

Hebrews

Exalting Christ - Encouraging Christians

As people are talking about COVID-19 I hear phrases like this: *I am tired of dealing with the virus. This is more than I expected. Who knew that this would go on so long? When is this going to end?* They are expressions of COVID-Fatigue.

In a different day and time Christians were having similar thoughts, only the issue was not a virus, but persecution. They were shaken. They had faith-fatigue!

It is easy to take our eyes off Jesus, to lose the joy of our salvation, and then focus only on what is in your face, happening to you, or adversely influencing you.

Some key words or phrases in Hebrews:

See/Look, Forgiven, Better, Eternal/Forever, Promises, New Covenant, Pay Attention, Hope, Once for All, Sacrifice, Stand Fast, Faith, High Priest, Not Shaken, Encourage

Background: Author - Holy Spirit. Because of the mention of Timothy people think of Paul whose unique writing style does not fit. Linguistics does not provide a match. Other suggestions are: Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, or an apostle. From the Old Testament references, temple, and priestly descriptions, it is someone of Jewish background. **Time:** The frequent references to the temple seems to imply that it was still standing. It was destroyed in 70 ad. The date of writing is most likely sometime during the persecution of the church under the Emperor Nero (64-68 ad). Paul refers to the church as *the sect called The Way* (Acts 24:14). Followers of Jesus were first called *Christians* in Antioch of Syria (Acts 11:26). Here the church members are called brothers and sisters and saints (13:22,24).

Biggest Issue: They had lost sight of who Christ is and the grace they had received. Some were considering going back to Judaism and the law. Then they would not be persecuted. "Normalcy" looked attractive. Anything to bring peace. Hebrews is a sermon/exhortation (13:22) on the greatness of our salvation in Christ, and why you don't want to even consider turning back from or denying Christ as your Savior. It gives many reasons why not to turn away, and many reasons for holding fast to your faith. Assurance, perseverance, and apostasy are addressed out of a high Christology.

What might drive you to this point? Most of the time it is not about Jesus, but people. Have you been disappointed and were ready to give up on your faith in Christ because of a perceived injustice, mistreatment, disappointment, or misunderstanding? Congregations are not perfect and a wrong word, a perceived slight, an abuse, a moral failure of a leader, shame or guilt from your own sin, broken habits, or simply the busyness of life have all contributed to people walking away from "church". How many could be reconciled or drawn back with encouragement?

Hebrews calls for a renewed perspective, faithfulness that comes from looking at Jesus, and encouragement that comes from right belief, encouraging fellowship, examples of the faithful, and a fresh call to a life of integrity and ministry in Christ. Don't look back, and don't give up. Stand Fast. Don't let circumstances or people separate you from the joy of your salvation or His blessings. Hold fast to the One who

in love sacrificed His life for the forgiveness of your sin, cleansed your conscience, has given you eternal life, intercedes for you as a High Priest, is present with you in power, and is returning one day not to judge, but bring salvation to his saints.

To help us stay strong and move forward in our faith, Jesus gives us access to God in prayer and worship, along with the fellowship of mutual encouragement of other believers. Christ has gone before us and looking to Him both helps and encourages us as we encounter trials, temptations and opposition to our witness for Him.

Chapter 1 - Exalting Christ

The Better Revelation – The Son Superior to Angels

Adoration of the Son, with whom there is no comparison, leads to application in faith (11:6) and heeding His Word (12:25) that is full of promises. When you truly know Jesus, who said, *Abide in Me, And I in you*, and walk in the joy of His Lordship over your life, His Friendship in your life, you experience the fullness of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who reminds us of truth and empowers us to stay faithful. The result is the commitment expressed in the phrase, *No going back, Whatever it takes*.

The declaration that it is worth it all comes from knowing Jesus. Whether the courage to endure is required or loss is experienced, your commitment and strength of faith comes from the encouragement you get by keeping your eyes on Jesus (12:1-2).

Christology

1. A Better Revelation Prophecies fulfilled by Incarnation

The declaration of the sermon begins with adoration of the Son. It is an affirmation that their new faith of the believers is well founded. Someone questioned whether they must abide by the law or abide in Jesus. Who was greater? The longstanding tradition of the prophets had great merit. These are the kinds of discussions that come out when people are wavering under pressure.

Christ is Superior

1:2 The Word of God – the Son is God’s spokesman (The Word John 1:1-2), heir of all things, creator of the universe (John 1:3; Col: 1:16) cf. 12:3 Also, source/author of our faith

1:3 Radiance of God’s image - John. 10:30 *I and the Father are one*, not a mere reflection but God Himself; Colossians 1:15, 2:9

Sustainer of all things - Col 1:17

Priest of God who provided purification, the “perfect” “once for all” sacrifice for sin (10:12-14)

King (Mt. 21:5, Rev. 19:16) who sits on the throne (Eph. 1:20-22, Ph. 2:9-11).

1:4 Superior to the angels – angels are associated with handing the 10 Commandments to Moses, and as beings of great strength. Jesus is greater! He rules over the angels cf. 1:5 ff.

Jesus is not just a better or best image of God. Jesus is the exact image of God, because He is God. He came in the flesh and was exalted back to his throne. (Cf. Phil. 2:5-11). There is no room for improvement, none better. Why would you want to return to second best, turn your back on Jesus, and abide by the law and prophets? Jesus commended as *blessed* those who believed even though they wouldn't see Him (Jn. 20:29) Listen to the testimony of the guard at the foot of the cross. Mt. 27:54 *Truly this man was the Son of God!*

The Spirit who gives witness to the truth of who Jesus is (Jn 15:26), is an eyewitness to us of Creation – Gen. 1:2, Jesus' Birth – Mt. 1:18, Baptism Mt. 3:16 and Death - Lk. 23:46, and Resurrection - Rom. 8:11. The Father, Son and Spirit are One!

1:5-14 Superior to angels, ministering Spirits (:14)

We only know the names of two righteous angels, Michael - Dan, 10:11, Jude 1:9, Archangel; and Gabriel - Dan 9:21: Lk. 1:26. The only other names are the fallen or unrighteous angels - Lucifer Is. 14:12, Beelzebub Mt. 12:24 and the Devil Jn. 8:44; and Abaddon Rev. 9:11.

Angels watch over God's children Mt. 18:10 and Minister to believers as they did to Jesus (Mt. 4:11) after his temptations. They assisted Elisha 2 Kings 6:16, and will announce (1 Thes. 4:16) and accompany (Rev. 19:14) Jesus upon his return. But we are not to worship them (Rev. 22:8), only God!! Revelation 7:9-12!! People of faith from every nation and the angels worship Jesus, *The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world* (Jn. 1:29).