

Review of Hebrews Chapters 1-7

Chapter 1

God spoke to the prophets and now speaks to us in Christ, who is the heir of all things. Beginning in verse 3 Christ's deity is proclaimed. Apparently, at this time in Judaism angels were greatly revered, but the author authoritatively proclaims that Jesus is better than the angels. We read that God elevated Christ above the angels by reminding us that God never spoke to the angels in the way He spoke to Christ—as a Son (vss. 4-5). The author contrasts the role and works of angels with the role and works of Christ. It's important to remember that angels worship and serve Christ. We learn that Christ will reign forever, that He created the world, and that He will remain though everything else will perish. Rather than worshiping angels the recipients of the letter needed to understand that the angels will worship Christ and were created to be ministering spirits to help believers.

Chapter 2

Chapter 1 closes with the thought that angels were sent to minister to those who would inherit salvation (1:14). "Salvation" is the transition thought into Chapter 2. Because of Jesus' superiority in every way (as seen in Chapter 1) we need to pay close attention to what has been taught and not drift away from that teaching, since it is the gospel which leads to salvation. God testified to this very truth through signs and wonders. From the very beginning God intended to bless man and give him glory as the crown jewel of creation, but because of sin man has never experienced that perfect world. In fact, even Jesus, while on earth, lowered Himself to identify with man in every way. Jesus, as a man, did not experience the fullness of God's intended blessing upon mankind so that He would be like us. God also deemed it fitting that our Savior would be completed—made more like us—through His sufferings on earth. Jesus identified in every way with our humanity so that He could call us His brethren, free us from the snare of the devil, and come to our aid. He was made like us in all things so that He would be the perfect priest to intercede for us and understand our temptations.

Chapter 3

Because Jesus understands all the ways in which mankind is tempted to sin against God, He is able to come to our aid. We are urged to study Him because He understands our weaknesses in a way no one else can. Jesus is compared with Moses and though Moses is a faithful example, Jesus is more so because He reigns over God's house as a Son, whose house we are also a part of. Because we are members of God's household we are urged to hold fast to our hope in Christ. Quotes from the Old Testament paint a picture of what happens to those who do not hold fast, who because of unbelief, will not experience the blessings of God. We are to take care that we are not unbelieving and encourage one another to believe the Lord so we can enter His rest, unlike the disobedient and unbelieving Israelites.

Chapter 4

Just as the Israelites were not able to enter the Promised Land because of unbelief so we too need to guard against that same sin. Unlike the Israelites, we need to make sure we enter the rest of God by believing the Good News, which was preached to us. In the same way that God rested

from His works of creation, so we need to rest from our “works” of salvation and accept the gift of God. We are warned that there are some who still need to enter into His rest. We need to be careful that we do not fail to enter His rest (salvation) because of unbelief so we are warned, “today” don’t harden your hearts. The word of God, and God Himself, discerns and reveals our true heart motivations, and can show us our unbelief. Yet amid these warnings and exhortations, let us also remember that Jesus Christ is our great high priest who understands our weakness. So, let us hold fast our confession and draw near to Him so that we will find grace and mercy to help us.

Chapter 5

Every high priest taken from men is appointed by God to offer sacrifices on man’s behalf. Because the high priest is a man, he understands man’s weaknesses, and must offer sacrifices for the sins of the people and for himself. Christ, too, was appointed by God according to the order of Melchizedek to offer sacrifice for sin. Because He was a man, He understands man’s weaknesses, and is able to offer sacrifice for sin. Yet though He was a man, He was also sinless, which makes Him a better high priest than those appointed under the Levitical system. As high priest, Jesus is the source of eternal salvation. The author desires to explain more about Christ as high priest but feels it will be a difficult task because the people are too dull spiritually. Though they should be teachers and leaders in the faith by now, they are still spiritually weak and immature.

Chapter 6

With the basic elements of the Christian faith established, the writer is now ready to move on to more complex issues if God permits. He then launches into the situation that must have been plaguing them all: The case of those who had been part of the church, but then fell away. What will happen to people like that? The answer: It is impossible to renew them to repentance. The author illustrates this truth using nature—the ground drinks rain to produce vegetation rather than thorns and thistles. If it does produce thorns and thistles it ends up being burned. After that dire warning, the author transitions from talking about those who fall away to those still in the church. He urges the faithful believers to continue to do what they have been doing, and to show diligence until the end so they will inherit the promises. The comments about the promises cause the writer to launch into a discussion about God keeping His word. Just as God promised Abraham and swore by Himself to show He intended to keep His word, so men swear an oath to show they intend to keep their promises. And God did keep His promises to us so we would be greatly encouraged and take hold of the hope set before us. This hope is our sure, steadfast anchor, which is Jesus, our eternal high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, who enters within the veil on our behalf.

Chapter 7

Important details about Melchizedek are introduced in this chapter. We learn that Melchizedek was a king and a priest of the Most High God, and even Abraham honored him by giving him a tenth of his spoils. Since there is no record of Melchizedek’s death it seemed as if his role as priest never ceased. It is in this way that Melchizedek is compared to Christ whose priesthood is eternal. The writer continues to point out how great Melchizedek is by reviewing how Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils to him, which was only right since Melchizedek was a priest. But

Melchizedek was not a priest descended from Levi; in fact, it was Levi who gave tithes to him when Levi “was in the loins of his father Abraham.” The writer reminds us that the Levitical priesthood was not able to bring men to God, so there needed to be a different priesthood that would last forever so that all could draw near to God through Jesus Christ. There needed to be many Levites because the work never ended, and only death brought an end to their work. But because Jesus lives forever, He is able to hold His priesthood permanently, and therefore secure access to God for man. We needed to have a high priest who was perfect and holy, and able to offer Himself as the perfect sacrifice, thereby destroying the need for ongoing sacrifices that were imperfect.