

HEBREWS PART 2

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Let's start with a brief resumé of last week's message.

The Book of Hebrews tells us more than any other book about what Jesus is doing today. If we didn't have the Book of Hebrews ... we wouldn't know what He was doing today. His ministry today is representing us and helping us.

Brief Background

The author is not named. Scholars dispute who wrote it but Paul is the most popular choice ... even though it doesn't have his usual salutation. There are a number of reasons why it is thought to be Paul.

In the beginning, the books of the Bible were organised differently. In the early days, Hebrews used to be in the middle of Paul's writings with Paul's other books.

Strangely enough ... The "Audience" is not clearly identified. Although not specifically addressed to Hebrews ... Jewish Christians ... this seems clear from the topics discussed. There are many references to the Old Testament: 29 direct quotations and 53 allusions ... a total of 82 altogether.

This would be more relevant to Hebrew people. The book is almost certainly addressed to Jewish believers ... Jewish converts to Jesus. It appears that they were in danger of turning back. Why? Because of persecution ... criticism ... from other Jews or their own families. Maybe because of disappointment after the passage of time ... of prophecies not working out ... that hadn't been fulfilled. Many

decades had passed and no signs of the returning Jesus ... and some of the older saints dying.

Paul's letter is one of exhortation and encouragement. Look at the conclusion of the letter.

Hebrews 13:22 (NKJV)

22 And I appeal to you, brethren, **bear with the word of exhortation, (the message of encouragement) for I have written to you in few words. (Relatively few words!)**

Hebrews 13:22 (Message)

22 **Friends, please take what I've written most seriously. I've kept this as brief as possible;** I haven't piled on a lot of extras.

Hebrews 13:23 (NKJV)

23 Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly. (*Looks like this writer is a co-worker with Timothy. We do know that Paul and Timothy did work closely together).*

If you were going to write to Hebrew believers ... who would be best qualified. Who was a noted rabbi ... taught at the feet of Gamaliel ... the best educated ... the best person to write this letter? Paul!

If we want to look for a theme ... a way we can understand the big picture ... a foundation ... there's a key word: **BETTER**. Chapter after chapter ... "Better" used 11 times ... now better than what was before.

CHAPTER 1 ... BETTER MESSENGER/SPOKESMAN

Hebrews 1:1-2 (NKJV)

1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

You and I have a Better Messenger. He is now speaking to you and me through His own Son ... The Ultimate Messenger.

Hebrews 1:4-5 (NKJV)

4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

5 For to which of the angels did He ever say:

"You are My Son,

Today I have begotten You"? And again:

"I will be to Him a Father,

And He shall be to Me a Son"?

Jesus is a Better Spokesman. God is talking to us. We are important to Him.

CHAPTER 2 ... A BETTER MAN

Hebrews 2:1-4 (NKJV) There are 2 major warnings

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, (neglect doesn't just happen. We don't set out to leave. We just drift away. People make light of their potential) which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,

4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

God backed up and endorsed this message. It is unique!

Hebrews 2:9-12 (NKJV)

9 But we see Jesus, (Don't just look at yourself. We don't have the power to live a perfect life before God. We are destined to fail ... on our own. But we have our faithful High Priest to help us) who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

10 For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, (we do get to share in what Jesus has) to make the captain of their salvation perfect (more complete) through sufferings.

11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one (Father), for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

12 saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; (brothers and sisters ... family)

In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."

Hebrews 2:17-18 (NKJV)

17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, (brothers and sisters) 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. (Jesus came as a fleshly human being. He did that for one reason ... to help us obtain this great salvation)

This letter reveals Jesus as our High Priest. Jesus came to BRING US INTO HIS FAMILY. He paid a huge sacrifice ... but not "just" at the cross. Quite a sacrifice. Look at the next few verses. They tell us what Jesus did before He went to the cross.

Philippians 2:5-7 (NKJV)

5 Let this mind (attitude) be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

Jesus "emptied Himself" ... "stripped Himself of all privilege" ... "He put aside everything that belonged to Him" and it is talking about the fact that Jesus was with God in Heaven ... was God ... had been the Logos for all eternity ... AND HE GAVE IT ALL UP!! Would you give all of that up? Eventually ... He even gave up His physical life. How valuable in God's eyes are you and I? What price did God have to pay? What price did Jesus have to pay? We are very valuable to God.

Philippians 2:8-11 (NKJV)

8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (That WILL HAPPEN!!)

We should reflect that we are part of a family. I have a brother. He is a King. He sits on a throne. He died for me. How catastrophic it would be to fail!

CHAPTER 3 ... A BETTER HOUSE/HOME

Hebrews 3:1-2 (NKJV)

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

2 who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house.

We are "Holy Brothers" ... (*Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers because we are holy*) ... how do we feel about that? Jesus is our High Priest. Jesus as High Priest is only mentioned in the Book of Hebrews ... 10 times.

"Consider" ... Fix your mind on Jesus ... The Great Messenger who is ...a Better Man/Brother/Apostle.

Hebrews 3:3-6 (NKJV)

3 For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honour than the house.

4 For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.

5 And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward,

6 but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

This is a Great House ... Home (Greek:Oikos = House/home/family) ... Us! Jesus is building a better home built up of brothers/sisters. If ... of course ... we hold fast to the end. Let's look at some verses with the use of the word "home/house/building".

Ephesians 2:19-22 (NKJV)

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ("corporate" house ... Made up of individual saints)

20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

1 Peter 2:4-5 (NKJV)

4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,

5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:9 (NKJV)

9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light;

The main part here is that we are stones assembled together ... shaped and formed to build this better house.

1 Corinthians 6:17-20 (NKJV)

17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

18 Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which you have from God, and you are not your own?

20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. (Individually ... we are a home to God)

2 Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1 (NKJV)

14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

15 And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. (God dwells ... Makes His home ... In Us) As God has said:

"I will dwell in them

And walk among them.

I will be their God,

And they shall be My people." (Relationship)

17 Therefore

"Come out from among them

And be separate, says the Lord.

Do not touch what is unclean,

And I will receive you."

18 "I will be a Father to you,

And you shall be My sons and daughters,

Says the Lord Almighty."

Chapter 7

1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, **perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

We are family ... we are God's building ... we are His home.

Jesus is Master of a building project. Jesus is a Better Home Builder. Jesus Christ is over this house ... a better home ... better relationships. Provided that ... we hold fast to the end.

The Book of Hebrews is talking about relationship.

Hebrews 3:7-11 (NKJV) ... MAJOR WARNING NUMBER 3

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

"Today, if you will hear His voice,

8 **Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, (Meribah)**

In the day of trial in the wilderness, (Massah)

9 Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,

And saw My works forty years.

10 **Therefore I was angry with that generation,**

And said, 'They always go astray in their heart,

And they have not known My ways.'

11 **So I swore in My wrath,**

'They shall not enter My rest.' "

Hebrews 3:8 (KJV)

8 Harden **not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:**

Another quote from the Old Testament ... Psalm 95:7-11.

These people did provoke God over and over again. Israel rebelled ... suffered penalty ... did not enter their "rest". How much worse if we

depart? This is not just an interesting reference to history. Read the next verse. Paul brings this right up to today.

Hebrews 3:12-13 (NKJV)

12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; (we ought to find ways to encourage each other)

13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (Sin is deceitful. It will seem like it is no big deal. You might say ... only this once ... only a little ... I can get away with this ... I'm in control ... I can stop any time ... It's just my personality [I was born with a temper] Don't harden your hearts ... become obstinate! ... stubborn ... difficult to reach).

Hebrews 3:14-19 (NKJV)

14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,

15 while it is said:

"Today, if you will hear His voice,

Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." (Sin will deceive us)

16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?

17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?

18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, (Greek: katapausis ... used 8 times) but to those who did not obey?

19 So we see that they could not enter in (to the rest) because of unbelief. (Let's learn from their experience).

Here in this verse the word "rest" is referring to the Land of Canaan ... Promised Land ... Glorious Future ... under God's blessings ... at rest

(potentially) from enemies ... at peace with God ... no more provocations.

The word "Rest" is clearly also a foreshadow: a future rest in the millennium ... satan gone ... Jesus (Builder) on the earth ... peace ... prosperity ... freedom from sickness and disease ... freedom from sin ... from today's world leaders and politicians.

We will pursue this "rest" a bit further.

HEBREWS 4 ... A BETTER REST

Hebrews 4:9 (NKJV) This is a central verse to Hebrews Chapter 4
9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

"Rest" verse 9 = Greek: Sabbatismos ... not identical in meaning to other types of "rest" in the other verses.

People who don't want to keep The Sabbath say, "there's no clear, explicit command in the New Testament". But ... Yes there is! This is one!

"Sabbatismos" = only once in the New Testament. However ... it is found at least 5 different times in other Christian literature.

(Anchor Bible Dictionary, vol. 5, p. 855)

Hebrews 4:9 states, "There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God." The words "sabbath rest" translate the Greek noun sabbatismos, a unique word in the NT. This term appears also in **Plutarch** (**Superst. 3 [Moralia 166a]**) for **sabbath observance**, and in **four post-canonical Christian writings** ... for seventh-day "sabbath celebration".

So ... Sabbatismos clearly means "Sabbath Observance" + "Sabbath Celebration".

Other Translations:

Hebrews 4:9 (WYCLIFFE 1384)

9 Therefore the Sabbath is left to the people of God

Hebrews 4:9 (ESV)

9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,

Hebrews 4:9 (NET)

9 Consequently a Sabbath rest remains for the people of God.

Hebrews 4:9 (NIV 1984)

9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;

George Lamsa's Ancient Aramaic Bible: "it is therefore the duty of the people of God to keep The Sabbath".

So ... using "Rest" in Hebrews 4:9 is misleading and may be deliberate. It means: TO KEEP THE 7TH DAY SABBATH

Paul is explaining why the Hebrews should not go back ... explaining the Better Messenger than the prophets ... Better Priest ... Better House ... Better Covenant with Better Promises ... Better Sacrifice ... Better Way ... Better things. But ... not everything is therefore over and finished with. The 7th DAY SABBATH REMAINS for the people of God. Paul makes it clear that it continues and gives 3 reasons why. There are 3 purposes mentioned as to why we keep The Sabbath. The 3 things that it symbolises.

Understanding Chapter 4:9 is the Key to Chapter 4.

We have just talked about how the people of Israel didn't enter into God's rest.

Hebrews 4:1 (NKJV)

1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.

There is a future promise ... enter His yet future rest (Katapausis) ... Millennium ... Eternal home.

Hebrews 4:2 (NKJV)

2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.

That's where they failed. We shouldn't!

Hebrews 4:3-11 (NKJV)

3 For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said:
"So I swore in My wrath,
'They shall not enter My rest,' " although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works";

(Genesis 2:2)

5 and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest."

6 Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience,

7 again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said:

"Today, if you will hear His voice,

Do not harden your hearts."

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, (Katapausis) then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.

9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

10 For he who has entered His rest (*Katapausis*) has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. (How did God rest?

Verse 4 tells us. We rest on the 7th day in the same way that God did from his creation works. We keep the 7th day Sabbath)

11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.