

Fact Sheet for **“Jesus, Our High Priest”**  
**Hebrews 3:1-19**

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02/26/2017

Hebrews 3 is really tough to navigate, and is often understood to indicate that Christians can lose their salvation. But even those who take that view have themselves a hard time with Hebrews 6:4-6, which would seem to say that once you have fallen away you are toast. You can never come back. Today I want to provide you with a solid alternative on how to view this chapter.

**ESV <sup>1</sup> ¶ Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, <sup>2</sup> who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house.**

Listen to how the author of Hebrews refers to his readers. The author is addressing those who have identified with Christ.

Then, the author writes, “consider Jesus”. He is the high priest of our confession. Stop a moment and think about what this means. Think about the role of the high priest and the Day of Atonement. Then, think about our confession. *That confession is one of a right standing with God through grace and faith, not through works, not through any other sacrifice. It is finished!* How wonderfully freeing that is. We can approach the throne of grace without fear (see Hebrews 4:16).

The author has already written that Jesus is greater than both the prophets and the angels, now he writes that Jesus is even greater than Moses.

**<sup>3</sup> For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses-- as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. <sup>4</sup> (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) <sup>5</sup> Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, <sup>6</sup> but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.**

Moses was a servant. The word translated servant is found only here in the NT. It refers to an honored servant, who is far above a slave but still a servant. In contrast, Christ was faithful as a son. Jesus is greater than the Mosaic Law also.

And we are of His priestly house, if indeed we “hold fast” our confidence and our boasting in our hope. But what does that mean? Does being a part of Christ’s priestly house mean that we are saved, and not being a part of Christ’s priestly house mean we are lost? Don’t be so quick to answer this question. It requires a lot of careful thought.

**<sup>7</sup> ¶ Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,**

**"TODAY, IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,**

**<sup>8</sup> DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS IN THE REBELLION,  
ON THE DAY OF TESTING IN THE WILDERNESS,**

**<sup>9</sup> WHERE YOUR FATHERS PUT ME TO THE TEST  
AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS.**

**<sup>10</sup> THEREFORE I WAS PROVOKED WITH THAT GENERATION,  
AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART;  
THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN MY WAYS.'**

**<sup>11</sup> AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH,  
'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.'"**

This is itself is a reference to Numbers 14:22-23. The ten times God spoke about are as follows:

1. Ex 15:1-21 - Straw & Bricks
2. Ex 14:1-14 - Red Sea
3. Ex 15:22-25a - Bitter Water at Marah
4. Ex 16:1-36 - 1st Quail & Manna
5. Ex 17:1-7 - Rock Struck Once (Massah & Meribah)
6. Ex 32:1-35 - Golden Calf
7. Num 11:1-3 - Complaining (fire consumed outskirts of camp)
8. Num 11:4-35 - 2nd Quail
9. Num 12:1-15 - Miriam & Aaron
10. Numbers 13-14 - 12 Spies

The “rest” God spoke of was enjoying the Promised Land. This “rest” was not eternal salvation. And it would be wrong to assume that the entire Exodus generation was unregenerate.

**<sup>12</sup> Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup> For we have come to share in (the) Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. <sup>15</sup> As it is said, "TODAY, IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS AS IN THE REBELLION."**

The author of Hebrews is clearly taking off from many of the thoughts in Psalm 95. When he wrote “Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God” he was referring to the example of Israel rebelling against God in the wilderness. This led to God’s pronouncement that they would not enter the Promised Land. For the Exodus generation this *did not* mean that they were all unsaved. It *did* mean that they would not enjoy the “rest” God would have given them in the Promised Land. For the original readers of this book it *did not* mean that that they could lose their salvation if they didn’t persevere in faith. It *did* mean that they wouldn’t “enjoy” the freedom of resting in a grace-based salvation. This is what it meant by being part of Christ’s priestly house. How does this approach hold up? Consider the words of Hebrews 4:10.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 4:10** for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

Now the author asks and answers three questions.

**<sup>16</sup> For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?**

**<sup>17</sup> And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?**

**<sup>18</sup> And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?**

**<sup>19</sup> So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.**

The implication is “Listen to Christ and do not try to return to a works-based salvation!”

Are you resting in Christ? At the same time are you seeking to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? This can lead to a works-based faith if we are not careful.

Is your confidence as a Christian based on how well you perform for God? Or, is your confidence before God based on the immense grace you have received from Jesus Christ? This can be the source of great worship.