The Book of Hebrews

Chapter 3

We are seeing the writer of this letter, refuting, one by one, the various theological arguments that the Jewish leaders have been using to pull back the new Jewish-Christian believers to Judaic Law or at least fill these Jewish converts with confusion. Beginning with the point that Jesus was greater than the Prophets of old, because He is the object of their prophesies. Next, that Jesus was greater than the angels, not lesser to them, because the angels served Jesus, not the other way around.

What was important to Jewish leaders from the beginning was their heritage, their hope as expressed by the prophets, Abraham who was the beginning father of their people and their Hebrew heritage, and Moses who was the leader of their freedom from Egyptian bondage, their Law giver and the establisher of the nation Israel. And if we recall in our studies of the books we have gone through over the years, how they stressed the prophets in their contentions with Jesus, or Abraham their father, in trying to unsettle Jesus. The angels are most important because they served and announced, and all of these were used to turn the hearts of the Jewish believers along with excommunication, arrest, and even death.

The Jewish believers, along with the harassment from their own people, are also faced with the Roman persecution, arrest and torture. No wonder that this writer had to pen this letter, because of the terror that was surrounding the Jewish believer. The Jews were caught between that proverbial rock and the hard place, and there seemed to be no escape. What this also did, was question this new belief in Jesus and what they had gotten themselves into. In other words, “I want to believe, but does it have to be this hard”?

Now we finished up the last chapter with Jesus being described as the ‘Captain of their Salvation’, and that the only way God could bring salvation to His own was to become like them, live like them, suffer and die for them. The writer then likens Jesus to their ‘High Priest’ who was the religious figure closest to God in the Temple, who was the intercessor and would make atonement sacrifice at the altar for them all, who would believe. He, Jesus, was the atonement sacrifice required by law for all sinners. To be able to do this he had to become a man, human in every way and tempted everyway as we are, yet He was sinless in all His ways.

A] Hebrews 3: 1 through 6; (read)

1] “*Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus.”*

Taking this apart, the writer starts with ‘therefore’ or (wherefore) which continues the previous thought. (There is that ol’ chapter and verse designation issue again) Therefore holy brethren: these are the ‘set apart’ Jews, brothers and sisters of this Faith we call Christianity, set apart meaning we are not of the world as living as the world does, but as those who have come to the atonement gift and salvation of Jesus and live a new life in Christ.

Partakers of the heavenly calling is this: Salvation is offered to us and accepted by us, through Jesus and we are then taking part in the new Christian movement. So, we are set apart to take part; does that make sense? The writer is trying to stress the important decision we have made even in the midst of the worldly trials, and we should be, in all ways, different than those of the world.

Consider the ‘Apostle’. Referring to Jesus, Jesus came to His own with this message of salvation, The Apostle is the messenger, the apostles were the messengers sent by the Apostle to tell of the truth of salvation that the Apostle brought. Then we have the High Priest who would accept the confessions of the people as they brought their sacrifices to the altar, as we confess our sins before the Father in heaven. The writer then ties the Apostle, High Priest to Jesus Christ. It is through Jesus Christ that we make our confessions as He intercedes before us to the Father, and is the Author of our Salvation.

2] “*Who was faithful to Him Who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all his house.”*

The writer now begins the comparison of Jesus to Moses, who was also prominent in the history of Israel. Jesus was as faithful in his task as Moses was to his task. Moses ‘house’ would be the Jewish nation of about one million people to three million people. Moses, once he left the cushy palace life with Pharaoh and his family, and took on the responsibilities of leading a massive number of people, although he was part of them but not raised with them, and followed God faithfully through the desert.

3] “*For this One has been counted worthy of more Glory than Moses inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He Who build all things is God.”*

Let’s consider this. Moses led the ‘house’ of Israel from Egypt to the promised land, but whose house is it? God built the house, didn’t He? All Moses did was to lead it away from bondage. And as we acknowledge that Jesus IS God, Jesus, then, is the builder and is worthy of greater glory than Moses. The writer continues that God is the builder of ALL things. This then refutes another argument of the Jews relegating Moses to a higher platform than he should be.

4] “*And Moses, indeed, was faithful in all his house as a servant, as a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward.”*

As we quickly look over this verse, we then note, Moses was the servant of the house of Israel, not the ruler. And throughout the Hebrew history, these are the things that are remembered. He led, he wrote the Law as given by God, he adjudicated issues, he worked for the people, so how then is he even on a par with Jesus?

Here I want to make a distinction regarding the ‘Servanthood’ of Christ. “Jesus came not to be served but to serve” (Matthew 20:28) and “Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19: 10) Although Jesus IS Lord over His house, he also is servant to all. I have my own house, and for all guests that arrive, I serve them, they don’t serve me. But Jesus certainly IS lord over my house. I trust Jesus is Lord over your house.

Did you ever stop to think, that in your house, you as the owner, serve your family, serve your guests, and in a manner of speaking you serve the house as there are constant repairs and upkeep that need to be done, and it is your own responsibility to see to the work needed to be done. As the father of your house, do you expect the children to see to your needs, or do you see to their needs? Does God expect His children to see to His needs, or do we as His children look to God the Father to see to our needs?

5] “*But Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope, firm to the end.”*

So as Moses was the servant of God’s house, Jesus is Lord over His house, and then the writer explains, we are the house of Christ, because we believe and are partakers as explained above, of the good things of Christ, through our salvation, and in that salvation, we have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. And in this personal relationship with Christ we are standing strong in His presence, and are rejoicing that we have such a protector as He.

Isn’t this encouraging even today? This is what the writer is striving to do with the Jewish believers then. He is admonishing then to take heart, stand strong, and understand that the pharisees and priests are trying to trick you through misinterpretations of scripture. That is what all of this is about.

B] Hebrews 3: 7 through 11; (read)

Now to begin this section, the writer will use Psalm 95: 7 through 11 to prove his point, and tie up the things he has stressed from the beginning of the letter.

1] “*Therefore, the Holy Spirit says: Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, and tried Me, and saw My works forty years.”*

There is that ‘therefore’ again signifying a continuing of thought. This Psalm is a Psalm of praise but at the same time a Psalm of stern warning and reminder to the people to remember what they were like throughout their history.’ Therefore, the Holy Spirit says’: The Psalm writer is very aware of the Holy Spirit, [the Greek renders this (pneuma to hagion)] So the Psalm writer tells the people if this is what the Holy Spirit, equating the Spirit with God, is telling folks, ‘If you hear His voice’ meaning the voice of the Spirit.

If we equate this to today, and we recognize the Holy Spirit as of God, and we should hear from the Holy Spirit, it is as hearing from God, right? Do we heed the Spirit’s call? Especially knowing the call is from God Himself? This is what the writer tells the Jews, if you heed the Spirits call do NOT harden your hearts. And MAN! Can we do that! We human beings can truly be hard-hearted, can’t we? Continuing on,’ as in the rebellion’ or back during the time of Moses when so many rebelled during the forty years sojourn in the desert., and again, in the day of trial in the wilderness’.

Looking at this I am reminded that there were nearly three million Jews leaving Egypt and in the following forty years there was attrition, much by aging out but many because of their sins, and it is believed that of all that started from Egypt, only two of the originals made it to the promised land, Joshua and Caleb. They argued, complained, demanded and rebelled during that time, not believing Moses, and God. They tested God and they did Try God and God’s patience. Yet God was faithful through all these things and led them to the promised land.

2] “*Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, ’they always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways, so I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’”*

It was that particular generation that was eliminated from the promises of God. When we stop to think, that for over four hundred years the Hebrew had integrated into the Egyptian lifestyle and beliefs, and although still understanding their background and heritage and who their God was, yet when they left some took their foreign idols with them. They saw the miracles and acts of God, yet they still rebelled.

The writer is reminding the Jews that their forefathers rebelled, yet God, in His faithfulness, did bring the Jews into their land He promised them, and that God did deal with them then, and He will deal with them now. This is what the Psalmist was singing about in Psalm 95, there was worship for what God had done but there was also a warning with what the people were doing. Let’s NOT harden the hearts at God’s call. Run to Him, cling to Him.

C] Hebrews 3: 12 through 15; (read)

1] “*Beware brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘today’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”*

So, after the exhortation through a Psalm, the writer now brings his own exhortation, with ‘beware!’ How easy it is to follow the path of the wicked when the fruits of evil looks so tempting, and that which is good for us is hidden in the weeds and thorns.

‘Beware brethren’ is telling the followers to look out, the temptations are there. Going on, lest there be in any of you, an evil heart of unbelief in the departing from the living God. This is getting to the heart of the problem the writer was addressing in the first place. Because of the pressure of the Priests and Pharisees, they were beginning to doubt and fall away, and reassume the mantle of the restrictive Law and not the Salvation of God. From the Romans, their fear was of assembling together in worship and instruction ere they be arrested and imprisoned or slain, was the stumbling block to this professed faith.

However, if we stand strong, together, we can be exhorting each other in faith, we can withstand those trials, but if we don’t stand together, we stand alone and become the individual, and alone we fall but assembled we stand. We should be exhorting and encouraging one another in the faith, and that makes us strong. Now in finishing this up, so many have a sin problem, and it takes others to make us see that sin problem, therefore if we exhort each other we can handle that sin problem together and that strengthens the assembly.

2] “*For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said, ‘Today if you hear His voice, do not harden you hearts as in the rebellion.’”*

Jesus suffered and died a most painful death on the cross and really before it. He was scourged and crowned with painful thorns, but the worst hurt was all the followers that fell away and He was alone. However, when we stand together through our severe adversity, we stand with Him who went through it first. Many scholars also look at this verse meaning partakers of His glory and the rewards of heaven when we stand fast. I like both.

We can face those trials with courage and boldness when we are assembled together and have that faith which is unshakeable and bold and have the confidence that God will stand with us through these trials, not taking us out of the trials, but full well knowing that these trials strengthen us for the day of our joining Jesus Christ in His House.

The writer then reemphasis the verse 11 of Psalm 95, that when Christ calls, do not turn away as your forefathers did. Today, do we turn away out of fear, or anxiety, or confusion by what others tell us? If we stand strong----together—in Christ, then our courage and confidence will keep us from that rebelling, and brings us into that relationship with Christ.

D] Hebrews 3: 16 through 19; (read)

1] “*For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, it was not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses?”*

There is that history lesson; who was it that rebelled? The people out of fear of the unknown that lay ahead, they would revert back to the idols they worshipped in Egypt. Many times, when we are subjected to harsh adversity, we look back to that which we understood to be our security. Back to the arms of mommy, so to speak.

2] “*Now, with whom was He angry with forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?”*

Here we have all those like Aarons sons and so many others, who’s blatant sin decreed that they die right where they were. Then we have the overall sinful nature of all the people who did acts of idol worship and other sins the Law yet to come would cover, and over the forty years in the wilderness, all their bones did fall to the sand.-----except for Caleb and Joshua.

3] “*And to whom did he swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those did not obey? So, we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”*

The writer now cleans up the issue with God’s warning to the people of Israel. Clean up your act or you will die in your sins and there is no redemption. And this is true even to today, repent and become a believer, and have that personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and be saved.