

INTRODUCTION TO HEBREWS' SERMONS

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: Hebrews 1:1-4.
- B. From Roy H. Enoch (2-19-95).
- C. We are beginning a series of sermons on Sunday evenings from the book of Hebrews.
 - 1. This study: some general background to the book and get a setting for the lessons.
 - 2. We, today, have some of the same problems that the writer addresses.
- D. Three things about Hebrews that we would like to know more about, but are not told.
 - 1. We would like to know who the author is, but are not told.
 - 2. We do not know to whom the letter is written.
 - 3. We do not know when it was written.
- E. There are many lessons that are valuable to Xians today.
 - 1. They seemed to be in danger of leaving X to return to Judaism.
 - 2. Some were neglecting their salvation.
 - 3. Some were discouraged by persecution.
 - 4. We need the same teachings of how X is superior to others.
 - 5. We need the exhortations that are given to them.
- F. In this lesson we want to examine the book to give an introduction for the series.
 - 1. Briefly review the background.
 - 2. Some unique characteristics.
 - 3. Kinds of lessons that can be profitable.

I. LET US FIRST LOOK AT THE SETTING AND BACKGROUND OF HEBREWS.

- A. We do not know who wrote the book.
 - 1. Early tradition in the Eastern Churches was to credit the ideas to Paul and the Greek to someone else.
 - a. Eusebius (325AD) states that Clement of Alexandria (200AD) claimed that Paul wrote it in Hebrew and Luke translated it into Greek.
 - b. Eusebius also quotes Origen of Alexandria (225 A.D.), "The style of the Epistle with the title, 'To the Hebrews,' has not that vulgarity of diction which belongs to the apostle, who confesses that he is but common in speech, (2Cor. 11:6,10:10), that is in his phraseology. But that this epistle is more pure Greek in the composition of its phrases, everyone will confess who is able to discern the difference in style." Origen goes on to write, "But I say, that the thoughts are the apostle's but the diction and phraseology belong to someone who has recorded what the apostle said, as one who noted down at his leisure what his master dictated. If then, any church considers this epistle as coming from Paul, let it be commended for this, for neither did those ancient men deliver it as such w/o cause. But, who it was that really wrote the epistle, God only knows." (He gives two guesses that were prominent at that time: Clement of Rome, and Luke.)
 - c. So when the ancients credited the book to Paul, they were referring to the teachings and not to the Greek.
 - 2. Donald Guthrie, *NT Introduction*, says concerning the Western churches, "the only early evidence of views of authorship comes from Tertullian (200 A.D.), who attributed it to Barnabas in the only place where he mentioned it."
 - 3. The reason they were sure that Paul did not write it was because it was in Pure Classical Greek.
 - a. Until the first of this century, Greek scholars were puzzled by the Greek of the NT.
 - b. It was very different from all other known Greek.
 - c. When Joseph Thayer translated *Grimm's Wilke's Greek-German* lexicon into English, he was of the opinion that it was a special "Holy Spirit" Greek.

- d. In 1903 a large group of papyrus manuscripts was discovered (over 5,000) that were in the same Greek as the NT.
 - e. They showed that the Greek of the NT was the language of the common people--the language of the marketplace--street language.
 - f. Paul was trained in the Rabbi schools of Jerusalem and had the best Jewish education.
 - g. But he was not trained in Classical Greek Rhetoric.
 - h. Therefore, the Greeks of Corinth thought his speech was “contemptible” and “uneducated” (2Cor. 10:10; 11:6).
 - i. He was not trained in the kind of Greek used for the book of Hebrews.
4. Another reason for believing Paul did not write it, is that he signed all the books he did write (2Th. 3:17).
- B. We also do not know for whom the book was written.
- 1. It was written to Jews.
 - a. The writer presupposes a knowledge of Jewish literature, ordinances, and institutions.
 - b. They had been Xians long enough to be teachers (5:11-14), but were neglecting their opportunities by dwelling on first principles (6:1-2).
 - 2. Since the writer was a Grecian Jew and wrote in Classical Greek, we wonder if the ones addressed were the same.
 - 3. The only internal evidence seems to be the reference in 13:24, “Those from Italy salute you.”
 - a. This could refer to the location of the writer.
 - b. Or it could mean that some from Italy were w/ the writer and that the letter was being sent to Italy, maybe Rome.
- C. The date of writing is also difficult to establish.
- 1. It was quoted extensively by Clement of Rome in A.D. 95.
 - 2. It makes frequent mention of the tabernacle and worship as though it were still in use.
 - 3. It is usually dated during the last of Nero’s reign, 65-68 A.D.

II. THE BOOK OF HEBREWS HAS SOME UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS.

- A. It has many OT quotations, as many as 36 are counted.
- 1. Psalms have the most, with 11 quotations.
 - 2. The quotations are all from the Septuagint, or Greek. Paul often quoted from the Hebrew, especially for Jews.
 - 3. The writer often cites these as God or the Spirit speaking.
 - 4. It focuses on the worship of the tabernacle of earlier times from the Scriptures rather than present temple worship.
- B. The style and structure of the book is of an oration rather than letter.
- 1. It does not follow the letter form of giving the author’s name and personal references. Only in the last chapter do we see any of the characteristics of an epistle or a letter.
 - 2. It is the dialectic style of Classical Greek Rhetoric.
 - a. The style is carefully structured w/ a main proposition focusing on the superiority of X to the law of Moses.
 - b. In addition to the main points support, there are parenthetical exhortations and applications as in a sermon.
- C. Six progressive warnings of dangers are given to urge them to faithfulness.
- 1. First, the neglect of salvation from the expression, “drift away” in 2:1-4.
 - 2. Second, is unbelief in turning away from God’s promises.
 - 3. Third, is disobedience, 4:11-13, “...lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience.”
 - 4. Fourth, is a lack of spiritual growth as they remained babes, 5:11-6:12, “...though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles...”

5. Fifth, was of rejecting God willfully (10:19-31, esp. v26).
 6. Sixth, is refusal to hear God speak (12:25-29, esp. v25).
- D. Thirteen exhortations are given to encourage them to greater service.
1. "Let us fear..." (4:1).
 2. "Let us therefore give diligence to enter..." (4:11).
 3. "Let us hold fast our confession..." (4:14).
 4. "Let us draw near... to the throne of grace..." (4:16).
 5. "Let us press on unto perfection..." (6:1).
 6. "Let us draw near..." (10:22).
 7. "Let us hold fast the confession of our faith..." (10:23).
 8. "Let us consider one another..." (10:24).
 9. "Let us... lay aside every weight..." (12:1).
 10. "Let us run the race..." (12:1).
 11. "Let us have grace..." (12:28).
 12. "Let us go forth to Him outside the camp..." (13:13).
 13. "Let us offer sacrifice of praise..." (13:15).
- E. The single value of the book of Hebrews is the teaching on the present ministry and priesthood of X.
1. Besides Hebrews, only Romans gives much insight in how X continues to minister to us from the right hand of God.
 - a. As the Aaronic priest offered sacrifices and interceded for God's people, X is our High Priest forever.
 - b. He also mediates our case before God.
 2. Hebrews also helps us understand the nature of the atonement that required incarnation.
 3. Chapter 11 shows that saving faith is obedient service to God.

III. THESE KINDS OF LESSONS ARE NEEDED TODAY.

- A. We also have temptations to neglect the Lord's service and worship.
1. Our temptations may not be persecution as much as leisure and pleasure.
 2. But they have the same dangers of causing us to neglect salvation.
 3. We can lose our faith by depending on possessions, as they turned back to Judaism.
 4. We may certainly remain babes in X and not grow up.
 5. We can willfully reject God by wanting to have our way and do things as we please.
 6. We can refuse to study God's word and not apply it to our lives.
 7. Those who have come out of the world or other religious teachings need these warnings not to turn back to our former lives.
- B. We need the same kind of encouragement that the writer offers those Jewish Xians.
1. I believe these will strengthen all Xians in any age.
 2. As with many solutions to problems, those who need them the most are those who will not listen to the Lord's solutions.
 3. We hope you will plan to make a commitment this year to focus more on reading and studying God's word, and living it.

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. Whether our job, family, or devotion to God, it is easy to neglect our duty and responsibility at times.
- B. It takes diligence to keep our focus on important things and to not be distracted by urgent things.
- C. Read this beautiful book and study w/ us for the next few months.
- D. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.

CONTRASTS AND COMPARISONS

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: Hebrews 1:1-4. From Roy H. Enoch.
- C. Man seems to have a natural tendency to underestimate the importance and significance of God's word.
 - 1. Naaman wanted a miracle instead of obeying God's word (2Kgs 5).
 - 2. The rich man wanted Lazarus to return from the dead to warn his brothers, when they had God's word (Lk. 16:27-31).
 - 3. Many today want a direct revelation rather than study God's word.
 - a. Some are just lazy and don't want to make an effort.
 - b. Some want something different, and to do as they please.
- D. God's word is not a dead letter (Heb. 4:12). It needs no supplement (2Tim. 3:16,17).
- E. God's word discerns (a critic or evaluator) of the thoughts and intents of man's heart.
 - 1. It gives the standard for what our heart should want and intend.
 - 2. It gives instruction for focusing our heart.
- F. The Epistle to the Hebrews begins with an emphasis on the word of God.
 - 1. It gives a contrast in spokesmen: The prophets and the Son.
 - 2. It gives a contrast in methods: Various ways versus His Son.
 - 3. It shows that regardless of the messenger, God means what He says.

I. INTRODUCTION OF THE BOOK CONTRASTS SPOKESMEN: THE PROPHETS-- THE SON.

- A. The prophets were "holy men of God" (1Pet. 1:21).
 - 1. These men still had their weaknesses and human liabilities.
 - a. David, the author of about half of the Psalms had committed adultery and murder, as described in 2Sam. 11,12, but his repentance is described in Psa. 51.
 - b. Isaiah describes himself as a man of "unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5).
 - 2. Their messages were at "various times and in various ways" (Heb. 1:1).
 - 3. Their messages ultimately looked toward the coming of "the prophet" that Moses spoke of (Deut. 18:18,19).
- B. But, God "has in these last days spoken to us by His Son..." (Heb. 1:2).
 - 1. "...these last days..." refers to the last dispensation or the Christian age.
 - 2. Christ is now "heir of all things..."
 - a. He now has all authority in heaven and on earth (Mt. 28:18).
 - b. He is the head of the church which is His body (Col. 1:18).
 - c. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.
 - 3. "...through whom (Christ) He (God) also made the worlds;" (Heb. 1:2,10).
 - a. In Gen. 1, we are told that "God SAID...and it was so."
 - b. The universe was spoken into existence.
 - 4. The Christ existed in the form of God (Heb. 1:3; Phil. 2:6).
 - 5. He sustains and maintains the universe (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:15).
 - 6. See Heb. 1:3; He was the sacrificial lamb and the High priest who offered it to God.
 - 7. Christ is recognized as greater than the angels (Heb. 1:4).
 - a. God called the Christ, "My Son" (Heb. 1:5).
 - b. God commanded the angels to worship Him (Heb. 1:6).
 - 8. Christ, the word (Jn. 1:1,2) will outlast the universe [heavens and earth] (Heb. 1:10-12).
- C. God's message through Christ is superior to that unto that which was given "to the fathers by the prophets," as Christ is a greater spokesman than the prophets.

II. HEBREWS CONTRASTS THE METHODS OF THE PROPHETS AND THE SON.

- A. God spoke to the fathers by the prophets "in various ways."
 - 1. The prophets spoke primarily to their own people and time about specific problems.
 - a. Amos and Hosea had a pertinent message for apostate Israel.
 - b. Jeremiah had a message from God for unfaithful Judah.
 - c. Haggai and Zephaniah tried to stir the hearts of the Jews who returned from Babylonian exile to rebuild the Temple.
- B. God's Son has a message from God for all man of all time.
 - 1. All men need salvation because all have sinned (Rom. 3:23).
 - a. "Salvation" was first spoken by the Lord. Heb. 2:1-4
 - b. One cannot learn the plan of salvation for the whole world from Isaiah, Jeremiah, or John the Baptizer.
 - c. It was Jesus who had the word of eternal life (Jn. 6:68).
 - 2. Men need His direction for their lives (Jn. 14:6).
 - 3. Men need purpose and peace in their lives (Jn. 10:10).
 - 4. Men are complete only in Christ (Col. 2:10).
 - a. All that one must know and do has been revealed in Christ (2Pet. 1:3).
 - b. The word of God through Christ is full, final and complete (Jude 3).

III. HEBREWS CONFIRMS THAT REGARDLESS OF WHO SPOKE-- GOD MEANS WHAT HE SAYS.

- A. The word spoken by angels was binding (Heb. 2:1,2).
The Law of Moses was given through angels (Gal. 3:19).
- B. One who despised Moses' law died without mercy (Heb. 10:28,29).
- C. Peter used three cases to prove that God means what He says (2Pet. 2:4).
 - 1. God meant what He said in the days of Noah (2Pet. 2:5).
 - 2. God meant what He said about Sodom and Gomorrah (2Pet. 2:6).
- D. Since God meant what He said when He spoke "at various times and in various ways," through the prophets, how much more does He mean what He says through His Son, the Christ.
 - 1. We cannot escape (Heb. 2:3,4).
 - 2. There is no hope for those who leave Christ (Heb. 10:26,39).

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. God's word has always been living and powerful (Heb. 4:12).
- B. God has always meant what He says and still does.
- C. We should study and obey all of the words of Christ to salvation.
- D. Love Him and trust Him enough to do all that He says.
- E. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.