

A CALL TO "STOP IT"!

■ *A Study in the book of Hebrews by Dr. John D. DeBrine* ■

Years ago I heard Donald Grey Barnhouse teach the New Testament book of Hebrews. I'll never forget his opening comment — "The book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrews to get the Hebrews to stop being Hebrews". We must remember that the book was written at approximately 70AD. The temple was still there with all of the sacrifices; therefore, it was a temptation to return to the lamb (small "l") instead of **the Lamb** (capital "L"). Whereas the Gospels depict the life of Christ, including His death, burial and resur-

"...IF YOU REALLY WANT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT JESUS CHRIST IS DOING NOW - READ THE BOOK OF HEBREWS."

rection, the book of Hebrews describes what Jesus Christ is doing on the very day you read this article. *"Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."* (Heb.7:25)

The book of Hebrews is written to present the superiority of Jesus Christ to the prophets - to the angels. In fact, it is a reminder that John 1:12 works because of who Jesus Christ is. To me it is significant that we really don't know who wrote the book of Hebrews. There is speculation but I haven't read proof that anyone knows although the recipients of the letter knew as Hebrews 13:22 indicates. The fact that the author is not known, fur-

ther causes us to focus our entire attention on the Lord Jesus Christ and it is again that classic reminder that occupation with Jesus Christ causes man to take a back seat. Note the downward progression as the Apostle Paul came to grips with the Person of Christ.

1. **"least of the Apostles"**
(I Corinthians 15:9)
2. **"less than the least of the saints"**
(Ephesians 3:8)
3. **"chief of sinners"**
(I Timothy 1:15)

To emphasize the Person of Jesus Christ let me introduce a contrast. God spoke to those in the era before

Christ by visions, by angels, and even a donkey (which encourages me!). Now note the contrast with the present. *"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe."* (Heb. 1:1,2)

THE WARNING

We must remember that since God is not working today as He did in Hebrews 1:1, the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the ultimate test. Let me make a partial list. Jesus Christ is the test of the following areas.

1. **He is the test to detect error.**
(I John 4:1-3)
This proves that Jesus Christ is the Eternally pre-existent one. Therefore if you have a question as you listen to someone, ask this question: "In your opinion, who is Jesus Christ?"
2. **Jesus Christ is the test to understand if we are dealing with the Holy Spirit or "some other spirit"** Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit is at work you can look for the following (John 16:8-15):
 - a. Conviction of sin (vs. 8-12)
 - b. Desire to know and apply the Word of God (vs. 13)
 - c. Occupation with the eternal - not the temporal (vs. 13b)
 - d. Occupation with Jesus Christ (vs. 14,15)

3. **Jesus Christ is the test for any new trend that develops.** *"And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy."* (Colossians 1:18)

This verse tells us to ask a simple question — "Who gets the credit?" If the answer is the human instrument, then we know that error is lurking in the background. This is summarized in I Corinthians 1:29-31 *"So that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."*

Continued on Next Page

Therefore, as it is written: Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

4. Jesus Christ is the trend for all ritual - Hebrews 9:28 "So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him."

The ritual of the church has a place but to make sure it never violates Hebrews 9:28 which reminds us that when Christ died for our sins, He himself said, "It is finished".

The hymn we seldom hear today puts it this way: "LORD, I BELIEVE THY PRECIOUS BLOOD WHICH AT THE MERCY SEAT OF GOD FOREVER DOTHS FOR SINNERS PLEAD. FOR ME EVEN FOR MY SOUL WAS SHED."

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"We've attended Maranatha Bible Conference and heard Dr. John for several years now. Until this year we started receiving your Audio Magazine tapes. I'm a 53 year old pastors wife and I work at a Retirement Home so I pass the tapes along to some of the residents there to enjoy."

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"Thanks for your web site - I appreciate being able to check the other articles, studies and notes section. I use it as a text for a devotion period during my lunch break at work."

(RI listener)



As an ordained clergyman, whenever I conduct the ordinance of the Lord's supper, I remind the audience of the words of Jesus..."This do in remembrance of me." (I Corinthians 11:25)

We are never to indicate that his cross work was not complete. Hebrews 9:28 is the standard. Underline "once for all" in your Bible. Beware!!

5. Jesus Christ is the test for the Gospel. Remember Galatians 1:9 reminds us that there is a false Gospel. The genuine is I Corinthians 2:2 and it reminds us that we cannot add to or subtract from the Gospel of God. It is never Christ *plus!* If we fall in this area we are preaching "another Gospel".

Now the book of Hebrews presents the Lord Jesus Christ as the ultimate test for the five areas I have outlined. In other words if you really want to understand what Jesus Christ is doing now read the book of Hebrews.

DOCTRINE IS NOT ENOUGH

You will note that with every major doctrine there is a **resultant** deportment. Ephesians 2:10 is the summary and here are some examples.

1. The Doctrine of the Return of the Lord Jesus Christ "Dear friends, now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as he is." -I John 3:2

2. The deportment that results from applying the doctrine.

"Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure." - I John 3:3

3. The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. - I Corinthians 15:1-23

4. The deportment that results in the application of this doctrine. "Therefore my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your

labor in the Lord is not in vain." - I Corinthians 15:58

Now all of this prepares us for a study in Hebrews. Let me put it this way. Since it is a comprehensive picture of what Jesus Christ is doing **now**, there is a danger of failing to apply these great truths. The book has five basic warnings. Let me share them:

- 1. Hebrews 2:1-4 - a warning not to drift away.**
- 2. Hebrews 3:7 / 4:13 - a warning against unbelief.**
- 3. Hebrews 5:11/6:20 - a warning against immaturity which results in dullness of hearing.**
- 4. Hebrews 10:26-31- a warning against willful sinning.**
- 5. Hebrews 12:18-29- a warning about building on the right foundation with the wrong materials. This is similar to I Cor. 3:11-15.**

I trust that you'll be with us as we begin a series from the book of Hebrews verse by verse on Songtime USA. If for any reason you are unable to hear the broadcast, write to us and ask for the Audio Magazine on cassette so you will be able to study with us and therefore discover that **preventative** procedures are superior to corrective ones. Pray for us as we begin one of the most important studies we've ever given. Keep in mind that your financial support will help us as we emphasize spiritual obstetrics (evangelism) and spiritual pediatrics (Bible study). We are asking every listener to Songtime to ask for the free cassette, "Decision Determines Destiny". Give it out to an unbeliever and let us know the name of that unbeliever so we can pray for them. Your reward won't be my personal thank you, but the realization some day of I Thessalonians 2:19-20 "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed you are our glory and joy."

The True Reason for Thanksgiving

■ *Pastor Steve Butts - MILLERSVILLE BIBLE CHURCH* ■

What does the Thanksgiving holiday mean to you? For some it is a time for family and special dinners. Those in business seize the opportunity for economic gain. Others think of those exciting holiday football games.

If the holiday has been designated Thanksgiving, whom should we thank? Should we thank ourselves? Do we thank our lucky stars? Sadly, the attitude of many in our nation is summed up in television character Bart Simpson's grace before meals: "Dear God, we paid for all this ourselves, so thanks for nothing." Author Os Guinness has appropriately suggested that, "rebellion against God does not begin with the clenched fist of atheism

but with the self-satisfied heart of the one for whom 'thank you' is redundant."

Originally, the national holiday of Thanksgiving was "...to be devoted by the people of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the Beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be; that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country..." (George Washington - October 3, 1789)

Obviously there is nothing wrong with many of the customs that have come to be associated with the Thanksgiving holiday. Visiting relatives, turkey dinners,

football games and even special bargains at the stores are not bad in themselves. Actually, the enjoyment of these things is further cause for thankfulness to God. There is an ancient Jewish saying reminding us that, "He that gets enjoyment out of the world without giving thanks, has committed a sacrilege; he has defrauded the Lord."

Some people find it hard to be thankful because of the suffering and difficulties they have experienced. Life in this world can be cruel and painful. Scripture verses like the one commanding us to, "*Give thanks in all circumstances*" (I Thessalonians 5:18), are hard to follow when our circumstances seem unbearable. How can we give thanks when we hurt so much? In his letters, C. S. Lewis has suggested that, "We ought to give thanks for all fortune: if it is 'good' because it is good, if 'bad' because it works in us patience, humility and the contempt of this world and the hope for our eternal country." Another reminds us that, "Some people complain that God put thorns on roses, while others praise Him for putting roses on thorns." Life can be very difficult but if we lose the ability to be grateful because of our suffering, we double our loss.

It is also good to remember that prosperity is often a greater threat to gratitude than hardship. In the Old Testament God repeatedly expressed concern that his people would forget him in their prosperity - and they did! The lesson of God's Old Testament people is a warning to America, one of the most prosperous nations in the world, about the sin of ingratitude. God has shed his grace on our nation and for this we should bow before him and give thanks. The Thanksgiving holiday was established for this purpose.

On a more personal level, I have found three categories for thanksgiving very helpful. We should thank God for spiritual, relational, and material blessings. The psalmist wrote, "*Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits*" (Psalm 103:2)

A "HYMNSTORY"

■ *Bill Dagle* ■

If I had a dollar for every time that John DeBrine said: "Cape Cod — the home of America"....well, I guess I'd be a rich man! In reality we are all rich in the truth of that statement for the Pilgrims landing at Provincetown was no accident. God was guiding and in His guidance a nation was formed. A rugged nation built out of a rugged wilderness.

Governor Bradford would decree the first Thanksgiving in 1621 to commemorate the Pilgrim's harvest. Later George Washington proclaimed November 26, 1789 as a national day of thanks giving but the holiday was not repeated on a national basis until Abraham Lincoln named it a national "Harvest Festival" on November 26, 1861. After that time, the holiday was proclaimed annually by the President and the Governors of each state. Congress passed a bill naming the fourth Thursday of each November as Thanksgiving Day.

Because the Pilgrims had originally come from England they brought a lot of English customs with them - including their music. The song, "*Come Ye Thankful People Come*" makes for a great Thanksgiving song but unfortunately it was not sung at the first Thanksgiving because it wouldn't be written until 1844. Yet an Englishman - Henry Alford - would be the writer and carry on those English traditions that still influence America today. If the Pilgrims had had this song, this harvest hymn would have fit well with the celebration. From the first stanza of invitation and exhortation to give thanks to God, to the last stanza of prayer for the Lord's return, "the final harvest" - this song truly expresses the meaning of Thanksgiving.

It is interesting to note that the original title of the hymn was "After Harvest" and was accompanied by the text - "*He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bring his sheaves with him.*" (Psalm 126:6) This verse expresses so well the mission of Songtime and the reason the Pilgrims came to America, making Cape Cod not only the home of America but also in the message the only hope America has — salvation in Christ and Him alone.

■ Questions & Answers ■

Dr. Bob Burrelli - GRACE BIBLE CHURCH

Q: Is it true that Jesus will give me anything that I ask for in his name?

A: A cursory reading of John 14:13-14 may give people the indication that Jesus will give a person anything he wants, so long as he asks for it "in Jesus name". But if we do not understand exactly what Jesus is saying, prayer will quickly become nothing more than an exercise in futility. Satan would love to get us to believe the lie that God answers our prayers according to our will. His hope is that once we discover that God is not answering our requests for riches, fame and glory, or whatever it may be, we chalk Christianity up to being a shame and accuse Jesus of breaking his promises. So what is Jesus really saying?

We must understand that Jesus is interested in making sure that His work of ministry is carried out in the world through the church and His promise in John 14:14 is one important means of making sure that happens. In other words, Jesus is really saying, "Ask me to do anything for you in the area of my work and I will do it." Now how do we know that this is the correct understanding from the context?

The significance of the name of Jesus is one indication. A person's name in the ancient world was a very significant thing. It captured or represented all that the individual was. The person of the Lord Jesus Christ is divine. He is God, the creator of the universe. More specifically, though, He is the savior who came to save sinners, and His name bears this out. It refers to His specific work of

redemption. Jesus, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew, Joshua, means savior. The angel told Joseph that he was to call the Christ child Jesus, "because he will save his people from their sins". The very name of Jesus points us to a redeemer and his work of redemption.

The significance of the will of the Father is another indication. This work of redemption, Jesus says a few short verses ago, is the Father's will, "... it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (v. 10). Jesus is interested in doing only the work that the Father has given to Him. And it is this work that Jesus has entrusted to and expects of His sheep. He says, "anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing ... because I am going to the Father" (v. 12). It is the work of ministry that Jesus has been doing that He is interested in completing through the church.

The goal of glorifying the Father is a third indication. The church is to carry out the ministry of her head, Christ, in order to bring glory to the Father, which was what Jesus was only ever interested in doing from the beginning. The "whatever" of verse 13 and the "anything" of verse 14 refer specifically to the work of Christ done through the church that will glorify the Father. Jesus' promises us in John 14 is that He will do whatever we, His believers, ask of Him without hesitation, so long as what we ask is in accordance with His will. It is no surprise,

therefore, that John would later write to the churches in Asia regarding prayer, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us-whatever we ask-we know that we have what we ask of him" (1 Jn 5:12-15). What we have in these two passages is a means by which Jesus completes His work of ministry from heaven through the church on earth. If we intend to be effective witnesses, we must employ God's assistance through prayer, asking only that His will be done, not ours. Only then do we have answered prayer.

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Hyannis, MA 02601. (508) 362-7070.
Email: info@songtime.com
Web Page: http://www.songtime.com

President: Dr. John DeBrine
Chairman: Rod August
Producer: David Beguerie
Editor/Layout: David Donnelly
Contributors: Dr. John D. DeBrine,
Bill Dagle, Dr. Bob Burrelli, Steve Butts,
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