

April 27. Read Hebrews 1:1-14. Jews, even Christian Jews, felt a very strong bond to the Law and the Prophets, the Old Testament as they knew it. Over generations they had become deeply convinced about God's message to them. God had called Abraham, who, because he was faithful, was blessed abundantly. In the same way, the Jews or Hebrews as a people, were called to be faithful to the Law through Moses. They proved unfaithful and as a nation were exiled 600–800 years after Moses. In exile, they learned repentance and developed a will never to forsake the Law again. Now God had revealed something new. He had spoken through His Son. God's promises through His prophets of a Messiah had been fulfilled. But it was not what the Hebrews expected. The message did not contradict God's nature but it did change very deeply things the Jews held closely in the practice of their religion. How could they put aside these familiar and precious things? The letter of Hebrews sets the stage for this by telling them they could change when they have something better. 'You have the Son of God' and that is surely something better than whatever they had before. Scripture shows us that Jesus is the Son (v 5), above all else (vs 6, 13), equal to God (v 8) and everlasting (vs 10-12).

April 28. Read Hebrews 2:1-9. So many people today take religion as an optional extra in life. We secure ourselves from poverty, loneliness and disease first and then seek to achieve honor, power and glory. If we live that way, we will never let what we consider the extras to disturb our inner comfort zone. Our philosophy is 'I take care of myself and my family first'. We may let truth matter but never let it matter so much as to threaten our health and security. But today we are warned in this passage to be careful how we respond to this important message we have heard from God! How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? The Hebrews knew the seriousness of God's word to them. When they neglected their Law and went after idols, they found that the Lord who loved them was not a God of empty threats. Although slow to anger, He duly fulfilled the promises of destruction according to His word. If God, because He loves us, shows us greater mercy by giving his Son to suffer death for everyone, how much more seriously and fearfully we should receive what we hear! A message that cost God His Son, logically demands that we obey and follow, even if it causes great inconvenience, even death. Are we ready for that? No eye has seen, nor mind conceived, what God has in store for those who love him. What walls around our comfort zone must we break down if we are to take God's word seriously? Have we given God the keys to the areas in our lives that really matter?

April 29. Read Hebrews 2:10-18. What is this wonderful message God has revealed? It is introduced right from the opening paragraph of the letter. The Son 'provided purification for sins' (1:3). He has redeemed sinners. There is much more on this in the letter, but here the point is made that God the Son, 'shares in our humanity'. Jesus was made 'a little lower than the angels... so that he might taste death for everyone' the point is emphasized here with three quotations from the Old Testament (vs 12-13). Perhaps why 'the author' of our salvation needed to be made 'perfect through suffering' may feel elusive and like a mystery; but this we know, it was absolutely necessary. Three things about His being made man however are not a mystery. The first is that He might destroy Satan, 'him who holds the power of death' (v 14). Second, that He might make atonement for the sins of the people (v 17). Third, that He might help those who are tempted because He Himself suffered when He was tempted (v 18). Here is the gospel condensed in brief phrases. Each of these grand themes could fill pages if we want words to fully describe them. But sometimes, like now, we should instead be quiet and let those words sink deep into us as we meditate on them. Another thing we can do is to repeat them aloud and memorize them. Because He himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted (v 18) turn to Him however difficult things may be. Turn to Him and Him alone in the face of tough times. Trust Him that He will act in His time even if He seems silent now.

April 30. Read Hebrews 3:1-6. We are reminded that this letter was written to the Hebrews. Living just about 40 years after Jesus appeared, the early Jewish believers had a more familiar knowledge and awareness of the man, Jesus. His Gospel was told to them in stories of His encounters and conversations. But He was just a preaching carpenter in Galilee. Moses, on the other hand was from back in time and was placed on a pedestal. He was the Lawgiver who heard the voice of God, the great champion who brought their forefathers out of Egypt against all human probabilities. It may have already been said earlier that the Son is greater than the Law, but the writer of Hebrews needed to say again that Jesus is greater than Moses. To accept Jesus, clothed in flesh and frail as we are, as God, is hard to accept and not just for the Jews. The church is littered with philosophies that try to separate the man Jesus from the Son of God. Today, we may face philosophies that try to equate Jesus with other so-called deities. We must believe that Jesus is the only Son of the Father; begotten not made; of one substance with the Father. **Colossians 1:15-16: Jesus is the image of the invisible God... by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.** Pray that family members who do not know Jesus will open their hearts to Him.

May 1. Read Hebrews 3:7-19. If there is one message that rings out from today's passage, it is this: Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion. It occurs in verses 7-8 and verse 15. In fact it comes up again in 4:7. The warning against unbelief is taken from the events of the exodus under Moses. The children of God had sinned and did not keep faith with God as He led them to the Promised Land. Believing Jews are now warned not to lose faith, not to harden their hearts. If Jesus, the one greater than Moses, has been revealed, how much more must we pay careful attention? This message surely rings like an echo of what we read at the beginning of chapter 2. We can really appreciate the Hebrew nature of this epistle. Parallelism, a feature of Hebrew poetry, is clearly evident. The passage we read yesterday of Jesus being greater than Moses echoed the message of the Son being greater than the Law. Today, the passage warning Christians Jews not to fall like the Israelites under Moses echoes the warning, 'How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?' An important message bears repeating. A serious warning is worth saying again. We share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end (v 14) what are the things in your life that can lead you to harden your heart against the message of Gospel?