

Hebrews Chapter Three (2.16 - 3.6)

16 For verily he took not on ~~him the nature of~~ angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

Verses 16-18 bring in the first hint of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus; a major theme of Hebrews. It is possible that the main readership of this epistle were priests themselves (Acts 6.7). As the readers well knew ('for verily'), the Lord Jesus did not become incarnate to help angels, but rather the 'seed of Abraham'. The phrase 'took on Him' has the idea of 'taking hold of, with a view to helping'. This is more than Calvary. It is also speaking of the present ministry of the Lord Jesus as High Priest. He has taken the 'seed of Abraham' by the hand in order to rescue, care for and deliver them to glory. The 'seed of Abraham' applies to the nation of Israel nationally, but here signifies those who believe, those who have the same kind of faith as faithful Abraham (cf. Romans 4.11, Galatians 3.7, 9, 29).

17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

If the Lord Jesus is going to 'help' the seed of Abraham in their wilderness walk to Canaan (glory), then He must know, experimentally, the sorrows of the way. This is why priests were taken from among men (5.1) as they would know and understand the difficulties of manhood. Thus it was necessary that the Lord Jesus was 'in all things' made like unto His brethren. This was a complete entrance into human conditions. As we are, God's Son became, apart from sin. We are body, soul and spirit; so was He (Mark 14.34, Luke 23.46, 1 Peter 2.24). He experienced all the stages of human life from babe to manhood. *Leckie: Although He never ceased to be what He always was, God, He behaved Himself appropriate to every phase of human life. He was all that a babe should be and all that a child should be. He increased in wisdom and stature (Luke 2.52).* This experience of humanity allows Him to be merciful and compassionate **manward** and faithful in the effective discharge of His office **Godward** (see 3.2, 6). As High Priest, He serves in matters for which we are responsible to God. Not only does He bring us to God, but He brings God to us. As such, He must first deal with our sins. He has **not** made 'reconciliation' for our sins (reconciliation always has reference to persons not sins), but rather the word should be 'propitiation'¹. In other words, through the shedding of His own precious blood, He has completely satisfied the claims of God's throne in respect of our sins. This is typified by the first goat, the blood of which was sprinkled *once on* and *seven times before* the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement.

18 For in that he himself hath suffered ~~being~~ (and been) tempted, he is able to succour them that are (being) tempted.

Not only is our need met in relation to the throne of God, but our daily need is being met in relation to the wilderness journey. It is because the Lord Jesus Himself has suffered (at Calvary), and therefore experienced the ultimate test of faithfulness, that He is able to 'run to our aid' ('succour'). The Lord Jesus could not be tempted to sin. In Him is no sin. There are two types of temptations; one is **internal** when our own thoughts and hearts give rise to sin (2 Samuel 11.2, James 1.14), the other is **external**, when Satan seeks to attack from without (Luke 4.2). The Lord Jesus could never be **tempted** from *within* (no principle of sin in Him), only **tested** from *without* (Matthew 4.1, John 14.30). Praise God for our High Priest. He 'runs to the aid' or 'help' of those who call (Hebrews 4.16) and are 'being tempted'. In the very moment of temptation, when the pressure is on, He runs to our aid to advance all the help we need. This is not sympathy with our sins, but rather with our suffering in relation to faithfulness (Matthew 15.25, Mark 9.22-24, Hebrews 10.32-34).

Chapter Three can be divided into two sections: **God's House** (present), vv.1-6 and **God's Rest** (future), vv.7-19.

1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our ~~pro~~ confession, **Christ Jesus**; **2** Who ~~was~~ (is) faithful to him that appointed him (as such), as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

In the light of the preceding glories of Christ and the position before God which is now ours ('holy brethren', 2.11 and 'partakers of the heavenly calling'², 2.10), let us 'consider' Him. Our outlook should be heavenly, not earthly. We should be gazing upon the glories of Christ, rather than the difficulties of life. To 'consider' is to 'contemplate with earnest attention' diligently and without distraction. We are to consider 'Jesus' as the 'Apostle' and 'High Priest'. 'Apostle' means 'one who is sent' for the purpose of guiding, instructing and teaching. The apostle was a **leader** and characterised by **authority** from God. The 'High Priest' was one who represented his people before God (2.17). The work of the High Priest was to deal with the blood in relation to God's throne on the Day of Atonement and intercede for the people of God in the wilderness journey. *John 13.3: Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he*

¹ As well as Hebrews 2.17, the word propitiation occurs in the following NT passages: Luke 18.13, Romans 3.25, 1 John 2.2, 4.10.

John emphasises the **Person** of propitiation, Romans the **place** of propitiation and Hebrews the **work** of propitiation. The publican in Luke 18 illustrates the **effect** of propitiation.

² Our calling is presented in a threefold way. In Philippians 3.14 we have a **high** calling, similar to the **heavenly** calling here (destiny and origin). In 1 Timothy 1.9 it is a **holy** calling (character).

was come from God (Apostle), and went to God (High Priest). As the Apostle He is the One who has come **from** God to man on earth (John 17.18, 20.21). As the High Priest, He has come **from** men to God in heaven (Hebrews 5.1). The Apostle comes **out**; the High Priest goes **in**. The Apostle represents God to us; the High Priest represents us before God. It is He (Jesus) that we have 'confessed' (Romans 10.9). This refers to the believer's glad acknowledgement of the Lord Jesus as the Son of God (emphasising the Apostle) and Son of Man (emphasising the High Priest).

Verse two introduces Moses and the thought of faithfulness. Just as the Lord Jesus was divinely appointed as Apostle, so too Moses was divinely appointed as the apostle of Israel's earthly calling (as Aaron was the High Priest). He is the one who was sent *by* God to speak *for* God (Exodus 3-4). In this office, Moses was 'faithful in all his house' (referring here to the nation or 'house of Israel' as quoted in Numbers 12.7 (cf. Exodus 16.31, Hebrews 8.8, 10). Moses was faithful as an apostle in the sense that he taught Israel all that God had commanded him (read Deuteronomy). Not only did he teach the truth but he also practiced it! *Exodus 40.16: Thus did Moses: according to all that the LORD commanded him, so did he.* Likewise, the Lord Jesus **is** (absolute statement) faithful to God in His offices of Apostle and High Priest. Why is faithfulness introduced here? For the solemn fact that there was the potential for unfaithfulness amongst the readership of the epistle (v.6). Some were wavering beneath the intense persecution of the faith. Could it be said of us that we are faithful? Are our lives characterised by implicit trust, total obedience, unswerving loyalty and loving devotion to God (see 1 Samuel 2.35)? Epaphras was faithful in prayer (Colossians 1.7, 4.12). Tychicus and Onesimus were faithful in service (Colossians 4.7, 9). *Luke 19.17: And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.*

3 *For this man was counted worthy of more (fuller) glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.* **4** *For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.* If verse two has **compared** the faithfulness of Jesus and Moses, vv.3-6 will bring a **contrast**. Moses was revered by the Jews (John 9.28) and so it was important that the writer demonstrate the superiority of Jesus. Moses' glory was extrinsic and fading (Exodus 34.29-35, 2 Corinthians 3.7); the Lord Jesus' glory is intrinsic and permanent (Hebrews 1.3). The Lord Jesus also has greater glory because Moses himself was a **part** of the created house of Israel (and there was a certain honour attached to this, Isaiah 46.13), but God the Son **built** (has the idea of 'constructing', 'establishing' and 'furnishing') the house. *Isaiah 43.1: But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.* **4** *Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee.*

5 *And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;* **6** *But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.*

A final contrast is noted in vv.5-6. Moses was a *servant* **in** God's house; Christ is a *Son* **over** God's house. A unique Greek word is used here to denote Moses as a 'servant'. This is one who holds a lofty position within the household, an attendant with high responsibilities. It carries the idea of intimacy and trust. *Exodus 33.11: And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.* Moses' faithful service as a prophet and apostle anticipated the coming Lord Jesus and what God would more fully and completely say through Him (Deuteronomy 18.15, 18).

Great as Moses was, he was merely a servant *in* God's house. Christ is a Son *over* God's house. Of what house is the writer now speaking? 'Whose house are we!' This is the church universal (cf. Matthew 16.18, 1 Peter 2.5, 1 Timothy 3.15); the place where God dwells, exercises authority and finds rest. This place is where Christ is Head. *1 Peter 2.5: Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

It is of great importance to remember that the readers of this epistle were not all genuine believers. Thus the final statement of verse six is **not** suggesting the possibility that salvation can be lost. It is not considering whether a person's faith is **weak** or **strong**, rather it is a question of whether a person has **faith** or **not**. Those who have genuinely confessed Christ (v.1) and exercised faith in Him will 'hold fast' (used of a ship staying its course) boldly, confidently and joyfully to the heavenly hope that God has promised (2.10). They are God's house. Those who had merely professed Christ and had no faith would **abandon** Christianity and return to Judaism. They would veer away (i.e. not 'hold fast') from Christ and show that they had never been saved. Their attention was focussed on earthly things.

Let us then boldly, cheerfully, courageously and joyfully testify to the hope we have in Christ. This is strong evidence of the reality of our faith and can only be accomplished through 'considering Christ'.