



SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS AND THE APOSTLE PAUL’S EPISTLES

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Many similarities exist between the book of Hebrews and Paul’s Epistles with more than sixty being identified during the research for this article. Here we can present only a handful, placing them into two main categories: **Substance** (theme, proposition, or passage cited) and **Style** (the author’s way of “putting things”).



One overall observation is that the theme of Hebrews aligns significantly with the theme of Paul’s epistles to the Romans and Galatians. All three books address—to varying degrees—the insufficiency of the Law for salvation, the supremacy of Christ and the need for the gospel, and the righteousness that comes by faith. A number of the similarities between Hebrews and Paul’s epistles relate to these themes, but there are also others.

Substance

In **Hebrews 8:4-5**, the author says, “...there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things...” Parallel to this verse, Paul writes concerning various elements of the old covenant Law, “which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (**Colossians 2:17**).

Additionally, in **Hebrews 8:8-12**, the author quotes **Jeremiah 31:31-34**: “...I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” Paul appears to truncate the same passage in **Romans 11:27**: “For this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.”

As well, the author of Hebrews employs the metaphors of milk and meat—pertaining to spiritual growth—the same way as Paul in 1 Corinthians: “...you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full

age...” (**Hebrews 5:12-14**) “I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it...” (**1 Corinthians 3:2**).

Finally, a direct quotation from Habakkuk, “the just shall live by faith” (**2:4**), appears three times in the New Testament: **Romans 1:17**, **Galatians 3:11**, and **Hebrews 10:38**.

Style

In his writing, Paul frequently describes the Christian life as a “race.” For example, he exhorts the Corinthians, “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” (**1 Corinthians 9:24**).

To Timothy he writes, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (**2 Timothy 4:7**). Similarly, the author of Hebrews urges, “...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (**12:1**).

On an almost humorous note, the author of Hebrews depicts the patriarch Abraham as being “as good as dead” in his old age (**Hebrews 11:12**). Likewise, Paul says in **Romans 4:19**, “... [Abraham] did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old)...”

Furthermore, we observe in the book of Hebrews the use of the phrase “the God of peace”: “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead...” (**Hebrews 13:20**). This particular phrase appears in several of Paul’s epistles as well, and in no others: “Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen” (**Romans 15:3**; see also **16:20**), “...the God of peace will be with you” (**Philippians 4:9**), and “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely...” (**1 Thessalonians 5:23**).

Finally, the author of Hebrews concludes his letter with the following benediction: “Grace be with you all. Amen” (**Hebrews 13:25**). Every epistle of Paul ends with a similar benediction of “grace.” The only other New Testament book to end in this same manner is the book of Revelation.

Regardless of our view of Hebrews’ authorship, surely through these and many other similarities of Substance and Style, we

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can see a strong correlation between the book of Hebrews and Paul's epistles. Of course, all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable (2 Timothy 3:16-17); thus, all of it is important. Ultimately, God is the True Author!

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS AND THE PAULINE EPISTLES

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While scholars and Bible students alike have written much about the authorship of the book of Hebrews down through the centuries, the absolute identity was withheld by the Holy Spirit. Historically, many have attributed the book to the Apostle Paul. Others, however, have suggested different authors.



The argument for Pauline authorship is often bolstered by comparing similarities in both content and writing style between what is written in Hebrews and what is written in Paul's epistles. These similarities are substantial, and they should not be ignored; however, there are several differences between Hebrews and Paul's epistles, and these differences must be considered in all discussions of authorship.

The purpose of this article is to identify some—though not all—of the differences that exist between the book of Hebrews and Paul's epistles. Please note that the aim of this work is *not* found in arguing for or against a particular author for the book, be it Paul or anyone else. The purpose is to present points that one should consider in such a pursuit.

The first key difference appears at the beginning of Hebrews—that is, in the introduction of the writer. In his epistles, Paul takes time to introduce himself to his readers. From the book of Romans through Philemon, Paul begins his epistles in this same manner. Hebrews, however, does not begin with the familiar introduction that is unique to Paul's letters: "*Paul, an apostle of Christ.*" In fact, nowhere in Hebrews is Paul identified as the author. This omission certainly distinguishes Hebrews from Paul's epistles, but it is not a sufficiently decisive argument against Pauline authorship; instead, it is merely a noteworthy difference.

Second, the book of Hebrews does not contain frequent references to Jesus that are typical of Pauline authorship (with a few exceptions—2:3; 3:1; 10:10; 13:8, 21). In his epistles, Paul frequently uses terms such as "*Jesus Christ,*"

"*our Lord Jesus Christ,*" and similar titles. These expressions are found more than 600 times in Paul's epistles; yet they are far less common in the book of Hebrews (King 25). This difference in writing style is a noteworthy and compelling difference between Hebrews and the Pauline epistles.

There are other differences in writing style between Hebrews and Paul's epistles that bear discussion. First, Christ's priesthood is a foundational topic for the Hebrew writer. The superiority of Christ and His priesthood garners much attention in Hebrews as the writer often demonstrates a rich understanding of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah and His priesthood (for example, the exposition of Psalm 110 and the Genesis story of Melchizedek found in the argumentation of Hebrews 7). Of course, Paul had a rich and undeniable knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures and prophecies; however, Christ's priesthood is not a topic that is fleshed out in any of the Pauline epistles. Thus, this point deserves attention as a key difference between Hebrews and the Pauline epistles.

The final difference for this discussion is seen in the Old Testament references found in Hebrews and in Paul's epistles. When referencing the Old Testament, the Hebrew writer primarily uses the Septuagint (with the possible exception of 10:30 where he employs the same Greek text found in Romans 12:19). Paul, however, typically uses both the Hebrew and the Septuagint translations of the Old Testament in his writings (King 23). Some authors have offered this point as not only a difference between the book of Hebrews and the Pauline epistles but also as a convincing argument against Pauline authorship. As with other arguments previously mentioned, this argument should be used carefully when discussing the true authorship of Hebrews.

In summary, there are many similarities between the book of Hebrews and the Pauline epistles. These similarities have driven many to identify Paul as the writer; however, there are also differences that must be considered. This article explores only a handful of differences, and these pieces of evidence should be weighed carefully during discussions regarding the identity of the Hebrew writer. Nonetheless, may God bless all those who carefully study the book of Hebrews, the Pauline epistles, and all the other teachings found in His Holy word!

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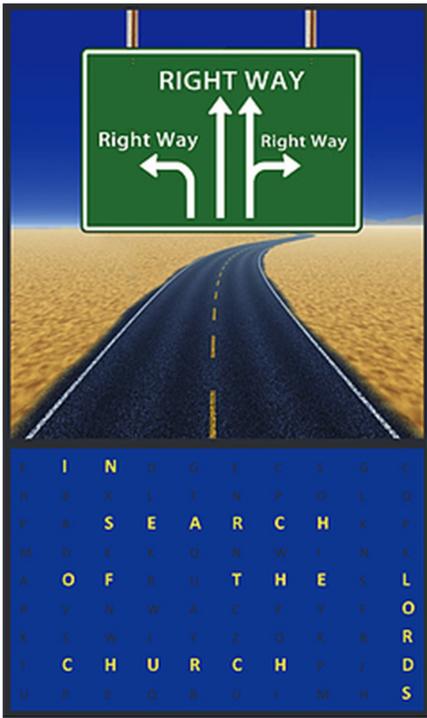
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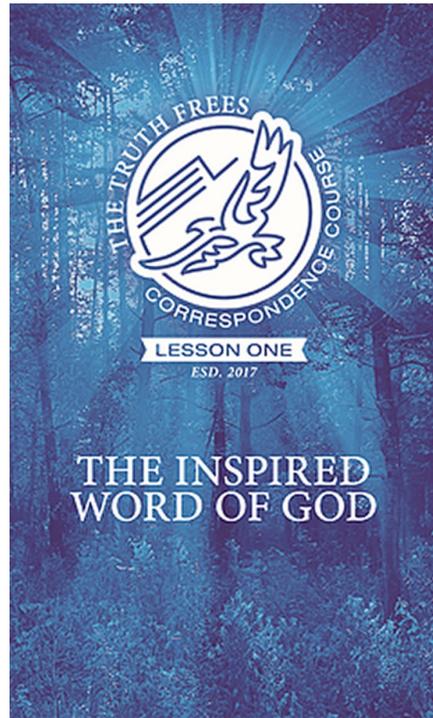
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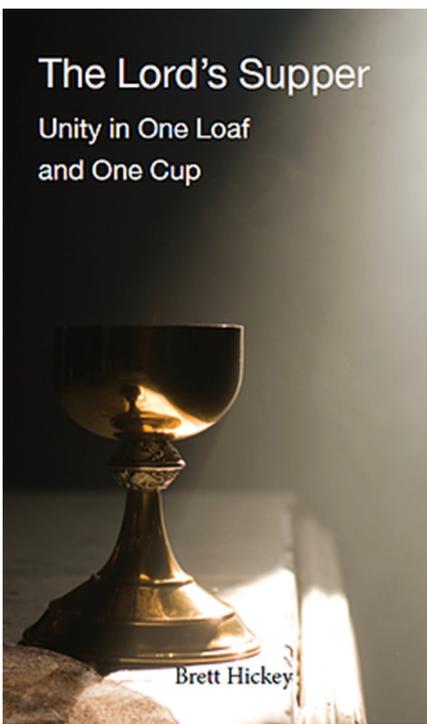
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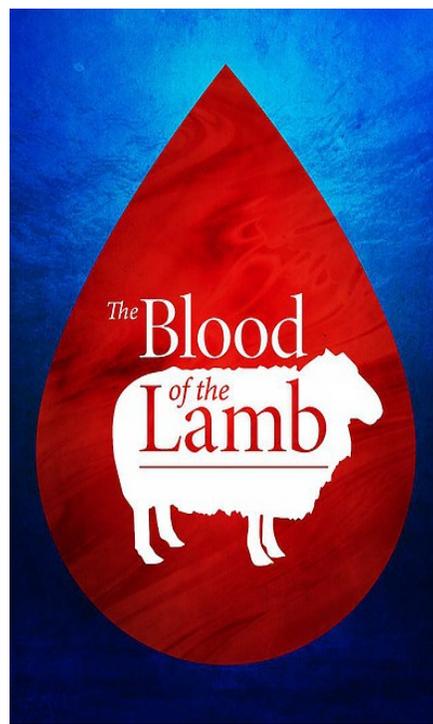
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