

Hebrews

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, I trust that all of you have a scripture sheet. I do have a few extras, but I think everybody got one. And believe it or not, we are going to arrive at the beginning of chapter 13.

Thought we would never get there, but here we are. And this is the last chapter in the book of Hebrews. We still do not know for certain who the author of this document is, but it has been suggested, and probably so far as conventional wisdom is concerned, I think it is safe to say that most scholars over the past, well, I guess we'd say over the past 2,000 years, most scholars have come out in favor of the Pauline authorship of Hebrews.

And that's probably, that's personally my position as well. Well, we cannot say that it is definite, but there are a lot of things that seem to point to this being the Apostle Paul.

And the point was made earlier that because Paul is the author, and because it is written to a Jewish constituency, as the name indicates, Hebrews, and it is just loaded with things Jewish.

I mean, much of what is in the epistle to the Hebrews would be almost like a foreign language to most Gentiles, because it's got so much in it that has to do with Judaism, and the law of Moses, and the rituals and everything.

[1 : 3 8] Things with which Jews would be fully familiar, but non-Jews would not. And some are of the opinion that this is one reason why Paul did not identify himself, because by the Jewish community as a whole, the former Saul of Tarsus was looked upon as a turncoat, as a traitor to his own faith, the law of Moses.

Because, so to speak, he jumped ship. He came over to the position of accepting, recognizing, and proclaiming Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah of Israel.

And that, of course, was a position that was adopted only by a minority of Jews. The vast minority, including the leadership establishment, never came to that position.

In fact, they began persecuting fellow Jews who did believe that. And it breaks out as early as chapter 4 in the book of Acts. And you will recall that the chief persecutor of the Jews was Saul of Tarsus himself.

And as a result of the Damascus Road thing, he completely reversed himself, and he is now preaching the faith he once sought to destroy. But how then do his Jewish countrymen look upon him?

[3 : 1 2] They look upon him as a traitor. And some suggest that that's why he did not introduce the letter to the Hebrews the way he does when he writes to the Philippians, the Corinthians, the Ephesians.

And what's the very first word in each of those epistles? Paul! An apostle of Jesus Christ and a servant and so on. And you'll find that in Hebrews.

And some suggest that if the Jewish constituency knew that it was this turncoat that wrote Hebrews, they would not want anything to do with it.

Wouldn't even read it, they would castigate it. So, that has some real merit. Joe? Mark, when you get to verse 3 this morning, you'll see he uses the word body.

And in Scripture, Paul is the only one that uses the body of Christ in Scripture. So, he tips himself off in verse 3. That's another possibility. By using the word body. And he also had a very close association with young Timothy, who was like a protege of his, to whom he also wrote two letters, 1st and 2nd Timothy.

[4 : 24] And the last one, of course, was probably the final thing that the Apostle Paul ever penned. And in that, he talks about the time is at hand.

I fought a good fight. I've kept the faith. You know, the time of his departure is near. He recognized that he was going to be departing this world by way of execution. And that last letter he wrote to Timothy.

And even though I don't have it in the Scripture sheet, because it doesn't go this far, but those of you who have a Bible and are following along in your Bible, look, if you will, at the last few verses of the chapter, and you will see that he refers, once again, to Timothy.

So, there is every bit... These are all evidences, I think, that lean heavily toward Paul having been the author. So, he begins chapter 13, not with a new chapter in his writing, but it's a new chapter with us.

And be reminded, as we pointed out in the past, that these letters, these texts in the Bible, were never written in chapters.

[5 : 30] They were just written as a continuous document. No chapter separation, and they didn't even have any verse separation. It was just one lengthy document.

And the chapters and verses were not added until about... Perhaps about 600 years ago. And that may seem like a long time, but we're only talking about the 1400s.

So, that's really not all that long. And for the first, say, 1400 years, all of these books of the Bible existed without chapters and without verses. So, you need to keep that in mind when you're trying to study the text of the Scripture and realize that in the original language, the original document, the original autograph, no chapter breaks existed.

Thus, the flow and the continuity was maintained. But with our chapter divisions, it tends to be broken because we very frequently come to an end of a chapter and quit and assume that the beginning of the next chapter is the beginning of a whole new thought.

And many times it isn't. It's a continuation. So, in verse 1, he says, let brotherly love continue. And we've defined what this kind of love is in the past.

[6 : 52] It is a love. It is love that is dictated by the will, not by the emotions. And there is where many, many people depart from the concept of love.

Hollywood and the media and the entertainment industry, et cetera, they are probably the principal violators in misleading people, particularly young people, as to what love is.

and for all too many, love is a feeling. It is an emotion. And I do not mean to downplay that in the sense that feelings and emotions are worthless.

They're not. They're very, very valuable. And life would be so humdrum and boring if it were not for emotions and feelings. and there is absolutely nothing wrong and it's commendable to have strong emotional feelings and ties toward a person of the opposite sex.

But that is not the driving thing that maintains the connection. It is the will that does that, not the feelings or the emotions. And so many times people are given the impression that I will love you as long as I feel like it or as long as I feel loving towards you.

[8 : 21] And they fall in and out of love and go through multiple partners and it's a frantic search for happiness and they never discover what true love is. Biblical love, the kind of love that God has for us and the kind of love that He has shed abroad in our hearts that enables us to love one another is what the Greeks call agape love.

And that is a love that is dictated not by the emotions but by the will. Love is an act of the will.

And I've likened this to, and I can't think of a better illustration, I've likened this to, both of these are legitimate and both are necessary, but the will is like the engine of a train that drives the train.

And the caboose, sorry to say this, but that's a vanishing American institution. Trains don't even have cabooses anymore, do they then?

But back in the good old days, when they had a caboose, a red caboose on the end, that represents the feelings, the emotions. But so many times in our culture, people are trying to use the caboose to drive the train.

[9 : 43] And they want to put the emotions and the feelings out front. And that's not going to work. It is an act of the will that causes people to enter into a marriage relationship.

And that is the only expression, that and I do, is the only expression that any clergyman I know is going to accept. Will you have this man to be your lawful wedded husband, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, so long as you both shall live?

And she says, I will as long as I love him. That's not going to fly. It just has to be an I will or I do.

And you muster those words with your will. Not your feelings and emotions. And that is so very important.

Fellas, this is precisely why so many marriages come apart. The will to love is gone. And what this means is, what this means is, we are to love one another whether we feel like it or not.

[10 : 54] Because sometimes, you may not feel like it. Sometimes your mate may just irritate you enough to drive you right up the wall. And all your mate is doing is expressing her humanity.

and you've got some of your own. And I can promise you that you probably have driven her right up the wall too. But nonetheless, the abiding glue that, this is in the word that, that, that the Hebrew uses in, in, in, in, in Genesis chapter 2, that the husband and wife shall be bonded together and the two shall become twain and believe and cleave and the word for the Hebrew there in cleave literally means to be glued to.

To become one with. so that the two of you, even though you do not forfeit your independent personality and your independent will, those things are meshed together to form a whole new dynamic unit of one.

And it's the most incredible thing that God has provided for humanity. It also typifies the relationship as Paul points out in Ephesians 5, that Jesus Christ has with the church.

And this is what it means to be in Christ and Christ in you. There is a union there. There's a unity there where the two have become one. We are bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

[12 : 31] And when we are joined together to our mate, that idea of being glued is very, very powerful in the Hebrew. Now, some today in a in a rather negative fashion don't look upon this as being glued to their mate.

They regard it as being stuck. I'm stuck in this relationship. And it's a position that can be very uncomfortable.

And it's a negative way of looking at it. And I can promise you this, and I've seen this played out so many, many times in doing marriage counseling like I have for the last 55, okay, actually 60 years I guess.

Yeah. Wow. 60 years. and I always counsel couples that are planning to get married that if you do this thing called marriage God's way, you are going to enter into a relationship that is as close to heaven as you're going to get on this earth.

but it has to be done God's way. And that means that both have to be in tune spiritually because the basis of the marriage union is spiritual.

[14 : 09] And by that I do not mean that you attend church together. That's just a very small part of it. It means that God has provided basic operating assets to every couple that is in Christ that enables them to live a married life of richness and fullness the likes of which the world knows nothing.

And yet so many Christian marriages do not enjoy that. And it is troubling to realize that some of the most unhappy marriages in the world are in church every Sunday morning.

what's that all about? It just means well let me put it this way it's the difference between a Christian who is married and a Christian marriage.

They're not the same. There are a lot of Christians who are married that do not have a Christian marriage. They are just Christians who happen to be married.

And that is so sad because they are depriving themselves of the riches that God has provided for them. But hey that's not my message. Let's get on here. Let brotherly love continue.

[15 : 31] Well I couldn't get away from that because of the love thing. The agape love is an act of the will. We are commanded to love one another because love is of God and Jesus said if you love me if you love me best way you can show that is by keeping my commandments and commandments are not kept as an act of the emotions and the feelings.

Commandments are kept as an act of the will and we are called upon to exercise the volition God has given us to will to do the right thing. And this is where the meaning of agape love comes in which is different from phileo love the word from which we get Philadelphia the city of brotherly love.

The phileo love is the love for the brethren and that's a legitimate love too. And then there is astorge love. These are different words in the Greek but they're all translated L-O-B-E in the English.

And astorge love is the love of family like a mother would have for a child or a child for a father, etc. That's a familial love. And then of course there's the eros love from which we get the word erotic and that has to do with the sexual love which is part of the marriage relationship.

But agape is the love that is commanded commanded by the will. And it means that we will say the thing and do the thing that is in the best interest of the object of our love.

[17 : 23] And in a marriage relationship of course that's between the husband and the wife. And if each does that for the other you've got a reciprocating thing there where one feeds off the other and all it does is get sweeter as the years go by.

That's inevitable. That's what's going to happen. The two grow closer and closer together as the years go on. But we all know that there is that possibility of a couple being married and maybe even now have an empty nest and the kids are gone and lo and behold they wake up one morning and say who is this person anyway you know.

And all the while they've been kind of drifting apart emotionally without even recognizing it. And sometimes that can happen. But it's not the agape thing where we spend ourselves in the best interest of our mate.

And the thing that characterizes it the most is an unnatural because it's supernatural an unnatural denial of self-centeredness where you put your mates' interests and welfare ahead of your own.

That is not a natural thing to do. That's a supernatural thing. but that's what the love of Christ has created within us.

[19 : 05] It's given us a capacity and an ability to do that. And what is it that determines whether or not we will implement that? Your will. Your volition.

So I put it this way. Sometimes you may not like your mate. but you must always love them. And there could be a real difference there sometimes because we're not always likable.

We're not called upon to like one another but we are called upon to love one another and that means that you do and say the thing that's in the best interest. So this is let brotherly love continue.

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers. Now this needs a little qualification because I don't want to backpedal on it because I think it's an important concept but it also has to be treated in accordance with the culture that existed then as opposed to now.

In fact we were talking about this just last Sunday in the series that Ron Gannon's been presenting at nine o'clock with the Ray Vanderlaan and the video series.

[20 : 14] It's been quite outstanding and last week's session dealt with this very issue of hospitality of strangers and he gave the illustration of Abraham and this is back in Genesis 18 or 19.

Abraham was just sitting there in the cool of the day in the tent minding his own business and he looks up and lo and behold coming down the hill there are three strangers and they just look like three ordinary people dressed in ordinary garb and as they get closer Abraham runs out to meet them because this eastern cultural thing of what is looked upon as an obligation to God and to mankind is to extend hospitality particularly to a stranger and that is just part and parcel of their DNA it's just ingrained in the mid eastern mindset to do that that's not something that we picked up on here in this culture but it was very germane to that culture and still is by the way still is and they looked upon it as a great honor to entertain someone who is in need and you are meeting that need and these three strangers happen to be two angels and a

Christophany we're talking about two angels and God a Christophany is nothing more than the person of Jesus Christ appearing in the Old Testament in this case a couple of thousand years before he is going to be made flesh and be born in Bethlehem placed in a manger this is the same one who will appear as the captain of the Lord's host to Joshua later this is the same one who walked in the cool of the day with Adam and Eve in the garden this was Jesus no let me correct that this was not Jesus this was the son of God this was the second person and even that's not accurate because that denotes rank first second third and there is no rank in the trinity but somebody has to be named first and his father son and holy spirit but when when

Christ became in flesh the word was made flesh and dwelt among us John says he had existence before that because he existed from eternity but he didn't exist as Jesus he didn't become Jesus until Bethlehem and that's why the angel told Mary you will call his name Jesus he didn't have that name before he always had the name the son of God the eternal son of God but it wasn't Jesus until Bethlehem now we are going back before that and this is a pre-incarnate experience because he is going to make it quite clear that he is the one who will be responsible for the baby that's going to be born of Sarah who is beyond childbearing and Abraham who is beyond fathering and yet he tells them that he this person speaking who is identified as a stranger but is really a pre-incarnate

Christ he is responsible for the baby boy that Sarah is going to bear when she is well past the years of childbearing and that of course will be Isaac and you got to remember Abraham is 100 years old and Sarah is 90 but that's not a problem when you're dealing with the creator of the universe and that's exactly what happens so these two angels that Abraham is entertaining there's no indication that he ever finds out or that he knows that they're angels or that he knows that this is a pre-incarnate Christ because they're looked upon as three streams I think that's what this text is talking about thereby some have entertained angels unawares and he may very well be hearkening back to that incident of Abraham who is regarded as the father of the faithful and you remember those two angels in Genesis 19 they are the same ones who are going to go on to Sodom and Gomorrah and level the place and these two angels are the same ones who are given refuge by Lot because the wicked men of Sodom wanted to sodomize those two angels thinking that they were just two new men in town in other words they were just fresh meat to them that's how debauched and depraved those cities of Sodom and

[25 : 39] Gomorrah were and the Lord says enough and he brought them to an end and I think that they are what is being referred to here in verse 2 thereby some and if that is Abraham entertained angels unawares remember he told Sarah prepare prepare a meal and and and pull out all the stops we want a lavish feed for these three men and yet one was deity and two were angelic beings yeah don't you think though Paul wasn't wanting to pretend that everybody was going to be an angel that you might entertain a stranger I mean you're close to entertain normal common people that come in he he inferred that too I mean they may be a stranger but they may not be either to show hospitality to them and kindness because you don't know what they might mean to your life those people might mean tremendous things to your life that's true but even even if they don't even if they don't the idea is that everything you have actually belongs to God and came from God your resources are not yours although we tend to claim them we put our name on them and we claim ownership for them but ultimately everything we have belongs to the Lord and this is why we are to be sharing and generous with our resources we're actually being generous with his resources he gave them to us what do you have that you've not received so if you received it what do you where do you get off bragging about it as if you look what I got well and he said that to the

Corinthians Mike are you under the assumption that these Christophane and angelic appearances are strictly more of a Jewish old covenant oh yeah but they seem to be I mean you don't assume that's happening with us yeah I would say that that is part and parcel of the way God operated early on in mankind keep in mind as a point that we've made a number of times the Bible is a book of progressive revelation it is the plan and program of God gradually unveiling and opening itself as you move through the Bible so when you get in Genesis what do you find there very primitive very primitive and everything is physical everything is material and when God speaks to Abraham and to Moses he's speaking face to face he's not speaking to me face to face people may make some outlandish claims about this but sometimes they're hallucinating or lying or whatever but this was par for the course back then because humanity was in its infancy and so much was concrete physical material hands on so that what God was doing through his people back in this day was very obvious they could see it with their eyes it was visible and physical and this is precisely why

Paul makes a great contrast that he does when he writes to the Corinthians which is far removed thousands of years removed from the incident in Genesis and Paul makes this statement that some just kind of dismiss in passing but it's very very telling and he says we walk by faith not by sight what does that mean there's a contrast there you're walking by sight you are walking and functioning on the basis of what you see and what you know based on what you see and that's that's the modus operandi throughout all the Old Testament this is this is why he said the Jews require a sign fellas don't just pass over that that's really significant the Jews require a sign and the word sign is the word semion in the

Greek semion it's the same word from which we get the word semaphore you know like they use on navy ships with the flags the semaphores and they send messages back and forth from one ship to another based on how they use the flags the semaphore and that's a sign and it means something that is visible obvious you can see it and God revealed himself to Israel time and again based on what they could see fellas that is infantile faith it's kind of like it's kind of like what Jesus said to Thomas who didn't believe he was resurrected and he denied it and then finally Jesus gave him an audience and he said Thomas reach hither your hand see my side and see my hand and Thomas said my Lord and my God and he came to faith and it's very significant what Jesus said in response to that he says

Thomas because thou hast seen me you have believed and in essence he's saying he's saying this is the only reason that you believed it's because you saw me with your own eyes he already denied that before he had eleven witnesses well not eleven because Judas was off the seat but he had ten witnesses and these ten apostles were saying I'm telling you Thomas we saw him we held him we know it was the Lord and Thomas said I think you're mistaken I think you're just wishful thinking unless I see the print of the nails and thrust my hand into his side I will not believe that Jesus gave him that opportunity because you have seen me you have believed blessed are they who having not seen me will believe and fellas that's you that's me

[32 : 31] I haven't seen him have you of course not I haven't seen him but on what basis do we believe on the basis of incontrovertible solid testimony by multiple witnesses on that basis in the word of God we take it we call it we take it by faith that means you have not personally witnessed it or seen it question or comment Joe Paul says I don't forget which letter it was he was telling the believers forget about Jesus when he was his place here on the world he walked here forget about his miracles that's not important now that's right he said he died for you that he rose again that's the spirit is there he's up in heaven right hand with God that's the important thing forget about that is such an important passage it's talking about 2nd Corinthians 5 previously we knew we knew people according to the flesh now henceforth know we know no more and what he's saying is there is a distinct difference between the

Jesus on the other side of the cross and the Jesus on this side of the cross what's the difference the cross that's what's the difference and the resurrection and the glorification but you know the vast majority of messages that are preached about Jesus are the Jesus on the other side of the cross that's not the up-to-date Jesus the up-to-date Jesus is the one who crucified resurrected ascended and from his position of ascendancy he has given additional revelation as Paul said an abundance of revelations to him that updated all of the information that they had before the cross and that's really important because that's part of the progression of revelation and it's just amazing for us now he's our interceding for God he's how we can approach

God we are now the temple of the Holy Spirit we are the temple now of God we have direct only access to God right and they didn't have that before bottom line is the cross the cross changed everything that remains the focal point of the universe for all of humanity and we are so glad hey guys thanks for being here