

Hebrews

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to begin chapter 3 this morning of Hebrews, and I want to remind you that this is an epistle that absolutely must be understood in the light of the audience to whom it is addressed.

One of the most unfortunate things that occurs in interpreting the epistle to the Hebrews is that so many in the Christian church want to Christianize Hebrews.

You can't do that. You shouldn't do that, but that does keep them from trying. And by Christianizing it, I mean try to make things that were to be interpreted of and appealed or applied directly to the Jewish people and bring them over and make them part and parcel of the church and the church's responsibilities.

You cannot do that. We need to understand that the text of a given message is always involving the audience to whom it is addressed.

And while there are wonderful principles, I call them abiding truths that are to be applied from the book of Hebrews, in the same way that there are abiding truths and principles, spiritual principles to be applied from the book of Genesis.

[1 : 2 6] But that is by way of application, not by way of interpretation. And there's a huge difference between interpreting the text and applying the text.

When you interpret the text, that means you are determined to get at what was in the mind of the writer when he wrote it.

What was the writer trying to say and communicate to the audience? And when you understand that the writer is writing to a Jewish constituency, you've got to take that into consideration.

Because if you don't, it's just like reading somebody else's personal mail and wondering why it doesn't make sense to you. When it talks about Antilles and the crops that are going to be put out and so on and so on, you read it with a puzzled look and you say, Well, what is this? It doesn't mean anything.

Well, it's not addressed to you. You're reading someone else's mail. You can't expect to understand it like that. So, we've got to keep in mind that the letter to the Hebrews was written to the Hebrews, to the Jewish people, in the same way that Moses wrote the Pentateuch.

[2 : 3 7] And it is amazing how long these documents have been around and how much they still suffer from misunderstanding. There is a huge difference between making an application of a text of Scripture and going and doing likewise.

Someone makes the blanket statement irresponsibly that we're supposed to do everything the Bible says. Really? Well, when did you offer your last animal? When did you attend the Feast of Pentecost?

And where was it? And have you been to the temple? And have you offered yourself there at the temple? A sacrifice in your book? Of course not. We say, well, and by the way, you do keep the Sabbath, don't you?

And you do have a kosher kitchen, don't you? You do not eat shrimp, I take it. You do not eat shrimp. And you certainly do not eat pork. Well, now, wait a minute.

Those prohibitions are valid. They're real. They're true. But to whom were those prohibitions given? They were not given to those in the body of Christ.

[3 : 43] We live in a different administration. Those things are passé. And they are no longer to be applied to people today.

Actually, they are no longer even to be applied to Jews. Because that old covenant has been done away with the death of Christ. So, keeping that in mind as we look at Hebrews here, and opening chapter 3, the first word we see is a mistake.

It's a mistake by way of reaching a wrong interpretation. And it starts with wherefore. There's an old cliché among preachers that goes something like this.

Whenever you see the word therefore or wherefore in the Bible, always stop and see what it's there for. Because it is invariably a word of conclusion.

It's not a word of beginning. Terrible way to start a new chapter is therefore or wherefore. Because the writer is drawing a conclusion from what he just said in the preceding chapter.

[4 : 51] And you understand that the chapter divisions and the verse divisions are not inspired. God didn't have anything to do with those. Matter of fact, fellas, if you were to pick up a Bible from 500 years ago, you would not find any chapter divisions in it at all.

And no verse divisions. They didn't exist. They were not added until like the 1500s, chapters and verses. So, they are not part of the inspired text.

And you have to take into consideration, when you come to the end of a chapter, that might not be a good place to break. So, what I want to do on page 2F here, is just back up a little bit and talk about the person of Christ being a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

For in that, he himself, Christ, has suffered being tempted. He is able to succor them that are tempted. Period. End of chapter. Terrible.

Terrible. What you need to do is keep right on reading and forget the chapter division. He is able to succor to comfort those who are tempted. Therefore, because of that, based on that, in conclusion to that, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, this is why you should consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

[6 : 22] So, you see, there is a conclusion and a continuation. There is a flow there. But when you break the chapter, at the end of chapter 2, you completely destroy the flow.

You break the continuity. You disturb the thought that the original writer is trying to make. And he is continuing on just as you are. When you write a letter, well, you may label it page 1, page 2, or page 3.

But you don't break it up in chapters like this. And they've got to, you know, I say there is one basic advantage to chapter and verse divisions in the Bible.

Just one. And that is it helps you locate a text. You can turn to the chapter. It would be really difficult if a preacher had to tell his audience, All right, everybody turn to about the middle of Isaiah.

It's a whole lot better if you can say, turn to Isaiah 35 and verse 1. So, the chapter and verse divisions are provided for the location of the text, but that's really the only thing they're good for.

[7 : 33] Keep that in mind when you study the Bible. All right? So, this is a conclusion. And he reminds us that we are partakers or recipients of the heavenly calling.

Paul reminds us in Philippians 3.20 that our citizenship is in heaven. Our place of permanent residence is in heaven.

And because you are a citizen of heaven, there are things that accrue to your benefit just because you are a citizen of heaven.

In the same way, being a citizen of the United States, there are certain benefits and rights that accrue to you just because you are a citizen.

You are entitled to those per our Constitution. So, Paul is reminding these believers here in the early church, and as I pointed out to you, I think it is necessary to date the writing of Hebrews prior to 70 A.D.

[8 : 48] And we conclude that because in 70 A.D. the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. And it is inconceivable that the writer of Hebrews, who frequently mentions the temple and Jerusalem, etc., that he would not have taken into consideration that that has been destroyed.

So, you can be sure that this is written before 70 A.D. And we are to consider the apostle. This is a name, one of several names given to Christ.

And an apostle is different from a disciple. A disciple, the word disciple, in the Greek, simply means a learner or a follower.

Now, Christ had thousands and thousands of disciples. People who hung on his every word. I'm sure there were more than 5,000 there when he fed 5,000 men, plus women and children.

And those who partook of the loaves and the fishes. And then, again, when he fed the 4,000, plus women and children. Likely, the vast majority of those were disciples.

[9 : 57] They were learners. They were followers after Christ, of whom it is said that the common people heard him gladly. But an apostle? That's an entirely different thing.

Out of all of the disciples, Christ chose 12. And he, in effect, promoted them from disciple to apostle.

And he gave them authority that they did not have. He imbued them with authority, as indicated in Matthew chapter 10.

He gave them authority over unclean spirits, over disease, etc. And he sent them forth two by two to replicate his ministry wherever they went. So, the word apostle literally means a sent one with the authority of the sending one.

Now, that's entirely different from a disciple. An apostle is one who was sent by his master, And he possessed his master's authority to conduct his ministry.

[11 : 07] In the same way that Peter and James and John and the others were sent by Christ with Christ's authority.

So, Jesus was sent by the Father with the Father's authority. And this is why he said, I do those things that please him.

And if you read John's gospel, for instance, You will find time and time and time again Where Christ refers to him that sent me. Him that sent me.

And God so loved the world that he gave. And Christ came as a result of that gift. He was that gift. So, an apostle is one who came with the authority.

It's kind of like an ambassador. When we send an ambassador to a foreign country, He or she speaks with the authority of the United States government behind them.

[12 : 09] Because they are given that authority by the sending agency. So, Christ is referred to, among other titles and names, As an apostle and an high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

Now, later in Hebrews 5, we will come to the reality That Christ was not qualified to be a priest After the order of Levi or Aaron.

The book of Leviticus is the handbook of the priests. And it was penned by Moses under inspiration to give directions to the priests.

And these were Levites. They were from the tribe of Levi. Levi was the third born son of Leah. And that's going to be the priestly tribe. Christ was not qualified to be a priest after the tribe of Levi Because he was from the tribe of Judah.

So, he had a peculiar, one-of-a-kind priesthood. His priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek. And we will see that when he surfaces in Genesis chapter 14, I believe it is, a little later.

[13 : 26] So, Christ is our high priest, but not in the Levitical order with all of the other priests. He is of the tribe or of the order of Melchizedek.

And actually, it isn't a tribe at all. Melchizedek was a singular individual. So, nonetheless, he is still our high priest. And he has identified Christ Jesus, who was, verse 2, who was faithful, reliable, dependable to him that appointed him.

As also, Moses was faithful in all his house. In the same way that Moses carried out the dictates of God, Christ carried them out, the dictates of God as well.

But he did it without the flaws that Moses exhibited in striking the rock when he should have spoken to it, and so on. And then when he says in verse 3, And this man, of course, he's talking about the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

And he is simply identified here as a man in his humanity. This man. In other words, this man, Jesus, was counted worthy of more glory than Moses.

[14 : 44] That is, worthy of more honor, more recognition, and more credit. Why? Well, because his accomplishments far exceeded that of Moses.

And he goes on to explain why it is that Christ is so much worthier than Moses. Inasmuch as he who hath built of the house hath more honor than the house.

That is, the house is simply the product of the builder. And it is the builder who takes precedent over that which is built.

Because the builder is the originator of that which is built. And that's why he's referred to as the apostle and high priest of our profession. And he is due more honor than the house. For every house is builded by some man.

But, he that built all things is God. Now, if you'll go to your sheet, the next page, which would be page 1042, and that is 3B.

[15 : 49] We will continue with our text in chapter 3. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after.

But, that's a conjunction of contrast. And the writer of Hebrews is making a very important distinction between Moses and Christ.

And he is saying, in effect, these are two entirely different entities. While it is true, Jesus Christ was human in his humanity.

He is deity. He is of God. He is the God-man, the theotropic person. But, Christ, by way of contrast, as a son over his own house, whose house are we.

If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope. Firm unto the end. Now, I want you to look at that carefully.

[16 : 59] And tell me, what do you see here? Do you see conditionality here? What is implied with this word, if?

What is he talking about? It's not guaranteed. Okay. Now, why is it not guaranteed? Because the if may not be. Okay.

It is not guaranteed because it is conditioned by if we hold fast. Now, wait a minute.

What's going on here? There are those who apply this to the Christian church, the body of Christ. And they say, you who have come to faith in Jesus Christ, have eternal life, provided you hold fast.

But if you don't hold fast, you lose your eternal life, and you'll end up in hell. And this is a verse that is used as a proof text.

[18 : 07] If we hold fast. If we endure to the end. Those that don't endure will be lost. There is no application here to the body of Christ. This is talking to a vacillating Jewish constituency, some of whom are for Christ, some of whom are not, and some of whom are on the fence, trying to decide which way to go.

What the writer of Hebrews here is doing is trying to get these Jews, and they are exclusively Jews, to embrace fully the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not be dissuaded by arguments or persecution or whatever is going to come against them.

This is a very volatile time. I do not think we have the right to read in to what is written to the Hebrews, the eternal truths that are reserved for the body of Christ.

We are in Him. We are complete in Him. We are bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh. We are baptized, identified into the body of Christ.

We have Christ's life in us. That's an entirely different kind of thing than what he is writing here to these Hebrews. This is a difficult time. It is a confusing time.

[19 : 28] It is a time when most of the believers were Jews, not Gentiles. But the body of Christ, of which Christ is the head, has not come into focus, not come into being, and will not until the Apostle Paul comes on the scene and gives these truths that are pertinent to the church.

Joe? There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, though, you know, after the church comes in, right?

That's right. After the church comes in. But this is before that. This is Paul stating this, though. Paul came from the Jews and the Gentiles. Right. How can we take this letter by Paul?

I know he's writing to Jews, but make some other kind of interpretation of how we connect with God. It sounds like you're saying here that the Jew is connected to God in some way different than the body of Christ is.

I think that's true. I think that is true. And what I am saying here is that in this letter, the Jew is connecting with God in the same way that the Jew connected with God during and in the Old Testament.

[20 : 46] Now, how was that? And I would be the first to admit, I would be the first to admit, I am still looking for a good definition of what it meant to believe in the Old Testament.

In the new, the body of Christ, it's quite obvious. We believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And our faith and our trust is in him as the one who died for our sins.

But, what did the Jew believe before Jesus was ever born in order to be justified? One God. Well, one God. And we know that they believed God.

And a key verse, a key verse is in Genesis 15, 6, that says, Abraham believed God and it was counted to him, that is to Abraham, for righteousness.

Now, what that means, fellas, simply is this. Because Abraham did not have the kind of righteousness that a holy God could accept.

[22 : 07] Because Abraham, just like us, was a flawed individual. He was a sinner. He was a sinner, like all of us. So, what God told Abraham is, if you will believe me, and if you will trust in me, then I, I will regard your faith, your belief, for the righteousness that you don't have.

I will accept your belief in place of the righteousness that I require. So, Abraham was justified or declared righteous on the basis of faith he believed God.

But the question is, what did others after Abraham, what did others after Abraham have to believe? Because their situation was different from Abraham's.

I mean, God told Abraham, I'm going to make of you the father of many nations, and out of your loins all the world would be blessed and everything. Well, that wasn't what God said to all the other Jews.

How were all the other Jews believed? What did they believe? And the only conclusion that I can come to is, somebody said, I think Joe mentioned, that you had to come to grips with the reality that, well, let me put it this way.

[23 : 25] Deuteronomy 6.4 nails it as well as anything. It is referred to as the Shema. And a Jewish baby would learn this almost before he could learn to say Mama and Dada.

And that is, here, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And that was in complete contrast to all of the nations around them that worshipped multiple gods and idols.

So, a Jew had to believe, I think, among other things, that there was one God, and that was the true God of Israel, which gives meaning to thou shalt have no other gods before me, etc.

So, a Jew had to come to that. And, when they offered sacrifice, the only thing that they offered sacrifice for was their own wrongdoing, their own sin.

And, God said he would accept the innocent animal sacrificed on behalf of the guilty human, and he would accept that as an atonement.

[24 : 35] And the word atonement means a covering. A covering. But the covering was only temporal. So, when one sinned again, guess what?

Another sacrifice. A covering. See, the atonement literally means the covering. And we'll see it later in Hebrews, how it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin.

Couldn't do that. All they could do was cover it, so God wouldn't have to look at it. And when he saw the blood, he would accept that as a sacrifice. But, when John introduced Jesus, he said, Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

That's entirely different. There is a permanence that the sin is taken away. Forgiven. Forgotten. Cleansed. Buried in the depths of the deepest sea.

Cast behind his back. Sought for and not found. All of those things are true of the believer in Christ. And I do not see how that applies to the Old Testament situation.

[25 : 46] That seems to have been an ongoing kind of thing. So, I'd appreciate any input that you've got on this. Kevin, what? You said just one word.

That would be here on English. This is the word of if. You brought the word if up. Yes. Okay. First of all, if it's not a word from the household of faith.

Okay. We live by faith. And this, there's a difference between knowing God, knowing of Christ, and being in Christ.

Oh, yeah. That's the word in Christ. Because when you're in Christ, it leaves no room for condemnation. Amen. That's what the word says. Amen. There's no condemnation.

Now, you've got to look at the man who's written it. This is a man who was killing God's people, wounding God's people, binding them up, beating them up, and throwing them into jail.

[26 : 58] To where they got so bad, to where Jesus himself had to come and say, Hey, man, what you doing here? What? Wait a minute. Hold up. Why are you persecuting me, man?

You're kicking against this. You're kicking against these priests. You know, your feet are going to start bleeding. What's wrong with you? And look, this is the very same man that has written two-thirds of the New Testament where each and every one of us in here live and grow by.

So there leaves no room for condemnation. And even after this, he said, I'm still doing things that I, he said, things that I want to do. Sometimes I feel myself. I'm just angry.

Yeah. Because. But oh, wretch man, that's, oh, wretch man that I am. You want to finish that part? Oh, wretch man that I am what?

Who can? There is no F anymore. There is no F. I'm in Christ, Jesus. If I mess up, I'm going to get a spanking. I'm born in heaven. Yep. Amen. I don't, there's no F.

[28 : 07] Amen. At all. Amen. But I'm out, you know, who's the condemnation because I'm in Christ. And this is a huge distinction that Kevin has made between where we are now and where these Jews were back here.

There is a difference. And later, we're going to see because one of the great burdens of the writer of Hebrews is to encourage and to prod those Jews who had believed in Christ as their Savior to press on and to press on in the face of persecution that they were enduring on a day-to-day basis.

Because let me tell you something. It was really, really dangerous and tough sledding to be a Jew who believed in Jesus as your Messiah during that first century.

It could cost you your life. And it did cost the lives of many. Yes, it did. So this is a very peculiar time that the writer of Hebrews is addressing that does not now exist.

That's the point. It doesn't exist any more than those in the Old Testament times no longer exist. Dana, you had a comment. If I understood the question correctly, the question is what makes a Jew a Jew?

[29 : 31] And to me it seems like the, and I'm not meaning to put Abraham on the same level as Christ, but an Israelite that believed in the teachings and the scripture of Abraham was a Jew and followed those.

Yeah. Well, and you know, this is we Christians follow the teachings of Christ. The Jewish people, the Jewish people are like the people of every other faith.

Whether you're talking Christian or Muslim or whatever. And that is there were those who were thoroughly committed to it and could not be dissuaded or dislodged from it.

And then there were those who took it kind of nominally. No big deal. Well, you got to believe something. So I guess I'll believe this is as good as anything else. In other words, every faith has people who are loosely committed.

What do we call them in Christendom? We call them Sioneers. The only time you see them in church is Christmas and Easter. That's because, why? Because, yes, they're Christians, but Christianity is just not that big a deal.

[30 : 48] I mean, you got to believe something and besides, I was raised in a Christian home so that makes me a Christian, blah, blah, blah. That's where a lot of people are. Well, it was no different with the Jews. In fact, many in Judaism at the time Christ was here, particularly those of the authority faction, the religious establishment, they had long since engaged in religious corruption and had departed far from the clear teachings of Moses, for which Christ roundly read them out time and again, calling blind guides, guides of blind guides who were guiding the blind.

And this is the kind of situation that existed during the time Christ was here and before and after. So, Caiaphas and his father's name, what was the name of the other high priest?

Caiaphas and Annas, the other high priest. They were father-in-law and son-in-law. And they had corrupted Judaism to the extent that it was just absolutely atrocious. They were even getting a rip-off from the temple and a kickback from the animals that were sold there and all of this stuff that was going on.

So, these were what you would call very poor practicing Jews. And these would not have been justified before God as were the loyal and faithful Jews.

Roger? Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. Yes, absolutely.

[32 : 25] You've got to keep that in mind. Thank you for making that observation. That from the time, from the time Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, the first ones who came to faith in Jesus as their Messiah were Jews.

exclusively Jews. And you do not even have a non-Jew introduced to the issue until you get all the way up to chapter 10 in the book of Acts with Cornelius.

And the reason that Cornelius raised such a fuss was because he was not a Jew. He was a Gentile. And that gives you an idea that early on, early on, all of the believers were Jews.

And you wouldn't call them Christians either. You would call them Jewish believers. And Christian, the term didn't even develop until chapter 13 of the book of Acts at Antioch.

They were called Christians first. So we've got some really important distinctions that are going to be drawn here. And the writer of Hebrews is speaking to Judaism, most of which were still estranged from Christ and did not believe him to be the Messiah.

[33 : 44] It was only a small percentage of those who actually did. It's chapters 1 and 2 which you've just covered which Paul was trying to drive that home. Exactly. Who Christ is. This is who he is who he says he is.

He's the old one to come. That's what he did in chapter 1 and 2. And throughout Hebrews, he is going to present Christ as the one who was worthy of the Jews belief and trust.

And why he was worthy. And he is going to confirm those who already believed and encourage them and urge them to press on and continue on in their faith and, hear me now, and not go back because of persecution so that they submitted to the pressure and said, alright, alright, I renounce Christ as my Savior.

And let me tell you something, that went on a lot because sometimes it would save your life to be able and willing to say you renounce Christ as your Savior.

And what the writer of Hebrews is saying is, don't do that! Don't cave in! Hang in there! And yes, it may cost you your life, but it's worth it.

[35 : 03] That's the point that's going to be made throughout Hebrews. We'll see it develop more and more as we go along.