

Introduction (Part 2)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 September 2022

Preacher: Tom Holland

[0 : 00] Last week was lesson one, introduction part one.

! This week is lesson two, introduction part two. How many parts total? Next week will be lesson three, introduction part three, and the week after will be verse one, chapter one.

But we're going to continue tonight as we lay a foundation for what is really going to be a lengthy study on the epistle to the Hebrews.

I subtitle that, The Superiority of Christ in All Things. And I've got an issue, not a bad issue or a mean-spirited issue, just an issue we're going to hit head on tonight.

Lee's been waiting for me to reveal this. It has to do with the authorship of Hebrews. Who wrote the epistle to the Hebrews?

[1 : 08] The first thing I'm going to do in an effort to try and answer that question is turn my attention to a guy by the name of Origen. Actually, his full name, Origen Adam Matthias.

He was an early Christian scholar. Some refer to him as one of the church fathers. He was also an ascetic as well as a theologian.

I didn't know what ascetic is, but it's someone that adopts a lifestyle that encompassed severe self-discipline.

He avoided all forms of indulgence in order to better serve and worship the Lord Jesus. I don't know what all that involved, but I doubt if you would have liked our meal tonight.

I had pizza and cupcakes, so I got both food groups. He lived from 185 A.D. to 253 A.D.

[2 : 11] So we're talking about the olden days. He was born and spent the first half of his life or his career in Alexandria, Egypt.

And I found that interesting because that's where the library of Alexander, or at Alexander, is that hundreds and thousands of scrolls that the Romans burned.

These ancient history. Even now, archaeologists say maybe they buried them or, you know, maybe they survived, but the Romans and Gibbons the rise and fall of the Roman Empire reported, no, they burned it to the ground.

There's something bad about burning libraries down, but they did. He was a prolific author. History records that he wrote probably over 2,000 treatises in multiple branches of theology, textual criticism, biblical exegesis, hermeneutics, homiletics, and other spiritual matters.

He was one of the most influential and controversial figures in early Christian thought, in theology, apologetics.

[3 : 32] He was described as one of the greatest geniuses of the early church that was ever produced. Unfortunately, most of his writings have disappeared.

They were so old and they're gone. We haven't... Some of them survived, but very few. An example of his genius, though, can be found in the few commentaries that survived.

Most of them have been lost to history. He wrote a commentary on the book of Romans. Romans is 16 chapters. He wrote 15 volumes on the 16 chapters of the book of Romans.

Sounds like Martin Lloyd-Jones. I have his book on Ephesians, which is six chapters, and that goes nine volumes. But Origen wrote 15 volumes on the book of Romans.

Origen was asked this question. Who wrote the epistle to the Hebrews? He said, only God knows. I mean, that was Origen's answer.

[4 : 46] Only God knows. I don't think I'm going to improve on that answer. Given the fact that this book was written to glorify and exalt Christ, that seems rather fitting to me.

We do know, regardless of who wrote it, the Holy Spirit is the ultimate author. This book is God-breathed. And that fact alone would be enough for all of us.

More than enough. But this truth has not kept men over the centuries of suggesting possible names as to the identity author.

Probably the most notable of possible authors is the Apostle Paul. And we'll return to him momentarily. But other names have been suggested.

Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, Dr. Luke, Aquila, and perhaps his lovely wife, Priscilla. I hope Priscilla is his wife and not his sister.

[5 : 53] I'm not even sure of that. But I can tell you Priscilla didn't write it because of the use of the masculine to even refer to the author. Philip or Clement of Rome.

That's some of the more outstanding names that have been offered. All of these were giant figures in the early church. But there's nothing in Scripture that tends to support any one of these individuals.

Thus the most powerful name that remains from this list as a suggested author is the great Apostle Paul himself. Now, let me tell you my approach to this.

I have my beliefs. You have yours. No one has ever come over to my beliefs. So, you're not going to offend me if that doesn't happen.

I'm not a salesman here. I'm just trying to put out truth here. So, before attempting to answer the authorship question and whether or not Paul wrote it, I want to borrow directly from Paul's playbook.

[7 : 08] Listen to these Holy Spirit-inspired words from the fourth chapter of the book of Romans. This is Romans 4.3. Paul said, what does the Scripture say?

That's Paul's words. When we find ourselves puzzled over a doctrine, the doctrines got us confused, what do the Scriptures say? If we're puzzled over a religious issue, what do the Scriptures say?

That's a great question to both ask and answer. What's the Scriptures have to say? Now, to be sure, so many great men in history hold to the Pauline authorship of Hebrews.

There's also been some great men that do not believe that Paul wrote the book. There's great men today, some of whom believe Paul is the author, some of whom do not.

I would have to say there's a third category, those who say, I don't know. Based on the scriptural testimony, I don't know.

[8 : 21] and probably add a fourth category, those who say, I don't care. I like the book and I just want to study the book and the Holy Spirit wrote it and I don't care who it was.

But again, I want to return to Paul's question, what does the Scripture say? Are there passages in the New Testament that give Paul credit as the author?

And the answer to that is yes, there are. In fact, there are 13 such passages, but it's not in Hebrews. It's in the books of Romans and 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians and Galatians and Ephesians and Philippians and Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon.

The first chapter and the first verse of all 13 of these books identify Paul by name as the author. Paul said, Paul. I had a friend of mine who was talking to a pastor friend of his, Willard, and he said, whenever I taught that for years in my church, I always read the first chapter and I started out I, Paul.

[9 : 36] And then I found out that was the letter 1 for first chapter. But he thought it was the letter I. He'd say, I, Paul. And then he would go from there. We know for a fact Paul wrote both because he gave himself credit.

James and Peter and Jude also identify themselves as the authors of the books they wrote. And of course, that would be four books. James, 1 and 2 Peter, and Jude.

John is interesting. he seemed somewhat reluctant to put his name on some of the books that he wrote.

In the gospel that we call the gospel of John, and in that gospel that bears his name, John never refers to himself by his proper name.

Now, he does talk about John, but he's talking about John the Baptist. But he does five times or four times. I could go back one page and tell. Five times he refers to the author as to the gospel of John as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

[10 : 51] And John used that a lot. Now, I've got to tell you this. I used to be... I thought John was kind of a braggart.

And then one day I realized the Holy Spirit wrote that down. I better quit criticizing it. That's the words of the Holy Spirit, the disciple whom Jesus loved.

And I would also say there was never any serious doubt in the early church that this was a reference to John the Apostle of the Lord.

Many times the Apostle John wrote that name John, but he was referring to John the Baptist. But the church never challenged John's authorship of the gospel that bears his name, referred to as the gospel of John.

John also wrote three epistles, 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John. He makes no reference to himself by name in those books.

[11:58] But again, the early church held almost exclusively that he was the author. To find guys challenging that, you almost have to come down to the 18th century and the German higher critical school, which was a bunch of agnostics and atheists that came up with German theology.

And they used to make all these guys that went to seminary to study German theology. You had to practically be able to read German. And they came up with, well, maybe John didn't write this.

But the early church believed John did. And then in the book of Revelation, John is identified several times in that book as the author, including chapter 1, verse 1.

So we should have no doubt about authorship there at all. Now, in the early days of the church, we had two designations show up.

One was called the Eastern Church and the other was referred to as the Western Church. Those were essentially geographic designations.

[13:16] the Eastern Church was found on the Eastern half of the Old Roman Empire. The Western half was in the Western part of the Roman Empire.

Today, we would call that Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and even beyond into Turkey called Asia Minor and those areas. The Eastern half largely held to Paul as the author of Hebrews.

The Western half did not. That's not the only thing they disagreed over. But the divide came very early. Very early.

So back to the question, what do the Scriptures say? Are there passages in the complete Word of God, Genesis to Revelation, that tell us Paul of Tarsus, his Greek name, Saul of Tarsus, his Hebrew name, are there any passages, Genesis to Revelation, that tell us Paul wrote the epistle to the Hebrews?

There are none. Are there any specific Scriptures that tell us Paul did not write the epistle to the Hebrews? Hebrews. If we use specific as the operative word, then I would say no.

[14:45] There are no such specific Scriptures. Nowhere in the Bible does it say, by the way, Paul didn't write the book of Hebrews. It doesn't say that.

But we do have inerrant, holy, inspired passages in the Bible, I think that give us an indication that maybe Paul was not the author to the epistle to Hebrews.

And I've got to inject here, these are my opinions as I read these passages. Each of you may read them and come up with an alternative interpretation. In fact, people have. Listen to the words in the second chapter, and we're getting way ahead of ourselves, the second chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews will be there about December, so don't worry.

In the second chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, as it refers to the origins of the Bible, but especially Hebrews, Hebrews 2.3, the second half of that verse, speaking of the word of God, it was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard.

So, we have three distinct categories here. Categories of persons. And category one stands by itself.

[16:18] Category one is the Lord Jesus Christ. And there's some good men in here, and my self, and none of us belong in category one.

That is exclusive to the Lord Jesus Christ, according to Hebrews 2.3. First declared by the Lord. Then we have a second category, and it talks about those who heard and learned directly from Jesus.

Those who heard His words, heard, they saw Jesus, in other words, and heard, and that hearing was directly from the Lord Jesus.

We have a third category, those who heard or learned from those in the second category. The third category, they didn't see Jesus, they didn't hear Jesus, but they heard or learned from those in the second category.

Man, I'm going to tell you something, that's where we heard. We heard from those guys. We heard in the books of the New Testament.

[17 : 42] We heard those guys. The Lord Jesus stands alone in the first category. category. He does not share that category with anyone. Paul's not a member of category one.

And none of us would expect him to be. How could he be? So the question is, where does Paul fit? He's either in category two or category three. There are no other categories.

And the question really can be reduced to this. Did Paul learn the message of Christ directly from the Lord himself?

Or did he learn it from those who heard it directly from Christ, thus placing him in category three? He heard it from the man who heard it from the Lord, in other words.

Well, Romans 4.3. What does the Scripture say? Do they say anything that can help us resolve this matter?

[18 : 48] And I think they do. I think the Scriptures have some Holy Spirit inspired words to help us with this question. And to find that help, we've got to look at Paul's writings, first chapter of a book he wrote to the churches in the region around Galatia.

So we depart from Hebrews, we depart from Romans, and we come to Galatia. Chapter 1.

For I would have you know, brothers, starting, I think, verse 11, for I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel was preached by me is not man's gospel.

for I did not receive it from any man. That's Paul. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it.

I think we can extend that out from any man. But I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently, and tried to destroy it.

[20 : 16] Again, I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people. So extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.

But when He who had set me apart before I was born and who called me by His grace was pleased to reveal His Son to me in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia.

Now, divorce your mind from Saudi Arabia. Okay? That's not Saudi Arabia. This is an area from Damascus to the Sinai. Nothing to do with Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, or any of that area.

I've been there. But I went away into Arabia and returned again to Damascus. Then, after three years, He's receiving instruction.

For three years, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, that's Peter, and remained with him for fifteen days.

[21 : 33] But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. In what I'm writing to you before God, I do not lie. Then, I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

They only were hearing it said he who once used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.

And they glorified God because of me. I mean, this is a guy that was killing Christians. He was on his way to Damascus to kill or arrest and bring back to Jerusalem to execute believers.

That is a powerful testimony of Paul as to where he received the message of the gospel. And of course, that first message came to him on the road to Damascus when he was blinded by a light.

And I think we used to always say he was knocked off his horse, and I'm not sure it says he was on a horse. But he was blinded, had to be led by hand into Damascus.

[22 : 57] he met there with the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus. First encounter. Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? Who are you Lord?

I'm Jesus whom you persecuted. Powerful testimony. One of the great commentaries, I'm going to get a little repetitious here, but it's worth it.

One of the great commentaries written on the New Testament is appropriately titled, it's a New Testament commentary, its title is the New Testament commentary.

I really like that. I've got a set. This great work was begun by Dr. William Hendrickson, born on November 18, 1900, until, are you ready?

Genderland. I had no clue where that was at. I had to look it up. It's the Netherlands. It's the Netherlands. He lived there until he was 11 years old, and then moved to Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1911.

[24 : 12] Dr. Hendrickson studied at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary, before obtaining a sacred theology degree from Pikes Peak Bible Seminary, later he received a doctorate of theology from Princeton Theological Seminary when that was a good place to attend.

It's not anymore. I tell people now, I'm a former FBI agent when that was a good thing, but not now. Dr. Hendrickson was an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church.

He served as professor of New Testament at Calvin Theological Seminary from 1942 to 1952. He started the New Testament commentary, and he completed commentaries in way more than half of the New Testament books.

But he died. He died. And he had a colleague who was equally brilliant, and the series was completed by his colleague Dr.

Simon Kistemacher, or Kistemacher. I found there's a website that will help you with these pronunciations. I found five websites and they had five pronunciations. So I'll call him Kistemacher.

[25 : 36] He took charge of the New Testament commentary after Dr. Hendrickson's death. Dr. Kistemacher, born April 21st, 1930, died September 23rd, 2017, not that long ago.

He was a New Testament scholar, served as professor of New Testament at Reform Theological Seminary. A good doctor also studied at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary.

He obtained his doctrine from the Free University in Amsterdam, Holland, the Netherlands. That's where Dr. Sproul got his and he served a term as president of the Evangelical Theological Society and he completed the New Testament commentary series that was commenced by Dr.

Hendrickson. Four of his volumes, Dr. Kistemacher's, won the Gold Medallion Evangelical Book of the Year Award, four of them, including his chapter on the epistle to the Hebrews.

By the way, it's a long chapter. Both of these men were brilliant scholars. Just brilliant. In discussing the authorship of the book of Hebrews, Dr.

[27 : 02] Kistemacher said this. Now, these are his words, not mine. The most significant point in considering whether Paul wrote the epistle to the Hebrews has to do with Hebrews 2.

3. I'm getting repetitious. The writer who includes himself in his warning to pay attention to the Word of God says, this salvation which was first announced by the Lord was confirmed to us by those who heard Jesus himself.

And in schematic form, according to Dr. Kistemacher, we have the following, the salvation or the gospel which was announced by the Lord by those who heard him and was confirmed in us.

Meaning, Dr. Henderson, Dr. Kistemacher, and all of us. back to Dr. Kistemacher. The conclusion may be drawn that the writer had not heard the Lord personally, but had to rely on reports of others. Paul, of course, states categorically that he did not receive the gospel from anyone but Jesus.

Galatians 1.12 Paul heard the voice of Jesus on the Damascus road.

[28 : 29] I would suggest in your notes if you want a copy, read about that in Acts 9.4, Acts 22.7, and Acts 26.14.

And Jesus spoke to him afterward in Acts 18.9-10, and verse 22, and, I'm sorry, Acts 18.9-10, and Acts 22.18-21.

Now, Dr. Kistemacher says, therefore, Paul could not have written the words of Hebrews 2.3, because he says there, I learned it from the guys who learned it from Jesus.

Thus endeth the quote from Dr. Kistemacher. We'll return to him, but I won't use his name, and I'll take credit for it. So, we're drawing close to our second lesson tonight.

This is our second lesson entitled Part 2. Let me say this in parting. Whether Paul wrote Hebrews, or one of the people I listed earlier, or someone unknown to history, when you get down to it, it doesn't matter.

[29 : 45] If we ascribe this book or the epistle to the Hebrews, to the Holy Spirit, is this book, was this book breathed out onto the sacred page?

I believe it was. And I believe you believe it was, all of you. 2 Timothy 3.16, all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

I read one time that there wasn't a word in Greek for breathed out by God, so Paul came, invented one, theoponoustos. God breathed.

He breathed the word onto the sacred page. Now, next week we're going to have our third and final lesson in the category of introduction.

I call it introduction part three. This lesson today I think was important, it's fun, not vital to our understanding of Scripture.

[31 : 08] next week's lesson is going to be very vital, very important for all of us.

And it'll help us after next week's lesson as we move into sacred Scriptures that make up the epistle to the Hebrews.

It'll help us immensely because we're going to have to, as we journey through this epistle, there's many times we're going to have to pause and we're going to have to ask a question, maybe verbally even, but we're going to have to ask a question, to whom is the Holy Spirit addressing this?

And there's been much confusion, particularly in what I would call the modern church over who's the Holy Spirit talking to here. One whole wing of the church believes most firmly, and they're good guys, I work around them at VOM, they're good guys, but they believe vehemently that you can lose your salvation once legitimately obtained through the grace of God through Christ.

and they base that on passages in Hebrews. Did God say that? What do the Scriptures say? We'll get there in a couple of Decembers.

[32 : 46] We're going to cover that. But next week's lesson, I mean, if you're about to drop out because I'm getting repetitive and redundant, don't do it. Next week's going to be really important to us.

And we'll look at this question of who's being addressed in this church of Hebrews. That's what this is.

This was a church of Hebrews. We'll even talk about that. And I've told you before, and I'll say this many times, in many respects, this book, which along with the Romans, by the way, is two of my favorite, my two favorite in the New Testament, this book is really, in many respects, a commentary on the book of Leviticus where we come face to face with God's high priest.

And that's what we come face to face with in this book too, God's high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, with that, we're going to have a word of prayer, and be dismissed.

Father, thank you for your day that you've given us here, and the day we can learn and study, and Lord, open our eyes, open our ears, open our heart to truth, and Lord, you're the ultimate source of truth.

[34 : 12] We need to base all biblical truth on your word, and what you say, and what you tell us, and may we interpret correctly. I'm including myself in that, most of all.

Lord, be with these men. I love them. Bring them back safely. We ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen.