

I don't know what it's like in the city, but out here, if you're looking to buy a house, a local wants to know: "Who built the thing"?

because, in a community, you do get to know who the good builders are.

- *Some build "quality" and "strength".*
Others, not so much...

So, a good house:

- *rooms square;*
- *floors & windows to be level*
- *strong enough to stand up to the storms;*
- *finished off and no big gaps for the mice to get in...*

My dad used to tell the story of a builder who said, "It doesn't matter whether the house is exactly level. As long as if when you sit a case of nails at the front door, it doesn't slide out the back door, it'll be right..."

I'm pretty sure he was only joking.

Today, we're starting off with the punch-line, and then we're going to go back to the beginning of the reading, and the punch-line will help it to make sense.

Today we're going to be talking about something that God is building. And, when it comes to God's plan of salvation, there is no shoddy workmanship about it.

Heb 3:3 introduces the concept that the builder of the house, has more honour than the house itself. And you get that, don't you? If the house is of good construction, it didn't get that way by itself. If a house is of good construction, that says a lot about the builder.

And up until this point in Hebrews, the author has been making the point that Jesus is far above anything else. Jesus is far greater than the angels....

And now he moves on, to compare Jesus to Moses.

In the eyes of Israel, Moses was pretty high-up. He was one of their great patriarchs (one of their highly respected forefathers). And the key thing that Moses was remembered for, was that it was through Moses, that God gave His Law to Israel, and so it became known as "The Law of Moses". Alright, you remember the 10 Commandments? Moses went up the mountain, and God gave Him the 10 Commandments.

And Israel lived by these. It was the Law of God that determined what was good and what was evil... But the point being made here, is Jesus Christ is **greater** than Moses. And Jesus brought something much greater than "The Law".

Jesus is greater than Moses, because Moses is part of "the house"... **Jesus** is the builder of the house.

As great as Moses was, he remained a servant of God (as you and I are). Jesus Christ, is God's son. The builder of all

things, is God. And so Jesus Christ is the builder. We are the house.

When I was a child, I thought a church building was God's house. It's no such thing. The **people** of God, are the house of God. The Church, are the gathered people of God (not a building). As we gather together as God's people, we are the church.

A building can never be a church. A building can only ever be a place, where God's house meet. Are you with me? You are the house of God. I am the house of God. When you become a Christian, the reason we repent of sin, is because God the Holy Spirit, is moving in. And He doesn't want to have sin as a housemate. My old nature (sin) is literally the housemate from hell.

As most of you know, we're looking at the possibility of purchasing the old Pre-school as a building for this church to meet in. And they allowed us to use it for the last 2 weeks to see if it's suitable.

But when we first went and had a look at it, to me it looked like "Yeah, we can just move in here on Sunday and give it a go."... But the ladies saw it very differently:

- *This is filthy;*
- *This is going to need some serious cleaning before we give this a go...*

And before the first Sunday, a few volunteers went in and scrubbed & cleaned & vacuumed & mopped.... It wasn't perfect, but the filth had been cleaned away.

And that's what the Spirit of God does. Before the Holy Spirit of God moves into my heart, He needs to clean the filth out of my life... I confess my sins to Jesus, and he takes them away. And He uses the most powerful cleaning agent known to man (environmentally friendly) – the blood of Jesus...

Now, that doesn't mean I'm instantly perfect. But it **does** mean that God can move in, and start remodelling. Where does the Spirit of God live? In the heart of every believer...

That may seem a bit daunting (God living inside), but it is wonderful. As He sets up house:

- He renovates your heart;
- (Good gardener). He plants joy and hope in your heart; and
- He makes His new home/you, beautiful in His sight...

And so we (like Moses) are the house of God... **Jesus**, is not only the resident – He is the builder...

And the point that Hebrews is making, is: Moses deserved honour, because the Law that Moses brought, testified, to something greater, that was coming:

- to be saved into the Kingdom of God, through The Lord Jesus Christ; and
- to have Jesus move into your heart.

Alright, so that's the punch-line, and we'll come back to it at the end.

So, let's go back to the beginning (2:14). Last week we talked about how Jesus Christ (the Son of God) descended from heaven, to become fully human. **We** are flesh and blood. Jesus came down from highest heaven, to **also** become flesh and blood.

Why???

For a very simple reason. "Death" could only be conquered from within. Jesus had to experience death, so that He could **conquer** death.

A well-known saying goes:

"There's only 2 certainties in life: Death and taxes".

I'm not too sure about that. Some of the world's wealthiest individuals, accumulate more and more assets, and live quite well, but somehow manage to pay very little tax...

But even so, there remains one absolute certainty in life, and that's "death". We all die. And the Lord alone knows, the date that is going to be inscribed upon your headstone.

And most people won't admit this, but most people (quite rightly), fear death. Most are not at all comfortable to talk about death. And so, they act as if it's something they're not going to have to deal with.

And out of fear of death, sometimes proper estate planning and succession planning, doesn't happen. And then the person dies, and their family fight it out, and families are torn apart.

There is a very real fear of death. And even some Christians fear death.

I saw it during Covid. Some people, were dreadfully afraid that they or their loved one would catch this new virus and die... And at the same time, others were dreadfully afraid that a vaccine might kill them...

I came across numerous people, who were crippled with fear – it became something that consumed them – that their life might get cut short...

And today, some people are so afraid, they do anything to avoid death.

- exercise regimes;
- strict diet;
- only “natural” foods;
- multitudes of supplements...

(Living by a set of rules, that may possibly extend my life a few years).

Now, this is what I thought about where V15 connects the fear of death, to the lifelong slavery of that fear.

There are some who have become slaves, to trying to extend their life. Why? Because life to them, is the most valuable thing they have. If this life, is the best they think there is, then the fear of death renders them to a lifetime of slavery.

And rather than enjoying life, they consume their life, working at staying alive.

I read an article in the paper a few months ago about a bloke by the name of Bryan Johnsonⁱ. He's a very wealthy individual, who is now spending his life (and his money) on trying to stay young. And his entire daily routine, is all about extending his life. – All day, every day.

Diet; exercise; sleep; daily schedule; hyperbaric chamber sessions; and invasive stuff like draining plasma & replacing it with something else...

And it just goes on and on and on... I couldn't think of a better example of slavery – a lifelong slavery from a fear of death...

Although I guess it can spill over into after death.

At a town called Holbrook in Southern NSW, you can pay somewhere around about \$250 000 to have your body frozen in liquid Nitrogen, in the hope that maybe someday they might be able to bring you back to life again (and fix up whatever it was that killed you in the first place)... (good luck with that)

That would have to be the ultimate fear of death.

For some, the slavery of death is

- that they fear to live life (trying to extend it);
- an enslavement to hedonism (eat; drink; be merry, for tomorrow I die) (sin & selfishness); and
- all of their life achievements – all that they produce/build/achieve, is for somebody else...
When I die, I take nothing with me.
- is the quest to be remembered – the craving to leave a legacy, but the fact of the matter is, “How long will a legacy live on anyway?”.

Fear of death, leads to lifelong slavery. And Jesus came to set us free from it.

Jesus (the Son of God) became flesh and blood (like you and me), so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil....

This is a spiritual battle. “Death” is not merely a physiological state. And most would fear death even more, if they **knew** it was more than a physiological state... The evil spiritual being known as “the Devil/Satan”, he is the one **who has the power of death** – that means “he kills”.

But Jesus died, to **destroy** the Devil, and to **destroy** his power of death. And so, that means Jesus didn’t die for the Angels. He died for you and me.

And we’re told here, that He became like us (in every respect) so that He could identify with us. And this is important

because as He can identify with us, Jesus takes on the role of being our high priest.

Let me explain that.

Under the Old Covenant/Law of Moses, the High Priest, was the intermediary between man and God. How could it be possible for sinful humans, to be in any kind of meaningful relationship with a God who is so unapproachable & Holy. Well, we needed an intermediary/go-between, to come in and do something.

And I'm sorry about this, but that something the High Priest did, is a big word: "propitiation" (Why do they give me words like these?)

(It's a doozy) "propitiation". And there are other words to describe the same thing. Let's see if they're any better: "expiation"... Still in the dark? How about "atonement"....

Whichever word we choose, I'm going to have to explain it.

Last week, we talked about the justice of God. And because God is a just God, all sin must be punished. Saying "Sorry", does not undo a crime. *Imagine if a bank-robber stole a \$1M and killed a bank-teller in the act. And he is arrested and hauled before the judge. And the judge declares him "guilty" ...*

And the bank-robber says, "I am very sorry, Your Honour". And the judge says, "Very good, you're free to go"... Would that judge be just? No. Would the victims of that crime be

happy with the sentence? No. Why not? Because justice, demands that retribution be served...

And so we come to the image of Jesus being the merciful and faithful high priest. How can sins be forgiven, and justice be served, at the same time?

Back in the Old Testament, once a year, was the Day of Atonement. On that day, Atonement was made for the sins of the people. And it involved a sacrifice. Actually, it was multiple sacrifices, and we might talk more about that on another day, when we're in another section of Hebrews.

But amongst the sacrifices, were 2 goats. And lots were cast, to see which goat did what. The first one, would be sacrificed, to make "The Holy Place" clean (because the sins of the people had polluted it). Alright, so the first goat was sacrificed to cleanse the Temple from the sins of the people.

The **second** goat became what we now call the "scape-goat" (the one who gets blame put upon them). Have you ever wondered why "a person who takes the blame for what somebody else has done", is called the "scape-goat"? It's because of this.

The High Priest lays both of his hands onto the head of the goat. And he confesses over the goat:

- all of the iniquities (wrong-doing) of the people of Israel; and
- all of their transgressions (rebellious acts); and

- all of their sins (to miss the mark, or to fail in our attitude toward God)

It's a transfer of all of this, onto the head of the goat. All of the blame, shifts on to the goat.

And then that goat was taken out into the wilderness, and released in the wilderness. And you might think, "Phew, lucky for that goat – he's the one that got away." No, he didn't get away with it. The Goat has been expelled from the presence of God, and from the presence of God's people. And in the Bible, "the wilderness", is an image of a desert, lonely place – a place of danger, where wild beasts will probably tear that goat apart...

But do you get this? The sins of the people – the blame that they deserve, is transferred on to the scape-goat... And it escapes out into the wilderness – it's excluded from God...

And so, the people's sins are expiated/propitiated/atoned for...(transferred across; taken away) – The Blame is gone.

And Jesus, is like the High Priest, but He's also like the goat who died for our sins; and He's also, our scape-goat. As Jesus hung on the cross, our sins, are transferred upon Him – the blame, is shifted from you and me, to Him.

I don't know how that works, and so I cannot explain the mechanics of it. But, this is why Jesus is the **merciful** High Priest. He is the one who atones for our sins, by His own death...

But His mercy doesn't end there. Because Jesus has suffered, beyond what we suffer; and because He was tempted, as we are tempted, He can help us, when we are tempted...

I cannot say to Jesus, "You don't understand what it's like. You are pure and holy. You aren't tempted like we are..." Jesus knows exactly what it's like. Jesus knows the suffering of temptation – He suffered when tempted... .

Therefore....

I could not end this message at the end of chapter 2, because the first word of chapter 3 is "**Therefore**". In other words:

- Because Jesus suffered for us;
- Jesus was tempted;
- Jesus died on the cross;
- Jesus is our Great High Priest;
- Jesus is merciful;
- Jesus has destroyed the Devil – the one who has the power of death;
- Jesus has set us free from slavery to the fear of death...
- expiated; propitiated; taken the blame

Therefore:

Consider Jesus... That's gotta be a picture of worship, doesn't it? Think about Jesus...

Think about our heavenly calling – a calling to follow Jesus;

Think about how when Jesus returns, the dead will be raised. Those who are His, will receive their new resurrection bodies (that will never die)....

And we come back to where we began. Think about how Jesus is the builder, and we are His building.

We, have a heavenly calling. Jesus calls us to something much greater than what we've ever experienced ever before. Jesus was faithful in His journey to the cross, making it possible for you and I to have new life...

It is because of the faithfulness of Jesus, that He is worthy of Glory. As Jesus was nailed to the cross, He was building His house...

And we are His house,,,, **IF**....

Uh-Oh... There's one of those pesky "conditional" words again. "If"... **Therefore**, this will happen, **IF** this happens...

we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

This is not a promise for everyone. To be the house of Jesus, we have to hold fast, to what we really believe. If I start out following Jesus, and then stop, V6 is telling me, that I am no longer Jesus' house. And that's why it is so important, to hold

fast to our confidence/faith in Jesus... And hold fast to our boasting in our hope

Now, I know your parents taught you that “boasting” is a bad thing. And it is a bad thing, if I boast about myself (Mind you, people like me don’t have a lot to boast about)... But there is something that it is good/Godly to boast about: The hope we have in Jesus.

Why are those pesky Christians always going on about Jesus???

I’ll tell you why: 2 reasons:

1. When you experience Jesus in your life, and the work that He does to transform you,,, you won’t be able to help yourself – you’ll just **have** to tell everybody about the hope you have in Jesus...
 - the hope that He will transform us now; and the sure and certain hope we have:
 - of eternal life in glory with Him;
 - that death is conquered;
 - the devil who has the power of death will be destroyed
 - that we are no longer slaves, to either sin or fear of death.
2. Because you love others. You love your friends/relatives/neighbour/(even)enemies so much, you want them to know and experience Jesus, in the same way that you do.

So, hold fast:

- to faith;
- to your confidence in Jesus;
- to the hope we have in Him,

and trust that He is building you, into His home.

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,

What a privilege it is, to be Your home.

-that You would love us so much,

that You would make your residence in our hearts...

This is no little matter.

The nails to build Your house,

are the nails driven into Your flesh,

to fasten Your body to the cross.

No wonder You are our Merciful High Priest,

In Your great mercy, you bridged the gap

between my sin, and our Holy God.

And in wonder,

we consider this/Christ,

Our Lord; Our God; Our High Priest,

We thank You Jesus, that You propitiated our sins.
That You atoned for our sins.
That You shifted the blame for every wrong-doing;
For every wrong attitude;
For every rebellious thought...
You shifted all of our blame,
onto Yourself...

And so we thank You,
That justice is served;
that mercy is given; and
forgiveness is received.

And Lord,
strengthen us to hold firm,
this faith and great hope that we have,

in Jesus' Name,
Amen.

ⁱ <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/weekend-australian-magazine/everything-at-some-point-was-impossible-inside-bryan-johnsons-quest-to-live-forever/news-story/641131bd406fcd720df5d264ee3f3fdf>