

Hebrews 3 – Jesus is Better Than Moses, The Need for Steadfast Faith

1. “Wherefore, holy _____, partakers of the _____ calling, consider the _____ and _____ of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to Him who _____ Him, as also _____ was faithful in all his house.”

[Having begun by showing the superiority of Jesus over the prophets (1:1-3) and angels (1:4 - 2:18), the author now turns his attention to Moses, the great law giver, and most highly regarded character of the Old Testament. With some 80 New Testament references, Moses is mentioned more often than any other Old Testament character.

Also, as we continue through this text, it should be noted that “house” does not refer to a building or any type of edifice (tabernacle, etc), though the word may be so used. In this context, it has reference to a family or household (cf Acts 16:15, 34). Specifically, it refers to God’s family / household (cf Num 12:7; 1 Tim 3:15). Thus, Moses is described as being faithful to the position to which God had appointed Him among the children of Israel (Neil R Lightfoot, Jesus Christ Today, 87).]

- a. What does the word “holy” mean? _____
- b. What does the word “brethren” imply? _____
- c. By what means do all men receive the “heavenly calling” (2 Th 2:14)? _____
- d. What do think the phrase “holy brethren” meant to the recipients of this epistle?

[“Consider” = “put through the mind, perceive, understand, observe fully” (Strong’s 2657). This was demanding much more than just a passing glance.

The titles “apostle” and “high priest” are significant. An apostle refers to “a delegate, messenger, or one who is sent” (Strong’s 652). Specifically, apostles were those sent with Divine authority in relaying God’s message to men. The high priest was the mediator between God and His people, one who offered sacrifices on behalf of the sins of the people (Heb 5:1-3; 7:22-27; 9:24-25). Therefore, in referring to Jesus as an apostle and high priest, the author identifies Him as God’s representative to men (1:1-3) and men’s representative to God (2:17) (Pink 55).]

2. “For this man was counted _____ or more _____ than _____, insomuch as he who hath _____ the house hath more _____ than the house.”

[The author is about to introduce an important line of demarcation between Jesus and Moses – that of being the house builder versus one who merely serves within the house. In spite of this, Neil Lightfoot shares a wonderful and valuable insight regarding the attitude of the author, saying:

“It is important to notice that the author, as he speaks of Moses, in no way reflects on him. He could have pointed to some instance of disobedience in the desert wanderings, such as that at Meribah (Num 20:7-13), to show Moses’ faith was not always satisfactory, but he does not choose to follow this line. He will lift up Christ but he will not disparage Moses. He acknowledges the value of the old dispensation, and proves that the new is better” (87).

What a wonderful lesson for us today! We can lift teach the truth about Jesus and lift up His church, and all the things pertaining to the same, without tearing down others. This is not to say we cannot point out the errors of false religions and false teachers in the church, for in spite of his respect for the law of Moses, the Hebrew author pointed out the flaws of the Mosaic system (7:19, 23; 8:6-13; 10:1-4, 8-9).

3. “For every _____ is builded by some man, but He Who built _____ is _____.”

[The writer continues his use of the word “house,” and is probably referring to the nations or kingdoms. However, he goes much further in his analogy, noting Christ as the builder, or founder, of all things.

In Hebrews 1:2, the writer identifies Christ as the medium through Whom the worlds were made (cf John 1:1-3). In 1:10 he identifies the Son as the one Who “laid the foundations of the earth” and the maker of the heavens were made (cf Col 1:16-17).

Though not the intention of the writer at the time, Hebrews 3:4 is a common sense approach pointing to God as the origin of all things. Regarding the existence of matter without a Divine creator, the atheist must accept one of two untenable positions: 1) Matter is eternal; that is, matter has always existed, having no creator (a logical impossibility); or 2) Non-living, non-sentient (unconscious and unthinking) matter created itself out of nothing (another logical impossibility). Both positions are in absolute conflict with the known laws and fundamental principles of science.]

4. “And Moses verily was _____ in all his _____, as a _____, for a _____ of those things which were to be spoken after; but _____ as a _____ over _____...” Two points of distinction in these verses:

- a. Moses is described as a _____, but Christ is a _____.
- b. Moses was _____ the house, but Christ is _____ the house.

[Moses is called a “servant.” This is not from the Greek *doulos*, which refers to a bondservant or slave (cf Matt 10:24-25; Rom 6:16-17, Strong’s 1401), but rather from the Greek *therapon* (Strong’s 2324), meaning a voluntary servant. Thayer’s says the word comes from the idea of holding onto or retaining. Thus, Moses was not the creator of his house, that is, he was not the originator of the Law, but merely a faithful steward of what was entrusted to him. (Incidentally, though this Greek word is found numerous times in the Septuagint, this is its only appearance in the New Testament.)

Though Christ was a servant in the sense that He served others (Matt 10:28; John 13), He was not a slave. Neither was He simply a trusted steward of someone else’s goods. Rather, he is the “Son over His own house,” an heir, and one possessing all authority in the house. “Over” is from the Greek *epi* (Strong’s 1909) meaning “super, over, above, have charge of, etc. It is used as a prefix in various Greek words such as “bishop” or “overseer” (*episkopos*).

Note finally how the author again praises the faithfulness of the great patriarch, judge, prophet, and lawgiver. He is not going to build his case for Christ by demeaning or denigrating Moses.]

5. “...whose _____ are we, if we _____ the _____ and _____ of the _____ firm to the _____.”

[The church is the house of God - 1 Timothy 3:15. Yet we may be cast out of the house if we are not faithful to the end (cf John 15:6). There is no reason for us to fall away due to fear. The author describes hope as the “anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (6:19). We are to boldly (4:16; 10:19, and same word as confidence here and in 10:35) and with great joy hold fast to the end the hope we have in Christ Jesus, for “hope maketh not ashamed” (Rom 5:5). Appropriately, the epistle ends with the reassurance that God will never leave or forsake us, therefore we shall not fear what men shall do to us (13:5-6).]

Lightfoot notes the entire thrust of the book relates to perseverance. This is in harmony with our earlier-studied theme of the epistle, “Jesus is Better.” Because Jesus is better, the recipients of the letter should persevere in light of the present difficulties, but especially in light of the intense persecution which will soon come (10:25; 12:1-4).

6. “As the _____ saith, _____ if ye will _____ His _____, _____ not your _____, as in the day of _____, in the day of _____ in the _____: when your fathers _____ Me, _____ Me, and saw My _____.”
- Read Hebrews 3:7-11 and Psalm 95:7-11. How do they compare? _____
 - To whom does the author of Hebrews attribute David’s words? _____
 - What does this tell us about the Psalms? (2 Tim 3:16) _____

- d. Whose responsibility is it to hear God? _____
- e. How is God's voice heard today? (2 Thes 2:13-14; 1 Cor 14:37) _____

["provocation" = to make bitter, exasperate. This reminds the reader of the incidents in the desert following Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. It has reference, not only to the incident of grumbling about the lack of water, but to the pattern of Israel's rebellion against the Lord, but particularly as recorded in Numbers 13-14.

Of interest to this author is the correlation of the time frame of the wilderness wanderings and the time frame of the writing of Hebrews in connection with the establishment of the church and destruction of Jerusalem. The Israelites were forty years in the wilderness, and witnesses to the goodness and work of God. When they had "learned their lesson," they were prepared to enter the promised land. On the other hand, most of the Jews of Jesus' day never learned their lesson, though they were witness to God's works in the ministry of Jesus His apostles (Matt 11:20-23; 13:54-58; Mark 6:13-14; John 5:36-38; 10:25-38; 11:41-53). After what might be called another "40-year probation," God's wrath was poured out upon the Jews as the Roman armies leveled the city and executed more than a million Jews in A.D. 70, approximately 40 years after the establishment of the church in Acts 2.]

- 7. How did Israel rebel against / provoke / tempt God in the following texts:
 - a. Exodus 14:10-12? _____
 - b. Exodus 16:1-3? _____
 - c. Exodus 16:22-27? _____
 - d. Exodus 17:1-3? _____
 - e. Exodus 32:1-4? _____
 - f. Numbers 13:26 - 14:10? _____
 - g. Numbers 14:32-45? _____

[Lest we be too hasty or harsh in our condemnation of Israel, we should first examine our own practices. How many times do we reject the blessings of God due to our refusal to obey Him? We miss out on God's promise of peace because we do not follow God (Rom 8:6), pursue the things that make for peace (Rom 14:9), let our requests be made known to God (Phil 4:6), think on good things and follow good examples (Phil 4:8-9). We fail to enjoy peace of mind because we are not content with such things as we have nor trust in the abiding presence of God (Heb 13:5-6).]

- 8. What was the result of Israel's rebellion? (v 11) _____
- 9. What warning is given in light of this example? " _____, _____, lest there be in any of _____ and _____ of _____, in _____ from the living God."

- a. According to the verse, to whom was this warning given? _____
- b. Whom does this term identify? _____
- c. Is it possible then, for brethren (i.e., Christians) to depart from God? _____
- d. Read Galatians 5:1-4.
 - i. What were these Christians in danger of doing? _____
 - ii. How did Paul describe the end result of this action? (v 4) _____

[The phrase, “the living God,” is of considerable import. It reminds the readers of Jesus’ Divinity. Throughout the course of Israel’s history, they were forever abandoning the God who delivered them from bondage to go a whoring after other gods (Ex 34:14-17; Jdg 2:15-19) which were not alive (Ps 115; Dan 5:23 cf Jer 10:10).]

10. What is the preventative for apostasy (Heb 3:13)? _____

[“Exhort” - from the Greek parakaleo. A compound word joining para = “alongside” and kaleo = “to call, entreat, or console.” Thus, it means “to call alongside” as a friend for the purpose of personal encouragement. The word “daily” is actually a translation of three Greek words: kata = “with intensity”; hekastos = “individually”; hemera = “during the day”.]

- a. How do you think this congregation is doing in this respect? _____
- b. What would happen in this congregation if we practiced this verse? _____

[“Deceitfulness” (Thayer’s # 539) is also quite interesting, having reference to “the lusts excited by deceit, i.e. by deceitful influences seducing to sin (cf Eph 4:22).” The Greek word is apatee’, and appears to have some connection with our word appetite. Sin has a deceptive means of creating an appetite for itself, yea, even an addiction which causes a increased desire for the same. Thus, we see the eternal good that comes from our daily involvement with and encouragement of one another within the family of God.]

11. We are made partakers under what condition? _____

[The word translated “partakers” is from the Greek present tense, meaning this partnership or sharing with Christ was begun previously and continues in the present under the stated conditions. (Lightfoot, 91).]

12. “While it is said, ‘_____ if ye will _____ His _____, _____ not your _____, as in the day of _____.’”

- a. Whose responsibility is it to hear God? _____
- b. What are we warned NOT to do after hearing God’s word? _____
- c. Does this verse imply the free will of every man? _____

[This verse is one of many that refutes the false doctrine of total depravity and unconditional election, two of the five fundamental principles of Calvinism. Most denominational bodies today are staunchly Calvinistic or Calvinistic in disposition.]

13. With whom was the Lord angry for forty years? _____

14. Who were not allowed to enter into God's rest? _____

15. Why did they not obey and enter in? _____

[Note how the author inquires three times in his "interrogation." Obviously, this was to emphasize his point – the absolute necessity of unwavering faith in God. Note also how the King James Version reads differently from most others in verse 16:

"For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses." KJV

"For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?" NKJV

"For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?" NASB

"Who were they that heard and yet were rebellious? Was it not all those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses?" RSV

The latter renderings seem to better fit the overall context. The same Greek word is used at the beginning of each of the verses (16-18). A series of rhetorical questions such as these was common among the literature of that day (Lightfoot, 91). And perhaps there is something to be said for the use of three questions, as three was a number of completeness among the Jews.

Of particular interest is the word translated "believed not" in verse 18. The NKJV renders the word as "did not obey." It is a different word than that of verse 19, which has as its root the Greek *pistos* (Strong's #4103) meaning "belief" or "faith." The word in verse 18 has as its root the Greek *peitho* (Strong's #3982), which includes the concept of obedience (cf Heb 4:6, 11). Therefore, we can here see the link between faith and works (obedience).

Romans 1:16 says the gospel is God's power to save all who believe; 2 Thessalonians 1:8 teaches the necessity of obedience to the gospel; 1 Corinthians 15:1 says we must stand (i.e., abide or continue in) the gospel that we might be saved.]