



# KIAMA ANGLICAN CHURCHES

**Jesus: His Work Finished**

***Sermon – Greg Holmes***

***23 July 2023***

***Hebrews 3:1 - 4:13***

## A prayer:

*Lord our God, we praise you that in the past you spoke through your prophets in many and various ways, and that in these last days you have spoken to us through your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Help us to receive your words with faith, obedience and joy. For Jesus' sake. Amen. (Peter Adam)*

## Introduction

*From the spiral staircase to the expansive bedroom, from the hardwood floors to the plush carpeting, from the huge laundry room to the well-organised office, the real estate agent showed a potential home to the young couple. At every corner they turned, they raved about its beauty: "You've picked the best place for us. This house is amazing!" Then the real estate agent responded with something they thought a bit unusual yet true: "I'll pass along your compliment to the builder. The one who built the house deserves the praise; not the house itself or the one who shows it off."*

In Hebrews 3:3 we read,

*The builder of a house has greater honour than the house itself.*

The writer compares the faithfulness of Jesus, the Son of God, with the prophet Moses (vv. 1–6). Christ as the Creator (1:2, 10) deserves honour as the divine 'builder of everything' and as the Son 'over God's house' (3:4, 6). God's house is his people.

So, as we look at Hebrews 3 and 4 this morning, I want to take building a house as our way into the passage.

## **Jesus' Finished Work**

**A Home for His People**

**A Firm Foundation**

**A Persistent Formation**

**A Final Home (Rest)**

**A Perfect Finished Plan**

Hebrews 3 and 4 is a vast passage pregnant with themes, allusions, encouragements and warnings. It is far too much to cover comprehensively, so we are going to look at it using the helicopter principle - just land on a few key spots and move on to the next one.

### Body

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1 *Therefore, ...*

‘Whenever you see the word ‘therefore’ you need to ask: “What is the word there for?” So, what is it referring to here? Well, it is asking us to think back over what we have just read (or heard) remembering that the first recipients of this piece of writing would most probably have had it read out to them as a whole.

So, what have we been told? Jesus is great – the exact representation of God, better than angels,

the bringer of salvation, and fully human. Along with a warning in 2:1-4 to not 'drift' away.

And so... all these themes continue.

*1 Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, ...*

Now the reader/hearer is again addressed directly (as in 2:1), but here they are defined; they are holy brothers and sisters.

*'The readers are 'holy', that is, God has accepted Jesus' death as atonement for their sins; they are made clean, forgiven and have access to God.*

*They are 'brothers and sisters', because Jesus has become one of them, shared their humanity, to sympathise and help them in their weakness and in order to die for them.'*

And out of that they are brought into a relationship with one another. Because they share in the heavenly calling they belong to the family of Jesus. And what does the 'therefore' direct them to do?

*...fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.*

Consider / think carefully about / take a good hard look at / reflect on / think through / mull over / weigh up / take into account / chew over...

... JESUS!

Did you see the climax of the Women's Road Race in the World Cycling Championship last year?

Towards the end of the race along Cliff Road in Wollongong, as the race came towards its finish line at the south end of City Beach, the leading pack of incredibly fit young ladies were in a bunch carefully watching each other in order to see which one would begin a sprint to the finish first when suddenly, from a hundred metres or so back, there was this pinkish orange streak which overtook all of them and held on to win the race. This Dutch woman, Annemiek van Vleuten, aged 49, who had been riding the 164 kms with a fractured elbow, had kept her eye on the finish line... kept that in focus and, with this mighty effort, finished first.

Jesus wants us to keep our eyes on him!

We too need to keep our focus... Don't be distracted - look to Jesus.

**Jesus...** who is both –

Apostle – someone who is sent out on a mission – usually with a message (hence the 12 apostles) from the sender – God himself here.

And High Priest – the one who intercedes with God on behalf of man – Jesus is shown later in the book to be the greatest High Priest.

So we have two good reasons to focus on Jesus. Firstly, who we are - we are holy brothers and sisters by his grace. And secondly, who Jesus is - he is apostle (the one sent to us) and priest (he represents us to God) as our saviour (a theme developed in greater detail in the rest of this book).

Jesus is then contrasted with Moses, one of the great heroes of the Old Testament (Abraham, David) who ‘built’ the nation as they were rescued from Egypt and led to the promised land.

*3:6 But Christ is faithful as the Son over God’s house.*

But note that Jesus (God) is the ultimate builder and is the Son rather than the servant. He is the true builder. Also note – *‘that there is only one house. The author is not contrasting Moses’ house with Jesus’ house. It is all one house.’*

## **The People of God**

*And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory.*

And with that assertion comes the segue into a warning - hold firm!

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We have all heard the stories of builders who fail to complete the work – and the house is not built. THIS house needs to be brought to completion.

*3:7 So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice,  
8 do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion,  
during the time of testing in the wilderness, ...”*

The children of Israel in Moses' time saw the wonders and received the blessings of God over and over again; they were saved by grace and yet many, many of them failed. They did not enter the land of promise... the rest that God had prepared. They failed because of their persistent, unbelieving sin.

*3:12 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.  
13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.*

The readers/hearers are to take the warning to heart - Stand firm!

*"Again and again, the writer will encourage his readers to have faith, the 'key' response to the character, plan and works of God."*

Encourage one another in this. This is back to the idea that we are holy brothers and sisters with responsibilities to each other - brothers and sisters

*"In our world today, the spirit of individualism reigns supreme. It is tempting to think, "I don't need a church. I'll just show up when I feel like it. I might hop around, do a little church shopping, figure out what I like and, if I don't like it, move on." That is the spirit of the age. But that is not the spirit we see in the book of Hebrews. You are the people of God, and God dwells in your midst. That means it is vital to be committed to one another and linked together as his people."*

And the goal is God's rest.

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*4:1 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.*

*<sup>2</sup> For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as*

*they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed. <sup>3</sup> Now we who have believed enter that rest, ...*

The goal is God's rest; this is always the promise. When God made the world, he rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day and that rest was for all the creation – that was the goal of creation. But sin stuffed it up. So God's plan of salvation is to bring his people, restore his people, into that rest.

The Promised Land, as they were rescued from Egypt, was to be true rest – but once again the people's stubbornness and rebellion, their sin, prevented that rest from coming into its fullness.

*"Hebrews 3:16-19 summarises this well-known story by rehearsing all the reasons why the Israelites failed to enter the promised land: they "heard and yet rebelled" (v 16); they "sinned" (v 17); they "were disobedient" (v 18); and they exhibited "unbelief" (v 19)."*



But now we have Jesus' promise of rest.

Matthew 11:28 *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

And we look forward in hope to it. So we persist... endure in the faith in order to enter into the rest.

*4:9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; <sup>10</sup> for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. <sup>11</sup> Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.*

Some of that privileged generation failed to gain the promised rest. So work at it and don't be distracted; put off; don't have your vision of Jesus blurred. Look to Jesus! Keep your eyes fixed!

As chapter 12 will remind us:

Hebrews 12: *...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, <sup>2</sup> fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. ... <sup>3</sup> Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

*'Steadfastness is the test of the true believer. Jesus also made this point in his parable of the sower, when he indicated that some seed "immediately sprang up" but it didn't last because "it had no depth of soil" (Mark 4:5).'*

And...

*‘Of course, it should be acknowledged that we don’t have to wait till heaven in order to have rest in the Christian life. As soon as we believe in Christ and the Spirit comes to dwell within us, we can enjoy a dimension of rest even in the present.’*

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*4:12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. <sup>13</sup> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

We are reminded that the story of the Exodus comes from God’s written word, which is so important in the process of enduring. The imagery is powerful and striking. God’s word gives us the encouragement and information we need to keep on keeping on.

*“When we encounter the word of God, we encounter God ... His word, indeed, is his personal presence. Whenever God’s word is spoken, read, or heard, God himself is there.*

*In his word God is personally present; through his word he powerfully acts; and by his word he penetrates to the place that no human can ever reach—the human heart. All that together*

*makes one simple point. Is God's word trustworthy? Should we rely on it and believe its promises? The answer is absolutely, "Yes."*

*God knows us through and through, while we are so often sin-deceived and self-deceived. Let us welcome the powerful and discerning word of God to work deeply in us to transform and change us."*

### Conclusion

When you get down to it you can sum all this, and indeed all of Hebrews, up with 7 words:

### Jesus is Best ... Stick with the Best

*When we serve God faithfully, it's Jesus, the divine builder, who deserves the honour. Any praise we (God's house) receive, ultimately belongs to him.*

### So what do we take home?

How do we enter that 'rest'? The passage presents us with a number of 'dos and don'ts':

DO... Fix your thoughts on Jesus

Encourage one another

Hold your original conviction, confidence and hope firmly

Strive to enter that rest

DON'T... Harden your hearts

Follow examples of disobedience

First we require Faith... Turn to Jesus trust in his saving act on the cross which pays the debt for all our sins and brings us into right relationship with God. This brings us salvation, hope and

a certainty of rest in God's house.

Then we require Fear... a true and loving respectful relationship with God which leads to obedience and right living.

*"While we are not saved by our obedience—we are only saved by faith in Christ—our obedience can be a test of whether our faith is real."*

Thirdly we require Fight...

*"The word 'strive' is important here. It reminds us that effort, diligence, and perseverance are essential to the Christian life. No, we are not saved by our efforts—we are only saved by the grace of Christ. But the Christian life still involves effort! It is not passive and detached but active and intentional."*

REMEMBER...

*<sup>13</sup> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*