

SEED & BREAD

Otis Q. Sellers, Founder

from Scripture is Silas. He was the one chosen to replace Barnabas as Paul's co-worker. He is closely connected with Paul in his ministry to Philippi just before Thessalonica. Though he is not mentioned in the historical record that the book of Acts gives of Paul in Thessalonica, Silas must have been working closely with Paul at that time, as well as Timothy. He is connected with Paul and Timothy in the writing of both I and II Thessalonians, as can be seen from the first verse of both of those books. Silas and Timothy both remained in Berea when Paul went away to Athens, according to Acts 17:14. They did not rejoin him until he was in Corinth in Acts 18:5, so they would have had time to visit Thessalonica while separated from Paul, as the author of Hebrews seems to have done. Silas certainly could have returned to Thessalonica before he wrote the book of Hebrews and was put in chains, as the author of Hebrews suggests happened to him in Hebrews 10:34. Then, once he was freed, he could have left them for another city of Macedonia like Berea, and then could have planned to rejoin them, hopefully with Timothy, as the author of Hebrews conveys in Hebrews 13:23.

Silas is described as a "leading man among the brethren" in Judea in Acts 15:22, and he and Judas Barsabas are clearly given much respect by the apostles and elders. As one who commanded such respect, it would make sense that Silas would be qualified to write a book like Hebrews just as much as Paul or Apollos would have been. Paul claims of himself and Silas in Acts 16:37, "**They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans.**" Silas, therefore, appears to have been a Roman citizen like Paul, and as such, would have been connected to people from Italy, just as Paul was. This would explain his connection to those from Italy in his greeting to the Hebrews. Silas probably believed after hearing the Word from those who heard Christ and upon seeing the accompanying signs, as the author of Hebrews says he did in Hebrews 2:3-4, a fact that practically eliminates Paul as the possible author.

What facts might there be which argue against Silas' authorship of Hebrews? Only one: ancient tradition, which assigns the book to Paul. This and the fact that few (if any) others suggest Silas as the author. Yet unpopularity does not prove this hypothesis is incorrect. So, we would conclude that, other than Christian tradition, there is no reason not to suppose Silas was the human author of the book of Hebrews. If we are correct that it was written to Thessalonica, then there is every reason to suppose Silas was the author. Therefore, we conclude that Silas was the most likely writer of the book of Hebrews.

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Who Wrote Hebrews?

By Nathan C. Johnson

In *MSB343 Who Were the Hebrews*, we considered the identity of those to whom the book of Hebrews was written. After examining all the evidence, we concluded that the most likely audience was the Jewish believers in the city of Thessalonica, since this location fits all the facts we find in the book of Hebrews, and no other major city Paul visited does. Yet, the identity of the audience of Hebrews is not the only mystery surrounding the book. Also unknown is the author of Hebrews, since he never identifies himself. Following the same method we used in the previous study, collecting all the evidence we can find and seeing who fits it best, we will attempt to determine the most likely author of Hebrews.

Working with the assumption that Hebrews was written to Thessalonica greatly helps us, because we know who is connected with that city and who is not. The first and most obvious answer is Paul. This is the most popular idea, and it is held by most who hold with the Acts 28:28 dispensational dividing line. This was the belief of Mr. Otis Q. Sellers, our founder at The Word of Truth, as well. What facts would support this idea?

First of all, we would note that the style of writing found in the book of Hebrews is similar to the way Paul writes. For example, consider Hebrews 12:1 (*New King James Version* throughout). **Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.** Compare this with I Corinthians 9:24. **Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.** The author of Hebrews uses a very similar illustration to the one Paul uses of the Christian life as a race. This gives some indication that Paul may be the author of the book of Hebrews.

Consider next that the author of Hebrews uses Paul's typical closing statement in Hebrews 13:25, **Grace be with you all. Amen.** Compare this to Romans 16:24 and the final verse of every other one of Paul's books, and you will see that Paul closes all his letters with grace. None of the other general epistles do, however. Only John in Revelation 22:21 closes with grace, and Revelation is not strictly an epistle like the others. Therefore, if Paul wrote Hebrews, it was only

he who closed his letters with grace. This would lead to the idea that perhaps it was Paul writing Hebrews and closing in his usual way.

Another argument significant to those of us who hold with the Acts 28:28 dispensational dividing line is that, if Hebrews is a book of Paul, then Paul wrote fourteen books, with seven before and seven after the dispensational change. If Paul did not write Hebrews, however, the division is not even, with six before the change and seven after. Fourteen, or seven times two, is a characteristic number that God would often use, whereas thirteen is not.

Finally, in Hebrews 13:24, we read: **Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints. Those from Italy greet you.** This statement indicates that the author is connected to those in Italy. It is almost certain that Paul did not write Hebrews from Italy, but being a Roman citizen, he would be connected to them in a way few others would be. It would make sense that some of his fellow Roman citizens would be with Paul, and therefore that he would greet the Hebrews from them.

These are the facts favoring Paul's authorship of the book of Hebrews. What facts, however, might support an argument against Paul's having written the book? The first is the most obvious: the way the book begins. Hebrews 1:1 starts with the name of God, and no author of the book is listed. While this is common enough with some other Bible authors, consider the first verse of every one of Paul's thirteen other books. Every single one of them starts with his own name, Paul. If this is a book by Paul, why did he break his pattern and not start the book of Hebrews with his name?

Bullinger suggests that Paul left his name off this book because he had a bad reputation among the intellectual Hebrews he was trying to reach, since he had switched sides to follow Christ. Yet Bullinger thought of Hebrews as a general letter to all Hebrews. If we accept the evidence that the Hebrews were the Thessalonians, then this excuse does not make sense. Paul signs his name to his other two letters to the same audience, I and II Thessalonians. This fact, then, that Paul's pattern is significantly not followed, cannot be easily discounted.

Secondly, consider Hebrews 2:3-4. **...how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?** The author of Hebrews identifies himself with those who began to hear of salvation from the Lord, and then had it confirmed to him by those who heard Him, with the accompanying signs. This is how believers typically came to Christ in the Acts period. However, this is not how Paul came to Christ. He believed in Christ only after seeing Him personally in a vision on the Damascus road. Thus, this statement does not fit Paul at all. In fact, we can hardly imagine Paul speaking as does the author of Hebrews in Hebrews 2:3-4. This is strong evidence against Paul being the author of this book.

Finally, in Hebrews 13:23, we read: **Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly.** From this verse, we learn that the author expects to see the Thessalonians shortly, with or without Timothy, depending on how fast Timothy comes. However, Paul did not return to the Thessalonians prior to writing his first letter to them, which appears to be later than Hebrews. Instead, he received his report of their faith from Timothy. If we are correct that the Hebrews are the Thessalonians, then this fact does not fit Paul as the author either.

So, the evidence against Paul as the author of Hebrews appears to be stronger than the evidence for his authorship. The similar style of Hebrews to Paul's style can easily be explained if its author was one of his co-workers and closest confidants. The typical closing statement of Paul can be explained the same way. As for only six books counted before the dividing line, Hebrews is connected with Paul even if he is not the author. None of the other "general epistles" were written by anyone connected to Paul, as the book of Hebrews was. The absence of Paul's typical intro is a problem not easily discounted. Also the fact that Paul did not go back to the Thessalonians with Timothy is important. In addition, the author seems to have come to Christ in the typical Acts-period way and not as Paul did. This evidence seems conclusive; Paul was not the author of the book of Hebrews.

Having established that Paul was not the author of Hebrews, who else might it have been? Many who do not think it was Paul suggest Apollos. This idea is based on the facts that he was both connected with Paul and very knowledgeable in the Scriptures (Acts 18:24-25), and so would have been qualified to write such a learned book as Hebrews. Against this idea, however, is the fact that Apollos is connected only with the locations of Ephesus, Corinth, and Crete. If Apollos wrote Hebrews, we would expect the book to be addressed to a city he was connected with in other epistles. Yet we have already deduced that none of these cities fit the criteria for the audience of Hebrews like Thessalonica does. We would conclude, taking Thessalonica as the audience, that the author of Hebrews was not Apollos.

Barnabas is another suggestion. However, he is never connected with Thessalonica any more than Apollos is. Besides, he had already left Paul by the time Paul went there. Barnabas does not seem to fit as the author either.

Timothy was a close confidant of Paul and was associated with him during his ministry to Thessalonica. In fact, he is listed in both I and II Thessalonians as a co-author with Paul. However, the author mentions Timothy in Hebrews, making it clear that Timothy was a different person from himself. Therefore, we must conclude that Timothy did not write Hebrews.

Who is left, then, who was closely connected with both Paul and Thessalonica? The only possibility remaining of those we know about