

UPON THE ROCK

October 2002



Vol. 5 Issue 10

PRIZED PASSAGES FROM HEBREWS

Special Chestnut Mountain Lectureship edition

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Upon the Rock is published monthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first-principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians

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GOD SPOKE TO THE FATHERS BY THE PROPHETS

Mark Reynolds

Man, being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), was made with the ability to hear and understand instructions from his Creator. Being in God's image from the beginning man was like God in at least three ways: (1) Man has intelligence; (2) Man has emotion; and (3) Man has a will. These three things separate us from the rest of God's creation, and places our value above that which was created for man to possess and cultivate (Genesis 1:26). Before man fell into sin (Genesis 3) he knew only the things of God; therefore, he loved only the things of God, hence, man's will was in perfect harmony with the will of God. This perfect knowledge, love and will, however, ceased to be perfect when sin entered into the world: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they KNEW they were naked (Genesis 3:6-7a). Man now knew something he did not know before he sinned, and his love that was only towards the things of God previously, now began to drift to other things.

The changes that took place on that day are the most devastating events that have ever occurred on this planet. More damaging than all of the natural disasters that have ever occurred; more destructive than all of the wars that have been fought; and much more serious than all of the problems that have ever been...SIN ENTERED THE WORLD! What God did next would prove that He still loved His creation, and desired fellowship with them. What did He do to prove His love?...He spoke: "And the Lord God called unto Adam, and SAID unto him, Where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9). In all of humanities lowest points God was there to guide them through with His Word. When man fell to sin, God spoke; When man wandered through their lives wondering if there was hope, God spoke (Job 38-42); When Israel was in need of a law by which they could live in their new land, God spoke (Exodus 20); and when the time was fulfilled to send the sacrifice to atone for man's sin what did God do? God sent His Word, the Christ (John 1:1-14).

THANK YOU

We want to use this space to say "thank you" to all who read *Upon the Rock* We appreciate, especially, those who tell others about this work. We receive requests, almost on a daily basis, to be added to the mailing list. You, the readers, are the best way to let others know about this Paper. Please continue to "get the word out." *Upon the Rock* is FREE and we are more than happy to send it to anyone interested!

Mark Reynolds, editor

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

- 1 Hear THE WORD OF GOD - (Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24-27).
2. Believe THE WORD OF GOD - (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15-16).
3. Repent OF YOUR SINS - (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 13:3).
4. Confess THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD - (Matthew 10:32,33; Acts 8:36).
5. Be baptized FOR THE REMISSION OF YOUR SINS- (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3-4).
6. Live faithfully unto death - (Rev. 2:10).

And, far from being an "old dead letter," the word of God is alive and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). God is making people complete and molding them into the image of His Son even today (Romans 12:2; II Corinthians 3:18). He is bringing about this perfection in the same way He always has, with His Word. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16-17).

The purpose of God's perfecting work is to equip us "to do his will" (Hebrews 13:21). Those who are complete and mature become instruments in God's service. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God (Romans 6:12-13). They present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God (Romans 12:1). The Hebrews writer begs these brethren to suffer the word of exhortation, to heed his warnings, and to allow God to work in them to make them complete and fruitful in His service (Hebrews 13:22).

No one can be complete outside of Christ. "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:10). Thus, if any man desires to be complete they must get into Christ. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27; Romans 6:3). Once a person has been baptized they can begin their journey from infancy to maturity, or completion (Hebrews 5:11-6:1). It may be necessary for some of those who have been baptized into Christ to be mended, restored, or made perfect (II Corinthians 13:9-11; Galatians 6:1). The God of peace does this by working in a person through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 13:20-21). He will not, however, make a person complete against their will. A person must suffer the word of exhortation (Hebrews 13:22). When a person allows the Word of God to work in them, applying the truths contained therein, they can be made "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16-17).

THE TEXT

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Hebrews 1:1). The book of Hebrews begins differently than any other book of the Bible. It does not identify the writer, nor does it give any proof of God's existence, it just states that God is. The Jews, to whom this book was addressed, would recognize this as the beginning whether or not they believed in Christ; they would already believe that God existed so no great effort is made to prove His existence. The writer fades into obscurity placing the emphasis of the epistle solely on God Almighty. Someone has rightfully noted that the book of Hebrews begins like an essay, proceeds like a sermon, and ends like a letter. The writer begins with the *Beginner*, that is, God. From there he can then move into a discussion of the authority of Christ, showing that Christ is superior to the old priesthood, the old covenant, the old sacrifices, etc. It is imperative that the reader understands where this epistle, and all the things that are taught, originated...IN THE MIND OF GOD. In the end, the Jews would be faced with a great dilemma. If God is indeed the One Who sent Christ and if they wanted to maintain their belief in the Almighty, then they must also believe in the One He sent, Jesus the Christ.

The principle sentence of the book is that "God has spoken." He spoke at sundry (various) times. God spoke to reveal His plan, over time, to save His creation through Jesus Christ. To Eve, it was promised indirectly, that through her Seed the devil would be dealt a crushing blow (Genesis 3:15); to Abraham that promise was made directly that through his Seed all nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3); to Judah, that Shiloh would come before the scepter should depart from him (Genesis 49:10); and to all Israel that God would raise up to them, from among themselves a Prophet like unto Moses, to whom he would require all to hearken (Deuteronomy 18:18). God spoke at various times to reveal His plan to save mankind. His revelation was progressive in nature.

God spoke in divers manners; that is, God spoke in different ways to reveal His plan. The Old Testament records the various ways God spoke to His people. He used dreams to communicate with His people; direct revelation was used; visions; Urim and Thummim; and

in many other ways. The various means God used to speak to His people served to mark the comparative imperfection of the Old Economy. God never before spoke to the people, even from the Mercy seat of the tabernacle, as He did in and through His own Son during His earthly ministry. The emphasis is that this is how God USED to speak until the One perfect way to communicate, Jesus Christ, came.

God spoke to their fathers. Most believe that this has reference to the Hebrew fathers, from Abraham, the father of the nation, to Malachi, who wrote the last book of the Old Testament. This would be most probable since the writer is mainly addressing those Jewish Christians who are being tempted to go back to the old law. The American Standard Version translates this phrase as, "God, having of old time spoken ..." The original phrase literally means *in ancient* times so it is unlikely that the writer was including the times in which John the Baptist prophesied.

God spoke "by the prophets." God first worked in the prophets and then through the prophets to make God's will for man known to the Hebrew Fathers. The Hebrew word *navee* literally means "one who boils over," given to the Hebrew prophets because they seemed to pour out their inspired utterances as a fountain pours out its waters (cf. Psalm 45:1). When a true and faithful prophet spoke for God, it was actually the words of God coming through the prophet: "Knowing this first that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:20,21).

The main "problem" with this type of revelation was knowing who was a true prophet of God and who was a false prophet. This problem plagued the people of old as it is leading millions astray today. How can I know who is a faithful teller of God's word? In the days of old there was a simple test applied to those who claimed to be prophets: "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deuteronomy 18:22). In other words, everything the *prophet* prophesied MUST come to pass, or else he is a FALSE prophet. Today, God does not use the prophet system as he did when

to the instrumentality of His blood, this is the preferable of the two possibilities. Robert Milligan suggests that "through the blood of the everlasting covenant" could be understood as "by virtue of the blood of the everlasting covenant." In other words, God raised Jesus from the dead by virtue of the fact that it was His blood that ratified the new covenant (Matthew 26:28; Hebrews 9:12-23). Jesus is the great Shepherd of the sheep by virtue of His shed blood. Indeed, Jesus would not even have a flock had He not ratified the new covenant with His blood. Even if He did have a flock, without the new covenant, it would not be a forgiven flock (Hebrews 10:12-18). Thus, on account of the blood of the everlasting covenant, Christ sits at God's right hand as the Great Shepherd of the sheep (John 10:11-18; Acts 2:30-36; Hebrews 1:3-4).

The writer desires that the God of peace make these brethren perfect in every good work (Hebrews 13:21). This implies that they were not perfect, or complete. Indeed, these brethren were dull of hearing, they had not matured to full age, or perfection. But the writer would have them to go on unto perfection, or maturity (Hebrews 5:11-6:1). These brethren needed to be "mended, or repaired" (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19). They needed to be "put in order, or restored, as one who by correction may be brought back into the right way" (Galatians 6:1). But how would God "make them what they ought to be?"

The writer prayed that God would make them perfect by working in them that which was well pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 13:21). Paul wrote, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). God works in an individual through His Son to make that person complete. God speaks through His Son, and His Son's message inherently possesses the power to make a person complete (Hebrews 1:1-2). This is yet another example of how Christ and His covenant are superior to the Mosaic economy. "For the law (the law of Moses) made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope (the gospel) did, by the which we draw nigh unto God" (Hebrews 7:19). God's Word was sufficiently powerful to create something out of nothing (Genesis 1). "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth...For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm 33:6-9). If the Word was powerful enough to serve as God's instrument of creation, it is powerful enough to reach the heart of man (Acts 2:37; Romans 1:16).

(Romans 14:11,12), and He will. The writer is urging them to hang on to what they have started, that is becoming a Christian. Hold fast and do not return to their former religion, because God is faithful and will keep His promise of reward to us.

Mike Gors may be reached at 3421 Thurber Ave. Ft. Wayne, IN. 46809

MAY GOD MAKE YOU COMPLETE

A.J. Cox

Having established that which he set out to prove in the epistle to the Hebrews that Christianity is in every way superior to Judaism, the writer now closes his letter by exhorting these brethren to perform various personal and social duties (Hebrews 13). He requests that the brethren pray for him, particularly so that he might again see them face to face (Hebrews 13:18-19). Then, to demonstrate his willingness to do for them what he requested for himself, he included this brief but grand prayer on their behalf: "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Hebrews 13:20-21).

It is clear from the many warnings throughout this epistle that there was a great danger of a massive falling away among the Jewish Christians (Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:12-13; 4:1, 11; 6:4-6, 11; 10:25-31, 35, 38; 12:15; 25). In this short prayer he leaves his readers with one last reminder of the supremacy of Christ and His covenant. The writer affirms, in the only verse in Hebrews that directly mentions the resurrection of Christ, that the God of peace brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep (Hebrews 13:20). Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4). This crowning miracle verified His claim that He was the Christ (Matthew 16:13- 20; John 4:25-26). Admittedly, it is difficult to determine exactly what it is that is accomplished through the blood of the everlasting covenant, whether Christ's resurrection, or that which follows in verse 21. Despite the initial awkwardness that comes with attributing Christ's resurrection

Moses wrote this rule. God has now spoken through His Son, and His will is completely revealed. So when a man claims to be a prophet today one can already know that he is a false prophet because the whole point of Hebrews 1:1 is that God USED to speak to the Hebrew Fathers through prophets, but NOW has spoken through His Son. One can, however, use this test in a general fashion today when listening to a teacher/preacher. Do the things that the man/woman is teaching correlate with EVERYTHING else that is taught in the Bible? If not, then you know he/she is a false teacher.

We can learn much from the system of the prophets that God used in the days of old, one of which, is their understanding in relaying ONLY what God wants them to teach. The phrase, "Thus saith the Lord," was used 3,808 times in the Old Testament. When they spoke, they were not "making it up as they went along." True prophets spoke where God spoke and were silent when God was silent. May God help us all to do the same...speak where God has spoken, and remain silent where He is silent!

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**FIRST ANNUAL CHESTNUT MOUNTAIN
LECTURESHIP
OCTOBER 11-13, 2002**

“PRIZED PASSAGES FROM HEBREWS”

Friday, October 11, 2002

7:00 pm “God Spoke to the Fathers by the Prophets” (Hebrews 1:1)

Mark Reynolds

Saturday, October 12, 2002

1:00 pm “God Spoke by His Son” (Hebrews 1:2) - A.J. Cox

2:00 pm “The Word Was Confirmed” (Hebrews 2:1-4) - Skip Andrews

3:00 pm “The Word of God is Living and Powerful” (Hebrews 4:12) - Brandon Britton

4:00 pm “Make All Things According to the Pattern” (Hebrews 8:5) – Mike Gors

7:00 pm “Better Covenant Better Promises” (Hebrews &6) - Larry Reynolds

Sunday, October 13, 2002

9:00 am “He Who Promised Is Faithful” (Hebrews 10:23) - Mike Gors

10:00 am “Do Not Refuse Him Who Speaks” (Hebrews 12:25) - Larry Reynolds

6:00 pm “May God Make You Complete” (Hebrews 13:20,21) - AJ. Cox

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just 5 miles from Gainesville, GA

GOD HAS SPOKEN BY HIS SON

AJ. Cox

The epistle to the Hebrews was clearly written against a background of apostasy. It is a powerful argument designed to persuade Jewish Christians not to return to Judaism. This it does by proving Christianity to be superior, in every way, to Judaism. Christ is shown to be

words, created the heavens and the earth and all that in them is. The same One Who promised to be with us unto the end and never leave us nor forsake us. The same One Who said “Whatever you ask in my name, I will give it” (Mark 6:23).

Third, He has promised forgiveness of sins to those who desire it. Hear the invitation: “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:28,29). Our forgiveness comes from our humble obedience to the gospel call and being immersed in the blood of Christ. “Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Revelation 1:5). “For as much as you know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (I Peter 1:18). And to those who are Christians and yield to temptation and sin there is the promise of forgiveness when we confess it to Him: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9).

Finally, He promised eternal reward to the faithful. “For without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). The law of Christ requires faithfulness and to those who can and will endure to the end they shall be saved (Matthew 24:13). “Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). This is the exceeding great and precious promise from God, a true rest from our labors.

GOD IS FAITHFUL

We serve a God Who cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18). The writer is telling his audience that God has made promises and always keeps those promises. He promised to destroy the world by water and He did. Then He placed a rainbow in the sky and promised never to destroy the earth by water again and has not He has promised a day in which we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (II Corinthians 5:10) and confess His name and give account for what we have done

animal sacrifice, no priests who wore special clothing, no special days, etc. This, no doubt was hard for them to adjust to and come to a full understanding. Thus, the thrust or underlying theme to the book of Hebrews is an urgent message for them to hold fast the confession they had made and to remain faithful to Christ that they may receive their reward.

GOD PROMISED

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:3,4). Christians have received promises of God. As the song we sing says, “Standing on the promises of God.” What are some of these promises?

First, there is the promise of being cared for providentially. “Therefore take no thought saying what shall we eat? Or what shall we drink? Or wherewithal shall we be clothed? But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you” (Matthew 6:25,33). It is understood that under the careful guidance and care of the Good Shepherd that “I shall not want,” that is to say, I shall not want of the things I need. “For my God shall supply your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

Second, as a Christian I have the promise of being heard by the very architect of this Universe. “Now we know that God heareth not sinners” (John 9:31). God may hear the audible voice, but does not acknowledge the prayers of sinners. But, rather, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Peter 3:12). How much stronger would Christians be if they utilized prayer? How much stronger would congregations be? Also, the individual lives as well as congregations would be much more peaceful if we engaged in prayer more often. Pray for each other, the preachers, the elders, the church, world leaders, etc. What a difference it would make! We are making our wishes and wants known to the very One Who, with mere

superior to the prophets (Hebrews 1:1-3), the angels (Hebrews 1:4-2:18), Moses (Hebrews 3:1-19), and Joshua (Hebrews 4:1-11). Jesus, as a high priest after the order of Melchisedec, is superior to Aaron and his priesthood, and His new covenant is better than the first (Hebrews 4:14-10:18). Since it is illogical to exchange the superior for the inferior, it is the height of foolishness to forsake Christianity in favor of Judaism. The first step in the development of this grand argument is the revelation that God has exchanged His former spokesmen for a new and better Spokesman.

CHRIST—THE SUPERIOR SPOKESMAN

There was an age in which God spoke to the Jewish fathers at various times and in several ways by the prophets. At the end of those days, or in the closing days of the Jewish age, God introduced a Son (the pronoun "his" is not in the original text) as the authorized Spokesman for the final dispensation of time (Hebrews 1:1-2). Moses foretold of the coming of this Spokesman and warned that God would require it of every individual who would not hearken unto His words (Deuteronomy 18:15-19; John 5:45-47; 6:14; Acts 3:20-23). So it is that every person who does not receive the words of Christ will be judged by those words (John 12:47-50).

Christ Is Superior In Nature

First, whereas all of God's former spokesmen were mere servants, Jesus, as a Son over His own house, is worthy of more glory (Hebrews 3:3-6). God has many sons who are heirs (Romans 8:16-17; 1 John 3:1-2), but He only has one Son who has been “appointed heir of all things” (Hebrews 1:2). God promised the Son the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession (Psalm 2:7-9). Upon His ascension into heaven Christ sat down at the right hand of God and received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit (Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:30-35; Hebrews 1:3-4, 13). He was given an everlasting dominion, glory, and an eternal kingdom composed of all people, nations, and languages (Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14; Matthew 28:18). Far from being a mere servant as the prophets of the Jewish age, the Prophet of this last dispensation of time is the Inheritor of all things, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords! (1 Timothy 6:15;

Revelation 17:14; 19:16). Second, whereas God's former spokesmen were mere creations, the Son, as the Instrument of God's creation, is eternal in nature (Hebrews 1:2, 10). The Apostle John testifies to the eternal, divine nature of the Son (the Word, or pre-incarnate Christ—John 1:14; I John 1:1-3) in John 1:1-3. The Son was in the beginning with God, and indeed was God (Deity). And, it goes without saying, if “all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made,” He himself WAS NOT MADE! No angel or created thing is a worthy recipient of worship (Matthew 4:9-10; Revelation 22:8-9), yet God instructs the angels to worship the Son (Hebrews 1:6). Indeed, the Father said unto the Son, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom” (Psalm 45:6- 7; Hebrews 1:8-9). Who could doubt the superiority of the Christian system when God Himself serves as its appointed Spokesman?

The Manner In Which Christ Speaks Is Superior

There is no difficulty in understanding how Christ spoke while He was on earth, but how does He speak today if He is in heaven at God's right hand? In the course of His earthly ministry Jesus selected certain ambassadors whom He empowered to speak in His name (John 15:16; II Corinthians 5:20). Before He ascended into heaven He commissioned these Apostles to go into all the world and teach all nations to observe all things He had commanded them (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit was given to aid the Apostles by teaching them all things and by bringing all things to their remembrance (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26-27; 16:12-14; Acts 1:1-2). Finally, by inspiration, the body of New Testament truth was put in writing so that future generations might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that they might be thoroughly furnished unto all good works (John 20:30-31; Ephesians 3:3-4; II Timothy 3:16-17). Remarkably, God has not only spoken through what Christ said, but through what Christ was! Jesus was the effulgence of the Father's glory, and the very image of His substance (Hebrews 1:3—AS'). As we see the Sun through its radiance, or effulgence, we see the Father through the Son. As an instrument may stamp or engrave an image on a coin, Jesus was the very stamp or impress of the essence of God. No man has seen God at any time, but the Son declared, or interpreted the Father (John 1:18). John says when they beheld the glory of the incarnate Word they beheld the

blood of the bulls and goats of the first covenant could not take away sin. The forgiveness of sins was made possible because of the better sacrifice that was offered once and for all. (Hebrews 9:9) *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God”* (Hebrews 9:14)? Thus the new covenant provides what the first covenant could not true forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 10:11,12).

At this point it might be appropriate to ask: have you truly entered into a covenant relationship with God? The entrance terms of this new covenant are simple. They involve faith in Christ and a confession of that faith. *“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”* (Mark 16:16). *“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven”* (Matthew 10:32). God wants you to repent of your sins and be baptized for the remission of your sins. *“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’* (Acts 2:36-39). We encourage you not to delay in doing the things necessary to enter into this covenant relationship with God.

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HE WHO PROMISED IS FAITHFUL

Mike Gors

Have you ever been homesick? Have you ever been anywhere and then wish that you could be home? To be in familiar surroundings, know where things are, know how to get around? The letter written to the Hebrews was written to somewhat new Christians. They were former Hebrews in a religious sense. They were ready to go back home. They were ready to go back to familiar surroundings, a system of religion that made more sense to them, perhaps, because they could see it, touch it, taste it, etc. There was a temple, there were priests, sacrifices, burning incense, there were special days, moons and feasts to observe. In this new religion called Christianity there was nothing. No special building nor emphasis on the building, no

Jeremiah the old covenant actually continued on for about 500 years after Jeremiah. But God would keep His promise to establish a “new covenant” to replace the “old covenant”; Jesus is the “Mediator” of this covenant, which is a “better covenant” because it was “established on better promises.” Let us now consider how the new covenant is better than the old.

The new covenant is a spiritual or an inward covenant. “I will put my laws in their mind and write them on their hearts” (Hebrews 8:10). The first covenant had its laws written on tablets of stone; the new covenant is one that requires God’s laws be written in our hearts. It is not enough to have God’s Word in our hands, in our home, in our motels; it must be planted in our hearts (James 1:21). For only then can we truly be born again by the incorruptible seed, the Word of God (I Peter 1:22-23). We need to ask ourselves if we are living up to the intent of the New Covenant or are we like those under the first covenant who had the Word, but not on their hearts?

The new covenant provides a closer relationship with God. “I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Hebrews 8:10). The apostle Paul quotes Ezekiel the prophet when God made this promise. “I will dwell in them and walk among them, I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (II Corinthians 6:16). Under the first covenant sin kept man separated from God. Under the better covenant we can be a people that obtain mercy (I Peter 2:9,10). Are we utilizing the blessings whereby we can have a closer relationship with God?

The new covenant is with people who know the Lord. “None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them” (Hebrews 8:11). Unlike the first covenant in which people entered it at birth; as they grew up, they needed to be taught about the Lord. In the new covenant, one must come to know the Lord before he can enter the covenant. So it is that one must believe in Jesus before he can enter into a covenant relationship with his Lord through baptism (Acts 2:36-38).

The new covenant provides true forgiveness for sin. “*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more*” (Hebrews 8:12). The sacrifice of the

glory as of the only begotten of the Father (John 1:14). The likeness or image that Jesus presented to the world was so perfect and exact that He could say to Philip, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). Throughout the ages God has spoken in several ways, but never was God so clearly revealed as in the person of Jesus Christ.

Christ’s Message Is Superior

Though a divine law, the Mosaic economy was incapable of taking away sins because it lacked a sufficient sacrifice (Hebrews 9:9; 10:1-4, 11). In the days of that first covenant, however, God promised that the time would come when He would make a new covenant that would provide for the forgiving of sin (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Jesus Christ is the mediator of that new better covenant (Hebrews 8:6-12). The sacrifice that was lacking under the old law is provided by Christ in the new, by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:11-17). Those Jewish Christians that might be contemplating a return to Judaism needed to understand that it was necessary for Christ to take away the first covenant in order to establish the second which sanctifies (Hebrews 7:12; 10:9-10). Why exchange the genuine article for the shadow? (Hebrews 10:1). Under the first covenant the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest (Hebrews 9:8). Now, by a new and living way, we have boldness, or liberty, to enter into the holiest by the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10:19-20). Christ’s message is superior because it is a message of forgiveness. How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? (Hebrews 2:3).

The arguments contained in this epistle against apostasy are as powerful and applicable today as they were in the first century. If those who despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses, how much sorer punishment can be expected by the one who has trodden under foot the Son of God? (Hebrews 10:28-31). God has spoken by His Son. “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven” (Hebrews 12:25).

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THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING AND POWERFUL

Brandon Britton

The human race lived and thrived for thousands of years with only primitive knowledge. From the creation of Adam and Eve until the late eighteenth century there were relatively few advancements in medicine, industry and transportation. Men in the 1700's traveled in much the same way as those in Bible times. Prior to the 1800's many accepted medical practices were actually harmful to the patient. Before the Industrial Revolution most everything had to be made by hand. However, all of this has changed drastically in the last two hundred years. Man has gone from wind driven boats to steam engines and nuclear powered submarines. The horse and buggy has grown nearly extinct due to the invention of the automobile. Numerous men with the aid of rockets and space shuttles have visited the moon that man once could only view from afar. The transition has been made from bloodletting and crude amputations to transfusions, transplants and artificial organs. Diseases that once plagued the earth have been eradicated. Goods that once took weeks to make by hand are now mass-produced daily. If the earth is allowed to continue for many more years there will continue to be great and amazing advancements. No matter how intelligent and advanced man may become, he will never become so wise as to not need guidance from His Creator. *"O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (Jeremiah 10:23).

Tragically this recent surge of knowledge has been partly responsible for man thinking he has "outgrown" God. Because of this widespread attitude we need to be reminded, "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Corinthians 1:25). From ages past God still reminds men today, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8,9). Despite all of our advances and expanding knowledge, we still need the Word of God to guide us safely through this life (Psalm 119:105). The Bible is not just a "Good Book" or collection of ancient stories, it is the mind of God written down for our benefit (1 Corinthians 2:7-16). Perhaps no section of Scripture makes

the focus shifts to the New Covenant. This New Covenant was established on better promises (Hebrews 8:6). Christ is the Personal guarantee of the terms of the new and better covenant, secured on the ground of His perfect sacrifice (Hebrews 7:22). In this article we will examine how the New Covenant is better, especially with regard to its promises.

The New Covenant is better because the first covenant was not faultless (Hebrews 8:7). Otherwise, there would have been no need for a second covenant. The fault with the first covenant was that the Levitical priesthood could not bring perfection (Hebrews 7:11). The Old Law made nothing perfect, and was therefore annulled due to its weakness and unprofitableness (Hebrews 7:18,19). The weakness in the first covenant has reference to the sacrifices that could not make those who approach perfect (Hebrews 10:1-3). The blood of animals offered by the priests could not take away sins (Hebrews 10:4,11).

The people of the first covenant were at fault because they did not continue in God's covenant (Hebrews 8:8,9). When God gave the first covenant He gave this warning, "Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known" (Deuteronomy 11:26-28). For this reason He allowed them to be taken away by their enemies (Jeremiah 11:11-14). Because the first covenant was not faultless and the people did not keep the law, God promised the new covenant, which was better than the first. "Behold, the days are coming says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the days that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying know the Lord, for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34). When God made this promise through

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Lift the phrase “build all things according to the pattern” and make practical application to one’s life as a Christian. We should build our lives according to the pattern set before us in God’s word. Jesus plainly stated, “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them I will liken unto a wise man, which built his house upon the rock” (Matthew 7:24). Let Christ be the center of your life. Take the time to read His word and pray to build your life upon the rock. Build marriages according to the pattern which God set. One man for one woman for life. Husbands are to lead, love, know and honor their wives (Ephesians 5). A wife is to follow, love, and reverence her husband (Ephesians 5; Titus 2:4). Become a Christian according to the pattern set in the New Testament. If we do what they did we will be what they were—Christians. They first heard the word, believed Jesus was the Christ, repented of their sins, confessed His name and were immersed in water to contact the cleansing blood. Let us ever be diligent to build all things according to the pattern of God.

BETTER COVENANT; BETTER PROMISES

Larry G. Reynolds

The Bible is a book of books, 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books. The Old Testament is a book of law, history, poetry and prophecy. They tell of the Messiah that would come to bring salvation to all mankind. The reason it is called the “Old Testament” is because it was given to the Jews through Moses to help build a nation of God’s people. It was schoolmaster to help bring people to the Christ that would come. When Jesus came and lived on earth He fulfilled the law of Moses (Matthew 5:17-18). When Christ died on the cross and shed His blood the Old Testament (covenant) was nailed to the cross and a New Covenant was established (Colossians 2:14). The apostles went everywhere preaching this new covenant that was for all people. The apostles met great opposition because many wanted to hold to the old covenant and opposed any change. The book of Hebrews was written to help Christians understand that the new covenant was better and essential to salvation. The first seven chapters of the epistle to the Hebrews focused on the superiority of Christ That He was superior to the prophets, angels, Moses and the Levitical priesthood. A transition takes place in chapter 8:1-6, where

this more clear than what is recorded in Hebrews 4:12. “For the word of God is quick (living), and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). When we consider what the Hebrews writer had to say about the Word of God we are impressed with the significant role it plays in our lives. In this article we will focus our attention on two key words from this verse: living and powerful.

THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING

We frequently sing the song, “Our God, He Is Alive” because we recognize that we serve the only true and living God (Hebrews 3:12). Since we serve a living God, it makes sense that He would communicate with us through a living Word (Hebrews 4:12). If the Bible were only a “dead letter,” as some contend, there would be a need for additional and continual revelation from God. Since the Scriptures declare the Word of God to be living, there is no need for God to give new revelation today.

This living Word is also capable of giving life to those who are dead in their sins. “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:22,23). “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls (James 1:21).

In explaining the Parable of the Soils, Jesus pointed out that the seed in the parable was the Word of God (Luke 8:11). One of the most noted characteristics of a seed is that it has life in it. When planted and properly nurtured it produces life and the ability to continue to give life. This is true in the world of agriculture and it is also true in the spiritual world. When the Word of God, which is living, is planted in a good heart it will produce everlasting life in the one who obeys it.

On another occasion the Lord stated, *"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life"* (John 6:63). He attributes this life giving quality to the Word of God. Add to this what Paul wrote about the Scriptures to his son in the faith Timothy. *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"* (2 Timothy 3:16). The phrase "inspiration of God" comes from a compound word in the original language (theopneustos). The literal translation of this word would be, "All scripture is 'God breathed'..." Now consider some of the other places in the Bible where it is mentioned that God breathed. *"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul"* (Genesis 2:7). What was simply a corpse was made alive when God breathed life into it and he (Adam) became alive. *"The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life"* (Job 33:4). Again, Job acknowledged that it was the breath of God that made him alive. *"Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live"* (Ezekiel 37:5). In his prophecy of the resurrection of the nation of Israel in returning from captivity, God has Ezekiel specify that it is His breath that will make this nation alive. Just as God breathed into Adam, Job and Israel the breath of life that made them alive, the Scriptures are also 'God breathed' and therefore are alive.

THE WORD OF GOD IS POWERFUL

For centuries man has been familiar with the power of small things. We have used gunpowder to launch everything from bullets to cannonballs. We have used dynamite to explode and move mountains. We have split the atom and vaporized cities. These are tremendous and frightening exhibitions of power, but they cannot compare to the power of the Word of God.

Consider the awesome power of the Word of God as seen in creation. *"And God said, Let there be light and there was light"* (Genesis 1:3). All He had to do was speak and creation happened. It was created out of nothing and became something. Nothing else in our universe has such a power. Consider the awesome power of the Word of God

spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:5). Christ being the High Priest for all His people.

THE MEETING PLACE AND MEDIATOR

One thing the Hebrew writer was dealing with was those people who wanted to go back to their former religion. In the Jewish faith everything was external. With the Christian faith everything is internal and a matter of the heart. It was an awkward feeling for them because there was no emphasis on the meeting place nor was there a high priest to intercede and so the writer assures them that we have both.

"We (Christians) have a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens." This phrase and discussion began in Hebrews 4:14 to assure us that we have a high priest in heaven Who approaches the Father and intercedes for us. We truly can "cast our cares upon him for he cares for us" (I Peter 5:7). He tends to and oversees the people of God who belong to the "true tabernacle which the Lord pitched (built) and not man" the church. And true to form He performs the duties of a priest by offering to God Himself, more exactly, His blood. "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor" (Ephesians 5:2). He cannot be a priest upon the earth for two reasons: (1) He came from the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:14). All priests, according to the Law must come from the tribe of Levi. (2) He is a priest after the order of Melchisedec, not of Levi nor Aaron (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7:3,11).

That tabernacle, the priests and the high priest, were types, shadows, a pattern of the real thing, the church. The "true tabernacle that the Lord built" being the church, the priest being the members who serve in the church, the High Priest being Christ Who intercedes for the people today. The application is this, the people of the earth have a place where they can have access to God, find relief for the burden and guilt of their sins and be servants of God all through Christ, that is, in the church for which Christ died.

working knowledge of the “day to day ins and outs” of the Hebrew culture and customs. They would be more familiar with the Jewish religion as they were former followers of the Jewish faith. They were not under a democracy rather they were under a Theocracy. The center of their culture was the tabernacle and later the temple with a group of people called Priests, called from the tribe of Levi, from the lineage of Aaron to mediate and approach God for the people. With the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ the New Testament was ushered in (Hebrews 9:16-18), and it was no longer a select group of people who could approach God but all the people of all nations that were and are obedient to the gospel call. As we now investigate the text (Hebrews 8:1-5), our attention must be focused upon Moses, who, while in the Mount (Mount Sinai) was “caused to see” something, the literal rendering of “showed to thee.” What did he see? The church. He saw it before he built the tabernacle. Therefore everything in the Mosaical System was a mere pattern or type of the future reality of the Christian dispensation of time. Just as blue prints clearly show the building but it is not the building itself, and cannot, while on paper, serve to its full capacity until the building is completed, so it was with the Jewish religion. In many respects the former religion was the “blue prints” or pattern of the future reality of Christ and the church.

THE PATTERN AND THE REALITY

The pattern was one body of people who belonged to God, unified by one set of laws (the ten commandments and other ordinances given to Moses), and were to be a light to the Gentiles. The reality is one body of people called by the gospel of Christ unified on one set of laws (we are built upon...the apostles and prophets and Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, Ephesians 2:20), and are to be a light to the world (Matthew 5:13-16). The tabernacle was a meeting place for the people to be with God. The reality is the church where the people meet God through Christ. The pattern was sacrifice of animals which pointed to the Christ. The reality was Christ who was the Lamb of God, Who was the perfect sacrifice, Who died once and for all. Through His blood the obedient will be relieved of their sins and iniquities. The pattern was the priests who served at the tabernacle offering gifts and sacrifices and a high priest who would enter into the holy place to intercede to the people. The reality is Christians who are the priests: “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a

over the grave. *“And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go”* (John 11:43,44). The Word of God was powerful enough to raise Lazarus from the dead. A preacher once commented that the reason Jesus called Lazarus by name was because if He had just said, “Come forth,” every dead body in the graveyard would have walked out. What a reverent attitude toward the power of His Word. It is this same voice that will open all of the graves on the last day. *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation”* (John 5:28,29).

There are other demonstrations of the power of the Word of God in changing the world and the course of history. The life of Jesus lasted only thirty-three years. His public teaching only lasted three years. He never traveled farther than His home country and He lived in a time when technology did not exist and travel was slow and limited. Despite all of this, you would be hard pressed to find a place on this planet that has not been affected and influenced by His life and teachings. Countless colleges, orphans homes, hospitals and other organizations of compassion and benevolence have been established because of His teachings. The menacing and cruel Roman Empire was conquered, not by an enemy nation, but by the mass conversions of its citizens to Christianity. Even members of Caesar’s family were converted to Christ (Philippians 4:22). The power of the Word of God was responsible for the transformation of Saul the Persecutor of Christianity to Paul the Persecuted for Christianity (Acts 7:58-8:3; 9:1-2; 2 Corinthians 11:23,28). *“And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ”* (Acts 9:20-22). It wrought such a change in him that he would boldly declare, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”* (Romans 1:16). The Word of God had the power to change the

murderers of Jesus into the servants of Jesus on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:22-47). The Word of God was powerful enough to convert people by the thousands (Acts 2:41). “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7). The Word of God was powerful enough to cause those involved in witchcraft and sorcery to repent and burn their books of black magic. “And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed” (Acts 19:18-20). It is this same living and powerful Word that we still study and preach to people today. It is just as life giving and powerful today as it was when God first spoke it.

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MAKE ALL THINGS ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN

Mike Gors

The book of Hebrews is filled with the “...riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8), “the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (Ephesians 1:23). This book exalts the Christ like no other. It tells us of His superiority over the angels, Moses, Aaron and the Levitical priesthood, ceremonies and rituals, and of course, Christ being the superior sacrifice. It tells of His function as the sacrificial Lamb, Great High Priest in Heaven where He sits upon the throne of grace and of His being the author and finisher of our faith and eternal salvation to all them that obey Him.

It will be unprofitable to read this book through twenty first century eyes. While this book is designed to help all Christians of every age see the Majesty of Christ and cause them to draw near to God, it was written to the Hebrews, a people very different from us as twenty first century Americans. The intended audience had a

(Continued on page 16)

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