

## **Introduction to the Book of Hebrews – Part 2**

Compiled by Dr. Gary M. Gulan, ©1983 (Rev. 92,01,09)

**Date** (49-100 ranges)(the \* reveals dates held by leading conservatives)

1. 96AD under persecution of Domitian<sup>1</sup>
- \*2. 70AD pretemple destruction<sup>2</sup>
- \*3. Mid-60's AD (64AD) prior to persecution under of Nero.<sup>3</sup>

“The use of the present tense in 5:1-4; 7:21,23,27,28; 8:3-5,13; 9:6-9,13,25; 10:1,3,4,8,11; and 13:10,11, suggest that the Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system were still in operation when the Epistle was composed.”<sup>4</sup>

The date seems to be between 65AD and 70AD.

### **The content: is Hebrews an epistle, a gospel, tract, essay, or sermon?**

1. “Hebrews begins like an essay, proceeds like a sermon, and ends like a letter.”<sup>5</sup>
2. “Though we usually call Hebrews an epistle, important features of a letter are lacking for this book. But if we cannot straightforwardly label it a letter, there are at least indications that it was meant for a restricted circle of readers, and not the general public or even the general Christian public.”<sup>6</sup>
3. “The book of Hebrews has been called the fifth gospel. The four describe what Christ once did on earth, while Hebrews describes what Christ is now doing in heaven.”<sup>7</sup>
4. “The so-called epistle to the Hebrews is not an epistle but a religious tract... It is on account of its polished form and scholarly contents, the first example of what we can consider Christian literature.”<sup>8</sup>

This makes the book of Hebrews a delightful book, because it is not like the other epistles. I personally like the gospel emphasis, because the book of Hebrews does complete the four gospels.

### **The reason for writing the book of “Hebrews”**

1. Four basic reasons: (1.) persecution, (2.) limited spiritual growth, (3.) failure to understand the person and work of Christ, and (4.) desire to go back to the Jewish faith, rejecting Christianity.<sup>9</sup>
2. Eight problems: (1.) lost initial enthusiasm for faith, (3:6,14; 10:23,35); (2.) slothful, (5:11; 6:12); (3.) failed to grow spiritually, (5:12-14); (4.) stopped attending church, (10:25); (5.) despondent, (12:3,12); (6.) in need of exhortation, (13:7); (7.) carried away by new and strange teachings, (13:9); and (8.) not supportive of church leaders, (13:17).<sup>10</sup>

All of these reasons, (and there are more that could be developed from the book) relate to the local church today. The book of Hebrews addresses many factors that members in church are facing today.

### **The canonicity of the book of “Hebrews”**

1. 298-373AD - Hebrews next to Romans, Paul as the author, Achanasius of Alexandria canonical list of the 27 NT books.<sup>11</sup>
2. 393AD – Hebrews was included in the 27 canonical books of the NT at the Synod of Hippo.<sup>12</sup>
3. 397AD – Hebrews was included in the 27 canonical books of the NT at the Third Synod of Carthage.<sup>13</sup>
4. 419AD – Hebrews was included in the 27 canonical books of the NT at the Sixth Synod of Carthage.<sup>14</sup>

We must remember that some council didn't stamp “canonicity” on the book in a whimsical manner. These councils and the early church looked at the content. The book of Hebrews is not like the Gnostic books that started to appear in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## **Uniqueness of the book of Hebrews**

1. Vocabulary, 152 terms not found elsewhere in NT<sup>15</sup>
2. 10 hapaxes (a word or form used only once)<sup>16</sup>
3. 90 terms found in only one other passage of the NT<sup>17</sup>
4. 167 words which occur here and elsewhere but not in Paul's writings<sup>18</sup>
5. 86 direct references to the OT<sup>19</sup>
6. 35 quotations from Greek translation of the OT<sup>20</sup>
7. 34 illustrations of Hebrew argument<sup>21</sup>
8. 19 summaries of OT material<sup>22</sup>
9. 13 mentions of OT names or topics<sup>23</sup>

These factors make this book very unique and makes studying the book a different experience than other New Testament books.

## **Key Verses**

Hebrews 3:4; 4:12; 4:14; 6:10; 7:25; 13:8

If this was a college course, you would be expected to memorize these key verses.

## **Key Words**

1. "Priest" "priesthood" 32xs<sup>24</sup>
2. "Faith" 32xs<sup>25</sup>
3. "Sacrifice(s)" 18xs<sup>26</sup>
4. "Heaven, Heavens, Heavenly" 17xs (1:10; 4:14; 7:26; 8:1; 9:24; 12:25,26; 3;1; 6:4; 8:5; 9:23; 11:16; 12;22)<sup>27</sup>
5. "Perfection" "perfect" 14xs (13:91; 7:19,11; 6:1; 10:14; 12:1,2; 2:10; 5:8; 7:28)<sup>28</sup>
6. "Eternal" "forever" 15xs (5:9; 6:2; 9:12,14,15; 13:20)<sup>29</sup>
7. "Better" 13xs (1:4; 6:9; 7:7,19,22; 8:6; 9:23; 10:34; 11:16,34,35,40)<sup>30</sup>
8. The "People" 13xs (2:17; 4:9; 5:3; 7:5,11,27; 8:10; 9:7,18,19; 10:30; 11:25; 13:12)<sup>31</sup>
9. "Let us" 13xs (14:1,11,14,16; 6:1; 10:22,23,24; 12:1,1,28; 13:13,15)<sup>32</sup>
10. "Partakers" 9xs (2:14; 3:1,14; 6:4; 10:33; 12:8,10)<sup>33</sup>
11. "Great" "Greater" 7xs (2:3; 4:14; 9:11; 10:32,35; 12:1; 13:20)<sup>34</sup>
12. "Take heed" 8xs<sup>35</sup>
13. "Lest" 7xs (2:1;3:12,13; 4:11; 12:3,13,15)<sup>36</sup>
14. "Covenant" 6xs (8:6,8,10; 10:16,29; 12:24)<sup>37</sup>

These key words reveal the depth and subject material of the book of Hebrews.

## **References:**

- <sup>1,2,3</sup>Hebrews, Harold Attridge, Hermeneia, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989, Pp. 6-9; Hebrews, George Guthrie, The NIV Application Commentary, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998, Pp. 20-22; "Hebrews," Leon Morris, The Expositors Bible Commentary, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Vol. 12, p. 8; Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews, E. Schuyler English, Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1976, p. 11,13; The Epistle of the Hebrews, Homer Kent, Grand Rapids; Baker, 1972, p. 26; The Epistle to the Hebrews, Thomas Hewitt, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, p. 39; Stand Bold in Grace: An Exposition of Hebrews, Robert Gromacki, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984, p. 16; The MacArthur Bible Commentary, John MacArthur, Nashville; Nelson, 2005, p. 1832; The Epistle to the Hebrews, B. F. Westcott, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980, p. xliii; "Hebrews," Zane Hodges, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Wheaton: Victor, 1983, p. 777; An Exposition of Hebrews, Arthur Pink, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979, p.13-14; Jensen's Survey of the New Testament, Irving Jensen, Chicago: Moody, 1981, p. 407; The Epistle to the Hebrews, R. C. H. Lenski, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966, p. 19-21; The Epistle to the Hebrews, NICNT, Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1978, p. xlii

<sup>4</sup>The MacArthur Bible Commentary, John MacArthur, Nashville; Nelson, 2005, p. 1832

<sup>5</sup>T. Rees

<sup>6</sup>"Hebrews," Leon Morris, The Expositors Bible Commentary, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, Vol. 12, p. 3

<sup>7</sup>Willmington's Guide to the Bible, H. L. Willmington, Wheaton: Tyndale, 1981, p. 516

- <sup>8</sup>The New Testament in Light of Modern Times, Adolf Deissman, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978, p. 51
- <sup>9,10</sup> “Hebrews,” A. M. Stibbs, The New Bible Commentary, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, p. 1192; Hebrews, W. H. Griffith Thomas, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, p. 10-11) The Unfolding Drama of Redemption, W. Graham Scroggie, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970, vol. 3, p. 254; Hebrews 1-8, William Lane, Word Biblical Commentary, Dallas: Word, 1991, p. c; “Hebrews,” Zane Hodges, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Wheaton: Victor, 1983, p. 779; “Hebrews,” A. M. Stibbs, The New Bible Commentary, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, p. 1193; Stand Bold in Grace: An Exposition of Hebrews, Robert Gromacki, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984, p. 9; “Hebrews,” Marcus Dods, The Expositor’s Greek New Testament, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Vol. IV, p. 221; Hebrews, George Guthrie, The NIV Application Commentary, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998, p. 21; The Epistle to the Hebrews, Thomas Hewitt, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, p. 39
- <sup>11,12,13,14</sup> Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews, E. Schuyler English, Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1976, p. 14; The Epistle to the Hebrews, R. C. H. Lenski, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1966, p. 8; The Epistle to the Hebrews, NICNT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, p. xlvii; The Epistle of the Hebrews, Homer Kent, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972, p. 16; “Hebrews,” Word Studies in the New Testament, Marvin Vincent, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977, Vol. IV, p. 371
- <sup>15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23</sup> Hebrews, Harold Attridge, Hermeneia, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989, p. 21) (Hebrews, James Thompson, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008, p. 6; The Unfolding Drama of Redemption, W. Graham Scroggie, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970, vol. 3, p. 254; Hebrews, George Guthrie, The NIV Application Commentary, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998, p. 19
- <sup>24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37</sup> Hebrews, W. H. Griffith Thomas, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979, p. 12-14; Stand Bold in Grace: An Exposition of Hebrews, Robert Gromacki, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984, p. 18-19; The Unfolding Drama of Redemption, W. Graham Scroggie, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970, vol. 3, p. 271-272; Hebrews, James Thompson, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008, p. 13) (Willmington’s Guide to the Bible, H. L. Willmington, Wheaton: Tyndale, 1981, p. 516; An Exposition of Hebrews, Arthur Pink, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979, p. 13-14,18