

THE STAND

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE HEBREWS CHAPTER 3



Chapter 3 Commentary

Anyone who has ever studied the Old Testament or been in Sunday School should recognize the name of Moses. You might recall stories of Moses as a baby floating down the river in a basket, the ten plagues or the parting of the Red Sea. But, for the Jewish nation, Moses was the most important man in all of history.

When we really dig into the Old Testament, we begin to see deep into Moses' life and discover the special calling God gave this man. Moses was the first man to bring deliverance to God's people. They saw how God had spared his life as a baby, uniquely placed him in the house of Pharaoh and then called him to bring the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. Moses was clearly God's chosen leader. After parting the Red Sea and successfully delivering the Israelites from Egyptian control, Moses led the Israelites towards God's Promised Land, God's rest from oppression. During this journey, Moses was God's mouthpiece to the Israelites. Moses spoke directly with God on multiple occasions; he spoke to God as if he were face to face. At one time, Moses even reflected the glory of God on his face after an encounter with the Lord. In addition to his encounters with God, Moses was the writer of the first five books of the Old Testament (the Torah). These books contained the law, the order of the priesthood and sacrificial system that were vital to the Jewish way of life.

Moses and God



Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face
Deuteronomy 34:10

When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him.
Exodus 34:29-30

Simply put, Moses was at the top of the Jewish Hall of Fame. So, for a Jew, it would have been hard to accept that Jesus would have been greater than the great patriarch, Moses. But, as we will see, the writer of Hebrews doesn't diminish Moses at all. In fact, he shows his audience Moses' importance in the story of Jesus.

In Hebrews 3:1, we see the author ask his audience to "consider Christ the Apostle and High Priest." (This verse holds great significance to the claims of the rest of the chapter, so we must look a little further at this phrase.) In the Greek language the word apostle literally means "sent one." This title is never directly given to Moses in Scripture, but as you can see from the background above, Moses definitely fits the role of apostle. Now, the writer is asking the brethren to consider Jesus the Apostle or "sent one" from God. He never denies Moses was sent by God, He is now saying Christ is to be considered the Apostle of their faith as he will explain later in the chapter. He also asks his audience to consider Jesus as High Priest. As we have mentioned before, a priest was a representative between man and God. Moses was an intricate part in establishing the priesthood that the Jews followed, even to the time Hebrews was written. However, the writer claims this priesthood has now changed.

They should no longer consider the Levitical priests as their representatives before God, but consider Jesus their perfect High Priest.

The writer is making a big claim before this Jewish audience that Jesus is greater than Moses. In verse 3, the writer says, "Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself." He's reminding his audience of the claim of Jesus as Creator given in chapter one. As creator, Jesus must be greater than Moses, because isn't the creator greater than the creation? To take it even further, the word house, used here, is a term used for "people" throughout Scripture. So, basically the author is saying, "Isn't Jesus the Creator greater than the man He created?" Moses, while a great man, was an imperfect man. Jesus was a perfect man, and God.

Centuries after Moses' death, the writer of Hebrews gives Moses the highest accolade He would ever receive. He claims Moses was faithful as a servant of God because he faithfully testified to Christ in all he did. See, one thing the Jews missed and we often miss today is this: the law, the priesthood and the sacrificial system Moses established all pointed to Christ. The law was given to prove to the people that they needed a Savior. The priesthood existed because the people needed a representative before God. The Promised Land of Canaan was a glimpse of the true rest

we will receive in eternity with Christ. Everything Moses had done championed the need for Christ. Moses prepared the nation of Israel for their coming Savior, but many people missed it. In the final days, Jesus, the Sent One and Final Representative, has come as the Son to claim everything that was given to Him by the Father. Moses had done his job. It was time for the people to recognize Jesus had done His job as well.

Everything leads to Jesus



Did you know all the Old Testament systems and laws really lead up to Jesus? If you look closely at the Old Testament you will see how the law, the sacrifices and the priesthood all pointed to Jesus. We even see the lives of great people like Moses, Joshua and David foreshadow the life of Jesus. When we realize that Jesus has been the point all along, the Old Testament Scriptures will come alive.

This exciting news leads to the first stage of rest we see God provide for His people, redemptive rest. The writer claims those who put their faith in Jesus are of the house of God. They are redeemed from their sin by Jesus Christ and they can rest knowing their salvation is secure. No longer do these people have to worry that they are not able to keep every letter of the law, because Jesus has fulfilled the law. The writer claims those belonging to the house of God will hold on to their courage and the hope of Christ. The writer is not claiming these new Christians could lose their salvation, but the result of true salvation is steadfastness to the end. If they do not hold on to the hope of Christ and fall back into their old ways, they must have never really committed their life to Christ in the first place. They may have intellectually understood the claims of Christ, but their heart was never changed.

This intellectual understanding and half-hearted belief in God was nothing new to the Jewish people. As we have mentioned before, the Jews had a track record of straying from God. Psalm 95 is quoted in Hebrews 3:7-11 and recounts Israel wandering in the desert. The Israelites were forced to wonder in the desert for 40 years because they did not believe God would take care of them. Nevermind the fact that God had just delivered them out of centuries of slavery,

parted a vast sea, allowed them to walk through on dry land and miraculously fed them everyday while traveling. Despite this, they still complained and refused to wholeheartedly believe God would lead them to rest in the Promised Land of Canaan.

God had made a promise to the nation of Israel that they would be His chosen people. He would never allow them to go back to Egypt in slavery. They had received God's redemptive rest, but God had something more. God wanted the nation of Israel to see that as His children, they had the power to overcome the world. They could take rest in the fact God would provide a way to conquer the Promised Land, and they would be able to enter this land of abundance. Unfortunately, this generation of Israelites never made it to Canaan's rest because of their unbelief in God's provision.

This rest also applies to our relationship with Christ today. Once we commit to follow Christ and enter into His redemptive rest, God will never allow us to fall away from Him. But as believers, we often fail to realize we have the power of God in our lives. We struggle with sin and the temptations of the world, failing to realize that in Jesus Christ we have the ability to overcome sin. We understand He has saved us and provided a place for us in eternity, but we believe we must still try to produce or succeed before God on our own here on earth. We take sin upon ourselves instead of nailing it to the cross. Experiencing Canaan rest is believing we have the power through Jesus Christ to overcome this sinful world. We should not simply wait for heaven to begin to rest from struggles, but believe that Jesus is active in restoring us here and now, and He wants to see us take refuge in Him.

The Israelites missed the rest that God had planned for them because they did not believe God would provide for them. We miss abundance in Christ here on earth because we are deceived by sin. Sin hardens our hearts and our minds and as John says, this allows Satan to steal our joy (John 10:10) and ultimately our rest. If we fall into sin's deceitfulness, we become callused to, what we believe, is small sin in our lives and become desensitized to its effects. We justify one little white lie and soon after we are justifying lies on a daily basis. One slip of the tongue turns into a fountain of course talk, and because of sin, Christ's presence is overshadowed by worry and stress in our day to day lives.

W 3 Types of Rest

Redemptive Rest

We experience redemptive rest when we realize that Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for our sins and that we are now redeemed through Him.

Canaan Rest

This rest follows redemptive rest. Once we rest in our salvation we can begin to realize that through Christ we have the power to overcome sin and the evil in the world through Jesus Christ.

Sabbath Rest

This is the ultimate rest in Christ. When we experience Sabbath rest we are committing to leave all the details of life up to God. Sabbath rest is trusting completely in Christ in every situation.



A passage in 1 John will help us understand these different stages of rest and sets the stage for Sabbath rest. 1 John 2:12 says, "I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name." The writer is claiming that, as children, we understand our sins are forgiven. This is the beginning stage to entering rest with God: understanding that we have redemptive rest. Our sin no longer separates us from God, but because of Jesus, we are restored. We will skip to the middle of verse 13 where John says, "I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one." Here, the writer is showing the next level of rest is realizing not only are your sins forgiven, but you have overcome Satan through the power of Jesus Christ. No longer does Satan hold you in bondage like he does the rest of the world, you can rest in Christ knowing He has overcome Satan. This is the Canaan rest we have described. It is here we realize we can stand against Satan in our day to day lives because Christ has overcome Satan and sin.

Finally we look at the phrase from the beginning of this verse, "I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning." Here John suggests that fathers, those who have experienced redemptive rest and Canaan rest have come to a full understanding of God's rest. This ultimate rest is called Sabbath rest, (which we will talk about much more next week in Hebrews 4.) Sabbath rest is when, as a mature Christian, you realize you can do nothing apart from Christ. Just like a father can do little to actually change his son, neither can we change ourselves or our circumstances. We must step back and rest that God is sovereign. We can't change anyone or even ourselves, but we can be changed through the cross of Christ. This rest is different than redemptive rest because when we experience Sabbath rest we are completely giving everything to Christ day by day, hour by hour. Sabbath rest is realizing that God is in control of your job, your family, your finances and your relationships. Taking Sabbath rest means trusting in God's plan for you here and now, and believing He will guide and care for you completely.

As Hebrews 3 closes, the writer recaps his message by asking the audience directly, "Who rebelled? Who fell victim to sin's deceitfulness? Who missed God's rest?" Maybe we should ask ourselves these questions as we look at Hebrews 3.



Personal Study Questions

The purpose of these study questions is to help you get into God's Word. We hope that through a personal encounter with God's Word, He will reveal His Truth and allow you to understand His story first hand.

1. Hebrews 3:1 says that we have a heavenly calling. What do the following passages tell us about our heavenly calling? Philippians 3:20-21, 2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 21:1-4

2. Hebrews 3:5 says that Moses was faithful as a servant. What are some of the ways that Moses served? You may answer on your own or use the following verses as reference. Exodus 3:10-13, Exodus 14:13-14, Exodus 19:3-7

3. Hebrews 3 warns us not to harden our hearts through sin's deceitfulness. How has sin deceived you? How did this deceit affect your life? Consider sharing your story in your small group this week, it may be an encouragement to others.

4. Read Psalms 95. Simply take time to notice the claims of God and His greatness and the warning of unbelief. The progression of the Psalm is very similar to the message of Hebrews hundreds of years later. May these passages be a reminder to you of God's greatness and encourage you to focus on Him so your heart is not hardened.