

Chapter 3

V1 Directs our attention to Jesus

V2 Jesus is faithful

V1-2 Moses was the supreme figure from the OT for the Jews. Just as in Ch 2 the writer makes it clear that Jesus was greater than angels, now he makes it clear that Jesus is greater than Moses. Moses was then the advocate with God, Jesus is our new advocate with God. The OT order is inferior to the NT order.

V5-6 Moses was a servant, Christ is son and heir. Moses was in charge of the people of Israel, Christ is over all nations. We need to be persistent in our faith.

V2-8 The Jews hardened their hearts against Moses (and God) – now he's saying don't harden your hearts against Jesus. Remember parable of sower.

V7-11 The work of Jesus was like a new Exodus he's the true Passover. This reproduces Psalm 95. Again don't harden your hearts. Remember the spies bringing back a bad report on the promised land. New generation being told not to follow bad example of ancestors.

V12 the judgement of the wilderness fell on the Israelites who rejected God's plan. They never entered the promised land. The Israelites rejected their appointed leaders – to reject Christ is to do the same. To renounce the gospel in favour of the old order is sin.

V13 Christians need to stick together to reject peer and other pressures.

V14 perseverance again

V15-19 If we witness God's work but don't accept it he's angry.

Chapter 4

V1 The promise of entering God's rest remains open – but it's not automatic. We can miss it like a whole generation missed the promised land. It's not just the hearing of the gospel which brings salvation – we need to have faith.

V2 the talk about just as they did refers to the ten spies who spied out the promised land, the earlier deliverance from Egypt etc. The Israelites will be saved if they keep their covenant faith.

V3 is a quote from Ps95:11 (as is verse 4)

V4 He has said somewhere does not mean the author has forgotten but refers to the fact that all scripture is inspired.

V3-5 those who accept the message of the gospel in faith enter the rest of God. The rest is real but Israel has failed to obtain it.

V6-7 We need to receive the message of the gospel now today. The Hebrew text doesn't say that this was a Psalm of David but the LXX does.

V8 our rest is not the promised land, the Jews were already there.

V9-10 although God entered his Sabbath rest he continued to sustain creation as John 5:17 makes clear. Our Sabbath rest will be a new experience which we don't have in this life.

V11-13 we need to make sure we enter this rest and not miss it like a generation of Israelites did.

V12 word here refers to God's spoken word not Jesus as the Word

V13 we may conceal our inner being from ourselves and our neighbours, but we can't conceal it from God.

V14-16 Jesus is our great high priest. He is fully man but he doesn't sin. Rabbis disputed whether there were 3 or 7 heavens, but we don't need to worry – although note the word is in the plural

Chapter 5

V1 Aaron and his successors were men but divinely appointed. Sacrifices – Day of Atonement etc

V2 he needs not only to perform the rituals but to identify with us. This is the aspect of the Law which the Pharisees missed. The ignorant could be forgiven through sacrifice, deliberate sin not. Jesus can deal gently with us because he was tempted just as we are.

V3 high priest has to offer a sacrifice for himself first on the Day of Atonement. Jesus as the sinless one didn't need to do this.

V5 Like Aaron Jesus was appointed by God. Melchizedek was King of Salem probably Jerusalem so Davidic King was priest in his line – Jesus couldn't be a priest in the Aaronic line because he derives from the house of Judah. Christ couldn't appoint himself high priest he was appointed by God.

V6 Psalm 110 gives the Messiah a role as priest in the order of Melchizedek. Some strands of Judaism acknowledged two Messiah's – the Messiah of the house of David and the priestly Messiah – for Christians there is only one Messiah.

Under the Hasmonaeans, from Jonathan Maccabaeus onward, the chief priesthood and the chief civil power in Israel were combined in one person; but even if some justification for this unwonted combination was sought in the tradition of Melchizedek's royal priesthood, the justification was empty, for the Hasmonaeans had nothing to do with Melchizedek. Indeed, the most pious groups in Israel strongly disapproved of the Hasmonaeans' assumption of the high priesthood,³⁶ and some of them—in particular, the community of Qumran—refused to recognize their usurpation of the sacred office, preferring to cherish the hope of a day when the legitimate line of Zadok would again be invested with the high-priestly dignity in a purified temple in a new Jerusalem.

V7 The high priest must be able to sympathise with his people. Probably refers to Gethsemane – although Jesus was not delivered from death.

V8 even though Jesus was the Son of God he was not exempted from the common law that we learn and are sanctified through suffering. Jesus' sufferings were a necessary consequence of his obedience to the Father. The Christians to whom this letter was addressed could escape suffering by renouncing Christ. Our author urges them to press on, in spite of all the suffering it may involve, and he sets before them the example of Jesus, who set his face "like a flint," refusing to turn back, and was thus made "perfect through sufferings." His example and his present aid might well encourage them too to persevere; no hardship could befall them in which he did not sympathize with them.

V9-10 To suffer death for God's sake is the attainment of perfection. but the essence of the perfection which our author has in mind consists in the twofold fact that by his suffering and death Christ (*a*) became to all who obey him "the source of eternal salvation" and (*b*) was "acclaimed by God as high priest after the order of Melchizedek." One can clearly recognize the motif of humiliation and suffering followed by exaltation in glory which pervades the primitive *kerygma*.

The expression translated "the source [or 'cause,' or 'author'] of salvation" is found in classical Greek;⁷² Philo also uses it—with regard to Noah, for example, and to the brazen serpent of wilderness days. Here it has practically the same meaning as "the pioneer of their salvation" in 2:10. The salvation which Jesus has procured is an "eternal" one.

Christian salvation is eternal.

V11 Melchizedek's person and office are subjects of deep import, he says, but his readers may not be in a position to grasp what he has to say in this regard because their minds are so sluggish.

V12 You've been Christians for a long time and by now you ought to be able to teach others, but you yourselves still need to be taught. You don't only need to learn deep things like the Melchizedek idea but the very basics. Paul uses this idea in 1 Cor 3:1 "Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men?" (1Co 3:1-3 NIV)

v13-14 The immaturity of the people addressed by our author, which caused him to doubt whether they were able to appreciate his teaching about the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ, was due to a disinclination to press on in the Christian way.

Chapter 6

V1 having told his readers they aren't ready for solid food the writer now goes on to give it to them. Contrast this with Paul who says he will continue to feed them with milk.

V1-2 give us a list of what were then regarded as basic Christian doctrines. We see that Jewish belief and practices were used as a foundation. Note doesn't use *baptisma* but word which refers more to cleansing by washing.

V3 the similarity between Christianity and Judaism gave rise to the dangerous possibility of gradually renouncing elements of the faith without feeling you had given it up.

V4-6 The reason why there is no point in laying the foundation over again is now stated: apostasy is irremediable. Once more our author emphasizes that continuance is the test of reality. In these verses he is not questioning the perseverance of the saints; we might say that rather he is insisting that those who persevere are the true saints. But in fact he is stating a practical truth that has verified itself repeatedly in the experience of the church. Those who have shared the covenant privileges of the people of God, and then deliberately renounce them, are the most difficult persons of all to reclaim for the faith.

Tasted the heavenly gift ? Eucharist.