

## The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews VIII The Greatest Provocation Against God

(Chapter 3)  
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I just want to review a couple of things in Heb. 3 that are important for us to realize; important for us to understand. Here Paul was making the comparison between Christ and Moses. In part seven we saw how important it was to make that distinction because all of the Jews, especially, thought that Moses was the prophet of God par excellence, no greater prophet of God.

Hebrews 3:1: “Because of this, Holy brethren...” That is everything in all of Heb. 1 & 2, which shows:

- the pre-existence of Christ as God
- His resurrection back to being God
- the suffering that He went through for the sake of bringing salvation to mankind
- being the High Priest who makes propitiation for the sins of the people

The reason Paul begins Heb. 3 this way, and begins comparing with Moses is because Moses also, when he was dealing with God and the children of Israel, *acted as a high priest to propitiate*, to go to God and ask for mercy for the sins of Israel, and God heard him.

Hebrews 3:1: “Because of this, Holy brethren, partakers of *the* heavenly calling...” Not just a citizen of Israel, but **a heavenly calling**; God is the One Who has called you. That’s why joining a ‘religion’ cannot bring you close to God; it can bring you some knowledge of God; it can give you a discipline in life which is better than total lawlessness, but ‘religion’ in itself becomes lawless in its final analysis; but, **we have a heavenly calling**.

“...consider the Apostle and High Priest of *the faith* we profess—Jesus Christ, Who was faithful to Him Who appointed Him, even as Moses *was* in all His house. For He has been counted worthy of greater glory than Moses, even as He Who built the house has so much more honor than the house *itself*. For every house is built by someone, but He Who built all things *is* God. Now on the one hand, Moses *was* faithful in all his house, as a ministering **servant**...” (vs 1-5)—a steward; someone who is in charge and acts of behalf of the interest of the owner.

“...for a testimony of those things which were going to be spoken afterwards.... [by Christ] ...But on the other hand, Christ *was faithful* as the

Son over His own house; Whose house we are, if we are truly holding fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm to *the end*” (vs 5-6).

Now, let’s go back to look at some other comparisons concerning Moses. Deuteronomy 18:15 is a powerful prophecy of Jesus Christ. What is important here is *it was spoken by Moses*. So, Moses was showing that there was coming, after him at a future time, *One greater than he*.

Deuteronomy 18:15: “The LORD your God will **raise up unto you a Prophet** from the midst of you, of your brethren, One like me. To Him you shall hearken, according to all that you desired of the LORD your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, so that I do not die’” (vs 15-16).

They wanted a man to speak to them. It’s also interesting that all of the ‘religions’ of the Gentiles want God to speak to them. Isn’t that interesting? So, in sending Christ, God—Who became Jesus Christ—fulfilled this prophecy for the Jews and the Israelites, and also, for the Gentiles.

- God did come in the flesh
- God did speak to His people
- God did make His will known

*through Jesus Christ* Who was God manifest in the flesh.

Verse 18: “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, *One* like you, and will put My words in His mouth...” That’s what Jesus said, ‘I don’t speak My words, but what the Father has commanded Me to speak, that’s what I speak.’ Whatever the Father does, the Son does. He shows the Son all things because the Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father.

“...And He shall speak to them all that I shall command Him” (v 18). That’s the whole New Testament. So therefore, **those who reject the New Testament are without excuse**, especially if they hold the Old Testament in their hands and say Christ was not from God.

Verse 19: “And it shall come to pass... [this is greater than Moses] ...whatever man will not hearken to My words which He shall speak in My name, I will require *it* of him.” Jesus said ‘I didn’t

come in my own name, I came in the name of the Father, and He sent Me.’

Verse 20: **“But the prophet who shall presume to speak a word in My name which I have not commanded him to speak or who shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.”**

It’s an awesome thing for anyone to set himself up as a preacher or a prophet. *They presume to speak in the name of God, and give all kinds of false doctrines!* We don’t have time to innumerate all the false doctrines and all the false Christianity of the world; all the way from prayers for the dead to snake handling.

Verse 21: “And if you say in your heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’ When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not follow nor come to pass, that *is* the thing, which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You shall not be afraid of him.” (21-22).

This has happened to even all the true ministers of God, in relationship to prophecy, because they *presumed* that they understood the times, and they didn’t. So therefore, they spoke presumptuously.

There’s another category that goes even further than this, which follows up on v 20. Everyone wants to know: Why does God allow this? Why does God allow that? *God allows it so He can test us and try us!* We’ll understand why Deut. 13 starts out the way it does because this is a comparison again between Moses and other prophets; and the Word of God and not the Word of God.

Deuteronomy 12:30: “Take heed to yourself that you do not become ensnared by following them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not ask about their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods that I may also do likewise?’”

- that’s interesting
- that’s quaint
- that’s wonderful
- that’s nice
- how thrilling
- how exciting
- it’s just such fun

We just recently had Halloween. *The depths of the evil of Satan portrayed as fun and games for kids!* All the witches were happy because they had a full moon on Halloween, the first time in 46 years.

**God says you shall not do so likewise!** ‘But it’s for the kids. We do it for the kids.’ You want to teach them demonism? Is that what you’re doing? *They don’t even know what they’re saying!* Same way with Christmas! I had one person say that ‘your religion is really good and it would be even better if you kept Christmas, because it’s for the kids.’ You mean:

- it’s all right to lie to children?
- it’s all right to tell them fairy tales?
- it’s all right to say there is a Santa Claus?

What happens? *That helps set the children up that they receive ‘good things’ from a liar, and someone who doesn’t exist—rather than their parents—and on and on and on!*

You could take anything else: mias and pias when the Catholics pray and they do the rosary. You know, 15 ‘hail Marys’ and 20 ‘our fathers.’ If you’re real zealous make it 200 of each. Isn’t it profound that the Muslims also have rosary? They have special prayer beads, and so do the Buddhist, and Buddhist have prayer wheels. My, that’s a handy way! You know you don’t even have to pray. Just go along and roll a wheel and there’s a prayer already written on it, and that rolls up to God. Why that’s handy dandy! Just think how much time that’ll save you, you know that’s better than going to McDonald’s for breakfast. You know we can get it done fast and in a hurry. Or whatever it may be.

Now I’m being a little sarcastic because when you watch some of these documentaries on some of these other religions they’re really stupid; just plain *stupid and demonic!*

“...and that you do not ask about their gods, saying, ‘How did these nations serve their gods that I may also do likewise?’” (v 30).

‘Well, that’s a quaint thing, let’s go ahead and put the name of Christ on it.’ That’s all the Catholic’s have done, wherever they have gone.

Verse 31: “You shall not do so to the LORD your God, for every abomination to the LORD, which He hates, they have done to their gods; even their sons and their daughters they have burned in the fire to their gods.”

To Baal, the sun-god, whose day of worship is Sunday. {note sermon series *Refuting Sunday-Keeping*}. I clearly show that Israel was sent into captivity for Sabbath-breaking and Sunday-keeping because they worship Baal and Asherah.

Verse 32: “Whatsoever thing that I command you... [add Deut. 18, that ‘that Prophet’ who was Christ like unto Moses, only of greater

stature] ...be careful to do it. You shall not add to it, nor take away from it.”

This flows right along, compared to what God has said; Deuteronomy 13:1 “If a prophet rises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder which he foretold to you comes to pass, saying... [we have today a lot of magicians; many magic shows on TV] ...‘Let us go after other gods...’” (vs 1-2).

That is worship God in a different manner than God has said, or even go after other gods like we have today. When a President goes into the national cathedral, which is a gothic Catholic structure if you look at it, what does he have? *He has an ecumenical service!* He has a Protestant, a Jew, a Muslim, a Catholic, an Orthodox, and *those are all priests of other gods.*

Verse 2: “...‘Let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them,’ you shall not hearken to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, **for the LORD your God is testing you...**” (vs 2-3).

That’s why He lets it happen; *to prove you!* How are you going to know you believe the Truth unless you have proved it? have lived it? have substantiated it? If some little trial comes along, and you listen to someone with some false prophesy, listen to someone with some false doctrine, and you believe it, then *you have failed the test*; rather than going back and proving it.

I’m reading the book by J. Michael Feazell, *The Restoration of the Worldwide Church of God*. That is how it supposedly came back in line with Protestantism. *They failed the test!* He says he thanks God for Mr. Roberts and the Easter bunny, and he worships Christ on Christmas because God says that He likens Himself unto a green pine tree. *They failed the test!* So, God proves you. Why? *There are tests to know!*

Verse 3: “...*is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*” Remember Gen. 22 and what Abraham was asked to do with Isaac. Remember that after all those years that Abraham followed God the angel gave the message from heaven where God said ‘Now I know that you fear Me seeing you have not with held your son, your only begotten son from Me.’ All that time. God is going to test us through our whole lives.

“...whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and **fear Him, and keep His commandments, and obey His voice,** and

you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. And that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death...” (vs 3-5).

That was when they had the *administration of death*, {note sermon: *What is the Administration of Death*}, because Israel was not only one who had the laws of God, but was also a sovereign nation of this world. Therefore, He gave them the right of the penalty of death in these things. In the Church today we find that if someone does that, the greatest right we have is expelling or disfellowshipment. We do not have the right to take the sword in our hand to do away with the immediate enemy that is within our midst. We send them on their way. This is why Jesus is looked upon, and the comparison is given that *He is greater than Moses.*

Hebrews 3:7 to the end is taken—most of it—from Psa. 95. Then we will go through and we will see all of the things that Israel did in going against God.

Hebrews 3:7: “For this reason, even as the Holy Spirit says, ‘Today, **if** you will hear His voice... [Showing there is choice. Are you willing to listen to God?] ...harden not your hearts, as in the rebellion, in the day of temptation in the wilderness... [so people have a choice] ...where your fathers tempted Me *and* tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Because of this, I was indignant with that generation, and said, “They are always going astray in their hearts, and they have not known My ways.” So, I swore in My wrath “**if** they shall enter into My rest—”’” (vs 7-11).

{note sermon: *Is God’s Love Conditional?*} So, this is conditional. Every time you see **if** that is a condition.

Paul gives a warning, v 12: “Beware, brethren, lest perhaps there by in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in apostatizing from *the* living God.” The whole book of Hebrews is written to keep people from apostatizing from God, from falling away and committing the unpardonable sin.

Verse 13: “Rather, be encouraging one another each day, while it is called ‘today’...” Every choice we make is *today*. It’s always in the present. What you did yesterday—whether good or bad—if it’s bad and you’ve repented of it, that’s fine, *don’t pollute today with the sin of yesterday*. And tomorrow when it becomes today, then everything you do in life is always lived in *today*. Do you understand that? *The future is not here, and the past is already gone!* So therefore, here’s another lesson, too, if you live in the past and don’t learn the lessons of the past, then you’re bound to make the same mistakes in the future; and make the same mistakes

today. This is why it always refers to today, and the word *today* refers directly to the Sabbath. When is it that we hear the voice of God through the Word of God most of all? during the week? Is it not on the Sabbath? *Yes it is! That's when we hear to voice of God!*

"...so that none of you become hardened by *the* deceitfulness of sin" (v 13). Because there is pleasure in sin for a season; it's deceitful. If you don't believe that, just look at the world and in particular look at the so called 'fun cities' of the world; be they Las Vegas, or Reno, or Monte Carlo, or any of the gambling cities of the world; the deceitfulness of riches that come out of that, which is robbery really because they take it from everybody else, and the few that win are then held up as they've really done something. That's all *the deceitfulness of sin!* That's just an example of it. The deceitfulness of sin can also come in the way of false doctrine and false religion. So, you can add that in there, too. The deceitfulness of sin in this case is the liberty to break the Sabbath.

Verse 14: "For we are companions of Christ, **if**... [there again we have another condition] ...we truly hold the confidence *that we had* at the beginning steadfast until the end. As it is being said, 'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion.' For some, after hearing, did rebel, but not all who came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was He indignant *for* forty years? *Was it* not with those who had sinned, whose dead bodies were strewn in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear *that they* would not enter into His rest, except to those who had disobeyed?" (vs 14-18) They didn't go in.

Verse 19: "So we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief."

- v 18: "...to those who had disobeyed?....
- v 19: "...So we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief"

Let's understand *if you don't believe you won't obey!* Disbelief is followed by disobedience. That's just the way it falls.

We're going to cover these things and go through them, not in a way that this is to be taken by anyone who hears this sermon who is loving God and keeping the Sabbath, and all these things, that this is correction for you. It is not correction for you. It may be for some who hear this that are disobeying God that it would be correction for them. If it is and they hear and they change, like it says, *today if you will hear His voice.* These things are given to us for a purpose; they are examples for us that we should

not do even as they did. In other words, God also believes in the principle that if you do not learn the lessons of history, you're bound to repeat them.

1-Corinthians 10:1 tells us why we should not do these things: "Now I do not wish you to be ignorant *of this*, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. And all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (vs 1-2). We were baptized *into the death of Jesus Christ, in a covenant relationship! Our baptism is greater!*

Verse 3: "And *they* all ate the same spiritual meat. And *they* all drank *of* the same spiritual drink; for they drank from *the* spiritual Rock that followed *them*. And that Rock was Christ" (vs 3-4). Here again is another proof that the Lord God of the Old Testament was the One Who became Jesus Christ. No question about it.

Verse 5: "But with many of them God was not pleased, for their dead bodies were strewn in the wilderness. Now these things became examples for us, so that we might not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.' Neither should we commit sexual immorality, as some of them committed, and twenty-three thousand were destroyed in one day. Neither should we tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted *Him*, and were killed by serpents. Neither *should we* complain against *God*, as some of them also complained, and were killed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them *as* examples, and were written for our admonition, **on whom the ends of the ages are coming**" (vs 3-11). Now, that's quite thing!

In the end of the world/age, having all of the Word of God, and understanding the Word of God, **are we more accountable than other people? No question about it! Absolutely no question about it!**

That's why He gives v 12: "Therefore, let the one who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall." Fall doing what? *Doing some of the things they have here!*

Psa. 95 is known as a Sabbath Psalm. When the people would come to the temple, or the synagogues on the Sabbath Day, what would they hear? *They would hear the Word of God!* The Sabbath Day was for instruction to *hear the Word of God*, then to set your heart and mind and course to *obey the Word of God, to live by the Word of God!* And all of that takes place more on the Sabbath Day than anything else. Is it not also true that because we're fleshly human beings, we need to be taught and taught, and repeat, and learn, and grow; and the

Sabbath Day and the Holy Days become a focal point in all of that.

For example, if you did not attend Sabbath services for a whole year, nor keep any of the Holy Days of God for a whole year, how far back into the world might you slip under those circumstances? *Probably pretty far!* How much faith would you lose? *Probably an awful lot of faith, because faith comes by the hearing of the Word, and if you were not there on the Sabbath Day, you're not hearing the Word of God!* If you don't study during the week on your own, you're not hearing the Word of God by reading it, because then you read it and you hear it in your mind. So therefore, it becomes very easy not to obey the voice of God because the voice of God is way off, not even a still little whisper in your ear. That's why he always focuses on *today*.

Psalm 95:6: "O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker." That we're to do everyday, but in particularly on the Sabbath Day. *No doubt about it!*

Verse 7: "For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand...."

Remember, Christ is the Chief Shepard. Note John 10, that He is the *true* Shepard; He leads them in and out, and they find pasture. What does this pasture mean? *This means the food from the Word of God to grow spiritually*

- in grace
- in knowledge
- in understanding
- to build the character of God!

"...**Today**, if you would but hearken to His voice: 'Harden not your heart as in the rebellion, as in the day of temptation in the wilderness when your fathers tempted Me, tried Me, even though they saw My work'" (vs 7-9).

Over and over again! What did they see everyday besides the Works of God? besides the manna everyday? Besides having the Sabbath marked out every week for 40 years because manna was never sent on the Sabbath. What did they see everyday? *The pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night!* As far as a physical carnal people, that's as close to God as you can get. The only time they were closer was when they were at Mount Sinai and God gave the Ten Commandments.

This whole thing that people say, 'Well if God would tell me what to do then I would know and then I would do it.' *No you wouldn't because that's an excuse!* 'Well, if I could just see God and be guaranteed it's God then I would do it.' *No you wouldn't because the children of Israel came as*

*close to seeing God, and Moses saw God and they still didn't do it!* That's just an excuse because *you don't want to obey!* If you have a Bible, God has spoken to you; whether you open it, read it and listen to it or not, that is not God's problem, that's the individual's problem who has the Bible and never does anything with it.

They don't look at it that way because, 'God didn't give me the Bible, my grandma gave me it; aunt gave it to me; my mother gave it to me; my father gave it to me. God didn't give it to me.' *Yes, He did* because He caused it to be produced and printed and sent out into all the world, it just happens that God used the vehicle of your aunt, or your uncle, or your father, or your mother to deliver the Bible to you. Many people don't even consider that, but that's just the way it is. So, they saw the works forty years.

Verse 10: "For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, 'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they have not known My ways'; to whom I swore in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest" (vs 10-11). This is the lesson every Sabbath: *that you come into the presence of God*

- to hear the Word of God
- to obey the Word of God
- to be instructed and encouraged in the Word of God

*today; while it is today!*

It's amazing how much God put up with. I mean, absolutely amazing! God loved Israel! He was grieved every time they sinned. He corrected them, they repented, but not from the heart; they flattered Him, yet, God forgave them. God dealt with them. Why? *Because He remembered His covenant that He had with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!*

Deuteronomy 9:3: "Therefore, understand this day... [this just before they're going into the 'promised land'] ...that the LORD your God *is* He Who goes over before you. *Like* a consuming fire, He shall destroy them... [all the enemies of the land, and the giants and so forth] ...and He shall bring them down before your face. So, you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly as the LORD has said to you."

When God does great things for people, as He did for Israel, as He did for America, v 4: "Do not speak in your heart after the LORD your God has cast them out from before you, saying, 'For my righteousness...'" In other words: because I'm good; because I'm industrious because I'm strong; because I have spirit; all the things *of self*.

“...the LORD has brought me in to possess this land’...” (v 4). In other words because ‘I’m so good’ God was obligated to do it. We’re saying the same things today in this war with the terrorist, ‘because we are so good God has to be on our side that we’ll get the enemy.’ God says don’t speak that way.

“...but for the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God drives them out from before you. Not for your righteousness, or for the uprightness of your heart, do you go to possess their land, but for the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God drives them out from before you, so that He may perform the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” (vs 4-5).

Before anyone in physical Israel or anyone even within the Church gets all up on their high horse by saying that ‘God had to do this because of how great we are,’ remember God has done it because of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We in the Church are ‘*If you be Christ then are you Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise!*’ **We are here because of Abraham**, not because of what we are as people, but because of what Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have done, and what God has done. If we always remember that, we’ll never get lifted above other people to think that we’re greater than other people because God is the One Who has called those who are His.

Verse 6: “Therefore, understand that the LORD your God does not give you this good land, to possess it for your righteousness...” He said it three times! A principle in the Bible, and remember this concerning the Sabbath and every other thing. When it’s *repeated* it is important. You don’t possess it for your righteousness.

“...for **you are a stiff-necked people**” (v 6). You can put it another way: *fiercely independent and self-reliant! My way is right! That’s the good ole American/Israel spirit! Yes, indeed!* And because of that, ‘God is bound to bless us because of what we do.’ **No!**

Verse 7: “Remember, *and* do not forget...” Whenever God says this, what happens? *We immediately don’t remember and forget it as quick as we can!*

“...how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you departed out of the land of Egypt, until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD” (v 7).

We’re going to look at some of these

provocations, and some of these rebellions so that we can learn the lesson that God wants us to because these are examples.

Verse 20: “And the LORD was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him. And I prayed for Aaron also at the same time.... [that’s what it means when he was up before God] ...And I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire, and stamped it, grinding *it* very small, until it was as fine as dust. And I threw the dust of it into the brook that descended out of the mountain. And at Taberah, and at Massah, and at the Graves of Lust, you provoked the LORD to anger. And when the LORD sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying, ‘Go up and possess the land which I have given you,’ then you rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and you did not believe Him, nor hearkened to His voice. You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you” (vs 20-24). That was before they left Egypt.

Let’s look at some of these things and kind of take this in chronological order. Here’s one of the first difficulties they have; this one here is not necessarily a provocation, but this is a murmuring and a complaint. We will see when we get to Exo. 16, that the murmuring and complaint, even against Moses and Aaron **was really truly against God** because they were only doing what God said.

Exodus 15:23: “And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah because it *was* bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah.... [*bitterness*] ...And the people murmured against Moses, saying, ‘What shall we drink?’” (vs 23-24).

Stop and think a minute what God had just done for them. Think of all the plagues that took place:

- the sparing of their firstborn
- the killing of the firstborn of Egypt
- taking them out of the land of Egypt
- taking them through the Red Sea saving them from Pharaoh and all the armies that came after them

—and they went just a few days journey away from the Red Sea and here they were already complaining rather than saying, ‘Wow! This water is bitter, let’s go to God and ask God to do something about the water because we know of all the mighty powerful miracles that He did, surely He came make bitter water sweet.’ *They complained!*

Verse 24: “And the people murmured against Moses, saying, ‘What shall we drink?’” Moses was always caught between the people and

God, which is worse than ‘a rock and a hard spot’; because at least if you’re between ‘a rock and a hard spot’ you have a chance of getting out of it. Here between God and the people, Moses always had the problem that when the people sinned they were Moses’ people. God says, and the people *you* brought out of Egypt. When they did well, they were *His* people. So, if anyone thinks they want to be a high exulted prophet like Moses, you better stop and think there’s an awful lot of responsibility that comes with it, an awful lot of accountability, and it’s not all the glory and all of the glamour that you might think it is, and it was a pretty tough row to hoe.

Moses being caught between the people and God, v 25: “...cried to the LORD. And the LORD showed him a tree. And when he had cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet...”

This also shows the principle of using herbs; ties in with Psa. 104, that herbs are for the service of men, and so forth. There are quite a few things you can find in the Bible of how we should use those things and they’re now finding that a lot of them are more preferable to some of the modern chemical medicine that they have.

Verse 25: “...There He made a decree and a law for them, and there He proved them.” Look upon it this way: A lot of the trials and difficulties that you have come because *God wants to prove you*. Not necessarily to give you trouble; trouble is going to come, trials are going to come whether you’re with God or without God, as far as the world is concerned. Is there anybody in the world who does not have trials and difficulties and problems? *No, they all do!* But for us these things come upon us that God may prove us. Give us a test. Do we believe Him or not? Will we look to Him or not? *To prove them!*

“...and there he proved them. And he said...” (vs 25-26). Here we go right back to the beginning of Hebrews. Remember the first thing we started out with? *Obey the voice of God!* What do we have in Heb. 3? *Today if you will hear His voice!* What do we have in Psa. 95? *Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart!* So, we have the same thing here, again *if*.

Everything we do brethren, is conditioned on v 26 “...‘If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD your God, and will do that which is right in His sight, and will give ear to His commandments, and keep all His laws...”

Here’s a blessing! Here is something that you can come to God and claim! And by all means, with all the things we have now, with anthrax scare,

with small pox scare; and I hear now they’re saying diphtheria scare, and all of this sort of thing to put hysteria in the people, and I tell you *hysteria and fear comes because people don’t trust God!* That’s why!

God gives a promise, v 26: “...**I** will put none of these diseases upon you, which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I *am* the LORD Who heals you.” That is Jehovah your Healer; Jehovah Rapha.

We can claim those promises! We can look to those! Of course, *we have to obey God*; we have to do the things that He says, and here in this case we have, with the waters being made sweet, that He used the tree or the herbs of the leaves from the tree and made the water sweet. So, all of that combined together shows that God is going to fulfill His promises.

I’m just going to cover a little bit of the first part of Exo. 16 to show part of the situation here when we get to Heb. 4 and we get into the Sabbath: when the Sabbath was revealed, when the children of Israel began keeping it and so forth, then we’ll get into chapter 16 in detail because that will explain to us about some of the particular Greek words that are in Heb. 4.

Exodus 16:1: “And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came into the Wilderness of Sin [Zin]...” When I first read that I thought, why would God bring them into the Wilderness of Sin?

“...which *is* between Elim and Sinai. An on the fifteenth day of the second month *after* their departing out of the land of Egypt, then the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness” (vs 1-2).

This is part of their rebellion against God. Now notice what they did: *They accused God, and they made up all kinds of excuses!* This is something to always remember:

- *The carnal mind* will look for any excuse possible to reject God and disobey God!
- *A converted mind* will look for every reason
  - ✓ to serve God
  - ✓ to love Him
  - ✓ to keep His commandments

That’s the difference between them. These examples are given for our admonition upon whom the ends of the earth have come; that we should not do as they did.

Verse 3: “And the children of Israel said to

them, ‘O that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt...’” No, that’s not what they said, they cried out to God so they could be released from Egypt.

“...when we sat by the fleshpots, when we ate bread to the full, for you have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger!” (v 3).

God is the One Who brought them out there, *not Moses or Aaron*. They were just following God’s instruction. Then God reveals the Sabbath, He sends the manna, we’ll cover that next time when we get into a little more detail into the situation concerning the Sabbath.

Exo. 20 is the giving of the Ten Commandments, and we’re going to see that the rebellion against God mainly centered around violating the first three commandments; and then, after that, the Sabbath commandment; and then after that, committing fornication. All of those things provoke God. But when God gave the Ten Commandments we know that He thundered them from the top of Mount Sinai.

Exodus 20:18: “And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking. And when the people saw, they trembled and stood afar off. And they said to Moses, ‘You speak with us, and we will hear. But let not God speak with us, lest we die’” (vs 18-19).

So again, they have that excuse that they would rather have a human being do it. Of course, we know the whole situation concerning Hebrews is that it explains that:

- God did come in the flesh
- God did speak to them
- God did give them His Word

So, *they provoked God there!*

Let’s see some other things where they provoked God because most of the provoking is contained in Num. 11. Here is where the people were really against what Moses and Aaron were doing. This is where then they complained about flesh again. They didn’t remember the flesh that God had given them in Exo. 16. So, God sent them lots of quail, but He also let them be consumed in their lust.

Let’s look at this provocation, Numbers 11:1: “And the people complained about *their* distress, speaking evil in the ears of the LORD. And the LORD heard it, and His anger was kindled. And the fire of the LORD burned among them and consumed some in the outermost parts of the camp.

And the people cried to Moses. And when Moses prayed to the LORD, the fire was quenched” (vs 1-2).

This is the way it is all the time with carnal Israel, when God gave them some punishment, when some of them were killed, just like we have with the terrorist attack today, then they came back to God, but not in truth, and not in repentance. They flattered God with their lips, and they feared God temporarily, and then continued right on their way. This is all part of the way it is with the children of Israel.

Verse 3: “And he called the name of the place Taberah because the fire of the LORD burned among them. And the troublemakers in their midst lusted with *great* lust. And the children of Israel also turned and wept, and said, ‘Who shall give us flesh to eat?’” (vs 3-4).

We have a situation here that they didn’t believe God, though God was right there with them all the time:

- by the pillar of cloud by day
  - by the fire by night
  - by the manna six days a week and double on the sixth day, and none of the Sabbath
- all the way down through the forty years*
- plus they had the experience that God sent the quail (Exo. 16)

When they started complaining to God about this, what they should of done was go to Moses and say, ‘Moses, let’s all pray and ask God to provide for us.’ Moses could have gone to God, and God would have sent anything they needed. But notice what they were looking to, and here’s the thing that a lot of people always do: *they live in the past*.

The whole thing that we saw concerning the word **today** if you will hear His voice, that means that not only just the Sabbath Day as we’ve explained, but it means today because we live in the present tense all the time. When you live in the past you bring the problems of the past to the present. When you complain and do those things, then you’re likely to carry them forward into tomorrow, and tomorrow hasn’t even come. Tomorrow is clean and pure because it hasn’t arrived.

Notice what they said, v 5: “We remember the fish...” If you get a good succulent fish and it’s cooked just right, and you put it in your mouth it just sort of melts and tastes really good.

“...which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic. But now our soul *is* dried away. There is nothing at all besides this manna

*before our eyes.* And the manna *was* like coriander seed, and the color of it was like the color of bdellium. The people went around and gathered, and ground it in mills, or beat *it* in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it. And the taste of it was like the taste of fresh oil. And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it” (vs 5-9).

So God was providing! If they would have gone to Moses, and to God, and said, ‘we remember the wonderful quail that you sent, God, and we know out here in the desert that you can’t send us fish.’ God could do that! He could just reach down there in the Red Sea and pick up a whole batch of fish and just bring them over and drop them on the camp, and they could have some fish there. That would not be an impossible thing for God to do. But when people come to God and demand of God, and complain to God, it really creates great problems for the people and for God.

Verse 10: “Then Moses heard the people weeping throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent.... [we have almost a riot going on here] ...And the anger of the LORD was kindled greatly. Moses also was displeased. And Moses said to the LORD, ‘Why have You afflicted Your servant?....’” (vs 10-11).

Poor Moses, he’s caught between God and the people. When the people were bad they were the people that Moses brought out of Egypt, they were *his* people; when they did good they were *God’s* people. So, here’s Moses caught between the two of them. Even he’s caught up in complaining to God.

“...And why have I not found favor in Your sight so that You lay the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Did I bring them forth that You should say to me, ‘Carry them in your bosom like a nursing father carries the sucking child,’ to the land which You swore to their fathers? From where should I get flesh to give to all this people? For they weep to me, saying, ‘Give us flesh that we may eat.’ I am not able to bear all this people alone because *it is* too heavy for me” (vs 11-14).

Then after Moses further confessed and repented, v 15: “And if You are going to deal this way with me, I beg You to kill me... [In other words, if you’re going to keep this up with me, God, just kill me.] ...at once... [just do it quickly, get it over with] ...or if I have found favor in Your sight, but let me not see my *own* wretchedness.”

God heard his prayer. Sometimes we can pray to God even in anger and God will hear our prayers. Even in despair and really being down like

Moses was, and having almost 2-million people griping and complaining at you. Now, that’s a *big* problem.

Then what God did, v 16: “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel...’” He gave them part of the Spirit that He gave to Moses, and then they helped govern the people.

After that was done, v 31: “And a wind went forth from the LORD. And it brought quails from the sea and let them fall by the camp, about a day’s journey on this side, and about a day’s journey on the other side...”

This time, God made them go work for it. The first time they came right on in the camp (Exo. 16); it was right at the end of the Sabbath and God didn’t want them going out at night. God said here, ‘If you want them, you’ve got to go get it.’

“...all around the camp, and about two cubits *high* upon the face of the earth” (v 31). A cubit’s is 18 inches so it’s about three feet; three feet high of quail that God just took and dumped them.

Verse 32: “And the people rose up all that day and all night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails. And he that gathered least gathered ten homers. And they spread *them* out for themselves all around the camp.”

They brought them, spread them; gave them to everybody. Because of their lust and their complaining God gave them a punishment here. This is part of the provocation.

Verse 33: “And while the flesh *was* yet between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague. And he called the name of that place Graves of Lust because there they buried the people that lusted” (vs 33-34). Then they left there.

Now we have another problem; here’s another provocation. This is why Paul had to make the comparison between Moses and Christ; to show that Christ was greater. This is a family struggle.

Numbers 12:1: “And Miriam and Aaron... [Miriam was Aaron’s sister] ...against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had taken, for he had taken a Cushite woman.”

This is the one that *Josephus* records that he married as a political marriage to solidify the alliance between Ethiopia and Egypt. This was done before God even called him. So apparently when they left Egypt Moses also took his Ethiopian wife with him. He had a son by the Ethiopian wife—

Gershom—who introduced idolatry into Israel a little later on after they went into the land. This did cause a problem, and the whole lesson here is that God would take care of Moses.

We can't use that excuse for us today because we're nowhere near in the category of Moses. But God taught a very good lesson here, and this was a provocation against God. Not by all of Israel in this particular case, but by Miriam and Aaron. Now notice, it puts her name first. We know the weakness of Aaron. Because when the people came and they brought the golden calf and so forth, and we'll get to that provocation here in just a minute when we get done with Num. 12. Then he gave in meekly to the people and built it.

Verse 2: "And they said, 'Has the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? Has He not also spoken by us?' And the LORD heard *it*. (Now the man Moses *was* very meek, more than all the men on the face of the earth.)" (vs 2-3). This is an editorial comment inserted there by, probably, King Hezekiah when he did some canonization of the Old Testament or perhaps by Ezra when he finalized the canonization. We don't now exactly, but it's more than likely that is was Hezekiah.

Verse 4: "And the LORD spoke suddenly to Moses and to Aaron and to Miriam, 'You three come out to the tabernacle of the congregation.' And the three came out. And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud and stood *in* the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam. And they both came forward. And He said, 'Hear now My words....'" (vs 4-6).

This is why the Jews thought and understood—which was correct until Christ came—that Moses was the prophet par excellent of God.

"... 'Hear now my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD will make Myself known to him in a vision, and will speak to him in a dream. **Not so with My servant Moses. He is faithful in all My house**'" (vs 6-7).

That ties right in with what Paul wrote back there in Heb. 3 that Moses was faithful as a servant, or that is a steward, over the household of God. Whereas Christ was the Builder of the house, and the One Who is the builder has more honor than steward. And has more honor than the house itself.

Verse 8: "I will speak with him mouth to mouth, even clearly, and not in dark speeches. And he shall behold the likeness of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them, and He departed. And the cloud moved

from the tabernacle. And behold, Miriam *became* leprous as snow. And Aaron looked on Miriam, and behold, *she was* leprous. And Aaron said to Moses, 'Oh, my lord, I beg you, do not lay upon us the sin in which we have done foolishly, and in which we have sinned. Let her not be like one dead...' (vs 8-12)—because surely she would be dead in just a short time.

"...of whom the flesh is half gone when he comes out of his mother's womb.'.... [in other words like a rotted fetus] ... And Moses cried to the LORD saying, 'Heal her now, O God, I beseech You.' And the LORD said to Moses, 'If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received'" (vs 12-14). So, Miriam was shut out of the camp and the people didn't journey again until Miriam was healed.

Let's see the major provocation. This is the most important one and this is the one that is *the* major provocation. Why is that? Remember, all you have to do is just look back at the last part of Exo. 31, where He told them about the Sabbath. So, right after that He gave the instructions concerning the Sabbath to the children of Israel, and He went back up on Mount Sinai.

Exodus 32:1: "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, then the people gathered themselves to Aaron, and they said to him, 'Up! Make us gods...'"

- This shows the weakness of Aaron  
As we already saw, Moses said he prayed for him; that God would not destroy him—and God heard Moses.
- This shows the rebellion of the people  
Everything that God had done up to that point was really fantastic, it was tremendous.

They should have known that Moses was going to come back down. They should have known because of the elders who were there. When the 70 elders went up with Moses, up to a level on the mountain when they confirmed the covenant, they were able to look up and see God walking on the Sea of Glass up there. They actually had as it were a wedding feast right there on the mountain with God and Moses just above them, and they were down just below.

So, all the elders could have said 'Look, let's trust God, we know Moses up there, and if he's with God everything's going to be fine. What he is doing is giving him instructions, and it's very important for us. Now everybody just relax and calm down and have faith and believe God and wait for Moses.' *No, they didn't do that!* Aaron could have

said so but apparently he was afraid of the people. So, here we have *giving into the mob*. And political expediency of doing what they do based upon what Aaron said, ‘Well you know this people is given the sins, so you know, let’s just turn them over to sin.’

So, they came to Aaron and said, “...‘Up! Make us gods which shall go before us, for this Moses, **the man** who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ And Aaron said to them, ‘Break off the golden earrings which *are* in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring *them* to me.’ And all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought *them* to Aaron. And he took *them* from their hand, and fashioned it with an engraving tool...” (vs 1-4). Aaron<sub>[transcriber’s correction]</sub> personally handmade the idols!

In this case they broke the first two commandments. We’re going to see that they broke the third commandment. We’re going to see that they broke the fourth commandment. That’s the provocation because:

- **the first commandment:** ‘I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.’
- the second commandment: ‘Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* under the earth.’ Or in the sea. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to worship them; for I the LORD your God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers unto the children of the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandment.’

Here they were breaking the first two right away. And Aaron, the high priest of God was right there in the middle of this provocation doing it. That is remarkable, to me.

“...and fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molten calf. And they said, ‘These *are* your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt’” (v 4).

Now you know why—when the kingdom was split during the days of Jeroboam and Rehoboam—Jeroboam was able to make the golden calves and the people just said, ‘oh yes, that is true.’ They went head long into idolatry again.

- **the third commandment:** taking the name of God in vain

- **the fourth commandment:** having a feast which was not of God

Now, on those golden calves, if you’ve seen the movie *The Ten Commandments*, they have it just right. Where the horns come up and there is a round sun-disc right between the horns, which is symbolizing sun-worship. So, I would have to say, although it doesn’t say it directly, I would be surprised if they were not doing this on a Sunday.

Verse 5, let’s see the rest of the account here: “And when Aaron saw *the calf*, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, ‘Tomorrow *is* a Feast to the LORD.’”

Isn’t that amazing? I wonder if that was from being the Sabbath and tomorrow was Sunday. I don’t know, it doesn’t say, so let’s not go beyond just saying it’s possible.

Verse 6: “And they rose up early on the next morning...” *Yes!* For their gods they would get up early on the morning, but for the true God all they would do was squawk and complain.

“...and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play” (v 6).

That means they had a pagan sex orgy before the golden calves. If you’ve seen the movie *The Ten Commandments* I think that they show a very good depiction of what went on with that scene where it says and they rose up to play. Let’s see the rest of the story; and *see how they provoke God!*

Verse 7: “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go! Get you down, for your people... [he’s stuck between the people and God] ...whom you brought out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves*. They have turned aside quickly out of the way, which I commanded them. They have made them a molten calf, and have worshiped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, “These *are* your gods, O Israel, who have brought you up out of the land of Egypt.”’ And the LORD said to Moses, ‘I have seen this people, and behold, it *is* a stiff-necked people. And now leave Me alone, so that My wrath may burn hot against them and that I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.’” (vs 7-10).

I mean, this is really quite a thing! God said, ‘Look, I can fulfill my promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob through you. Let Me destroy all these people of Israel because they are so rebellious.’

Verse 11: “And Moses prayed to the LORD his God, and said, ‘LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great

power and with a mighty hand?... [this is putting the burden back on God] ...Why should the Egyptians speak and say, “He brought them out with an evil intent...” (vs 11-12).

Notice how he was able to *talk* with God; notice how he was able to *reason* with God. There are times when we can reason with God, and Moses is doing it here, and he’s doing it properly, and he’s doing it rightly.

He says, “...with an evil intent, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth”? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Your people” (v 12). Those are pretty strong words!

Verse 13: “Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, “I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give to your seed, and they shall inherit *it* forever.” And the LORD repented of the evil which He spoke of doing to His people” (vs 13-14).

Can prayer make a difference? *Not only is this intercessory prayer!* When you have intercessory prayer, what do you do? *You claim the promises of God!* Notice how he did it; he went back to where God swore by Himself to Abraham, and to Isaac, that He would do it. God bound himself, He said okay, *I’ll repent!* So then, Moses turned and came down the mountain, and he saw the golden calf.

Verse 19: “And it came to pass, as soon as he came near to the camp and saw the calf and dancing, then Moses’ anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands...”—which had the Ten Commandments, and broke them at the base of the mountain.

“...and broke them at the bottom of the mountain.... [at the base of the mountain] ...And he took the calf which they had made and burned *it* in the fire, and pulverized *it* to powder, and scattered *it* upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink *of it*. And Moses said to Aaron, ‘What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?’” (vs 19-21).

*Quite a thing!* Can those who are to be the leaders and teachers bring sin upon people? *Yes!* With what has happened to the largest Church of God in this era, great sin has been brought upon God, and the people because they have rejected the Sabbath and the Holy Days and the Truth of God, and have gone right back out into this world, and said, ‘Behold, Protestantism is the true religion.’

That’s almost the same as this. So, Aaron being weak as he was:

Verse 22: “And Aaron said, ‘Let not the anger of my lord burn hot. You know the people, that they *are set* on mischief, for they said to me, “Make us gods who shall go before us; as for this Moses... [it’s your fault Moses] ...the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” And I said to them, “Whoever has any gold, let them break *it* off.” And they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and there came out this calf” (vs 22-24).

Wooop! Boom! Automatic idolatry! That’s really something! ***This was the greatest provocation against God!***

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

Scriptural References:

- 1) Hebrews 3:1-6
- 2) Deuteronomy 18:15-16, 18-22
- 3) Deuteronomy 12:30-32
- 4) Deuteronomy 13:1-5
- 5) Hebrews 3:7-19, 18, 19
- 6) 1 Corinthians 10:1-12
- 7) Psalm 95:6-11
- 8) Deuteronomy 9:3-7, 20-24
- 9) Exodus 15:23-26
- 10) Exodus 16:1-3
- 11) Exodus 20:18-19
- 12) Numbers 11:1-16, 31-34
- 13) Numbers 12:1-14
- 14) Exodus 32:1-14, 19-24

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Genesis 22
- John 10
- Psalm 104
- Hebrews 4
- Exodus 31

Also referenced:

Books:

- *The Restoration of the World Wide Church of God* by J. Michael Feazell
- *Josephus*

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- *Refuting Sunday-Keeping*

Sermons:

- *What is the Administration of Death*
- *Is God’s Love Conditional?*

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