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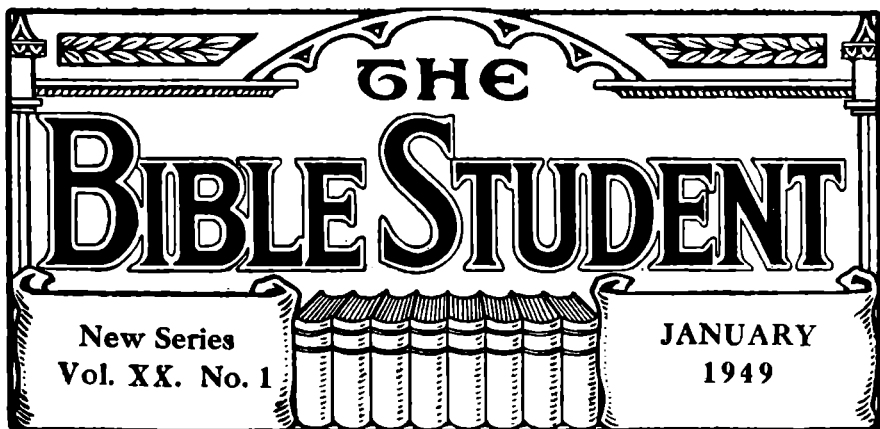
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"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"

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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

of the Hasmoneans to regain power with the aid of the eastern Parthian power, Herod ruled Judaea as 'friend and ally' of the Roman people from 37 to 4 B.C. The family to which he belonged was Idumaeen (Edomite), and his rigorous control of the Jewish people was a grim nemesis for the forcible incorporation of Idumaea in the Jewish kingdom by John Hyrcanus.

In 31 B.C. the civil wars which had raged in the Roman world for many years came to an end with the sea-victory won at Actium by Octavian, the adopted son of Julius Caesar, over his rival Antony and Queen Cleopatra, the last ruler of the Ptolemaic dynasty. With this victory Octavian had the whole Roman world at his feet, and he ruled it until A.D. 14 as first Roman Emperor, under the name Augustus (which means something like 'His Majesty').

And so it came to pass that when the fulness of the time came and God sent forth His Son, that Son "was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king" (Matt. 2:1), Joseph and Mary having travelled to that place because "there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled" (Luke 2:1).

NOTES ON HEBREWS

BY W. E. VINE, M.A., (Lond.)

Notes on Chap. 3: 1-6¹

The writer has already dwelt upon His mercy as a High Priest, he now sets forth His faithfulness. He "*was faithful to Him that appointed Him as also was Moses in all His (i.e., God's) House.*" Moses was faithful in God's House "*as a servant*" and his service was "*a testimony of those things which were to be spoken afterwards*" (Verse 2). But Christ's position is that of "*a Son*" over God's House. It is important to observe in verse 6 that it is still God's House that is referred to. The word "own" should be omitted, as in the R.V. It is God's House that is in view throughout the passage (verses 2-6). Again, the word *therapōn*, servant, is indicative, not of bondservice, but of an elevated position in the household as an attendant, with high responsibilities. The same word occurs in the Septuagint of Numbers 3:7.

¹ See Analysis of this section in last issue, p. 161.

Christ's Sonship

The Sonship of Christ is still kept prominent as in the earlier part of the Epistle. In the first chapter His Sonship is described in His eternal relationship to the Father as His Firstbegotten, as the Heir of all things, and as One to whom belongs a Throne and Sceptre, the immutable One whom angels worship. Here His Sonship is spoken of in connection with the House of God, and shows the dignity of His authority over it.

The writer shows clearly that He is not disparaging Moses. On the contrary he is testifying both to his position in the House of God in the wilderness of old, and to his faithfulness in that House. The Hebrews had an esteem for Moses amounting almost to veneration. But a greater than Moses is here; for the One whose glory is being set forth in contrast to the servant character of Moses, is not only the Son of God, but, as such, is Himself the Builder of the House. He therefore cannot but have more honour than the House itself (Verses 3 to 5).

Holding Fast

The evidence of belonging to God's House consists in holding fast "*our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end*" (Verse 6). Though this is put conditionally, yet obviously that those who are addressed should hold fast their boldness and the glorying of their hope firm unto the end, is not laid down as a condition of becoming a part of the House; for they are actually constituted part of the House solely on the ground of faith. It was possible, however, to fail to enter into the realization of what is involved in belonging to the House of God. The Hebrews were, by reason of their religious upbringing, especially in danger of forsaking a salvation in which Christ was not visible; for their former system was characterized by the visible and palpable, and the exhortations of this Epistle were directed to prevent them from this danger.

The Glorying of the Hope

"The hope" had formed the subject of Paul's testimony before Agrippa: "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers. Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" The hope was established upon the

promise made to the fathers; it involved resurrection, and was the object of the service appointed for Israel. It was indissociable from Christ. Compare also Acts 28:20.

The Hebrews therefore must find the goal of their expectations in Christ. Mere profession of Christianity, with the liability to depart from the ground of grace and lapse into Judaism, was a condition of grave danger. Let the Hebrew, professing Christianity, see to it that his hope was based upon genuine faith in Christ, and centred in Him.

The exhortation has a certain secondary application to all believers. If we cease to glory in Christ, we give evidence of failure to apprehend the privileges of our heavenly calling. We need to hold fast the boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end. The tendency of our very nature is to walk by sight rather than by faith. Let us not attach undue importance to the things which are seen, which are temporal, and loosen our grasp of the things that are not seen, that are eternal.

The Effect of Holding Fast the Hope

It is just in measure as we keep in mind what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us, and is to the Father for us, just in measure as we are in the habit of considering Him, "The Apostle and High Priest of our confession," and thus are occupied with Him and captivated by His love, that we are enabled to hold fast the boldness and the glorying of our hope. By a bold confession we show that we really are partakers of the heavenly calling and that all the arrangements of our life are under the authority of the Son of God. A fast hold upon our hope empowers us to go through all circumstances of trial and difficulty, opposition and temptation, with patience and confidence. For by thus holding fast we receive power to "endure as seeing Him who is invisible," and learn to wait, with ardent expectation, for His return.

Analysis Chapters 3: 7 to 4: 16

The Second Series of Exhortations

A. <i>Unbelief</i> —the cause of failure:	3:7-4:2
I. <i>First exhortation</i> , against hardness of heart	3:7-II
i. The voice of God by the Spirit	7
ii. Israel's provocation—a warning	8-II
(a) the time	8a
(b) the place	8b

(c) the manner	9
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(e) the second effect	11
2. <i>Second exhortation</i> , against unbelief	3:12-19
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(1) the effect—departing from the Living God.	12
(2) the preventative—mutual exhortation	13 <i>a</i>
(a) the danger to be guarded against— hardening of heart	13 <i>b</i>
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(3) the blessing of steadfastness	14
(4) the opportunity of listening	15
ii. Israel's unbelief—a warning	3:16-18
(a) first effect—refusal to hearken	16
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(c) third effect—Divine retribution	18
iii. Conclusion	3:19
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ii. good tidings preached, as with Israel	2 <i>a</i>
(a) a word without profit	2 <i>b</i>
(b) a heart without faith	2 <i>c</i>

God's Rest in Christ

B. <i>Faith</i> , the means of entering:	4:3-10
i. The persons who enter	3 <i>a</i>
ii. The character of the rest	3 <i>b</i> -9
(a) A different rest from the seventh day	6
(b) The fact of God's seventh day or old creation rest	4
(c) God's Canaan or typical rest	5
(d) Exclusion through unbelief	3 <i>b</i>
(e) Another day spoken of long after the entrance into Canaan	7
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- iii. The persons who enter, and their fellowship with God 10
- C. *Three Practical Instructions:*
4. *Fourth Exhortation*, to give diligence vs.11-13
- i. The admonition—let us give diligence to enter 11
- ii. The danger—falling through disobedience 11
- iii. The reasons—
- (1) The character of God's Word— 12
- (a) living: it possesses life
- (b) active: it possesses energy
- (c) sharp: it possesses power
- (d) piercing: it possesses penetration
- (e) quick to discern: it possesses perception
- (2) The character of God— 13
- (a) everything manifest in His sight
- (b) everything naked and laid open before His eyes
- (c) everyone has to do with Him
- Christ's High Priesthood**
5. *Fifth Exhortation* to hold fast vs.14-15
- i. The admonition—"let us hold fast our confession" 14
- ii. The cause—
- (1) The fact of Christ's High Priesthood 15
- (a) His ascension
- (b) His title.
- (2) The nature of Christ's Priesthood 15
- (a) His sympathy
- (b) His title
6. *Sixth Exhortation*, to draw near 16
- i. The admonition—"let us draw near"
- (a) the place: the Throne of Grace
- (b) the manner: with boldness
- ii. The objects—
- (a) to receive mercy
- (b) to find grace

NOTES

The presentation of the superiority of Christ over Moses leads the Apostle now to apply what he has said to the heart and conscience of his readers, and he bases his exhortations upon the

conduct of the people of Israel in the wilderness under Moses. For this purpose he makes use of Psalm 95, showing that its teaching applies to Christ (*verses 7 to 11*). The first part of that Psalm consists of a glowing call by the godly in Israel to come together into the presence of the Lord to worship and praise Him. For He is their God and they are "the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand." At this point there is a break in the Psalm and God Himself speaks. "Today, Oh that ye would hear His voice. Harden not your heart, as at Meribah (that is 'strife'). as in the day of Massah (that is, 'temptation') in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My work (plural in the LXX). Forty years long was I grieved with that nation and said, It is a people that do err in their heart and they have not known My ways: wherefore I swear in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest." This is now quoted with very little alteration.

God declares that He had been grieved with His people and had debarred them from entering into His rest, notwithstanding His having called them out of Egypt for that very purpose. So now the Apostle argues, if the Hebrews wish really to belong to the House of God (and unless they belong to that House they must perish), and to enter into all that is involved therein, they must not harden their hearts but listen to His voice, the voice that had spoken through Christ. They will then both belong to the House of God and be made partakers with Christ and enter into God's rest. "*Take heed brethren*" he says, "*lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief in falling away from the Living God*" (*verse 12*). The "evil heart" here recalls the statement in *verse 10*, "*they do always err in their heart.*" The word *aphistēmi* rendered "falling away," primarily means "stand away from," or "keep aloof from." It represents the antithesis of "drawing near" (cp. 4:16) and suggests a refusal to listen to God's voice. "*But exhort one another,*" he says, "*day by day, so long as it is called today; lest anyone of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin*" (*verse 13*). The "you" is emphatic, suggesting forcefully the danger of their being like their forefathers in the time of the provocation. The "day" is the day of Christ, to which there is a definite time limit. With the thought of the deceitfulness of sin cp. Gen. 3:13, Rom. 7:11 (where also sin is personified).

Partakers of Christ

Verse 14 shews in what direction the mutual exhortation is to be given. There is need to hold fast "*the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end.*" Only so can they actually be partakers of (margin 'with') Christ. The word *hupostasis*, rendered "confidence," is different from that in verse 6, where it is *parrhēsia*, or boldness. Here the present word suggests the combined thoughts of perseverance as well as confidence; so we might render by "firm confidence." The word seems to have been purposely chosen, as being literally contrasted with the *apostasis*, suggested in verse 12. There is no room for any such deduction from this verse as that possession of salvation and union with Christ are conditional upon steadfastness of faith. Scripture is perfectly clear on that point. A sinner, be he Jew or Gentile, has either received Christ by faith, or has not done so. If he has received Him he has life (John 1:12) and shall never perish (John 10:28). In this passage the Apostle is shewing what Christ actually becomes to those who, instead of going back to Judaism, hold fast the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end. To go back to Judaism would be to leave the ground of grace, to fail in the apprehension of what it is to have become partakers of Christ.

In *verse 15* the writer repeats the quotation in verses 7 and 8, but now with special emphasis on the word "Today," enforcing his exhortation to listen to the voice of God, and in what follows he gives in greater detail the circumstances of Israel's provocation in the wilderness.

He gives three reasons why his readers should not harden their hearts. They are put in the form of three questions (see the R.V.), each receiving a reply, as follows:—

(1) "*For who, when they heard, did provoke? Nay, did not all they which came out of Egypt by Moses?*" (*verse 16*).

(2) "*And with whom was He displeased forty years? Was it not with them that sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?*" (*verse 17*).

(3) "*And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that were disobedient?*" (*verse 18*).

The order of these three is noticeable. The first points particularly to the beginning of the period of provocation, after the voice had sounded from Sinai. The second to the whole course of the time, the third to the result. The three phrases are also

noticeable, "out of Egypt" (v. 16) "in the wilderness" (v. 17) "into His rest" (v. 18).

In *verse 16* the phrase "all they that came out of Egypt by Moses" speaks of the nation as a whole. The Apostle purposely omits reference to the few who remained faithful. The nation as a whole was guilty of provoking the Lord. The solemnity of the warning he gave in this respect is weakened by the A.V. translation. The provocation was national and involved national retribution, though all were not personally guilty.

In their disobedience Moses himself was involved, resulting in his being prohibited from entering into the land. "Even Moses on whom the Hebrews had set their hope" (John 5:45). The conclusion drawn in *verse 19*, "*And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief,*" sums up the argument thus far, and serves to introduce the warning which follows at the beginning of chapter 4. The great sin of the people of Israel was unbelief. This was responsible for their provocation of the Lord and responsible secondly for their failure to enter into the Canaan rest.

BIBLE MIRACLES

BY ROWLAND H. C. HILL

The word "miracle" is vaguely and promiscuously used. In discussing miracles we must agree as to what kind of phenomena we are talking about. In this discussion a merely supernatural event is not a miracle. All 'spiritualistic' phenomena are excluded. The acts of God in saving and sanctifying men are *not* included.

A miracle, as we shall consider miracles, is a wonder specially worked by God for a sign to man. These three elements set the bounds within which our present discussion of miracles will range.

A miracle then, is first a wonder. It excites wonder by being outside the known laws of nature and because it cannot be accounted for by those laws. Tyndall, a non-believer in the Bible but a noted scientist, is quoted as saying that if there is a God he is Almighty, and can therefore work miracles; and that miracles, if there be such a thing, have nothing to do with science, but lie outside her province.

Secondly, a miracle is a special work of God, not a familiar phenomenon, but something apparently incomprehensible.

But a miracle is *more* than a wonder worked by God. For miracles there is a special cause; they are specially worked