

Advent Pondering – 2018

In the often busy Christmas season this is an invitation to carve out some quiet moments to do a little pondering about the meaning of Christmas. There are a series of “Pondering Ideas” listed below. They are all based on lines from the first two chapters of the book of Hebrews. These chapters speak of Christmas themes, of Jesus “sharing in our humanity”, and becoming “fully human in every way”. But it speaks of these Christmas themes in the context of a much longer story. And the Christmas Story means so much more when pondered inside this longer story.

Consider reading over the first two chapters of Hebrews a few times over the Christmas season. When you are able, pick one of these “Pondering Ideas” and read over the lines from the opening chapters of the book of Hebrews. Then ponder a bit. May you find fresh discoveries about the meaning of Christmas.

A God who Speaks

In the past God spoke to our ancestors (1:1)
in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son (1:2)

Ponder: God is described as a God who speaks. What is He saying?

God Spoke in the Past

God spoke to our ancestors
through the prophets
at many times
and in various ways (1:1)

Ponder: These lines have in mind what we call the Old Testament. How did God speak and what did God say in the first part of the Bible?

God Spoke by His Son

in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son (1:2)

Ponder: The birth, life, death, resurrection of Jesus is described as God speaking. What did God say in Jesus?

The Son and the Father

The Son is the radiance of God’s glory (1:3)
and the exact representation of his being (1:3)

Ponder: What picture of God do you have by considering Jesus?

The Son and the Universe

through whom also he made the universe (1:2)
sustaining all things by his powerful word (1:3)
whom he appointed heir of all things (1:2)

Ponder: What is being said in these lines about Jesus’ role in the universe?

The Son Superior to Angels

he became ... superior to the angels (1:4)
Collection of Scriptures (1:5-14)

Ponder: Jesus the son is compared to angels in these lines. How is the Son superior?

God's Ultimate Purpose for People

It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come (2:5)
What is mankind that you ...
put everything under their feet (2:6-8)
bringing many sons and daughters to glory (2:10)

Ponder: What is God’s ultimate purpose for human beings?

This Purpose not Accomplished Yet

Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them (2:8)

Ponder: This line implies that we are made for something we have not yet accomplished. How do you see and feel that truth?

Jesus, Humans and Angels

The Son ... superior to the angels (1:4)

You made [mankind] a little lower than the angels (2:7)

Jesus ... was made lower than the angels for a little while (2:9)

Ponder: What is said in these lines about Jesus, about us, and about angels?

Jesus made Low, then Exalted

Jesus ... was made lower than the angels for a little while (2:9)

Jesus ... now crowned with glory and honor (2:9)

he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven (1:3)

Ponder: Jesus time on earth is pictured as a temporary time of being made lower. Consider what it meant for Jesus to come here.

Jesus became Human

Since the children have flesh and blood,
he too shared in their humanity (2:14)

Both the one who makes people holy
and those who are made holy are of the same family (2:11)

Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters (2:11)

For this reason he had to be made like them,
fully human in every way (2:17)

Ponder: Jesus entered our situation fully. What did Jesus experience as a human being?

Jesus - Suffering and Death

[God made] the pioneer of their salvation
perfect through what he suffered (2:10)

so that by the grace of God
he might taste death for everyone (2:9)

Ponder: Jesus suffered and died. Jesus tasted death for everyone. What does that mean?

Jesus Did This For People

the pioneer of their salvation (2:10)

Ponder: Consider these two words – Pioneer and Salvation. What does it mean for Jesus to be our Pioneer? What is the Salvation that he brings?

The Son Purifies People's Sins

he ... provided purification for sins (1:4)

that he might make atonement for the sins of the people (2:17)

Ponder: Consider this idea – Jesus brings forgiveness from sin.

The Son sets People Free

break the power of him who holds the power of death—
that is, the devil (2:14)

free those who all their lives
were held in slavery by their fear of death (2:15)

Ponder: Jesus set people free. From what? How?

The Son Makes People Holy

the one who makes people holy (2:11)

Ponder: Jesus is described as making people holy. What does that look like?

Jesus Helps People

For surely it is not angels he helps,
but Abraham's descendants. (2:16)

he is able to help those who are being tempted (2:18)

Ponder: What help is Jesus offering? How do you need it now?

Danger of Drifting Away

We must pay the most careful attention (2:1)
so that we do not drift away (2:1)

if we ignore so great a salvation (2:2)

Ponder: What does it mean to “drift away”? How do we prevent this?