

Hebrews: Its Background (Part Five)

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I am going to read a very familiar section of scripture in II Peter 3. This is not going to provide any more than the impetus for the sermon just to get us started, though in its own way it applies to the entire sermon. It says:

II Peter 3:1-9 Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of a reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.” For this they willingly forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgement and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

In my previous sermon on this subject, which is again on the background of the book of Hebrews, we traveled through about one third of the book of Acts, highlighting the tumultuous period of time in the Jerusalem area following Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, and then the giving of the Holy Spirit in a rather dramatic way to mankind as the church began its work as an institution.

I was asked since the last sermon whether I was going to use any material from a previous series of Bible studies on Hebrews that I gave while pastoring a congregation in southern California. Those Bible studies are available on our website, and you certainly are welcome to use them. But I am using a different approach in this present series because of the times that we are living.

News reports are showing clearly that the church today is operating in a culture strongly in the grip of God-denying-secularists, while at the same time, a fairly large group of the population—those sincerely religious—are adhering to a religion many sincerely believe is the way of Christ. But to us, it is clearly not the way of Christ. And though these issues are not precisely the reason why the epistle to the Hebrews was written in the first century, there is no doubt it was written for the edification of church members during the midst of a culture in turmoil, during which church members were being persecuted for religious reasons.

Now, the members needed to grasp more fully how important their relationship with Jesus Christ was. I am doing this because I believe that the present-day news reports are showing that the church is gradually being drawn toward a somewhat similar situation in our Israelitish cultures and we need to be prepared to use our calling and faith. Our living circumstances are not as intense as in the situation in first century Judea, but our circumstances are intensifying around the election of Donald Trump and the Republicans into power in the federal government.

For a while now, the true church has operated pretty much in a period of quietude. But historically, the church never operated that way for very long. It has historically always been perceived as either a strange or even a troublemaking organization by the majority, whether it was in an Israelitish culture or in the Gentile world. Because of the secularists here in the United States, it is already regarded this way in the United States by the media and what is being called “the deep state.

There is, in reality, an American deep-state that is working against this nation's best interests and seeking to bring the United States of America into the fold of the beast power. They are not advertising that is their reason; and they individually may not realize they are being used for that purpose, but

they are being manipulated. We can see it in the prophecies, that they are being manipulated in that direction. The deep-state is operating, and not really all that secretly, and exerting its will hidden within an elected government, operating using its facilities for their own ends. They are a reality; how long will it be before people discover that their Christian religion is but a counterfeit and living will become much more dangerously intense?

Most of the people in Jerusalem and Judea during the time of Christ were sincere Jews, and they thought that they were operating within a religion that had been formulated for them by God through Moses. But they were not; it was a counterfeit of what Moses under God had established. How long will it be now before the flaw in the thinking of the people who sincerely believe that they are following the Christian way of life, is exposed to that public? And when this happens, and it will happen (I have no idea how long it is going to take. I can only see that it is moving in that general direction), trouble will begin piling up, even as it did in the area surrounding Jerusalem immediately following the giving of God's Holy Spirit. Events in our time are gradually building towards a persecution of some level.

I will be continuing my approach (rather than revisit the former topics covered in my Hebrew Bible studies), and the central subject right now is the epistle to the Hebrews, its background, and the cultural atmosphere in which it came to be written. When I gave that series [of Bible studies] in southern California, I barely touched on that aspect [of the book]. But if the cultural situation and the founding of the church in that period of time played significant roles in what was happening after the giving of God's Holy Spirit—and we are finding in these sermons that it does—those things *specifically* became reasons why the book of Hebrews was produced.

My overall thought when I began this series was that I wanted to remind us that the church does not operate in a vacuum. Rather, it impacts *on* the culture and is in turn impacted *by* the culture. And there will undoubtedly be some overlap between the two series that I will give a little bit later. But right now, my approach is concentrating on one major reason why the epistle to the Hebrews was written in the first place. Now that one major reason has general branches to it.

In my previous sermon, we had gotten to the place, at the end of Acts 7, where Stephen was murdered and the revelation that the people committing the murder did so under the firebrand leadership of Saul of Tarsus. Saul was undoubtedly a brilliant, brilliant man intellectually, but at the same time, he was virtually totally misguided spiritually, as to whom and what he gave his loyalties too. His problems were simply that he did not believe the right things, and he was not converted. That was the big issue—he was not converted—but God was using him, and his activities were focusing attention on him, as well as the church that he was persecuting.

Turn with me to Acts 9:15-18. The conversation that we are breaking into is the one between God and Ananias, and it says here:

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel [I am sure that was a scary responsibility for Ananias, but he was going to do it anyway].

Acts 9:16-18 “For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.” And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

This section reveals Paul's miraculous conversion, but there is a reality that I feel that I must expound on briefly. Our conversions, though not as dramatic as Paul's, have some similarities with his. We may not have been as violently destructive to the faith as Paul. We were no more Christian at our conversion than he was. We may have even had a lot of spiritual knowledge, but all that spiritual knowledge gleaned in some way from the Bible was not pointing us in the right direction. We were no more converted than Paul was, or that Nicodemus was, whenever he appeared before Christ. We too, were enemies of the true God.

Now mark this fact in your mind. Paul's conversion history vividly shows that our calling and conversion reveals (if we are honest): God's initiative.

There are people who say they have been seeking God ever since they could read, or ever since they were a kid or whatever they were, but they were not seeking the true God. God must reveal Himself even to somebody as intellectual and as powerful politically as Nicodemus was. Even somebody as vigorous spiritually as the apostle Paul—the one who became the apostle Paul, this Saul of Tarsus—had not put the pieces together correctly, despite all his zeal, despite that he had learned from people of the highest regard within the nation. He still did not get it. And whether he knew it or not, he was persecuting Jesus Christ. Is that not what Jesus said to him? He said, “Paul how long are you going to kick at the goads?” I am sure that by the time that happened Paul was speechless, and he could not even see.

Do not separate yourself from what I am saying here. We were no more converted than Paul, even though we grew up in the United States of America or some other Israelitish country where the religions were essentially taught to us as if they were Christian, we understand they were not! They were not the true church. The doctrines had not been put together correctly. Our true spiritual life did not begin until God opened our mind to receive it. And sometimes, even when He does that, it takes a long time for us to get it and begin to take action on it.

So, it is God who must trigger our mind to accept His truth, just as He did with Paul, though generally not as dramatically as He did with Paul. He must first draw us to Him, or we will forever remain His enemy. We might not want to admit that, but with the carnality that is within us and the world surrounding us, we were not obeying Him, as we later were when He revealed Himself to us. Now this is how persistently influential our carnality is. A miracle has occurred in our life as well as in Paul’s, and the scales, as it were, fell off our eyes. This illustrates what Jesus meant whenever He said in John 6:44... I am going to turn to there and read it, because this is an important scripture for us to build on. There, Jesus dogmatically states: *no one, no one !*

John 6:44 “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him . . .”

Are we going to call Jesus a liar? No one comes to Christ unless he is drawn by the Father! There are some cases where Jesus was directly involved, but this is a general statement.

John 6:44 “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Despite what happened with Paul's conversion, things did not stop happening in individual lives as converted people wrestled with meeting the adjustment needs of this new religion. I have shifted my thinking back to Jerusalem once again here. The way of God first came to Jerusalem and the way really opened up with the giving of the Holy Spirit and God began adding to the church so that it could begin to carry out the responsibility that He, through Jesus Christ, had given to it.

Now, there were requirements that this new way of life held for those people. Jesus knew that these people that He was speaking to, for the most part, did not get it, even those who were sincerely following Him as He preached around the nation. They still did not get it. So, He gave them a warning. And so, in Luke 14 He admonished them in this way:

Luke 14:25-26 Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.”

I think you understand that hate does not mean to be really angry with, but it means willingly putting others behind Christ, and to put Christ ahead of, in terms of obedience and giving respect to them others.

Luke 14:26-28 “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters [all family members!], yes, and his own life also [including himself], he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross [that is the cost of this particular calling] and come after Me [despite the heaviness of that cross] cannot be My disciple. For

which of you intending to build a tower does not sit down first and count the cost whether he has enough to finish it?"

The conversions from the Old Covenant religion that the Jews cobbled together under Satan's leadership over the centuries were not easily adjusted to within close family relationships. It might be difficult to appreciate the emotional upheaval the new converts had to face in order to be loyal to their baptismal vows. The realities of why Jesus admonished those Jews listening to Him were becoming apparent. By that I mean the realities of what Jesus taught those people were becoming apparent to those people that were converted right after God gave His Holy Spirit.

Now, try to imagine the turmoil felt in this close family setting, those that Jesus just addressed in verses 25, 26, and 27. It was intense. From Acts we just read the overview of what was happening in Jerusalem to Jewish converts in the years from Christ's resurrection to the important doctrinal meeting that is shown in Acts 15.

But things had not stopped elsewhere either. Another dramatic cultural shock was just around the corner timewise, away from the activity within Jerusalem. Historically, by the time we reach the events recorded in Acts 10, as the persecutions were happening in and around Jerusalem, the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius, and his family, was taking place in the city of Caesarea about fifty, sixty miles north of Jerusalem.

Researchers are unsure regarding the dating, but they seem to believe that it took place in the early ^{AD} 40s. That seems a little late to me, but nonetheless that is what they say. It is also interesting that it did not take place in or around Jerusalem. It seems as though God was introducing the Gentiles into the church through the back door in order to soften the cultural shock to Jewish pride somewhat. Turn with me to Acts again, the tenth chapter, as we continue to build our case. We are breaking into this episode here:

Acts 10:24-29 And the following day they entered Caesarea [this was Peter and his group that traveled with him, as well as the people that were sent by Cornelius to contact Peter]. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met

him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I myself am also a man.” And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together.

How many there were, we do not know, but at least the Bible says it was many. It was probably more than just a few members of Cornelius’ family. But Cornelius, his family, some of his friends, and his family's friends as well. You can be sure that Cornelius and his family have been talking about Jesus Christ and maybe there had been some news from Jerusalem as well.

Acts 10:28 Then he said to them, “You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?”

Those couple of verses there very clearly state the spiritual and therefore the social and cultural division between the Jews and the Gentiles. It did not matter whether it was at Jerusalem or not, this was in Caesarea which was a Gentile city. However, it is helpful for us to understand (now mark this in your mind), that there is no place in any direction God gave in His Word, in which He forbids Gentiles from being acceptable to being companions with Jews.

Make sure that you get this. It was unlawful, as Peter stated, by means of Jewish adjustments and traditions *added* to God's laws, and upon reflection, with God's help giving Peter the vision, Peter clearly perceived God's hand in the entire tradition-blasting episode. In a way, as far as we would later see, this was turning the Jewish world especially upside down. Very quickly, God began converting Gentiles in large enough numbers to establish congregations. Probably calling Gentiles just about as rapidly as he was calling Jewish people.

Let us turn to Ephesians 2. Paul writes to this a Gentile congregation.

Ephesians 2:11-18 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the

Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two [Gentile and Jew, Gentile and Israelite], thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body [the church] through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

Here in these verses the problem is stated clearly and confirmed more formally by the apostle Paul and he is speaking of what in another place is called the middle wall of partition that kept Israelites and Gentiles from being united in one spiritual body. Now, because of the existing Jewish religious regulations, combined with mankind's normal carnality, the separation between the two peoples could hardly get healed. It became a natural part of both cultures to have a prejudiced wariness of each other that, in some cases, was outright hatred. But this had to be overcome spiritually in order to accept each other, and to meet together in the closest bonds of spiritual brotherhood, as parts of the same spiritual body that Jesus was forming by means of the church.

Now consider these spiritual realities following that special Pentecost when God gave His Spirit. New Jewish converts were being taught to abandon what they sincerely believed was a God-instituted religion founded through Moses. Fifteen hundred years before this, the Jews had been following what they thought was the religion that Moses put together. It was *not* the religion that Moses put together under God's direction. So they thought it was a God-instituted religion founded by Moses fifteen hundred years earlier.

I want you to get this really drilled into your mind: Judaism was not the religion founded by Moses. It was a religion Gentiles were not really accepted at participating in, except at a very comfortable distance. The converted Jews were being persecuted by Judaism, by their own people, which was a religious patchwork quilt quite far removed from God's truth. These are the same types of people that killed the Christ. They rejected Him and His way of life. And so, when the church began to form, there was automatic hatred against the church.

As the intensity of the persecutions rose, the converts were gradually being excluded from participating (try to understand this) in all activities held at the Temple. How many times have you read in the Bible that Jesus was walking in the Temple whenever He went there? He used it as a place to preach the truth of God. Now those people were doing the same basic thing, except at the time Jesus was going there, He was not being persecuted, that came later, because the Jews did not realize what He stood for, because God had not opened their minds through it. And so He could go there, and He could counsel with people, and He could even have preached there on the stairs or wherever, at the Temple, and there was no problem.

But once the normal, everyday, regular Jew began to be converted, the persecution began right in his own family, and that extended out then to activities that were held at the Temple. And they were being excluded from the social, cultural, and religious activities that were still taking place there.

So, as the intensity of the persecution rose, the converts were gradually being excluded from participating in all activities at the Temple and treated socially as being *worse* than the Gentiles because they were recanting from what the normal Jewish citizenry, in many cases sincerely believed was the one and only true way of worshipping, and given faith.

And so the converts were being forced to pretty much give up cleaving—this is how they began to think—to the promises within the Scriptures if they accepted the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. That is what they were being persecuted for. Recant!

These were the questions that were going through their minds? Was the Sanhedrin and priesthood wrong? Had the converts been prospered since declaring their belief in Jesus Christ? And they were no doubt asking themselves, how soon is Christ going to return?

They knew about those things. Everywhere they looked in family and community life, they were being told and shown by outright painful physical persecutions that believing in Jesus as Messiah was a tragic mistake, a delusion, a sin of the highest order. And both spiritually and physically the church was being shown the highest needs, the need of needs was now for the epistle of Hebrews, the book provided by God through whom he chose to author it.

Hebrews had not been written yet. Remember, we are still fairly close to Christ's resurrection and the giving of the Holy Spirit and churches beginning to form, small, probably what we would call a house church. House churches were beginning to form throughout the city of Jerusalem and I am sure that Cornelius and his family had a congregation meeting in their house. And so, it was a truly difficult period of life for this testing of their faith.

In coming to understand this, it is no wonder that the epistle has a warning within it. In chapter 10 of Hebrews, it warns the people to whom the book of Hebrews was written, to not neglect the assembling of themselves together, which people might do to hide their association with the church. I am talking about Jews here.

Now, perhaps you can get a feel for the social tumult then taking place in the Jewish Christians' lives by imagining what is going to happen in this country and in other Israelitish nations, whenever they are exposed to the truth that the many of the religious concepts they believed in as being true Christianity were not true to the truth. It is coming.

You might recall the series of sermons I gave 'Is America a Christian Nation?' Well, I hope I proved to you that right from the beginning it has never been Christian. They used the reformations that took place as their doctrinal base. And when those Protestant reformations were put together,

they were not true to God's way right from the beginning. They had a lot of things right, but they also had a great deal wrong as well.

What was literally happening was that by remaining faithful to Jesus as Messiah, they were civilly and socially being banished from what they held as important before their conversion. There is a scripture here in Hebrews 12 that I want you to read, because I want you to see that not very many people were being killed. The persecution was primarily happening within family units. But in Hebrews 12, as we are getting to the end of the book of Hebrews, he says to these people:

Hebrews 12:4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

So even though the persecutions were going on, they were not bloody ones as happened to Stephen. That was a rarity. But still they were being persecuted by being excluded from family units and persecuted within their families.

Evelyn and I know a little bit about this, because it happened in my family but did not happen in her family. They accepted our conversion to this, but my family did not accept it, and so we were on the outside looking in as it were. But they did not kill us or anything, they did not strap us to a pole and whip us or anything, but since we were not at Christmas celebrations and all kinds of things like that, we were pretty much excluded from out of the family.

Now, let us get into the book of Hebrews here in chapter 8, because I want to touch base with this very important chapter. We will read it just because the author gives a summary, so that we can pause just for a second, catch our breath and understand where the author is headed. We have not even gotten into the scriptures themselves in the book of Hebrews, but this tells us what to look forward to, and helps to anchor us in a certain direction.

Hebrews 8:1-2 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand

of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

There is a mouthful right there, a brainful right in those two verses. What other religion on the face of the earth has a High Priest for the people who is located in heaven, at the right hand of the throne of God? Nobody, zilch, nada. zero, only one!

Hebrews 8:3-5 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

Can you imagine a new convert to the church trying to explain to his father, mother, sisters, and brothers/brethren that they have a high priest who is not even a priest and he is in heaven. He is not on earth, visible to the people. This is something that is operating almost entirely by faith, and to explain these things to an unconverted person who is fighting you tooth and toenail regarding what you are doing with your life. What a hardship that must have been for those people to be rejected by their families. Not just the family, but the community as well.

Hebrews 8:6-8 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry [that is then what the Temple represented], inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because finding fault with them, He says, “Behold, the days’ are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—

Can you imagine trying to explain that to your Jewish family members? I operate under the New Covenant that was established by my Savior. Huh? It

is no wonder Jesus admonished those people and named the very people who were going to be persecutors of them before they were even converted. It was going to be their family.

Hebrews 8:9-10 “not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in my covenant. and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord [That covenant is being made with the church. But eventually it is going to be made with the house of Israel, a reunited house of Israel.] For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God. And they shall be My people.

Again, just a reminder as we go on here through this chapter, this is what the whole book is about. And they needed this encouragement as they were being persecuted by their family members and separated away from everything that they knew beforehand was solid and right and good and given by God. Now they find out it was not given by God. It was given by the God of Moses and Moses delivered it to the people. But what they were worshipping during their life was not what Moses had been given.

Hebrews 8:11-13 “None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

So, these verses in this chapter are the major scriptures used in the epistle in one continuous statement regarding what the epistle of Hebrews teaches.

We do not know absolutely who wrote Hebrews. The most likely person was the apostle Paul. So let us set the stage as we begin. Whoever did it had a clear and complete understanding of worship under the Old Covenant that

enabled him to clearly compare the two covenants. However, the entire epistle this commentary was concerned about was the effects of whom Christ was, and how His teaching, death, and resurrection impacted the church. Now the church consists of those God called, justified, and sanctified for salvation.

First, we have the Jewish people living in the areas of Jerusalem and Palestine, especially those in and around Jerusalem, and including the apostles, because most of the early converts, following Christ's teaching and death, also lived there. But from there, its impact spread as God began converting Gentiles. They too began to understand and appreciate the very clear Old Testament connections the apostles' teaching provided them within their sermons regarding God's relationship with the Israelitish nation and the Bible that God provides.

That must have been quite a show; maybe shocking, if I can put it that way. By shocking, I mean the Gentiles response. So how much did those who were converted know about the relationship between God and Israel, and how God guided the Israelites in their relationship with Him? Remember, they had no book of Hebrews yet. But the apostles' sermons gave the new converts the foundational roots needful for living their way of life. The spiritual greats, who are named in Hebrews 11, lived by faith, even as we do. And they set patterns that God wants us to follow in our lives, even as he desired them when the epistle was written.

Now, let us explore briefly who probably wrote it, even though only God knows for sure. Well, there are not a great number of scriptures that give an indication. But on the other hand, there is more than I am going to give you here right now.

II Peter 3:1-2 Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior.

I chose this first simply because the apostles are directly named, not each apostle by name, but the apostles were teaching the church the background

on the church, and other things that have to do with other places in the book of Hebrews. Now in verses 14-16, Paul was certainly an apostle.

II Peter 3:14-16 Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found in Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and account that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them these things in which are some things hard to understand [I will tell you, the book of Hebrews would be hard for a Gentile to understand, and even for maybe many, many people in the church, in our times, they are hard to understand.], which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

So here Peter is telling us, that the apostle Paul was teaching people about things concerning the covenants and so forth.

I Peter 1:1-2 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

This is one of the stronger internal biblical pieces of evidence because there is no historical record that gives evidence of Peter moving around the Mideast evangelizing like the apostle Paul did. Every one of those places that is mentioned by Peter there were places that the apostle Paul travelled through, held evangelistic campaigns there, and where congregations were being raised up. So I think you are seeing that it is beginning to look fairly closely that the apostle Paul was probably the author, and I think what I am going to give you in my next sermon will seal it, that he was the one who wrote the book of the Hebrews.

Let us go to Acts the ninth chapter. These verses are just kind of hitting around the edges of things.

Acts 9:10-16 Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, “Ananias.” And he said, “Here I am, Lord.” So the Lord said to him, “Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.” Then Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name.” But the Lord said to him “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before [now notice who he names] Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. [He had a very large prescription in terms of the things that he was supposed to do.] For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.”

The book of Hebrews certainly falls within Paul's area of assignment from Christ. However, its writing style is somewhat different from Paul's other epistles. And Hebrews lacks the normal pedestrian roughness researchers expect of the style Paul used in other epistles. Some researchers have described Hebrews as being elegant, a formal and systematic account of a subject, and it reads as though it is a classroom lecture in a college. That was not Paul's style. He wrote, in a very excited and excitable way, charging full-steam ahead with that great mind of his and his enthusiasm as well. But, at its beginning, the book of Hebrews is organized as a treatise, which, again, is not Paul's style.

But we will see the next time I speak that in this case, he was capable of doing either. A treatise is a formal and systematic account of some subject, and it reads as though it is a classroom-like lecture at a college. But chapters twelve and thirteen end the epistle as though it is a personal letter from a church pastor, as Paul's epistles normally do.

Some think Hebrews was written by Luke or even Priscilla, as I have had suggested to me. That, I believe, is really pretty far out.

Now I will go no further on this point till I get you a little bit more information. I did not have the opportunity to put it into this sermon, so I will

go no further at this point. But researchers have found a number of high, in the teens, of characteristics that fit only the apostle Paul, within other writings that are without doubt his, including certain singular words, phrases, and number combinations, and who the author's companion was when Hebrews was written. I will give you that just for fun.

Hebrews 13:22-24 And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words. [listen to these words!] Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly. Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.

The thing that is so interesting about this is the Bible mentions nobody but Timothy ever travelled with Paul. I mean, there were others who traveled with him, but Timothy, when he was used by Paul, it is marked that it was Timothy who did it. And so, that pretty much nails it, that with the information I am going to give you the next time, that it was the apostle Paul who wrote it.

I will give you a couple more things because we are just about getting ready to enter into expounding the Scripture. When was it written? It is undated, but internal evidence written in the present tense in small amounts, compared to the overall subject material, provides the distinct impression the Temple was still standing and sacrifices were being offered at it. Therefore, the conclusion that these experts finally reach is that it was written before, but they feel very near to AD 65, somewhere in that general area.

To whom is it addressed? These things are part of the writing but in Hebrews the first chapter, it states on the first page of the first chapter, 'The Epistle to the Hebrews.' Now, to the best of my knowledge, no truly reputable researcher claims that this title is inspired. However, that does not mean that is entirely wrong, because it is a reasonably correct conclusion from evidence within the Bible itself. In what way is it reasonably correct? It is because of the internal evidence in writings that are indeed inspired combined with the profane history of the times that it was written within provides reputable evidence. Now, here is the manner in which most biblical books got their title. Turn with me to I Corinthians 1.

I Corinthians 1:1-2 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

This title is inspired because verses 1 and 2 are inspired and that is directly where the title came from. Well, here is a verse that gives evidence that the title that has been given to Hebrews is probably correct.

Hebrews 1:1-2 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom He also made the worlds.

Now we know for sure that God did absolutely send his prophets to the Hebrew Israelites, including the greatest Prophet of all, Jesus Christ. However, there is no evidence that He sent prophets to any other nations in any consistent regularity whatever. Never allow yourself to forget Amos 3:2 in this regard, because God states:

Amos 3:2 “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.”

No other nation has been so blessed except the Hebrew people.

But at the same time this also must be understood that epistle to the Hebrews was not written to Hebrew people generally like other epistles. It is written for the benefit of Israelitish Hebrews who had converted and were fellowshipping in the church congregations. This is people like Peter, James, John, Jude, and Matthew, and those converted through them.

Also note that the apostles did not send their epistles to the world, and as far as we know, only to church congregations.

So, you will notice, the researchers are zeroing around and eventually most of them come to the realization that the apostle Paul is the one most likely to have written the book of Hebrews.

