

## Week 2 – Class Handout

### **Hebrews 3:1-4:13 – “The Christian Hope for Rest”**

*1:1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

#### **(1:1-4) Christ is....**

- Part of God’s logos, word, speech....a way of communicating / revealing
- Heir of all things = Because he is son, he is heir
- Through him God created the world
- Reflects the glory of God = perfect representation of God
- Bears the very stamp of his nature = reveals God’s essence
- Upholds the universe by his word of power = ongoing work in creation
- Purification for sins = blood sacrifice
- Right hand of God = exaltation (Ps 110)

#### **Superior to Angels (1:4-2:9)**

- Based on Ps 2:7; 104:4; 45:6f; 2 Sam 7:14; Deut 32:43 (from Septuagint version)
- Angels are servants....Jesus is God’s Son
- Since Christ is superior to angels....we need to pay more careful attention to his salvation

#### **Made Like his Brothers (2:5-18)**

- Christ is superior to angels because he was made like humans and then exalted to right hand of God
- “Crowned with glory and honor BECAUSE he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.” (2:9)
- “Made perfect through suffering”, “shared in their humanity”, “made like his brothers in every way” = completely human, total solidarity with humanity...

#### **Jesus Greater than Moses (3:1-6)**

- Based on Num 12:6-8
- In Jewish tradition Moses was considered greater than angels
- “Therefore” – indicates that this section is connected to the previous discussion about the nature of Christ
- “Share in the heavenly calling” = Christ shares in our humanity, we share in his heavenly calling
- “fix your thoughts on Jesus” = reflect upon the *earthly* life of Christ
- Apostle & Priest = apostle is one who is sent and represents God to people, Priest is one who represents people to God.
- Moses was faithful as servant (like angels)....Jesus is faithful as son (on with authority)
- IF – Overall theme of Hebrews is to exhort the hearers to persevere under trials, persecutions, faith-challenges
- “courage” (NIV) – better translated as “confidence” which in Jewish was associated with the freedom to speak...in this case to stand before God assured by the sacrifice of Christ
- “hope of which we boast” – equated with faith / trust in Hebrews. See also Rom 5:2f

## **Warning to Persevere in Faith to Receive the promised Rest (3:7-4:13)**

- Based on Ps 95:7-11 which tells the stories of Ex 17:1f and Num 13:25f.
- Combines with Gen 2:2
- Extends the prior section idea of “IF we hold on to confidence and hope...”

### **Argument Structure**

- Takes the Psalmist’s perspective that the promise of rest remains open
- Because the Israelites did not enter the rest...because of their lack of faith in the promise (hard hearts)
- Thus the promise of entering God’s rest remains unfulfilled...it remains an open promise
- Thus the “Today” is understood not historically, but rather as an ongoing “Today”

### **Comments**

- (3: 12) “unbelieving heart” = lack of trust, conviction
- (3:12) “turn away from God” = rebellion, not individual sins, but a rejecting / rebellious / unresponsive to the promise heart
- (3:13) The household of God plays an important role in nurturing confidence and hope, because sin tricks us
- (3:14) “confidence we had at first” = word “confidence” is translated as “assurance” in 11:1. This phrase does not mean “the confidence we had back then...” rather it means “our first / primary assurance” i.e. the basis of our hope.
- (3:19) “disobeyed” = a reference to the rebellion
- (4:2) Both Israel and Christians have heard the promise (gospel) of God...”to enter His rest”
- (4:12f) “word of God” – his message in past and in Christ
- (4:12f) “two-edged sword” – both promise and warning....God can discern the presence of faith and rebellion.

### **Table Discussion**

1. The foundation of the encouragement to persevere in faith is the fact that Christ, although the creator of the world, was completely human. Often we focus on Christ-as-God who loved us as a source of encouragement. How does reflecting on Christ-as-completely human encourage you?
2. What causes you to lose confidence in the certainty of our salvation in Christ?
3. Heb 3:13 emphasizes the need for us to encourage one another to nurture confidence and hope. How does our meeting together strengthen your confidence and hope? How could it be more effective?