

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

HEBREWS 3-4

Keith Green was a popular Christian singer in the 1970s. Keith was formerly a hippie - a 60s flower child. Like his peers he searched for truth in eastern religion.

Yet one day Keith had a thought... Every guru he'd heard referenced a person named *Jesus*. All the exotic religions Keith studied tried to justify their teaching by drawing an association with Jesus. It finally dawned on him, "[Maybe I should just find out about this Jesus.](#)"

Keith purchased a Bible, *and spent some time considering Jesus*. It changed his life forever... And it will change our lives as well. *To find meaning, and to cultivate wisdom, and to experience the presence of God; you and I must spend time **considering Jesus.***

As Hebrews 3:1 tells us, "**Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus.**"

And yet tragically, the Hebrew believers who first received this letter were proof that in this world it's easy to get distracted and take our eyes off Jesus!

Peter walked on water as long as his focus was on the Lord, but as soon as he saw that the wind was boisterous he became afraid and sank. And today, the winds and waves of circumstance, *the boisterousness of modern living* - can steal away our vision of Jesus.

Life can get so hectic and frenetic, we forget what matters. We focus on trivialities and grow preoccupied with

peripherals. We forget the core values of our life. One commentator suggests, “If you would deal aright with the circumference, **live at the center.** From your daily world come back evermore to Jesus, that from Jesus you may better go back to the world - bearing the peace and power of the Lord Himself upon you.”

In John 12:21, a Greek delegation approached the disciples and they asked Philip, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus...” This should always be our prayer and priority, “to see Jesus...” Verse 1 tells us, “*consider Christ!*”

Verse 2, “Who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house.” As we mentioned last week, Hebrews was written to Jewish believers struggling with their Jewish roots.

They’d embraced Jesus as Messiah, *but what about the traditions of Judaism?* Spouses, parents, siblings, community leaders were exerting heavy pressure on these Christian converts. Their rabbis were adamant, *faith in Jesus was not enough - you also needed to obey the rules and rituals of Judaism.* These Hebrew believers were struggling to sort out their allegiances.

In this letter the author compares the institutions of Judaism with the person of Jesus - *and he concludes there’s no comparison!* Jesus is better than any other way of relating to God! It’s better to believe in the risen Christ than to follow the precepts of a dead religion.

In Chapters 1-2 we were shown that Jesus is better than the prophets, the Law, and angels. Now Chapters 3-4 explain how He’s better than Moses and Joshua.

Verse 3, “**For this One** (i.e. Jesus) **has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses...**” Among the Hebrews Moses was not only the most revered Jew, but the greatest human of all time. He was a *hero* with no peers. Except for one incident, He faithfully led Israel for 40 years. Moses had an unparalleled resume.

He spoke to God from a bush that burned yet wasn't consumed; and later on Mount Sinai face to face.

He wielded miraculous power and parted the Sea.

He humbled a tyrannical Pharaoh and mighty Egypt.

He liberated His people from 400 years of slavery.

*Moses delivered God's law to His people and the world. God's Law is forever called “**The Law of Moses.**”*

He relaunched a massive people group and sculpted a band of former slaves into a nation and fighting army.

He struck a rock and out came water.

He led three million Israelis through a barren desert.

Moses was so revered by His people, when he died the angel Michael buried him in a hidden grave so no one would be tempted to worship his dead bones.

Years ago, Israeli general Ariel Sharon and George Bush were scheduled for a meeting. Sharon was late and Bush was upset. Sharon told him, “**Mr. President, I'm sorry, but I was talking to someone more important than you.**” Bush was thinking, “**How dare him! Who could be more important than the American President?**” Sharon told him, “**I was talking to Moses.**”

Bush was impressed. He said, *“Can I talk to Moses?”* Sharon pulled out his cell phone, punched in a number, and whispered... Finally, he turns to George W. and says, *“Mr. President, I’m sorry, but Moses said he doesn’t want to talk to you... The last time he talked to a Bush it cost him forty years in the wilderness.”*

It’s true Moses is more important than any American President, but in verse 3 the writer of Hebrews assures us that he pales in significance to the King of kings.

Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses *“inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house.”* In the construction of *“the house (or nation) of Israel”* Moses was a tool in God’s hand. But Jesus is the builder! Jesus is the Divine Contractor. In Matthew 16:18 the Lord Jesus declared, *“I will build My Church.”*

Jesus is building God’s Kingdom. Verse 4, *“For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God.”* And notice the implication - *if God builds all things, and Jesus builds the Church, then Jesus must be God.* It’s a powerful proof-text for the deity of Christ.

Jesus is the builder of God’s house - *a member of the Godhead.* Moses, just a hammer in God’s toolbox.

“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...” Moses was *a servant* in God’s house, Jesus is *God’s Son.* Moses is a *hired-hand.* Jesus is the *heir.*

And notice another detail in verse 6, the Church is referred to as “*(Jesus’) own house.*” You and I are considered the house in which Jesus dwells. He hangs out among us. He’s revealed through our fellowship.

That is “*whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.*” God’s kids don’t just believe, but they continue in faith. Throughout the letter to the Hebrews it’s clear a believer’s membership in God’s family (*in essence, our salvation*) depends on the perseverance of our faith. “*Whose house we are if we hold fast... firm to the end.*”

Perhaps you were raised in a godly home and came to faith as a child - or years ago you were radically converted - the question isn’t did you once believe, it’s how about today? Have you continued in that faith?

And to illustrate this need for perseverance, the writer reminds the Hebrews of Israel’s wanderings in the wilderness. The ancient Jews *began well*, but they *ended poorly* because they didn’t continue in their faith.

Verse 7, “*Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says...*” and he quotes from Psalm 95, “*Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years.*”

Rather than **trust** God, they **tested and tried** God. The wilderness wanderers pushed God’s patience.

The Hebrews who exited Egypt refused to take God at His word. They kept insisting He do something to prove Himself... *You’d think turning the Nile to blood, or parting the Red Sea*

would've sealed their allegiance, but miracles alone don't produce faith! More often than not all miracles create is a desire for more miracles. Faith grows by taking God at His Word. God has done more than enough miracles for us to trust Him.

In verse 10 God said of the faithless Jews who kept testing Him, "Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.'" The Hebrews Moses led were acquainted with God's **works**. For forty years on a daily basis they ate the miracle manna, but they never learned God's **ways**.

They treated God like a circus act... Let's hope He performs for us. Maybe He'll hang from a trapeze, or get shot out of a cannon - *but let's not sit at His feet and learn to live His way, a better way...* Even today, folks want to see miracles; then turn around and do life their own way. **This was the attitude God rejected.**

Just looking for God's works, without listening to His words and living His way will sentence you to perpetual restlessness. You'll spend your life wandering in a spiritual desert. God promises, verse 11, "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" Harden your heart to God and you can kiss His peace good-bye!

Verse 12, "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 hardening of a heart is a subtle occurrence. It can begin on a

spiritual highpoint. After you *climb a mountain, overcome an obstacle, win a victory* - that's when you're tempted to assume that you're at the end of your struggle. *Now you can coast!*

Rather than stretch forward, you lay back. You're no longer resting in the Savior, but in your favorable circumstances - your steady job, or fat bank account. *And it hardens us to the voice and call of God's Spirit.*

Thus, we need daily encouraging to never take a day off. Keep walking *with Jesus*. Keep walking *by faith*.

“For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end...”

Notice this is an **“if”** statement. It's conditional. You and I will be partakers of Christ and the blessings He brings **“if”** we cross the finish line with our faith intact.

The Hebrews had started well. They'd embraced the sufficiency of Christ with their whole heart. Jesus was all they needed, *but* doubts crept in - their confidence waned - they weren't so sure that faith in Jesus would be enough. *What about the Law, the Temple, the sacrifices, the feasts - the trappings of Judaism?*

Their initial faith was unraveling, and this is a warning. You're a partaker of Christ not by once having faith, but by continuing in faith **“steadfast to the end.”**

Verse 15, **“While it is said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”**

Again he quotes, Psalm 95:7-8. Every Jew had this passage memorized. It was used in the synagogue as a call to

worship. Yet sadly, though the Hebrews heard these words weekly, most of them never took heed. Apparently, *hearing and heeding are not the same.*

My car has an alarm that beeps until you buckle your seatbelt. It's a distinctive sound, it grabs your attention, it's a sound that sticks out, it's memorable, it's actually annoying... HEY, WILL SOMEBODY BUCKLE UP!

Likewise you can hear God's voice, yet ignore it, or cover your ears, and not obey. *To hear is not to heed.*

“For who, having heard, rebelled?” He returns to his analogy of Israel in the wilderness. Just because they heard and believed once, didn't mean they couldn't later rebel. **“Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness?”** The same folks who believed in Egypt, later died in the desert. Even mighty Moses couldn't insure the continuation of their faith.

Moses could break the will of a stubborn Pharaoh - put God's miracles on display - split the vast ocean - bring bread from heaven - *but He couldn't convince the hard-hearted Hebrews to persist in their faith.* Moses failed to bring God's people into God's promises.

With the exception of two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, the generation that exited Egypt died in the wilderness. As godly a man as Moses was, he failed in his mission. **Moses brought Israel out of *Egyptian bondage*, but couldn't bring them into *God's blessing*.**

And this describes Christians today. They've been saved from the Egypt of sin and bondage, and they've crossed the Red Sea of baptism, but as soon as their faith is challenged; rather than press on they grow bitter or fearful or doubtful. They're "saved but stalled."

They're forgiven, but far from victorious. They've exited Egypt, but have yet to taste the milk and honey of the Promised Land. In short, a faith that was, isn't necessarily a faith that is. You can fall short of God's blessing if you don't press on and continue in faith.

Verse 18, "And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." When Israel reached the land of Canaan and the moment of decision arrived, only two spies believed in God's promise. The ten spies saw a land of giants and fortified cities - obstacles. All the spies saw the same variables, but what ten saw as *stumbling blocks*, Joshua and Caleb saw as *stepping stones*.

The difference? Eyes of faith. The two who believed entered. The people who didn't died in the wilderness. If you don't want to miss God's blessings have faith.

Chapter 4, "Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it..." As a kid growing up in church I heard the phrase, "sins and shortcomings." And I'd wonder, "*what is a shortcoming?*" I felt sorry for fellows under 5'-8" - *maybe they were guilty of shortcoming?* But a shortcoming is **the sin of coming up short.**

It's like a baserunner sliding into second, but not reaching the base. That's a shortcoming. And likewise when you reach for God's promises, but get distracted, or grow weary, and end up lacking the faith to finish.

The Hebrews exited Egypt, but they came up **short** of entering the Promised Land. They were liberated from sin, but failed to occupy their promised blessings.

And here was their mistake, verse 2, "For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being **mixed with faith** in those who heard it." The Hebrews heard God's Word, but never added faith. On every Bible cover should be printed the words, "mix with faith." For it won't have its desired effect without faith.

The key to entering God's rest and blessing is faith! And to prove it He cross-references several verses...

"For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said (a quote from Psalm 95): "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place (Genesis 2:2) of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works; and again in this place (once more Psalm 95): "They shall not enter My rest."

Here's an amazing truth - *God has finished His work!* On the Seventh Day God rested from creation and God has been resting since. He fashioned a perfect world.

Even from the beginning, God knew man would sin and spoil His work. Revelation 13:8 calls Jesus, “the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.” Apparently, even in His creating, God had plans for His redeeming. Nothing was lacking on that seventh day when God rested. And this remains God’s posture today. He’s got it all worked out. Everything is under His control. There’re no loose ends He needs to tie up. God has already set in motion all that He’s planned.

With God the end has been worked out from the beginning. Today, God is relaxing, and He wants us to join Him! We’re invited to enter into God’s own rest!

When my kids were little I owned a hammock. And whenever I finished my yard work I’d spend a few minutes of recovery in the hammock - and my kids loved to join me. They would stop whatever they were doing to jump in with dad and swing in his hammock.

And here the Father is inviting you and I to join Him in His hammock, but we too have to stop emphasizing what we’re doing - *even for God* - and rest in what He’s done for us! We join in *His* rest, not produce our own. We take our hope *in Him*, and trust in *His* sufficiency.

Hudson Taylor, missionary to China, had a little jingle he was fond of quoting... God speaks to us, “Bear not a single care thyself. One is too much for thee. The work is mine, and mine alone. Thy work, to rest in Me.”

Today, God is at rest. And He wants us to rest with Him - add some faith to His promises. Rather than strive in my own efforts to get control of my life, I need to believe God is in

control. He's resting and I can rest in Him. Trust God to take over the living in your life.

Verse 6, "Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."

God entered His rest after His creation, and He invited the Hebrews to join Him in that rest after He brought them into the Promised Land. Unfortunately, they failed to experience His promise for lack of faith.

But 400 years later, through the pen of David in Psalm 95, God issued the promise again. Long after Israel's failure in the wilderness, God still promised, "If you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."

The writer of Hebrews is proving to His readers that **God's rest is still available to God's people**. He promised this rest to Moses and his followers in 1445 BC; but then He reiterated the promise 400 years later during the time of King David. The point is God's rest is always available to people who come to Him by faith.

"For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day." Israel had two national heroes, **Moses**, and his successor **Joshua** but neither of these leaders brought God's people into God's rest. Thus, David still makes the offer years later

“There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.” Jesus is better than Moses and Joshua, for He leads us into this rest... *and here’s how He does it...*

“For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.” When God entered His rest it involved ceasing from His work.

For the six days of creation, God accomplished quite a to-do list, but once finished, He rested. Understand His rest didn’t involve inaction. He wasn’t comatose. The difference was that for six days God did what was **obligatory**; then on Day Seven His activity became **celebratory**. And there’s a big difference... **obligation is required work. Celebration is responsive work.**

And this is what it means to enter God’s rest. Not to be inactive, but to realize on the cross, Jesus did all that needed to be done for us to be right with God. He said, “**It is finished.**” I can add nothing to what He did.

My requirement was fulfilled by Christ. I’m no longer under obligation - *that’s the rest, the freedom, the joy*. Now what I do for God is out of *celebration* not *obligation*. I praise, I serve, I pray, I witness not to earn God’s favor, but because I already have it in Christ.

That’s why verse 11 tells us, “**Let us therefore be diligent** (or literally, *labor*) **to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.**” This sounds contradictory... ***we labor to rest?*** Yet here’s the point, entering God’s rest does take a major effort. We need to hold

fast *to* Jesus! Have faith *in* Jesus! **Consider Christ!** Keep our eyes on Jesus!

Corrie Ten Boom once said, “Look within and be depressed. Look without and be distressed. But look to Jesus and be at rest.” But it takes effort to keep looking in the right direction - to avoid the distractions.

Having faith isn't passive, it's active. It's aggressive. It's looking, and focusing, and holding, and clutching. We don't labor to *earn* God's rest - it can't be earned, it's a free gift - but we labor to *enter* it and *enjoy* it!

Think of the difference between *digging a ditch* and *planning a party*. Both require effort. But digging a ditch is obligation, while planning a party is celebration. Both are labor, but only digging seems like it. It may sound contradictory, but it's not, **we labor to enter God rest.**

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword...” All it takes for God's Word to do miracles is to mix it with a little faith.

The Greek word translated “*sword*” refers to **the Roman short sword, or dagger**. It was an ancient weapon used in hand-to-hand combat - at close range.

And this is how God's Word works. When we apply it personally to our individual hearts it has the ability to penetrate a facade, and knife through a resistance.

The Bible is “*living*” or **active**. It has a life of its own... It's “*powerful*” or **effective**. It can transform a life... And it's “*sharp*” or **incisive**. It cuts to the chase and gets to the point. It uncovers the real, heart issues.

And it's sharper than a two-edged sword. It slices coming and going. It's not only a weapon to use on the enemy, it's a surgeon's scalpel the Holy Spirit turns on us. *The Holy Spirit does open heart on the inner man!*

The Scriptures (pierce) even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow." God's Word untangles flesh from faith - it sorts out what's of me and what's of God. The Bible can differentiate the heavenly from the human. And it exposes motives, It's "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Once, a young guy walked into an ole country barber shop. The shop was decorated with trophies of wild animals - a deer's head, a wild fox, a wild turkey - as well as several stuffed birds. But this young man wasn't impressed. He happened to be studying taxidermy, and he was extremely critical of the work.

He pointed to the owl sitting on the shelf, and said, "look at those drooping wings, and that crook in the leg, and the angle of the head - it looks so unnatural."

He went on and on with his critique until suddenly the owl turned its head and winked. The bird was alive! He had been criticizing the life-likeness of a live bird.

And this is true of the Bible's critics. They're critiquing a live book. Berate it, deny it - say what you want about the Bible - but when its ready, it'll fly off the shelf to do as it pleases! It's self-propelled. When you hear God's Word and mix it with faith the author Himself works in you to help you grasp its meaning.

Verse 13, “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.” God sees all.

I’ll never forget the couple that came for marriage counseling. They told me they didn’t want anyone to know they were having problems, *especially God*. Sorry, nothing is hidden from our All-knowing Father.

Folks today worry about Big Brother eavesdropping on their private communications. But Big Brother isn’t your chief concern. You have a Father who hears all. Encryptions don’t work. *God sees all thoughts, hears all calls, reads all texts.* Nothing is hidden from Him!

Verse 14, “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.” Here’s another reason to hold tight to your faith in Christ - He is “*a great High Priest!*,” better than the Hebrew priests!

Once, a lady was pulled over by the police. The officer noticed that her license required her to wear her eye-glasses. They were missing. When the policeman inquired, she said, “*But officer I have contacts.*” The policeman said firmly, “*Lady, I don’t care who you know, you’ve got to wear your glasses to drive!*”

Contacts can go a long way in this life. At times it’s not *what you know*, but *who you know* that counts. *And contacts are even more important in the life to come!*

This is why one of the central components of Jewish religion was its system of priests and Levites. Of the 12 tribes, an

entire tribe was devoted to attend to the nation's relationship with God. The tribe of Levi's sole occupation was to intercede for the people with God.

And this gave the Hebrews confidence. When they sinned, they had **a contact** who would go to bat for them. And of all the priests, the one with the most clout was the High Priest. Once a year he entered the holiest room in the Temple to atone for the nation's sin.

Yet as believers in Jesus these Hebrews had turned their back on the priesthood. To the shock of parents and friends they'd thrown away this confidence. They were being asked, *"If you no longer reverence the priesthood how do you expect to gain access to God?"*

Well, according to verse 14 the Hebrews still had a priest - and not just a High Priest, but *"a great High Priest."* Jesus entered, not just the earthly Temple, *but Heaven itself.* The Hebrews had not lost confidence at all. They had gained a greater confidence in Christ!

He writes in verse 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."* Unlike the Jewish Priest, Jesus is a perfect priest. He's God, thus He *clearly represents God's truth.* But He's also man, and *closely understand our needs.*

For years entertainer Bob Hope led trips to Vietnam to humor the troops. Once, reminiscing on his USO shows he made the statement, *"All I ever saw was those kids laughing and applauding. I never knew what they were going through*

until I saw a couple of movies like *'Platoon'* and *'Hamburger Hill'*! What courage they had - and fighting a war we wouldn't let them win."

Unlike Hope's visits to Vietnam, when Jesus visited earth He didn't just stay on stage and entertain. He invaded the jungle, and got into the trenches. He was subjected to the Napalm and sniper fire. He fought the battle as one of the troops, and prevailed - without sin.

Here we're told, Jesus was tempted "*in all points*" as we are. That means He had *an active libido, a curiosity, a temper with a fuse*. Jesus was a man, and vulnerable to the temptations of all men. Yet He never caved in!

He was tempted with everything Satan has ever thrown at you or me, yet Jesus never succumbed. He was born sinless, and stayed sinless - as a result He is perfectly suited to help us win our struggle for purity.

Yet I've met folks who question His effectiveness. If God's Son didn't sin, how can He truly know what I face - *the lure of darkness and the pull of temptation?*

Author C.S. Lewis answers this question, "Only those who try to resist temptation know how strong it is. You find out the strength of an army by fighting against it, not by giving in. You find out the strength of a wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down. A man who gives into temptation after five minutes simply does not know what it would have been like an hour later... We never find out the strength of an evil impulse... until we try to fight it: and Christ, because He was the only man who never yielded to temptation, is also the only

man who knows to the full (extent) what temptation means.” Jesus knows more than we think.

A thin rubber band can be stretched only so far and it snaps. It never experiences a high degree of tension since it snaps before a greater tension can be applied.

But take a thicker rubber band, it can handle more. You can stretch it further because it refuses to break. *So which rubber band feels the greater tension?* **Obviously, the rubber band that refuses to break.**

And the fact Jesus didn't break enabled Him to endure all Satan could muster. We whimper and quibble, *“nobody knows what I'm going through...”* Oh, yes they do! **Consider Jesus!** Your temptation is kid's stuff compared to what our Lord Jesus endured. He knows your struggle and how you can win the victory.

And since Jesus understands, verse 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...” or literally, “when we need it the most.” The Spirit of God gives us the mercy and grace and comfort and power we need at the exact moment we need it!

I love this paraphrase of verse 16, “So let’s walk right up to Him and get what He is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help.” When you go to God you don’t have to call ahead and make an appointment. You can walk right in - not haughtily or rudely - but you can enter God’s throne room like you belong there! *For in Christ you do!* Jesus secures us total access!

So let’s enter God’s presence *unashamedly, unreservedly, uninhibitedly*. Come just as you are - the sacrifice is *done* - the access is *won*. Come boldly to His throne for the help you need and rest for your soul!