of the Bible that are there because their originator is God himself as he inspired human beings.

They comprise the canon. And that's made up of 39 books in the Old Testament, 27 books in the New, 66 books in total. And if God does not protect that and include all of the books that he wanted in it and excluded all of the books that he does not want in it, then the whole purpose of Revelation is defeated because we really don't know what the Word of God is.

So, not only is inspiration protected, but the canon is protected as well. And I see that as being absolutely essential. Any other questions about that before we move on?

We probably won't get too far today, but anyway, this is a lengthy epistle, 13 chapters, and we're going to discover a lot of wonderful things that are going to come out of this.

So, let's look at the first, very first verse, if we may. Notice how in the King James it starts out with the recognition of the deity. God who at sundry times, that's a word we don't use anymore, do we?

[15:05] I well remember, though, when I was a kid, the neighborhood drugstore on the corner had a sign that said something to the effect of RX prescriptions, ice cream, sundries, sundries, not sundries, but sundries, s-u-n-d-r-i-e-s, and what that meant was, if you come in this store, you're going to find a large assortment of all kinds of things that we have to sell, and that all comes under the title sundries, and it's an old English word, and the writer of Hebrews is using it here when he says God at sundry times, that means various times, all kinds of times, and all kinds of places in the past, and in divers manners, boy, this King James is right here, how many times do we use the word divers?

We usually use it in connection with scuba, scuba diving, or Olympic diving, or something like that, but all this means is an old English word, and it refers to a multiple times.

Divers times means in many times, various times, and it's kind of related to the idea of sundry, and he's saying God used all kinds of vehicles, avenues, to communicate himself and his word to us in times past.

Let's read on. Divers, manners spoke in times past. Sometimes he did that by direct revelation to an individual, face to face, as with Abraham or Moses.

Sometimes he did it through writing. Sometimes he did it through a vision. Sometimes he did it through a dream. In all these different kinds of ways, God had a revealing himself in times past.

[16:55] And some of the other translations, if you will look at them here, William's translation, a little further down in verse, he says, it was bit by bit, and in many different ways, that God in olden times spoke.

And of course, when you read Hebrews in the first century, when he's talking about olden times, he's referring all the way back to Moses and the prophets, etc., that we find in the Old Testament. So there are a number of different translations and ways speaking here. You'll notice the amplified clear down at the bottom of verse, verse one says, in many separate revelations, each of which set forth a portion of the truth, and in different ways, God spoke of old.

Now that's called the amplified version. And you can see that it is taking elaboration, it's making it broader, and it is spelling out more and more what the writer is communicating.

And then he says, unto the fathers, and I'm reading from the King James now, and let me just remind you that the bold type that we see that begins each verse is the way the King James translation has rendered it, and the others that follow are different variations.

[18:19] They are identified by the way they are spelled out here. The ASV is the American Standard Version, RHM is the Rhames Version, and Weybeth is W-E-Y, and M-O-F is Moffat's Translation, Williams' Translation, the Revised Standard Version, the Amplified, and so one, spoken unto the fathers, and when he uses the word fathers, he's talking about ancient fathers, he's not talking about their present fathers one generation removed, he's talking about their historical fathers, and more often than not, when the New Testament refers to the term fathers, it is referencing primarily Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

They are the patriarchs, they are the big three patriarchs, they are referred to that way many, many times in the New Testament, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But he's now saying, out of all of these ways that God spoke in times past, in verse 2 he says, hath in these last days.

Now that's interesting. The writer of Hebrews, who is writing in the first century, 2,000 years ago from us, refers to his time as the last days.

Have you ever thought of that? Has in these last days, 2,000 years ago, he was considering his contemporaries as living in the last days.

And I want to make an important distinction here, and I think it is a valid one, needs to be kept in mind, and that is, the person and work of Jesus Christ is that event that separates the former days from the last days.

[20:14] So he is writing here in the last days. Paul's ministry, which he wrote some 13 epistles and traveled all those miles, Paul's ministry occurred in the latter days.

Now, we ordinarily think of the latter days as being the days today that we are living in, or the days immediately prior to the coming of Christ and his second coming, that would be the last days.

But I think the scripture makes a broader distinction between everything that was on the other side of the cross as being the former days, the former times, and everything that is on this side of the cross is referred to as the latter days.

We are living in the latter days. George Washington was living in the latter days. St. Augustine, who was in the fourth century, lived in the latter days.

And everything previous to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ was the former days.

Question or comment? Dana? Could the last days be the replaced by the recent days?

[21:32] I'm sorry? Could the last days be replaced by the recent days? Recent days? I suppose that could be a synonym.

Yeah, I can see that. That would certainly be more accurate than the former days. Yeah, more definitive than the former days. I was thinking about Christ coming back real quick and soon. You know, didn't they feel he was coming back the second time?

now. I mean, like the last days were here. I mean, he was coming. He wasn't going to wait. They hadn't come back yet, but they thought he was coming back real soon, didn't they? That's true.

That's true. And there's good reason to believe that the Apostle Paul fully expected and anticipated the Lord coming during his lifetime. Yeah. And I think he makes reference to that, particularly when he writes to the Thessalonians that they were eagerly looking for, longing for, the return of Christ.

And I can promise you this, that when Jesus promised them that he would return, I go and prepare a place for you, and if I go, I will come again and receive you unto myself.

[22:42] They had no idea that it would be 2,000 years, and he still would not have returned. And this, of course, leads many today to say, well, that was a promise given 2,000 years ago, and it's obvious that it is not going to be fulfilled, that either Jesus came spiritually, maybe in the person of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, that was the second coming, which of course is nonsense, but some hold that position, or that he isn't able to fulfill his promise, he isn't coming at all.

And I can promise you this, that when God promised Eve that her seed would crush the head of the serpent, and that she would bear, she who was responsible for the fall, through her unbelief and her rejection of God's authority, she is also going to be responsible for being the vehicle of redemption, in that she is going to produce seed that will ultimately result in the arrival of the Redeemer, the Messiah.

But I am certain, I am certain Eve had no idea that four thousand years would go by before God would make good on that promise, because from the time he uttered that promise to Eve until the time Jesus was born in Bethlehem, it was about four thousand years.

So as I have often said, take heart, we have only waited half as long for the second coming as the Jews did for the first coming. So we have got nothing to complain about, do we?

Other comments or questions before we go on? Anyone? Alright, notice if you will, he's spoken to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.

[25 : 04] Now here at the very outset, the writer of Hebrews is making sure that he injects the thought, the idea, the doctrine here regarding the eternity, the perpetuity of the Son of God, his existence from time past with the Father, and when he uses this expression spoken unto us by his Son, think of it this way, God took what he wanted us to know, and he wrapped it up in a book called the Bible, and he also wrapped it up in a person incarnated in human flesh called Jesus the Messiah, and in the person of Christ, the living word, in the Bible, the written word, and creation that is visibly seen, God has commuted everything to us that he wants us to know.

It's not everything that we want to know, but everything that he knows we need to know has been provided. And here, principal vehicle is, he has spoken unto us by his Son.

Jesus makes it very clear, and as you go through, for instance, John's gospel, and I counted these just the other day, there are some 124 times in the gospel of John alone that the word Father is used, and only a couple of times that it does not refer to God the Father, the Heavenly Father.

Sometimes it refers even to Satan when Jesus told the Pharisees, you are of your father, the devil.

But in the vast majority of the times of over 120 of them, it refers to the Father, and it is Christ using that terminology making reference to his Heavenly Father as two things.

Number one, being the one who sent him. Time and again he refers to that, because this is key.

This is key. For the Jew and for us today, absolutely everything hinges upon the identity of this person, Jesus of Nazareth.

[27 : 32] Was he really the Messiah, or was he not? The identity of the person of Christ is just absolutely everything. That is the sine qua non of Christianity, and it is absolutely critical.

And Christ not only refers to the fact time and again that his Father sent him, but his Father sent him to accomplish a certain thing, and that was to provide redemption for a lost world.

And this is what Jesus was referring to on the cross when he said, it is finished. And it's another way of Christ simply saying, mission accomplished. Mission accomplished.

Time and again throughout John's gospel, and we'll see it here in Hebrews too, Christ makes reference to the fact that not only did the Father send him, but he sent him on a mission, and he came to do the Father's will.

I do always those things that please him. Christ is referring to time and again. And the Father confirms that with the voice that was heard from heaven at his baptism and at his transfiguration.

[28 : 47] The voice was heard from heaven, this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him. So everything impinges upon this person and his authority.

And as I've often said in the past, and we'll be saying again in the future as we work our way through Hebrews, the issue, guys, the issue is authority always has been, always will be.

That's the crowning issue. Is this the word of God or is it not? Is Jesus the son of God or is he not? Did the father send him or did he not? There is no in-between, there is no in-between area to these issues.

There is no third option. He is or he is not. You cannot say he is if you believe he is. He is not if you don't believe he is.

You cannot say that. The options are limited and so much hinges upon it. Anything before we conclude? Anyone? Mark? Yes. I believe that Paul wrote the letter.

[29 : 53] And it was one of his early letters he wrote too. It was one of his first letters he wrote. Because in Romans it tells us the Jew first. Paul says in Romans the Jew first, the Gentile next.

Because he is going back to God's original plan. The original plan was for the Jew to be one of God, be saved, be salvation, and then to win the Gentile.

It coincides with God's total plan and what he had originally set. And so Paul knew that and was from that. And so he wrote to the Jew first. And so this Hebrews was written to the Jews and it was one of the very first letters.

I would agree that it was, well I agree with what you said generally. And I do think that it was very early because you have to take into consideration what was taking place when this was written. And we'll try as best we can to put a date on it, although that's not something that can be conclusively proved. But I do think that it is one of the earlier things written and it addresses issues that were burning issues for the Jew of that day.

[31 : 02] There was a lot of persecution that was taking place and Rome was tightening the screws on Christians and Jews at this time. So this will surface when the writer refers to persecution, etc.

as we go on through it. Larry? Larry? Can we all now be considered Latter-day saints? Yeah, well, we are in fact Latter-day saints.

That is true. We may not have a speck of Mormon theology in us, but we are saints. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are one who is separated, which is literally the word saint or sanctified, and this is the latter-day.

So everyone who is a believer in Christ is, in fact, a latter-day saint, even though we would not consider ourselves Mormon. Interesting point. nothing about sort of Sociology things wherever ■■ if it is not enough it is are ■