

Christ Community Covenant Church
God Has Spoken: We must be careful or we may drift away
Pastor Dave Scherrer - September 15, 2013

This study of Hebrews that we have set out on is important in the life of The Church. I believe it is important in the life of our church, as I stated last week when we were setting the stage for the study. We don't know who wrote Hebrews but we know to whom it was written – a sophisticated urban setting where there would be a hearty exchange in the world of ideas. I shared with you that it seems to be a vintage sermon that was shared among the churches and most likely at the synagogues across the known world at the time.

It begins with a profound celebration of the supremacy of Christ in chapter 1 verses 1 – 4.

Hebrews 1:1 – 4

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

It is similar in style to a passage I referred you to last week found in Colossians where Paul speaks of Jesus saying:

Colossians 1:13 – 20

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

You can imagine perhaps how inspired those believers were to share about the Messiah they knew and loved. But how to do that? The traditional way is to go to where ideas regarding God can be explored – at the synagogue.

It seems fairly obvious that Christians, as a sect within first-century Judaism, worshipped essentially as other first-century Jews did. The Mishnah, instructs us that worship at the synagogue began when ten males were present to create a quorum I guess, with the reading of the Shema, the most important prayer in Judaism found in the writings of Deuteronomy and Numbers where we read, ***'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.'***

During this prayer the participants stand and carefully repeat the verses from memory, closing their eyes and covering them with the right hand. Then following a blessing there is a prayer and then a reading from the Torah. Following that there would likely be teachings from the reading by a local Rabbi or perhaps another respected teacher. Right about here in the service it can be imagined that this sermon, the letter to the Hebrews might on occasion be presented, probably to a gathering of Christians at Synagogue, but it is very likely there may be seeking Jews or even surprised Jews present. Because of its reverence for Scripture and its excellent outline, you can see that it would be the perfect tool to help persuade Jewish believers to be open to the truth.

I want to fast forward to our passage this morning as if you were hearing this for the first time, perhaps at a small gathering of Christians listening to the words for the first time as we did this morning they might have been a bit shocked:

Hebrews 2:1 – 4

Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

You know what this is saying? **No more same old same old!**

No more same old same old

This is not to say that the old truths are no longer important. It is just that upon these old truths is now a new and glorious finish or crescendo of the revelation of God to His people. This new truth called Jesus took the looked-to teachings of the Scriptures and the Torah and declared Jesus to be the looked-for Messiah; the satisfaction of the Law and the culmination of the teachings of Moses.

Illustration: No more same old same old – Pastors for Revival and the encouragement and prayer of Jim Cymbala from Brooklyn Tabernacle Church in NYC. His book “Fresh Wind Fresh Fire” describes a revival that happened at TBC.

The Foundation of Truth has been laid in the faithfulness of God and built upon by faithful men and women for thousands of years, a foundation poured in history by a God who is good for His promises.

The laying of the foundation

Hebrews 1:1 – Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.

And we go on to read that this Son is most excellent, beyond all that we can imagine; more glorious than the angels and more trustworthy than Moses. Let’s look at how the writer begins to engage the listener with a logical progression of thought worthy of thought worthy of a TV courtroom drama:

Hebrews 1:7 – 12

Of the angels he says,
“He makes his angels winds,
and his ministers flames of fire.”
But of the Son he says,
“Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,
the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.
You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you
with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.”
And,
“You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning,
and the heavens are the work of your hands;
they will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment,
like a robe you will roll them up,
like a garment they will be changed.
But you are the same,
and your years will have no end.”

Ancient Jewish tradition tells us that angels; messengers from God, actually gave Moses the Law. This tradition makes sense when you remember that to look upon God is to die. These angels, with the power of God upon them, shake the mountain with their presence and Moses lingers with them and God on top of Mt. Sinai and receives the commandments. But the writer of Hebrews is saying this is just the start of a whole new understanding, in fact a whole new covenant in the blood in Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews is saying Christ is the shining culmination of God's Story, in fact He is the culmination of your story and my story and every story ever told.

Exalting Christ as the shining culmination of The Story

But into this grand unveiling is imbedded some stern warnings, the pastoral heart of the writer is asking the listeners of his sermon to take care, a very dangerous circumstance is just ahead; dire warnings of potential disasters:

Dire Warnings!

Illustrations of warning: 1960s nuclear readiness video

Hebrews 2:1-4	Do not drift away but instead pay attention to what you have heard
Hebrews 3:7-4:13	Do not harden your heart but instead hold fast to your convictions
Hebrews 5:11-6:12	Do not be dull of hearing but instead hold fast to the hope set before us
Hebrews 10:19-39	Do not sin but instead let us draw near, hold fast and consider how
Hebrews 12:1-29	Do not grow weary but instead let us run with endurance, setting our eyes on Christ

The warning in our text today is against "drifting away" – it is a reference to a nautical image of a ship without anchor drifting past a harbor or place of safety. Slowly, imperceptibly, the chance to safely dock is lost through no active act but by simply not paying attention.

Good, Better, Best!

I believe God has been laying a foundation of promises and asking us to respond in faith to those promises. When the nation of Israel was asked to occupy the Promised Land, they faltered. They lacked faith and they failed to enter the rest of God. Now today God is asking us to take steps of faith. And I am not talking about a building though of course that crosses my mind. No, what I think he is asking of us is to consider the hope of revival in our church and in our community.

Prayer.

