

Learn From the Past – Hebrews 3

1. I would like to say that we live in a celebrity culture as if that were something new but, let's face it, we have always lived in a celebrity culture. [sports stars, generals, dictators, singers...we still call them "stars" and "lumenaries") Arguments over Marvel/DC or sports stars (ESPN) remind me of those who read Soap Opera Digest.
2. Three of Jesus' closest friends had a close encounter with their top level celebrities. Three of the Gospels mention it as does 2nd Peter, with the longest version found in **Luke 9:28-36**.
3. Moses was universally esteemed among the Jews and, remember, this is called the Book of Hebrews. A natural tendency among the Jews who had come to Jesus was to "honor" him by elevating him to the place of Moses. Chapter 1 spoke to the high position of Jesus and Chapter 2 spoke of his becoming human alongside us in order to defeat death for us. Now, the writer brings us back to the high position of Jesus so that we do not keep our minds earth-bound and forget that human Jesus was also God.
4. **[Hebrews 3:1-6]** If we feel the call of heaven, if we are looking to God above, we will see Jesus there, not Moses. This is not, the writer assures us, speaking ill of Moses. No, Moses was a wonderful, obedient servant of God – "faithful in all God's house." But it is God's house, not the house of Moses. To the Jews, this was highly significant; the ruler of the house was established in law and culture. When you were in a house, you obeyed the ruler, the patriarch or matriarch.
5. We are then reminded of the truth of **Genesis 1:1**. Now look again at **Hebrews 3:3-4**. And that recalls **Exodus 20:1-6**. It would seem that we would not need to remind ourselves – we who are gathered to worship God – that there are no other gods and you are not to have any other gods...but we do. We make our nation, our politics, our preferences, our culture, our religious history...our appetites, desires, our own stubborn will into gods that often trump our stated dedication to Jesus. [man getting photos developed in East Kilbride] We must make all other gods bow to Jesus and not allow any of them to keep us from bowing to Jesus.

6. And then...[Hebrews 3:6]. This is Jesus' house. We must never forget that.
7. Will we learn from the past? Humans have a very bad record in this regard. We tend to elevate kings and then riot against them time and time again. We try things that have never worked as if we didn't know they hadn't worked in the past telling ourselves that it will work this time (ads for ministers in Christian Chronicle – doubling down on what failed).
8. The Old Testament, Paul said, was our teacher to bring us to Christ. One of the greatest lessons we should have learned from the Old Testament (the Jewish scriptures) is that it is NOT safe or good to ignore God or His commands. [Hebrews 3:7-11]
9. I have had to tell church leaders that they would not be able to move forward until the doubters died. That isn't a pleasant thing to say, but if we've read the OT we should not be surprised that it is reality. You see, it does not work to say that you believe in God but you disagree with His rule over you. To disobey is proof of disbelief [Hebrews 3:12].
10. As a community of faith, we are to encourage each other daily [Hebrews 3:13-16]. Asking for us to attend worship together and to gather in groups to study and pray is not legalism (though it can be!). We gather in community, not to please God (though it does), but to stay together and stay strong. The hottest coal goes cold and dark when it is separated from the other coals.
11. Parents know how hard it is to get children to do what is good for them. We know that getting them to eat right, sleep when they should, behave in public spaces – this is for their good, but they fight us every step of the way. Why? Because it doesn't seem like it's good to them or because it is difficult and uncomfortable...or because they have another idea. Sometimes, it is merely because they aren't focusing on what they've been told. See the parallels?
12. Can we learn from the past? [Hebrews 3:16-18] Have we not been blessed? Even with our scars and brokenness, can we not see

that we have been blessed? His own Son did not get through this world without scars and neither will we.

13. Should we then make this life more difficult by refusing to focus on God, creating a de-facto false God that outshines ours? That is unbelief and you don't want to go where that will take you.

Most of us are not Jews but we know some of their story from reading the Old Testament and listening to Jesus and the NT writers speak of Jewish life and ways. Paul would warn we Gentiles that we should never get the idea that God got fed up with the Jews so we are now the favored kids. No, we will always be grafted onto the tree – which is a blessing but we need to keep our status in mind. And we need to learn from the past.

And lesson one is the same as commandment one: no other gods.