

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## HEBREWS LESSON 3 (Chapters 3-4)

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“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” (Heb 3:12-13). Welcome to our study of Hebrews 3 and 4. This great book tells us about the supremacy of Christ, Christianity, and Christian living. In chapters 3 and 4 we are going to learn that Christ is greater than Moses and Joshua. In chapter 3 we learn that Moses was a great leader and servant in God’s house. But we learn in Hebrews 3:1-6 that Christ was greater than Moses. And, we also learn that our faith must be greater than the faith of those who followed Moses (Heb. 3:7-19). Chapter 3 teaches us, then, about a great contrast between Moses (and exemplary servant of God) and Christ (the Son of God). Notice Hebrews 3:1-6,

“Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. 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 built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.”

Here is the contrast. Moses was a great servant among God’s people. Look at all that Moses did. He stood up to the Egyptians. He led God’s people out of the land of Egypt (while it was God who performed the miracles). He took the people across the Red Sea on dry ground. He put up with their complaining and murmuring. He went to the top of Mt. Sinai to receive the law from God. He did so many great things as a servant for God and His people. But Christ is not a servant. Christ is a Son over His own House. Moses was a servant in the house, while Christ is a Son over the house. Moses was a servant; Christ is the Son of God. Just as a son has more rights, power, and imperatives than a servant, so Christ is greater than Moses. Moses was a wonderful, compassionate, longsuffering leader of God’s people. Jesus is Lord over God’s people. Yes, Moses did great things. But we must realize today that Moses cannot compare with Jesus. There is a very practical application here. If Christ is greater than Moses, then the deliverance that Christ offers is greater than the deliverance that Moses offered. The law that Christ brought is greater than the law that Moses delivered to the people. The help that Jesus offers is so much greater than the help that Moses offered his people. We no longer are fleeing the bondage and tyranny of pharaoh in Egypt. Rather, Jesus delivers us from the sin and from the bondage and tyranny that we face under Satan, an evil, horrible taskmaster.

This chapter not only exalts Jesus over Moses, but also presents us with a practical application. Since Jesus is greater than Moses, our faith must be greater than the faith of those who followed Moses. Do you remember those people who followed Moses? Just after they had sung the song of Moses (Ex. 14 and 15) complained and murmured, saying, “We wish

we could return to the fleshpots of Egypt once more. Why did you bring us out to this desert to kill us? We want to return to Egypt.” These are the people of whom we are speaking today. They were the people who wandered for forty years in the wilderness while their bodies perished there. Our faith has to be greater than the faith of those who followed Moses. Hebrews 3 teaches us that in order for our faith to be greater, we must listen more carefully than the wanderers did. Hebrews 3:7-8 says, “Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.’” The emphasis here is that, just like those under Moses, we must be extremely careful to listen to what God says. Hebrews 2:1 says that we need to “give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.” In Revelation 2 and 3 there is a recurring phrase in the message to the seven congregations: “To him who has ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says.” The Bible makes it abundantly clear that we must take heed how we hear (Lk. 8:18). We also must be careful what we hear (Mk. 4:24). And we must listen very carefully to the voice of God.

The only way to listen carefully to the voice of God is for us to be sure to study the Scriptures for ourselves, and to study them with an open and honest heart. Acts 17:11 provides a perfect example of this. “These [the Bereans] were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.” This is what we need to do. We need to study to show ourselves approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15). For our faith to be greater, we must listen more carefully, and we must apply God’s truths to our everyday lives. For our faith to be greater, we need to encourage one another daily. Notice Hebrews 3:12-13, which is a wonderful passage about Christians encouraging one another.

“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.”

The Bible has so much to say about our building one another up and encouraging one another. Hebrews 10:24-26 says that we are to encourage one another daily. The Bible itself is encouraging. In Acts 20:32 Paul said to the elders in Ephesus, “Now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” The Lord’s body today needs people who are encouragers. There are way too many people who are critics. There are way too many people who are fault finders. We need people who will encourage and lift up one another. Jesus said, “As I have loved you, you also must love one another” (Jn. 13:34). The writer of Hebrews said that we are to “let brotherly love continue.” If I love you and if you love me, and if we are trying to help one another get to Heaven, we may need encouraging along the way. We need to lift up one another “while it is called ‘Today.’” This is what we have been promised: **today!** This is all we have. The moment that we have right now is all that we can be sure of. We have no promise of tomorrow. There is not a grand promise that we are going to live forever. In fact, the Bible speaks of life as being very brief, and as being “like a vapor” (Jas. 4:14). It is “poured out like water” (2 Sam. 14:14). “Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble” (Job. 14:1). We need not boast about tomorrow because we do not know what tomorrow will bring (Prov. 27:1). Today is all we have. So, we need to uplift one another, and in so doing we become different than those who fell and wandered for forty years because we care for one another.

Another way that our faith can be greater than the faith of those who perished in the wilderness is for us to beware of unbelief. Hebrews 3:13 says, “...lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” Hebrews 3:19 says of those who wandered, “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.” These were not people who doubted that

there is a God. They had seen the ten plagues and the manna falling from Heaven. They saw Moses come down from Mt. Sinai with his face shining (2 Cor. 3:7). These were people who knew there was a God, but they did not enter into the Promised Land because of unbelief. What does that mean? Although they believed in God in a mental-knowledge sense, they did not believe in God enough to exhibit their faith in their daily lives. This might be thought of as “practical atheism.” From a knowledge aspect, they believed there was a God. But when it came to their daily lives, they lived as though there was none. We need to be careful that we follow up our faith with true Christian living. We need to die daily to self (Lk. 9:23). We need to realize that we were bought with a price, and that we are not our own (1 Cor. 6:19-20). We need to realize that we are a living sacrifice for Jesus (Rom. 12:1). And we need to say with Paul, “I have been crucified with Christ.” The way to be different than those who perished in the wilderness is to listen carefully to the Word of God, encourage one another along the way, and no get caught up in the type of faith that recognizes God, but does not get out and do anything.

In Hebrews 4 the writer is going to show us that Christ is greater than Joshua. Moses began leading people out of Egypt, but God punished Moses because instead of speaking to the rock, he struck it. Moses died at the brink of the Promised Land. It was Joshua who led the people in. So, in Hebrews 4:1-9 the writer shows us that Christ offers a greater rest than Joshua. And, in verses 12-16 he is going to give us some incentive to make sure that we make it into the Promised Land. How is Christ greater than Joshua? In Hebrews 4 there are three rests mentioned. First, there is God’s rest on the seventh day—the Sabbath Day rest of God on which He ceased from all His labors (Heb. 4:4). Second, there is the Promised Land rest (Heb. 4:8) into which Joshua led God’s people. Third, as Hebrews 4:9 says, “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.” Jesus is greater than Joshua because, although Joshua was a great servant, Jesus leads us into something far greater than the Promised Land. He leads us into Heaven itself. I am thankful that the people of Israel lived their lives right and entered into the land that flowed with milk and honey. But that land still had some things in it that were not pleasant. There was death. There were people who did not make the best choices. The Israelites had to fight off their enemies. There were things that did not make it a perfect place of rest. But if we stay true to Jesus, we have been promised a rest that is far greater than we could ever imagine. It will be a rest in which there is no more sorrow, no more tears, and no more dying. All the former things will have passed away (Rev. 21:3-4). We will enjoy a rest where we will be at the right hand of the throne of God as we worship Him (Rev. 4-5). It will be a rest that we will enjoy with those who have gone on before us. It will be a rest that truly gives us peace and joy. Don’t you want to be a part of that? If so, then what the Hebrews writer says is for you. He says, “You need to stop going back to the old way, and instead look forward to the rest that Jesus offers each and every person.”

Hebrews 4:12 gives us one of four incentives to help us make it to the promised rest. Jesus makes a greater rest available, and God gives us incentives to get into that rest. The first incentive is the all-sufficient Word of God. The Bible says, “For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” If we are going to make it to that promised land of rest that is Heaven, we must realize the power and all-sufficiency of God’s Word in order to get there. We cannot be saved without the Word of God. Romans 1:16 tells us that the Gospel is “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” We are told in James 1:21 to “receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” In 1 Peter 1:23-25 we are taught that it is the Word of

God by which we are born again. The Word of God plays a powerful part in the salvation of man. The Word of God also has a powerful part in helping us to stay saved. In Psalm 119:105 we are told that God's Word is "a lamp to our feet and a light to our path." The Bible teaches us that it is that light which, in a world of darkness, shines light on everything that is good and holy. It is that light which teaches us the right way—the way to Heaven itself. Jeremiah said, "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. 15:16). It is the Word of God that gives us real joy in this life. Did you know that the Bible is the only book we possess that comes **from** God, and that it is the only book that can get us **to** God? In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we are told that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." Peter said that holy men of God spoke "as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:19-21). The psalmist said in the long ago, "The entirety of Your word is truth" (Ps. 119:160). Jesus placed a premium on truth in John 8:32 when He said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Are we really living our lives by the Scriptures? That is an incentive that can help each one of us get to Heaven. Here is the application that goes along with that. If we have the incentive to get to Heaven, then we must take the Word of life, read it, and do something with it in order to live it out in our daily lives. There is a great need for people today to study the Bible for themselves. The Bible says, "Study to show yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). We are to be ready always to give an answer for the reason of the hope that is within us (1 Pet. 3:15). We are to be like those in Berea who searched the Scriptures daily to see if what they were taught is true. So, we need to study the Word of God as an incentive. But we also need to live it and teach it to others. I love the example of Ezra. In Ezra 7:10 we are told, "Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel." We need more people like Ezra who will not only know what God says, but who also will follow up on that knowledge by getting out and living it. In Philippians 4:9 Paul said, "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." Are we really living our lives by the all-powerful Word of God?

A second incentive to help us get to the promised land of rest is the all-seeing eye of God. Hebrews 4:13 says, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." An incentive that can either offer us fear (to help us be brought back to God) or encouragement (to stay on the right path) is the all-seeing eye of God. Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good." Psalm 139:1-12 illustrates in graphic language how God sees and knows all. "If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there." No matter where we go—whether into the depths of the sea or behind the biggest rock you can imagine—God still is there. God sees and knows all things. But He cares for each one of us. This can be an incentive to us in one of two ways. If you are a child of God but you are not living the way you ought to, then the fact that God knows and sees all things ought to encourage you to get your life right. On the Day of Judgment, you are going to give an account. Ecclesiastes 12:14 says, "God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." We are going to give an account for the deeds we have done in this body (Rom. 14:12). One day we will all stand before the eyes of God. All things are open and naked before the eyes of Him before Whom we must give an account. If we are not living correctly, that ought to encourage us. God sees, and God knows. Thus, we need to get our lives right. But if we are living correctly, the fact that God sees and knows is still a powerful incentive. If

we are living correctly, God knows that we are trying. And He cares. “Cast all your cares upon the Lord, for He cares for you” (1 Pet. 5:7). If we are living correctly, yet facing challenges, difficulties, and trials, God sees and knows that. He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). So either way we approach this, the all-seeing eye of God ought to be an incentive for us to make it to the heavenly rest.

There also is a third incentive. And it is quite powerful. We have the perfect example of Jesus Christ to follow. Look at Hebrews 4:15. “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” The very fact that God knows how we are suffering and what we are facing, and that Jesus came to this Earth to live like a man, die like a man, and face the same temptations we do (or even more), is an encouragement. The perfect example of Jesus offers us great help. He was “in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” That tells us that Jesus knows what we are going through. Jesus knows what it means to be tempted by the devil. He knows what it means to have people not like you. He knows what it means to stand up for the truth and still be mocked and beaten for that. Jesus knows what it means to live every day for God. He knows the struggles and temptations that we face. In 1 Peter 2:21-22 we learn that we are to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, Who “committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth.” In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we are told that God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Christ gave us the perfect example. As such, He is the shining example that we are to follow. In Matthew 5:16 we are told, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” How do Christians let their lights shine? By following Jesus—Who is the light (Jn. 8:12). If we look to His like for our light, then we truly are a good example and a shining light to those in the world around us. No matter what we face, and no matter what difficulties we encounter, we must look to Jesus for our help. Hebrews 2:18 tells us, “For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.” There is help. We must look to Jesus and to the Word of God so that we can find encouragement to live as we ought to.

But there also is a fourth incentive in Hebrews 4—the privilege and power of prayer. Notice Hebrews 4:16—“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” We can approach God’s throne boldly. This is a strong contrast to what could occur under the Old Law, where no one could approach the throne of God. Once a year the High Priest went into the Holy of Holies, and he had a relationship with God. But now Christians can approach the throne of God with boldness so that we may “obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” What is the writer talking about here? This is the power and privilege of prayer, which can help us stay on the straight and narrow path. Jesus said in Luke 18:1, “Men always ought to pray and not lose heart.” Do you ever get discouraged? Does life ever get you down? Do you sometimes wonder if it’s even worth it, or if you should just “throw in the towel” and give up? In moments like these, Jesus said, “Men always ought to pray and not lose heart.” In fact, the Bible teaches that there should never be a time when we cannot pray. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 we are taught to “pray without ceasing.” In so doing, we realize that prayer has powerful results. James 5:16 says, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Prayer has the power to overcome in this life. We know this is the case because of the example of Daniel. He faced great trouble. He had been told that if he did not worship a graven image, he would be cast into the lions’ den. When the trumpet was blown, Daniel knew that everyone was supposed to bow to the image. But it says in Daniel 6:10, “In his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.” Daniel defied the king’s edict because he knew the power of praying

to and worshipping God. Jesus knew the importance of prayer. In Mark 1:35 we are told that "in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." How did Jesus face the trials, difficulties, and disappointments that He faced every day? He started every day by having a relationship with God through prayer. Jesus tells us that we can do the same thing. Jesus said, "Whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Mt. 21:22). If it is according to the will of God (1 Jn. 5:13-16), we know that Christians will receive those things.

The lesson for us is that Christ is greater than Moses. Our faith, therefore, must be greater than the faith of those who followed Moses. Christ is greater than Joshua. And the hope in, and relationship with, Jesus that we possess should give us a greater rest than those people under Joshua could experience. Have you taken part in that rest? If not, you can do so by believing in Jesus, repenting of your sins, confessing His name before men, and being baptized in water just as they did in Acts 2:38. But if you, as a Christian, have veered from the straight and narrow, why not let these passages encourage you to get your life right? We see that they, because of unbelief, did not enter in. Do not let that be said of you. Today, obey the Gospel of Christ and live faithfully before the Supreme One, Jesus Christ.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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### **STUDY QUESTIONS FOR HEBREWS LESSON 3 (CHAPTERS 3 & 4)**

1. From Hebrews 3 & 4 we learn that Christ is greater than two Old Testament characters. Who were they?
2. In Hebrews 3:5, what designation is given to Moses?
3. In Hebrews 3:6, what designation is given to Christ?
4. What does Hebrews 3:7-8 admonish us to do?
5. According to Acts 17:11, how can we “hear” the Word of God today?
6. What does 2 Timothy 2:15 admonish us to do?
7. What does Hebrews 3:13 admonish us to do?
8. Against what does Hebrews 3:13 warn us?
9. In Hebrews 4:1-9 the writer stresses that Christ can give us a better rest than a specific Old Testament character. Who is that character?
10. In Hebrews 4 there are three specific “rests” mentioned. What is the first one (vs. 4)?
11. What is the second rest mentioned in Hebrews 4 (vs. 8)?
12. What is the third rest mentioned in Hebrews 4 (vs. 9)?
13. According to Hebrews 4:12, what is one incentive for us to make it to the promised rest that God offers?
14. According to Hebrews 4:13, what is a second incentive for us to make it to the promised rest that God offers?
15. According to Hebrews 4:15, what is a third incentive for us to make it to the promised rest that God offers?
16. According to Hebrews 4:16, what is a fourth incentive for us to make it to the promised rest that God offers?
17. What, according to John 17:17, is truth?
18. What does Romans 14:12 say that every accountable person will one day have to do?
19. According to Hebrews 4:16, how may Christians approach God’s throne of grace?
20. According to Luke 18, what are we to do?
21. According to 1 Thessalonians 5:17, what are we to do?