

Hebrews

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[0 : 00] The writer of Hebrews, whether it is the Apostle Paul or someone else that remains unknown, and I personally think that it probably was Paul, is making the case for believers who were living during this first century.

And I think, guys, that this is really a principal key to understanding the whole content of this book of Hebrews, is that it is in that first century when persecution was rampant, and when the majority of the persecution that was taking place at this time was Jew upon Jew.

The Roman persecution of Christianity is going to be very real, but it's going to be later. And it will be closer to the end of the first century.

But you must understand that early on in the Christian faith, and by this I'm talking about within 10 to 15 years after the death of Christ, the constituency of Christianity, if you want to call it that then, and I'm not even sure that that is a correct term, I would say the constituency of believers, because the term Christian didn't even come about until years later in Antioch, where they were first called Christians, these people were all Jews.

And be reminded, if you will, that the first Gentile, the first non-Jew, who embraced Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Messiah, as their Savior and Lord, did not occur until Acts chapter 10.

[1 : 51] And we are talking about 8 to 10 years after the death of Christ. All of the believers up to that time were Jews.

And it was not until Acts 10, with the introduction of Cornelius, who was a Roman army officer, and the former pagan, even though he was described as a God-fearer, he came to faith, and even then, it raised the eyebrows of all the Jewish community.

And they called Peter on the carpet for even going to Cornelius and ministering to him, simply because he was a Gentile. And you'll remember, when Peter had the sheet let down from heaven with the vision and everything, and he finally went to the house of Cornelius, didn't want to go, God had to do this three times to get him to go, and when he did, and he entered the house of Cornelius, first thing he said was, you know how illegal it is for a man that is a Jew to be here in the company of you Gentiles.

He was out of his element. But he says, but God has revealed to me that I was supposed to come, so there's nothing else I could do. And he began telling them about the Lord Jesus, and as a result, the Spirit of God fell on them, and they were speaking in languages they had not learned, just as happened on the day of Pentecost, and this was a huge breakthrough.

But the point I want you to understand, and this is very, very important, is that this transition period was very, very volatile, and very confusing, very upsetting to a whole lot of people.

[3 : 34] The singular issue that existed at this time was embedded in the Jewish community, and it was simply this.

Was Jesus of Nazareth the one promised by Moses and the prophets, or was he not? And when these Jews saw Jesus hanging on the cross there at Calvary, for many of them, that convinced them, and that was proof positive, that Jesus of Nazareth could not possibly be the Messiah, because God would never allow his Messiah to come to an end like that.

So the crucifixion of Christ proved that he was not the Messiah until three days later. And that changed everything. Then the central message of the gospel became the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

And that's what Paul is preaching. That's what Peter preached in Acts chapter 2 and Pentecost, that you have by wicked and cruel hands crucified and slain the Lord of glory, but God raised him from the dead, whereof we are all witnesses.

So now they've got an additional factor to add to the claim of Jesus Christ, and that is the resurrection of Christ. However, despite the fact that he appeared to the twelve, despite the fact that he appeared to five hundred at one time, despite the fact that he did that over a period of six weeks after his crucifixion, the burning issue continued as to whether or not Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah.

[5 : 22] That became the issue. And here's what happened. Since all of those who were believers for the first eight or ten years were Jews, there, of course, were most of the Jews who did not believe.

And when we talk about most of the Jews, we're talking about the greater population of the nation of Israel had never come to faith in Christ as the Messiah. The majority opinion was, no, he was not the Messiah.

And that was the position that was set forth by the leaders of Israel, the ruling council, the Sanhedrin, et cetera. And they had a great deal of influence over the people. So those Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, what did they do with their Judaism?

They kept right on practicing it. They didn't stop observing the Sabbath. They didn't stop circumcising their baby boys on the eighth day. They didn't stop eating a kosher diet.

They continued right on with their Judaism. and it never occurred to them that the law of Moses that had bound them for so long was now defunct.

[6 : 34] Did they have quit the sacrifice? No, of course not. They continued right on with the sacrifices. Absolutely. They did not put together, they did not connect all of the dots how that Christ was the one ultimate final sacrifice and that there was no longer any need for or any place for animal sacrifice.

They didn't know that. They didn't know that. And when Paul was raised up of God to preach this gospel of the grace of God, he was called to go to Gentiles as well as Jews.

And this is very, very striking because what is he going to tell these Gentiles? Well, he's not going to try to put them under the law of Moses. He's not going to tell them, well, you Gentiles, you have to be circumcised and you have to become Jews in order to become believers.

No, no, no, no. In fact, they had a big argument and a big council in Acts chapter 15 over that very issue, circumcision. So what Paul is preaching to the Gentiles is, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

And it was without anything to do with the law. But here's the problem. While he is preaching that, he is also going to the Jewish synagogues.

[7 : 56] Because every time Paul got to a new town, first thing he did was head for the synagogue. And he knew when he got there, especially on the Sabbath, he's going to find a bunch of Jews who are fully familiar with the Old Testament.

Remember, after Jesus was resurrected, the disciples that he confronted on the road to Emmaus in Luke chapter 24, they didn't even know who he was.

And they knew him in the breaking of the bread when he returned, thanks. And it says, the scripture says there in Luke 24, and beginning with Moses and the prophets, Jesus expounded to them, these two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Jesus expounded to them all things concerning himself.

And he was doing that, of course, from the Old Testament. The new didn't even exist then. And he was showing where he is in the Old Testament and later when he departed and went away from them, one of those disciples turned to the other and said, did not our hearts burn within us when he opened unto us the scriptures by the way?

Wow! I'm convinced that that same thing Paul did when he went to the synagogue. He didn't go into the synagogue and say, alright, listen, all you Jews, I want you to know with the crucifixion of Christ, death, burial, and resurrection, and with the tearing of the veil in the temple from the top to the bottom, the law of Moses is now kaput.

[9 : 38] It's defunct. You don't need to function under the law of Moses anymore. If you want to continue circumcising your children, you can do so out of tradition, but you don't have to do it out of divine obligation.

And by the way, you don't have to really keep the Sabbath anymore. No, no, no, no, no. Paul didn't preach that. But was that true? Yes!

It was true. This, I think, is what he meant in 2 Corinthians 9 when he, and listen, fellas, this is so hard to pick up on because this, as I said on one of the CDs I did with Christianity Clarified, this is not a once-in-lifetime event.

This is a once-in-the-world's-time event. Nothing like this had ever happened before. This transition is so dynamic, so upsetting, so confusing, that people have a difficult time plugging into it.

What we've got in the book of Acts over a period of 30 years, 28 chapters that took 30 years to fulfill, what we've got is doctrine developing.

[11 : 00] Doctrine on the Move. And what it is moving away from is the Law of Moses and everything that was required under it into this whole new administration called the Administration of the Grace of God.

Before, it was the Administration of Law and it was given through Moses. Now, it's the Administration of the Grace of God and what Moses was to Israel, Paul is to the Gentiles.

It's a new administration. Whole new thing! But they didn't understand that at that time. And people are continuing to, in matter of fact, we won't go there for time's sake, but in Acts chapter 19, Paul is recounting the experience that he had among the Gentiles.

What he had been preaching among the Gentiles. And when he gets back to Jerusalem, and this will be his last time in Jerusalem, when he gets there, he is confronted by the local Jewish establishment, and these are believing Jews.

These are believing Jews. And they take Paul aside and they say to him, Brother, we really appreciate what you have been preaching among the Gentiles and how God has been blessing that ministry.

[12 : 27] But we got a problem. And here's the problem. We have a number of Jewish brethren here. Here in Jerusalem, and they say, and they are believers.

That means they are committed to the reality of Jesus being the Messiah. They are believers. But they have heard that you have been teaching to forsake the law of Moses.

Now, had Paul been doing that? Well, indirectly, yeah. Indirectly, yeah. actually, he wasn't teaching the Gentiles to forsake the law of Moses because they never were under it.

They never were under the law of Moses. But he was teaching the Gentiles the pure truth of the grace of God, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, plus nothing, and you will be saved.

That's the message of the grace of God. That's not the message that Peter and the twelve were preaching. They were preaching this kingdom message that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he is the king, and when you embrace him, you make yourself available for a position in the kingdom, etc., etc.

[13 : 44] Completely different message. The only thing they had in common was that Jesus was at the center of both messages. So, when Paul gets back there, they said, we've got these believing Jews who have heard you are teaching against the law of Moses.

Now, to prove that that is not true, and to satisfy these people, we've got four men who were under a Jewish vow, and if you will pay the fee, these men have their heads shorn, this is a Jewish thing, strictly Jewish thing, if you will pay their fee to the temple and offer the sacrifice that the law of Moses prescribes, that will satisfy them.

Then they will know that you are not teaching against the law of Moses, and everything will be okay. And you know what? Paul did that.

And to this day, 2,000 years later, there are a lot of believers who criticize him, and they say, Paul caved in. He should not have done that.

He should have stood his ground and said, hey, that's mosaic stuff. That's past. I'm not going to have anything to do with that. I'm the preacher of the gospel of the grace of God, and I'm not going to have anything anymore to do with the law of Moses.

[15 : 07] He didn't do that. Now, some think that he caved and that he buckled under this pressure and that he went along with it.

And I frankly don't buy that at all for the simple reason that this man's track record was such that he's not going to cave under anything.

Absolutely not. But I'll tell you what, he did not go in with a wrecking bar, and he did not go in creating havoc. As he wrote to the Thessalonians, he said, we were gentle among you even as a nursing mother is to her children.

So Paul did not go in waving and slashing and cutting and burning and all the rest of it. He was a consummate diplomat. And I think this is exactly what he was talking about when he wrote to the Corinthians and he said, I make myself a servant to all.

What do you mean by that, Paul? Explain that. And he goes on and says, to the Jew, I became as a Jew, that I might win the Jews. Well, he was a Jew.

[16 : 31] And to the Gentiles, I became as a Gentile, that I might win the Gentile. I became all things to all men that if by any means I might save some.

Now some think that he was compromising and frankly, I don't see it that way at all. I see it. Paul was bending over backwards to communicate the truth to people and he wasn't going to unnecessarily rankle anybody's feathers by making demands or telling them they were out of line or whatever.

He was a consummate diplomat. But this man on too many occasions demonstrated incredible backbone and fortitude.

Remember, when he went to Antioch and confronted Peter face to face. And you've got to remember, Peter had stature in the believing Jewish community.

After all, he was the spokesman for the twelve. He was the one to whom the Lord said he would give the keys of the kingdom. Peter had stature. What did Paul have? He didn't have stature among those people.

[17 : 38] In fact, among many of the Jews, he was considered a turncoat because he was anti-Jesus. Now he's pro-Jesus. And they considered him a turncoat.

But he'd been subjected to all kinds of vile traits. What we're told in that list of things that he endured that five times he received stripes from the Jews and three times he was beaten with rods.

And this doesn't sound to me like a man who's going to cave in under any circumstances. Joe? Sure he did.

Absolutely. Absolutely. And he took a stand against Peter there in Acts 2. When Peter if anybody knew something about caving in it was Peter.

And he did to the little gal who pointed him out the night that Jesus was betrayed denied that he even knew him. And then when he got to Galatia Peter was a lovable flip flopper.

[18 : 51] That's what Peter was. He'd go whichever way the wind was blowing. And he would fellowship with these Gentiles and he would hang out with them and he would have meals with them.

But when the Jewish big wigs from out of town came in he disowned them. He acted like I don't even know who these people are. And Paul called him on the carpet and he said Peter that's hypocritical.

What's the matter with you? Where do you get off doing that? And he called him down. So this man is not at a loss for backbone and I do not believe that for a moment.

He was very intense and yet he was very diplomatic wherever he could be. And here we've got a situation in Hebrews chapter 10 and when he says as you see the day approaching he's thinking in terms of return of the Lord and then here in verse 26 he says for if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth there remain no more sacrifice for sins and what he's talking about here and what he's introducing is a very complex kind of issue that I personally am satisfied it was true only of this first century this is one of those abnormalities and what he is discussing is apostasy apostasy means the word the word apostasy apostasis comes from the compound Greek word and it means to stand away from or to fall away from or to abandon to leave and here he is talking about

Jews who had been exposed to the gospel they heard the truth of the gospel death burial and resurrection of Christ and everything about it and they will not commit to it they have heard the message they aren't buying it part of the complexity of this is you've got both of these factions in virtually every synagogue because when these Jews first century Jews when they came to faith in Jesus as their messiah they didn't drop out of the synagogue they didn't stop functioning under the law of Moses they continued right on you fellas we do not understand maybe the closest comparison we've got is the church but that isn't really an equal to what the Jewish synagogue was to the Jewish people it was it was the very core it was the heart and center of

[21 : 50] Judaism in every community where there were Jews in the synagogue is where your children were educated it's where you went each Sabbath to hear the Torah and the explanation of it law of Moses it's where business deals were struck it's where funerals and weddings were held it was the very nerve center of Judaism and if you were a Jew and you were excommunicated from the synagogue boy you were you were almost as good as dead I mean you couldn't function in that society remember back in remember back in in John chapter 9 the man who was born blind and the Pharisees went to the parents of the man who was born blind and they said is this your son whom you say was born blind and they say well he yes he is our son and he was born blind but by what means he now sees we don't know he's the age he's an adult ask him and then the very next verse says for the

Jews have already decided that anyone who said Jesus was the Messiah should be put out of the synagogue and that's almost like a death sentence it is it is a social educational death sentence you couldn't go to the synagogue you had no and everybody was supposed to ignore you and shun you you were you were a pariah so that's how critical this is now we've got a situation in the first century where virtually every Jewish synagogue is made up of people all Jews all Jews made up of people who believe Jesus was the Messiah and they put their trust in him and sitting right next to you is a Jew who doesn't buy it he does not believe it you've got families divided parents divided grandparents divided cousins divided this was the volatile issue was

Jesus of Nazareth the one promised by Moses and the prophets or not vast majority of them said no no and one reason they believe this was here's another thing to add to is if Jesus was the king of Israel where's the kingdom where's the kingdom he's supposed to be the king to establish the kingdom and the kingdom of heaven come to earth means that God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven do you think that's what's happening now well of course not they were under the Roman boot and these Romans were a bunch of pagans a bunch of idolaters and their reasoning was first we knew Jesus couldn't be the Messiah because he died on the cross now he's supposedly resurrected from the dead but where is he and where is his kingdom because the king is supposed to bring the kingdom we don't see any kingdom we've got the Romans here still occupying our country we've got unrighteousness and evil going on all around where's the kingdom and the fact that there is no kingdom is to them again proof positive

Jesus was not the Messiah so here you've got this tremendous dichotomy taking place in virtually every Jewish synagogue that's a big idea and these people who have heard the gospel have heard about the death burial and resurrection of Christ and stand away from it will not embrace it they are called apostates that means to stand away from to fall away from this is let's go on and read this text here for if we sin willfully verse 26 after that we have received the knowledge of the truth now the writer is using an editorial we here he's talking about the Jewish community and remember this epistle to the Hebrews is written to the Hebrews these are Jews don't try to Christianize what is written to the Jews it will only bring more confusion after we have received the knowledge of the truth they heard all about

Jesus death burial resurrection and all of it there remain no more sacrifice for sin is there anything else that can be done that hasn't been done by way of taking away the sins of humanity no there isn't anything left the ultimate price has been paid there is nothing there remains no more sacrifice for sins all that remains is a certain fearful looking for of judgment this is negative not positive this is judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries he now here he's going to give an example he's going to compare their present day situation and their rejection of the gospel with the time that existed under Moses and he's giving an illustration here in verse 28 he says he that despised

[27 : 32] Moses law to despise something means the word the word in the Greek means to look down your nose at it means to hold yourself above something as superior to the thing you're looking at you look down your nose at it you're condescending to it you're demeaning it you are denying it he that despised Moses law died without mercy under two or three witnesses that was anyone anyone who taught against the law of Moses was considered worthy of death that was blasphemy and under Judaism under the law of Moses the penalty for blasphemy was death you execute them now it didn't happen very often because people had better sense than to do that but those who did they died without mercy under two or three witnesses and that's because no one could be no one could be subjected to capital punishment without two or three witnesses otherwise you've got he said and he said so there has to be multiple witnesses he died without mercy under two or three witnesses yeah yeah yeah yeah absolutely it would have been it would have been spiritual treason now in verse 29 he's using that comparison and he says of how much sore punishment hey you think despising the law of Moses was bad what we're talking about here is a lot worse than that how much sure punishment suppose ye worse punishment severe punishment heavier punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden underfoot the son of God and has counted the blood of the covenant and this is the new covenant that he's talking about prophesied by Jeremiah hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified or wherewith he was set apart and an unholy thing well in the in the

Jewish sacrificial system there was nothing that was more holy under the law of Moses than the blood of animals it was used to seal all contracts and this goes all the way back to Genesis 15 when when God had Abraham take those animals and cut them in half put half on one side and half on the other and he walked between them that shedding of the blood of those animals sanctified the solemnity of the covenant we talk today we don't do anything like that of course under a Western culture what we do is we put our signature down we sign a contract that was the equivalent but in the Jewish method of making a covenant they didn't sign contracts they shed animal blood the idea of life being taken from something added a degree of solemnity and seriousness to the contract that was entered into and when when these two people would separate these animals put half of them here and half of them here and then the two making that contract would walk arm in arm between those animals and what both of them were saying is see what's happened to these animals if I do not keep up my end of this contract may this happen to me hey that's pretty serious stuff that was the making of the blood covenant that was that was systemic to

Judaism only here what he's talking about is the blood of Christ not the blood of an animal and they were considering it an unholy thing or a common thing a profane thing in other words what they are saying is the blood of Jesus Christ didn't do the job couldn't do the job they rejected it despised it looked down on it ridiculed it and hath done despot unto the spirit of grace or insulted the spirit of grace outraged the spirit of grace for we know verse 30 for we know him that hath said vengeance belongs unto me I will recompense saith the Lord and again the Lord shall judge his people and he says it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living

God well I tell you you you either fall into the hands of the loving God or you will fall into the hands of the judging God one of the two and he's saying here this is going to be the fate of those who apostatize and an apostate is one who has heard the claims of the gospel and by the way there are tons of apostates right here in this country they have heard the gospel they heard Billy Graham preach on television or whatever or they've got it at a funeral or someplace they have heard the gospel and the claims of Christ and they say I don't buy it I'm not going to commit to that I'm not going to I'm not going to make a commitment to that and you know this goes back to the three levels of belief we've talked about in the past remember the smell of food has distracted me the noticia and the essentia and the fiducia yeah those three levels and one has heard the gospel that's noticia you've been notified you've heard the claims and the second is essentia which means you may even assent to the claims you may agree yes

I heard that Jesus died on the cross for our sins for my sins I've heard that I believe that is true but I'm not going to do anything about it I'm not going to commit to it that's the fiducia and it's that word fiducia in the Latin from which our word faith and fiduciary is taken and the exercising of faith means a commitment to what you understand to be true you can understand something to be true believe it to be true but you can say I'm going to stand off that's apostasy I'm going to stand away from it I'm not going to embrace it I'm not going to commit to it and there's a lot of people like that in this country today Joe and then Paul he said he said he said oh I made a mistake and everybody you think now okay

[35 : 10] I've still got a chance I'm still alive no you won't because second for only second for only says all those that were apostates will be made delusional they will be made delusional they won't understand what happened at all in other words they'll get things backwards and you will have lost out your opportunity if you heard the gospel before that last now those that didn't do that that that's one of the popular interpretations of that passage that they receive not the love of the truth and they'll be blinded with a strong delusion well there'll be a lot of delusion going on because the guy who will be in the driver's seat then is the antichrist and his forte is deception so it all comes together and that is about as serious an issue as you can get so the writer so don't do that don't be there let us go on make the commitment and that's coming up in the next in the next section to do time go to einge out him the unnot be broke