

**Thought for Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2021**  
**Pastor Gordon Hamilton**

**Hebrews 3:1-19**

In this third chapter we see the writer emphasising that Jesus is above the angels and now states that Jesus is also above the great prophets, verse 3; *‘Jesus has been found worthy of greater honour than Moses.’* So although Jesus was and is human, he is more than just you normal average human being. We know Moses was a very special person. I’m sure you will remember when Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration with Peter, John and James, it was with Elijah and Moses who Jesus spoke with, and Moses had died some 1,400 years before. Moses is the one who is held in high esteem by the Jews at Passover, Moses was the one who led the Israelites out of Egypt, through the Red Sea and into the desert, before Joshua took them into the Promised Land. As it says in verses 5 and 6; *‘Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house... but Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house.’* But talking about Moses gives the writer the opportunity to stress the point, that we must not be like the Israelites, who having been taken through the Red sea, took their eyes off of God. We are told in Exodus 14:22; *‘the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.’* If you had been one of the Israelites you would have recognised God’s hand on it, wouldn’t you? If that hadn’t convinced you God was at work, then I’m sure what happened next would have done. **Read Exodus 14:26-31...** and yet it wasn’t long after that those who saw that miracle, appear to have forgotten God’s hand at work. That is what our writer is warning us of. Let’s be honest, there are many people who know of God’s plan through Jesus Christ, who like those early Israelites, have forgotten God’s love for them and have turned their backs on the church. The writer here in verses 7-12 warns against turning away from God, more especially in verse 12 where he says; *‘See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful heart that turns you away from the living God.’* And the writer goes on to say that we must encourage each other, and others that faith in God, that belief in God is important. Sadly there are many people who have turned away from the church because of what they see in the people who attend church, who don’t live as people who believe in Jesus. In his book, Red Letter Christianity, Tony Campolo along with Shane Claiborne, challenge Christians, and in doing so, challenge themselves, to live as people who adhere to the words of Jesus. I am sure we all know the Lord’s Prayer and can recite it without having to think too much about it, yet do we take seriously what we are saying? *‘Give us this day our daily bread...’* That is a fair prayer request, even when the Israelites were in the desert God gave them manna to eat, manna means ‘what is it?’ because they had never seen it before. They were also told only to take enough for that day, unless it was the day before the Sabbath when they should take enough for two days. Every other day anything left over would end up with maggots, but not on the Sabbath. So as we ask for our daily bread, we don’t need to take too much. It was Ghandi who said; *‘There’s enough for everyone’s need, but not enough for everyone’s greed.’* **Read Acts 2:42-47...** Verse 13 of Hebrews 3 encourages us to *‘encourage one another.’* It can be difficult at times, in fact this last fourteen months have not been easy for any of us. Many people have lost their jobs, many have been furloughed and we thank God that the government have tried to help as much as they can, but many people have still found life very difficult. I am sure we are all looking forward to when the lockdown comes to an end and that we have the freedom to visit family and friends, without having to wear a mask. It brought it home to us all, I’m sure, when we saw the queen at her husband of 73 years funeral, adhering to the law, where only 30 people are allowed to attend a funeral, and the queen sat on her own, and wearing the mandatory face mask, and no big get together afterwards. There will always be people who don’t obey the rules but to see our monarch sticking to the rules, I felt

was encouraging, and I'm sure she could have pulled rank had she wanted to. As the writer to the Hebrews says here, v16-18; *'who were those who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed?'* The writer here is not saying we have to always obey the law of the land, there are times that the law could be used to subdue the people. We have seen the way the Chinese authorities are putting down the democratic movement in Hong Kong. Now that is, according to the Chinese government their right, to keep peace. And we see other governments going against, what we would call, people's human rights. We are called to do the 'right' thing, that does sometimes mean that we go against those who rule over us. We British have to hang our heads in shame at times, as we look back on some of the ways we have treated people. I have quoted Ghandi already today, but he believed in peaceful protests, and yet governments use force against peaceful protests, just to get their own way. Verse 12 says; *'See to it brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.'* As we have already seen, that was the problem with the Israelites, they had seen a massive miracle, and yet still didn't trust in the Lord their God. You will remember the words of Jesus to Thomas in John 20:29; *'Jesus told him, 'because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'* It appears that for many people, they've had an encounter with church, but not with Jesus. If we have had an encounter with Jesus then we have to show the love that Jesus showed to us. Being a Christian is not about attending a church, it is about being a church, a living church, and showing the love of Jesus in everything we do and say. Those Israelites that failed to remember God's goodness towards them, failed to reach the Promised Land, so don't let your salvation slip through your fingers. As the hymn says, *'Turn your eyes upon Jesus.'* Amen.

O soul, are you weary and troubled?  
No light in the darkness you see?  
There's light for a look at the Saviour,  
And life more abundant and free!

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of His glory and grace.*

Through death into life everlasting  
He passed, and we follow Him there;  
O'er us sin no more hath dominion—  
For more than conqu'rors we are!

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus...*

His Word shall not fail you—He promised;  
Believe Him, and all will be well:  
Then go to a world that is dying,  
His perfect salvation to tell!

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus...*