



Chapter Three

The writer has expressed Jesus as superior to the prophets as a spokesman for God. As the Son, Christ's name and position is far greater than that of any angel. Yet He became one of us, to bring us to our intended glory. Through His own suffering and temptations He was qualified to serve perfectly as priest and comforter to His suffering and tempted brethren on earth.

Now the author turns to other spirit led matters. Moses was the chief character of the Old Covenant, and was respected by the Hebrews as their foremost leader of religion and life. Jesus prophet and priest of the New Covenant, and Christians are to be faithful to Him in all things. The Hebrew Christians were being tempted to leave Christ and return to Moses. To prevent this, chapter three shows Christ's superiority over Moses. It shows the possibility of apostasy and destruction, based on the former example of God's Old Testament people under Moses. The chapter then urges extreme caution in maintaining a faithful heart lest the Christians, too, fall by disbelief.

3:1 Remember to always reflect back on what the therefore is therefore. In this case specifically the divine appointment of Christ as perfect prophet and because of His absolute perfection

as sympathetic and faithful priest.

Hebrews 3:1 (1) Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle, and High Priest of our confession;

The writer starts with two special descriptions as he addresses the Hebrew Christians. The first one is “holy brethren.” Which literally means “brothers that are set apart.” Set apart from the world and sin and are dedicated to Godly service in Christ. **1 Corinthians 1:2** To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours: In this text the word saints is the same as translated holy. The word “church” comes from the translation of a Greek word, that word is “ekklesia.” This means to be called out ones. What a thought this would have been for the Jewish Christians who had a far better idea of the concept of holiness. Please note the Christians in Corinth with all of their sin, division, and false doctrine were still called saints. If we are a Christian, we are a saint. Sainthood is achieved in this life not after certainly not by a vote by a group of people. It happens when we clothe ourselves in baptism with Christ and God

adds us to the Church.

The second one is, “partakers of the heavenly or celestial calling.” Hebrews spends a lot of time contrasting the present, visible, and material with immaterial, eternal, and heavenly things. He draws their attention to the fact that they have a heavenly calling, one not of this world, but one that is eternal. This simple statement should have been a conviction for the people not to revert back to their former life. The word “partakers” has the idea of sharers and fellow partakers, with the writer and even Jesus.

The call is for the people to “consider” once again Jesus. Jesus is the object of what they are to study or consider. Jesus deserves at the very least deserves every person on the face of the earth’s careful consideration and serious study of who He may be. We must keep Jesus as our focus. Most sin occurs when we take our eyes off of Him.

We see now Jesus is given two titles for us to consider. The first is that of “apostle.” This word is simply one sent on a mission with authority. Jesus was sent by the Father to be Savior of the world. **1 John 4:14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior**

of the world.

The second title of Christ here is “High Priest.” Jesus was sent to go before God on man’s behalf, in all things, superior to every previous agent of God. The hope is that as readers of this text one would consider why would we desire to go back to the old Levitical priesthood compared to the new one we have in Christ. To confess Christ as our High Priest is a great thought. The reader would have to realize that Christ is better than the law of Moses and better than the High Priesthood of Aaron combined.

Hebrews is calling people to say that Jesus is our High Priest who intercedes for us as well as being sent (apostle) for that purpose. Two more times in this book the writer refers to the confession of our faith, Hebrews 4:14 and Hebrews 10:23. Our faith is in Jesus, it is Christ that we are confessing.

3:2 The writer does not minimize the faithfulness or the function of Moses. He praises and commends Moses for faithful service. But he shows, on the basis of the heavenly realities that Christ is far superior to Moses by virtue of His greater person and function.

Hebrews 3:2 (2) He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house.

Jesus was appointed by God the Father. Jesus was faithful to God in His life and ministry. Jesus is faithful as God's apostle to man. Jesus is faithful as God's High Priest. Although Moses and Jesus in their respected tasks are comparable their roles and offices were different. Even though there are great comparison of Moses with Jesus we will see that will come to an end. In doing this the writer does not put Moses down by any means, but rather lifts Jesus up. Jewish writings such as the Mishnah says that "none in Israel is greater than Moses." Moses' character and ministry is complimented. Moses clearly had a special calling and special relationship with God to which he was faithful. To leave Jesus and return to the Law of Moses would greatly diminish the work that Moses was appointed to. Moses even gave a Messianic prediction. **Deuteronomy 18:15 The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him.**

Even we as Christians today are called to be faithful to our heavenly calling. We are never

called to be successful, but we are called to be faithful.

3:3 In verse 2 there was a comparison between Jesus and Moses, in this verse there will be a contrast between the two.

Christ is counted worthy of more glory than Moses, not because Moses was unfaithful, for he was not, but because of the inherent function of both men in God's plan. The man who builds a house has more honor than the house. We admire a beautiful building, but we regard more highly the architect who designed it and the superintendent who saw it rise.

Hebrews 3:3 (3) For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house.

The glory being referred to here is that of honor. All Jews would have thought of Moses as one to receive great glory or honor, so this was really saying something to them. The reason for the greater honor is due to rank and not faithfulness. Jesus will be seen as the builder of the house while Moses will be recognized as a member of the household. Moses is not the house, but a

member of the house. He was faithful in the house.

3:4 As the work of salvation is concerned, the one who builds all things is God. He is the grand architect and superintendent of the entire scheme of redemption. He is its originator and its goal. The Word which became flesh was one with God the Father. Therefore Christ, who was that Word, is the builder of the house, while Moses, though faithful, was a part in the divine house.

Hebrews 3:4 (4) For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.

The writer will illustrate the point of Jesus' superiority to Moses by speaking of a house being built. Design always demands there be a designer. The building of every house demands an architect. No building just pops up and comes into being. No nations just happened to appear. All things have a cause, a builder. Hebrews stresses that Jesus is the builder of the house. The question arises, how can Jesus be the builder of the house of Israel when He was not born until 1,500 years after Moses? There are two ideas we need to take from this. The first, is that Jesus is eternal. Jesus claimed to be before

Abraham. John says, "He was with God in the beginning." To be the builder He would have to be there before the house was built. Secondly, The Hebrews writer then asserts that God is the builder of all things. This makes clear that Jesus is God. This is why Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses.

3:5-6 Christ is superior to Moses in other points as well. Moses truly was faithful in God's household, as a servant and as a member of the household. His faithfulness to God served as a testimony to the reliability and trustworthiness of the message which he spoke from God. The point here is based on **Numbers 12:6-8** (6) He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. (7) "Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; (8) With him I speak mouth to mouth, Even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant, against Moses?" There God testified to the faithfulness of Moses and rewarded that faithfulness by speaking directly with Moses in revealing His will. Moses' personal faithfulness as a worker in God's house served as a witness to the word which he revealed from

God.

Hebrews 3:5-6 (5) Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; (6) but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

But Christ is a son, not a servant over His own house. Moses was a temporary servant, while Christ is the eternal Son. Now we learn what is meant by house so far as Christ is concerned. We, the church, God's people under Christ are the house of God. Christ promised to "build" it, and He began that work on Pentecost. The house that Moses served in was Israel. The house that Christ is over is the church. The church is composed of "living stones" those individuals who by faith and baptism have come into union with Christ, have become members of His spiritual body and, collectively, are His church. Moses was a faithful servant in the Old Testament "house" of God, but Christ is the faithful Son over His own house. He is far superior to Moses, though Moses was a great and faithful man of God.

But there is a divine if, so far as we are concerned. We are His house, if we hold fast the confidence, the boldness based on inner assurance, and the rejoicing of boasting of the hope firm unto the end. This is the message of the entire Bible and is particularly the theme of the book of Hebrews. The reward is of grace, but it depends on faith. And a saving faith is one which trusts and obeys until the very end. **Romans 11:22** Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. It is not enough to begin, only to fall along the way. Saving faith, true grounds of rejoicing, a genuine hope, all these depend on steadfastness and continued trust throughout life. This totally decimates the false doctrine of "once saved always saved." The Hebrew Christians urgently needed that lesson. All Christians have something to lose if we turn back. We are no less in need of it today.

3:7-11 As an incentive to steadfastness, our author points to the example of God's people under Moses. If they fell from God's favor through disbelief, the same fate could befall God's people today. We see Psalm 95 is quoted here in these verses. There are three parts to

this quotation that we will take a look into, the warning, the example, and the consequence.

Hebrews 3:7-11 (7) Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, “TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, (8) DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME, AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS, (9) WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED Me BY TESTING Me, AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS. (10) “THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION, AND SAID, ‘THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART, AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS’; (11) AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, ‘THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.’”

Psalm 95 is a call to worship God. The psalmist bases his call on God’s deity, His might as creator and sustainer and His election of and covenant relationship with Israel. First, a warning against a hard or disobedient heart, which he says will lead only to destruction. This happened to the fathers in the wilderness, the psalmist points out, and it can happen to God’s people in his day. Now the psalmist’s point is made by the writer to the Hebrews, who applies it to the believers of his day. God’s people have fallen before through unbelief and an evil heart. They

can do the same again.

The warning comes not just from the Psalms but also in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. **1 Corinthians 10:6-11** (6) Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. (7) Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY." (8) Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. (9) Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. (10) Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. (11) Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Paul gives out four warnings from this passage. Do not be idolaters. Do not be sexually immoral. Do not try the Lord. Do not grumble.

Secondly, the example, look to Exodus 17:1-7 to read of this record of this happening. The unbelief of the Jews then was essentially a lack of trust. They doubted that God, who had called them from Egypt, would provide for them in the wilderness and see them safely to the promise

land. This lack of faith led to murmuring. That murmuring was a provocation of God and was sin. Christians are exhorted not to distrust God, murmur, and sin, but to have full confidence in Him. In that confident trust they are to do His will as fully and exactly as possible.

Thirdly, we see the consequences. The Hebrew Christians were in danger of leaving Christ for Moses. The analogy here suggests that because of their threatened apostasy was a basic lack of trust in the work of Christ as perfect, priest, and Savior. They were not confident of their standing before God. Because their basis of salvation was the finished redemptive work of Son, such lack of confidence reflected a fundamental lack of faith in Christ. This unbelief was sinful and it was the same kind of sin which led to the Jews' destruction centuries before in the wilderness. They grieved God by distrusting Him. Because of this unbelief God swore His wrath that they would not enter into His rest.

3:12 In light of what was quoted from Psalm 95 the text begins with "take care," the better translation may be "Look Out!!!" An evil heart of unbelief is a heart, or disposition, or spirit, which does not so trust God that it accepts what He says with confidence and then walks with trust in

Him and in His word. Falling away which is closely related to that which we understand as apostasy. The child of God can become so corrupted by a distrustful and unfaithful heart that he finally forsakes God completely.

Hebrews 3:12 (12) Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

Such distrust of Christ can lead to apostasy in two directions. The first is not to have an evil heart. **Matthew 15:19** For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. The second, is not to have an unbelieving heart. **Proverbs 4:23** Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life. We need to be extra careful what we allow into our hearts. What will allow in will come out. What we are filled with spills out when we are bumped.

Unbelief is equated to disobedience as we will see later in this chapter. **Jude 5** Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. A passage such as this will

shows us that miracles do not cement faith and belief. The Israelites saw miracle after miracle and still disbelieved. Jesus warned that miracles would not cause belief. **Matthew 12:38-40** (38) Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." (39) But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet; (40) for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. In the end, people do not believe simply because people do not want to believe. **Luke 16:31** "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'" Unbelief is a heart issue more than a reasoning issue.

Some who begin to doubt their acceptance on the basis of Christ's perfect life and blood will despair of all hope and go back into sin and the world. Others will seek to help or add to their stature by their own strict observance of rules and regulations, which they themselves will choose as important or receive as such from someone else. When motivated by a lack of trust

in the standing Christ makes possible, this too is sinful.

It was this error in part which led to the writing of Galatians, Colossians, 1 John, and even Hebrews. Christ is sufficient as Savior, and the man who truly has Him has enough. Steadfast faithfulness to Christ is an evidence of this inward faith, and is a necessity if one is to be saved in the end. That is the point of this chapter.

We need to understand that when we fall way or walk away, we are in fact leaving the living God. There are four times in this book that the phrase, “living God” is used. Hebrews 9:14, Hebrews 10:31, Hebrews 12:22, and this text here. To fall away is to become an apostate, to depart from faith, to leave God. Paul gave a great warning about this. **1 Timothy 4:1** But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, Once again this creates big trouble for those that tend to hold on to the “once saved always saved” theology.

3:13 So that Christians do not fall through unbelief we are to exhort and encourage one another. We are to do this daily. Refreshing our spirit and rededication to God and Christ will

prevent the callousing up of our hearts by the error of sin and its deceitfulness. Many people leave a congregation or choose a congregation based on the fact of whether they get anything out of it or not. This is a possible indicator of some serious problems, such as pride and self-absorption. We are not called just to receive, but we are called to be givers. Givers of love. Givers of compassion. Givers of joy. Givers of sympathy. Givers of encouragement. As Christians it is our responsibility to each other to admonish one another tenderly and kindly. This is especially one of the responsibilities of an elder, but not limited to them. It should be something all Christians are on the lookout for. We are all called to encourage. We should strive to be builders of the church and not destroyers of it. Unfortunately demolition is easier than construction and can happen in far less time and effort.

Hebrews 3:13 (13) But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

While this exhortation should happen every day the thought is that this is the purpose of the Lord's Day assembly. While we commune with

our Savior and each other there should be no greater encouragement we can have. Those saints that are absent from times of gathering fail both to receive needful exhortation and to contribute their encouragement to others. We will look deeper into this when we get to chapter ten. Encouragement is not the same thing as flattery. Encouragement is meant as a form of preventative maintenance. Encouragement might be corrective and it might be to stay faithful or even to repent. How many fall into a deeper pit of sin because no one comes alongside them and encourages them, challenges them, or admonishes them. This is why without encouragement the deceitfulness of sin is a real threat.

The neglect of Christian exhortation is surely among the greatest failings of God's people today. The mad rush for the world's goods, the excessive drive for material prosperity, the disproportionate love of pleasure, the self-centered living of a modern age, these have all practically extinguished the selfless and obedient concern of the saints in too many places for one another, and the careful exhortation which should grow out of that concern has died before it was born. Any congregation that ignores this divine obligation

has no right to parade itself as a faithful Church of Christ, regardless of its other qualities or so-called distinctive marks. (This was written 50 years ago in 1973)

Sin in itself is deceptive. If sin could always be seen in its true light it would cease to be as tempting. Sin does not produce the entire story at its outset. Sin originates from Satan who is the “deceiver.” Sin is deceiving because it presents itself that the lie that a little sin is not a big deal. The deceiving traits of sin are that it causes you to believe that you are okay, but before you know it you are trapped. Sin promises in a way in which it can never perform. Sin will take you further than you want to go, keep you longer than you wanted to stay, and cost you more than you wanted to pay. The deceit is justifying sin in our lives, thinking it is not a big deal or that it is harmless. It is the attempt to minimize the seriousness of sin by quantifying it, ranking it compared to other sins, or comparing it to other sinners. It gives the appeal that it will satisfy long term. Its deception is that sin will bring no consequences, or that sin is really not sin. The warning here is not just about sin's deceit but the warning of being hardened to it. When our heart is hardened our spiritual sensitivity becomes dull.

3:14 We are made partakers or partners of Christ only if we hold fast to the beginning of our confidence or grounds of hope faithful and steadfast to the end or the conclusion of our goal. Remember back to verse one of this chapter where the writer addresses his readers as partakers of the heavenly calling. Though the call has been declared the journey is not over. Christians will be Christ's partners in glory if we remain faithful to the end.

Hebrews 3:14 (14) For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,

This is to emphasize the privileges we have in being a Christian as sharing with Christ. As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter with being partakers on heavenly calling, we will also be reminder and discuss later in this book that we are partakers of the Holy Spirit and we are partakers of discipline. This word partake means to have a relationship with. It is to say that we have experienced the Christian life and the blessings of it. We do not know when the end will be, therefore we must be steadfast to lay claim to the promises of God.

3:15 The writer repeats the admonition from the

psalm that we had looked at early, this time with a focus on the word provoked.

Hebrews 3:15 (15) while it is said, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS, AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME."

He says that they need to hold fast as long as it can be said, "today if you hear His voice..." He starts by explaining how long they have to "hold fast." Again, looking at Psalm 95:7. We see the pointing at the Old Testament examples of the wanderers not entering into the Promised Land. Urging them to be faithful so that they can enter their own Promised Land.

3:16 Some, after they had heard, did provoke God. This is probably best translated as a question as we see in our NASB text. The KJV does not pose it as a question. Who provoked God? The answer is: all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

Hebrews 3:16 (16) For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses?

This is the first of a grouping of a series of three

questions on how God dealt with those in the Wilderness. These questions really just walk through Psalm 95 and take the application to them. The first question is: “who provoked Him?” This was the Israelites’ behavior forcing God to punish them. Each of the answers actually posed in the form of a question which states the answer. The answer he states was that it was “all those who came up out of Egypt.” The “all” obviously must not take into consideration faithful Joshua, Caleb, and Eleazar. The obvious emphasis is on the widespread nature of the provoking. The point is that if their forefathers could do that, so could they. The Israelites got off to a good start. They left Egypt. They crossed the Red Sea, and then they provoked God. They did not enter the Promised Land. The Hebrew Christians made a good start. They confessed Jesus. They became Christians. The question implied for them is, will they head the same direction as those that came before them?

3:17 It is not like God was upset with just a few reprobates the wanted things their own way. He was grieved by those that sinned and whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, and that number included the entire company of adults who left Egypt with the exception of the three we mentioned earlier. The danger of leaving faith in

Christ is grave because the possibility is both real and widespread.

Hebrews 3:17 (17) And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

This is the second grouping of questions, “who was He angry with for forty years?” The answer: “with those who sinned.” It was not just that they sinned, it was that they provoked God. It was the nature of their sin. The sin they provoked Him with was unbelief. It was unbelief in spite of hearing the voice of God. remember, they provoked Him when they heard. If God punished them for unbelief, He would also punish the Hebrew Christians for their unbelief.

3:18 God swore to this group they would not enter into His rest. They failed to believe and were disobedient. Beware! Their journey started in faith, but they stopped believing.

Hebrews 3:18 (18) And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?

The third question was: “who did God swear would not enter His rest?” The answer was:

“those who were disobedient.” All of this was leading up to what the writer would say in chapter four about a rest for God’s people. The word “disobedient” here means a refusal to be persuaded. It means that they could not be persuaded. The people of Moses’ day did not rebel out of ignorance, they had observed the miracles, they had a good leader, they had good examples in Joshua and Caleb. Their obedience was stubborn disobedience to God. This is the same type of disobedience the Hebrew Christians were being tempted with. It is the same temptation that modern day Christians are faced with. God took this kind of defiance very seriously. He swore that those people would not enter His rest. He swore in His wrath against them. The Promised Land for us is Heaven.

3:19 Due to disbelief they could not enter into the land. Their death in the wilderness was not because of Moses’ unfaithfulness, he was faithful in all God’s house. It was not because God was unable to save them, He showed them His mighty works for forty years in the wilderness. The reason they fell was simple and single: they stopped believing and trusting God. The next verse of exhortation should be included in this third chapter. It has happened before it could happen again.

Hebrews 3:19 (19) So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

Notice, what is called disobedience in verse 18 is called unbelief in verse 19. He will go on in chapter 4 to make clear that there is an eternal rest awaiting the people of God. However, those who abandon Christianity through unbelief will not enter that eternal rest.