God is the Builder of Everything

Hebrews 3:1-19

Key Verse: 3:4 “For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.”

 The Nile River is called the river of Africa and was the source of Egyptian civilization in human history. This river flows down by the Sahara Desert, the biggest desert on earth. People wonder how the Nile River does not dry up even though it passes the Sahara Desert, which rarely rains in the hottest weather. Do you know why? This is because the Nile River starts from the Victoria Lake and receives abundant water from the rainy and tropical African Jungle. The tremendous amount of water from the lake and the jungle flow down through the Sahara Desert to the Mediterranean Sea. So, the Nile River never dries up. Through the Nile River I learned one lesson. Even though we pass through times of drought, hardship, and suffering like the Sahara Desert, our lives will not dry up, as long as we receive the Holy Spirit from God the Father. As Egyptian civilization flourished along the Nile River, our lives will be flourished and blessed as long as we put our anchor in the Lord Jesus, who is the source of blessing.

 In chapter 1 we studied how Jesus is superior to the prophets. In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But now God has spoken to us through Jesus Christ, his Son. In chapter 2 we studied how Jesus is superior to the angels. God did not choose our Savior from the angels, but from his Son, who became fully human. As a merciful and faithful high priest Jesus took his own blood and entered the Most Holy Place for our eternal salvation. Amen! In chapter 3 the author teaches us how Jesus is greater than Moses. Moses is known as one of the greatest men of God in Israel’s history. In Matthew’s gospel Matthew compared Jesus to Moses when he wrote down the Sermon on a Mount. Even today Jews are still waiting for a Moses-like messiah, who is powerful and strong enough to liberate his people. But in this chapter the author explains how and why Jesus is greater and superior to Moses and reveals the supremacy of Christ Jesus the Son.

First, fix your thoughts on Jesus (1) Look at verse 1. “***Therefor, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.***” The author called the believers holy brothers and sisters who share in the heavenly calling. Indeed we are called people of God, brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. We are called by God as the servant of God to do his work. We are *called*. We are called to serve the Lord. God’s calling is sacred and irrevocable. We must not take God’s calling lightly, but seriously as a sacred and responsible task. Are you responsible for your heavenly calling? What must we do as his people, people called by God? *Fix our thoughts on Jesus*! Here, fix our thoughts means behold and consider (*catanaeo*). We must look at Jesus and think of him all the time. Fixing our thoughts on God is the attitude which the servants of God should have. Moses had a hard time taking care of his people in Egypt and in the Desert. They were full of complaining and bitterness against God and Moses. They tried to stone Moses, but Moses turned to God and sought his face. Moses fixed his eyes and thoughts on the God of Israel who had led them out of Egypt for his good purpose. King David wrote half of Psalms in the Bible. Most of his psalms show us how he fixed his thoughts on God in the time of suffering and trial. He did not think of all his enemies who sought for his life. Instead, he believed the God of righteousness and justice and trusted in the Lord to the end.

 We are called on as missionaries, Bible teachers, leaders, and so on. As those who are called we must fix our thoughts on Jesus, who is our Lord and Savior. Jesus himself fixed his eyes and thoughts on God the Father throughout his lifetime. Even though he was the Son, he did not consider himself equal to the Father, but made himself nothing to obey the Father’s will. The main theme of the coming Missionary and Leaders conference and World Mission Report 2021 in Seoul Korea is “*I want to know Christ*” based on Philippians 2,3. To learn from Jesus, Paul asks us to have the same mindset of Christ Jesus. Jesus became humble and obedient even though he was God himself. He did not consider himself equal with God, but he made himself nothing and appeared as a man. He became obedient to the Father, even to the point of death. Then, God exalted him to the highest place and let every knee bow him and let every tongue praise the name of Jesus. We often consider ourselves better than others. We judge others thinking that I am right and that they are wrong. So, we confront those who do not agree with us. But Jesus did not consider himself above the Father. He did not argue for his justice and demand for righteousness, but Jesus simply trusted the Father and obeyed Him. In this way Jesus showed us how to submit himself to God the Father, carry out God’s mission, and fulfill God’s will by faith. I pray that all our missionaries and leaders may learn Jesus’ humility and his obedience through this conference and report. We may have the same mindset of Christ and grow as mature missionaries and leaders who become faithful to God’s heavenly calling. Amen!

 In verse one the author acknowledges Jesus as our apostle and high priest. Apostles are the ones who are sent by God for a mission. In short, an apostle is a missionary in modern terms. Jesus is the first missionary who was sent to this world by God. So, those who are called as missionaries or apostles must show their faithfulness as Jesus did.

 Look at verses 2-6. In verses 2-6 the word ‘faithful’ repeats four times. There is a similarity between Moses and Jesus, which is faithfulness. Moses was faithful to God in all God’s houses (2). Here, God’s house is the assembly of the Israelites. Moses worked hard to lead his people out of Egypt, pass through the desert, and reach to the edge of the Promised Land. Moses completed his mission. Jesus was also faithful to the one who appointed him, even to the point of death. (2) These two faithful figures remind me of 1 Corinthians 4:2 which says, “*Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*”

 Look at verse 3. “***Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself***.” In this verse Jesus is compared to the builder of a house and Moses to the house itself. Who is greater and superior between the builder of a house and a house itself? Of course, it is the builder of a house. As the builder of a house is greater than a house itself, so Jesus is greater than Moses. Moses was great, but nothing but a part of God’s house. Look at verse 4. “***For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.***” This verse teaches us something important about our relationship with God. As for Moses, God’s house was his people. As for Jesus, God’s house is his church. Paul said in 1 Timothy 3:15, “*if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth*.” In verse 6 the author of Hebrews called us his house. “***And we are his house***.” God’s house does not always indicate a building, but people. The word ‘church’ has two main meanings in Greek: 1. “*ecclesia*” which means “assembly of being called (the believers).” 2. “*koinonia*” which means ‘fellowship’. In fact, in the era of the early church, a church was an assembly of the believers. Wherever they met, it became their church. The great apostles and Jesus’ disciples met in a big upper room. It became their church. The saints in Rome met in their houses. This became the origin of the house church.

 There are three requirements to be a good and healthy church including house churches: First, *kerusso*, which means proclaiming the gospel such as sermon, confession of faith, Bible study, discipleship programs, and so on, which are related to *logos*. Second, *koinonia,* which means ‘fellowship’ including the Holy Communion, eating fellowship, prayer meetings, retreat, conference, and so on. Third; *diakonos,* which means ‘service’ such as offering, outreach, relief, community service and so on. The good and healthy church should have a balance of these three requirements. University Bible Fellowship St. Louis Church is a house church because we meet and worship in a house. It is also one of the officially registered local churches. Let us check our church whether well balanced with these three requirements or not.

 The word, “*God is the builder of everything*”, teaches us that God is the builder of his house, churches. Jesus built his first church on Peter’s confession of faith. (Mt 16:18) We can build his church with those who make confessions of faith. Still, without the builder we can’t build God’s churches. Psalm 127:1 which says, “*Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.*”

 In verses 5,6 the author compares Jesus as the Son in God’s house and Moses as a servant. Who is greater and superior in his house between the Son of the house and a servant? Of course, it is the Son. Jesus the Son is the builder and the owner of the house. We studied in chapter 1 that the Son is an heir of all things which the Father possesses, his right, name, position, property, and all things. For these reasons, Jesus is greater and superior to Moses.

Second, make every effort to enter that rest (7-19) In these verses the author teaches us how and why the Israelites, Moses’ people, failed in entering the Promised Land. In short, they failed to enter God’s rest because of their rebellion and unbelief. The author gave the answer by quoting Psalm 95:7-11. Look at verses 7-11. “***So, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, where your ancestors tested and tried me, through for forty years they saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation; I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways.’ So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.***” Before God took them out of Egypt, the Israelites had lived as slaves in Egypt for 430 years. When they suffered, God remembered the covenant with Abraham and brought them out from Egypt through Moses. God led them into the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land. God provided manna and quail for them for forty years. God made a covenant with them to make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. God gave the law through Moses so that they might live as people of God. The Israelites should have remembered God’s grace of deliverance and given thanks to Him. They had to worship God alone and live according to his law. But, they complained about their inconvenience through the life of wilderness and opposed Moses. In Exodus 17:1-7 they complained to God when they didn’t find any water. They quarreled with God and tested his patience. God let Moses strike a rock where water gushed out. Moses called the place *Massah*, which means ‘testing’, and *Meribah*’ which means ‘quarreling’. They continued to rebel against God and against Moses, his servant. Miriam and Aaron opposed Moses saying, “*Has the Lord spoken only through Moses?*” How did God answer them? God answered Miriam with leprosy. (Nu 12:10). In Numbers 13-14 after the exploration of the land of Canaan, all the assembly of the Israelites cried out because of the bad report about the people and land of Canaan. The leaders grumbled against Moses and Aaron. How did God answer them? God answered them in Numbers 14:30, “*Not one of you will enter the land I swore with the uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun*.” As God said, none of the Israelites who opposed God and showed their unbelief, entered the Promised Land. They all died in the wilderness. They did not enter God’s rest. Look at verses 16-19. Read verse 19. “***So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.***”

Third, hear his voice today (4:1-12) In chapter 4 the author encourages us to have hope because there is still a chance for us to enter God’s rest. Look at verse 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***.” We have the promise of entering God’s rest which is still available for us. In verse 2 the author said that it is the good news, which is the gospel. We can enter God’s rest through the good news, the gospel. In the past the Israelites failed to enter God’s rest because of their unbelief. But now we can enter God’s rest by what? By faith! We can enter the kingdom of God by faith in Jesus Christ.

 Last month Mary and I visited one missionary family who serve a house church in LA. We went there to encourage them, but we were greatly encouraged by their life testimony, which tells us how they crossed the Red Sea by faith. Missionary Peter Ahn and all his family came to the US as student missionaries 13 years ago. Msn. Peter wanted to become a nurse, but he was rejected by a community college nursing school two times because of his poor English. But he did not give up. He applied for a special program for BSN course at a university. It seemed impossible for a failed student for community college to enter the special nursing program in a university. But Msn Peter wanted to live as a missionary in America and taught students the Bible with his poor English. He challenged the impossible situation by faith. God blessed his faith and attitude toward his calling as a missionary. Msn. Peter was accepted for the special program and later he graduated as an honor student. In the course of his struggling with his visa and school study, he did not forget his calling as a missionary. He invited his students to his house and served them. His house church ministry grew and became fruitful. Now, God promoted him from a nurse to a nursing practitioner. He entered God’s rest in terms of experiencing the power of faith. We can enter God’s rest by faith like Msn. Peter Ahn. We please God when we live by faith. We experience the living God when we trust in Him, who is the builder of everything.

 In chapter 3, 5 the author urges the readers for immediate repentance. He repeats the same message from Psalm 95:7-8 three times, “*Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts*.” (7,8; 15, 7) Today means ‘now’, the moment when you hear. We don’t have to delay for tomorrow, but now for today. Look at 3:12-13. “***See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today”, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.***”

 In today’s passage we learned that God is the builder of his house. We are his house. God wants us to live by faith. God’s word is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. It penetrates our souls, spirits, thoughts, and attitude of our hearts. So, today right now we must repent of our unbelief, bitterness, complaining, and all sins and fix our thoughts on Jesus and enter God’s rest by faith. Amen!