

Sent: Wednesday, October 12, 2016 10:25 PM  
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Hebrews 3

Hebrews 3 starts out a lot like Hebrews 2! The author (possibly the Apostle Paul) wants his readers (presumably Jewish believers)--whom he addresses as "holy brethren, and partakers of a heavenly calling"--to have a clear understanding of who Jesus was and is, what He's done for them, and why He's superior to the highly esteemed Moses whose name and legacy are synonymous with everything Jewish! The author seems to have the idea that if only his readers had a clearer and fuller understanding of Jesus, there's no way they'd consider returning to Judaism--or continuing in a life of sin, or holding anyone or anything higher than Him!

And so, he begins chapter 3 urging them to again "consider Jesus"--the "Son of God"! The One through whom God had spoken! The One whom He appointed "heir of all things by word of His power"! The One who is the "radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature"! The One who "made purification for sins"! And the One who is now "seated down at the right hand of the Majesty on high"!

In chapter 2, the author continues His tribute! He (Jesus) is the One who was "made--for a little while--lower than the angels...and who suffered, and shed His blood, and died so that He "might taste death for everyone"! And thus become the "author of their salvation"!

The author says He "had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people..." And to be able to identify with, and "come to the aid of, those who are tempted" (and tested)!

He continues this line of thought in chapter 3, which we discussed last nite! He's called the "Apostle and High Priest of our confession"! An "apostle" in the sense of being "sent by the Father to be the Savior of the world" (I John 4:14). A "high priest" who "offered up Himself" as the supreme, "once for all" sacrifice for sin! And so, becoming the both the "minister" of God to man, and the Mediator of man to God!

Jesus is obviously "better than the angels, having inherited a more excellent name"! And, the author notes, angels "worship Him"! But He's also better than Moses, who the "children of Israel" remember as a "friend of God;" the one who God spoke with "face to face...on behalf of the people; and the one whom God used to deliver them from bondage in Egypt! While Moses was "faithful in all his house as a servant, the author writes that Christ was "faithful as a Son, over His house--whose house we are..."! Hagner notes that "whereas Jesus brought about the fulfillment of God's purpose (redemption!), Moses had (only?) a preparatory role in the purpose of God, and testified to what would be said in the future"! Thus Jesus was superior to Moses!

All this is expressed by the author to make the case that his readers needed to "take care, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God..." And one that becomes "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin!" (like what happened to their forefathers in their wilderness wanderings and resulted in them not being able to enter the "promised land")!

The author urges "the brethren" (and this would apply to us as well) to "encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you (us!) will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin"!

By referring to the passage in Psalm 95 and applying it in "midrashic" fashion (Hagner's term) the author is warning his readers that they (we!) are facing the same spiritual crisis that their forefathers faced in the wilderness! The problem of "unbelief"! It's a "heart thing" (ala "hardening of the hearteries"), which shows itself in disobedience and, carried to the extreme and not dealt with, is the mark of an "unbeliever"!

"Shepherd's Notes" notes that Hebrews 3 "begins with a compelling presentation of Jesus' superiority and ends with a ringing challenge for Christians to endure"! It's generally referred to as the doctrine of the "perseverance of the saints" and it defines the part we play in "holding fast to our confession" and "standing firm in the faith"! But it's also good to reminded, when grappling with these doctrinal distinctions, to rely and "rest" on the words of Jesus Himself who said: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give them eternal life, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand!" (John 10:27-28) And so too, the doctrine of the "security of the believer"!

Well, there's more coming on these ideas, as well as on the promise of "rest" for the believer, as we move on to Hebrews 4 in next week's lesson!

Have a great week, men!

Lowell