

# **Introduction to the Book of Hebrews**

**Michael Colburn**

# Objectives of the Class

- To behold in our hearts the glory of Christ
- To participate more deeply in life in the Spirit
- To become more conformed to His likeness
- To pray for and encourage one another

# Format of the Class

1. In-Depth Study of the current passage (30 minutes)
2. Questions and Answers (15 mins)
3. Sharing of how we are doing (10 mins)
4. Prayer for one another (5 mins)

# Resources for the Class

1. <https://theColburns.us>
2. Click on "Classes", then "Hebrews Bible Study"
3. Youtube Video available next day. *Note: Q&A and prayer requests are not placed on Youtube.*
4. Fr. Lawrence Farley. 2013. The Epistle to the Hebrews.
5. Orthodox Study Bible (NKJV for NT)



# Prayer Before Reading Scripture

Shine within our hearts, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge and open the eyes of our minds that we may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments, so that having conquered all sinful desires, we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the light of our souls and bodies, and to You we give glory together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all holy, good, and life giving Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

# Purpose

- To "exhort" (encourage) the readers to remain faithful to Christ
  - "I appeal to you, brethren, bear with my word of exhortation...." (Heb. 13.22a)
- Alternating discourse, exhortation

# Purpose

- **1.1-4 Intro (Final revelation through God's Son)**
- **1.5-14 Discourse (Christ superior to angels because He is God)**
- **2.1-4 Exhortation (Call to not drift away from the faith)**

\*outline adapted from Hagner, 2002/2013

# Purpose

- **2.5-3.6 Discourse (Christ superior to angels and Moses)**
- **3:7-19 Exhortation (Call to not harden their hearts)**

# Purpose

- **4:1-13 Discourse (the promise of rest)**
- **4:14-16 Exhortation (Hold fast, draw near)**
- **5:1-10 Discourse (High priesthood of Christ)**
- **5:11-6:12 Exhortation (maturity, seriousness of apostasy)**

# Purpose

- **6:13-10:18 Discourse (Superiority of Christ's Priesthood)**
- **10:19-39 Exhortation (be faithful, danger of apostasy, call to endure)**
- **11:1-40 Discourse (examples of faithful men and women)**
- **12:1-17 Exhortation (call to faithfulness, endurance, holiness)**

# Purpose

- **12:18-24 Discourse (the glory of our status)**
- **12:25-13:17 Exhortation (don't reject the One warning us from Heaven, offer acceptable worship, walk in love and holiness)**
- **13:18-25 Closing**

# Date: Earliest Known Citation



- **1 Clement (Letter to the Corinthians)**
- **Quotes Hebrews Two Times**
- **Conclusion: Hebrews written before 96 AD**

**Clement of Rome +99**



# Date: Internal Evidence



- After persecution of Jews by Claudius (49 AD)

- Before destruction of Jewish temple (70 AD)



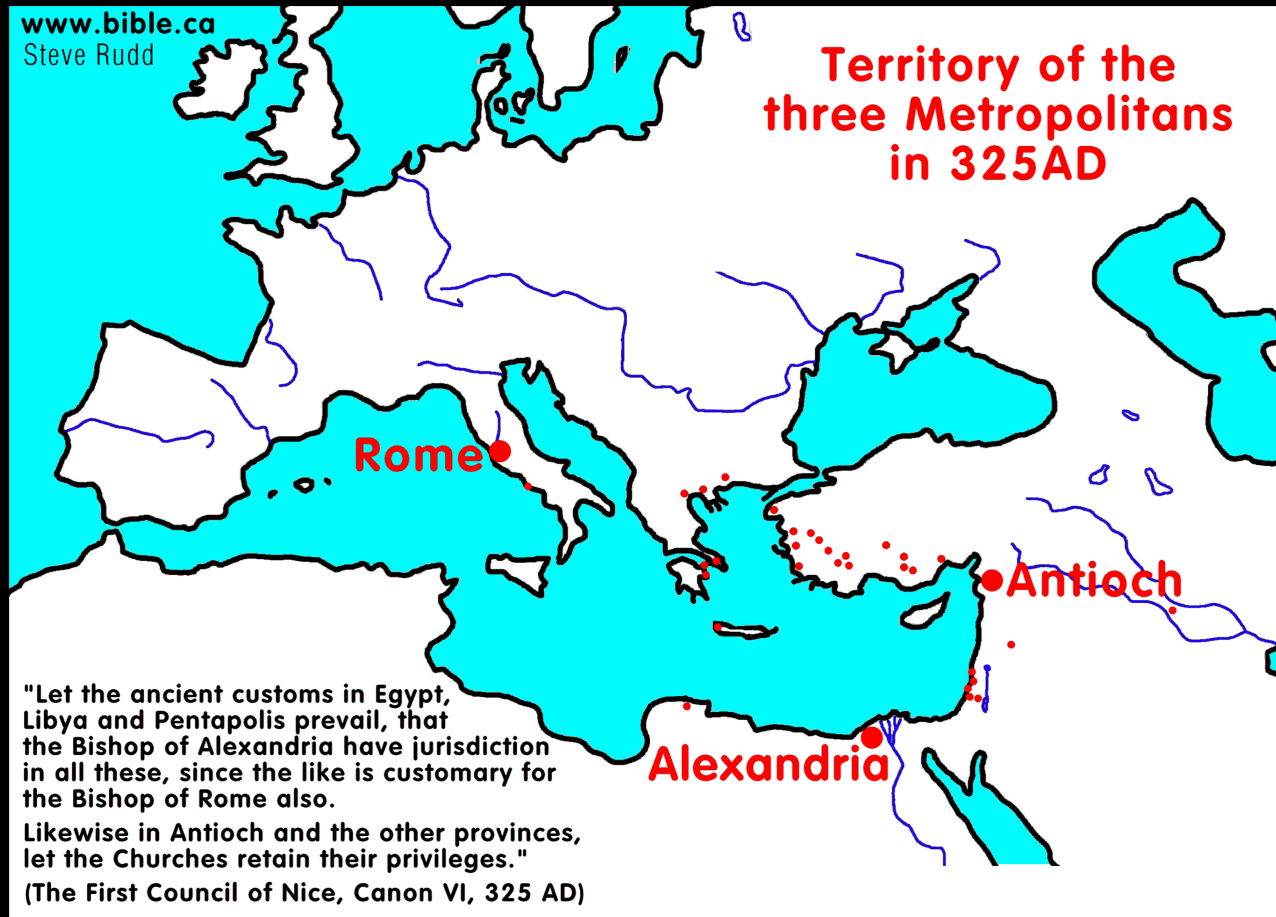
# Genre

- **Hebrews does not open like a letter (epistle)...**
  - "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." (Heb 1:1-2)
- **But, Hebrews closes like a letter...**
  - "I appeal to you, brethren, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly." (Heb. 13.22)
  - "Greet all your leaders and all the saints." (Heb 13:24)
  - "Grace be with all of you. Amen." (Heb 13.25)

# Audience

- **"To Hebrews" (Papyrus 46, 175-225 AD)**
- **Internal Evidence**
  - **"Those from Italy greet you." (Heb. 13.24b)**
  - **"...you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven." (Heb. 10.34)**
  - **"Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly." (Heb. 13.23)**

# The First Metropolitans



# The First Patriarchates

www.bible.ca  
Steve Rudd

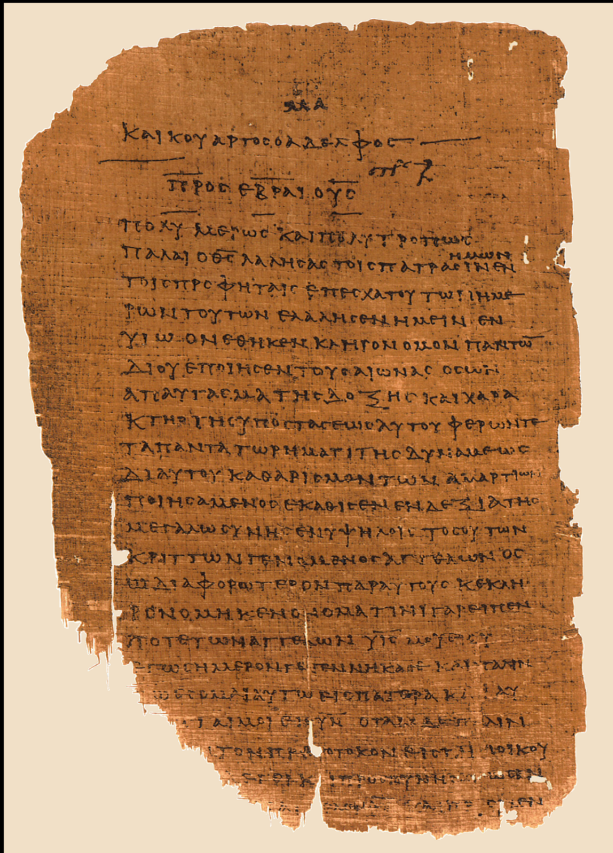
**Territory of the  
Five Patriarchs  
in 381 AD**



The Bishop of Constantinople, however, shall have the prerogative of honour after the Bishop of Rome; because Constantinople is New Rome."

(The Second Ecumenical Council, Constantinople, Canon III, 381 AD)

# Authorship: Earliest Known Manuscript

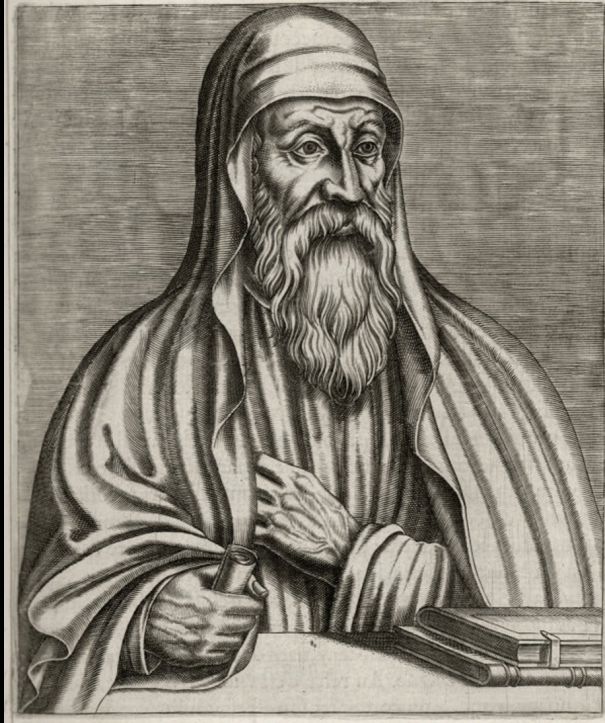


- **P46: earliest known manuscript containing the writings of St Paul**
- **Romans to 2 Thessalonians**
- **Hebrews placed after Romans**
- **Conclusion: the scribe considered Hebrews to be written by St Paul**

**Papyrus 46 c. 175–225**



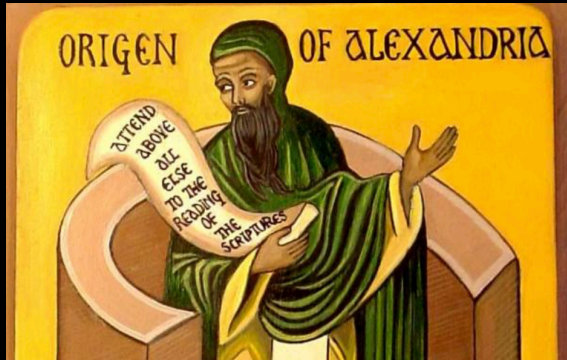
# Authorship



- **An elder (probably his teacher Pantaenus) claimed St Paul wrote Hebrews**
- **Suggested that St Paul wrote it in Hebrew and Luke translated it**

**Clement of Alexandria +215**

# Authorship



Origen of Alexandria +253  
(Quoted by Eusebius +340)

- "If I may state my opinion, I should say that the thoughts are the apostle's, but that the style and composition are the work of someone who called to mind the apostle's teaching."
- "If any church, then, regards this epistle as Paul's, let it be commended on this score; for it was not for nothing that the men of old have handed it down to us as Paul's. But as to who actually wrote the epistle, God knows the truth of the matter."



# Authorship: St Paul?



- Assumes author is St Paul
- Defends St Paul's authorship

John Chrysostom + 407

# St. Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles



## St. Paul's Trip to Jerusalem (Acts 21.18ff)

- **"“You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed; they are all zealous for the law, and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs.**

## St. Paul's Trip to Jerusalem (Acts 21.18ff)

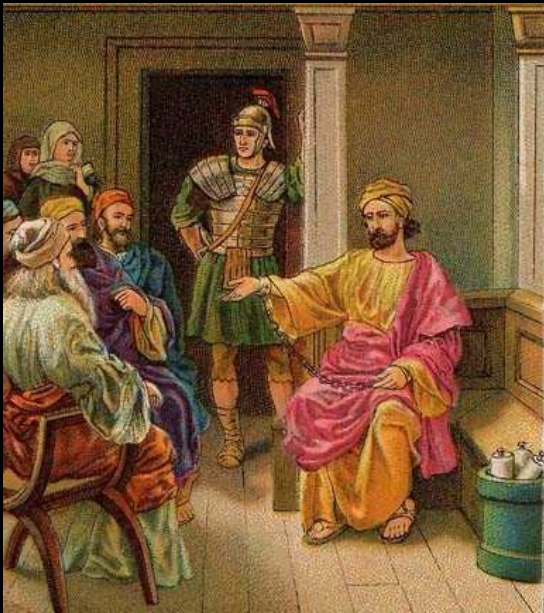
- **What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you but that you yourself live in observance of the law."**

# St. Paul's First Imprisonment in Rome



- “We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brethren coming here has reported or spoken any evil about you. But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”

# St. Paul's First Imprisonment in Rome



- When they had appointed a day for him, they came to him at his lodging in great numbers. And he expounded the matter to them from morning till evening, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets.

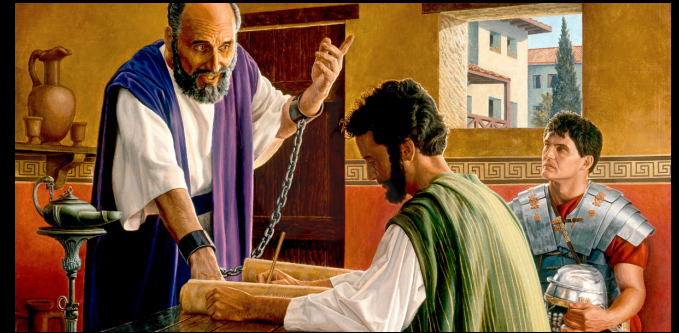


# Authorship: St Paul?



John Chrysostom + 407

- **St Paul**
  - **Wrote Hebrews from Rome**
  - **to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem**
  - **to encourage them.**



# Authorship by St. Paul?

- **For**
  - **Eastern Church believed it was St Paul**
  - **Claimed by the teacher of Clement of Alexandria**
  - **Timothy was an associate of the author**
  - **Earliest extant manuscript of Paul's letters places it after Romans.**
- **Against**
  - **Name does not appear in book**
  - **Not an eyewitness of Christ (Heb. 2.3)**
  - **Best Greek in New Testament, better than Paul's other letters**



# Summary

- **Author:** probably a very well educated Hellenistic Jew, possibly an associate of the Apostle Paul, but not an eye-witness of Christ. Educated in both Greek rhetoric and Jewish methods of exegesis. Probably written from Rome.
- **Date:** after (49 AD persecution by Claudius) and before 70 AD (destruction of Jerusalem)
- **Audience:** Hellenistic Jewish Christians who were tempted to abandon Christianity and go back to Judaism.
- **Purpose:** to encourage the audience to remain faithful to Christ.

**Questions?**  
**Comments?**