

WHERE ON EARTH DOES GOD LIVE?

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By the Book™ A Chapter by Chapter Bible Study Series from Jerry Vines Ministries
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Let's Begin

We often speak of the church building as God's house. At times we want a solemn atmosphere so we ask people to respect the "Lord's house" by being quiet. At other times, we desire to create a basic respect for church property, so we insist that certain activities should not be held in the "Lord's house." For example, we may have a policy which states, "there is to be no dancing in the Lord's house."

While it is right to insist on respect for church property as well as assuring the buildings are used for their proper intention, few, if any, Christians actually believe the church building is where God lives. Indeed if God has a physical address, we cannot identify it by street name and number.

The author's focus in this chapter is on "God's house." He states it succinctly, "But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we..." (v. 6a). Hence, as we make our way through chapter three, let's focus on the outline below:

- I. **God's House is Marked by Careful Consideration (v. 1)**
- II. **God's House is Marked by Grateful Appreciation (vv. 2-6a)**
- III. **God's House is Marked by Faithful Determination (v. 6b)**
- IV. **God's House is Marked by Powerful Devotion (vv. 7-19)**

I. God's House Is Marked by Careful Consideration (v. 1)

The author opens with these words, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (v. 1). Two characters are mentioned in this verse. First, the author speaks about *believers*. And the initial description we find is that believers have a new *character*; we are "holy brethren." We are "set apart" exclusively for God. Being members of His family, we have a newly bestowed Divine nature about us (cp. 2 Pet. 1:4).

In addition, we also have a new *calling*, a "heavenly calling" the author indicates. The Jewish people had an earthly calling, to be the earthly people of God. Yet Christians are "partakers" of an even higher calling. The term translated "partakers" carries the idea of sharing in a partnership. Imagine it. Believers are partners with God Almighty! Is remains our holy destiny.

Reflection Connection

Do you think the Jewish people still have a calling to be God's earthly people? Why or why not?

Second, the author speaks about the Savior. Usually, the term "apostle" is reserved for the original disciples of Jesus (including the Apostle Paul). However, the author calls Jesus our "Apostle." He does so because of His worth. The term "Apostle" literally means "sent one" John's Gospel is filled with indicators of Jesus' mission from the Father (cp. John 3:17, 34; 5:36; 7:39; 17:3). He was sent by the Father to be our Savior. In addition, the author mentions His *work*; that is, He is our "High Priest." He represents God to us. He is a go-between. We reach God through Him (John 14:6). Consequently, we are to "consider" Him. In other words, we must fix our minds upon Him.



II. God's House Is Marked by Grateful Appreciation (vv. 2-6a)

Already we have discovered Jesus is better than both the prophets and the angels. Now the author moves to another level and proclaims Jesus is higher than even Moses! To those steeped in the Old Testament, no person is beyond Moses, the one who talked directly with God. Note the author's words, "Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses *was faithful* in all his house. For this *man* was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some *man*; but he that built all things *is* God. And Moses verily *was faithful* in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we..." (vv. 2-6a).

Moses' significance to Israel is unprecedented. Yet, according to the author of Hebrews, Moses pointed beyond himself to a future, higher revelation in Jesus Christ (cp. John 5:46). He mentions several ways in which Jesus is higher than Moses.

Reflection Connection

How is faithfulness teased out in your personal life? Does your faithfulness at home conflict with your faithfulness to church? Explain.

First, Jesus is higher because of His *fidelity* (v. 2). Scripture teaches the faithfulness of Moses (Num. 12:7). He was reluctant even though he finally agreed to lead the Hebrew people out of Egypt's clutches. But it took two generations to get him where he wanted them to be. On the other hand, Jesus' faithfulness far surpassed that of Moses. He lived totally in the Father's will, never hesitating to fulfill all the Father planned.

Second, Jesus is higher because of His *majesty* (vv. 3-4). He possesses "more glory" and "more honor." While Moses is perhaps the highest honored person in the Old Testament, being mentioned over 700 times in the entire Bible, yet he was still only a part of the larger house. On the other hand, Jesus is not a part of the house but is over it. After all, He built it! As a builder has more honor than the house he builds, so Jesus has more honor than Moses.

Third, Jesus is higher because of His *deity* (vv. 5-6a). Moses was a unique servant of the Almighty. Because of this, he is honored with special recognition. However, Jesus is more than a servant; Jesus is God's only begotten Son!

III. God's House Is Marked by Faithful Determination (v. 6b)

The author makes it plain concerning the believer's identity—"whose house are we..." (v. 6a). But how do we know we are a part of the "house"? How do we know we are saved? The author offers a test, "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (v. 6b). Continuance is the proof of reality. Our faith is demonstrated by our perseverance (cp. 1 John 2:19).

According to the author, we are to "hold fast." The term translated "hold fast" was a nautical term used of ships to stay on course. Understand: he does not suggest believers are to "hold fast" their salvation. We cannot keep ourselves saved anymore than we may get ourselves saved. It is only by grace alone through



faith alone in Jesus Christ that we are saved and remain saved from our sin (cp. Eph. 2:8-10). Rather, we are to “hold fast” our “confidence” and our “rejoicing”.

Consequently, there are two measures which keep our lives on course with the Lord Jesus Christ. First, we are to exhibit a *holy boldness*. The Greek term translated as the English word “confidence” carries the idea of free and fearless speech. In other words, we have a fundamental boldness in our speaking. We are not afraid to live for Jesus. Confidence increases the likelihood we will share the Gospel with the lost. Confidence prods us toward obedience.

Second, we are to exhibit a *happy boastfulness*. The author says we are to keep on course by “rejoicing.” In fact, we are to rejoice “firmly to the end.” Joy is the ground of our boasting. Hence, boasting is not arrogance. Instead it is the fuel of our hope. Nor do we boast about ourselves. Rather we boast in what Jesus Christ does for us. We do not just endure the Christian life; we enjoy it! Furthermore, if joy ever recedes from our Christian experience, the only way to recover it is to surrender one’s self to the Lord afresh and anew, requesting He restores joy in one’s soul (cp. Psalm 51:12).

IV. God’s House is Marked by Powerful Devotion (vv. 7-19)

As incredible as it sounds, it remains possible for a person to be saved, destined for heaven and yet lead a miserable, defeated and wasted life. Thus, there are two possible lifestyles for the believer. On the one hand, a Christian can be a “Canaan Christian.” A “Canaan Christian” is one who lives a life of victory in the Lord Jesus; one who has entered the “promised land” of joy, obedience, blessings and spiritual satisfaction. On the other, there is the “Wilderness Christian.” The “Wilderness Christian” is a defeated Christian; one who exists as a wanderer in a spiritual desert.

As a negative example, the author of Hebrews offered an historical picture of the rebellious Israel to inspire believers. He records the tragedy of disbelief in these words, “Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, “Today if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years” (vv. 7-9; cp. vv. 15-16).

A “Canaan Christian” is one who lives a life of victory in the Lord Jesus; one who has entered the “promised land” of joy, obedience, blessings and spiritual satisfaction.



First, we glean the truth as to how Israel rebelled. Quoting from Psalms 95: 7-11, the author recounts the tragic days of Israel in the wilderness. God wanted the people to live in freedom. He sent Moses as deliverer to set the captives free. But freedom was not in just being released from Egypt; freedom was in the promised land of Canaan. What happened that Israel did not make it to Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey? God's plan included not only their exit from Egypt but also their entrance into Canaan.

Later in the chapter, the author makes it clear what happened to Israel. He writes, "But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?* And to whom swore he that

Sin always gets easier.

they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (vv. 17-19). After getting to the edge of Canaan, the people rebelled and turned back. They failed to fulfill their intended destiny. And, what was the reason they did not succeed? One word answers the question—*unbelief*. They failed because of their unbelief.

Second, we glean the truth as to how God responded (vv. 10-11). God explicitly said, "I was grieved with that generation." The term "grieved" bears the meaning of offense and disgust. God was sorely disappointed Israel rebelled and did not enter the promised land. Adding to the offense was Israel's pattern of behavior. In short, they "always go astray." One sin led to another. One act of rebellion—perhaps only a little resistance to His will—led to greater acts of rebellion. Sin always gets easier. When we make sin a habit, we actually begin to behave unconsciously. In fact, we do not even realize we are sinning any more. We become callous, hardened to the truth.

It is at this point, God proclaimed the people would "not enter my rest." These words may be the most dreadful words spoken to believers in all the Bible. God is so disgusted, He says His people will receive no rest. The tragic story of Israel moves us to tears. It should inspire us to obey!

The solution is to "take heed" and examine ourselves to see whether there is in us a "heart of unbelief" (v. 12). We must be on the watch. Is it possible for a believer to harden himself or herself toward God? The tragic answer is yes. Indeed every problem we face, in the end, is a heart problem. Therefore, the author instructs us to "exhort" other believers "daily." Since we are a family of God—a fellowship of faith—we must encourage each other to avoid the tragedy of disbelief. A lack of encouragement means some could "depart from the living God," losing the blessings of God (v. 12), or could become "hardened," only to embrace "deceitfulness" (v. 13).

Finally, the author once again emphasizes "holding" on to the "confidence" we all must possess to live victorious lives for Him (v. 14). Continuation in our faith is the best possible proof of our faith. It gives our faith profession of faith bite (cp. 1 John 2:19).

Reflection Connection

As you reflect upon your faith, are there circumstance you can imagine when God would say to you, "you cannot enter my rest?" If so, what might those circumstances look like?



Golden Greek Nugget

The author spoke of the possibility of becoming “hardened” in our hearts toward God (v. 13). The Greek term translated “hardened” is *skleruno*, and means “to make dry or hard.” It provokes images of clay baked in the hot sun, which becomes dry and crusty. Unbelief always ends in hardened hearts.

Wrap Up

In this chapter, God has given us instructions to “take heed” so that our faith will not become stale nor our lives defeated. Jesus performed a marvelous work by “destroying” the “work of the devil.” Consequently, we have victory in Christ. But we must press on, remaining confident and possessing complete joy in Him.

