

Text: Heb 2.1–4; 3.7–4.13; 5.11–6.12; 10.19–39; 12.14–29

We are getting back to our study of Hebrews after our Christmas break.

As always, after Christmas, I find myself scrambling to catch up. I added an additional impediment to catching up this time when a friend mentioned online his list of books for last year. One of them caught my eye:

Four Views of the Warning Passages in Hebrews, Herbert Bateman IV, ed.

We are wrestling with these passages as we work through the book. The warnings come in a rush in the first half of the book, then there is a long central section on the priesthood of Christ (the main point of Hebrews, I think), and two more warnings come as the book closes.

The *Four Views* book is one of many published in recent years where various Bible teachers get together to lay out their views on a subject, then offer rebuttals to each other.

They are done, not in pursuit of argument, but in pursuit of clarity – the passages or themes are areas where Christians disagree. If you can work through these controversies in a measured way, perhaps we can gain a little light instead of heat.

This is the problem with most theological debate / conversations

Well, the book is over four hundred pages. I think I have to wade through most of it to make much sense of it, and to really add insight for the whole book of Hebrews. I've read about 20% of the book this week.

The introduction of the book gives a good overview of all the warnings. So I decided to use that as the basis for our message today. I am thus heavily indebted to Herbert Bateman IV for the backbone of our message, the charts I am handing out come from him, with my own adaptations to try to keep it simple.

This is one of those messages that will sound like a lecture as we get started, but I plan to zero in on an essential spiritual point as we get to the end. That's when I'll give you the proposition.

Now, there are five main warnings in Hebrews. We will work through each of them, so I won't take the time to read them all here at the beginning of the message.

Let's just get started with point 1.

I. Comparing and contrasting Hebrews 2.1-4, 12.14-29

Bateman calls these two warnings, “Warnings to hear”

I’m not going to read the whole section in ch. 12, just the heart of the warning.

Read 2.1-4, 12.18-29

A. The exhortations

1. Pay attention to the Son (2.1-4, see also preamble in ch. 1)
2. Do not refuse the speech of the Son [“Him who is speaking”] (12.25)
3. Show gratitude (12.28)

We can’t emphasize enough how much you need to be hearers of the Word. Hearing leads to doing.

B. The Concerns

1. In chapter 2
 - a. Slipping away or forgetting the message (2.1)
 - b. Neglecting one’s salvation (2.3)
2. In chapter 12
 - a. Refusing the Son’s message (12.25b)
 - b. Refusing Jesus (12.25b)

The concern of chapter 12 is *heavier* but it is of the same kind: neglect leads to refusal.

C. Jewish historical precedent

1. The wilderness generation at Mt Sinai (2.1-4)
2. The wilderness generation at Mt Sinai (12.14-29)

D. Lesser-to-greater mediator

1. Chapter 2
 - a. Angels (lesser beings, 2.2, *cf.* 1.4-14)
 - b. The Son (greater, 2.3-4, *cf.* 1.1-2)
2. Chapter 12

- a. Moses (him who warned on earth – 12.25b, *cf.* 12.18-20)
- b. The Son (him who warns from heaven – 12.25c)

E. Lesser-to-greater consequence

1. Chapter 2

- a. Judgment of the Sinai community in the wilderness **versus**
- b. no escape from some future judgment (2.2–3)

2. Chapter 12

- a. Judgment of the Sinai community in the wilderness **versus**
- b. no escape from some future judgment (12.25)

F. Desirable consequence

1. The unshakable kingdom (28)

The energy of the last warning comes from the phrase, “our God is a consuming fire”

II. Comparing and contrasting Heb 3.7-4.13, 10.19-39

Here both passages are lengthy, so we have to suffice with excerpts

Bateman: Warnings to Trust and Obey

A. Exhortation

1. Chapter 3

- a. Encourage one another against hardening (3.12-13)
- b. Fear coming short of God’s rest (4.1), be diligent to enter God’s rest (4.11)

2. Chapter 10

- a. Boldly enter (10.22), Maintain confession (10.23), Encourage one another (10.24)
- b. Remember former days (10.32), hold onto your confidence (10.35)

B. Concern

1. Chapter 3

- a. Falling away (3.12)
- b. Hardening heart (3.13)
- c. Disobedience (3.16, 18, et al)

2. Chapter 10

- a. Deliberate (willful) sin (10.26)
- b. Setting aside the sacrifice of Jesus (10.28-29)
- c. Insulting the Holy Spirit (10.29)

C. Jewish historical precedent

- 1. The disobedience of wilderness generation at Kadesh (3:16–18; 4:2b, 6)
- 2. Allusion to the disobedience of Israel under the Law (10:26–28, 30)

D. Lesser-to-greater mediator

1. Chapter 3

- a. Moses
- b. The Son

2. Chapter 10

- a. The Old Covenant through Moses
- b. The New Covenant through the Son

E. Lesser-to-greater dire consequence

1. Chapter 3

- a. Disobedient prevented from Canaan (rest)
- b. Disobedient risking coming short of God's rest

2. Chapter 10

- a. From a sacrifice for sins in the OT to no more sacrifice in the NT
- b. From suffering physical death under the Law to “a severer punishment” in Hebrews (10.29)

Both passages use the lesser-to-greater argument: if this was true in OT, how much more in NT

The NT times are greater because revelation is full: we have Christ, the fulfillment of the Law

F. Desirable consequence

1. Entering God's rest (4.9-11)
2. Receiving the great reward (10.35); receiving what was promised (10.36); preserving life (10.37-39)

In both of these warnings, the believer is called to guard his heart and obey God's voice.

III. Considering Heb 5.11-6.12

Bateman: "A harsh warning"

A. Exhortation

- Let us press on to maturity (6.1)

B. Concern (i.e., sin)

- Falling away [falling off the path] (6.6)

C. Jewish historical precedent

- None specifically mentioned

D. Lesser-to-greater mediator

- None mentioned

E. Dire consequence

- No renewal to repentance (6.6)

F. Desirable consequence

1. Things accompanying salvation (6.9)
2. The same diligence to realize the assurance of hope (6.11)
3. That you not be sluggish (6.12)

G. OT citations used as a testimony

- None: the heart of this warning is exclusively New Testament

The important thing to take from this warning is: what does the Lord want of us? That is, the desirable consequences.

Continuing the Comparison

- A Hebrews 2:1–4: ‘hear’ (believe)
- B Hebrews 3:7–4:13: trust and obey (explicit concern about distrust and disobedience)
- C Hebrews 5:11–6:12: be lifelong learners disciples
- B Hebrews 10:19–39: trust and obey (explicit concern about distrust and disobedience)
- A Hebrews 12:14–29: ‘listen’ (believe)”¹

Bateman uses the word “learners” — I supply the word “disciples”

“Of these five warning passages, two invoke the need to hear or listen to God’s message (2:1–4; 12:14–29), while two others generate an emotive need and explicit expectation to trust and obey God (3:7–4:13; 10:19–39). At the heart of these warning passages is Hebrews 5:11–6:12.”²

Conclusion:

Proposition: The issue of Hebrews is discipleship: because we have such a great Master.

In the Old Testament, we see example after example of half-hearted obedience to God’s Law (if that).

In the New Testament, we are “so much the more” (lesser-to-greater) called to earnest discipleship.

- Let me again emphasize Bible reading and personal devotions
- And again, let me emphasize church attendance, doing a little more than your past practice

The Lord Jesus and the salvation he offers us means we have eternal life: this should be the number one priority of our thinking and doing.

Lay aside those things that distract you from serving God.

¹ Bateman, 84.

² Bateman, “Introducing the Warning Passages in Hebrews: A Contextual Orientation,” 28.

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