

Hebrews 3A (2014)

- In our study of Hebrews, we've come to the end of the writer's first argument in favor of accepting Christ as superior to all former revelations
 - And the writer's first argument was Christ is a greater messenger than any that came before
 - And therefore, Christ's message is a greater message
 - And Christ's superiority is undiminished by His appearing in the form of a man
 - The writer explained last week how Jesus came in a lowly form at the command of the Father and as a pioneer of our salvation
 - In order to grant us a salvation from death and slavery to the devil, Jesus had to take on flesh and blood as well
 - It was the only way to stand in our place and take the death that we deserved
 - Then, having died in our place, he took the enemy's only weapon out of his hand
 - When we place our faith in Jesus Christ, we see our sins washed away, leaving us without condemnation from God
 - So now, though our bodies may die, we have nothing to fear – for what follows is glorious
 - Therefore, the enemy is no longer able to control us through a fear of dying and judgment
 - We can ignore his schemes and live for Christ
- We ended last week in Chapter 2, with the writer making that very conclusion

[Heb. 2:14](#) Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,

[Heb. 2:15](#) and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

- Having brought the point to conclusion, the writer conclusively proves that Jesus' arrival as man did not lessen His power

- It reflected His obedience and self-sacrificial love for man
 - The Father has created mankind as a special part of Creation, above all else in Creation
- Did you know that? You are even more special in Creation than the Heavenly creatures God made?
 - You are more special than even angels
 - So not only is Christ greater than an angel, so are we more precious than angels
- Consider what the writer says at the end of Chapter 2

Heb. 2:16 For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.

- Assuredly, Christ did not give help to angels
 - What kind of help do angels need?
 - Well, the angels are very much like mankind, at least in a couple of ways
 - Like us, they are beings created for the purpose of serving God
 - Secondly, they have experienced sin and rebellion within their ranks
- Just as mankind rejected God's authority in the Garden and sinned, so did a part of the angelic realm
 - Satan, the chief cherub, started the process, of course
 - We can read about his fall in Ezekiel 28

Ezek. 28:12 "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,

"You had the seal of perfection,
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

Ezek. 28:13 "You were in Eden, the garden of God;
Every precious stone was your covering:
The ruby, the topaz and the diamond;
The beryl, the onyx and the jasper;
The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald;

And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets,
Was in you.
On the day that you were created
They were prepared.

[Ezek. 28:14](#) "You were the anointed cherub who covers,
And I placed you there.
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.

[Ezek. 28:15](#) "You were blameless in your ways
From the day you were created
Until unrighteousness was found in you.

[Ezek. 28:16](#) "By the abundance of your trade
You were internally filled with violence,
And you sinned;
Therefore I have cast you as profane
From the mountain of God.
And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,
From the midst of the stones of fire.

[Ezek. 28:17](#) "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.
I cast you to the ground;
I put you before kings,
That they may see you.

- At the time of his fall, we learn in Revelation 12:4, Satan took one-third of the angelic realm with him in rebellion against God
- The third of the angels who rebelled and sinned against God are the angels who need help
 - Like man, they are lost and without hope, unless the Lord made a way for redemption
 - They, like us, cannot return to glory and erase the sin that separates us from God, unless the Lord gives us help
- But the writer of Hebrews says Christ has never authored a plan of redemption for the fallen angels, called demons
 - Christ never took the form of an angel so He could experience judgment in their place
 - Consequently, all demons stand condemned for their sin

- And one day, they will all be judged and punished in the Lake of Fire
- In Ezekiel, the Lord declares that Satan will one day cease to exist

[Ezek. 28:18](#) "By the multitude of your iniquities,
In the unrighteousness of your trade
You profaned your sanctuaries.
Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you;
It has consumed you,
And I have turned you to ashes on the earth
In the eyes of all who see you.

[Ezek. 28:19](#) "All who know you among the peoples
Are appalled at you;
You have become terrified
And you will cease to be forever."""

- And then, in Revelation, we learn that all the angels who followed him will likewise be cast down from Heaven

[Rev. 12:7](#) And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war,

[Rev. 12:8](#) and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.

[Rev. 12:9](#) And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

- The point in all this is clear –
 - While angels are valued servants to Christ, and to us as well, they are not greater than Christ
 - In fact, they are not even as valued as mankind
 - The Father made no allowance for redemption of fallen angels
 - He has considered every fallen angel lost forever
 - On the other hand, the Lord has made a path of redemption available for men
 - He gladly helps Abraham's descendant, the writer says

- A descendant of Abraham in this context means someone who is of the faith of Abraham, whether Jew or Gentile
- As Paul explains elsewhere

Rom. 4:16 For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of **Abraham**, who is the father of us all,

- The Lord has made a way to help us out of our sin, one that required His death in our place
- Only mankind has been given this blessing
- In fact, Peter tells us that angels long to see and understand God's plan of redemption for men

1 Pet. 1:12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven – things into which **angels long** to look.

- Angels have long desired to see how the Lord was going to fulfill His promise to Abraham
- And yet, it's we who have the privilege to know the fullness of the Gospel
- This detail in the writer's argument is a profound truth, and it becomes all the more powerful the more we consider it
 - The Lord didn't have to save anyone, whether angel or man
 - He chose not to save a single angel, for His own reasons
 - That fact reminds us that the Lord didn't owe us salvation either
 - If the Lord can decide to reject 100% of the fallen angels, then He could have certainly rejected 100% of mankind
 - But He didn't
 - Spend some time contemplating how precious His children are to the Lord
- That's why He came as a man, to be like us, and to sympathize with us

[Heb. 2:17](#) Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

[Heb. 2:18](#) For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

- In the Law given to Israel, the Lord established a priesthood, led by a man called the High Priest
 - Now we'll talk more about priests and the priesthood later in this letter
 - But for this moment, the writer is focused on the need for a High Priest to be like those he represents
- A High Priest was an important man in Israel
 - He was the only guy who could walk into the holiest place in Israel and perform an act that resulted in the nation's receiving forgiveness for their sins
 - He could only take this action once per year
 - And no one else was allowed to make this intercession for the people of Israel
 - So everyone treated the High Priest with great respect and honor
- High Priests serve as the representative of the people before God
 - And so he must, by necessity, be like those he represents
 - He was bearing the sins of Israel on his shoulders, quite literally, in the form of the *ephod*
 - And he knew what it was like to fall to temptation
 - That qualified him to be the perfect one to stand before God and seek mercy for the people of Israel
- The writer says that's another reason why Jesus had to become like us to author salvation
 - If Jesus was to be our high priest, then He had to understand what it's like to be human

- He couldn't be our representative before the Father without first being like us
- Jesus is a merciful and faithful High Priest for us in His role to intercede for us before the Father
- And He understands how best to intercede, because he understands how temptation works in the life of a man or woman
- Because He experienced it Himself
- The writer says Jesus was tempted when He suffered
 - The suffering is a reference to suffering several times in Jesus' earthly life
 - At the very least, it refers to the 40 days of fasting in the wilderness
 - When the devil tempted Jesus to disobey the Lord
 - Jesus felt every desire you or I would feel
 - Yet, He resisted to remain sinless
 - Secondly, the suffering refers to the passion of Christ
 - The Gospels teach us that Jesus had the power to stop the beatings and the crucifixion with a word from His mouth
 - He could have commanded a legion of angels to stop everything
 - Imagine the temptation to stop the pain
 - But Jesus also knew the Father had determined He should die for our sins
 - So Jesus resisted the temptation to disobey
- So now the Lord is ready and able to assist us with temptation
 - As our High Priest, seated at the right hand of the Father, Christ intercedes for us with power to change hearts and circumstances to address our needs
 - But He also has the experience of living as a man, which means He has infinite mercy and sympathy for our weaknesses and failures

- If you are tempted – and really, who isn't? – then you have no excuse for not putting that before the Lord in prayer
- You can't say Christ can't help you with your temptations to sin
- He's been there, and He succeeded where you and I fail
- So He can solve your temptations, if you give Him that chance
- The secret is, you have to put that need before Him
 - As you pray, confess your sinful temptations
 - Confess your failures to resist
 - And ask Him to take the temptation away
- And then, when the enemy brings those temptations back again, turn to prayer in the moment
 - Watch the Lord work
 - Give Him that chance
 - Don't just wait to turn to Him in guilt after you've made the mistake and fallen to temptation
 - Turn to Him in the moment of temptation
 - That's the power of a High Priest Who knows what it's like to be human in a fallen world
 - We can seek His intercession as we walk
 - Not just after we stumble
- And with that, the writer is ready to move away from the topic of angels and into the next discussion

Heb. 3:1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession;

Heb. 3:2 He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house.

Heb. 3:3 For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house.

- As we transition into Chapter 3, let's remember the writer's purpose in writing this letter

- He has a concern that some in the Jewish Church are not appreciating the person and work of Jesus properly
- It's likely he has this concern from things he's heard going on in the early Church
 - Jews returning to living under the Law
 - Sacrificing in the temple
 - Holding the Old Covenant in higher regard than the New Covenant
 - Living as if the Messiah had never even appeared
- In the first two chapters, the writer highlighted their greater reverence for angels and the mistaken thinking it reflects
 - And he issued a warning that they should give greater attention to Jesus as Messiah
 - And they should also understand the penalties they were risking for continuing disobedience to the New Covenant
- And now in Chapter 3 and into Chapter 4, the writer comes back to that thought, asking his audience again to consider Jesus as the Apostle and High Priest
 - The first verse opens with a call to the holy brethren, the partakers of a holy calling
 - This sounds like a reference to believers
 - And since this letter went out to many churches in the Diaspora, we can be sure he had believers in mind as he wrote these words
 - But this terminology is equally applicable to Jewish brothers, regardless of whether they knew Jesus as Lord
 - All Jews could be called holy brethren
 - All Jews are partakers of a Heavenly calling
 - So we can't assume that the writer views all his readers to be believers as this point
 - He asks them to consider Jesus

- The word “consider” in Greek, is *katanoeo*, which means “to look very closely”
- This word is used in Acts, when Stephen is retelling the history of Israel and speaks of Moses seeing the burning fire in the bush

[Acts 7:31](#) “When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he approached to look more closely, there came the voice of the Lord:

- Have you ever glanced at something casually, and you thought you saw it correctly?
 - But then if you take a second, closer look, you realize you didn’t see it properly
 - That’s what the writer is asking here...telling his readers that maybe they didn’t get the full picture the first time
- As they look more closely at Jesus, the writer asks them to consider a new comparison: Moses
 - Jesus was faithful to the Father, in the same way that Moses was faithful to the Father in serving in the Lord’s house
 - This is a very specific phrase in Greek that means “a house servant”
 - Moses was a slave of the house owner, and the owner was the Lord
 - The reference to “house” is a euphemism then
 - It refers to the family of God, the people of Israel that Moses was commanded to lead and represent before God
 - Moses was an intercessor for the people, and the one who brought the Word of God to the people
 - And Moses was faithful in all these things
 - And then in v.3, the writer says that Jesus was counted worthy of even more glory than Moses
 - If you want to get a Jew’s attention in any discussion, tell him that you found someone worthy of more glory than Moses
 - For most Jews, Moses is the preeminent man of God

- The man who delivered Israel from slavery, guided them through the desert and gave them their precious Covenant and Law
- Moses is traditionally an even more imposing figure in Judaism than father Abraham
- But the writer says Jesus was worthy of greater honor
- And then in v.3, the writer says that Jesus is greater than Moses
 - Because Jesus is the builder of the house, not merely the servant
 - This is a provocative statement
 - And it sets up the next two chapters
 - In a few simple words, the writer just said that Jesus is God
 - Look at the logical progression the writer has used to bring his readers to this conclusion
 - He said Moses was a servant to God
 - And of course, God is the one who called Israel and formed them into a nation and placed Moses over that nation
 - And Moses served God by caring for that house of God, which God built, so to speak
 - But now the writer says Jesus is worthy of more honor than Moses, because Jesus was that builder whom Moses served
 - Jesus is the God that called Israel and led them in the desert
 - Jesus is the God who appointed Moses to serve over Israel
 - Jesus is the One who gave Moses the Law through angels
- Take a closer look at this Messiah you think you know
 - He is not just a messenger or a prophet or a ruler
 - He is God in the flesh
 - And as God, He is worthy of oh-so much more honor than any of His servants – even Moses
 - Do you get the feeling that the writer is preparing to preach the Gospel to his readers?

- Does it sound like he wants to introduce them to Jesus in a new and better way?
- This is our first indication that the writer isn't speaking exclusively to an audience of believing Jews
 - He seems concerned that some of his Jewish readers didn't see Christ in the right way the first time

Heb. 3:4 For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.

Heb. 3:5 Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later;

Heb. 3:6 but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house – whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

- While every house has someone who caused it to be built, the cause of everything is God
 - God commonly works through men to accomplish His purposes
 - So in that sense, God is the builder of every house
 - The writer is simply saying that the work Moses did was under God's direction
 - And likewise, the work Christ did was also in service to the Father and according to the Father's purposes
 - But as we compare Moses and Jesus, we find a lessor-to-greater relationship
 - Moses is a picture of Jesus in lessor form
 - Moses' life was orchestrated by God to illustrate the life and work of the coming Messiah
 - Notice in vs.5-6, the writer says that Moses' faithfulness in serving God in the house God constructed, was to be a testimony of what would come later
 - We can say it was simply meant to be a picture of Christ
 - Just as the writer says in v.6, that Jesus fulfilled that picture when He came to be a faithful Son over God's house
- If the people of Israel wandering in the desert was the "house" that God gave Moses to watch over, then what house is Jesus watching over?

- The writer says that house is the children of God
 - The saints are the house that Jesus guards faithfully
 - All those who have trusted in God's promise to bring a deliverer, a Messiah, have become part of that house
 - The writer says we are that house
- But then, the writer introduces that preposition we never like to see: "if"
 - The writer says we are in this house, the body of believers, the saints of the New Covenant, if...
 - If we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end
 - What does it mean to hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope?
 - And what is the end?
- First, the confidence a Christian holds on to is the confidence that our sins have been paid for in full by the blood of Christ
 - Our confidence in the sufficiency of Christ's work is what leads us to cast off all other means of salvation
 - We turn from works and superstitions and myths and humanism
 - And we turn to Christ, knowing that nothing else works and nothing else is needed
 - And then, the hope we boast about to the world is the hope of resurrection
 - When we die, we know that the Lord promised we will experience the resurrection that He also experienced
 - Death is not the end of us, so we boast to the world of that hope that one day we will live again without fear of death
 - Before we skip past these words, let's take a closer look at the word "hope"
 - We typically use the word "hope" when some degree of uncertainty exists
 - We hope it rains today

- We hope we win the lottery
 - We hope our children do their chores (which would be like hitting the lottery in my case)
- The Bible uses the word differently
 - The Bible uses the word like we use the word “expect”
 - In Greek, the word is *elpis*, which means “expectation”
 - So the Bible’s word for hope is like saying, “I expect to win the lottery”; “I expect it to rain today”
- And for the Christian, “I expect to be resurrected”
 - It is not wishful thinking, but absolute confidence in a future event, based on the promises of God
 - But because it remains unseen for now, it is properly called a “hope”
 - A “hope” is the expectation of something that hasn’t happened yet
- This writer says that we can count ourselves as a part of the family of God, if we are confident that Jesus’ death was a sufficient payment for our sin and we expect to be resurrected
 - These beliefs are the beliefs that define saving faith – as Paul writes in Rom. 10
 - Faith is confessing with your mouth that Jesus is Lord (the promise of His death paying for your sins) and
 - Believing in your heart that the Father raised Him from the dead – that’s your hope of resurrection
 - Do you believe He paid the price, do you believe He’ll live again? If you believe these things, you’re in the house of God
 - Then, he adds that interesting piece – holding fast that belief until the end
 - If you have been convinced by the Spirit that Jesus is Lord and that you will be resurrected, you will never become unconvinced

- Because the conviction of the truth of those things does not come by flesh and blood, according to Scripture
- Remember when Jesus asked Peter, “But who do you say that I am?” and Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
- And Jesus replied that Peter was blessed because that truth was not revealed to Peter by flesh and blood, but by the Father in Heaven (Matt. 16)
- You cannot come to those convictions by flesh and blood – no one gets there because in their head, they decided they like it – they get there because the Spirit persuaded them
 - If you say you believe these things, but then in a future day, you decide you need something else besides Jesus to make yourself righteous
 - Or if you suddenly no longer expect to be resurrected someday and begin to fear death again
 - Then, the writer says, you’re showing evidence you never really understood with the truth in the first place
- Saving faith will understand these truths such that we hold on to them to the end
 - If you have become convinced by the Spirit that Jesus is Lord, you will never be unconvinced
 - And if you have an expectation, a hope of resurrection made certain by the Spirit, then you will never lose that hope to seek it elsewhere
- But the recipients of this letter – at least some of them – were doing those very things, as we’ll see in the rest of Chapters 3 & 4