

1. The Apostle and High Priest (Heb 3:1-2)

The author now turns his attention to the superiority of Jesus over Moses. This is a delicate matter as Moses was highly revered among the Jews for obvious reasons. But the comparison does not cite Moses' faults; rather, it acknowledges that "*Moses was faithful in all His house*" (Heb 3:2). Like Moses, it is affirmed that Jesus was sent with heavenly authority; viz., "*the Apostle ... of our confession*" (3:1). But Jesus also fulfills Aaron's role: He is the "*High Priest of our confession.*" The writer urges his readers to "consider" Jesus in these roles, to think soberly and carefully about their implications.

1. In what circumstances did God proclaim Moses faithful in Numbers 12:7?

2. Comment on the term "holy brethren" from chapter 2.

2. More Glory Than Moses (Heb 3:3-6)

While Moses was a faithful servant, he was a servant nonetheless. And while Moses inherited a nation to lead, Jesus *built* His nation/house: He is "*a Son over His own house*" (Heb 3:6; cf. "*I will build My church ...*" – Mt 16:18). This anticipates the author's next exhortation, for as Moses was faithful over an *unfaithful* people, his readers must not become like unfaithful Israel. Christians remain the house of God only "*if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end*" (3:6). This exhortation clearly makes salvation conditional upon each believer maintaining his/her own faith.

3. If Jesus built His house, and "He who built all things is God," then Jesus is _____.

4. What should the builder of the house receive?

3. The Rebellion of Israel (Heb 3:7-11)

The author has concluded his first main thesis – that Jesus Christ is superior to all, including angels and Moses – and now exhorts and warns his readers from Heb 3:7-4:13. He first quotes from Ps 95 where God expresses His anger with the persistent rebelliousness of the Israelites. They complained about their provisions; they challenged Moses' leadership; and finally they refused to take the land of promise by force. Says God, "*So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest'*" (Heb 3:11). The unbelief of this generation consigned the whole congregation to forty years of arduous wandering in a desolate wilderness where they witnessed the power of God over and over again (3:9). This passage is similar to 1 Cor 10:1-11 where Paul reminisces about the glorious exodus of Israel from Egypt under Moses' illustrious leadership. In spite of such a grand beginning, "*with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness*" (1 Cor 10:5). The recipients of Hebrews are in danger of the same fate.

5. Who was responsible for the words in Ps 95:7-11?

6. What was the source of Israel's obstinacy and rebellion (Hebrews 3:10)?

4. The Hardening of the Heart (Heb 3:12-15)

A most grave warning is introduced with the word "beware" followed by two "lests": "*lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God*"; and "*lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*" (Heb 3:12-13). The antidote to apostasy is "*exhort one another daily*" (3:13a). The author picks up on the word "to-day" from the quotation of Psalms in 3:7 and makes fresh application: "... *while it is called 'Today'* ...". That is, the words of the Holy Spirit in reference to Israel's unbelief are ever applicable to God's people. The coming of grace through Jesus Christ has not made apostasy impossible; it does not safeguard the believer against willful rebellion. These words are absolutely pointless if a true believer cannot depart from God. The author says one **can** defect and become unfaithful. Many today say such is impossible. Which shall we believe?

7. On what condition do we become partakers with Christ?

8. Were these people believers or unbelievers at the time this epistle was written (3:12)?

9. How can sin harden our heart?

5. Disobedience and Unbelief (Heb 3:16-19)

Note the process which took place among the Israelites: They heard (3:16); they sinned/did not obey (3:17-18); their hearts were hardened (3:13, 15); they were over-come by unbelief (3:12, 19); they rebelled or apostatized (3:12, 16). Consequently, God was angry with them and swore that they would not enter the land (3:17-18), "*whose corpses fell in the wilderness.*" It is important to differentiate sin and apostasy. The NT affirms that all men and women of faith will occasionally sin through weakness, but apostasy is the settled choice to abandon God altogether. It is this ultimate departure that is not only *possible* but *likely* if these Christians continue on their present course.

10. Under whose leadership did Israel depart from God? Is this a reflection on his leadership?

11. Discuss how people who had seen the plagues and the parting of the Red Sea could become unbelievers.

12. God was angry "*with those who sinned*" (3:17). With whom was He **not** angry?