

Orienting Data For Hebrews

From "How To Read The Bible Book By Book"

Content: a "word of exhortation" (13:22) sent in letter form, encouraging faithful perseverance in light of the superlative final word God has spoken in Christ

Author: unknown; a second-generation believer (2:3), who was a skilled preacher and interpreter of Scripture, with an excellent command of Greek (it came into the canon among Paul's letters but definitely not by him)

Date: unknown; guesses range from A.D. 50 to 90; probably before 70 (since the author gives no hint that the Jewish temple has been destroyed)

Recipients: an unknown but specific group of (predominately) Jewish Christians; perhaps a house church in Rome (13:24) that is opting out of relationships with the larger Christian community (10:25; 13:7, 17)

Occasion: the community is discouraged because of suffering (10:35-39) and perhaps form doubts about whether Jesus really took care of sin; the author writes to convince them to "not throw away your confidence" (10:35; cf. 2:1; 4:14)

Emphases: God has spoken his absolutely final word in his Son; to abandon Christ is to abandon God altogether; Christ is superior to everything that went before – the old revelation, its angelic mediators, the first exodus (Moses and Joshua), and the whole priestly system; God's people can have full confidence in God's Son, the perfect high priest, who gives all people ready access to God