

Hebrews

Hebrews 3:1-13 – Part I

November 9, 2008

- I. Jesus – Christ compared to Moses. Listen and obey – don't fall away.
 - A. **Hebrews 3:1-19** . . . Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; [2] He (*Jesus*) was faithful to Him (*God*) who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His (*God's*) house. [3] For He (*Jesus*) 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. [4] For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. [5] Now Moses was faithful in all His (*God's*) 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 (*God's*) house – whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end. [7] Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, "Today if you hear His (*Christ's*) voice, [8] do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me (*God*), as in the day of trial in the wilderness, [9] where your fathers tried Me (*God*) by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years. [10] "Therefore I (*God*) 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.' " [12] Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. [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.
 - B. **Review:** from the beginning of **Hebrews 1:1**, God tells us the following things about Jesus Christ.
 1. Where at one time God spoke to us through the prophets, now – in these last days He is speaking to us through Jesus – **Hebrews 1:2**.
 2. Jesus is God in human flesh – and as a human being, he is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's nature – **Hebrews 1:3**.
 3. Jesus is superior to the angels – **Hebrews 1:4**.
 4. Because Jesus is superior to the angels we must pay much closer attention to what Jesus says – **Hebrews 2:1**.

5. Even though Jesus became one of us and we are now his brothers and sisters – **Hebrews 2:10-18**,
 - a. he died for us so that we could life with God forever,
 - b. he gives saving help to us and not the angels,
 - c. he suffered for us in order to break the devil’s power over us,
 - d. he save us and he sanctifies us,
 - e. he has become our merciful and faithful high priest, representing us before God in all things pertaining to our relationship with God,
 - f. and he has been tempted in all the ways we are tempted so that he would be equipped to come to our aid when we are tempted.
6. All that God has told us so far about Jesus in these first two chapters leads us into **Hebrews 3:1** – where God reminds us again that we need to listen to Jesus. Then, God moves on to point out that Jesus is superior to Moses – and from there He tells us that if He, that is God, judged those who did not listen to Moses we can be certain He will judge even more severely those who do not listen to Jesus.

C. Prayer

- D. **Hebrews 3:1-6** . . . Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; [2] He (*Jesus*) was faithful to Him (*God*) who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His (*God’s*) house. [3] For He (*Jesus*) 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. [4] For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. [5] Now Moses was faithful in all His (*God’s*) 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 (*God’s*) house – whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

1. **Hebrews 3:1** . . . Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;
 - a. **partakers of a heavenly calling** – When the word “calling” is used like this in the NT it usually refers to something we are called to here on the earth. In other words, “heavenly

calling” does not refer to our calling unto salvation but to the way we live here and now.

- (1) And here in Hebrews, our “heavenly calling” is directly related to listening to and obeying Jesus – just as Israel’s calling was directly related to listening to and obeying God.
 - (a) I am bringing up Israel’s calling here because throughout the book of Hebrews, God uses Israel and their behavior in response to His lordship over them as the backdrop for speaking to us about our behavior in response to the lordship of Jesus Christ over us.
 - (b) As we know from the OT, Israel had a heavenly calling. Their calling was to be an earthly, visible nation that showed forth the glory of God to all the surrounding nations in how they lived day to day.
 - (c) However, Israel failed to fulfill their calling – and we see this in two primary ways:
 - i) The **first** way was the first time they came up to the Jordan River after being freed from Egypt. Just prior to crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land, they sent twelve spies in to check out the land. As a result of the report from 10 of the spies, they decided it would be suicide to go into the land. The consequence of their choice to distrust God – which directly led to disobeying God – was being forbidden by God to enter into and enjoy the Promised Land. And so those who failed to fulfill their calling died in the desert – outside the Promised Land.
 - ii) The **second** way in which Israel failed to fulfill their calling was spread over many hundreds of years. Instead of living as children of God, they worshiped idols, failed to care for the poor, were dishonest in business, did not forgive debt as prescribed by God – in essence, they lived a hypocritical life. The consequences of this failure was to be driven out of their homeland.
- (2) Since God is the one bringing up Israel’s history as a backdrop to what He is saying to us, we should assume that the lessons from Israel’s history referred to through

out the book of Hebrews are important lessons to absorb and keep in mind as we consider our heavenly calling today.

- (3) Therefore, let me summarize God's message to us about our heavenly calling and our response to this calling.
 - (a) God is now speaking to us through His son, Jesus Christ – who is greater than the prophets, the angels, and as we will see in just a moment, Moses.
 - (b) God has made every effort to make it easy for us to identify with Jesus so that it would be easy for us to listen to and obey Jesus.
 - (c) Listening to and obeying Jesus is required for entrance into God's eternal kingdom in the same way as listening to and obeying God when He was speaking through Moses was required for Israel's entrance into the Promised Land.
 - (d) Failure to live a life of listening to and obeying Jesus leads to dire consequences just as Israel's failure at the Jordan and over the many years of living in the Promised Land led to dire consequences. And in spite of what many wish to believe about God's grace in relation to our sin, only a fool thinks he can fail to fulfill God's heavenly calling and still enter God's eternal kingdom. Remember the Israelites tried this and paid a dear price for their foolishness.
- (4) To summarize: God is telling us here in Hebrews that what He is speaking through His son, Jesus Christ, must be obeyed in this life if we are to enter into God's eternal kingdom. God began this message in Hebrews 2:1-3 and continues it in the last half of this chapter and on into **Hebrews 4**.
- (5) Now, as we continue our study today, let us not be as those who live in an irrational fear of losing our salvation, but as those who are sincere and zealous in submissively listening to and obeying our Lord Jesus Christ – day in and day out. After all, in simplest terms, this is the life of faith.

- b. In light of what I have just said concerning our heavenly calling, how are we going to live this life of faith? God's next

words here in **Hebrews 3:1** get us up and running. God says, **consider Jesus** –

- (1) study, examine, evaluate, carefully think about, fix your eyes and mind on, size up Jesus.
 - (2) Why? Because it is in thinking about, meditating on, and studying Jesus that we fix our mind on things above and not on things on the earth. And it is as we fix our mind on things above that we live as those whose home is above.
 - (a) If you want to live a life of faith, fill your mind with right thoughts about Jesus, his character, his behavior on a day to day basis, his submission to God, his words, and his intentions for his body, the Church.
 - (b) You see, the more we think on things that are earthly, fleshly, and self-serving the less we want to live by faith and the more we want to rebel against God's will and rule and decide for ourselves which way to go.
 - (3) In other words, what you fill your mind with – you do and you become. This is why God speaking through Paul so clearly says in **Philippians 4:8** . . . Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on, set your mind on, meditate on these things.
 - (a) We may not be able to prevent wrong thinking from entering our mind, but we can toss it out as soon as we are aware it's presence and return to thinking on Jesus and how we should live.
 - (b) One last thought here – it is not God's duty to control our thinking. That is our duty. God empowers us and enables us to think of right things, but we are the ones who have the responsibility to examine our thoughts and make sure they are heading us in the right direction. Failure to do so on our part opens the door for our own fleshly desires and outside temptations to have their way with us.
- c. Continuing on in **Hebrews 3:1** we read that Jesus is **the Apostle and High Priest of our confession**. I want to point out a couple of truths contained in this phrase.

- (1) **First**, the label **Apostle** shows Jesus as being sent by God as God's representative to us.
 - (2) **Second**, the label **High Priest** shows Jesus as chosen by God to be our representative before God. In other words, Jesus is both God's representative to us and our representative to God.
 - (3) **Finally**, the word **confession** speaks of agreeing with someone else about some truth or reality and then giving public testimony to our faith in that truth or reality.

2. The next five verses in **Hebrews 3** build on what we have just talked about by setting the stage for what is to come in **verse 7**. So in preparation for what is to come, let look at how these five verses set this stage.

3. **Hebrews 3:2-6 . . .** [2] He (*Jesus*) was faithful to Him (*God*) who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His (*God's*) house. [3] For He (*Jesus*) 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. [4] For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. [5] Now Moses was faithful in all His (*God's*) 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 (*God's*) house – whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.
 - a. God begins this section by establishing the fact that both Jesus and Moses were faithful workers in God's house – which is another way of saying, God's kingdom here on earth. For Moses, God's kingdom here on the earth was the nation of Israel. For Jesus it was his disciples and the ensuing church.
 - b. Moving on from there, God establishes the fact that Jesus is superior to Moses – just as the one who builds a house is superior to the finished product itself. God builds on this imagery by affirming that Jesus' superiority rests of the fact that Moses was God's servant while Jesus is God's son.
 - c. Next, God restates the fact that both Moses and Jesus were faithful workers in God's house / kingdom.
 - d. So what is the point of these comparisons between Jesus and Moses?

- (1) Moses was held in high esteem, and rightly so, by every Jew. As a result, the Jewish influence in the Church was very strong – so strong in fact that the Apostles exhorted the early Church to resist that influence wherever that influence was leading the church away from Christ and back to Judaism. But the point is still important – Moses was held up to be a prophet that God’s people were to listen to and submit to.
- (2) Now what God is trying to get the reader to see is that Jesus is to be held in the highest esteem now. If we would listen to and submit to the words of Moses then all the more we are to listen to and submit to the words of Jesus.
- e. Now we come to the final statement – the statement that completes the setting of the stage for what God has to say to us in **verses 7** and following. The last half of **Hebrews 3:6** says . . . but Christ was faithful as a Son over His (*God’s*) house – **whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.**
 - (1) Remember the “heavenly calling” and how it refers to the way we live as Christians here and now? And remember how Israel failed to fulfill their heavenly calling – specifically in refusing to trust God enough to enter the Promised Land that first time they came to the Jordan River? And remember what happened to Israel as a result of their unbelief and disobedience? Those who refused to listen and obey died in the desert. They were not allowed to enter the Promised Land.
 - (2) Their experience makes these words rich with meaning: **if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.**
 - (a) To **hold fast** means to “stay the course,” to remain committed to the path we are on, to continue moving in the right direction.
 - i) In light of listening to and submitting to Jesus, holding fast means continuing to move down the path and in the direction he has set for us.
 - ii) To change course, or to decide another way is better than the way Jesus has established is to fail in fulfilling our heavenly calling – just as Israel failed when they changed course at the Jordan.

- (b) To hold fast our **confidence** and the **boast of our hope** means to stay the course even when strongly tempted to change course. For an example from scripture, consider David when facing Goliath. His confidence was in victory over the giant. His boast of hope was God – who David was convinced would ensure the victory.
- (3) The point of these words is important in light of what God goes on to say to us in **verse 7** and beyond. What God is saying to us here is that permanence in fulfilling our “heavenly calling” as Christians is essential to experiencing the intended outcome of saving faith.
 - (a) Listening to and submitting to Jesus so that we become more and more like him in how we live day-to-day not only validates we are saved, it is the natural and only rational outcome of saving faith.
 - (b) Therefore, persevering to the end in listening to and submitting to the lordship of Jesus is essential for entering into God’s eternal kingdom.

II. Conclusion

- A. After making us very aware of Christ’s exalted position in our life, and his identification with us in order to save us and help us when tempted, God is now warning us about staying on course rather than pulling back and going our own way as Israel did at the Jordan. Why? So we don’t miss out on God’s eternal rest – that is, on heaven – as those Israelites did who voted against obeying God (trusting God) and taking the Promised Land in spite of the giants, walled cities, and standing armies. The way is not easy, but victory is guaranteed if we will persevere to the end.