

## Reading Schedule for February 19-25, 2018

After prayerful consideration I have chosen Hebrews for our Scripture focus during Lent. We have six weeks before Easter with the Book of Hebrews inspiring us about the meaning of Christ's sacrificial death. The purpose could simply be stated: "To present the sufficiency and superiority of Christ." That will definitely enhance our walk with God as our understanding of Christ expands. You will be delighted with the emphasis of this Book!

**February 19 - Hebrews 1:1-4:** "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." (v.3) This first paragraph is an important introduction to the Book and to the identity of Christ. This specific verse is especially inspiring as it identifies the Lord Jesus as the full revelation of God. It reminds me of the powerful presentation of the Apostle Paul in Colossians 1:15-20 that elevates the significance of Christ in so many ways. I want you to absorb the wonder of Jesus in these 4 verses. It is time to slow down and smell the incense of Christ's beauty and power - all in One! What do you notice in this paragraph about Jesus? What other Scriptures point to God's revelation in Christ? Are there any "I AM" statements from John's Gospel that apply here?

**February 20 - Hebrews 1:5-14:** "To which of the angels did God ever say, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?'" (v.13) There is a chain of Old Testament references that supports the claim that Jesus is superior to angels since Jesus has the position and authority of God's Son. This verse is Psalm 110:1 and will be referred to three more times in Hebrews (5:6; 7:17 & 21). It applies to "great David's greater son," the Messiah. There seems to be some angel worship going on and so the author wraps up this section with a succinct definition of how to understand angels - "ministering agents" of God. This affirms the significance of angels but also makes them quite distinct from the glory of Jesus. The splendor of angels is clearly portrayed, proving that Jesus is even more glorious because he is greater than the angels. What do you appreciate about angels?

**February 21 - Hebrews 2:1-4:** "God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will." (v.4) I believe in the ministry philosophy of "show and tell." I think that is the meaning of this verse. God's witness came through the demonstration of his presence alongside the proclamation of his message. Miracles, spiritual gifting and sacrificial love point to the life changing message of salvation found in Jesus. This week I prayed for the healing touch of God to do a miracle work in someone who probably isn't a Christian. I want them to know Christ and I thought a miracle might be the vehicle God uses to soften this person's heart to salvation. I also pray that God moves among us miraculously so that a skeptical world will see the Lord with new eyes. How do you understand this paragraph about the message of salvation?

**February 22 - Hebrews 2:5-18** "But there is a place where someone has testified: 'What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him?'" (v.6) The author of Hebrews is utilizing the Old Testament throughout. I

enjoy Psalm 8 very much; here he is using this reference to highlight the Messiah, not just human beings. Jesus is the truest representative of mankind. Jesus referred to himself as the "son of man" several times. In verse 9 the author clearly presents his emphasis on Jesus. This use of the Old Testament is a characteristic of Hebrews and an affirmation of God's message about the Messiah in the Old Testament. You notice the purpose our author has in mind as he addresses Jewish Christians who would automatically have a high regard for the Old Testament. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament. He is divine but he is one of us as well. Continue to notice the prevalence of Old Testament Scriptures in this Book. How do you understand these verses? What do you learn about Jesus?

**February 23 - Hebrews 3:1-6:** "But Christ is faithful as the Son over God's house. And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory." (v.6) The point of this paragraph is that Jesus is greater. Moses was held in high esteem by the Jews but again he doesn't compare to Christ. This is the first time the author of Hebrews uses the title of Christ which means Messiah. There is also an affirmation for the significance of the church which is described as God's house. We form the house as followers of Jesus. We are courageous because of Christ and live with enduring hope. As Moses led the people of Israel out of bondage, so Christ leads us out of sin's bondage. The comparison between Moses and Jesus is purposeful and clearly part of God's plan. How does this short reading inspire you?

**February 24 - Hebrews 3:7-19:** "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness." (v.13) I have identified this verse as one that teaches us about the power of encouragement. The theme of these verses focuses on the decline of a hardening heart. Hidden in this text is the remedy of hardheartedness. Encouragement, one to another, sustains and even strengthens our faith. Too often, when we notice someone drifting, we avoid moving close enough to them to share our concern. We say within our thoughts, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The answer is yes because your love and confrontation has the power to turn them around from an eroding spiritual life. We are warned not to wander in the wilderness again. How might you encourage someone you sense is drifting spiritually?

**February 25 - Hebrews 4:1-11:** ". . . for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his." (v.10) The Jew had a strong connection to Sabbath-rest. The author uses that understanding to share the significance of salvation as entering rest. We know heaven is describe as the ultimate rest but in this section the author emphasizes "today!" Essentially it is inviting us into a spiritual relationship with God through Christ that eliminates striving. We do not have to prove anything. Our concern for measuring up is over. This is Sabbath-rest everyday with the culmination being found in heaven. The message in verse 11 encourages us to strive for rest. Stand firm in grace. Be assured of your lasting identity as a child of God. How might you apply this message to your life?

**PRAYER - Before February concludes, let's ask God to help us love others like he loves us.**