

November 16, 2014
Sunday Evening Service
Series: Hebrews
Community Baptist Church
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as you prepare to hear from Hebrews 3:1-6

1. What is involved in considering Jesus and how much time do you spend doing it?
2. What is God's "house" regarding the faithfulness of Moses and what is God's "house" as Jesus built it?
3. Explain the importance of the word "if" where the text says, "We are His house if we indeed hold fast our confidence."
4. How can we become guilty of worshiping human heroes to the neglect of Jesus Christ?

JESUS IS BETTER THAN MOSES **Hebrews 3:1-6**

As we continue our study through this letter, we need to remember that the author wrote to Jews, most of whom were Christians, possibly in a particular local church. Like all Christians in every age, they were subjected to various teachings about Jesus. Our Lord had been gone from the earth for about thirty years by the time the author penned this instruction. In that length of time, teaching that denied the authority or the divinity or the true humanity of Jesus had sprung up. Satan always desires to minimize the truth about Jesus, because if He is not who He claimed to be, He has no salvation to offer.

Therefore, the author stressed from the opening words that Jesus

is superior to the prophets who conveyed God's message to the fathers (1:1). He wrote that Jesus is superior to angels, which was a very important reminder to people who held angels in high esteem (1:4-2:9). Stephen indicated in the sermon that caused his death that the Jewish people held that angels were included in the process of giving the law (Acts 7:53). That put them in a very high estate in the minds of the Jews.

However, the old prophets and even the angels didn't compare with the esteem the Jews held for Moses. Jesus ran into that same issue when He taught the crowds that He is the living bread. They demanded that He do some sign that would prove He was as important as Moses (John 6). That was some good evidence that the Jews esteemed Moses more highly than any other human.

Why shouldn't they esteem Moses? In their historical teaching they learned that God had protected Moses as a baby and while growing up in Pharaoh's household. Because he grew up as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, Moses could have sided with the Egyptians and probably become their king. But, he chose to be identified with the people of God, the Israelites, the slaves. God spoke to Moses from a burning bush, He spoke to Moses face-to-face, and He spoke to Moses directly from heaven. Not many people in history can lay claim to that privilege. God used Moses to lead the entire nation out of Egypt and into existence. God gave Moses the law, which was of greatest value to the devout Jews. When Moses came down from the mountain where He caught a glimpse of God's glory, his face shone fearfully bright. Who was like Moses?

Actually, in a lot of ways, Jesus was like Moses. But the author's intent in this letter is to prove that Jesus is superior to Moses too. It wasn't that the author tries to make Moses look like a failure. To the contrary, the writer extols Moses' work and faithfulness. But he is quick to point out that Jesus is superior to all the goodness and faithfulness of Moses.

This contrast is of vital importance as we work our way through the rest of this section in chapters three through six. Jesus Christ, the superior high priest, intercedes for us with His own blood. He offers to us the eternal rest. And yet many religious people take the work and offering of Christ with a grain of salt. They know about it. They know some of the details. But they don't know Christ.

Often very religious people don't know Christ because they are satisfied with lesser communicators of God's truth. No one will argue that the prophets who God used communicated God's truth. The angels certainly communicated God's truth. Moses was among the greatest tellers of truth. But none of them can offer eternal life. People who exalt their religious heroes above Jesus will miss the promised everlasting rest that only Christ can give. It is human tendency for people to trust communicators with skin rather than the perfect communicator, Jesus Christ, who is no longer physically present. To us kind of people, God said through the author of this letter, "Wake up and pay attention to Jesus." God continues to speak to us in these last days through Christ, the captain of our faith, the high priest of our sacrifice, the only entrance to everlasting rest.

Our High Priest Is Faithful Like Moses Was (vv.1-2).

Here is a great challenge from the writer of this letter: If you are a holy brother, consider Jesus. That is how this third chapter opens. *Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus (v.1a).* The challenge must be addressed to holy brothers in particular because even though the letter is for the church, there are some people in the church visible who are not holy brothers. We know that is the case in our day, but it was also true in the day of this letter. There were those who hear the same good news, but they are "not united by faith with those who listened" (4:2), and they fail to reach the everlasting rest (4:1). There were those who had been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, and tasted the goodness of God's Word (6:4), who fall away and are eternally lost. There were those who go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, who have only a fearful expectation of judgment in the future (10:26).

Those same scenarios are only too true in our own day. The visible church across the world is full of people who hear the Bible, hear religious truth, even hear the gospel. They even identify with a certain level of the truth, often through a particular religious organization, denomination, or cult. Though they have heard the

Bible and scriptural truth, the truth does not change them. It is a very common ailment in the visible church.

I have a friend who was reared in the Episcopal Church. He even graduated from the high school connected with the church. He told me that he heard the Episcopal Book of Prayer quoted Monday through Friday at school and on Sunday at church. This went on year after year. In fact, he is still able to quote many of the verses from the prayer book. This is truth. The readings from that book are very sound doctrinally. They are, for the most part, pure Scripture. The words condemn sin, identify sinners, and tell of the wonderful work of Jesus Christ in offering salvation. However, my friend confessed that while he heard and quoted those words every day, they never registered with him until after he was saved as a forty-year-old adult. Until he became part of God's family, God's Word was just religious words.

Holy brothers are not dull of hearing. Holy brothers share the heavenly calling. The promise of heaven is only for those who God has adopted into His family. All *brothers* have experienced the same regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. All *brothers* share the joy and confidence of heaven. That is because our call to salvation, our call to come to Christ, originated in heaven in eternity. Our call from heaven is a calling to heaven. That means that while we live in this body on this earth, we know we are not at home yet. So Paul concluded, *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14).* He reminded us that our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:20).

People with that kind of confidence in that kind of future need to consider Jesus because He is the one who grants us entrance into heaven. The challenge is very important, very necessary for people like us. It draws us back to God's standard, God's plan. Our goals, plans, desires, or even religious aspirations are not important compared to our only possible means of entering heaven. Human nature becomes so fixated on the mechanics of ministry, the bright lights, the music, and even the buildings of ministry. We strive to make our ministry popular or at least acceptable. But when we die, every single trapping of ministry is left behind. How sad the plight of

people who have nothing but the passing stuff to show for their “religious” experience.

Therefore, while we have the opportunity, we do well to consider Jesus. The verb is a command that requires us to always think carefully about Jesus. This is not the idea of learning facts about Jesus. Satan knows more facts about Jesus than we can ever learn. The need taught here is that we need to keep on noticing Jesus, observing Him, gazing on Him with reflection and contemplation.

That idea fits well with the fact that Jesus also encourages His followers to learn of Him. That is what *considering* means. Jesus taught, “*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*” (Matthew 11:28-30). He invites us to become intimately familiar with His character. When we do, we will learn to love Him, just as spending time with our spouse teaches us what true, deep, intimate love really is.

Paul determined to learn Jesus like that. He wrote, *Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith – that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death* (Philippians 3:8-10).

When I was a child, I was familiar with some well-known classical music pieces. I just didn’t realize that is what they were. I knew of the *William Tell Overture* by Rossini, but I thought it was written to be the theme song for *The Lone Ranger* show. I heard Beethoven’s *Symphony Number 5* but always associated it as the theme music for the nightly news. I heard Tchaikovsky’s *1812 Overture* but thought it was written for a commercial. I was familiar with classical music, but I sure didn’t know classical music. So while I was in college I elected a course called “Music Appreciation.” The first day of class the teacher said, “I assume that everyone here is an education major since this is a required course for you, right?” I raised my hand and told the teacher I was a Bible major. He said,

“You realize you are not required to take this course.” I said, “Sure, I elected it because I wanted to learn about classical music.” He said, “That’s an automatic ‘A.’” My peers all said, “Are you crazy?” But, because I had to spend so much time listening to classical music, I developed a genuine love for it and love to listen to it in the comfort of my living room.

Maybe the reason you have a shallow affection for Jesus is because you really don’t know Him. And maybe you really don’t know Him because you don’t spend much time with Him. There is a great difference between being familiar with Jesus and gazing on Him until you learn to love Him.

Learn Jesus because Jesus is faithful. The writer of this letter affirmed that Jesus is *the apostle and high priest of our confession* (v.1b). That sounds good. But what is our confession? The Greek term used in this phrase “our confession” is *homologia*, which simply means to say the same thing. Our confession then is to say the same thing about Jesus that the Bible says about Him. Which is . . . ? He is the One sent with authority concerning that story, that truth. Jesus came to convey the message of the Heavenly Father who sent Him. He often taught, “*For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment – what to say and what to speak*” (John 12:49). Therefore, Jesus also conveyed the authority of the Father. He was the only perfect apostle, the perfect representative of God.

Jesus Christ also serves as the high priest of the truth we confess regarding Him. He represents God the Father for us and us to God the Father. He intercedes with God, the Righteous Judge, pleading His own blood sacrifice in our behalf.

In all of this Jesus is faithful like Moses was. He *was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house* (v.2). The historical facts prove that Moses was faithful in God’s house. That faithfulness is proven in the fact that Moses was also an apostle like Jesus Christ is. As such, God sent Moses to do His work and to teach His message. In reciprocal fashion, Moses represented God’s authority to the people. Moses did the works God sent him to do and gave the law which was God’s message to the people.

Moses was dependable in the task. The one exception, the one that disqualified him from entering the land, was when he struck the rock and robbed God of His glory. Otherwise, we are hard put to find a better example of faithfulness to the work of God. No wonder the people esteemed Moses highly.

Like Moses, but even better, Jesus is faithful to Him who appointed Him. Jesus is the only servant of God who completed His assigned task perfectly. While Moses was exemplary, Jesus was flawless. While Moses set a pretty high standard of righteousness, Jesus is the standard of righteousness.

Our High Priest Is More Worthy Than Moses Was (vv.3-6).

It is true and wonderful that Moses was faithful in the house of God, but Jesus built the house (vv.3-4). This great truth stands on the reality that God is the builder of all things. In parenthetical information the writer said, (*For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.*) (v.4). Moses didn't build God's House. "God's House" is a name for the nation of Israel and all that it represents before God. It is true that Moses was very dependable in establishing, governing, teaching that "house." So true is this that Jewish tradition and practice consider Moses to be the builder of the house of Israel.

But God built the house. He created Moses and preserved him from destruction. God oversaw Moses' education, preparing him to be a national leader. God empowered Moses and used him to deliver the nation from Egypt. God created the nation at Mount Sinai. In reality God began the construction of the house of Israel many years earlier with His promise to Abraham. While the Jews look to Abraham and Moses as the architects and builders of the nation, they miss the fact that God created and chose to use both of those mere humans.

Now here is the wonderful truth in that matter. Because Jesus is God, He is the builder. *For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses – as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself* (v.3). God is more to be honored than Moses because God only used Moses to build His house according to His plan. Jesus is ultimately the builder. Houses don't

build themselves. They have designers, engineers, architects, and contractors. It is sad when people glory in the finished product and never consider who designed it and built it.

There is a house that sits just off North Main Street in Greenville. Probably many of you have driven by it and thought very little of it. However, architects know about this house. It was built in 1954, the creation of Frank Lloyd Wright. "So?" you say. The house was listed in the National Registry of Historic Places in 1978 because Frank Lloyd Wright was a famous architect, designer, and educator who designed over 1,000 structures (both large and small) and built 532 of them including sky scrapers, museums, churches, and hotels. In 1991 Wright was recognized by the American Institute of Architects as the greatest American architect of all time. Now that house on West Avondale Drive is probably more significant to you than it has ever been.

Moses was faithful in the house, but Jesus built the house.

Also, Moses was a faithful servant; Jesus is the faithful Son (vv.5-6). The Jews are well aware that Moses was faithful as a servant in God's house. *Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later* (v.5). The people hold Moses to be among the greatest of leaders. The law came through him. Even Jesus referred to it as the law of Moses (Luke 24:44). He constantly referred to "what Moses taught." Moses founded the nation, in the people's opinion.

That's great. But really Moses was a servant in God's house. He was glad to be known as such. True servants of God delight in being known as servants. People who pretend to be God's servants get ticked when someone treats them like God's servant. Everything Moses faithfully taught and did pointed to the things that would be spoken later. The servant understood that the law without grace was incomplete. The Old Testament without the New Testament is truncated truth. Moses without Jesus leaves everyone condemned to hell. Moses' faithful life shouted that Jesus the Messiah would come and bring to completion all things. And almost no one understood. They are still willfully blind.

Moses was a faithful servant in God's house, but Jesus is the faithful Son over God's house. The writer made it plain that Jesus is over God's house writing, *but Christ is faithful over God's house as*

a son (v.6a). Moses was a wonderful servant who continually pointed to the coming “Son.” Christ is faithful as the Son in the house like Moses was faithful as the servant in the house. So who is more important, the Son or the servant? The servant will not inherit the “House” – the Son will.

And where, what, or who is that house Jesus will inherit? We are God’s house if . . . ! *And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope (v.6b)*. That we are God’s house is an incredible promise. Moses presided over the building of an important part of God’s house, the nation of Israel. But it was incomplete. The Church is the fulfillment of God’s plan. We are the inheritance that God the Father gives to the Son for His faithful obedience. We are the Bride given to the Groom.

But that is true only “if” we hold fast to our confidence. “If” is an important theme in this letter as we will discover in chapters four, six, and ten. Those people who are truly redeemed, who are truly part of the Body of Christ, the Bride, will hold fast. Multitudes appear to be part of the House, but looks can be deceiving.

We live in an age of hero worship. Nothing could be more obvious from the overwhelming media. The movers and shakers create idols and then cast them aside as they move on to the next creation. The mass of humanity worships at the feet of the idols longing to be just like them.

Sadly, the same is true in the realm of religion. Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Charles Russell, Sanatana Dharma, the Buddha, and a plethora of other lesser gods capture the attention of followers and worshipers by the millions. Often the disciples are devout and committed. Certainly, if they do not forsake their human idols and embrace Jesus Christ by faith, they will spend eternity in the lake of fire.

But sadder still is the number of people who worship Moses-like leaders all the time thinking they are pleasing God. Such is the plight of Jews to this day. But so is the condition of Catholics who worship the Pope and the masses of Charismatics in the last generation who worshiped the likes of Jim Baker, Jim Swaggart, James Robinson, and all the other lesser gods who crumbled and fell. And what about our peers in this age who think they follow Christ and think they please God, but their faith is really in that religious

personality who is able to attract such a huge following to himself? Or even the people who make heroes out of servants who just want to serve God. Moses never intended for people to make him an icon.

We do well to assess our worship to be sure we do not put a human servant in the place of Jesus Christ, our apostle and high priest.