

Hebrews Study Session 5 - 3:1-6

From chapters 1 & 2 the author has concluded that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is not an angel but rather is God Himself and as such, is above the angels. In fact, Jesus is supremely great and the champion and captain and author of a great salvation. He alone is great enough to be the man who accomplished this great salvation on behalf of the Father and for mankind. Actually, chapter 3 and 4 go together as one thought. For the sake of time, we're only going to deal with the beginning of chapter 3 this week and complete the thoughts in over the next two weeks. Chapter 3 deals with faithfulness to God and the importance of remaining faithful to Him. To discuss faithfulness, the author is going to give us a positive and then a negative example. The positive example is another comparison - this time between Moses and Jesus. The negative example of faithfulness (faithlessness) is given through the Israelites who wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. This week we are only getting through the positive example.

Before we get started, we need to understand the importance of Moses to the Jewish faith. Even above the angels, Moses was revered by the Jews. His influence cannot be exaggerated. He was the preeminent messenger of the Old Testament (which remember, when Hebrews was written/preached was the entire Scripture). He had a very special relationship with God in that he was given a mission from God to lead Israel out of Egypt and set up the nation under God's rule. Moses was seen as the supreme example of perfection in the sense of access to God. While he is only referred to one time as a priest directly (Psalm 99:6), he is shown to be a priest by his ministry of the Word, special visions given to him, and performing priestly functions - especially as intercessor between God and the people of God. We see this near reverence of Moses in the New Testament as the Jewish leaders argued with Jesus and used Moses as the basis for their cases. So for the Hellenistic Jews who originally received the message of Hebrews, bringing up Moses was bringing up the biggest gun a Jew could bring up. There was no one higher on the list of "heros of the faith" than Moses.

I. The positive example of the Son

[Read Hebrews 3:1-6]

Q: The very first word of chapter 3 is "therefore". What was the author saying just prior to chapter 3? (*Jesus was superior to the angels and worthy of our faith because He became man and made salvation possible through His death. He now offers aid to those who are His.*)

Q: What does the author call the people he's speaking to in v.1? (*holy brothers*)

This is the first time in Hebrews that the author does not directly identify himself with the audience. He speaks directly to them here. This is the only place in the New Testament that this phrase "holy brothers" is used. It denotes both affection (brotherly kindness) and consecration to God. The Lord has called them by His initiative to His own service. Their calling is called "heavenly". In other words, they did not choose the assignment or write their own ticket of service but rather received it and accepted it from God in accordance with His will. Calling often

is translated “invitation”. They accepted God’s invitation. The author knows that if the people put the heavenly calling they have received from God in the front of their minds, it will inspire faith in them.

Q: Has there ever been a time in your life when you were down or depressed and then heard or read the Word of God and was revived? *(This is what the author is hoping for)*

Q: What does this let us know about the original hearers of this message? *(They were saved. This will become critical in properly interpreting the later points of this chapter.)*

“partakers” - this is a business term used to describe business partners. It describes an intimate working relationship forged in the common fires of our faith. This is the same word used in Heb. 1:9 which is translated “companions”. Our partnership is for a purpose, working to fill up the kingdom of God. Notice again that the author knows these people are believers as he is reminding them of their common service, their comradeship through the trials of this life to serve God.

The listeners are told to “consider Jesus”. Jesus is used again to stress the humanity of the Lord and His work on earth during the incarnation. The word “consider” means to observe carefully or fully. He wanted those who were listening to this message to fix their thoughts on Jesus. In other words, take a big, long look at Jesus before deciding to jump ship back to Judaism.

Jesus is referred to as the “Apostle” and “High Priest” of our confession.

1) Apostle - this is the only time in the New Testament this word is used in conjunction with Jesus. It means a person who is sent on a mission. This certainly describes Jesus as He was sent on a mission by the Heavenly Father.

2) High Priest - this brings up the sacrificial nature of the mission. His mission was to die to pay for our sins. He was the One and Only person worthy to offer up this sacrifice to God for us.

These two words need to be kept together in this context. Jesus was not just an apostle and then also a high priest. He was the Apostle sent by God with a mission to intercede on our behalf before God. His mission was to bring us to God. **[Read I Peter 3:18]**

3) confession - There are two uses of this word in the New Testament. The first is what we can call “confession light” - it means to agree with another person about something. Usually in the New Testament this confession is agreeing with God about who Jesus Christ is. However, there is a second use of this word and it’s the use of the author here. It means a binding expression of obligation and commitment. It is the response of faith in Jesus to the activity of God and not just mental agreement but one of action based upon that agreement. So when the original believers heard this, it presented Jesus as the Apostle and High Priest and their agreement with God was full and binding so that they were to act upon this agreement through faith. They were not to take their faith in Christ lightly as He is the One who believers have agreed with on a deep and binding level. It was Jesus alone who came to earth to bring salvation to mankind. The key to what has been said in v.1 is that we are not to live with an earth-bound perspective on life. Rather we are to live with a heavenly perspective on life remembering that God’s call is upon us as believers.

Now let's get to the nuts and bolts of the comparison and what it means for us.

Q: In v.2 - who was the author referring to as faithful and who was the One who appointed Him? *(Jesus and the Father)*

The word "faithful" and its opposite is going to crop up a million times in this chapter. It's a straightforward word that means trustworthy. A person does what they are supposed to do or are told to do.

Q: How is Moses described in v.2? *(faithful, like Jesus)*

We're going to see that like the comparison to the angels, the author hold Moses in high regard and does not disparage him in any way. He isn't seeking to tarnish Moses' image nor does he recall any of Moses' faults or failures. But like the rest of the book, this chapter is built upon many arguments from the Old Testament.

[Read Numbers 12:1-8]

Q: What does this passage teach us about Moses? *(He was unique among prophets. God spoke to him face to face. He was the most humble man on the planet.)*

[Read I Chronicles 17:11-14] *(These are the words of the prophet Nathan to David concerning what was going to come after David's death)*

Q: What is God going to do to one in David's line after his death? *(God is going to set one of his descendants apart as a son and give him an eternal throne. He will set the son in His house forever. The "house" theme is important in Hebrews.)*

This Son referred to by Nathan is Jesus.

[Read I Samuel 2:34-36] *(These words were spoken by God to Eli, the priest over Israel just before Samuel's ministry. Samuel was a first fulfillment of this prophecy but Jesus was the complete fulfillment of this prophecy.)*

Q: What will God build for this person (v.35)? *(an enduring house)*

Q: Why is the builder of the house worthy of more praise than the house itself? *(The builder conceived the idea for the house and brought it into existence. The builder is the active force behind the house being built. The house was just a pile of raw materials before being formed and built by the builder's design into the house.)*

Q: Based upon this fact that the builder is worthy of more honor than the house itself, what is the author saying in v.4 about God? *(That He is worthy of more honor than everyone else.)*

Q: Where does v.5 say Moses was faithful? *(IN the house)*

Q: What was Moses' role in the house of God? (*servant*)

This is the only place in the New Testament where this word for "servant" is used. It means "honored servant". It often was used of a squire, personal attendant, or close companion. This sort of servant was more than a slave but also a trusted and proven servant. This is high praise for Moses.

Q: What was the purpose of Moses' testimony of faithfulness to God? (*it was for us, those who come later in the line of faith*)

Q: Where does v.6 say Jesus was faithful? (*OVER the house*)

Q: What was Christ's role in the house of God? (*Son*)

This is the first time in the book of Hebrews that the word "Christ" is used. The Christ (Messiah) is linked with the eternal Son from chapters 1&2.

Q: What is the house of God? (*all believers*)

Q: Why do you think that believers are described as a house? What are the qualities of a house that are similar to the people of God? (*a physical house is built up by someone and it is a place where people dwell, we are built up and dwelled in by the Holy Spirit. A house also refers to a lineage of a person. We are the "descendants or children" of God. Jesus, as we saw last week, is our big brother and we are His joint heirs.*)

So Moses had authority as an honored servant of God. His authority extended to all God's people in the time of his life. Moses was foreshadowing of Jesus in this respect. Yet, Jesus has authority as the Son of God and His authority extends to all God's people forever. Believers become part of God's house by their faith in Christ.

Q: In your own words, how would you sum up the comparison between Moses and Jesus? (*While Moses was worthy of honor based on his faithfulness to God as His servant, Jesus is worthy of even more honor based on His faithfulness to God as His Son over the people of God.*)

The word "confidence" means "courage". It is the outwardly show of boldness in regards to the life of faith in Christ. The Christian looks forward to the triumph of God. We eagerly expect God to act in accordance with His nature and will.

[Read I John 5:14-15]

Q: What is the key to maintaining confidence in your prayers, that God will answer them? (*Make sure that what you are praying is in God's will.*)

Maintaining our courage in the face of the overwhelming nature of sin and darkness in the world is a constant struggle. It is imperative that we keep our thoughts focused on our Apostle and

High Priest who both came to earth and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. When our perspective is on our heavenly calling and things of the kingdom, confidence comes more naturally.

Q: Why can Christians hold their hope firmly as we live out our faith in this life? (*Christ is with us in that we are part of His house and He is over us - there are other answers too*)

Now we need to examine the conditional clause in v.6. (It's important to understand what it truly means so that we also get it right in v.14.). Remember, I told you that this chapter deals with faithfulness. The author is stressing the importance of faithfulness in the life all believers. The first six verses deal with the positive example of Jesus and Moses being faithful. This section ends with an admonition.

Q: What is the condition the author sets forth in v.6? (*let them struggle here - let Randy bang his head on the table a few times*)

The truth is that the construction in Greek is not something that translates well into English. In fact, we don't have anything that corresponds to this sort of grammatical construction which is why you can come up with all sorts of wild interpretations. In English we have simple conditional statements. These are if/then statements. If this happens, then that will happen, etc. However, in Greek there are four different types of conditional statements and they make life hard for English translators because they mean very different things that don't translate neatly. This is what is called a condition of the third class which is also known as the "more probable future condition". What it means is that the author or speaker is expecting a positive result from the audience. It's like us saying something repeatedly to someone and then asking, "Do you get what I mean?" We expect the yes result. You can replace the "if" with "as you would expect". If you try to translate this simply by what you read in English you get one of two options and neither is supported:

A) We have to work for our salvation (persevere in our faith boldly to earn it, thus our salvation becomes works-based or dependent upon us to get it and maintain it

B) or that the author expects at least some of his audience to be lost (which we know isn't the case because of his description of these people in v.1 and other places in Hebrews and the use of the condition of the third class). This leaves us with something like in v.6:

"but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are and as expected, we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end."

In other words, because we are in Christ and He is over us as the Apostle and High Priest worthy of more honor than even Moses, then by fixing our thoughts on Him, we will remain steadfast in our courageous confidence in Christ and the boast of our hope until the end.

"the end" - this is either the end of the believer's life or the end when Jesus returns. Either way there is no sneaking away early for the believer.

Q: Are there any questions, comments, rebukes or rebuttals?