

HEBREWS

Message 16

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Reading: Hebrew 2:17-3:6

INTRO: After completing Hebrews chapter 2 we took a long break and now we have come to Hebrews chapter 3. We do not know who the writer of this book is but we know the reason why it was written. Not long after the Lord ascended to heaven some Jewish believers came to faith. We do not know if they were in Italy or Israel or elsewhere. We have covered all this in the introductory message. These new believers rejoiced in their faith and lived in hope of Christ's soon return. But Christ did not return. And their Christian life turned for the worse, not better. And now the hope in Christ was not wonderful any more. As a matter of fact, persecution set in and life became difficult and slowly their new found hope in Christ began to wane.

And then they began to look back to the security they had had in traditional Judaism. When they had turned to Jesus Christ, they were cut off from the Jews, their own people. Now they didn't fit into the world nor among their own people. They became lonely and life got more difficult and they began to go back in their hearts to Judaism. The first teaching they were beginning to consider was a certain teaching of the Jews of a hope to be delivered from Rome's oppressive rule by angels. Instead of remaining steadfast in their hope in Jesus Christ, they began to waver. They became double minded and thus unstable.

And so, in chapters 1-2 the writer shows trusting in angels is not a good hope and that they should remain with placing their hope in Jesus Christ. Then in the remainder of the book he will show how hopeless it is to put their trust in Judaism and the High Priest. And so, in the next and longer section we will now begin to look at we will learn a lot about Judaism and about the High Priest.

Let me briefly go over how I see the structure of this book. There is always first and foremost a section of doctrine, that is a section of teaching. One of the reasons the church today is in such sad shape is that for the last 100 years we have failed to teach biblical doctrine. In days gone by, new believers were

taught biblical doctrine by way of what was called a Catechism. Today the majority of Christians do not have a good biblical foundation. We think they do, but they don't.

And so, in the book of Hebrews, after the doctrinal section a warning is given to believers not to drift away from true teaching. There are five such warnings and they are some of the strongest warnings for believers not to drift from the truth and that if they drift from the truth, they immediately enter a danger zone. And if they do not pay heed, repent and turn back, they are in danger of hell-fire.

Calvinism, which took hold in Christian camps when John Calvin wrote his Institutes of the Christian Religion in the 1500's, taught a new and totally false doctrine of God and of the five main points, the last was the perseverance of the saints. This teaching said that once a person was a true believer such a person would persevere to the end. God had rendered them incapable of falling away. Like a machine, they would do what God had predetermined they would do. All five of those points are, in my view, heresy.

Then in the 1800s or so, and nobody seems to know where or by whom, a teaching came along that rejected four of the five Calvinistic points and slightly changed the fifth point and this teaching goes by the name of *once saved always saved*. I cannot find that teaching anywhere in the first 1800 years of Christianity. I have concluded it is a teaching that developed in the last 200 years and it is one of the teachings that is responsible for removing believers from the fear of God. There are atrocious teachers in this camp and let me name one, Charles Stanley. His teaching is that once you have become a believer, though you murder or live in adultery without repentance, you will never be lost.

But both Calvinism and the teachers of OSAS stutter and stammer when they come to the warning sections of the book of Hebrews. Let me read one of those sections for you. It is Hebrews 10:26-29. It says:

26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.

28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.

29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

When you read commentaries on these passages you will find what the sign on a woodworking shop said: "Many fancy twistings and turnings done here." If one wants to make these warning passages fit the perseverance of the saints or OSAS doctrines, it requires many fancy twistings and turnings to make them fit. Listen to what John MacArthur says when he comes to the first warning in chapter 2. He said this about the warning in 2:1: "And may I add, that this is the first of five great warnings in the book of Hebrews. And you must understand this, interjected throughout the book of Hebrews are warnings. They're slapped at intervals in the middle of great treatises on the superiority of Christ." Let me just kindly say there is nothing in Scripture that is just sort of slapped in. Hebrews is a carefully written book with a clear purpose throughout. Saying it like he did is a subtle way of downplaying the seriousness of those warnings.

So let me begin with a warning: If you claim to be a believer and you are dabbling in sin, the book of Hebrews, after five carefully thought-out teachings will warn you to repent and drop that sin as if you had the devil himself in your hands. My wife read to me what a certain preacher said. He said, "If you are a preacher and you do not preach on sin and repentance (I don't remember the third thing, I think it was hell) then you are a false prophet."

So besides being warned in this book to never let sin get a hold in one's life there are some incredible things to be learned, both of angels and the priesthood.

Well, in chapters 1-2 we have had some teaching on angels and we have had the first warning to not drift. Look at 2:1-3a for the first warning:

1 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

2 *For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward,*

3 *how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation,*

If we drift away from the Lord, how shall we escape? Well, we won't escape.

One other introductory point. This book is a book of hope. In numerous places we find the word "hope" in Hebrews. I titled point #1 of this book as *Jesus Christ: The hope superior to angels*. The second point now I have titled as *Jesus Christ: The hope superior to the High Priest*. So, we are about to begin to learn about the priesthood of the OT.

II. JESUS CHRIST: THE HOPE SUPERIOR TO THE HIGH PRIEST (3:1-13:25)

A. Christ Our High Priest (3:1-4:16) - **Moses**

Intro: (3:1-2)

1. The doctrine - Christ superior to Moses

a. The command to consider our High Priest (1-2)

As I interpret this next section, in 3:1-6 we have the doctrine from which the application of the doctrine will be explained, and in the application, we will be given the second warning to these Hebrew Christians and hence to all Christians. In the book of Hebrews, we learn that Christ is our High Priest. The High Priest of the OT was a picture of Christ. Let me say this here, without some understanding of the OT we cannot understand the NT. It is not possible. Christ is the fulfillment of the ministry of the OT high priest.

We go then to verse 1 which introduces our subject of Christ as our High Priest. It says:

1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus,

The writer has been dealing with angels for 2 chapters and now he is beginning to deal with the High Priest. But notice how he makes a transition from dealing with angels to dealing with the High Priest in 2:14-18. Here he writes:

14 Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

15 and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

16 For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.

There we have the concluding remarks on angels, and now comes the transition to the subject of the High Priest in verse 17:

17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Here the writer begins to move to the subject of the High Priest. The word "therefore" in 3:1 connects back to the subject of the High Priest in 2:17-18. These discouraged Hebrew believers were thinking of returning to Judaism in which the High Priest played a very important role. But the writer will now show that Jesus Christ is our High Priest. When we dealt with those verses, we gave some explanations of the High Priest.

Now, what these Hebrew believers did not realize was that not only the Jewish High Priest but also the Jewish temple would be

destroyed in just a few years and if they returned to Judaism, soon they would have neither the temple nor the High Priest. That is how it still is today because the Church age entered. Today we see the transition taking place in our world where Judaism will once more have a temple and a High Priest, but this will not be the real temple nor the real High Priest. The real temple and High Priest will happen 7 years later, in the millennium, and you can read the last chapters in Ezekiel to see what will happen.

Now note the main verb of verses 2-3. Can anyone spot it? It is the word "consider." The original word is *katanoeo*. I would give the meaning like this: "Immerse your thoughts in this." Jesus said, "Consider the lilies." Immerse your thoughts in the lilies.

Now this verb is an imperative. This is not a suggestion. It is a command to consider and here is what the Hebrews were to consider: The Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus. You see, the Christian has a confession. Now there is no greater confession than the confession of Christ Jesus. Someone tell me what "Christ" means? It means "the anointed one." He was anointed by God almighty. And the name Jesus means? Jehovah saves. This is our confession Jesus is our Jehovah who saves.

Now someone tell me what He saves us from? Check Matthew 1 and you will find that He called Jesus because He will save us from our sins, not in our sins. Sin is man's biggest problem.

Now note who is to immerse his or her thoughts in Christ Jesus. The writer says, "brethren." That means believers. The term the Bible uses would not fly well in our age, but don't worry about what our age thinks. Our age doesn't even know what a woman is. Notice further that believers are called "holy brethren." And who are brethren? Well, these are true Christians.

They are further described as holy brethren. Holiness has to do with separation from sin. One cannot live in unconfessed sin and claim to be holy.

Notice further that the believer is described as a partaker of the heavenly calling. I have told you many times that within the larger doctrine of salvation there are many other doctrines. These are such as justification; sanctification; election; predestination etc... And one of those doctrines is the doctrine of the call of God. It is called the doctrine of vocation. The call of God to salvation is God's invitation to salvation.

The question in Calvinism is, is God's call sincere? If only the elect can be saved and all the reprobated, the majority of mankind, can't be saved, is the call of God sincere? It is not. Let it be sufficient to say that God so loved the *world* that *whosoever* believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. The call is sincere. It is for everyone.

Now let me ask, how does God call sinners to salvation? He does so by placing the Gospel in the hands of the sincere believer and instructing them to share it with the world. God will not come and evangelize. That is your task and mine. If we do not open our mouth with the Gospel, God cannot save them. They must hear the Gospel. That is the great commission, "go ye into all the world."

Well, the writer in these verses gives two things the Hebrew believer is to immerse his thoughts in. There are myriads of others. Here we are only given two. The first is to consider the Apostle of our confession, referring to Christ Jesus. This is the only time Jesus Christ is referred to as an apostle.

So, let me ask, just what is an apostle? We get the word "apostle" from the Greek word "apostolos." The word, "apostolos" comes from the verb "apostello" and apostello simply means

to send. So, an Apostle is a "sent one." In the Church, a sent one is a missionary. Someone sent on a mission. Today we have many people who claim to be apostles. Often, they are self appointed, which is not truly a sent one. Someone who is sent is sent by another, not by self.

Jesus Christ was sent by God and He had a mission. We have a record of this in the four Gospels. He is our Apostle. He was sent to us and for us. So, He is called here the Apostle of our confession. If we make a confession of faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ is our confession. We agree to what the Bible says about Him and live accordingly.

Let me add this that if we make a confession of Christ, that means He is presently saving us from our sins. We are not openly living in known sin. How can we live in sin if we are being saved from it? It is amazing what we discover in ourselves as we go along in life. If we are truly holy, that is separated from sin, the more we learn about ourselves the deeper ingrained we find in ourselves a sin nature. And all that sin nature wants to produce in us is what the Lord wants to save us from. With every year we learn new things in ourselves that we need to be saved from. All of this happens in sanctification, the process of being made holy. We may need to be delivered from envy, or jealousy, or lying, or any other kind of sin. All of this He will save us from. That is what He was sent to do. So, He became our Sent One, the Apostle of our confession.

Furthermore, Christ Jesus is our High Priest. So let me cover something here that will help us in future messages. There is a temple in heaven. If you study this subject, you will find that the Jewish temple was patterned after the temple that is in heaven. We will see that in this book. Further, there was a time when there was no temple in heaven. How do I know that. Go to Hebrews 8. We'll read verses 1-2 and it says:

1 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,

2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

This tabernacle was made without hands. God Himself made it. And when did He make it? It is my view He made it after Adam and Eve sinned. This tabernacle is there to deal with sin. In governed countries when a law is violated that is dealt with in a court where judges sit to make rulings. There is a process for every kind of violation. In the kingdom of God there is a way in which all sin is handled. If we are unsaved, we will be judged at the Great white throne judgment. Turn to Revelation 20:

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened...

When those books are opened there will be a record of every unconfessed sin every person has committed who will be judged there. Now the people judged at this judgment are the unsaved. In those books every sin is recorded.

Now the verse goes on to say, "And another book was opened which is the book of Life." I think the book of life is opened when the lost are judged to show them that their name is not there. And where does all this take place? This is at the judgment of the lost and this is what the tabernacle was all about, dealing with sin. These people will find what they are all guilty of and here will be determined what kind of judgment they will get.

Now let me tell you about the book of Life. Here is a record of all those who are truly born again, and thus saved. You see, when we are born again and we repent of our sins, our slate is wiped clean. Sometimes after we are saved the Lord puts His finger on certain sins we have committed against certain people and then we need to go clean those up. When we do that, that sin is wiped clean in heaven.

When the Christian dies and goes to heaven or if we meet the Lord in the air at the rapture, then we will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ. This will not be to see what punishment we will get, but what rewards we will receive or lose. We can't deal with all this here.

But before Christ came, sins were taken care of at the tabernacle and later the temple. And this is where the High Priest came in. Israel has just commemorated the Day of Atonement. This is the highest holy day in Israel even today. On the Day of Atonement two goats were brought. Let me recommend our messages on sermonaudio called: Forgiveness: One goat or two? In the OT the Jewish High Priest stood between God and the people. And on the Day of Atonement, he confessed the sins of the people over the one goat and that goat was slain instead of the sinner. The other goat was the scapegoat. It was sent away into the wilderness and was never to be seen again. It showed the bearing away of the sins so they were gone.

But all the sins dealt with in the temple in the OT were only covered. When Christ, our High Priest came and He died in our place, then all those sins were removed. Today Jesus Christ is our High Priest. Now if we did what our text says, which is that we should consider, or think carefully about the High Priest of our confession, we would have a lot to talk about.

Let me just mention this. When Jesus died, the veil in the temple in Jerusalem was torn from top to bottom. This was the veil between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The Most

Holy Place is where God dwells between the cherubim. It is here that sin is judged. Before the true High Priest, that is Jesus Christ, died for us, only one man, the High Priest ever went into the Holy of Holies. If anyone else went in it would have meant death on the spot. But one time, one day of the year, the High Priest entered this room.

So let us read now a chapter in the OT to show what the Day of Atonement was all about. We find this in Leviticus 15 and we'll begin in verse 1:

1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered profane fire before the LORD, and died;

2 and the LORD said to Moses: "Tell Aaron your brother not to come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil, before the mercy seat which is on the ark, lest he die; for I will appear in the cloud above the mercy seat.

3 "Thus Aaron shall come into the Holy Place: with the blood of a young bull as a sin offering, and of a ram as a burnt offering.

4 "He shall put the holy linen tunic and the linen trousers on his body; he shall be girded with a linen sash, and with the linen turban he shall be attired. These are holy garments. Therefore he shall wash his body in water, and put them on.

Aaron was the High Priest. Verse 5:

5 "And he shall take from the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats as a sin offering, and one ram as a burnt offering.

6 "Aaron shall offer the bull as a sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house.

7 "He shall take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.

8 "Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat.

9 "And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the LORD'S lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering.

10 "But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness.

11 "And Aaron shall bring the bull of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bull as the sin offering which is for himself.

12 "Then he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from the altar before the LORD, with his hands full of sweet incense beaten fine, and bring it inside the veil.

13 "And he shall put the incense on the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the Testimony, lest he die.

14 "He shall take some of the blood of the bull and sprinkle it with his finger on the mercy seat on the east side; and before the mercy seat he shall sprinkle some of the blood with his finger seven times.

15 "Then he shall kill the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people, bring its blood inside the veil, do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat.

16 "So he shall make atonement for the Holy Place, because of the uncleanness of the

children of Israel, and because of their transgressions, for all their sins; and so he shall do for the tabernacle of meeting which remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

17 "There shall be no man in the tabernacle of meeting when he goes in to make atonement in the Holy Place, until he comes out, that he may make atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the assembly of Israel.

18 "And he shall go out to the altar that is before the LORD, and make atonement for it, and shall take some of the blood of the bull and some of the blood of the goat, and put it on the horns of the altar all around.

19 "Then he shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleanse it, and consecrate it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.

20 "And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat.

21 "Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man.

22 "The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness.

23 "Then Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of meeting, shall take off the linen garments which he put on when he went into the Holy Place, and shall leave them there.

24 "And he shall wash his body with water in a holy place, put on his garments, come out and offer his burnt offering and the burnt offering

of the people, and make atonement for himself and for the people.

25 "The fat of the sin offering he shall burn on the altar.

26 "And he who released the goat as the scapegoat shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

27 "The bull for the sin offering and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the Holy Place, shall be carried outside the camp. And they shall burn in the fire their skins, their flesh, and their offal.

28 "Then he who burns them shall wash his clothes and bathe his body in water, and afterward he may come into the camp.

29 "This shall be a statute forever for you: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether a native of your own country or a stranger who dwells among you.

30 "For on that day the priest shall make atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.

31 "It is a sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall afflict your souls. It is a statute forever.

32 "And the priest, who is anointed and consecrated to minister as priest in his father's place, shall make atonement, and put on the linen clothes, the holy garments;

33 "then he shall make atonement for the Holy Sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly.

34 *"This shall be an everlasting statute for you, to make atonement for the children of Israel, for all their sins, once a year." And he did as the LORD commanded Moses.*

Now our text said we were to consider, or think carefully about our High Priest. So turn to Hebrews 10:19:

19 *Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,*

Only the High Priest, and that only once a year, went into the Holiest place. But consider this now. Today the Christian can have boldness to enter the Holiest place by the blood of Jesus! If we but grasped the significance of this we would shout, "Glory, Hallelujah!" When we sin, we can enter this Holiest place of all and repent of our sins. We don't wait for a year. We do it when we need it. Repentance is the first word of the Gospel and the greatest news there is on earth. We can be forgiven when we come before God and we repent. And when we do that, those sins are gone. Let me just say, when we sin against people, we must repent to them as well. Oh, the washing, the cleansing that comes in true repentance.

I'll begin in verse 19 again:

19 *Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,*

20 *by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,*

21 *and having a High Priest over the house of God,*

Here is Jesus, our High Priest. Verse 22:

22 *let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

Here is the good news. Jesus Christ has paid for our sins but they are not yet remitted. In order for any sin to be remitted it must be confessed and forsaken. So, John the Baptist and Jesus Christ both came preaching repentance. And here is the good news. If we repent, God removes our sins as far as the east is from the west. They are gone. Glory, hallelujah!

When Jesus Christ died, the veil in the temple, a very thick veil that hung between the holy place and the most holy place was torn in two from top to bottom. What did that mean? The way into the holiest place is now open to us. And Jesus Christ is our High Priest. He stands there between God and us and He clears our sins when we repent. Repentance is one of the most important doctrines of the Bible and it is totally under stressed in our day. Repentance is both the hardest thing we will ever do, and the most rewarding.

CONCL: So, we conclude. The divine instruction of verse 1 was to consider, to think very carefully about our High Priest. We looked at a few things. In verses 2-6 the writer will show us which things He wants us to carefully consider about our High Priest. Then later in the book we will learn much more about this High Priest.

Let me liken these Hebrews to something we understand. Let us say someone gets saved out of a traditional church. They learn we cannot get saved by works. They rejoice in their new faith and then things do not progress as they thought it should. Difficulties set in just like before, and slowly they get discouraged. And then the day comes when they begin to look longingly at the stability of the traditional church, and then the consideration to go back looks more and more appealing.

These Hebrews were considering the teachings of traditional Judaism in its view of angels bringing about the longed-for kingdom. And so the writer has shown them that there is much

more stability in Jesus Christ than in setting their hope in angels.

Then second, they were looking back to Judaism in its religious practices. The feast days. The ministry of the High Priest. They were looking back at all the people they had been friends with and were now ostracised from. They were beginning to long back to life as it had once been. This new faith they had found was not paying off in actual practical.

The first warning the writer gave was: Therefore, we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. Have you observed how easy it is to begin to drift away. Let me give you part of the second warning from 3:12: Beware brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. We do well to consider these warnings.