Wednesday Evening Bible Study
April 15th – May 13th, 2026
Series: The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul
The Letter to the Hebrews – Looking unto Jesus
Chapter Three - "Consider Christ Jesus"

Memory Verse – Hebrews 3:1

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;"

Introduction

Chapter three begins the long section of this letter that will compare Christ and Christianity with Old Testament Judaism. God will demonstrate to the Hebrew believers that what they have in Christ is better than what they had in Judaism. Christ is the complete fulfillment of the Old Testament. At the Cross, when Christ said, "It is finished," He was also saying that it was fulfilled. Christ had fulfilled all that needed to be done to atone for our sin debt, thus signifying the end of all the ceremonies and traditions that had served only as mere shadows of Christ. Christ was, in fact, the substance that Judaism was pointing to all along.

I. Considering Christ (vv. 1 & 2)

Note the phrase – "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." The word, "brethren" (ἀδελφός *adelphos*), is used in a variety of ways in the New Testament. It is used to refer to siblings (Acts 12:2). It is also used to refer to fellow Israelites (Romans 9:3). Also, it is used to refer to fellow believers (Romans 12:1). Here the context indicates that believers are in view, but specifically believers who were converted from Judaism. Notice the phrase "Apostle and high priest of our profession," indicating that these readers were professors of Christ.

A. Apostle

The word, "apostle" (ἀπόστολος *apostolos*), in verse 1, is used in the Bible to refer to the twelve apostles of the Lord, and in a broader way to other prominent New Testament leaders (i.e. Paul – Romans 1:1; Barnabas - Acts 14:14). An "apostle" is one that is sent forth with orders, a delegate or a messenger. The Gospel of John repeatedly refers to Christ as the One "sent" from God (John 3:17, 34; 5:36, 38; 6:29, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3; and note also 13:3), and as such He is the Apostle of the New Testament covenant of grace.

In this section, the writer will begin by comparing Christ with Moses, who was one of God's "apostles" to the children of Israel. Moses was called by God to speak on His behalf to the people, and to lead the people. Christ was now the one that would represent God to the people. (Hebrews 1:1 – 2)

B. High Priest

Later in the letter, the writer will compare Christ with the Old Testament high priest. A high priest was one that was born to the family of Aaron and would represent the people to God. Christ is "better" than the earthly high priest.

God is not pleased when people place Christ on the same level as men. Peter, James, and John once saw Christ communing with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. When Peter suggested that three tabernacles be made, the Father rebuked him out of heaven. (Matthew 17:2 – 8; Mark 9:2 – 8)

"*While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*" (Matthew 17:5)

II. Contrasting Christ and Moses (vv. 3 – 6)

Note - The word "house" is used several times in vs. 3 – 6. H. A. Ironside had this to say about its usage:

> Observe that the term "house" is used here in three senses. The house in which Moses was faithful was the tabernacle. But the tabernacle was the pattern of things in the heavens, so the house that God built is the universe. But the house over which Christ is set and to which we belong is that building composed of living stones in which every believer has a place.[1]

Wiersbe says this about the usage of "house":

> The word "house" is used six times in these verses. It refers to the people of God, not to a material building. Moses ministered to Israel, the people of God under the Old Covenant. Today, Christ ministers to His church, the people of God under the New Covenant ("whose house are we," Heb. 3:6). You find an illustration of this dual use of "house" in 2 Samuel 7. David wanted to build a temple for God, a house in which God could dwell. But God told David that He would build David's house (household, family) and make a covenant with David's descendants[2]

A. Moses was a Servant (v. 5)

B. Christ is the Son (v. 6)

God is not saying anything against Moses. Moses was indeed a faithful servant of God, but he was merely a servant. Christ is the Son. Moses is created, but Christ is the Creator. The writer uses

[1] H. A. Ironside, *Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1932), 55.

[2] W. W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 286.

the example of a building here. We may marvel at the building, but we give glory to the builder. The builder is God, and Christ is God.

Note the statement at the end of verse 6, which will transition us into the next point. The statement is not teaching that if we don't "hold fast" we will lose what we have. It is teaching that if we are in fact "in Christ" we will hold fast the confidence and hope firm until the end.

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. (1 John 2:19)

Again, quoting from Wiersbe:

> The "if" clause (Heb. 3:6) 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 (Heb. 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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> In other words, those who have trusted Christ *prove* this confession by their steadfastness, confidence, and joyful hope. They are not burdened by the past or threatened by the present but are "living in the future tense" as they await the "blessed hope" of their Lord's return. It is this "heavenly calling" that motivates the believers to keep on living for the Saviour even when the going is tough.[3]

J. Vernon McGee states:

> The proof that you are a child of God is that you hold to the faith. That doesn't *make* you a child of God, but it does prove that you *are* a child of God. If you are a believer, you will hold on, not because you are able but because *He* is able to make you stand. So, the writer of this Hebrew epistle (who I believe to be the apostle Paul) is using the "if" of argument. "If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" means that you are a partaker of the heavenly calling; you are among the brethren. I have always used the Bible as a means of testing. If a person really is a child of God, he will hold to the Word of God, and he is going to love the Word of God because he wants to hear his Father talking to him.[4]

Note – the word "confidence" (παρρησία - parrēsia), in verse six, means boldness, particularly in speech.

[3] Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:286.

[4] J. V. McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary*, electronic ed., vol. 5 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 524–525.

"For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." (Romans 10:11)

III. Comparing Followers of Christ to Israel (vv. 7 – 19)

In Hebrews 3:7 – 11 we see almost an exact quotation from Psalm 95:7 – 11:

"For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest." (Psalm 95:7-11)

The comparison that is made here is of believers today to those that were delivered from Egypt and wandered in the wilderness for forty years. And, the warning that is implied with it is designed to admonish unbelievers (professors), as well as encourage true believers. The deliverance from Egypt is a picture of salvation; the crossing of the Red Sea is a picture of baptism; the wilderness wandering is a picture of the believer in this world; and the entering into Canaan is a picture of the Spirit-filled life in this world. Most Christians will never enter the rest of the Spirit-filled Christian life, just as most of Israel (save Joshua and Caleb) never entered the promised land of Canaan. Why? Because of their unbelief.

This section comprises the second "Warning Passage" in the Letter to the Hebrews and has to do with doubting God's Word. The congregation of Israel doubted the promises of God when they refused to enter Canaan after the negative report of the spies. (Numbers 13 and 14) Many believers today are "out of Egypt", but they have not yet "entered into Canaan", meaning that they have been delivered from the bondage of sin yet choose to wander in the doubts of a life that is not surrendered to the will and Word of God.

Note the term "rest" in verses 11 and 18. This word will be used in a variety of ways in chapter 4 (Salvation rest, Sabbath rest, Spirit-filled rest); which we will deal with when we get there, but here in chapter three the word is used to refer to "Canaan rest." The people of Israel were "resting" from their bondage of slavery in Egypt, which is a type of salvation rest; but they were not yet resting in Canaan. The "rest" in chapter 3 has to do with the children of Israel entering the land of Canaan. Most of the people could not enter the Promised Land because of their unbelief. The people of Israel believed God enough to leave Egypt, but not enough to enter Canaan. This rest is a picture of the Christian who is living in the will of God, controlled by the Spirit of God.

A. Warning to Professors (vv. 6, 12)

Not everyone that names the name of Christ is a genuine believer; just as not everyone that was part of the congregation of Israel was truly a believer.

Tares within the body may look like the wheat but they do not produce any fruit. (Matthew 13:24 – 30)

B. Encouragement for Believers (v. 13)

Believers need to be encouraged to stay in the fold and trust in Christ no matter what the others around them might do. The influences around them may not be godly influences.

1. Discouraged believers tend to lean unto their own understanding rather than trust the promises of God.

Notice the following phrases:

"*harden not your hearts*" in vv. 8 and 15

"*evil heart of unbelief*" in v. 12

"*hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*"

The heart condition that these strong phrases describe could certainly apply to unbelievers, but does this warning not also admonish and exhort believers as well. It has been my experience that Christians can be a hard bunch of people. We need to ask God to help us keep our hearts soft, humble, and teachable.

Wiersbe states:

> When a person has an *erring* heart and a *disbelieving* heart, the result will also be a *hard* heart. This is a heart that is insensitive to the Word and work of God. So hard was the heart of Israel that the people even wanted to return to Egypt! Imagine wanting to exchange their freedom under God for slavery in Egypt! Of course, all this history spoke to the hearts of the readers of this letter because they were in danger of "going back" themselves.
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> The sin of Israel is stated in Hebrews 3:12— "departing from the living God." The Greek word gives us our English word "apostasy." This is the only place this word is used in Hebrews. Does "apostasy" mean abandoning one's faith and therefore being condemned forever? That does not fit into this context. Israel departed from the living God by refusing God's will for their lives and stubbornly wanting to go their own way back to Egypt. God did not permit them to return to Egypt. Rather, He disciplined them in the wilderness. God did not allow His people to return to bondage.[5]

McGee states regarding the phrase in verse 17, "*departing from the living God*":

[5] Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2:288.

You may ask, "Could that be true of a believer?" It certainly could. It is very important to realize that God was angry with their *sin*. What was their sin? It was not murder; it was not stealing; it was not lying. What was it? My friend, they didn't *believe* God. That was their great sin.[6]

2. Discouraged believers can be encouraged by other believers.

Notice the phrase in verse 13, *"But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day;".*

God will use other believers to encourage us, and He will use us to encourage and strengthen other believers. That is why we need to be in church every time the doors are opened. This was very important during the time of persecution that these Jewish Christians were facing, and it will also be critical as we "*see the day* (of Christ's return) *approaching*".

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:23-25)

3. Discouraged believers can be encouraged through the Word of God.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17)

The problem was unbelief (vv. 18 and 19). The solution to unbelief is the Word of God.

Conclusion – "Don't Die in the Wilderness"

As we close Hebrews chapter 3 tonight, the Holy Spirit brings us face-to-face with a sobering picture: The same generation that was delivered from Egypt's bondage never entered Canaan's rest — not because God failed them, but because of unbelief. They saw the miracles. They crossed the Red Sea. They ate the manna. But when it came time to trust God fully and move forward, they hardened their hearts and died in the wilderness.

Brothers and sisters, the warning is clear for us: It is possible to be "out of Egypt" (saved from sin's penalty) and still live in the wilderness — wandering in doubt, fear, anxiety, bitterness, or self-effort instead of enjoying the Spirit-filled rest God has promised us in Christ.

So, what does this mean for us practically this week?

1. Fight unbelief daily with the Word of God. Every morning, open your Bible and listen for His voice. Ask, "Lord, what are You calling me to trust You for *today*?" Write down one specific promise and speak it over your fears. Faith comes by hearing — so feed your faith and starve your doubts.

[6] McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary*, 5:527.

2. Guard your heart against hardening. Sin is deceitful. Little compromises and lingering doubts harden us over time. This week, do an honest heart check: "Am I becoming cynical, critical, or apathetic toward God and His people?" Confess quickly. Keep your heart soft and teachable before the Lord.
3. Exhort one another daily. Don't try to walk this Christian life alone. Text or call at least one other believer this week and encourage them specifically. Ask, "How can I pray for you?" or "What is God teaching you right now?" We need each other more than ever as we see the day of Christ's return approaching.
4. Choose to enter His rest. Are you living in spiritual Canaan — surrendered, Spirit-controlled, and at rest in God's will? Or are you still wandering? The choice is yours. God is not asking you to try harder. He is inviting you to trust Him fully and step into the abundant life He has already provided.

Final Challenge:

- If you've never truly trusted Christ alone for salvation, today is the day. Don't be like that wilderness generation — come to Him while it is called "Today."
- If you are a believer, will you repent of any area of unbelief right now? Will you commit to daily time in the Word and to intentionally encouraging at least one other Christian this week?

There remains a rest for the people of God (chapter 4). The same Jesus who is our Apostle and High Priest is fully able to bring us in. Let's not stop short. Let's enter the rest He died to give us.