

Hebrews 2 & 3

Proposition: The Christian life involves constant changes as we leave the past, reach out to others and possess the promised life style.

Hebrews 2 and 3 can be read together as one study, as an overview of the Christian life that concludes with a key to living in the Promised Land. That is to live a life of blessing and abundance as God intended for you to live. This morning I am going to read more scripture than I normally would, and that excites me because I believe that we gain faith and revelation as we listen to the Word of God.

We are not too sure who wrote the letter to the Hebrews, some say Paul, some say Barnabas and some say Apollos the scholar. What we are sure of is this that God inspired this letter and that this letter was sent to a group of early church Christians **all** of whom used to be practicing Jews before they accepted Christ. They are all of the same ethnic, language and cultural grouping. These guys grew up in the temple worship and the traditions of old and then became Christians. They all had darker features than most races and larger noses than most. They all had happy memories of incense and priestly robes and the temple music and stories. They had come from rituals and traditions that 'seemed' so spiritual and holy but were they really?

Whoever this writer was God uses him to challenge the rituals and traditions of the past especially the Hebrew fascination with angels and Moses. He wanted to challenge their old ideas and tell them to

1. Move On from tradition and ritual.

Their traditions, their old cultural practices, the old bells and smells tugged at their memories and called them to go back. But God was saying to these people through the writer of the letter, don't focus on tradition and routine Jesus is much better. It's time to move on. Now let me give you some modern parallels.

When you and I were growing up you would have heard someone say "God helps those who help themselves" probably many times. It sounds spiritual, it sounds biblical but of course it isn't its counter biblical. The bible never says anything like that but we struggle to let it go. Those old ideas seem so spiritual – so familiar. Where in the bible does it say or demonstrate sprinkling holy water in houses as we pray through them? Nowhere, it is a tradition that originated outside of Christianity and we have taken it over. And it feels so holy. Where in the bible does it say a person's spirit stays on earth for a year after death? Nowhere, but it is so familiar to many of our people and seems so spiritual. Where in the bible does it say wear white on Sundays? How many of our beliefs and practices are biblical and how many are simply tradition and culture; keeping on with the familiar. They all 'seem' so spiritual and holy but are they Christian?

These young Christians, all ethnic Hebrews and from the Jewish culture love the ten commandments which are there to show us we need a saviour, they love the OT law, they love their culture and were

fascinated with angels because there is some suggestion that God used angels to pass on the 10 commandments to Moses, and they were fixated on Moses so in this passage, God says, you are a new creation, you have been born again, it's time to move on. All those things were good but Jesus, the new covenant is way better.

Hebrews 1:10-2:3a... (CEV Version)

Angels are great and the message brought through the 10 commandments was amazing but ...now we have a greater, complete message of salvation through Jesus, and if the consequences to breaking the ten commandments; lying, stealing, immorality, greed, putting things in life before God etc; if the consequences to breaking the moral law are really serious, this foreshadow to the real deal, the complete plan of salvation; if the consequences to breaking that first law are really serious then how much more serious a thing it is to reject the complete and perfect message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Hebrews, New Zealanders, Europeans, Samoans, Tongans, Roma, Maori, when you became a Christian make sure you move on from those things in your past that do not fit with the message of salvation through Jesus Christ. Don't try and hold onto and carry with you traditions and rituals and practices that do not fit with the Bible.

Secondly

2. Move out to minister in the miraculous

Hebrews 2:3b-4...

God showed that his message was true by working all kinds of powerful miracles and wonders. Derek Weir some 3 months ago said to me, "Russell I really want to see the healing ministry of the church extended out so we can pray for a lot more unsaved people." Then he asked me how we could do that in an organised way to which I had no intelligent answer except to say that praying for miracles in the lives of the pre Christian is extremely biblical.

It says in this passage that God proves that the gospel message is true by following up our preaching, our testimonies 'out there' with signs and wonders.

Now you and I are really, really comfortable prophesying, bringing words of knowledge, praying out demons and praying for healing within these four walls or in our home groups but ... did you know that in the book of Acts 99% of the miracles happened as the church went out and prayed for the unbeliever. And God confirmed what they were preaching and giving testimony to by working many signs and wonders. Yes God will heal us and give supernatural gifts to minister to the gathered church but the biblical normal is that virtually all of the healings and deliverances took place outside the church as God's children prayed for and ministered to the community. They shared the Word and God confirmed what they were saying was true by doing amazing things.

Now the verses that follow this call to be moving out and trusting God to move miraculously are followed by scriptures that describe Jesus being the captain of our team, one of us as he leads us into the world. Our captain knows what life is like for us and He is for us, Gods adopted children, Abraham's descendants. Jesus our captain is far more concerned about us than any angels. He wants us to live lives so connected to him that we aren't even worried about or afraid of dying like everyone else in the world is. How does Jesus free us from the fear of death. He invites us to die to self daily and to live for Him; that is to live each day concerned about his glory and his will and not my own. Dead people aren't scared of anything are they and if we are dead, we are living for Him daily you and I will not fear death.

Would you please stand

Hebrews 2: 5-17...

Your captain can help you. He came for you and he is with you through the Holy Spirit. He can strengthen you and help you even when you are tempted to sin.

Hebrews 3:1-19..

God wants you to move on from spiritual beliefs and practices that might be very familiar but do not fit with the bible. For these Hebrews it was their fascination with angels and the way they revered Moses. Culture is usually a beautiful and enjoyable thing but some things don't fit with our new identity 'in Christ' and we need to move on from them.

Secondly we need to move out from these four walls and the places where we meet with other believers and expect it to become the norm for miracles to follow our testimonies and our sharing of the Word in the workplace and in the community. We need to expect as we share. He will turn up powerfully confirming our testimony with signs and wonders. As we go into the world we are not alone, ever. Our captain our leader fully understands the struggles that make up life and He is with us and can strengthen us.

Finally

3. Move into the promised land

In the bible historical Egypt became a prophetic symbol of the world and the unsaved life. To come out of Egypt is to become a believer. The promised land has giants and struggles and so is still linked with this earth but depicts in prophetic literature a life full of abundance and blessing.

Egypt = life without salvation

Promised land = a life of abundance and blessing

Now keep that prophetic terminology in mind as I retell the story of the deliverance from Egypt; that is the unsaved life and the entrance into the Promised Land as it happened originally in the Old Testament.

The Israelites became a chosen, identifiable people when the angel of death passed over their homes because of the blood of the lamb on the door posts and Pharaoh let them go.

When the Israelites were delivered from Egypt and delivered through the Red Sea from the pursuing Egyptian army they had come out of Egypt and were promised a land of their own, a land that would be flowing with milk and honey where they could establish their homes and their families. After only two years though they got to the edge of the promised land and Moses sent out 12 spies to spy. When these 12 spies came back they described a land that was so awesome, beautiful and they carried with them bunches of grapes so huge they looked like bowling balls they were that massive. What a place, they said?

But 10 of them said, there are giants in the land, these guys were bigger than the “tall blacks” basketball team and we looked like grasshoppers in their sight.

10 of them said; people two problems;

1. They look like giants and we don't believe that God will give us victory over them and
2. Secondly we look like grasshoppers compared to them.

So the people murmured and thought, “I know God said he would give us the land but ... not so sure he will ... we don't want to die... who are we anyway? We are just grasshoppers.” They were focused on their limitations.

Two spies came back with a different report. Joshua and Caleb said, “If God is for us, what's the problem? Let's take the Promised Land, let's move into it.”

Two things stopped these Israelites from entering the Promised Land, the land full of abundance and blessing.

1. **They didn't have faith but doubted the goodness of God**
2. **They didn't see themselves a chosen people but inadequate people.**

Moses later on was to get angry at the people and misrepresent God to the people. As he raged at the people and beat the rock with a stick and for that he too was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. For 38 years the Israelites wandered around and around in circles until all but two of that unbelieving generation were left alive.

Only two of that original group that was delivered out of Egypt actually made it into the Promised Land, they were Joshua and Caleb.

Friends, family: Could it be that some of us are like the Israelites of old. We too have been delivered out of Egypt, we have been born again but we haven't yet entered the Promised Land because we have doubted the goodness of God and because we have not seen ourselves as His children but as inadequate. And so we have not entered yet the life of abundance and blessing God has for us.

Every week I get to see Tom and Meleane virtually every day as they pretty much live at the church and they are constantly serving somewhere. Whenever Meleane approaches me to talk to me about anything at all, she usually begins her conversation by saying "Russell, God is so good." She believes in the goodness of God to the core of her being and what usually follows next is a revelation, or an answer to prayer, or an acknowledgement of what God has just done. She lives in the Promised Land full of abundance and blessing and joy and revelation because she knows who she is in Christ and she has real faith in the goodness of God.

May it be that you and I will see ourselves as chosen, as special to God. May it be that you and I will believe that God is good, and that He is good all the time. May you and I be like Joshua and Caleb who said God has promised this land to us so don't stress about the giants – just believe. May you and I enter into the degree of blessing and joy and abundance that he has for us in this life, on this planet because he has so much for each one of us.

We have read a lot of scripture this morning and there are truths in the Bible about lots of things but, church I hear three messages in particular.

1. Move on from traditions, and beliefs that don't fit with the good news about Jesus as recorded in the bible. Spend time this week asking God to reveal to you any wrong beliefs.
2. May we also begin to really move out with boldness to share the Word and expect God to turn up to confirm the Word out there with signs and wonders. As we pray for that sick workmate who is Muslim or as we bring a word of knowledge for that person on the train who is struggling in life. Let us expect a whole lot of miracles to happen out there as we speak and act with faith because that is the biblical norm.
3. Thirdly let us consider where we are living right now. Are we living in the Promised Land or are we just born again, delivered out of Egypt and just wandering around the desert doing a few good things? You are not inadequate, a grasshopper, you are a child of the living God. Believe and don't doubt God. Yes there are giants in the land but if God said that the promised land full of abundance and blessing is ours then just believe in His goodness to come through for you every time. I would pray that if there be any desert dwellers here this morning that this week will be the week you begin to move into the Promised Land.