

Hebrews 3

The writer starts this chapter with **another** ‘therefore’! We have found a few already, along with ‘for this reason’ in **2:1**, and there are plenty more to come as we continue through Hebrews. ‘Therefore’ always looks **back** to what we have just read and points **forward** to action or understanding that need to result from it. As the old preacher said, “When you see a wherefore or a therefore, look to see what it is there for.” We shall find that advice useful as we move forwards.

He has just been writing about the fact that the Lord Jesus needed to be made human like us in order to rescue us from the power of death and the devil. Just at the end of **chapter 2**, he has mentioned ‘sins’ (= ‘failures’) for only the second time¹ and introduces the understanding that Jesus needed to **become** a ‘merciful and faithful high priest’ so that he is able to deal with those failures and come to the assistance of ‘those who are tempted’. Now he goes on to explain more.

3:1 He is clear to whom he is writing: brothers and sisters who have been set apart for God (which is what ‘holy’ means), who have received a ‘heavenly calling’ – literally ‘a calling from above the sky’. No question, this is a letter/book for those who are already believers.

He calls us to ‘consider’ him, to ‘fully exercise our minds’ about him, the Apostle (one sent for a purpose) and the High Priest of our confession. He is going to shelve the consideration of Jesus’ ‘high priestliness’ until **chapters 4 & 5**, but what does ‘our confession’ mean? We have been here before! To ‘confess’ means to ‘say the same thing’ (Greek *homologeō*) and ‘confession’ (*homologia*) means ‘saying the same thing’ – in other words, positively acknowledging and responding to the message which we have received. Another ‘underlining’ of who he is writing to!

3:2-6 Comparing Jesus to Moses. For the Jews, Abraham was certainly the ‘father of the nation’ but Moses was (humanly speaking) the one who set the whole thing in motion, with the Law, the priesthood and especially the Tabernacle. He writes about ‘the house’, God’s dwelling place with mankind, and certainly there had never been anything quite like the Tabernacle before, a place where the presence of God could be known and **seen**.²

Moses, the writer says, was ‘faithful in all his house as a servant’. But Moses was not a priest like Aaron his brother. He didn’t have any official duties to perform in the Tabernacle, so what does this mean? This goes further than God’s visible presence there, even the times that Moses would meet with him and come out with his face shining.³ ‘House’ literally means ‘a place to dwell’, so ‘home’ might be a better translation. God made his presence visible in and

¹ The first mention is in **1:3**.

² See **Exodus 40:34-38** for the culmination of all the work described in preceding chapters. When the tabernacle construction was complete, the LORD’s presence moved in as promised! (**25:8**)

³ **Exodus 34:34-35**. **2 Corinthians 3:4-18** has more comparisons of Old and New covenants!

above the Tabernacle, but his purpose was to make his home **with his people**. It was **they** who were really intended to be his 'house', and it was 'in' (or among) them that Moses was 'faithful as a servant'.

Moses was faithful **in** God's house as a servant. Jesus as a Son **over** his house (**v.6**). The contrasts are between a servant of the household and the heir of the family, between the house itself and the builder of it! Not denying Moses' key role, but showing that Jesus' position is in a totally different league! We see him as the Son and heir of his Father's house and Moses as a faithful servant, preparing things 'which were to be spoken later' (**v.5**).

The very essence of the meaning of the Greek word *oikos*, translated as 'house' is **a dwelling place**. Not emphasising the building so much as who lives in it, the person who calls it home, and **v.6** says that we are the house of God – the place where he lives – *"if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end"*.

There is a warning built into that last part of the verse, and the writer goes on to quote from **Psalms 95:7-11** (introduced with another 'therefore')! It's all about responsiveness to the voice of God, and draws a graphic parallel with the people of Israel in the wilderness journey between slavery in Egypt and their taking possession of the Promised Land. See **Exodus 17:2-7**. The people there tested and quarrelled with the LORD and, as a result, a whole generation of them died in the wilderness and did not enter Canaan (with two notable exceptions!) (**V.7-11**)

V.12-19. Here is a strong encouragement to personal and fellowship responsibility, making sure that we all stay in close active relationship with the Lord. Let's not get caught up in theoretical discussions about the possibility (or not) of 'losing our salvation'! This is a straightforward warning and encouragement for each of us as individuals to make sure that we stay in real relationship with the living God, and also to try to make sure that we encourage each other to do the same, always aware of 'the deceitfulness of sin' and the danger of becoming hardened by it.

This is not something that is often talked about – not often enough! Do we know **how** to stay in up-to-date relationship with the Lord? Do we recognise the symptoms of when we have 'moved away'? Do we know how to put it right when it has gone wrong? And do we do it?

The writer leads into the next chapter, very much determined that his readers will know **in their own experience** the reality of 'entering into his rest' . . .

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