Live your life with nothing to prove, nothing to lose, & nothing to hide.
Author unknown
Quote from Phillips, Craig, & Dean

Prayer Study #511
THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS
CHAPTER ONE
First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, GA USA

Sources:
The Amplified Bible
Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee by J. Vernon McGee
The Letter to the Hebrews by William Barclay
Exploring Hebrews by John Phillips
The Expositor's Study Bible: Jimmy Swaggart Edition
The Open Bible

Who wrote this epistle? No one knows
Suggestions: Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Clement, Paul, Priscilla wife of Aquilla
I personally believe that Paul wrote this epistle. The vocabulary, language and style of Hebrews is very unlike that of the other Pauline epistles. He was, however, writing to a Jewish audience and not to a Gentile one as he was in the other letters he wrote. He had studied under Gamaliel and knew well Jewish opinion and thought. A reference from 2nd Peter 3:15 most likely is referring to a Pauline epistle to the Hebrews. Furthermore, the inclusion of information about Timothy in the last chapter points to Paul being the author. Perhaps Paul did not sign this letter to the Hebrews because he knew the Jews were suspicious of him and would not read the letter objectively.

However, when the Church fathers were trying to canonize scripture, they adhered to a rule that the book must have been written by an apostle or at least by someone in direct contact with an apostle to be included as holy scripture. Because the people loved the book of Hebrews so much, they felt it must go into the New Testament. The only way to insure this was to say the book had been written by Paul. Most of them did not really believe this, but they wanted the book in the Bible.

Theme of Hebrews

Barclay tells us that, if the writer of Hebrews whomever he was, had one text, it was: *Let us draw near*. He says that the Hebrew writer found in Jesus Christ the one person who could take him into the very presence of God. This whole idea is summarized in Hebrews 10:19-22:

Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opend for us through the curtain (that is through his flesh)…let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith.

In His humanity, Jesus takes us to God, and in His Godhead, He can take God to us. Barclay writes, "The perfect sacrifice he brings is the sacrifice of himself, a sacrifice so perfect that it never needs to be made again.

When was it written?

Hebrews is called the riddle of the New Testament. Who wrote it, to whom was it written, and when it was written are all mysteries. Hebrews was not in the list (or even mentioned) of the first list of New Testament books compiled around AD 170. It was not canonized until the 4th century, and even as late as the Reformation, it was disputed by some. Martin Luther, for example, was not too sure about it.

There are many clues in the text that help us narrow down the time of the writing of Hebrews. The greatest help in dating the book are the references to persecution. From these references we learn that the leaders of the early Christian Church had already gone through tremendous persecution, but were not being persecuted directly during this time period, although they were unpopular. The book indicates a persecution to come. There were two great persecutions of the early Church. The first was in the time of Nero in the year AD 64. The second was in the time of Domitian around AD 85. This book, therefore, was written between AD 64 and AD 85, most probably nearer the time of the second persecution, perhaps around AD 80.

To whom was it written?

The letter was written to a long-established church (Hebrews 5:12), which in the past had suffered persecution (Hebrews 10:32-34). This church had not been directly founded by the apostles (Hebrews 12:3), and the church was known for its generosity (Hebrews 6:10). In the closing the author writes: *Those who come from Italy send you greetings* (Hebrews 13:24). That could mean it was written from Italy or to Italy. Mostly likely it was written, not to the entire Roman Church, but to a small group of scholarly believers in Rome.

Hebrews 1Amplified Bible (AMP)

God’s Final Word in His Son

CHRIST IS SUPERIOR TO THE PROPHETS

1 *God, having spoken to the fathers long ago in [the voices and writings of] the prophets in many separate revelations [each of which set forth a portion of the truth], and in many ways,* ***2*** *has in these last days spoken [with finality] to us in [the person of One who is by His character and nature] His Son [namely Jesus], whom He appointed heir and lawful owner of all things, through whom also He created the universe [that is, the universe as a space-time-matter continuum].* ***3*** *The Son is the radiance and only expression of the glory of [our awesome] God [reflecting God’s Shekinah glory, the Light-being, the brilliant light of the divine], and the exact representation and perfect imprint of His [Father’s] essence, and upholding and maintaining and propelling all things [the entire physical and spiritual universe] by His powerful word [carrying the universe along to its predetermined goal]. When He [Himself and no other] had [by offering Himself on the cross as a sacrifice for sin] accomplished purification from sins and established our freedom from guilt, He sat down [revealing His completed work] at the*

right hand of the Majesty on high [revealing His Divine authority],

While many of the epistles begin with the author's name, this letter begins with God. The Bible makes no effort to prove the existence of God. In fact, it says that those who say there is no God are fools (Psalm 14:1 & 53:1). This Only True God used spokesmen called prophets to communicate to man, but He had so much more to say so He sent His Son Jesus to relay His heart, His mind, and His will.

These last days are the Church Age or the Age of Grace. God the Father has spoken to us through Jesus. In fact, J. Vernon McGee says, "…we have the last word from God to this world in Jesus Christ. He fulfills all of the Old Testament, and He Himself gives God's final word to man.

Next Jesus is described in six statements: 1) He is creator and the heir of all things. 2) He is God's glory, which tells us that God does not get glory out of crushing men and women but by serving them and loving them and in the end dying for them. 3) He is the image of God. In fact, we would know very little about God apart from the revelation He has given of Himself in His Son. 4) He upholds all things by His Word. Just as He created all things by

His Word, He holds everything together by His Word. 5) He purged us from sins by shedding His blood on Calvary. Those who come to Jesus receive complete forgiveness of sin. 6) The Finished Work of Jesus allows Him to sit down on the right hand of the Father. There is nothing more that He needs to do.

ABOVE THE ANGELS

4 *having become as much superior to angels, since He has inherited a more excellent and glorious name than they [that is, Son—the name above all names].*
5 *For to which of the angels did the Father ever say,*
"You are My Son,
Today I have begotten (fathered) You [established You as a Son, with kingly dignity]"?
And again [did He ever say to the angels],
"I shall be a Father to Him
And He shall be a Son to Me"?
6 *And when He again brings the firstborn [highest-ranking Son] into the world, He says,*
"And all the angels of God are to worship Him."
7 *And concerning the angels He says,*
"Who makes His angels winds,

And His ministering servants flames of fire [to do His bidding].”
8 *But about the Son [the Father says to Him],*
“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,
And the scepter of [absolute] righteousness is the scepter of His kingdom.
9 *“You have loved righteousness [integrity, virtue, uprightness in purpose] and have hated lawlessness [injustice, sin].*
Therefore God, Your God, Has anointed You
With the oil of gladness above Your companions.”
10 *And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the works of Your hands;*
11 *They will perish, but You remain [forever and ever];*
And they will all wear out like a garment,
12 *And like a robe You will roll them up;*
Like a garment they will be changed.
But You are the same [forever],
And Your years will never end.”
13 *But to which of the angels has the Father ever said,*
“Sit at My right hand [together with me in royal dignity],
Until I make your enemies
A footstool for your feet [in triumphant conquest]”?

14 *Are not all the angels ministering spirits sent out [by God] to serve (accompany, protect) those who will inherit salvation? [Of course they are!]*

JESUS as a man was superior to the angels. An angel could not have died for our sins. Only God could have paid that sacrifice legally. He was God, not an angel and not just a Son. He, as a man, obtained a more excellent Name than the angels because of what He did on the Cross. Furthermore, God the Father never said to an angel, "You are My Son" (Psalm 2:7). When God the Father orchestrated for Jesus to be born on earth to the Virgin Mary, He said, "Let the angels of God worship Him." The idea is that only deity can be worshiped.

In verse 7 the writer of Hebrews is saying that the angels travel like the wind and are ministers sent from God to do His will. Verses 8 and 9 emphasizes that Jesus, having a throne and a scepter, has dominion, even over angels, and is completely and absolutely righteous. This passage is taken from the Messianic Psalm 45. This passage makes it perfectly clear that Jesus is God, not just the Son of God, as the Jehovah Witnesses teach. (Other passages that refute this cultic doctrine are Micah 5:2, John 1:1, John 10:30, Philippians 2:5-7.)

Verse 10 declares that Jesus the Messiah is also the Creator and that creation is something that only Deity could do. Verse 10-12 are quoted from Psalm 102:25-27 and emphasize that angels are the creatures and the Lord is the Creator.

We have talked many times of verse 13. This verse is found in scripture at least 7 times. The first reference is from Psalm 110:1. This verse makes it clear again that Jesus is God. The angels stand before God. The Son sits because He is superior to the angels. The initial fulfillment of verse 13, i.e. *Sit on My Right Hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool,* was accomplished at the Cross. I do believe there will be a further fulfillment right before the coming of the Lord.

Verse 14 tells us that the function of angels is to minister to those who have made Christ their savior.

The first of this chapter is designed to show the superiority of Christ over the prophets. The latter part is to show the superiority of Christ over the angels. The reason for this long discuss is the increasing belief in angels and the unscriptural viewpoints that some of the Jews were beginning to express. They came to believe that angels (not Jesus) bridged the gap between God and man. God spoke to men through angels, and men spoke to God through angels carrying messages back to Him. In the New Testament times Jews were even teaching falsely that God gave the law first to the angels who then gave it to Moses, since direct communication between God and man was unthinkable. Angels supposedly were created on the 2nd or 5th day of Creation. They did not eat or drink or have children. Most believed they were immortal but could be annihilated by God. Some believed that they were made for just one day. They praised God all day and then were basically annihilated.

It is thought that the writer of Hebrews emphasized in this chapter the superiority of Jesus to angels so that the

people would not get caught up in the wrong doctrine that angels were the intermediaries between God and man. We know that Jesus is the only One we need.

WE WILL NOT BE SHAKEN

For we trust in our God and through His unfailing love we will not be shaken. We will not be shaken. We will not be shaken. (x2)

Though the battle rages, we will stand in the fight. Though the armies rise up against us on all sides, we will not be shaken. We will not be shaken. We will not be shaken. (x2)

For in the hour of our darkest day, we will not tremble. We won't be afraid. Hope is rising like the light of dawn. Our God is for us. He has overcome. (x2)

All those against Him will fall, for our God is stronger. He can do all things. No higher name, we can call for Jesus is greater. We can do all things.