

## The Church In Hebrews

Heb. 3:1-6

### Introduction:

1. Most recently we have been studying about the government of the church as it is revealed in Paul's writings.
2. In this lesson I want to give consideration to the church as it is revealed in the Book of Hebrews.

### Discussion:

I. In the passage we have just read the image of a family or household is used to describe the church.

- A. The recipients of the letter are described as "holy brethren."
- B. They are described as the "house (oikos) of God." This could be translated with the word "household."
  1. It is not referring to the church as a physical house (cf. temple).
  2. It is referring to God's family. Cf. Eph. 2:19.
  3. The concept harks back to 2 Sam. 7.
    - a. David had planned on building a physical house for God (the temple).
    - b. But God disagreed and said, "The Lord will make a house for you" (see 2 Sam. 7:11b-16). God is the builder of His house (Heb. 3:4).
    - c. In 2 Sam. 7 God's house and God's (David's) kingdom are equivalent. Cf. Heb. 1:3, 13).
  4. Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest is the builder of God's house (Heb. 3:3).
  5. Like Moses, He is faithful to God, but worthy of more glory than Moses. Jesus is the builder of God's house and is worthy of more glory than the house that He builds.
  6. Those who place their confidence in God are God's house (Heb. 3:6).

II. Throughout the Book of Hebrews the Christian community is viewed almost entirely in terms of the O.T. wandering people of God.

- A. O.T. images are exploited in communicating to N.T. people.
  1. This is clearly exemplified in chapters 3-4.
  2. N.T. people are called upon to NOT be like those who wandered in the wilders for 40 years because of their unbelief (3:12-18).
  3. They lost the rest that God intended to give them (4:1-3).
  4. The Christian community is viewed as "the people of God" (4:9). They have a rest prepared for them. They are the spiritual successors of the Israelites, who exchanged faith for unbelief and have therefore become ineligible for the inheritance

of rest. But the Christian community has now become the recipients of the promised rest (3:7, 13, 15; 4:7-8).

- B. The High Priest theme assumes a people whom the High Priest represents.
  - 1. Jesus is our High Priest (3:1). He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him (7:25; 8:1). So this Christian community is those who draw near to God through Jesus. They are the saved.
  - 2. His priesthood allows us to draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith (10:22).
- C. The related sacrificial images necessarily imply a people for whom the sacrifices are made.
  - 1. Jesus obtains eternal redemption by the offering of His own blood for the sins of the people (Heb. 9-10).
  - 2. Heb. 9:20 refers to Ex. 24:6 and the blood of the covenant. Jesus used the same language in Matt. 26:28 in instituting the Lord's Supper to be observed in the new covenant community.
  - 3. It is the blood of Jesus that allows people entrance into the holy place (Heb. 10:19-25). It is "the confession of our hope" (v. 23).
  - 4. Those who have this hope must hold fast, considering stimulating one another to love and good deeds lest they abandon their hope, shrinking back to destruction (Heb. 10:19-39). They assembled regularly to stimulate one another to faithfulness. Endurance in painful circumstances is demanded (Heb. 10:32-12:3).

III. Hebrews 12:23 identifies "the general assembly and church of the firstborn ones" which points to a community.

- A. The parallelism with O.T. Israel continues here.
  - 1. They have come to Mount Zion.
  - 2. They are the city of the living God.
  - 3. They are the heavenly Jerusalem.
  - 4. They are enrolled in heaven.
- B. We often think of the heavenly Jerusalem as a geographical place, but in this text the first-born ones are the heavenly Jerusalem.
- C. We have received the unshakeable kingdom (Heb. 12:28). As citizens in it we offer to God acceptable service with reverence and awe.

IV. Three additional observations regarding the community evident in Hebrews.

- A. They placed special significance on the word of God.
  - 1. This is evidenced in the frequent O.T. quotations, in the historical connections with ancient Israel.

2. And yet the O.T. revelation is set over against the even more significant word spoken “in His Son” (Heb. 1:1-2a; 2:1-4). Note the emphasis on this word “confirmed to us by those who heard” (the apostles!).
  3. So we have a similar emphasis here as in other N.T. documents on the word of God as authoritative revelation for the community of believers.
- B. Leaders are mentioned in 13:17 although no specific officials are named. Christ is the only apostle mentioned (3:1).
- C. Baptism is NOT mentioned specifically, but 10:22 probably refers to it. Note that the context associates it with the blood of the covenant by which one is sanctified and enters the holy place (10:19, 29). This becomes another reference that associates baptism and the blood of Christ.

#### Conclusion:

1. The Book of Hebrews dovetails well with the information about the church in the Gospels, Acts and the writings of Paul.
2. Although expressed in different language it is consistent with the information given elsewhere. Part of the difference seems to be in the parallelism of the O.T. imagery.
3. It is clear that the people of God in the O.T. have given way to the people of God of the new covenant, believers, who confess Jesus Christ are the general assembly and church of the first-born ones.