

STUDIES IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

PART I

STUDY NUMBER FOUR - Hebrews 3:1-11

The writer to the book of Hebrews
is writing to a group of people, who are
contemplating, going back under Judaism.

They are being persecuted for their new faith.

They want to forsake their new faith
in Christ, and go back under Judaism,
where it's going to be a lot more comfortable.

The writer wants to make it
quite clear, there are serious ramifications
in doing that.

And that they are leaving that which is
superior, for that which is inferior.

In Hebrews chapter 1 we saw Christ
SUPERIOR TO THE PROPHETS, because
He is the last prophet
who brings the final message.

Then we saw at the end of chapter 1
that Christ is
SUPERIOR TO THE ANGELS.

Now there is one more great superiority,
that is so crucial to any Jew and that is,
Christ is **SUPERIOR TO MOSES.**

Moses is the law giver.
Moses is the epitome of Judaism.
*So the argument today is one, where we
see Christ, as being superior to Moses himself.

The focus of today's study is settled on again,
the person of the Lord Jesus.

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily
Devotions by Kenneth W. Osbeck)

Out of one of the darkest hours of her life—the tragic drowning of her husband—a young mother proclaimed through her tears, “Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus . . . and I know that thou art with me, wilt be with me to the end.” As Louisa Stead, her husband and their little daughter were enjoying an ocean side picnic one day, a drowning boy cried for help. Mr. Stead rushed to save him but was pulled under by the terrified boy. Both drowned as Louisa and her daughter watched helplessly.

During the sorrowful days that followed, the words of this hymn came from the grief stricken wife's heart.

Soon after this Mrs. Stead and her daughter left for missionary work in South Africa. After more than 25 years of fruitful service, Louisa was forced to retire because of ill health. She died a few years later in Southern Rhodesia. Her fellow missionaries had always loved “‘Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus” and wrote this tribute after her death:

“We miss her very much, but her influence goes on as our five thousand native Christians continually sing this hymn in their native language.

“Out of a deep human tragedy early in her life, Louisa Stead learned simply to trust in her Lord. She was used to ‘the praise of His glory’ and for the remainder of her life. Still today, her ministry continues each time we sing and apply the truth of these words:

‘Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just to take Him at His Word,
Just to rest upon His promise,
Just to know, “Thus saith the Lord.”

I’m so glad I learned to trust Him,
Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend;
And I know that He is with me,
Will be with me to the end.” p. 220

It is the focus and centrality on the person of Christ again that we see in these verses.

v. 1 Therefore, holy brethren, sharing in a heavenly calling, contemplate Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.

“THEREFORE, HOLY BRETHREN” is speaking again of the family relationship.

Last week we saw the word brethren,
we saw the word children,
we saw the word sons and
the *family relationship* was throughout
last week’s study.

Here it is again, holy brethren, speaking
of the fact, that they have a relationship
with someone, who is changing their lives,
and that’s the Lord Jesus, “sharing
in a heavenly calling.”

“SHARING IN A HEAVENLY CALLING.”

Now for the nation of Israel, it’s an earthly
calling, they are looking forward
to an earthly kingdom.

To the church of Jesus Christ, to Christians,
it is a heavenly calling.
We set our affection on things above.

What is the first command he says?
This command is the most important thing.

**Look at the next phrase.
“CONTEMPLATE JESUS.”**

**It doesn't matter what our background is,
it doesn't matter what our problems are,
I can tell you the solution is in
those two words.**

“CONTEMPLATE JESUS.”

**If your focus is on Christ, instead of
on your circumstance,
you are ok.**

**But if you have your eyes off of Christ, and
you are under the stress
of your circumstances, and
you are looking horizontal
instead of vertical,
then we have some problems.**

“CONTEMPLATE JESUS.”

**The thing these Jewish Christians need,
more than anything else,
is to see Jesus Christ, for who He is.**

He is proud of us we learned last week;
He is not ashamed to call us His brethren.

He shows our pictures around heaven,
joyful over the fact, that we have
a relationship with Him.

But what are we doing on this end,
of the relationship?
The answer is “CONTEMPLATE JESUS.”

This word in the King James is CONSIDER,
but it is more than that.

The Greek word means to “fasten the mind on.”
It is an intensive form.
We could translate it “get focused.”

Get so focused that you are focused
on Jesus Christ, and your relationship with Him
and everything else, takes second place
to that relationship.

In other words, put your mind on Jesus Christ.
Ponder him, who He is and
what He has done.

How does one fix one’s mind?
It begins with desire.

Listen to Psalm 27:4

**“One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of
my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek
him in his temple”**

If you took some of the letters
that the Apostle Paul wrote, the book of
Philippians 4 chapters,
Colossians 4 chapters,
1 Thessalonians 5 chapters,
and you highlighted in yellow the name
of Christ or the Lord or Jesus.

You would discover that most of your pages
would turn yellow.

Because the person of Christ, was the most
consuming person, that he was focused upon,
in the life of the Apostle Paul.

**“THEREFORE, HOLY BRETHREN, SHARING IN A
HEAVENLY CALLING, CONTEMPLATE JESUS, THE
APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST OF OUR CONFESSION.”**

The writer issues a **COMMAND:**
“CONTEMPLATE JESUS”
and then He is **DESCRIBED** **IN 2 WAYS:**

1. THE APOSTLE

2. HIGH PRIEST OF OUR CONFESSION

This is the only place in the Bible,
where Jesus, is called an apostle.

The word apostle means “to send.”

He was sent by the Father, to the earth, for what,
“TO TASTE DEATH FOR EVERY MAN”

So yes He is, a “sent one.”

How about “HIGH PRIEST OF OUR CONFESSION.”

“High Priest” means “bridge builder.”

He is the bridge between a Holy God,
and sinful man.

J. Vernon McGee says:

Now the writer is going to show that Christ is superior to Moses. You see, having shown the superiority of Christ over the prophets who spoke for God in the Old Testament, and having shown His superiority over the angels, now he must show that He is superior to Moses because Moses is very important to the Hebrews.

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v. 2 Who is faithful to the One who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house.

***The key word in the next few verses is “FAITHFUL.”**

One of the greatest delights of the Father in His children, is to see the quality of FAITHFULNESS.

Jesus was faithful to the one who appointed Him.

The Father appointed Him to come on this mission, and he was faithful, to fulfill the mission, and to finish, what God the Father had asked him to do.

**Was Moses faithful?
He really was.**

What was the key phrase that characterizes Moses?

In Exodus 39 you have the little phrase “AS THE LORD COMMANDED MOSES” occurring 9 TIMES.

Then in the actual setting up of the tabernacle
in chapter 40, you have the phrase
occurring 8 TIMES.

So in chapters 39 and 40 you have this
little phrase occurring 17 TIMES,
referring to Moses' faithfulness.
He was faithful.
The Lord said it and He did it.

Now do you see the word HOUSE? When it says,
"MOSES IN ALL HIS HOUSE."

Really the word "HOUSE"
the house of a family,
of bricks and mortar. is like
not the house

The word "HOUSE"
in the next verses. occurs seven times

It's important to know, whose "HOUSE"
we are talking about.

Is it Moses' house? I don't believe so.

Moses was faithful to God's house.

It's the Nation of Israel and
the people of God.

v. 3 For He has been considered worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as He who built the house is having more honor than the house.

Now let's tie these first 3 verses together:

In verse 1 the command is: “contemplate Jesus, the apostle and high priest.”

He is characterized in verse 2 as being “faithful to the One who appointed Him.”

And now we read in verse 3 that “HE HAS BEEN CONSIDERED WORTHY OF MORE GLORY THAN MOSES.”

Christ is seen as the CREATOR of the house, and Moses is a RESIDENT.

Here we have a STATEMENT OF REASON in the argument:

“FOR HE, (Christ), HAS BEEN COUNTED WORTHY OF MORE GLORY THAN MOSES, BY SO MUCH AS HE WHO BUILT [it] IS HAVING MORE HONOR THAN THE HOUSE.”

Here we see the superiority of Christ, to Moses, and this is a painful thing, for these Jewish Israelite Christians.

J.B. Phillips says:

Moses certainly derived glory in God's house, and God did not hesitate to give it to him. The fact that Moses is mentioned by name upward of 700 times in the Bible and that his name appears in every section of the Bible is proof of that.

He was truly one of the cornerstones in God's plans for this world, but it would be ludicrous to magnify a stone, however ornate, important, and key it might be, above the building's designer. Moses was not without his majesty, but he was still a servant and inferior to Christ.

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**v. 4 For every house is being built by someone,
but the one who built all things is God.**

**We now have a STATEMENT OF THE
2ND REASON in his argument:**

**“FOR EVERY HOUSE IS BEING BUILT
BY SOMEONE”**

“BUT” in contrast:

“THE ONE WHO BUILT ALL THINGS IS GOD.”

**Christ is the builder of all things,
and Moses is part of His building
operations.**

Let's read verses 5 and 6 together.

v. 5 Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later;

v. 6 But Christ is faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are, if indeed we keep the confidence firm and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

The argument now expands:

**CHRIST as the BUILDER and
MOSES as a PART OF THE HOUSE.**

**CHRIST is OVER THE HOUSE and
MOSES is IN IT.**

In contrast to Moses being
“faithful in all his house as a servant”:

**“CHRIST IS FAITHFUL AS A SON
OVER HIS HOUSE.”**

Son speaks of relationship and
servant speaks of service.

Remember when we discussed, the difference
between the angels, and the son.

**The angel is a servant and
Christ is a son.**

Same argument.

**Moses is a servant.
Christ is the son of God in human flesh.**

**Notice the writer speaks of his recipients,
as well as of himself,
when he says:**

“WHOSE HOUSE WE ARE.”

We are the House of Jesus Christ.

**The author concludes verse 6 with a
CONDITIONAL PHRASE.**

**“IF INDEED WE KEEP THE CONFIDENCE FIRM AND
THE BOAST OF OUR HOPE FIRM UNTIL THE END.”**

**When you see a phrase like that it is so easy
to take it out of context.**

**“Whoops, we can lose our salvation, unless
we hold on firm until the end.**

Salvation is not here, it is not an issue.

What is the issue?

**The issue is some Jewish Christians
are getting ready, to throw in the towel and
go back to Judaism.**

**So he is telling them, the secret to
demonstrating your commitment to Christ.**

***If you're really a Christian,
no matter what happens to you,
you are committed to Jesus Christ.**

Perseverance is the word.

**There is nothing that would cause you,
to fall away or fall back,
from that commitment.**

Warren Wiersbe says:

The “if” clause (v. 6) needs to be understood in the light of the total context, which is Moses leading Israel out of Egypt and to the Promised Land. The writer is not suggesting that we, as Christians, must keep ourselves saved. This would contradict the major theme of the book, which is the finished work of Christ and His heavenly ministry guaranteeing our eternal salvation (7:14ff). Rather, the writer is affirming that those who hold fast their confidence and hope are proving that they are truly born again.

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v. 7 Therefore just as the Holy Spirit is saying,
“Today if you hear His voice,

There is a Peanut’s carton in which
Charlie Brown says,
“Nothing echoes like an empty mailbox.”

*What a sadness, not to hear anything
from the Lord, not to sense that He is there,
and working, in your life.

So listen for His voice.
(God Works the Night Shift by Ron Mehl)

Maybe, on occasion, you might find yourself saying,
“God seems to be working overtime, holidays, and
weekends in others. But if He’s working in my life, it’s
like putting a stopwatch on a glacier. It’s like watching
ivy grow on the side of a brick building. It’s so slow I
can’t tell if anything is really happening.” At times it
seems everything in your life is sheer boredom while in
others’ lives it’s a great adventure. Others speak of
God doing this and that, teaching them profound
truths, giving them songs in the night and whispering
words of wisdom and comfort. But for you . . . well, it’s
been kind of dark and quiet.

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v. 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion in the day of testing in the wilderness, These next two passages describe what happened when the children of Israel, came out of Egypt, under the leadership of Moses, and they crossed the Red Sea and they headed straight for the land, and what happened?

They got to Kadesh Barnea, the southern border of the land and they made a mistake, they formed a committee.

Instead of going on in and acting on the basis of the promise of God, ten guys said we can't, two guys said we can and they ended up judged for that, and they wandered in the wilderness for forty years.

These Jewish Believers are warned not to repeat this mistake. Will there be another defection away from Christ and go back and live under the Law and Judaism?

Warren Wiersbe says:

The writer uses the failure of Israel as a warning against a hard heart. How does a believer's heart become hard? By refusing His words, despising His works, and being ignorant of His ways. Sin is deceitful. You think you are getting away with it, but all the

while it is hardening your heart and robbing you of blessing. pp. 814-15

v. 9 Where your fathers tried me by testing me, and saw my works for forty years.

How is it that the Israelites manifested their rebellion toward God “in the day of trial in the wilderness?”

It is noted in 2 WAYS in verse 9:

1. “YOUR FATHERS TRIED ME BY TESTING ME”

2. They “SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS.”

The point of the writer is that you can make an exodus out of Egypt, you can experience salvation by the blood of the Passover lamb, but you can still wander in the desert without, experiencing the Lord’s blessing in your life.

v.10 Therefore, I was angry with this generation, and I said, ‘They are always being led astray in their heart; and they did not know my ways’;

This is the 3RD “THEREFORE” in the passage:

1. Back in verse 1

2. and verse 7

3. and now here in verse 10.

**Here we get the Lord’s RESPONSE
to the irresponsible behavior of the Israelites.**

**The Lord says, THERE ARE 2 THINGS
THAT REALLY UPSET ME:**

**1. “THEY ARE ALWAYS BEING LED ASTRAY
IN THEIR HEART”**

2. “THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS”

Warren Wiersbe says:

The heart of every problem is a problem in the heart. The people of Israel (except Moses, Joshua, and Caleb) erred in their hearts (Heb. 3:10), which means that their hearts wandered from God and His Word. They also had evil hearts of unbelief (v. 12); they did not believe that God would give them victory in Canaan. They had seen God perform great signs in Egypt. Yet they doubted He was adequate for the challenge of Canaan.

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(Broken In The Right Place by Alan E. Nelson)

ATTITUDE CHECKS FOR BROKENNESS

- 1. Am I willing to let go of my dreams and ambitions if such is God's will?**
- 2. Am I defensive when accused, or criticized, or misunderstood?**
- 3. Am I coveting what others have instead of waiting for heaven's rewards?**
- 4. Am I forgiving when offended, with or without an apology?**
- 5. Am I complaining or arguing out of unsurrendered rights?**
- 6. Am I thinking of others first out of love?**
- 7. Am I proudly appearing that I am always right or know all the answers?**
- 8. Am I practicing the spiritual disciplines (prayer, fasting, solitude, simplicity, etc.)?**
- 9. Am I being silent regarding self-promotion and letting God do my public relations?**
- 10. Am I daily saying, "God whatever it takes, I'm willing to submit to your leadership"?**
- 11. Am I expressing joy in the difficulties which serve to refine me?**
- 12. Am I taking risks out of obedience to Christ instead of giving in to fear, pride, or denial?**

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v.11 As I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my rest.”

**The word REST is going to occur, 8 times
in the next couple of studies.**

It is going to be part of the focus.

Let me share 1 definition of this REST?

**I’ll give you another definition
in a future study.**

**REST is the result, of a deepening
dependant relationship with the Lord Jesus.**

That’s Isaiah 32:17

**“My dear friends, the work of righteousness will be
peace and the effective of righteousness will be
quietness and assurance forever.”**

Now listen to the opposite.

Deuteronomy 28:65, 66

**“Among those nations you will find no repose, no
resting place for the sole of your foot. There the
Lord will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary
with longing, and a despairing heart. You will live**

in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life.”

The REST that the Lord wants to provide, is yours, when you live your life, obedient to Him.

CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons that we can learn from this particular study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: We are commanded to gaze upon Jesus Christ. He must be the center of our contemplation. Where we put Christ is the important thing. If I am not occupied with Christ, I am occupied with myself.

LESSON #2: Jesus Christ is an Apostle in that He was sent by the Father, and He is a High Priest in that He came to make a sacrifice of Himself.

LESSON #3: Faithfulness delights the heart of God when He sees it in His children.

LESSON #4: Moses is a servant in the house. Jesus is a Son who built the house.

LESSON #5: We demonstrate our commitment to Christ when in the midst of adversity we maintain our confidence and boast of our hope.

LESSON #6: Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.

LESSON #7: Our hearts become hardened by the consistent refusal to respond to Him.

LESSON #8: God was angry with Israel because of their rebellion, their refusal to respond, and their lack of repentance.

LESSON #9: Two things made Him angry: “They are always being led astray in their heart”; and “They did not know my ways.”

LESSON #10: God vowed that the consequences would be: “They shall not enter my rest.”

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- v. 1** Therefore, holy brethren, sharing in a heavenly calling, contemplate Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.
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- v. 7** Therefore just as the Holy Spirit is saying, “Today if you hear His voice,
- v. 8** Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion in the day of testing in the wilderness,
- v. 9** Where your fathers tried me by testing me, and saw my works for forty years.
- v.10** Therefore, I was angry with this generation, and I said, ‘They are always being led astray in their heart; and they did not know my ways’;
- v.11** As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall not enter my rest.’“

QUESTIONS:

- 1. Read Hebrews 3:1-11 and summarize in your own words what Paul is saying in this section.**
- 2. What are the brethren commanded to do in verse 1?**
- 3. How is Jesus characterized in verse 2?**
- 4. Who has “built all things,” according to verse 4?**
- 5. How is Christ characterized in verse 6?**
- 6. How are we supposed to respond if we “hear His voice,” according to verse 8?**
- 7. What two things are said about the ancient Israelites in verse 10?**
- 8. What did God swear He would do to them, according to verse 11?**
- 9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?**
- 10. What lesson have you learned from this study?**

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

LESSON #1: We are commanded to gaze upon Jesus Christ. He must be the center of our contemplation. Where we put Christ is the important thing. If I am not occupied with Christ, I am occupied with myself.

LESSON #2: Jesus Christ is an Apostle in that He was sent by the Father, and He is a High Priest in that He came to make a sacrifice of Himself.

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