



WHAT JESUS' DISCIPLES
SHOWED THE JUDAIZERS

Letter of James, Synagogues for Judaizers, I & II
Peter, Matthew's Gospel, and Paul's Letter to Hebrews

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SCALE



It was 59 A.D. and Paul who had evangelized Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the ekklesia-church around the northern portion of the Mediterranean Sea, from Antioch to Rome, languished in Caesarea waiting for the Roman officials to make up their minds. All of the Christian world was concerned about Paul's internment and I'm sure were discussing the role of the Jewish Christians of the circumcision in this debacle.

This was a pivotal time in Christian history and I believe four Christian writers chose this time to write in response to Paul's arrest and the realization that so many Jewish Christians of the circumcision were adamant about their old Jewish ways. Up to this point, most Christians including Paul considered them weak, (Rom 14:1) and in need of the power of the Holy Spirit. Examples were Apollos and the twelve disciples in Ephesus (Acts 19:6).

In my estimation, the letter of James was probably the first of these and was written by James in 59 A.D. Although James never mentioned Paul's arrest, you know he was under a lot of pressure to say and write something in response to these events.

The Letter of James has had a hard time being accepted down through church history. Tertullian did not accept it but Athanasius canonized the letter into the Bible in 367 A.D. Martin Luther, the leader of the Reformation, refused to include James with the other books of the New Testament. The book of James has troubled theologians because he only mentioned Jesus twice in the whole book and there was no reference to the resurrection. According to William Barkley, a noted theologian, the book of James sounded like a Jewish sermon to the synagogue and with the exception of the Jesus references there was nothing in it which an Orthodox Jew could not accept (Barkley's James pp 31).

James addressed his letter to the Jews, as coming from a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ (James 1:1). So this letter was meant for the Jewish

Christians. In the first part of his letter, James seemed to have a grudge against anybody with money (James 1:10). I'm sure he and the other Jews had suffered through many economic hardships because of their belief in Jesus. Welcome and receive the Word, he told them **AB James 1:22-23. *But-obey the message; be doers of the Word, and not merely listeners to it, betraying yourselves (into deception by reasoning contrary to the Truth). For if any one only listens to the Word without obeying it and being a doer of it, he is like a man who looks carefully at his (own) natural face in a mirror;*** You wonder if he was referring to some of Paul's or Mark's writings. But no, it was the Law. **AB James 1:25. *But he who looks carefully into the faultless law, the (law) of liberty, and is faithful to it and perseveres in looking into it, being not a heedless listener who forgets, but an active doer (who obeys), he shall be blessed in his doing-in his life of obedience.*** From this verse, James made it clear he was referring to the "Faultless Law" as the Word.

To the Pharisaic Jew, the law was a revelation from God. This revelation was complete and faultless. It was mans for the knowing. As God revealed the Law, so in turn, the Law revealed God. So the Jew's object in life was to be as much like God as possible (Interpreters Bible pp 110). This complete Law of God was revealed by the Scriptures and that was why the Jews studied and discussed the Law, so as to learn from the Law more about God.

The synagogue was the place for these discussions and a rabbi (teacher) controlled the religious life of the synagogue. It was controlled by a body of elders, one of which was the "ruler of the synagogue". A person or teacher would read the Scriptures in Hebrew, then, because most everyone spoke Aramic, they offered a translation. They met twice on the Sabbath once on Monday and Thursday. In the more populated areas, they might have three services each day that correlated with the Temple sacrifices.

James told the Christian Jews not to be impressed by people with money and not to practice the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ with snobbery. **AB James 2:2-3. *For if a person comes into your congregation whose hands are adorned with gold rings and who is wearing splen-***

did apparel, and also a poor (man) in shabby clothes comes in, and you pay special attention to the one who wears the splendid clothes and say to him, Sit here in this preferable seat! while you tell the poor (man), Stand there! Or, Sit there on the floor at my feet.

This certainly didn't sound like an ekklesia-church meeting in the colonnades because there were no choice seats. Well, it was not an ekklesia meeting. The word James used in verse 2 for congregation or assembly was actually the word "synagogue". ***Interpreters Bible Vol. XII, pp 36. In the Greek the word for assembly is "synagogue"; not found elsewhere in the N.T. to describe a Christian congregation but always used of the building in which Jews worship.*** From James 2:2 we see the Jewish Christians actually did meet in their own synagogues! James actually said, ". . . if a person comes into your synagogue". . . In most Bibles, the word used is either assembly or congregation. According to the Wycliffe Bible Encyclopedia, there were more than four hundred synagogues in Jerusalem at this time.

I think James meant to use the word 'synagogue' because later (James 5:14) he used the word ekklesia for a Christian meeting. If he meant to use the word synagogue then it meant the Judaizers, and there were thousands, had their own synagogues in Jerusalem. To me this made sense in the light of other verses, when it seemed they met independent of the ekklesia. Some of these Judaizers didn't know about the Holy Spirit and as James himself said they made demands on the converts in Antioch unbeknownst to the ekklesia in Jerusalem (Acts 15:24). These Judaizers, who were living and worshipping like Jews by all outward appearances, would in my opinion, require their own synagogues.

In Jerusalem at least some of the four hundred odd synagogues were for the Christian Jews of the circumcision. They met as a synagogue, where they had seats in a closed-in facility. There they would certainly discuss the prophets who had prophesied about Jesus, and that was when they came up with the idea of circumcising the Gentile converts. . This would be a lot different from the ekklesias that met in public, in the public places like the stoas and colonnades of the Agora.

This marked the beginning of a pullback from what Jesus intended for his ekklesia-church. In Matt 16:18, Jesus would have said, "His Synagogue", if He had not intended it to be "His Ekklesia". Jesus wanted the ekklesia to show the world the spiritual events prophets like Joel, had prophesied about, and the events which happened at Pentecost only twenty years previously, when the Holy Spirit came with power. The ekklesia-church with this power had spread from Jerusalem to Caesarea, to Antioch, to Derbe, to Philippi, to Thessalonica, to Corinth, and to the rest of the Roman Empire. This growth occurred because it was an ekklesia and not a synagogue.

James countered what Paul had said previously to the ekklesia in Rome. **AB Rom 3:28. For we hold that a man is justified and made upright by faith independent of and distinctly apart from good deeds (works of the law).-The observance of the Law has nothing to do with justification.** James wrote to the Jewish Christians **AB James 2:24. You see that man is justified (pronounced righteous before God) through what he does and not alone through faith-through works of obedience as well as by what he believes.** Obviously James disagreed with Paul's freedom from the Law. The difference came from what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. He said if I made a Law you could not keep it. So, therefore, we must realize we are all sinners and need to accept Jesus who provided the forgiveness of our sins.

James questioned the revelations coming to the unlearned and unskilled. **AB James 3:1. Not many (of you) should become teachers (self-constituted censors and reprovers of others), my brethren, for you know that we (teachers) will be judged by a higher standard and with greater severity (than other people).-thus we assume the greater accountability and the more condemnation.** Paul taught, by the Holy Spirit, even the lowest one, would have revelations coming from God to the Body of Christ.

In these verses James recognized the benefit of the Holy Spirit for an individual. **AB James 4:5-6. Or do you suppose that the Scripture is speaking to no purpose that says, The Spirit Whom He has caused to dwell in us yearns over us-and He yearns for the Spirit (to be welcome)-with a jealous love? But He gives us more and more grace**

(power of the Holy Spirit, to meet this evil tendency and all others fully). That is why He says, God sets Himself against the proud and haughty, but gives grace (continually) to the lowly-those who are humble-minded (enough to receive it). It seemed James was aware of help from the Holy Spirit for an individual but was not familiar with the power of the Holy Spirit in the Body of Christ. In the group, the Gifts were manifested and all the things Jesus did were possible for His disciples.

To James, the spirit-filled groups seemed too confident and self assured. This was typical thinking of those who had pulled back from the manifestations from God. **AB James 4:15-16. *You ought instead to say, If the Lord is willing, we shall live and we shall do this or that (thing). But as it is, you boast (falsely) in your presumption and your self-conceit. All such boasting is wrong.*** The more people exercised the Gifts of the Holy Spirit the more confidence they had in knowing the will of God. By the revelations of the Holy Spirit to the Body of Christ people were not a passive by-stander to the will of God but rather an active participant in His will.

It was obvious James knew the difference between synagogue and ekklesia. **AB James 5:13-14. *Is any one among you afflicted-ill-treated, suffering evil? He should pray. Is any one glad at heart? He should sing praise (to God). Is any one among you sick? He should call in the church elders-the spiritual guides. And they should pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Lord's name.*** James told them if you are sick call the ekklesia elders. He respected the ekklesia but continued to require someone of leadership to do the praying.

James said in **AB James 5:16. *Confess to one another therefore your faults-your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins; and pray (also) for one another, that you may be healed and restored-to a spiritual tone of mind and heart. The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available-dynamic in its working.*** Here he ended on a good note; however, I don't think James ever grasped the Body of Christ with the Gifts of the Holy Spirit as taught by Paul. James seemed to be torn between the power of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and the old ways of the Jews.

The next book of the New Testament came out in 60 A.D., from the pen of old Peter himself. You know he was concerned about the arrest of Paul because he knew, from firsthand experience, the number of Judaizers in Jerusalem. After the council in Jerusalem in 50 A.D., it was his, James, and John's responsibility to minister to the Jews of the circumcision.

Peter was probably somewhere in the vicinity of Rome when he wrote 1st and 2nd Peter, for he ends 1st Peter with a reference to "Babylon". Like always Peter showed his impetuous side as he addressed his letter to the Jews in Asia. They were the ones who instigated the near riot in Jerusalem when Paul went into the Jewish Temple. He directed his letter to the source of the problem. (1 Peter 1:1)

In regard to the issue of Judaizers, Peter ended the debate in 50 A.D., when he said, ***AB Acts 15:10-11. Now then, why do you try to test God by putting a yoke on the necks of the disciples, such as neither our forefathers nor we (ourselves) were able to endue? But we believe that we are saved through the grace (the undeserved favor and mercy) of the Lord Jesus, just as they (are).*** Peter stated we are all saved by Grace. The Jewish Christians of the circumcision kept quiet after this, but obviously they didn't change their ways or their beliefs. Peter began his epistle by telling these Jewish Christians how lucky they were to have this Good News (Gospel) brought to them and especially how the prophets of old looked forward to this day.

NIV 1 Peter 1:10-12. Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things. Coming from Peter, the old apostle, this had to make the Jews stop and think. Then Peter told them what had happened as a result of this grace. ***AB I Peter 1:18-19. You must know (recognize) that you were redeemed (ransomed) from the useless (fruitless) way of living inherited by tradition***

from (your) forefathers, not with corruptible things (such as) silver and gold, But (you were purchased) with the precious blood of Christ, the Messiah, like that of a (sacrificial) lamb without blemish or spot. The perfect sacrifice had been made on their behalf by none other than the Son of the Father Himself.

Peter reminded them we now have a much better Temple than before. ***AB I Peter 2:5. (Come) and as living stones be yourselves built (into) a spiritual house, for a holy (dedicated, consecrated) priesthood, to offer up (those) spiritual sacrifices (that are) acceptable and well-pleasing to God through Jesus Christ.*** It was a spiritual house made of living stones and we offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ. These spiritual sacrifices are the faith we exhibit through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Then Peter took time to tell them as Christians not to participate in the talk of rebellion. ***AB I Peter 2:13, 15-17. Be submissive to every human institution and authority for the sake of the Lord, whether it be to the emperor as supreme . . . For it is God's will and intention that by doing right (your) good and honest lives should silence (muzzle, gag) the ignorant charges and ill-informed criticisms of foolish persons. (Live) as free people, (yet) without employing your freedom as a pretext for wickedness; but (live at all times) as servants of God. Show respect for all men-treat them honorably. Love the brotherhood (the Christian fraternity of which Christ is the Head). Reverence God. Honor the emperor.*** This rebellion talk was like a gnat on an elephant and besides the ekklesia depended on the Roman protection in order to minister in the stoas and colonnades of the public places. I'm sure because the Jewish Christians were acting like Jews; the other Jews assumed they were in favor of the rebellion.

Peter was the first to teach about what Jesus did for the Old Testament saints. I'm sure this was a problem with many of the tradition minded Jews who were worried about their forefathers. ***AB I Peter 3:18-19, 4:6. For Christ, the Messiah, (Himself) died for sins once for all, the Righteous for the unrighteous-the Just for the unjust, the Innocent for the guilty-that He might bring us to God. In His human body He was put to death but He was made alive in the spirit. In***

which He went and preached to the spirits in prison . . . For this is why the good news (the Gospel) was preached (in their lifetime) even to the dead, that though judged in fleshly bodies as men are, they might live in the spirit as God does. According to Kenyon, this was what Jesus did before he was resurrected by God. **Kenyon WHCT pp 75** *You see, Jesus did not have anything to preach to them until His blood had been carried into the Holy of Holies. It tells in Ephesians 4:8-9, "Wherefore He saith, when He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." (Now this, He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth?) What does He mean by this? He went into the place where the Old Testament saints were kept in Paradise and proclaimed to them the joyful news of their redemption, and He took these captives captive and He gave unto them gifts.* This told the Jews they and their forefathers were going to the same place and assured them, the Messiah gave their forefathers the same opportunity to accept the Son as their Savior. Jesus addressed this in John 5:25 when He said, "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear shall live.

Peter then brought up the Body of Christ for the believers and its power through Gifts by unmerited favor. **NIV I Peter 4:9-11.** *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.* Peter here showed his agreement with Paul about the ekklesia-Body of Christ and the attendant Gifts. Peter pleaded with the Jews to accept and practice the Gifts among themselves and join with strangers in the ekklesia-church. That would involve being active in the ekklesia meetings and not cloistered by themselves in some synagogue-like meeting. To reassure the Jews, he said to cast your worries on Jesus and know the same Body of Christ was active throughout the world (I Peter 5:9)

About this same time another apostle became concerned about the turn of events concerning Paul and his arrest in Jerusalem. Matthew, who may have lived somewhere in Syria near Antioch, probably made a trip to Jerusalem to see for himself those in Jerusalem who believed on Jesus but were zealous for the Law (Acts 21:20). After this visit, he saw the need for a more detailed and complete exhortation about what Jesus had to say about the Jewish Law. This is beautifully illustrated in Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" in the Gospel of Matthew.

According to Papias who died in 155 A.D., Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew. *ANF Vol. 1 pp 155 . . . but with regard to Matthew he has made the following statements: Matthew put together the oracles (of the Lord) in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could.* With his education, Matthew could probably write both in Greek and Hebrew. The Hebrew edition may have been for the Jews of the circumcision who met in their own synagogues.

In the Sermon on the Mount from the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus explained the Law for a large group of people. He said I am the fulfillment of the Law. *AB Matt 5:17. Do not think that I have come to do away with or undo the Law and the prophets; I have come not to do away with or undo, but to complete and fulfill them.* He told them you must be righteous. *AB Matt 5:20. For I tell you, unless your righteousness (your uprightness and your right standing with God) is more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.* They must become more righteous than those who say they keep the Law. He gave them a practical application of His Law. *AB Matt 5:21-22. You have heard that it was said to the men of old, You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable so that he cannot escape the punishment imposed by the court. But I say to you that every one who continues to be angry with his brother or harbors malice (enmity of heart) against him shall be liable to and unable to escape the punishment imposed by the court; and whoever speaks contemptuously and insultingly to his brother shall be liable to and unable to escape punishment imposed by the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, You cursed fool! - You empty-headed idiot! shall be liable to and unable to escape the hell (Gehenna) of fire.*

Not to kill! He said if you're angry, you have missed the mark. He gave them another example about women. **AB Matt 5:27-28. You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery, But I say to you that every one who so much as looks at a woman with evil desires for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.** If you think about adultery, you missed the mark. Then he told them about love. **AB Matt 5:43-44. You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy; But I tell you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.** We are to love our enemies. A person needs to read all these to get the point. We can't keep Jesus' Law so therefore we are all sinners. It is necessary for us to have the forgiveness provided by Him on the Cross. When we receive this forgiveness, then we are worthy and able to approach God as His child. **AB Matt 5:48. You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect (that is, grow into complete maturity of godliness in mind and character, having reached the proper height of virtue and integrity).** This was the ultimate goal of God---Bring man back to Him with the same relationship He had with Adam before the fall.

Matthew reminded them Jesus intimated He was greater than the Temple. **AB Matt 12:6-8. But I tell you, Something greater and more exalted and more majestic than the temple is here! And if you had only known what this saying means, I want mercy (readiness to help, to spare, to forgive) rather than sacrifice and sacrificial victims, you would not have condemned the guiltless for the Son of man is Lord (even) of the Sabbath.** Jesus said, "I want mercy and forgiveness more than I want sacrifices." The Son of man is Lord; depend on Him and not the Temple.

Within Christianity, the Judaizers wanted to be treated separately because they wanted to hold onto their Jewish traditions and be different from the Gentiles. Matthew showed them a warning when he quoted Isaiah 6:9 as he told the Parable of the Sower. **AB Matt 13:14. In them indeed is the process of fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah which says: You shall indeed hear and hear, but never grasp and understand; and you shall indeed look and look, but never see and perceive.** Jesus told the disciples they were lucky to be "seeing what

they see and hearing what they hear". (Matt 13:17) But sometimes they don't see or hear. The Judaizers had ample opportunity to both see and hear.

Jesus taught about the kingdom of heaven in **AB Matt 13:52**. ***He said to them, Therefore every teacher and interpreter of the Sacred Writings who has been instructed and trained for the kingdom of heaven and become a disciple, is like a householder who brings forth out of his storehouse treasure that is new and (treasure that is) old-the fresh (as well as) the familiar.*** Jesus told the disciples to go with the new and keep the old for instruction. I'm sure Matthew felt this would reassure some of the Judaizers.

The Judaizers chose to pull away from the ekklesia in Jerusalem and met in their own synagogues. (James 2:2) Matthew reminded them about the declaration from Jesus about His ekklesia. **AB Matt 16:18**. ***And I tell you, you are Peter (Petros, masculine, a large piece of rock), and on this rock (petra, feminine, a huge rock like Gibraltar) I will build My church, and the gates of Hades (the powers of the infernal region) shall not overpower it-or be strong to its detriment, or hold out against it.*** By continuing their own brand of Christianity in an enclosed synagogue-like setting, the Judaizers were going against the plan of Jesus and His ekklesia. Because of His revelations to the Body of Christ, there was no need for the Law. **AB Matt 16:19**. ***I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind-that is declare to be improper and unlawful-on earth must be already bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth-declare lawful-must be what is already loosed in heaven.*** The Jews thought of the Law as a revelation from God, but Jesus told them in Matt 16:19 you will have the keys to the kingdom through these revelations coming directly to you from God. By the Holy Spirit and its Gifts, the revelations will come and not be filtered through the Law or any earthly organization. These revelations will be the will of God.

The Judaizers because of their continued Jewishness were an example of the "Gates of Hades" coming against Jesus' ekklesia. Even though they believed in Jesus, they did not trust enough to leave the Temple, the Law or their synagogues and go on in faith. So the organization,

that is the Temple, Laws, and synagogues were the "Gates", (those in charge). In the case of the Judaizers, the "Gates" had prevailed.

The Gospel of Matthew contained a lot of what Jesus had to say about leadership. Jesus criticized the Jewish leaders for going around in their white robes and taking the best seats in the synagogues. ***NIV Matt 23:8-11. But you are not to be called 'Rabbi', for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father, for you have one Father and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher', for you have one Teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you will be your servant.*** Jesus made it crystal clear what He wanted in leadership. He insisted on servants. The Jewish organization was rife with levels of leadership in all levels of the Temple, and synagogues. Through the Judaizers, this system was introduced into Christianity by the synagogues of the Jewish Christians of the circumcision. (James 2:2) This was why Jesus said He would build His ekklesia and not a synagogue.

In Marks' Gospel which was written some eleven years before Matthew, he related that Jesus prophesied the Temple will be destroyed. Here in 61 A.D., Matthew includes this prophecy in his Gospel. ***NIV Matt 24:1-2. Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. "Do you see all these things?" he asked, "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."*** Here Matthew showed a lot of faith because there were many Christians of the circumcision going back to the Temple. Little did anyone know, the Temple and Temple Mount would be destroyed in nine years from the date of Matthew's Gospel.

Matthew reminded the people, like Mark, about what Jesus told them after his resurrection. ***AB Matt 28:18-20. Jesus approached and breaking the silence said to them, All authority-all power of rule-in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go then and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe everything that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you all the days-perpetually, uniformly and on every occasion-to the (very) close***

and consummation of the ages. Amen-so let it be. Jesus told them He had all authority and power of rule in heaven and on earth. He told them to teach all things He had commanded and He would be with them in all the days. All authority belonged to Jesus, so by this Matthew reminded the Jews to go on with the greater things of Jesus and leave behind the Temple, and the Law. Matthew's gospel was published and distributed and I'm sure it had a tremendous effect on many of the Jewish Christians of the circumcision or anyone else who read this Word.

Peter wrote 2nd Peter within a year of 1st Peter and he began by reminding the Jewish believers of the power from the spiritual things. **AB 2 Peter 1:3 For His divine power has bestowed upon us all things that (are requisite and suited) to life and godliness, through the (full, personal) knowledge of Him who called us by and to His own glory and excellence (virtue).** This divine power bestowed on them was requisite (necessary) for living a life that shared His divine nature (II Peter 1:4). Then the old fisherman became a little bit testy with his vivid description of what he thought of going back to the Temple and old traditions of the Jews. **AB II Peter 2:20-22 For if, after they escaped the pollutions of the world through (the full, personal) knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they again became entangled in them and are overcome, their last condition is worse (for them) than the first. For never to have obtained a (full, personal) knowledge of the Way of righteousness would have been better for them than, having obtained (such knowledge), to turn back from the holy commandment which was (verbally) delivered to them. There has befallen them the thing spoken of in the true proverb. The dog turns back to his own vomit, and the sow is washed only to wallow again in the mire.** I'm sure Peter's words did not fall on deaf ears because he clearly showed the Jewish Christians what they were doing by going back with the old ways.

There is no question Peter and Paul agreed about the Jewish Law being subject to the Grace of Jesus the Savior. We must remember what Peter said at the conference in 50 A.D. The Judaizers demanded the new Gentile converts be circumcised according to the Law (Acts 15:5). The old fisherman and senior apostle ended the debate

when he said; "We have all been saved by Grace just like the gentiles" (Acts 15:8-11).

In the third chapter of 2nd Peter, he told the Jews, I have written both letters to stimulate you to wholesome thinking remembering the words of the holy prophets and the commands of Jesus the Savior (II Peter 3:1-2). Peter goes straight to the main problem of the Jewish Christians of the circumcision and that was Paul's and Peter's insistence on the complete and eternal salvation provided by Jesus Christ. ***NIV II Peter 3:15-16 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things what are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other scriptures, to their own destruction.*** These hard to understand (to some of the Jews) writings of Paul were the bare fact that the only way to salvation was through Jesus Christ and not the Law. I'm sure what Peter said about Paul's writings set Paul to thinking he needed to write a more complete dissertation on the Law versus the Grace of Jesus to the Jews.

In the meantime, the officials in Caesarea had sent Paul on to Rome because he had appealed to Caesar. He had a very eventful trip with storms, shipwrecks, snake bites and ended up praying for the main man to be healed on the Isle of Malta (Acts 28).

One may question all these books of the Bible being written in such a short time-frame; however, let's look at what Paul later wrote to the Philippians. ***AB Phil 1:13-14. So much is this a fact that throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest (here), my imprisonment has become generally known to be in Christ-in that I am a prisoner in His service and for Him. And (also) most of the brethren have derived fresh confidence in the Lord because of my chains, and are much more bold to speak and publish fearlessly the Word of God-acting with more freedom and indifference to the consequences.*** The word "publish" in the Amplified Bible may be a little strong; however, we must realize the danger in putting your name on a Christian writing for all to read during these times. But we see that Paul was

aware the brethren were coming forth with the Word from God because he was in jail.

After Paul arrived in Rome, he set about to write the letter to the Hebrews. Since Peter's comment about Paul's writings in II Peter 3:16, I'm sure Paul took special care in composing Hebrews. He probably sought help with such things as clarity and proper Greek.

Paul began Hebrews with an overview of the prophetic history of the Jews and why Jesus came to mankind. **NIV Heb 1:1-3. *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*** Paul told the Jews, Jesus was their Savior and He was the very imprint of God.

Paul like Peter and Matthew reminded the Jewish Christians how lucky they were to receive their salvation from Jesus through the New Covenant. **AB Heb 2:3-4. *How shall we escape (appropriate retribution) if we neglect and refuse to pay attention to such a great salvation (as is now offered to us, letting it drift past us forever)? For it was declared at first by the Lord (Himself), and it was confirmed to us and proved to be real and genuine by those who personally heard (Him speak). (Besides these evidences) it was also established and plainly endorsed by God, Who showed His approval of it by signs and wonders and various miraculous manifestations of (His) power and by imparting the gifts of the Holy Spirit (to the believers) according to His own will.*** He reminded them Jesus came with signs and wonders, and he imparted Gifts to the believers by the Holy Spirit. This was how God manifested Himself to His people.

Paul pleaded with the Jews to listen to the Holy Spirit and not harden their hearts. **AB Heb 3:6 *But Christ, the Messiah, was faithful over His (own father's) house as a son (and Master of it). And it is we who are (now members of) this house, if we hold fast and firm to the end***

our joyful and exultant confidence and sense of triumph in our hope (in Christ). He told them we are now members of the Body of Christ which is His house. Paul also told them we have a High Priest who has ascended and passed through the heavens in Jesus Christ (Heb 4:4)

Paul was gradually becoming more forceful. In his letter to the Romans, he indicated the Judaizers were merely weak Christians, but now he knew better. Now he said they were spiritually sluggish. ***AB Heb 5:11-12. Concerning this we have much to say which is hard to explain, since you have become dull in your (spiritual) hearing and sluggish, even slothful (in achieving spiritual insight). For even though by this time you ought to be teaching others, you actually need some one to teach you over again the very first principles of God's Word. You have come to need milk, not solid food.*** They should not have to be taught over and over again the first principles of God's Word. This was because they hadn't experienced the workings of the Holy Spirit. This is why people sit in church and never learn anything. They don't avail themselves the experiences of the Holy Spirit.

Paul continued to tell the Jewish Christians, they should be spiritually mature and not wallowing in dead works. ***AB Heb 6:1, 4-5. Therefore let us go on and get past the elementary stage in the teachings and doctrine of Christ, the Messiah, advancing steadily toward the completeness and perfection that belongs to spiritual maturity. Let us not again be laying the foundation of repentance and abandonment of dead works (dead formalism), and of the faith) by which you turned) to God. . . . For it is impossible (to restore and bring again to repentance) those who have been once for all enlightened, who have consciously tasted the heavenly gift, and have become sharers of the Holy Spirit. And have felt how good the Word of God is and the mighty powers of the age and world to come.*** Paul implored them that had tasted the heavenly Gifts to return to the mighty powers of the Holy Spirit. Paul knew they were withdrawing into the synagogue-like meetings (James 2:2) where nothing happened and they discussed and continually laid the same old foundations of repentance. He wanted

them to step out and again feel how good the Word of God was with the mighty power of the ekklesia-church.

This was how heresies developed in the early church. The ekklesia-church was a public display of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. There God manifested Himself and there was no reason to doubt. In these synagogue-like meetings, no power was evident and there were endless discussions about what might or might not be true. From this, heresies were created and became beliefs. In the true Body of Christ-ekklesia-church, there was no room for heresies.

Then Paul really went to the heart of his teaching about God's New Covenant through Jesus Christ. He quoted the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 31:31-34) when God said He would make a new covenant. He would put His Laws in their minds, write them in their hearts, and remember their sins no more (Heb 8:1-12). Paul used Heb 8:11 with Jeremiah's words to solidify his teaching about the Body of Christ. ***AB Heb 8:11 And it will nevermore be necessary for every one to teach his neighbor and his fellow citizen or every one his brother, saying, Know--- (that is,) perceive, have knowledge of and get acquainted by experience with---the Lord; for all will know Me, from the smallest to the greatest of them.*** God declared through Jeremiah that man will no longer teach his neighbor or brother to "know the Lord, because then they will all know Me from the least to the greatest." This is the essence of Paul's teaching in all his letters where God reveals Himself through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Body of Christ. There the members from the least to the greatest will know God. This originated after the seventy returned after ministering in Jesus' name. Jesus was energized and told God, I thank you Father, You have revealed this to the babes and unlearned (Luke 10:21). Jesus knew then His message would be delivered by the small people and not the learned and the wise. That's why He chose the democratic ekklesia and not the organization and hierarchy of the Jews. Paul taught the same thing in his letter of the Corinthians where he instructed them concerning how best to use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in the public ekklesia meetings. In I Cor 14:30-31, he told them to have only two prophesy, but if one who is setting by, received a revelation, let him speak. Then later, the Apostle John in I John 2:27 reminded the believers they have

no need of teachers because they have the unction of the Holy Spirit to teach them. I believe Paul hit a home run with the Jews because he was able to use the words of Jeremiah to make his point about the manifestations of God coming to individuals in the Body of Christ. This was part of the New Covenant.

Now, Paul reminded some of the older Jewish Christians how they had met together in the Temple Mount area and witnessed signs and wonders (Acts 2:42-46). In order to go back to those days they should come together and help one another. ***NIV Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another---and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*** He especially reminded them how they had been a gazing stock in the public places proclaiming the Gospel. ***NIV 10:32-33 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times, you stood side by side with those who were so treated.*** Many of the Jews had shied away from Jesus' ekklesia in the public places and were meeting in their own synagogues and living under the Law. The result of this was mentioned in the epistle of Barnabas which was written after the destruction of the Temple. It told the signs and wonders in Israel were after a time abandoned ANF Vol 1, pp 139. This would indicate the pull back of the Jews from the original ekklesia-like meeting caused the abandonment of the miracles.

Paul continued to encourage them and told them, "Do not fling away your fearless confidence." (Heb 10:35) The ekklesia-Body of Christ ministry in the public places required a boatload of faith. You came together and had faith the Holy Spirit would manifest some of the Gifts, whether it was a Prophecy, Healings, Words of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge or the others. It was much easier to be ensconced in some synagogue-like meeting where you listened to someone teach or had discussions. The ekklesia meeting was to show the manifestations of God. Generally people are like the Jews in the wilderness when

they told Moses they were afraid of God and for him to speak with God for them. (Exo 20:18-19)

Paul in this part of his letter to the Hebrews was almost in a prophetic mode as he warned those who rejected Jesus' ekklesia (church). ***AB Heb 12:23, 25. And to the church (assembly) of the First-born who are registered (as citizens) in heaven, and to the Judge Who is God of all, and to the spirits of the righteous (the redeemed in heaven) who have been made perfect; . . . For if they (the Israelites) did not escape when they refused to listen and heed Him Who warned and divinely instructed them (here) on earth-revealing with heavenly warnings His will-how much less shall we escape if we reject and turn out backs on Him Who cautions and admonishes (us) from heaven?*** Paul said see to it you do not reject Him and refuse to listen to Him Who is speaking to you.

In his letter to the Hebrews Paul was able to make it clear to the Jews how Jesus had brought the New Covenant from God. Jesus brought eternal salvation and would manifest Himself to them through the Body of Christ.