

December 23

Hebrews 1-6.12

Hi everyone, my name is Mark Ashton. Today you read Hebrews 1 through chapter 6, verse 12. The key idea of the book can be expressed in three simple words: "Christ is better". This section of Hebrews teaches the superiority of Christ. The author also sets out some warnings and implications for us.

Hebrews chapter 1 is a great Christological passage in the New Testament. It is worthy of careful attention. In many times and in many ways God spoke to our fathers through the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son." Did you see the twenty items listed about Christ? He is (1) heir of all things; (2) the Creator of the universe; (3) the radiance of God's glory; (4) the exact representation of His being; (5) the sustainer of the universe; (6) the One who made purification for our sins; (7) the One enthroned at God's right hand.

The list continues: (8) He is the One the Father calls Son; (9) the angels worship Him; (10) He is addressed as "God" in the quotation from Psalm 110:1; (11) just as He created the earth, at the end of time He will remodel it, but He will never change; (12) everything is in subjection to Him; (13) He tasted death for everyone; (14) He shared our humanity; (15) He destroyed the one who had the power of death; (16) He took away the fear of death (17) He freed us from slavery; (18) He made atonement for our sin; and (19) because He has suffered; (20) He is able to help us in our temptations. WOW!!

Chapters 1 and 2 put us immediately in position to say, "Christ is better than the angels!" In chapter 1, verse 4 the author states, "He became as much superior to the angels as the name He inherited is superior to theirs" - the name He inherited is "son".

Orthodox theology has always maintained that the Jesus was one person with two natures: He was fully God and at the same time He was fully man. Hebrews 1 and 2 deserve a special marking as the place where this reality is most clearly evidenced in all of the New Testament.

A set of warnings also appear in these chapters. The first warning comes in conjunction with the observation that whenever an angel showed up in the Old Testament record, people paid attention. At the beginning of chapter 2 the author says, if you paid careful attention to what an angel said because you were afraid to disobey, and if Christ is superior to the angels, then how much more attention ought we to pay to Him? Indeed, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation as this?"

The second warning is against unbelief. Everyone knew what happened when the children of Israel refused to obey or believe Moses. If Christ is greater than Moses, it would be even more disastrous to disobey and refuse to listen to Him.

The third warning at the end of Chapter 3 was not harden our hearts by disobedience and fail as Israel did in Moses' time, to enter the "rest" of God. Chapter 4 begins: "Therefore, since the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it."

The theme of "rest" is a fairly prominent one in Scripture. We find it in the Book of Genesis when God created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then He rested from His labor. He taught His people, right from the beginning, to observe a Sabbath rest. The Book of Revelation assures us that those who die in the Lord are blessed and they will "rest" from their labor.

Finally, let me point out a few implications from our reading today. The first is that since Jesus was really a man, He can represent us as our High Priest before God.

A second implication of the true humanity of Christ is that He completely understands us. Chapter 4 contains this remarkable assertion: "For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are - yet without sin".

The third and final implication is that if we are truly believers in the God-man Jesus Christ then there will be evidence of growth--"things that accompany salvation" (6.12).

Jesus is able to help us grow closer to God because he "learned obedience from what he suffered. Once made perfect, he became or source for eternal salvation." (5.10) Jesus is an eternal priest after the order of Melchizedek. We will learn more about Melchizedek tomorrow.

The author is concerned that we don't go back to the elementary teachings of our faith (6.1-3). He is also concerned about the person who has minimal understanding of faith in Christ by being "enlightened". This person has "tasted" and "shared" in God's greatest gift but does not produce a crop useful or fruit from their life. If they produce thorns and thistles then they show there is no new life in Christ (6.4-8).

"We are confident of better things in your case--things that accompany salvation," he writes. Do you have things that accompany salvation? They are work and love for God along with service to his people (6.9-10). Keep up your diligence and imitate those who have gone before you and inherited their reward (6.11-12).

Hebrews is a wonderful book of the Bible. It has some difficult truths but I hope you will continue to read, meditate and pray over the truths. Try to put the author's admonitions into your life. Thanks for reading, I will talk with you again tomorrow.