

# **“Hold Fast Your Confession in Jesus!”**

## **Part 1**

### **Hebrews 3:1-19**

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Remember the first two chapters of Hebrews. Jesus is higher than the angels (Hebrews 1:1-2:4). Jesus temporarily became lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:5-18). He was writing to people who knew the Scriptures well. This was not milk... it was meat! And his focus was on Jesus. Now, the author continued to focus on Jesus in a section of this book that will last until late in the fourth chapter.

The human author of this book had written to a distinctly Hebrew/Christian audience. Remember that the early church was in essence a Messianic group. It was only later, with the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, that the Gentiles were welcomed in without needing to become Jewish. Hebrew society was a mixed bag when it came to salvation. There were both saved Jews and unsaved Jews... but they were still Jews. Likewise, some of the Jewish recipients of this book had truly put their faith in Christ. But others were still considering trusting in Jesus.

**Hebrews 3:1** The words “holy brothers” has sort of a double meaning. First, he was writing to a group of people who were in the early church and were from a Jewish background. They were Jewish brothers. Then most of them were Christians. They would indeed be “holy brothers.” However, some were what we would today call “seekers.” These were folks who were not yet Christians... but were considering. The “heavenly calling” the author refers to also has sort of a double meaning. It clearly referred to the Christian’s calling to Christ... but it also had the echoes of the calling to the Jews to be God’s people... Abraham’s descendants.

**Hebrews 3:2-4** Jesus was faithful to God the Father, not only in life but also in His death on a cross. Moses was the most important individual in Hebrew history. The Law came through him. The only other person that could possibly give him a run for his money was Abraham. The author of Hebrews has introduced the image of a physical house, something that he would use as a metaphor.

**Hebrews 3:5** God’s house that Moses was faithful in was the Jewish nation, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The word translated servant only appears here in the New Testament. It refers to an honored servant, who is far above a slave but still a servant. Moses was an honored servant of God, but still just a servant.

**Hebrews 3:6** Moses was a servant, but Christ was a son. And we are of God’s house, if indeed we “hold fast” our confidence in Jesus. Moses was faithful in the nation of the genetic people of God, but Christ is faithful over the spiritual people of God. Now think carefully about this. Does the last sentence of this verse say that we can be part of God’s spiritual house... then slip away from our confidence in Christ... then no longer be a part of God’s spiritual house? In other words, we can lose our salvation? This is building too many details into the words. But could the second sentence of this verse mean that those who hold fast their confidence in Christ are a part of God’s spiritual house... and they will not slip away? It seems a lot more reasonable to view the author’s words this way.

**Hebrews 3:7-11** This quote is from Psalm 95:7b-11. With this quote we need to make a full stop for a moment. This Psalm is loosely referencing an event with the 12 spies in Numbers 13 and 14. The word “test” and the reference to forty years are unmistakable. But consider that last word “rest.” Although it appears in Psalm 95:11 it does not appear in Numbers 13-14. So, where does it come from? It comes from Deuteronomy 12:9-10. The word “rest” appears here in relation to their inheritance in the Promised

Land. This rest was the rest from all their enemies. It was *not* eternal salvation. Also, this “rest” was *not* eternal salvation in Psalm 95. When God spoke in Numbers 14:22-23 that those who were older than 20 and who had put Him to the test ten times would not enter the Promised Land, he was not saying that they all were unsaved.

Take a look at the ten times when they put God to the test by grumbling... and worse..

Exodus 15:1-21 - Straw & Bricks

Exodus 14:1-14 - Red Sea

Exodus 15:22-25a - Bitter Water at Marah

Exodus 16:1-36 - 1st Quail & Manna

Exodus 17:1-7 - Rock Struck Once (Massah & Meribah)

Exodus 32:1-35 - Golden Calf

Numbers 11:1-3 - Complaining (fire consumed outskirts of the camp)

Numbers 11:4-35 - 2nd Quail

Numbers 12:1-15 - Miriam & Aaron

Numbers 13-14 - 12 Spies

**Hebrews 3:12** Here the author of Hebrews will begin to use this event in Israel's past as an illustration. The author is warning them about the danger of falling away... of not being saved. I mentioned last week the way we regularly use illustrations to make our point. Our usage may have absolutely no connection with the illustration we are citing (*“resistance is futile” in one example*). The author of Hebrews is using Psalm 95 in this same way and will be using the word “rest” in the next chapter to be referring to eternal salvation, while in Psalm 95 it did not.

So, who is in danger of falling away in Hebrews 3:12? Is it those who have already placed their faith in Christ and have become Christians? Or is it the seekers who have finally decided not to put their faith in Christ in the first place? This second option fits the context of Hebrews... and the rest of the New Testament... better.

**Hebrews 3:13-15** The rebellion was with the people's response to the 12 spies. This led to God's pronouncement that most would not enter the “rest” God had prepared for them in the Promised Land. It *did not* mean that they were all unsaved. For the original readers of the book of Hebrews the author *did not* mean that that they could lose their salvation if they didn't persevere in faith. It *did* mean that they would not “enjoy” the freedom of being saved by resting in a grace-based salvation. Going back to relying on the old familiarity of a works-based salvation may have emotionally been more comfortable. Imagine what it would have been like to transition to a faith-based understanding of salvation from a works-based one. How does this approach hold up? Consider Hebrews 4:10.

**Hebrews 3:16-19** Now the author asks and answers three questions. If we don't believe (have faith in) Christ we will miss out on “resting” in Him.

Are you resting in Christ? At the same time are you seeking to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? 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?

But I want to leave you with another application. Consider the people's reaction to the 12 spies in Numbers 13 and 14 again. They tested God with their grumbling. Do you implicitly trust God in your circumstances, or do you find yourself grumbling also? You have to ask the question, “Am I testing God.” It's something we should think about.