

Who wrote Hebrews? In thirteen New Testament letters, or epistles, Paul introduces himself as the writer. However, the writer of Hebrews is anonymous. Hebrews was accepted as an epistle of Paul by early writers, and throughout most of Christian history, the apostle Paul was viewed as the writer of Hebrews. However, in the last couple of hundred years, this view has been dismissed by many of the “experts.” What are the facts? Who wrote Hebrews?



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Regardless of who wrote the Letter to the Hebrews, the important thing to remember is that this writing, like the Old Testament before it, is what **“the holy Spirit says” (Hebrews 3:7 NAB)**. The fact that the writer does not identify himself by name in the letter does not prove that Paul isn’t the writer. Many Old Testament Bible books don’t name the writer, and neither do the Gospels and Acts in the New Testament.

Differing Views of Writership

Most “scholars” and “experts” these days, especially since the 1800’s, do not think that the Christian apostle Paul wrote Hebrews. This view stands in contrast to the early Christians, who almost unanimously held the view that Paul wrote Hebrews, even though the writer isn’t named in the book itself.

“As early as the end of the second century the church of Alexandria in Egypt accepted Hebrews as a letter of Paul, and that became the commonly held view in the East. Pauline authorship was contested in the West in the fourth century, but then accepted. In the sixteenth century, doubts about that position were again raised, and the modern consensus

is that the letter was not written by Paul. There is, however, no widespread agreement on any of the other suggested authors, e. g., Barnabas, Apollos, or Priscilla and Aquila. The document itself has no statement about its author”—Introduction to The Letter To The Hebrews, New American Bible (NAB).

Why Isn't the Writer Named?

Why isn't the writer named in the book of Hebrews, as are the writers of the other 20 New Testament letters? None of the other theories raised for other writers, such as for Apollos, or Barnabas, or Luke, or Aquila, or Priscilla, or Epaphras, or Silas, etc., have been able to explain the reason for the lack of the writer's identification at the outset of, or anywhere else in, the letter. Priscilla can be ruled out by the fact that the writer refers to himself with a masculine gender participle at **Hebrews 11:32: “There is is not time for me** [masculine in the Greek] **to give an account” (NJB).**

But Paul's omission is obvious!—He was hated and despised with fanatical zeal in the Jerusalem and Judea area because he was viewed as **“a troublemaker”** apostate from Judaism, and **“a ringleader of the cult of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5 NIV).** The Jewish leaders and their fanatical followers were especially stung by his miraculous gifts of the spirit, but, even more importantly, his ability to prove that Jesus was the Messiah (**Acts 9:20-30; 21:27-36; 23:12-21; 24:5-8**). If Hebrews had had Paul's name attached to it, it may not have even made it into Jerusalem, much less reached its intended recipients. So, as far as the possible writership of Paul is concerned, there are good reasons Hebrews was anonymously written.

Even so, that doesn't prove Paul wrote Hebrews. So, still, the question remains, who wrote Hebrews? Was it Paul, or someone else?

Internal & Biblical Evidence Favoring Paul's Writership

“So what makes us think we can escape if we ignore this great salvation that was first announced by the Lord Jesus himself and then delivered to us by those who heard him speak?” (Hebrews 2:3 NLT). The writer of Hebrews was obviously not a disciple during the time of Jesus’ earthly ministry. This fits Paul, who did not become a disciple until a couple of years after Jesus death (**Acts 9:1-18**).

“The Greek of this letter is in many ways the best in the New Testament” (NAB, Introduction to Hebrews). The writer of Hebrews was very well educated, proficient in Greek (for example, **Hebrews** has 151 Greek words that do not appear elsewhere in the New Testament), and wrote with an impressive style, vocabulary and cogency. This fits the well-educated Apostle Paul, who was born and raised in the Greek city of Tarsus, educated in Jerusalem under the tutelage of Gamaliel in Jerusalem (**Acts 22:3; Galatians 1:14; Philippians 3:5**).

The writer wrote with a confident conviction that God had climactically made himself known **“through his Son”** Jesus (**Hebrews 1:1,2 NLT; 10:19**). This also fits Paul, whom the historian Luke recorded as having preached this same message (**Acts 17:2,3,30,31; 28:23**).

Another thing to keep in mind, is that, if the writer is not Paul, knowing who the writer is would add little to our understanding in any case. Both the writer of the letter and the intended recipients are very familiar with the Old Testament in the Greek translation, known as the **Greek Septuagint (LXX)**.

Paul was foretold to be God’s **“chosen instrument to proclaim my name** to the Gentiles and their kings and **to the people of Israel”** (**Acts 9:15 NIV**). The Letter to the Hebrews falls well within this purview. Also, the complex theology and in-depth knowledge of the various details of the Old Covenant sacrificial arrangement fit Paul very well.

The writer of Hebrews was known to the recipients (**Acts 9:26-30; Galatians 1:18-2:2**), as is

evidenced by his personal comments. **“Pray for us.” “I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly.” “Greet all your leaders and all the saints” (Hebrews 13:18,22,24 NRSV).** This fits well with Paul’s writership, and his being known to the Christians in Jerusalem and Judea (Acts 9:26-30 Galatians 1:18-2:2).

“I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been set free. If he arrives in time, he will be with me when I see you. Greetings to all your leaders and to God’s holy people. God’s holy people in Italy send you greetings” (Hebrews 13:23-24 NJB). His close friendship with Timothy, whose prison release is mentioned, and the fact that the letter was written in Italy, also fit well with what we know about both Paul and Timothy. Timothy traveled extensively with Paul on Paul’s 2 and 3rd missionary journeys, and apparently was there in Rome with Paul in prison, but has just lately been released. Paul’s 2 year confinement in Rome appears to be nearing its end.

How about the difference in style between Hebrews and the thirteen letters which name Paul as the writer? Hebrews is written from the standpoint of a very well-versed Christian Jew to Jewish Christians who were very familiar with the Jewish system, but who had doubts, or were challenged, about the superiority of Christ and the New Covenant in comparison with Moses and the Old Covenant. Paul was very skilled at what God used him for: **“I have become all things to all people, so that by all possible means I might save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22 NIV).** This certainly fits the apostle Paul, who was extremely well-versed in the Hebrew Scriptures, and also in using those scriptures to prove that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 17:2,3; 22:3; 28:23; Philippians 3:5).

Of the 21 letters, or epistles, in the New Testament, 14 are named after the recipients, namely, Romans through Hebrews. In contrast, the other 7 New Testament letters are named after their respective writers. Since, in 13 of the 14 letters that are named after the recipients, Paul is named as the writer, this gives evidence of at least a distinct possibility that Paul is also the anonymous writer of Hebrews.

Manuscript & Historical Evidence

The 2nd strongest proof of Paul's writership is the fact that in early manuscripts collections of Paul's letters, Hebrews follows after Romans. If Hebrews wasn't written by Paul, that doesn't make much sense. One such early manuscript collection scroll is the Chester Beatty Papyrus P46, which was written about 200 CE, and includes Hebrews in its collection of Paul's letters. In fact, Hebrews wasn't on either end of the scroll, as might be expected if it had another writer, but, being placed after Romans as the 2nd letter of the 9 letters that remain in the scroll is extremely strong proof of Paul's writership.

Hebrews is listed among "fourteen letters of Paul the apostle" in "The Canon of Athanasius," of the fourth century C.E.

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Strongest Evidence that Paul Wrote Hebrews

But the number one proof of Paul's writership is in the internal evidence, and is something that is almost always overlooked by those who think someone other than Paul wrote Hebrews—it is something in the conclusion of all of his letters, including Hebrews! Every writer

has certain habits, and even though the style of Hebrews is somewhat different than the other 13 letters that name Paul as the writer, due to the different subject matter and the situational background of the letter – there is one habit of Paul that marks every one of his 14 letters! Let’s look at the nearly identical phrase that is in the conclusion of each of his 14 letters:

“The grace of of our Lord Jesus be with you”—Romans 16:20 NIV

“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you”—1 Corinthians 16:24 NIV

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all”—2 Corinthians 13:13 NIV

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen”—Galatians 6:18 ESV

“Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible”—Ephesians 6:24 ESV

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit”—Philippians 4:23 ESV

“I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you”—Colossians 4:23 Colossians 4:18 ESV

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you”—1 Thessalonians 5:28 ESV

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all”—2 Thessalonians 3:18 ESV

“Grace be with you”—1 Timothy 6:21 ESV

“The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you”— Timothy 4:22 ESV

“Grace be with you all”—Titus 3:15 ESV

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit”—Philemon 25 ESV

“Grace be with all of you”—Hebrews 13:25 ESV

Did Paul write Hebrews? Every one of Paul’s 14 canonical letters has the same basic phrase in the conclusion: **“Grace be with you,”** whereas none of the seven other New Testament letters do. While Peter’s 2 letters mention grace in their conclusions (**1 Peter 5:10; 2 Peter 3:18**), Peter does not use “grace” in a phrase that even comes close to the way that Paul uses “grace” in his conclusions. The fact is that none of other seven non-Pauline New Testament letters’ conclusions use anything like Paul’s consistent phrase, **“Grace be with you”**. Along with all the other Biblical evidence, this fact makes it just about 100% certain that the Apostle Paul wrote Hebrews.