

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 305 – November 1st – Hebrews 3:1-19

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Hebrews

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| Bruce, FF | <i>The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1964 |
| Guthrie, Donald | <i>Hebrews</i> (Tyndale Commentary), IVP, Leicester, 1983 |
| Hughes, Philip Edgcombe | <i>A Commentary on The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1977 |
| Westcott, BF | <i>The Epistle to the Hebrews</i> , Macmillan, London, 1889 |

Hebrews 3

"The writer shows that Moses' status as a servant was greatly inferior to Jesus' status as son. Moreover, in spite of his greatness, Moses never achieved his aim of leading the Israelites into the promised land; this too is in strong contrast to the completed work of Christ which is strongly stressed later in the epistle." Guthrie

Verse 1

Ὅθεν, ἀδελφοὶ ἅγιοι, κλήσεως ἐπουρανίου μέτοχοι, κατανοήσατε τὸν ἀπόστολον καὶ ἀρχιερέα τῆς ὁμολογίας ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν,
ὅθεν see 2:17

"The term *brethren* which the author uses to address the recipients of the letter shows that, though they are in need of correction and admonition, he has not ceased to regard them as his fellow Christians and companions in the faith." Hughes.

ἅγιος, α, ον holy
κλησις, εως f call, calling
ἐπουρανιος, ον heavenly, celestial

Our calling is heavenly both in its origin and in its end.

μετοχος, ου m one who shares in, partner
κατανοεω consider, think of

"In Christ the functions of Moses and Aaron are combined, each in an infinitely loftier form." Westcott.
The designation of Christ as 'apostle' is unparalleled in the NT – though John speaks of Jesus having been 'sent' by the Father even as he is sending the apostles into the world (Jn 20:21 cf. 17:18).

ὁμολογια, ας f confession, profession

Verse 2

πιστὸν ὄντα τῷ ποιήσαντι αὐτὸν ὡς καὶ Μωϋσῆς ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ.

πιστος, η, ον see 2:17
ποιήσαντι Verb, aor act ptc, m dat s ποιεω

The sense here is 'appointed' – "who invested him with his office" Westcott. For this use of ποιεω cf. Mk 3:14.
Christ came only to do the Father's will, cf. 10:7,9.

όλος, η, ον whole, all

Of the reading ὄλω Metzger, on behalf of the UBS Committee writes, "Both external evidence and transcriptional probabilities are singularly difficult to evaluate. On the one hand, ὄλω is read by a wide variety of text-types, but is suspect as having been conformed to the text of v.5 and/or Numb 12:17. On the other hand, several early and excellent witnesses lack ὄλω, but the omission may be a deliberate (Alexandrian?) emendation, introduced to render the OT quotation more appropriate to the argument (in v.2 'whole' disturbs the parallelism between Moses and Jesus)."

οικος, ου m house, household, family

The allusion is to Numb 12:7.

Verse 3

πλείονος γὰρ οὗτος δόξης παρὰ Μωϋσῆν ἠξίωται καθ' ὅσον πλείονα τιμὴν ἔχει τοῦ οἴκου ὁ κατασκευάσας αὐτόν·

πλειων, πλειον οι πλειον more
δοξα, ης f glory, splendour
ἠξίωται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s ἄξιωω
consider worthy, make worthy
ὁσος, η, ον correlative pronoun, as much as,
καθ ὅσον to the degree that
τιμη, ης f honour
κατασκευάσας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s
κατασκευαζω prepare, build, furnish

"The concept of Christ as the builder of the house is probably based on the messianic prophecy of Zechariah 6:12f., which declares: 'Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall grow up in his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord. It is he who shall build the temple of the Lord, and shall bear royal honour, and shall sit and rule upon his throne.' It also rests on God's promise to David that he would raise up for him a son who will build a house for God and whose throne would be established forever (1 Chr 17:11f.). As Mediator, Redeemer, and Lord, Jesus Christ is the builder of the house, the *ecclesia*, of God's people, who as 'living stones' are 'built into a spiritual house' (1 Pet 2:5) and 'a holy temple' (Eph 2:21). Moses, a truly great figure, was nonetheless a member of the household and indeed a servant in it (v.5)." Hughes.

Verse 4

πᾶς γὰρ οἶκος κατασκευάζεται ὑπὸ τινοῦ, ὃ δὲ πάντα κατασκευάσας θεός.

κατασκευάσας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s
κατασκευαζῶ

Treated parenthetically in many translations.

Verse 5

καὶ Μωϋσῆς μὲν πιστός ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ
ὡς θεράπων εἰς μαρτύριον τῶν
λαληθησομένων,

The contrast suggested by μὲν ... δε is between ἐν ... τῷ οἴκῳ and ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον and also between θεράπων and υἱός.

πιστός, η, ον see 2:17
ὅλος, η, ον whole, all
θεράπων, οντος m servant

This word occurs here only in the NT.

μαρτυριον, ου n testimony, witness,
evidence
λαληθησομένων Verb, fut pass ptc, gen pl
λαλεῶ speak, talk

"By God through the prophets and finally through Christ (1:1)." Westcott.
"That is to say, an important element of Moses' stewardship was that of witness, not to himself as though he were the end and fulfilment of God's purposes, but to realities which were still future and would come to expression in the incomparably greater person of Christ."
Hughes. Cf. Jn 5:46.

Verse 6

Χριστὸς δὲ ὡς υἱὸς ἐπὶ τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ· ὃς οἶκος ἐσμὲν ἡμεῖς, ἐὰν τὴν παρρησίαν καὶ τὸ καύχημα τῆς ἐλπίδος κατάσχωμεν.

Christians now, rather than Jews, are the house of God. Cf. Gal 6:10; Eph 2:19; 1 Peter 4:17.

ἐὰν if, even if
παρρησια, ας f boldness, assurance
καύχημα, τος n boasting, pride

Cf. Rom 5:2.

ἐλπις, ιδος f hope

"The conception of 'hope' occupies an important place in the Epistle... Hope is related to Faith as the energetic activity of life is related to life. Through hope the power of faith is seen in regard to the future. Hope gives distinctness to the objects of faith." Westcott.
The readers of this letter are to boast in their hope rather than being ashamed of it.

κατάσχωμεν Verb, aor act subj, 1 pl κατεχῶ
hold fast

Cf. Jn 8:31. Bruce remarks on the "repeated insistence" in Hebrews "on the fact that continuance in the Christian life is the test of reality."

"It must not be imagined that our author is speaking only theoretically rather than addressing himself to the realities of the situation. His perception of the perilous state of this particular community was what impelled him to undertake the writing of this epistle. His readers, he discerns, are in danger of wavering under the influence of strange ideas and hostile pressures. Like Christians in every age, they are face to face with perplexities and temptations. They are exhorted accordingly not to weaken and retire from the struggle, and reminded that only if they *hold fast* are they God's 'house.' Nor does an admonition of this kind conflict with the dominical and apostolic teaching that the Christian's eternal security is dependent not upon himself but on Christ and his merits alone (cf. Jn 5:24; 6:37; 10:27-29; Acts 2:47; Rom 11:6f.; 1 Cor 1:26ff.; 2 Cor 5:18ff.; Eph 2:8-10). But it does mean that a man whose profession of faith is contradicted by the quality of his life should examine himself and see whether he is a Christian at all (2 Cor 13:5). Security in Christ does not absolve one from personal responsibility: quite the contrary, for the regenerate man is under total obligation to God. Seriousness in believing should manifest itself in seriousness concerning doctrine and conduct. And this is applicable to communities as well as individuals; hence the incitements to the seven churches of the Apocalypse to overcome, to be faithful unto death, and to hold fast until Christ comes (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 25f.; 3:5, 11f., 21)." Hughes.

Verses 7-11

"The comparison of Christ with Moses leads naturally to a comparison of those who respectively received their teaching." Westcott

Verse 7

Διό, καθὼς λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον· Σήμερον ἐὰν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε,

διο therefore, for this reason

Cf. Ps 95. Hughes comments, "Plainly, the wilderness setting of this quotation would have had particular appropriateness for a group or community whose expectations were to a greater or lesser degree coloured by teachings similar to those of the Dead Sea Sect, for the adherents of the latter had withdrawn themselves to the wilderness with the express intention of reconstructing the exodus situation of their forefathers under Moses, there by discipline and faithfulness to prepare themselves for the establishment of the kingdom of righteousness.

"This formula *as the Holy Spirit says* which introduces the quotation has the effect of demanding the serious attention of the readers and emphasising the extreme seriousness of the warning conveyed in the quotation: it is none other than the Holy Spirit who is admonishing them through this passage of Scripture. While it is doubtless true that the author is not primarily concerned here with the doctrine of biblical inspiration, yet these few words disclose in a manner which is quite unforced the attitude with which he regards Scripture."

Hughes goes on to comment on the author's conviction that what was spoken by God long ago remains of relevance; "He regards Scripture not as a dead letter of a bygone period but as fully existential in its significance, so that what was spoken or written in the wilderness situation centuries before continues to have a dynamic applicability to the people of God in his own day."

σημερον today

Verse 8

μη σκληρόνητε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν ὡς ἐν τῷ παραπικρασμῷ, κατὰ τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ πειρασμοῦ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ,

σκληρυνω make stubborn

παραπικρασμος, ου m rebellion (during the time of Israel's wandering in the wilderness)

πειρασμος, ου m period or process of testing, trial, temptation

The original has the proper names Meribah and Massah. The LXX may have intended Παραπικρασμος and Πειρασμος as proper names. The incidents concerned span the whole period of the forty years (Num 20:1ff; Ex 17:1ff; cf. Deut 33:8).

ἐρημος, ου f deserted place, desert

Verse 9

οὗ ἐπείρασαν οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν ἐν δοκιμασίᾳ καὶ εἶδον τὰ ἔργα μου

οὗ adv where

ἐκπειραζω put to the test, tempt

Westcott suggests that the absence of a direct object suggests that they tested not God but his works. However, it is probably better to understand the object of the testing to be implied and to be God himself.

πατηρ, πατρος m father

δοκιμασια, ας f test, testing

εἶδον Verb, aor act ind, 1s & 3pl ὁραω see

Verse 10

τεσσεράκοντα ἔτη· διὸ προσώχθισα τῇ γενεᾷ ταύτῃ καὶ εἶπον· Ἄει πλανῶνται τῇ καρδίᾳ· αὐτοὶ δὲ οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τὰς ὁδοὺς μου·

τεσσερακοντα forty

ἔτη Noun, nom & acc pl ἔτος, ους n year

In the original these words go with the following clause.

Westcott suggests that "The period had a significant coincidence with the interval which had elapsed since the Passion at the time when the Epistle was written."

διὸ see v.7

προσοχθίζω be angry

The original, τῆ suggests loathing.

γενεα, ας f generation

εἶπον Verb, aor act indic, 1s & 3pl λεγω

ἀει always, constantly

πλαναω lead astray, mislead, deceive

ἔγνωσαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl γινωσκω

ὁδος, ου f way, path

Verse 11

ὡς ὄμοσα ἐν τῇ ὀργῇ μου· εἰ εἰσελεύσονται εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσίν μου.

ὄμοσα Verb, aor act indic, 1 s ὀμνυω swear, vow, make an oath

ὀργη, ης f wrath, anger

εἰσελεύσονται Verb, fut midd dep indic, 3 pl

εἰσερχομαι enter, go in, come in

The phrase εἰ εἰς. means "They shall by no means enter ..." Cf. Mk 8:12 and Gen 14:23; Num 14:30; 1 Sam 3:17.

καταπαυσις, εως f place of rest, rest

"At the first the occupation of the promised land was treated as being ideally the fulfilment of the highest destiny of Israel in perfect fellowship with God (Lev 26:11f). But the partial outward accomplishment of the national hope necessarily fixed attention upon the spiritual realities with which the imperfect earthly blessings corresponded. The unsatisfying character of the temporal inheritance quickened aspirations after a truer inheritance which the prophets cherished and deepened." Westcott

Verse 12

βλέπετε, ἀδελφοί, μήποτε ἔσται ἐν τινὶ ὑμῶν καρδία πονηρὰ ἀπιστίας ἐν τῷ ἀποστῆναι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ζῶντος,

βλεπω see

Note the ἀδελφοί "thus indicating that, while he finds it necessary to rebuke them sternly, he does not despair of there being true faith, and faithfulness, among them." Hughes.

μηποτε lest, otherwise

ἔσται Verb, fut indic, 3 s εἶμι

πονηρος, α, ον evil, bad, wicked

ἀπιστια, ας f unbelief

ἀποστῆναι Verb, aor act infin ἀφισταμαι

(verb dep in all forms but aorist) leave, go

away, desert, commit apostasy

ζωω live, be alive

"In old times the glory of Israel was the knowledge of 'the living God'; but now to fall back from Christianity to Judaism was really to revolt from him (comp, 6:5ff), for as God is living so the revelation He gives of Himself is progressive." Westcott. On the evil of apostasy, cf. 2 Peter 2:15, 20f.

Verse 13

ἀλλὰ παρακαλεῖτε ἑαυτοὺς καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν, ἄχρις οὗ τὸ Σήμερον καλεῖται, ἵνα μὴ σκληρυνθῇ τις ἐξ ὑμῶν ἀπάτη τῆς ἀμαρτίας·

παρακαλεω exhort, encourage

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον reflexive pronoun,

himself, herself, itself

Here equivalent to ἀλληλους (one another), cf. Eph 4:32; Col 3:13. "An important means for withstanding the enticement to apostasy is that of mutual exhortation or admonition. Christians have a corporate as well as an individual responsibility." Hughes.

ἐκαστος, η, ον each, every

καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν day by day. "How different might have been the story of the Israelites in the wilderness if only they had daily fostered among themselves a constant faith in God instead of mutually inciting a spirit of rebellion and unbelief!" Hughes.

ἄχρι (and ἄχρις) prep with gen until; ἄχρι οὗ until, as long as

σημερον see v.7

I.e. "as long as the present day of God's grace endures." Hughes.

σκληρυνθῇ Verb, aor pass subj, 2 s

σκληρυνω make stubborn; pass be stubborn, be hardened

ἀπατη, ης f deception

ἀμαρτια, ας f sin

Westcott says that "Sin is represented as an active, aggressive power." Cf. 12:4.

Verse 14

μέτοχοι γὰρ τοῦ Χριστοῦ γεγόναμεν, ἐάνπερ τὴν ἀρχὴν τῆς ὑποστάσεως μέχρι τέλους βεβαίαν κατάσχωμεν.

μετοχος, ου m see v.1

γεγόναμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl γινομαι

Westcott draws attention to the article ὁ Χριστος, "the Christ, the hope of our fathers."

ἐάν if; ἐάνπερ if only

ἀρχη, ης f beginning, first principle
 ὑποστασις, εως f confidence, assurance,
 conviction

Expresses "that resolute confidence which opposes a strong resistance to all assaults. It is used in late Greek writers for firmness of endurance under torture." Westcott.

την ἀρχην της ὑποστασεως the confidence we had at the beginning, i.e. when we first became Christians. Cf. 6:10.

μεχρι and μεχρις conj until

τελος, ους n end

βεβαιος, α, ον reliable, firm

On βεβαιος cf. 2:2; 6:19. What God has spoken is sure, firm and unshakeable, therefore we may lay hold of it with unshakable confidence.

κατάσχωμεν Verb, aor act subj, 1 pl κατεχω see v.6

Cf. also 10:23. 'if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence unto the end.' It is only continuance in the Christian faith that demonstrates a genuine participation in Christ – that we truly belong to him and have a share in his kingdom.

Verse 15

ἐν τῷ λέγεσθαι· Σήμερον ἐὰν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτοῦ ἀκούσητε, Μὴ σκληρύνητε τὰς καρδίας ὑμῶν ὡς ἐν τῷ παραπικρασμῷ.

Repeats the quotation from vv 7 & 8, for which see vocabulary.

Many prefer to link v.15 with the verses that follow rather than those which precede. The repetition of this verse recalls the entire passage cited in vv 7-11.

Verse 16

τίνες γὰρ ἀκούσαντες παρεπίκραναν; ἀλλ' οὐ πάντες οἱ ἐξεληθόντες ἐξ Αἰγύπτου διὰ Μωϋσέως;

παρεπίκραναν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl
 παραπικραίνω rebel

Westcott draws attention to the sequence of thought in verses 16-19. The very people whom God had rescued were those who rebelled against him and so were rejected. The phrases are all introduced with interrogative pronouns, τινες ... τισιν ... Who? ... With whom?

πάντες Adjective, m nom pl πας

The faith of Joshua and Caleb does not invalidate this generalisation. "The point is that this generation, which had first-hand experience of the goodness of God in bringing them from slavery to freedom, comprised the very last group of persons one would have expected to rebel against their Saviour God." Hughes.

ἐξεληθόντες Verb, aor act ptc, m pl nom
 ἐξερχομαι

Verse 17

τίσιν δὲ προσώχθισεν τεσσαράκοντα ἔτη; οὐχὶ τοῖς ἀμαρτήσασιν, ὧν τὰ κῶλα ἔπεσεν ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ;

προσώχθίζω see v.10

τεσσαρακοντα see v.10

οὐχι (emphatic form of οὐ) not, no; used in questions expecting an affirmative answer.

ἀμαρτήσασιν Verb, aor act ptc, dat pl

ἀμαρτανῶ sin, commit sin

κῶλον, ου n dead body, corpse

ἔπεσεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s πίπτω fall

ἐρημος, ου f see v.8

Verse 18

τίσιν δὲ ὤμοσεν μὴ εἰσελεύσεσθαι εἰς τὴν κατάπαυσιν αὐτοῦ εἰ μὴ τοῖς ἀπειθήσασιν;

ὤμοσεν Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ὀμνῶ see v.11

εἰσελεύσεσθαι Verb, fut midd dep infin

εἰσερχομαι see v.11

καταπαυσις, εως f see v.11

ἀπειθήσασιν Verb, aor act ptc, dat pl

ἀπειθεῶ disobey, be an unbeliever

'to them that were disobedient'

Verse 19

καὶ βλέπομεν ὅτι οὐκ ἠδυνήθησαν εἰσελθεῖν δι' ἀπιστίαν.

βλέπω see v.12

Introducing a general conclusion.

ἠδυνήθησαν Verb, aor indic, 3 pl δυναμαι

can, be able to

ἀπιστία, ας f see v.12

"The failure of the first generation of redeemed Jews, who corresponded in position with the first generation of Christians, is traced back to its source. The faith which they had at the beginning failed them. They fell into unbelief." Westcott.

"It is what happened when man fell first from God; it was repeated in the wilderness; and the same disastrous sequence was now threatening the community to whom this letter was sent. The rest from which Adam and Eve were excluded was that of fellowship with God in Eden; the rest forfeited by the rebellious Israelites was that of the promised land; and the rest denied to apostates from the Christian faith is that of the eternal Sabbath of the new heaven and new earth (Rev 2:6; 22:1ff.)... True rest is the enjoyment by the creature of perfect harmony with his Creator, and it can therefore only be *rest in God*. As such, it is totally incompatible with unbelief and disobedience toward God." Hughes.