

Hebrews: Continuing With Christ Part 2

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Preacher: Pastor Steve Hersey

[0 : 0 0] The book of Hebrews.

All right. Let's have a word of prayer. Father, we just thank you for this time to be in your word this morning, Lord. I pray that you would minister to our hearts, Lord, as we look at it, as we learn the things that you've given to us.

Lord, I pray that you would just help us today to have open hearts to what your Holy Spirit has to say to us. Lord, I pray that you'd be with those that are away.

There's a bunch of people away this weekend. I pray that you'd watch over each one of them, Lord, and meet their needs. Lord, be with us here. Help it to be a good day of growing in you.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. All right. Last week we began talking about Hebrews, and we talked about some things. I'll kind of review those things quickly, and then we'll get into some new things.

[1 : 1 0] First of all, we talked about the author. The author of Hebrews, we said, King James Bible, if you have one like mine, it says, The Epistle of Paul, the Apostle to the Hebrews. And a lot of people believe that Paul wrote this book.

But we talked about some of the differences of why Paul might not have written this book. First of all, we talked about the fact that others have said it could have been written by Luke, Apollos, Barnabas, Clement, Timothy, Epaphras, Silas, Philip, and there are others some people speculate on.

Why did they think that some of these other guys might have done it? Well, because one of the key factors in a lot of Paul's writing, he's very abrupt and makes frequent digressions from he'll be talking about one thing, and all of a sudden he'll kind of go off to another thing and then come back.

Whereas the book of Hebrews was written by someone who knew Greek very well. He was able to write and express himself in Greek, like classical Greek rhetoric, and had careful construction about the way he did things.

We also looked at chapter 2, verse 3 there. If you're looking at Hebrews, chapter 2, verse 3, where it says, How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?

[2 : 3 2] And we talked about the fact that it says, It was confirmed unto us by them that heard him. It was a second generation of Christians who were telling the Hebrews, writing to the Hebrews, not the first generation, not the original apostles and stuff.

And with Paul, if you go back, you don't have to turn there, but if you go back to Galatians 1.12, Paul says in Galatians, For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

So Hebrews says, It was given to us by those who knew Jesus. Paul says, I didn't get it from anybody else, but from God himself.

You remember, if you go on there in Galatians and look at verses 17 and 19, Paul talks about going to Arabia and learning from God. He did not talk to Peter until after that time.

He did talk to James before he went to Arabia, but not just for a short time. So there's questions about whether Paul would have done that, because Paul did not get it from anybody else.

[3 : 43] There's still a lot of evidence, though, that Paul wrote the letter, and we talked about some of that, why he did. Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3.15, Just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

So Paul had been writing to Hebrews just as Peter had gone to the Gentiles. So they were taking the message to everybody. And we said that we don't know who the human author was, human writer was, but we do know the author.

For all scripture is given by inspiration of God. So God had it written. One of the recipients said, one of the church fathers said, we'll go because we know certainly that God wrote it.

And so just go with that. Who were the recipients? Well, you notice it says there in chapter 2, verse 3 again, that it was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.

So it's people who were receiving it. And as you read through it, you're going to learn that it was written to the Hebrews. It definitely was for them. Whoever wrote it was trying to convince or help reestablish to the Hebrews that Jesus Christ was better.

[5 : 20] Jesus Christ was supreme over everything else. And so whatever is written in here, a lot of the Gentiles would not have understood the things about the sacrifices and things of that nature.

So it was written to Hebrews. And then we talked about the date of the writing. And the date of the writing, again, being second generation, had to be probably around 60 AD, we said, because the guys who were with Jesus are now leading others to the Lord and teaching them so it would be around 60.

But then we said that no, it wasn't necessarily 60, but it had to be before 96 because Clement quotes from it in 96 AD.

And then we said, no, probably got to be earlier than that because Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD. So Jerusalem's destroyed. And finally we came down to probably between 64 and 68 because the uprising of the Jews was in 67 against Rome and everything had to have been destroyed.

One of the verses in there talked about the fact that the sacrifices, sacrifices would have stopped at least by 70, probably even earlier than that because of the uprising and Rome would have come in and put a stop to all those things.

[6 : 40] Which brings us to number four. Number four. The theme of the book. Hebrews develops several themes.

Part of it had to do with they were under persecution. And because they were facing persecution, the writer is trying to encourage them to stand fast in the Lord, to stand fast with Jesus Christ.

Don't give up. Remember when Matthew wrote over, in Matthew chapter 7, familiar verses, starting at verse 24, it says, Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock.

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand.

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. What is he trying to teach us about obedience? How important is our obedience to God and to his word?

[7 : 58] He says, if you don't follow what I have for you, he says, you're not going to be able to stand. You're going to fall. He says, look, stand fast in the Lord and the things that he has done.

The first seven chapters of Hebrews stresses the supremacy of Jesus Christ. Talk about themes, there's a theme for you. The supremacy of Jesus Christ and what he has done and who he is.

Chapter one talks about him being superior to the angels. Chapter three he's superior to Moses. First part of chapter four he's superior to Joshua.

The end of chapter four, chapter five, end of chapter seven, he is superior to Aaron as a high priest. Christ is supreme in everything that he does.

Christ is supreme. And doing this comparison to these Old Testament figures, these people who are well respected, he's showing, look, yes, they are important people.

[9 : 03] They are God's people. They were used by God to do things. But Jesus is superior. Go over to Colossians. Paul talked about this. Colossians chapter one.

Colossians chapter one. Paul wrote this about Christ and who he is. Beginning at verse 15. Who is the image of the invisible God?

The firstborn of every creature. For by him were all things created that are in heaven, that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.

All things were created by him and for him. He is before all things and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence.

For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. What is he saying about the preeminence of Christ in these verses?

[10 : 10] He's the image of God. He's the firstborn. He's the creator of all things. He is before all things and by him all things consist.

He holds everything together in place. He's the head of the body, the church. And it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.

He says everything comes back to Jesus Christ and who he is. In Hebrews 8 through chapter 10 verse 18 the focus is on the fact that Christianity is better than the old covenant, the old system of worship, the Old Testament things.

the sacrifices of the priesthood was God's provision for the time but it was looking forward to when Jesus would come and give his life a ransom for many.

The final chapters of the book chapter 10 through 13 says teach the faith in Christ gives us hope in the midst of suffering. As I said they were going through a lot of trials, a lot of suffering, a lot of things were taking place and Hebrews gives a challenge to stay committed to Christ no matter what.

[11 : 26] You know think about these themes. How are they relevant to us today? You know the Bible's we want to read the Bible we want to take the Bible in we want to learn the Bible but we also want it to apply to us.

How does it apply to us today? Well Christ is still preeminent the head of the church. It's his church he's going to do with it what he wants.

He still wants us to be submitted to his leadership how we submit it to the leadership of Jesus Christ and what he is doing. God's program and his mission for the church hasn't changed.

It's still the same. Take the gospel to the world and share it. And he's still the primary source of hope in the midst of everything taking place in our life.

So number five what's the purpose of the book? The purpose of the book. He has several purposes in mind as well as several themes. He knew that the people were weary.

[12 : 31] Wow, it's coming down out there. Yeah, it's coming down. He wanted to make sure that his readers who were weary from the suffering that they had been facing were encouraged and uplifted and ready to face the challenges that were in front of them.

Keeping their focus on Christ. This book is the one you always hear me quoting, looking unto Jesus. We are to keep our eyes there, no matter what happens, no matter where things are going.

He says, keep your eyes focused on him. And actually, go to chapter 12. I want you to see, not only does he say, in verse 2, looking unto Jesus, but look at verse 3.

For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your mind. He said, when the going gets tough, when things get to be real challenges, when things get to be hard and suffering is coming and taking place, don't forget what Christ went through for us.

Keep your eyes on him, remembering what he did for us. he wanted to also make sure that they didn't fall into apostasy.

[13 : 48] A lot of different doctrines and things were starting to be taught, a lot of variations, and he didn't want to go into apostasy. You're right there in chapter 12, go back to chapter 10. Chapter 10 and verse 29.

Oh, how much sore punishment suppose ye shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace.

He says, be careful. Think about what someone is going to face in judgment if they start walking contrary to what Jesus Christ taught.

If they start saying the blood is not enough. Oh, that's when you hear all the time today, isn't it? Jesus is not enough. The blood is not enough.

We need to make sure that we have more. We need to be baptized. We need to go to church. We need to do good works. We need to, he says, no, no, no. The blood is enough.

[14 : 56] He warned them against slipping away from Christ. He warned them about forsaking the assembling of themselves together. He also encouraged them to be encouraging one to another in the face of prosecution.

He says, look, what is it in chapter 10? Verse, look at verse 24.

Actually, go back to 23. Chapter 10, verse 23, says, let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful to promise.

God's going to be faithful. Christ is going to be faithful. Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. We're here to encourage one another, lift one another up, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as a manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much more as you see the day approaching.

He says, you're supposed to be lifting one another up, you're supposed to be exhorting one another, you're supposed to be encouraging one another, especially as you see the day approaching, the end of is coming.

[16 : 04] He says, you need to be uplifting one another and encouraging one another. The main purpose of Hebrews is to take the things that the Christians know, the things that they are very familiar with, and encourage them to not fear.

Don't fear the things that are coming your way. He says, be careful only Christ is worthy of worship. He is supreme. He is over all the Old Testament worship styles.

He can help you during times of suffering. He, keep your focus on him, looking unto Jesus. You know, go back there to chapter 12 again.

Look at the whole beginning of this. It says, chapter 12, verse 1, wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses. Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which has so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is before us.

He says, look, you're a crowd of witnesses. You're supposed to be encouraging one another. He says, don't let sin beset you. Encourage one another. Looking unto Jesus, verse 2, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

[17 : 31] For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, that he be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

He's saying, yes, you're facing hard times, you're facing ridicule, but you have not had to go where it's cost you your life yet. Jesus gave his life so that we might have eternal life.

He gave his life so that we might have salvation. He says, be careful, you haven't gone to those lengths. Just take courage in what Christ is doing. Hebrews contains a lot of theology as well, especially about Jesus, and it's very practical in the way it talks about living out of faith.

We're to endure, we're to understand the preeminence of Christ and cling to him because he is better than anything else you can possibly have in your life. Number six, form.

Form. Like I said, many Bibles, including mine, says the beginning of it, the epistle of Paul, the apostle, to the Hebrews.

[18 : 46] But is it really an epistle? Is it really a letter? Epistle means a letter. Remember in all the other ones, Paul goes, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to Galatia, Ephesians, Philippi, and all these different ones.

This one had no, didn't have that. Look at me, well, go to Hebrews chapter one. I'm going to be there in just a second. Hebrews chapter one.

Hebrews 13, 22 says, and I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation, for I have written a letter unto you in few words. Paul says, I've written a letter to you in chapter 13 of Acts 13, 15, it says, and after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogues, send unto them saying, ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

He says, look, if you've got anything else to add, if you've got anything else to give that's going to encourage the people, he says, say on. So when you look at Hebrews chapter 1, and you look at those first four verses, look there with me, Hebrews chapter 1, the first four verses, God who has sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who being the brightness of his glory and express image of his person and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Okay, just stop there. When you look at this, does that sound like the beginning of a letter, or does it sound like the beginning of a sermon? He's ready to give them a sermon.

[20 : 44] He's ready to teach them about Jesus and who he is. It's a spoken message that has been written down by hand to be given to these people so they understand.

He uses language in such a skillful way, they hear it, it's going to have an impact on them because of the way he does things. Whoever did it gave careful thought to the way it was written.

He employed words, sometimes unusual words, in order to make the message more powerful. Whoever wrote Hebrews knew how to use language very well.

It teaches doctrine. It teaches a lot of doctrine. And, as it gives an exposition of the truth and an exhortation to obey, he mixes in applications with the message and how to take it and to use it.

See, it's written to persuade the hearers how they should live their life. It's written to help people understand God has a plan for you and he has a way he wants you to do things.

[21 : 56] He's written it to reinforce the beliefs of the people who are listening, to believe in Christ and who he is and what he has done. He's combining all these things to make an important message for the people there.

Next week, we will get into Hebrews itself. Start beginning, going through the book. You've got the basics now of what's going on and what the purpose is and what the themes are and everything.

Now let's get into looking at the specifics of what God has for us in the book of Hebrews. Okay? Let's have a word of prayer. Father, thank you.