

## 1. The theme of the book

The overall theme of the book is the supremacy of Jesus Christ.

Topics in the book include but are not limited to the following:

- Jesus Christ
- Deity of Christ
- Moses, Aaron, and Melchisedec
- OT covenant
- OT priesthood – High priest
- OT laws/rituals
- New covenant
- Suffering
- Faith – Examples of men and women of faith
- Christian duty
- Rest
- Unbelief
- Atonement – Sacrifice – Finished work
- Shadows – Real “thing”

This purpose of this letter was to bolster the faith of these believers, to show the superiority of Jesus Christ to their old ways and religion, and to show that God was done with the Old covenant.

## 2. Author

Possible authors:

- Paul – the most prominent option, accepted by many especially in the Eastern part of the early church.
- Apollos – Luther began this idea; it has become a popular option
- Barnabas – Levite who would have understood the background to the Jewish practices
- Origen said this and is the best summary of the question of authorship: “Who the author if the Epistle is, God truly knows.”

I firmly believe God did not want us to know the author because He wanted us to know the Author and Finisher of our Faith who takes center stage in the book.

## 3. Recipients of the book

There seems to be no reference to Gentiles in the book. Conversely, the book is filled with Jewish references including names, the tabernacle/temple, priestly duties, sacrificial information, and other Hebrew history and religion.

The bulk of commentators lean heavily to the recipients primarily being suffering Jewish believers.

These Hebrews had in the recent years left Judaism and been converted to following Christ but were being strongly drawn back into their old Jewish religious ways.

Therefore, while they had truly believed, they “lacked full confidence in the gospel, and consequently in their Lord. They were in danger of going back to the standards and patterns of Judaism - not of losing their salvation but of confusing the gospel with Jewish ceremony and legalism and thereby weakening their faith and testimony” (MacArthur xi).

Thus the author presents Christ and Christianity as superior over Judaism and its understanding of the priesthood and sacrifices.

#### 4. **Canonicity**

In “the First Epistle of Clement of Rome there are clear references to the Epistle to the Hebrews” (Kent 15). Other early church fathers “who knew Hebrews included Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Theophilus, Pantaeus and Clement of Alexandria, and Origen” (Kent 15). Eusebius (ca. 260-340), who wrote *Ecclesiastical History*, “listed Hebrews among the acknowledge epistles of Paul as the prevailing view of the church, even though he explained that some rejected it from the canon on the ground that the church at Rome did not think it was by Paul” (15).

“In summary, the canonicity of Hebrews was recognized from the earliest times, even though some especially in the West questioned Pauline authorship” (16).

#### 5. **Date**

Sometime in the mid to late 60s seems plausible.

#### 6. **Key verses:** 1:3; 1:8; 2:3; 2:9; 2:17; 4:12; 4:14-16; 5:6-8; 5:12-14; 6:4-6; 6:16-19; 7:22-27; 9:11-14; 9:22-24; 9:27-28; 10:4; 10:10-12; 10:22-25; 11:1; 11:3; 11:6; 11:19; 11:25; 12:1-3; 12:6, 11; 12:14; 12:29; 13:3; 13:5-6; 13:8; 13:15-16; 13:17