



## **"REASONS TO REJOICE"**

**"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16**

### **HEBREWS Lesson 3**

Before we begin, let's take a moment and recall the writer's purpose for writing this letter to the Jewish/Christian believers. He was reminding them that the true revelation of God came through Jesus Christ, and only through Him do we have access to the Father. He begins by showing them that Christ is superior to the prophets, and then proceeds to remind them that Jesus is superior to the angels as well. (Angels surely can't identify with us concerning our needs and weaknesses, but Jesus can!) Now, in chapter 3, he intends to prove that Jesus Christ is superior to Moses, a leader, who, next to Abraham, was greatly revered by the Jews. The Law came through Moses via the Ten Commandments, which were the basis for the entire Jewish religion. William Barclay wrote, "To the Jews it would have been impossible to conceive that anyone ever stood closer to God than Moses did, and yet that is precisely what the writer of Hebrews set out to prove." Truly, Jesus is greater than the greatest!

#### **First Day**

1. Let's begin today by reading Hebrews 3:1-19. Observe the facts. Ask yourself the questions: Who? What? Where? When? Why?
2. Are there any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts?
3. What is the main point of this chapter? What verse would you choose to support that?

4. So far in this letter, Jesus has been called Son, Firstborn, Lord, and High Priest. What new title is He given in verse 1? What new title does he give his audience?

Moses was a man called to be a prophet and served as a priest on occasion (Psalm 99:6). Jesus is the Son of God, sent by the Father into the world. "Apostle" means "one sent with a commission." Moses was called and commissioned by God, but Jesus was "sent" as God's Word to sinful man. He was not only a High Priest, but the "Great" High Priest (Hebrews 4:14). As the Apostle, Jesus represents God to man, but as the High Priest, He represents man to God in Heaven. Although Moses was faithful to his calling and obeyed God's will (Numbers 12:7), he was not perfect. Not only was Jesus faithful, He was sinless as well. But the Jews could follow Moses' example by being faithful to their calling in Christ, obeying His voice.

5. Is the writer trying to stir them toward any action? Are there any exhortations or commands?
  
6. The writer quotes Psalm 95 in verses 7-11. In verse 7, who does he say is the author of these words? Why is this significant?
  
7. What have you learned about Moses from this chapter?
  
8. What have you learned about the Israelites?

That's it for today. Isn't this a great chapter? I love the example of Moses. He's very inspiring as a man, as well as a leader. But no one can top Jesus, not even Moses!

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God." Hebrews 3:4

## Second Day

**Review your memory verse.**

1. Read Hebrews 3:1-19. Focus on verses 1-6. The word "partakers" means "partners." What are we partakers of?

The word "consider" means "observe attentively, fix your thoughts, mark with attention." It also can mean "to understand fully." (Also used in Luke 12:24)

2. What, or who, is the author asking the reader to consider? What does that mean? (It has been said that the key to understanding Hebrews rests in the thought of "consider" Him.)

The author asks us to consider Christ, seeing Him as an Apostle and our High Priest. Nowhere else in the New Testament is Jesus called an Apostle, meaning "one who is sent forth or commissioned" or "a messenger." The writer makes a point to never give this title to any man; he saves it for Christ. The Latin word for priest is "pontifex," which means "bridge builder." "The priest is the person who builds a bridge between man and God. To do that he must know both man and God. He must be able to speak to God for man and to speak to man for God. Jesus is the perfect High Priest because He is perfectly man and perfectly God; He can represent man to God and God to man." (Barclay) The writer will expound on this more fully as he develops his letter.

3. According to verse 2, what did Jesus and Moses have in common? Yet, how were they different?

4. How often do you stop and "consider" Christ? Do you take time to carefully examine who He is? What happens when you do?
  
5. What principle is the writer explaining in verses 3-6? Explain the difference between a son and a servant.

Commentators disagree on exactly what the writer means in his use of "house." Some believe he's referring to the nation of Israel, while others believe he is talking about the tabernacle. The tabernacle is called "the house of God" 6 times in the Old Testament, and the Temple is called that 43 times. Stedman writes that "Moses is especially connected with the tabernacle as the one who received its design on Mount Sinai and oversaw its building and ritual. If the tabernacle was the symbol of the dwelling place of God in the midst of His people, as will be seen more fully in 3:6, then we may view the phrase "God's house" as referring both to Israel and the building itself, each standing for the other." Wiersbe believes that it "refers to the people of God, not a material building."

Whatever you think, the meaning of verses 3-5 is clear. The builder of the house is more worthy of honor than the house which he builds. The house is only the product of the builder's skill and wisdom. Therefore, Jesus, who builds all things, is more worthy of honor than Moses, who was simply a servant in that house.

6. In verses 6-7, it's clear that the writer is now saying that the Church is God's house. He brought it into being. Read 1 Peter 4:17, 1 Timothy 3:15, and 1 Peter 2:5. How are we all like "stones"?
  
7. What happens when one of the "stones" is weak?
  
8. Are you a weak or strong stone? As part of God's house, are you doing your part? Are you doing your specific job, as well as supporting those around you?

9. According to verse 6, how do we, as believers, show the reality of our faith? (The word "confidence" can be translated as "boldness.")

Of verse 10, Warren Wiersbe writes, "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."

10. Are you bold and confident in your faith, or do you doubt and worry? Are you hopeful? Are you living in the future tense? Search your heart on this one.

I pray that you can be a confident, strong, determined, and joyful "stone" in the house of God! See you tomorrow!

### **Third Day**

#### **What's your memory verse?**

It's interesting to note that the writer introduced the quotation in verse 7 from the Old Testament as originating from the "Holy Spirit." The Psalmist was only the mouthpiece of God; God Himself is the author of Scripture. The writer obviously has a high view of Scripture, seeing it as completely divine.

In Hebrews 3:1-6, the writer shows us a comparison between Jesus and Moses, reminding them that Jesus deserves more honor. Then, without transition, the writer refers back to the Psalms again, quoting Psalm 95:7-11. He goes on to explain his reasoning in verses 12-15. He ends the chapter with some historical examples of the point he's making.

1. Read Hebrews 3:1-19. Reread verses 7-14. The writer is quoting Psalm 95:7-11. (Also read Exodus 17:1-7.) Can you explain the incident he is referring to?

## 2. What do you think the writer means by "today?"

The incident in the desert happened at Meribah and Massah, according to Psalm 95. These two names are literally translated as "rebellion" and "testing or trial." This Psalm begins by describing worship that is acceptable to God, but then closes with a description of the false worship of Israel in the wilderness. They saw themselves as God's flock, yet they held bitterness against Him in their hearts. At the beginning of their 40-year journey, the people of Israel lacked water, which caused them to grumble and complain. God instructed Moses to strike the rock, and water gushed forth. Towards the end of their journey, they complained again because of their thirst. This time, Moses lost his temper and struck the rock twice instead of following the Lord's instructions. Because of that act of rebellion, Moses was not allowed to enter into the Promised Land.

The people of Israel tested God's patience over and over in the 40 years of wandering. (Ten times to be exact, according to Numbers 14:22) Stedman said, "On occasion God sought to make them aware of their ingratitude and rebellion by visiting them with deserved punishment (fire, plagues, quail, and poisonous serpents). But He always offered repentance and recovery. Still, their complaints continued and their hearts gradually hardened until, at Kadesh-Barnea, when God commanded them to enter the land of Canaan and take it for their own, they rebelled and refused to go up. Finally, God spoke in anger and said, 'Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known My ways. So I declared an oath in My anger, 'They shall never enter My rest.'"

After 40 years, the Israelites had not learned God's ways or grown in their knowledge of God. This failure to grow is the very danger the writer of Hebrews is warning his readers about. This snapshot in the history of the Jews was to serve as a warning to them. They challenged God's sovereign authority by their rebellion in the wilderness, and He didn't want it to happen again!

## 3. What did God say they would never enter?

This is the first time the word "rest" is used in Hebrews. This word describes the end of wandering or restlessness. Israel could have had a permanent and safe dwelling place had they trusted God (Deut. 12:9). Although here "rest" literally refers to the Land of Canaan (The Promised Land), "Canaan rest" can also be a symbol of a greater rest available to God's people in the future.

4. Read Numbers 13 and 14. In your own words, briefly describe what happened and why the Israelites couldn't enter Canaan.

5. Why was God so angry at them?

One of the key words the writer uses in Hebrews is the word "rest." (3:11, 18; 4:1; 3-5; 8-11) Wiersbe writes, "The writer mentions two different 'rests' found in Old Testament history: (1) God's Sabbath rest, when He ceased from His Creation activities (Gen. 2:2, Heb. 4:4), and (2) Israel's rest in Canaan (Deut. 12:9, Josh 21:43-45, Heb. 3:11). But he saw illustrations of the spiritual experiences of believers today in these 'rest' illustrations. The Sabbath rest is a picture of our rest in Christ through salvation (Heb. 4:3). The Canaan rest is a picture of our present rest as we claim our inheritance in Christ (Heb 4:11-13). The first is the rest of salvation; the second is the rest of submission." We'll talk more about rest next week in chapter 4.

6. We are all tempted to drift, doubt, or disbelieve. Are you experiencing that right now? Is there an area of your life that you are doubting or disbelieving God's authority? Has He "proven" Himself over and over, yet you still continue to disbelieve or refuse to trust Him? Why is this so dangerous? What should you do?

7. What does He call this kind of heart in verse 8?

8. What is the writer asking us to do in verses 12-13?

**9. How can sin deceive and harden us? Who can it happen to?**

It seems to me that the writer knew how often all of us are prone to wander or doubt. He says to encourage each other "daily." Sin is always deceitful, and we never believe it will take us captive. We must always be on guard, as well as exhort and encourage each other constantly.

**10. Is there someone in your life that appears to be wandering in disbelief or doubt or whose heart is becoming harder and harder? What can you do to help?**

Let's end here for now. Spend some time examining your heart. Are you allowing your heart to become hard in any way? If so, bring it to the Lord immediately! Don't be deceived and think it's not a big deal!

**Fourth Day**

**Work on your memory verse.**

**1. Read Hebrews 3 again. You should know it really well by now! We're going to pick it up again in verse 14. What is the writer's point in this verse?**

Someone once said, "The heart of every problem is a problem in the heart." The people of Israel, with the exception of Moses, Joshua and Caleb, allowed themselves to wander in their heart from God and His Word. They also didn't believe that God would give them victory in Canaan. Although they were witnesses of the miracles He did in Egypt, they doubted He would, or could, do it again in Canaan. Their hearts were so hard that some of them even wanted to go back to Egypt! Believers are still tempted today to go back, to give up their confession of Christ and go back into the world's system of compromise and bondage. The author uses the word "brethren" in verse 12. Is he talking about abandoning our faith and



being condemned forever? Is he saying that we can lose our salvation? The answer is no; that isn't what he's saying. I like what Wiersbe wrote in his commentary on Hebrews: "The emphasis in Hebrews is that true believers have an eternal salvation because they trust a living Savior who constantly interceded for them. But the writer is careful to point out that this confidence is no excuse for sin. God disciplines His children. Remember that Canaan is not a picture of Heaven, but of the believer's present spiritual inheritance in Christ. Believers who doubt God's Word and rebel against Him do not miss Heaven, but they do miss out on the blessings of their inheritance today, and they must suffer the chastening of God."

For me and you, "today" means "while life lasts." While we have the chance, give God the honor and obedience He deserves. Give it all to Him before "your" day is over.

Verses 15-19, again, give us the historical examples of what the writer was talking about in the previous verses. Yesterday we read about their stories in Numbers 13 and 14.

**William Barclay believes that the author gives some important warnings in this chapter:**

- A.** God makes men an offer. He offered the Israelites the blessings of the Promised Land. What does He offer us?
  
- B.** To obtain the blessings of God, two things are necessary: trust and obedience. How does this chapter show us this truth?
  
- C.** There is a "limit" to God's offer. What is it? (hint: vs 13)

Trusting God and believing His promises is not only crucial, it's necessary. Will you stake your life on His promises? I once read that in any realm of life, success depends on the obedience to the word of an expert. God is our expert on life. Will you depend on and obey Him?

2. Why is it so important to exhort each other daily? Also read 1 Thessalonians 5:11. Why is this concept so important to the church today? It is a "corporate responsibility of the Christian community" to warn believers not to turn away from God, but to be strong! What changes would be possible if we all took this to heart? (Why is this a responsibility and obligation of the Church?)

3. How does Hebrews 3:6 parallel verse 14?

Sometimes the phrase "partakers of Christ" is difficult to understand completely. I like what Andrew Murray wrote in his book Holiest of All. He said, "Just as truly as Christ became a partaker 'in flesh and blood,' we become 'partakers of Christ.' In partaking with us of flesh and blood, Christ entered into perfect fellowship with us in all we were; our life and our death became His. When we become partakers of Christ, we enter into perfect fellowship with Him in all He was and is; His death and His life become ours. When God set forth His only begotten Son as the only possible way of access to Himself, it meant that He can delight in, or have fellowship with, nothing in which the likeness of His Son is not to be seen." That's us, once we've surrendered our life to Christ!

4. When Christ became a "partaker" of human nature, He totally identified Himself with us, making it visible for the whole world to see. We are now "partakers of Christ." Are you so identified with Him that your whole life is marked by it?

"When Christ took on human nature, He left His own state of life, forsook all, and entered into our state of life. How do I become a partaker of Christ? By coming out from my own state of life, forsaking all, giving myself wholly to be possessed of Him and to live His life."

5. Kistemaker wrote, "The moment will come when God will cease to warn sinful man. When that moment arrives, the day of grace changes into the day of judgment." What does he mean, and how does our chapter support that?

Andrew Murray said, "There is nothing so hardening as delay. The delay, instead of making the surrender and obedience and faith easy, makes it more difficult. Obedience to the Spirit's 'today' is your only certainty of power and of blessings."

6. Is the Holy Spirit whispering something to you "today"? Are you listening carefully or are you "putting off" what He's telling you to do?

Murray goes on to say, "You thought 'today' was only meant for a sinner when called to immediate repentance; you did not know that it also means immediate wholehearted submission to all God says each time the believer hears His voice, as well as immediate trustful acceptance of all He gives." Wow ... that's a lot to think about. See you tomorrow, ladies!

### **Fifth Day**

**Write out your verse from memory.**

1. Read Hebrews 3:1-19 again. Let's close our lesson by answering some "general" questions regarding this chapter.

Many scholars discuss the two stages of the Christian. There are those who are carnal and those who are spiritual. There are those who remain babes and those who are full grown; those who come out of Egypt but then remain in the wilderness of a worldly life; and those who follow the Lord fully, entering into His rest and victory. What stage are you in? Are you like the Israelites in any way? Pray and answer the following questions:

- A. Do you often grumble and complain?
  - B. Do you make your own plans rather than seek God's will?
  - C. Do you openly express dissatisfaction with what God is doing in your life?
  - D. Do you rebel against authority or refuse to listen to counsel?
  - E. Do you refuse to listen to God's voice, or refuse to act in obedience?
  - F. Do you daily seek to encourage and edify other believers in their faith?
2. What is the most significant thing you learned from this chapter?
3. We are truly blessed to be one of God's daughters, firmly planted in the house of God. End this week's lesson by writing a prayer of thanks to the Lord for allowing us to be "partakers of Christ."

**"Let faith be the habit of our soul, the every breath of our life."**

Andrew Murray

