

In the movie *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, Queen Jadis happens upon Edmund. She offers him power and Turkish Delight to bring his brother and sisters to her castle. He is unaware that she wants to kill them all. He tries to bring them to her, but they refuse to follow him. He had lied to them earlier and they had a greater motivation to meet Aslan – a Jesus-like figure – to figure out what was going on. As it turns out, both Queen Jadis and Edmund were deceitful.



- The prophet Jeremiah wrote, 'The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked (Jer 17:9 NIV).'
- Jesus said in the last days many 'False prophets will appear and deceive many people ... <sup>12</sup> the love of most will grow cold, <sup>13</sup> but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved (Mt 24:11-13 NIV).'

The takeaway from today's message is do not trust your eternity to a mere human being.

The Lord has **led me to go through the book of Hebrews** this fall. It is 'a strange and difficult book'<sup>1</sup> for several reasons.

Hebrews can be 'strange and difficult' because ...

1. Five different cultural layers (Roman, Hebrew, Hellenists, Hellenistic Christians, and our culture.
2. It is a sermon to a very specific audience. They knew exactly what he was talking about. Some parts seem odd or mysterious to us given the layers of culture involved.
3. Its uses symbols from Judaism to make two arguments.
  - Don't go back to Judaism.
  - Jesus, the Messiah, is better than Judaism. Jesus is the fulfillment of all that the OT looked forward to. Here is the key verse: 'God had planned something better for us (He 11:40 NIV).'

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<sup>1</sup> N.T. Wright and Michael F. Bird, *The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 710.

Today's symbol and argument is that Jesus is better than the Moses and Joshua. The preacher will use the **stories of Moses, Joshua**, the 40 years in the desert, and the Promised Land as examples to make his point.

### Something Better

*The Book of Hebrews – Better than Moses & Joshua*



Let's do a quick review to catch everyone up.

#### Minute Review

The author does not cut down Moses or Judaism but encourages his listeners to something better. Last Sunday we learned that ...

- Jesus is better than the angels, 1:4-2:18. Jesus is fully man & God and he destroyed sin and death. The angels are mere servants.

Let's jump in.

#### 1. Superior to Moses, 3:1-6.

'Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. <sup>2</sup>He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house (He 3:1-2 NIV).'

This preacher knows you **catch more flies with honey** than vinegar. He affirms that they are

- 'Holy'
- 'Share in the heavenly calling (v. 1)'
- 'Are his house (v. 6).'

**Like you and me**, we are *being built up* as a part of God's kingdom, **we are called to something better, something heavenly**.

He introduces **Moses**, the most revered character in the OT.

- A **national hero** who with God's help delivered them from Egypt and made them into a stable society.
- He **led them** and received God's laws.

He **does not insult** Moses but affirms that Moses was 'faithful in all God's house (v. 2).'

*Just as Moses was faithful in leading the people out of Egypt and to the Promised Land, Jesus was faithful to his calling.*

**But Jesus is more than a second Moses.<sup>2</sup>**

‘Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. <sup>4</sup>For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. <sup>5</sup>“Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house,” bearing witness to what would be spoken by God in the future. <sup>6</sup>But Christ is faithful as the Son over God’s house (He 3:3-6a NIV).’

**Jesus is superior to the Moses.**

- **Moses** was a ‘household servant’ and Jesus is the ‘founder and inheritor’ of the household.
- **Moses** ‘is not on the same level as the Son, who by his family status has authority over the house.’<sup>3</sup>

‘And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory (He 3:6b NIV).’

Our **heavenward calling** is *conditional*, we must ‘hold firmly to our confidence and hope (v. 6).’

- ‘The saints are the ones who persevere to the end.’<sup>4</sup>
- **That is why we must ‘fix our thoughts on Jesus (v. 1).’**

**Do not trust your eternity to a mere human being but fix your eyes on Jesus until the end.**

**The preacher senses his people are in danger of falling away or going back to Judaism. I know what he feels - I carry the same pastoral burden for you. He launches his second warning.**

## **2. Second Warning, 3:7-19.**

‘So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, <sup>8</sup>do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, <sup>9</sup>where your ancestors tested and tried me, though for forty years they saw what I did (He 3:7-9 NIV).’

He is quoting **Ps 95**.

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<sup>2</sup> F.F. Bruce, *NICNT Hebrews* (Grand Rapids, MI: Willam B. Eerdmans, 1990), 93.

<sup>3</sup> R.T. France in Tremper Longman III & David E. Garland, eds., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Revised Edition 13* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2006), 60.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce, *NICNT Hebrews*, 94.

- Our preacher keys in on Israel's failures, their unbelief even though they saw the miracles.
- Ps 95 was often **sung by the early Christians**.
- **Paul and Jude** both mention it (1Co 13, Jude 5).

Note that the **Holy Spirit speaks** and we must listen. He will revisit that idea at the end of today's message.

Imagine: **they witnessed** the miracle of deliverance from Egypt, God pulling back the waters of the Red Sea, the daily manna, and *yet they rebelled*. **Miracles** are such a blessing, **but they do not build strong Christians**. **Faith and perseverance** in the desert are what make us strong.

The example of **Israel in the wilderness** hits hard.

- **Three times** in today's passage, the preacher quotes this warning, 'Today, if you hear his voice, <sup>8</sup>do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion (3:7-8; 13; 4:7 NIV).'
- Like a preacher **hammering away** at his main point.

When did Israel rebel?

- When they wanted to go back to Egypt (Ex 14:3).
- When the 10 of the spies doubted (Nu 14:22).
- When they wanted water at Meribah (Ex 17:7).
- They made a gold calf at Mt. Sinai (Ex 32).
- The entire 40 years they tested God's patience!

It **does not matter** which incident of rebellion. The point is that **they were disciplined** to wander in the wilderness for forty years - until that rebellious generation died.

His point is that **rejection of Jesus is more serious than Israel's rejection of Moses in the wilderness**. By **connecting** their situation to Israel's failure, he is **pleading with them** to *not give up* their faith and hope.

'See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

<sup>13</sup>But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. <sup>14</sup>We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end (He 3:12-14 NIV).'

So far, the preacher has **warned them not to ...**

- Drift away (2:1).

- Ignore salvation (2:3).
- Harden hearts (3:8)
- Rebel (3:8).
- An unbelieving heart (3:12).

The **Israelites who died** in the desert *missed* 'the promised blessing of ... an earthly Canaan, *but ... (our) rebellion would forfeit the blessings of the new age.*'<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, we should ...

We should ...

- Pay careful attention to what we have heard (2:1).
- Fix our thoughts on Jesus (3:1).
- Hold firmly to faith & hope (3:6, 14).
- Listen to the Holy Spirit (3:7, 11).
- Encourage one another (3:13).

Our preacher has **not mentioned persecution** much yet, but we should encourage each other to be faithful.

- This is why you should be in church often – **isolation is dangerous**.<sup>6</sup>
- **The temptation now with digital ministry is to think we are receiving ministry just by getting content. No, isolation is the Devil's playground.**
- **I understand. I see people miss church and slowly drift and soon they are gone.** There is a **spiritual covering** that comes from being committed and getting involved in church. The **Amalekites** 'attacked all who were lagging behind (Dt 25:17).'

We are **called to persevere to the end**. *Only those* who **stay the course** and **finish** the race will receive the prize.

The **preacher segues** into the **anticipated rest** of the Promised Land, following Ps 95's order: 'So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest (He 3:11; Ps 95:11)."'

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<sup>5</sup> Bruce, *NICNT Hebrews*, 99.

<sup>6</sup> 'In isolation ... each individual ... was more likely to succumb to the subtle temptations ... but if they came together regularly for mutual encouragement ... (they) would be in less danger,' Bruce, *NICNT Hebrews*, 100.

'My rest,' God's rest. Just like God rested on the seventh day, they could put down roots, unpack, and enjoy a season of rest in the Promised Land.

He moves onto Joshua.

### 3. Better than Joshua, 4:1-11.

'For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. <sup>9</sup> There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; <sup>10</sup> for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. <sup>11</sup> Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience (He 4:8-11 NIV).'

Jesus is greater than Joshua, too. Joshua only offered them an earthly Promised Land.

Joshua and Jesus share the same name, so there is a real contrast between a temporary rest and a heavenly rest.

- By rest, the preacher means that someone has fulfilled God's plan for them.<sup>7</sup>
- The well done good and faithful servant.
- He will revisit this theme of rest in chapter 11, calling heaven a 'better country (He 11:16).'

Let's pause our look for just a minute.

I am **not worried about you** slipping back to Judaism, but I am worried about you falling away because of secularism – which is a **religion masquerading as a non-religion**. I believe this is **why many** children and grandchildren slipped away from faith.

#### Secularism (Paganism)

I am the highest authority but limited.

Richard Landry's first grader saying, 'my mommy says I don't have to do what you say.'

I am who I say I am or *make* myself to be.

This world is all there is.

#### Christianity

God is the highest authority, unlimited.

I am God's creation.

There is something beyond this world.

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<sup>7</sup> 'Completed his appointed work in accordance with God's will,' Bruce, *NICNT Hebrews*, 109.

History is what I make it.

History is moving towards a climax by God's unseen hand.

I can build utopia with science, education, and governmental power.

Utopia is only possible in the next sinless world.

Others are of less value than me.  
E.g., abortion is a way to deal with sexual liberty.

Others are of infinite value as God's image bearers.

Morality is what I say it is.

Morality is what God says it is.

I am not responsible, but victim of oppression (reasons vary).

I am responsible for my sin and actions.

Boundaryless sex is for identity, greed.

Sex is for procreation, pleasure within boundaries.

Big Three Questions ...

1. Where did I come from? Secularists avoid,<sup>8</sup> but we believe it all starts with the Creator.
2. What's wrong with the world? Secularists believe non-conformity, we believe that sin in the human heart is the root.
3. How can it be fixed? Secularists' solution is to demand more money, more power, more allegiance, and they will work things out.<sup>9</sup> Christians believe that Jesus' work on Calvary is the solution.

Do not trust your eternity to a mere human being but fix your eyes on Jesus until the end.

#### 4. Listen, 4:12-13.

At the **beginning** of this sermon segment the preacher said, 'The Holy Spirit says ... (3:7).' Now he **reminds his listeners** that ... 'For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged

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<sup>8</sup> The best example, in my opinion, is, Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos: How the Greatest Scientific Discoveries of the Century Reveal God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1993).

<sup>9</sup> Political activism is a new religion and competing religion, Voddie T. Bauchman, Jr., *Fault Lines: The Social Justice Movement and Evangelicalism's Looming Catastrophe* (Washington, DC: Salem Books, 2021), pp. 65-90.

sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. <sup>13</sup>Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account (He 4:12-13 NIV).'

This is one of the **golden passages** you should memorize from Hebrews.

The ancient Israelites **heard God's voice at Mt. Sinai** and were terrified (Ex 20:19), *and yet they rebelled*.

- God is **speaking**, if we will but listen.
- God is constantly trying **to get our attention**, if we will but listen.
- His word will **achieve its purpose** *if* we obey.
- God's word 'brings the **subconscious motives** to light.'<sup>10</sup>

While we can **conceal our inmost thoughts** from our neighbors or even our spouse, **nothing is hidden from God**. Stripped of all our masks, pretenses, and disguises, we are utterly at the mercy of God, the judge of all.

## Conclusion

When I was in high school I worked for my uncle mowing or helping with burials in his cemetery. It was a large cemetery and during the summer, it would take 5 men all week to mow it. In time I was given responsibility to mow about 3 acres of lawn in front of the cemetery with a five-gang reel mower. It was a lot of fun. The barn swallows would dive bomb and follow me to get bugs to eat. They are amazing flyers.

Whenever I started for the day, I had to fix my eyes on one of the fenceposts at the end otherwise my rows would be curvy and not look professional. To compound matters there was a sinkhole in the middle that I had to avoid. So, until that first row was done I could not relax. I had to not look at the sinkhole.

Someday, our eternal rest will come, until then ...

**Do not trust your eternity to a mere human being but fix your eyes on Jesus until the end.**

'Fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest (He 3:1 NIV).'

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<sup>10</sup> Bruce, *NICNT Hebrews*, 113.