
Words of Truth

Hebrews 3:1-2

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“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house” (Hebrews 3:1-2). Our study in this article starts off with the word “wherefore.” That ties us backwards to what we studied in the previous chapter about Jesus coming in the flesh. It would do you well to read through that again as you consider what we are going to study from here forward.

The Hebrew writer refers to those whom this letter is addressed to as “holy brethren.” We read that phrase in one other New Testament letter (I Thessalonians 5:27). We know that saints are taught to be holy (II Corinthians 6:14-7:1, Ephesians 1:1-4, Ephesians 4:21-24, I Peter 1:13-16, I Peter 2:5-9, and II Peter 3:10-14). In addition, as these saints are addressed, the faithful are partakers of the heavenly calling. The word translated “partakers” means: “participant, i.e. (as noun) a sharer; by implication, an associate: — fellow, partaker, partner” (Strong’s #3355). We are talking about partakers in the heavenly calling. What does that mean?

If you were to examine the phrase “heavenly calling”, you’d quickly find that this is the only time that English phrase is in the Scriptures. Doing a word study is not much help either. The term translated “heavenly” basically means above the sky or from Heaven (Strong’s # 2032). We know that there is a difference between earthly things and heavenly things (John 3:12, I Corinthians 15:40-54, and Ephesians 1:3). So, what is it that saints partake in while on earth that is from Heaven? What is a calling?

The simple way to define the heavenly calling is to think about the calling and how that ties to things in Heaven. The calling comes through the Gospel (II Thessalonians 2:14). The Gospel gives us the hope of things in Heaven (Colossians 1:5 and Colossians 1:23). To make this even more specific to our study, think about who came from Heaven to give us that hope (John 6:38-51). Now it all comes together in thought. Jesus, who came down from Heaven, is that hope. Later in this chapter we will see these saints were “partakers of Christ” (Hebrews 3:14). Early first century Jewish saints needed to arrive at the full conclusion of their salvation being in Christ and no one else (Acts 4:10-12). Thus, our study continues with the point this writer is making. He wants them to take a step forward and “consider” what is about to be said about Jesus.

They needed to consider Jesus as the Apostle. When most people think of an Apostle, Jesus is not the name that comes to mind. The names Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Paul, etc. are generally the names that come to mind (Matthew 10:1-4 and Romans 1:1). The term translated “Apostle” means: “a delegate; specially, an ambassador of the Gospel; officially a commissioner of Christ (“apostle”) (with miraculous powers): — apostle, messenger, he that is sent” (Strong’s # 652). Jesus was sent with a message from His [our] Father in Heaven (John 3:31-36, John 8:26-28, and John 8:40). When you understand that Jesus was sent from the Father, you get the meaning of Him being called an Apostle. Jesus Himself said this to His Apostles: *“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you”* (John 20:21).

In addition to being called an Apostle, Jesus is referred to as the “High Priest of our profession.” In our previous studies, we briefly talked about Him being our High Priest (Hebrews 2:17-18). This will be something we address more fully as we read through this letter (Hebrews 4:14-7:28). What is “our profession”? The word translated “profession” is also translated “confession” (I Timothy 6:13). That is the term that best describes, to most, what this verse is stating. So, Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of “the way” (John 14:6) which they [we] confess and are partakers of (Colossians 1:12-18). In the first century, “the way” was called heresy by many Jews (Acts 24:14). That made confessing “the way” hard for Jews.

Jesus was faithful to our Heavenly Father. As one sent to do a task, Jesus had the mindset to do what the Father sent Him to do (John 4:34 and John 5:30). Though Jesus was faced with death and He was not looking forward to it, He carried out His Father’s will (Matthew 26:36-46). Notice what Jesus said to the Jews: *“Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him”* (John 8:28-29).

Since the Jews typically thought very highly of Moses (John 5:45), the writer of this letter used that to equate Moses’ obedience to the obedience of Christ. Moses was faithful (Numbers 12:7 and Hebrews 3:5). What these Jewish saints needed to learn was that Jesus and Moses had similar tasks as God’s messengers. While these folks obviously initially obeyed Christ, their generation primarily rejected Him (Luke 17:25). If they could have thought of Jesus as a messenger from God instead of a contradictor of Moses (cf. Acts 6:8-15); maybe then they would have grown, learned more, and been saved.

Jesus was not Moses’ replacement. Jesus was what Moses promised would come (Acts 3:11-26; cf. Deuteronomy 18:15-19). Whatever conflicts Jewish Christians had, they needed to overcome. Whole congregations ended up erring from the faith because of this struggle (Galatians 1:1-9; 5:1-9). Whether they or us, we must understand that obeying Jesus is equal to obeying God the Father and vice versa (John 5:19-29).