

## Hebrews Chapter 3:1-4:13 “Hearing God's voice today”

### The faithfulness of Jesus Christ (3:1-6)

Here the author sets out the faithfulness of Jesus as a model for the community. Just as the comparison between Christ and the angels is the basis for exhortation not to drift away, the comparison between Christ and Moses (3:1-6) is the basis for the exhortation in 3:7-4:13 not to fail because of unbelief. Just like before we are seeing the theme of “responding to God's word”. There has been a shift from “the word spoken through angels at Sinai” to “Moses, the one who spoke for God”. The author has proceeded from the giving of the Law through angels (2:2) to Moses, God's supreme spokesman. Indeed, the comparison between Jesus and Moses follows naturally, last week we saw Jesus as our **pioneer**, our **brother**, our **liberator**, and our **high priest**. Who else can fulfil all these pictures in the bible? Moses. Moses was apart of the family of Israel (**brother**), liberated them from their bondage in Egypt (**liberator**), led them out of Egypt to the promised land (**pioneer**), and represented God to them and them to God (**priest/mediator**).

The picture of the wilderness continues throughout Hebrews. In the exhortation that follows (3:7-4:13), the author compares the church to the wilderness generation. In the comparison between the heavenly and earthly sanctuaries (8:1-9:28), his object of comparison is not the Jerusalem temple but the tabernacle that was built by Moses (8:5). Similarly, in 12:18-24, he compares the church's approach to the heavenly Zion to Israel's approach to the earthly mount Sinai. Through Hebrews, the author sees the community as the “wandering people of God” on the way to the promised land.

### Faithful in all His House (3:1-2)

For the first time in Hebrews the author speaks directly to the listeners in 3:1, he begins by building off what he has said and first reminds them of their status.

- **Therefore** – connects what he is about to say back to what has been said. Therefore since “we see Jesus, who is crowned because of his suffering of death, our pioneer, brother, liberator and merciful high priest” now holy brothers...
- **Holy brothers** – Paul called Christians “saints” or “called to be saints”. (Rom 1:7, 1 Cor 1:2)
- **who share in a heavenly calling** – participants/companions in a heavenly calling. Resembles Paul's reference to the “upward calling” (Phil 3:14) and to his readers as “called”.
  - They are holy brothers insofar as they are the sons (2:10) who are being made holy (2:11), and they are “participants in a heavenly calling” because their brother has participated with them in the anguish of human existence and is the pioneer who will take them to glory. ==> their status in Jesus, their pioneer.

The author now reinforces his attempt to to guide the people to see beyond the earthly realities of a world that has raised doubts in their mind... and to recall their confession of the high priest who has triumphed over death (consider Jesus).

- **Consider** – to look in a reflective manner, to contemplate. He wants them to consider Jesus, this focuses on the entire path of the earthly Jesus from suffering to glory, in which he proved to be faithful.
- **The apostle and high priest of our confession** – the one who is sent to bring the message of salvation. It seems to refer to Jesus as the one sent to speak the word of salvation (1:1-2:4), while high priest refers to the new status of the Son (2:5-18).

The author now brings in a comparison in vs2 to show the faithfulness of Jesus. Again the author is not trying to denigrate Moses. It is a comparison to highlight Jesus' faithfulness. It's like me saying “hey you guys know wayne gretsky? Well... my dad taught him everything he knows!”. **Faithfulness** becomes the central focus of this section. Jesus demonstrated his **faithfulness** through “suffering of death” (2:9). Here the author is going to make a contrast between the **faithfulness of the Son** with the **faithlessness of the wilderness generation**. This is to urge the community to respond appropriately to its' heavenly calling.

- **who was faithful to him who appointed him** – continues the theme of the pioneer. **Faithful** has the idea of being “trustworthy”.

- **just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house** – in the same way as Moses was faithful in all of God's house, so Jesus was faithful to God who appointed him.
- **God's house** – the family/people/sons of God, continuing the family imagery of 2:10-18.

### Greater Glory than Moses (3:3-4)

Although Moses and Jesus are both faithful (3:2), they are not equivalent.

- **Was counted of greater glory than Moses** – to be regarded, considered worthy. The focus again is on God's word. Just like the angels, here God has considered, regarded, counted Jesus worthy of greater glory than Moses.
  - He is trying to strengthen their appreciation of Jesus. Although Moses was the greatest spokesman, the community here contemplates someone even greater.
- **as much more glory as** – here the author shows them just how much more glory Jesus has been counted worthy of.

**Illustration:** who do you thank? The chef or the food for tasting good?

- As much as a builder is greater than the house, so is Jesus to Moses. But his point isn't over yet. This truth is only the basis for his point. Vs4 is his point. *The builder of all things is God*. Why should they look to Jesus? Because He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, as much glory and honour as a builder has over the house, as much glory and honour as God has over the universe He created. Moses' reputation and honour was extremely high, but Jesus is in a different category altogether.

### Faithful as a Son (3:5-6)

- Vs5-6a, completes the comparison of Jesus and Moses.
  - Moses' work was limited (**was faithful**), Jesus' work is everlasting (**is faithful**). Moses' place was under God's rule (**in God's house**), Jesus' place is with God's rule (**over God's house**). Moses was a servant, Jesus is the son.
  - The reason/purpose given for Moses' faithfulness was to **testify to the things that were to be spoken later**. In other words Moses' faithfulness as a servant was meant to point them forward to him who was faithful as a Son, Jesus.
- **we are his house** – They are the children who God is bringing to glory. He is showing them again their place in God's plan. They are participants in a heavenly calling. They are the house of God, his family. Over them is Jesus, the faithful one.
  - There is a beautiful picture of this in Ephesians 1. God gave Jesus as the head to the church. He who rules over all things, has one guiding principle, the good of the church. Your good. The author does not want them to throw this great status away, and now proceeds to warn them.
- **If**, this word introduces a condition.
- **Hold fast** = This word is used in nautical circles in the meaning of "holding one's course toward." Luke uses it in Acts 27:40 where the storm-tossed ship held its course toward shore. Here it is expressing "continuing belief and practise".
- **Confidence/Boasting** – courage. A state of boldness and confidence, implying intimidating circumstances. What is this confidence? It is the right of full access to God, which allows them to draw near to God's throne. Thus it is a gift that the community dares not to throw away.
- **Pride in our hope** – boasting. An expression of unusually high degree of confidence in someone or something being exceptionally noteworthy. This high confidence is also a gift from God, for hope has been made possible by entry of Christ into the heavenly sanctuary.
  - These gifts can only remain in their possession if they hold firm to what God has given rather than neglect the great salvation.
    - The community, therefore, faces a choice in its response to God's gracious gift. It can either fall away or hold firm to its possession.
      - The author frequent use of this verb "hold firm" (3:6, 14; 10:23 or the synonym in 4:14, 6:18)

indicates that it is synonymous with “being patient” (6:15), enduring (10:36; 12:1-2), being faithful (10:36-39). From here the author now moves to show the unfaithfulness of the Israelites in 3:7-4:11.

**Q.** How can you hold onto a confidence, or boasting, or hope? Are these things created within you? Or do you experience these things in response to something? ==> Hear his word, His promises.

**Verses Summary:** Therefore, consider Jesus. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, and we are His house if we hold fast our hope.

### **The unfaithfulness of the ancestors (3:7-4:11)**

in 3:7-4:11, the author cites the unfaithfulness of the ancestors as a warning for the community.

### **Ancestors who did not enter the rest (3:7-19)**

The author now quotes Psalm 95:7-11, which offers ancient Israel as the example of those who did not hold firm to it's hope. The citation is another reminder that the God who has spoken in the past (1:1) now speaks to the church. He is viewing the church in continuity with Israel, and it also stands at the entrance to the promised land.

- **Therefore** – markers of result. Because of what he has just told them he now tells them this. Because being “God's house” is conditioned on holding fast to confidence in our hope, the author gives us Israel as an example of those who did not hold fast to their confidence in the hope they had been given.
- As the **Holy Spirit** says in Ps95:7–11, in this word of God to you (thus showing us inspiration of all of scripture).
- **Today If you Hear His voice** – God how spoke in the past still speaks **today!** (God's word is always today)
- Vs8, Don't **harden** your hearts. Don't make your hearts **stubborn**. Think about parable of the Sower.
  - As in the **rebellion ...day of testing** = these Greek words are the translated words of the Hebrew words Meribah (rebellion/provocation), and Massah (testing/temptation). This is referring to Exodus 17:1-7 (or Numbers 20:1-13) while Israel was encamped at Meribah and Massah.
    - In the exodus event the people wanted water and quarrelled with and grumbled against Moses. The people tested the Lord by saying “is the Lord among us or not”. Moses struck the rock and water was provided for the people.
      - They had problems and didn't hold fast to their confidence, but through it away asking if the Lord was even among them. A similar account happens in Numbers, but this time it is Moses who did not *believe the Lord*, and he couldn't take the people into the land.
    - Hebrews uses the translated versions of Meribah and Massah, rebellion and testing, **to refer to the whole 40 years in the wilderness**. It was a time of rebellion and testing (testing God).
- Vs10, Saw My works **forty years** = for forty years they saw God graciously provide for them. Therefore God was angry with them, why? ...*they always go astray*.
  - **Astray in their hearts ...not known my ways** = they wandered from the right way. They had seen God's gracious works for 40 years, instead of seeing the wonderful works of God's provision and trusting Him, they kept putting Him to the test with their unbelief, wandering away from His ways. Therefore God...
- Vs11, **swore in wrath** = they had provoked God to wrath through their unbelief. So God made an oath in *conformity* to their unbelief, saying they would not enter His rest (ie, the promised land).

Vs12-19 are framed by references to unbelief. In 4:2, he summarises the experiences of the wilderness generation as unfaithfulness. He is using the unfaithfulness of Israel as a warning against the church's unfaithfulness, indicating the tragic consequences of not heeding God's voice.

- Vs12, now the author is applying this quote to his readers. He is warning them against following Israel's example. He says “**take care**” = "Be seeing to it constantly, keep a watchful eye ever open," is the idea. Why should they do that?
  - **Lest there be...** The Greek construction indicates the fear that the thing spoken of *may* occur, there is also

a suspicion that it *will* occur.

- **In anyone of you...** the author is appealing to everyone individually.
- **An evil unbelieving heart...** Greek order of words is “a heart evil with reference to unbelief.” The word for **evil** is *poneros*, evil in active opposition to the good. When Satan is spoken of as the evil one, the word used is *poneros*.
  - He it seems to be referring to a heart which is bitter and rebellious. It goes back to vs8.
- **Leading you to fall away from the living God...** Falling away can be translated “to stand off from”. The English word *apostasy* is derived from another form of this Greek word. The danger and evil of an unbelieving heart is that it will lead you to stand off from God, and even to apostatise. Therefore **take care**, watch out for it!
- Vs13, here the author is offering a means for them to maintain their faithfulness.
  - **Exhort** = to be constantly exhorting. Encourage.
  - **Every day.. as long as it is called today** = shows us when we should be encouraging one another. **Today.**
  - **That none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin** = this is what encouraging/exhorting one another daily will prevent. “hardening” - becoming stubborn. This happens through deception of sin. Ephesians 5:21-24 speaks about this.... old man wants to corrupt us with deceitful lusts...
    - The author is showing them how they can prevent themselves and the others from being hardened by the lies of sin. Through encouraging one another. “The word of God is in Fellowship”. It is a call back to the way they lived during the beginning of their Christian lives, when they cared for one another during times of distress (6:10, 10:32-34). Reminds of “lost their first love” in Rev.

Q. how do you exhort a person to believe? By telling them to believe? Or by telling them about the promise they had been given? Fellowship builds/strengthens faith – minister to those who come – speak about Jesus/common hope with them.

- Vs14, here the author is reminding the community that it holds a possession worth holding on to with all of their strength.
  - **For**, why should we exhort our brothers? Because **we have become partners with Christ**.
  - **Partners with Christ** = companion, often business associates, “sharers”. James and John were both fishing partners. It can be used for people who share in a common inheritance. This is going back to what he said earlier (3:1) that they have a heavenly calling and are his “house”.
    - They are companions in Jesus work. They have taken hold of the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and it has become their story. They now have the hope of glory. This is a hope they have in Christ.
  - **if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end** = just like the previous “if” clause in vs6, here he adds another one. The community needs to hold firm to the confidence which they have in the midst of their disappointment.

In 15-19 the author returns to scripture to recall the wilderness generation and to address his audience with rhetorical questions, presenting Israel as the example of those who heard the word but did not “hold firm” and of the consequences of such failure.

- Vs15, **today** – is speaking to them now. God's word is for us today, and needs to be responded to **today**. If you hear God's voice don't become stubborn.
- Vs16-19, this last section contains 3 questions.
  - Vs16, **Who then heard and rebelled?** This identifies the people in the wilderness as those who had heard the word of God. They started their journey because God had promised them a land and God had verified the promise with signs and wonders.
    - In refusing to continue they reject the promise and the God who made it.
  - These people had **come out of Egypt through Moses**, they had experienced God's saving action.
    - The unspoken implication is that Christians, who had received the word amid signs and wonders (2:3-4) and who had been delivered from the tyrant who enslaved them (2:14-16), were capable of

rebellion as well.

- Vs17, **With whom was (God) angered for forty years?** God was angry not at the righteous but at those who sinned. The wilderness generation saw God's work for 40years, yet the people's resistance continued for the same amount of time. **Their bodies fell in the wilderness.** They died in their stubborn resistance.
  - God let Israel's own refusal to enter the land prevail. That was His divine anger. The people had declared that it would have been better to die in Egypt or the wilderness than to enter the land, and God vowed that they would get what they wanted.
- Vs18, **To whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest?** The stubborn resistance to God's word brought an oath from God. God promised that they would not enter his rest. We see the result....
- Vs19, ...**they were unable to enter because of unbelief.** Not they “would not enter” but they were “unable to enter”. When God made his oath, it meant they were not going in, period. God's word does not change. In the same sense that Pharaoh hardened his heart... and then finally God hardened his heart. Here we are seeing the same... they hardened their hearts, became stubborn and wouldn't enter the land, and God made an oath that they would not be able to enter.
  - The reason for this was their **unbelief – not trusting God.**

**Illustration:** In Num14:39-45, they tried to, but were defeated before their enemy. They couldn't enter the land. God's oath barred the way. The author will later warn that a similar situation will confront people who reject what God has done for them in Christ (6:4-6).

- the warning of this section is designed to keep listeners from repeating the sins of a previous generation. It shows the consequences of rejecting God's voice. It suggests the irrevocably of the communities choice. Just as God's decision was final for Israel, God's response will be ultimate for the community that fails to hold firm to its commitments. The author holds out hope in the next section (4:1-13) and gives them encouragement to persevere in the hope of entering the rest that God has prepared for them.

**Verses Summary:** therefore do not harden your hearts, but take care and exhort your brothers, for you have come to share in Christ. For those who hear and rebelled were unable to enter the promise because of unbelief.

**Those who believe may enter (4:1-5)**

**Let us enter His rest (4:6-11)**