

# *Paideia: An Education for Royalty: Hebrews 12:5-11*

## **Introduction: You are Royal Heirs of the King of Kings—Start Acting Like It**

The English crown's power and privilege are impressive, with its glorious castles and palaces, and pomp and circumstance. But *the House of Windsor should envy us*. We are, in fact, their betters. How so? God tell us in I Peter 2:9 and Eph. 1:11-23. We are adopted sons and daughters and royal heirs of the King of the Universe, the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. Contrary to the godless egalitarianism of our secular culture, *it's time we started acting like the royal heirs of King Jesus that we are*.

## **Hebrews 11: From Faith to Sight**

Heb. 11 highlights the great heroes of the faith, who looked *forward* to the Messiah, but never lived to see him. They lived by faith, yet didn't receive the Promised One.

Heb 11:39-40: *And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.*

Hebrews explains that we're in a better position: we have received the promise—we see Jesus in His glory (also Eph. 1).

Heb 2:9: *But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

## **Hebrews 12: Cloud of Witnesses- Consuming Fire**

*Brief Excursus on Why You Should Always Look for the Deeper Glory & Wonder in God's Word:* The Word is greater than the things it created. If our complex universe, at the cosmic and subatomic levels, is beyond imaging, *how much more* ought we to *expect* the Word, which is greater than any creature, to reveal unbelievable wonders, glories, and complexities *in itself*. The Word is more than black text on a white page; it reveals the glorious character of the Word-Giver Himself.

[See the notes on the structure and themes of Heb. 12.]

## **Hebrews 12:5-11: *Paideia*: The Education of Royal Heirs**

This portion of the chapter is a catechism for parents and children who are heirs of King Jesus. Three questions and answers. The key is *paideia*. The term has a very rich and complex history and meaning, hard to capture in a single English word. *Discipline* most often used, but *disciple* would be better.

*Greco-Roman Idea?* Werner Jaeger: A *system (not just an action) for the total enculturation of a child into everything it meant to be a free Greek or Roman citizen (freeman), not slave*. The film *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* captures this sense. Slaves did not receive *paideia*, but mere training for tasks, jobs. Aristotle made this distinction clear. Socrates and Plato's academies understood the importance of *paideia* for the life of the city-nation. It always bestows identity and purpose to life.

When Paul tells fathers to *paideia* their children in Eph. 6:4—he knows his audience will be familiar with the pagan Greek concept of *paideia*, but he actually alludes to the Septuagint's use of *paideia* in its translation of Deut. and Prov. 1:1-9; 4:1-13; 6:20-23; 13:24, and esp. in our text from Prov. 3:11-12. *Paideia* is a *biblical*, not a *pagan*, concept, likely borrowed by Plato and the Greeks from Moses and Solomon. Peter Leithart argues that Plato almost certainly read Moses and visited Alexandria where there were large numbers of Jews, who were widely scattered across the Mediterranean world.

## **How Then Shall We Educate Our Children?**

A Christian education acculturates a child in the royal heritage of the Lord through a *paideia* of wisdom and knowledge. It clarifies a child's identity and purpose rooted in his or her royal kinship with King Jesus. It teaches a child (to age 20: Num. 1:3) everything it means to be an heir of the Creator and Lord of the Universe. It is *fundamentally not* about training for jobs or careers or financial security. That is the *great lie* of the secular world. That is an education designed for slaves, illegitimate children, and those without an inheritance. Jobs and careers are good, but never priorities. *Seek first the kingdom!*

How does God *paideia* his children? Something of a surprise: II Tim 3:16-17:

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for **paideia** in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

Give your children the *paideia* of the Lord, *everything* it means to be heirs of the King of Kings. Set your sights much higher.