

Sermon 13, How Moses Stacks Up, Hebrews 3:1-6

Proposition: Jesus's superiority to Moses tells us to be confident and boast in the hope we have in Him.

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Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, we come this morning to the comparison you've really been waiting for. We saw over the last few weeks that Jesus is superior to angels. Then came the incredible announcement that in Him, the human race too is superior to angels. Jesus takes hold of us, not them. Well, the comparison with angels comes to an end with the close of chapter 2, and the Hebrew writer moves on to compare Jesus to someone a lot more down to earth. I speak, of course, of Moses the man of God. Moses is a fascinating figure. As the author of the Torah, he did more than any other one man to establish Biblical religion.

Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night:
God said, Let Newton be! and all was light."

So said the English poet Alexander Pope about the great inventor of calculus, Sir Isaac Newton. But far more than the mathematical and gravitational genius of Newton, the pen of Moses sheds light on this world. Where did the world come from? What is our history and destiny? How is God addressing the problem of sin? All of these questions are answered in nation-founding detail

in the pages of the Pentateuch. Just as a side, Moses is the most important Biblical character with a name to himself. There are two Josephs, several Judahs (we call one Judas and one Jude but they are all named Judah), two Miriams (we call one Mary), two Sauls, even two Jesuses (we call one Joshua). But there is only one Moses. No one else in the Bible has his name.

A few cranks have decided that angels are important and should be worshiped. But anyone who has cracked the Bible open can see that the whole book would basically not exist without Moses.

Yet, that said, Jesus is greater. That's the point that the author makes today. He makes it by showing three points of similarity between Jesus and Moses, but also three points of difference. Even in the similarities, Jesus emerges as the clear winner — but in the differences, His glory shines forth brightly. Because Jesus is greater than Moses, you and I should be confident and boast in the hope we have through Him.

I. Three Points of Contrast, vv. 2-6

We will start by looking at the contrasts. There are three major areas in which Christ's superiority is seen.

A. Faithfulness, vv. 2, 5-6

The first and biggest comparison in this section regards the faithfulness of Moses and Jesus. Essentially, the writer provides an extended commentary on the statement in Numbers 12 that Moses was faithful in all God's house. That's high praise, for even if Moses wrote it down, it was spoken by God Himself. Aaron and Miriam had a problem with Moses' choice of wife, but God rebuked them by telling "Moses is faithful in all my house."

1. Jesus Is Faithful to His Maker

We'll talk more about that in a second. But the writer begins with the supreme faithfulness of Christ. Jesus was faithful to the God who made Him. He was perfectly faithful to His Creator from beginning to end. He never stepped out of line. He never failed to carry out His Father's instructions. He never forgot to say something in the heat of the moment. God set Him to save the world, and He saved the world.

2. Moses Was Faithful in All God's House

Moses, by contrast, was faithful in all God's house. He was particularly charged with hearing all the details of tabernacle construction, writing them down, and then supervising the building of a house for God. That is a huge job. And Moses was faithful in every aspect of it. As we will see in a few weeks in our evening worship, Exodus 35-40 records how every last piece of the tent was made and assembled there in the plains of Sinai. Moses had already recorded the instructions, but in an age before copy-paste and mechanical reproduction, he repeated all the instructions word-for-word along with a note that Moses and the construction team did exactly what they were supposed to do. This isn't just once, either. This is for every piece of furniture and every part of erecting the tabernacle. "As the Lord commanded Moses, so they did." And God was able to move in. The tent was built exactly to His specifications. That is certainly at least a major part of what it means to say that Moses was faithful in all God's house. He obeyed God in every part

of constructing the tabernacle. More broadly, he was faithful in leading the people out of Egypt, except for his brief error of striking the rock rather than speaking to it.

Nonetheless, the contrast remains. Jesus was completely faithful across the board. He was faithful to His Creator. Moses was faithful in a smaller area — in the house of God. He was not faithful everywhere and at all times. His faithfulness was impressive for a fallen human being, but it was not flawless like Jesus' faithfulness.

B. Glory, v. 3

The second point of contrast relates to glory. Both men have some glory. That is presupposed by comparing their glory. Once again, as I pointed out in my introductory sermons, the fact that Jesus is better does not mean that the things He's being compared to were utterly worthless. Far from it. Jesus' glory does not detract from Moses'. But it does outshine it.

1. Moses Has the Glory of Being a Faithful Part of God's House

What glory does Moses have? He has the glory of being a faithful part of God's house. The text does not say in so many words that Moses was part of God's house. But it is clearly implied by putting together the end of v. 6, which says that we are the house of God, with the truth that God's people have been one people from the beginning. If we are God's house, then our great-grandchildren will be and our forebears in faith were as well. Moses was an important part of God's house. As we'll discuss in a few moments, he was a freeborn servant in the house of the Lord.

The church is a glorious bride, with no spot, wrinkle, or any such thing. And you and I have the glory of being part of this glorious church. We are not such key parts of it as Moses was. And it is appropriate to honor Moses as the one who delivered the first written words of God to the human race. In fact, you have to understand how glorious Moses is to understand the point of the comparison. Jesus is not more glorious than someone lame and inglorious and dishonorable. He is more glorious than the most glorious member of His church. If I may dare to use this comparison, imagine the most godly pope in history — a man who has conquered evil empires simply by the overwhelming force of his moral authority. Imagine how excited devout Roman Catholics would be about such a man and how much glory they would shower on him. Well, Moses is far worthier and more glorious than that. Jesus Christ is far worthier and more glorious than that. Nonetheless, Moses has the glory of being a faithful part of the glorious household of the living God.

2. Christ Has the Glory of the House-Builder

But Christ has the glory of the house-builder. If you recall from your Bible reading, the tabernacle is never called "the house of God," even though the Temple is called that all the time. Why? One obvious reason is that it's not a house, it's a tent. Tents aren't houses, and even if you live in a tent you're not too likely to confuse it with a house. But another reason, I think, is that Jesus wants the glory of building God's house. Yes, Solomon is credited as the temple-builder, alongside his foreman Hiram. But that temple fell after four centuries. It was rebuilt, and that one is gone too. But the household of God that Jesus built, the temple made of living stones, is alive

and well. In fact, we are the temple of the living God, and Christ has all the glory of the house-builder.

What's more famous? Fallingwater, or Frank Lloyd Wright? The Eisenhower Memorial in Washington, D.C., or Frank Gehry? These questions answer themselves. Perhaps the house made the architect famous, but now the architect is more famous than his house. Jesus is to be honored, praised, worshiped, and glorified because He built the church. Moses was a faithful part of the church, just like we are called to be. But Jesus is not part of the church. He built the church.

C. Household Role

So Jesus is faithful in a broader area than Moses; He is more glorious than Moses; and He has a much bigger role in the household than Moses does. You know how you'll be talking to a kid, who will tell you "I got a role in the school play!"

You say, "Cool! What role?"

"I'm Donkey #3," says the kid.

And you think to yourself, *Poor kid is going to get three seconds of stage time.*

Well, Moses had a starring role. But Jesus' role dwarfs his. What is it? Hamlet is onstage for all but ten minutes of the 4-hour play, or something like that. But Jesus is, in a certain sense, in *every* scene of the drama, in every room of the household, supervising everything and being everywhere loving and saving everyone the whole time. Jesus doesn't have three seconds of stage time as a minor character. He is front and center the whole time.

1. Moses a Free Servant in God's House, v. 5a

Moses, on the other hand, is a free servant in God's house. The word here is not the word "bondservant" or "slave." It refers to an attendant or ministrant, and most often to religious service. Moses is a servant in the sense that a high priest is a servant. He is the most exalted of God's merely human servants. "He is faithful in all my house," said God about Moses. But the Hebrew writer adds that this faithfulness was as a servant. At the end of the day, the servant does not own the house. It's not his house. He does what the owner wants. That's what being a servant means. You may have heard your parents say, or said to your own offspring, "When you have your own house you can do it your own way." Well, Jesus has his own house. Moses didn't do it his way. He had to do it God's way — and of course, he wanted to do it God's way because he was faithful as a servant. A faithful servant is one who is able to do it the boss's way.

2. Christ a Son in His Father's House, v. 6a

But Christ is not a servant in His house. He is a Son in God's house, just as Moses was a servant in God's house. We'll talk in a moment about how that is something the two have in common. But Christ, living in His Father's house just as we will, has a special status — the status of Son. Nothing in the house is off-limits to Him. "Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours," says that father to the resentful elder brother. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand," says Jesus.

God built all things. But He has appointed Christ to be the one through whom He builds His church — just as Jesus said, "I will build my church."

So that's the contrasts. Christ is faithful in a greater area, more glorious, and more exalted in role than Moses. Moses was faithful, glorious, and a very great servant. But Jesus is greater on all counts.

II. Three Points of Comparison, vv. 2-5

Yet that said, we cannot overlook the similarities.

A. Both Men Were Made by God, v. 2

Both men were made by God. Jesus was faithful to the one who made Him. Who made Him what? Who made Him Jesus. "A body you have prepared me," as the Hebrew writer will later quote from Psalm 40. Moses and Jesus were both made by God, Moses in his whole self, Jesus only in His human nature. As God, He was begotten by His Father.

B. Both Men Served in God's House, v. 4

Furthermore, both men served in God's house. It's not that they were in entirely different domains. The Hebrews had some excuse for saying "We know that Moses' teaching is faithful, but as for this Jesus, we don't know where He comes from." But the Hebrew writer is taking away that excuse. He is telling them that anyone who acknowledges Moses must also acknowledge Jesus.

C. Moses Testified to Jesus' Future Revelation, v. 5a

And he hints at this by using a single future passive participle. What are these "things that would be spoken later," and how did Moses testify to them? I believe that the writer is saying that by testifying faithfully to all that God told him in his five books, Moses was making God's future revelation in Jesus more credible. For instance, Jesus finds the truth of the resurrection in God's Exodus 3 statement, "I am the God of Abraham." He says "Abraham rejoiced to see my day; *he saw it*, and was glad." Hebrews 11 will tell us that Abraham was seeking heaven, and that Moses suffered the reproach of Christ.

In short, Moses, accurately writing down all that God told Him, bore witness in advance to God's future speech in Christ. This, in a nutshell, is the author's view of Scripture that leads him to constantly quote the OT as testifying to Christ. Moses testified to Jesus' future revelation — something that the two have in common. One is the Son of God, the other His primary witness.

III. Three Points of Application, v. 6

So what do we do about the truth that Jesus is greater than Moses, across three points of contrast and three points of comparison? We need to believe one thing and do two things.

A. We Are God's House

We have to believe that we are God's house. Jesus is building a house for God. And we are that house. We are the living stones being assembled into a holy temple in the Lord by the master builder, Jesus Christ.

So if you're part of the house of God, what should you do?

B. We Must Hang on to our Confidence

We must first of all hang on to your confidence. I include myself in this, because the Hebrew writer includes himself in this. You should be confident in Christ. You should have full certainty

that He is faithful and that He will save you. You should not be wondering whether He will carry you through. You should know that He will.

How do you hang on to this confidence? The first thing to do is to repent of sin. Sin saps confidence. When you are doing something you know you shouldn't, and refusing to root it out of your life, your confidence will dry up and go away. You will have lost it. So take your sins to God and to the appropriate people, confess them, and forsake them.

Second, build confidence by thinking about Jesus. We talked about this last week. You hang on to your confidence in God's Son by knowing who He is. The more you have walked with Him, the more you have seen Him carry you safely through, the more confident you will be in Him. Someone who has ridden the Mind Eraser at Elitch Gardens in Denver 100 times is more confident that it won't jump the track than someone who has ridden it only once.

Third, keep gathering together with fellow believers who have confidence in Jesus. If you have meaningful relationships with people who are full of confidence in Him, you are much more likely to retain your own confidence.

C. We Must Hang on to the Boasting of Hope

Finally, brothers and sisters, hang on to the boasting of hope. To boast is generally regarded as impolite in our society today. Does the author simply mean that we ought to walk around saying "I have the world's greatest hope?" In a certain sense, I do think that's what he's referring to. The boast is the thing you trust in. You won't find Detroit Lions fans boasting about the exploits of their team. You won't find residents of East Timor bragging about being from the world's richest, most powerful nation, cause they're not. But you and I have something to brag about. That something is the hope in Jesus we enjoy. The Hebrew writer is not suggesting that Christians should be obnoxious. But he most certainly is saying that we must refuse to be silent about our hope, or keep it bottled up inside. We should be saying things like "The world will be put right yet" and "The politicians can't stop my Savior."

Hang on to the boasting of hope. Most of you are already doing a lot to hold fast your confidence. But I think most of us could do with some additional boasting in the hope we have. Don't self-censor. Be sure that everyone who interacts with you regularly knows that you are hopeful, and that the world's present condition can't keep you down. Walk in hope; talk in hope. That's what members of the world's best-run household do. Amen.