

A STUDY OF HEBREWS

Signs of Salvation and Apostasy - Chapter 5:11-6:12

I. Review

A. Jesus Christ is the greatest and final Prophet and enthroned Son of God.

1. Therefore we must pay closest attention to His Gospel, lest we drift from it or fail to realize His sympathy with us as a human being. (1:1-2:18)

B. Jesus Christ is infinitely greater than Moses since He is the Son over God's church and the Giver of eternal, not just temporal, rest.

1. Therefore we must persevere in faith lest we fail to reach the true heavenly rest, just as many Israelites failed to reach the rest of Canaan. (3:1-4:13)

C. Jesus Christ is our Great High Priest, called by God, and sympathetic to us all since He was truly and painfully tempted.

1. Therefore we who have profound needs must fly to God's throne of grace, freely opened because of Christ's heavenly intercession for us. (4:14-5:10)

Author's Most Recent Point: *And being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,*¹⁰ *being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.* (Heb 5:9-10)

II. Text: Hebrews 5:11-6:12 – A Divine Detour Detailing the Devastation of Disbelief and Disobedience

"(I should like to enlarge on this subject, but really I do not know if I can; you are so spiritually immature. I must warn you solemnly that those who have once been baptized and tasted the blessings of the new age can never repeat the experience of repentance and conversion if they commit apostasy. Not that I think you actually mean to be apostates; I have better hopes of you than that. I want you rather to press on from the point you have reached, so as to attain full maturity, instead of sticking there, or slipping back.)"
 - F.F. Bruce, paraphrase of Heb 5:11-6:20, *Hebrews*, xx.

A. Spiritual Immaturity and Its Consequences

*About this we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.*¹² *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God. You need milk, not solid food,*¹³ *for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child.*¹⁴ *But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.* (Heb 5:11-14)

6:1 *Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,*² *and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.*³ *And this we will do if God permits.* (Heb 6:1-3)

1. Why do you think the topic of Melchizedek is "hard to explain" for the author? What does he say?

SIDE NOTE: To be an "infant" is not always bad...

Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. (1 Cor 14:20)

Other times, to be an "infant" is not bad, but it is temporary... We must grow up!

*But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.*² *I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready,*³ *for you are still of the flesh.* (1 Cor 3:1-3)

“[Our wills and affections] are the principle wings or sails of our souls, whereby we are, or may be, carried on in our voyage...When, in the diligent use of means, our wills and affections do adhere and cleave with delight unto the things wherein we are instructed, then we are in our right course; then **if the holy gales of the Spirit of God do breathe on us, are we in a blessed tendency toward perfection.**”

- John Owen, *Hebrews*, Vol 5, 13-14.

“...because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” (2 Thess 2:10)

2. If Heb 6:1-3 describe a rudimentary Christian education for a former Jew, what is the danger of returning back to these things in their Old Testament forms? Why would this rejection of Christianity be particularly subtle?

- repentance from dead works
- faith toward God
- instructions about washings
- the laying on of hands
- the resurrection of the dead
- eternal judgment

3. Are we in a similar danger in our American “Christian” world? How?

“But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.” (2 Tim 3:1-5)

B. Apostasy and Its Consequences

⁴ For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. ⁷ For land that has drunk the rain that often falls on it, and produces a crop useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸ But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed, and its end is to be burned.

⁹ Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. ¹⁰ For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.

¹¹ And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. (Heb 6:4-12)

Apostate = one who has seemed to have been a Christian, professed faith, given signs, received sacraments, and then rejects and disowns Christ. Such a person is not merely an unbeliever, nor merely a disobedient but genuine Christian, but belongs to a third category altogether.