

The One Superior to Moses
Hebrews 3

Numbers 12

Ephesians 2:1-10

Responsive: Psalm 66: 1-9

Today we are starting out chapter 3 in the book of Hebrews and as you can tell by the title of the message this morning, The One Superior to Moses is sort of like, part 2 of chapter 1 and 2, which focused heavily on the superiority of Christ over the Angels. Before we even really start to dig into this chapter as we read through it this morning, think about who this is written to, for the statements that this author makes here has profound implications and with a Hebrew heritage, or background this passage would actually be highly offensive if it was not for the work of God in their lives. For the notion that Christ, the one who died on the cross is superior to Moses, the one who God gave the commandments to establishing them as a nation, leading them out of captivity into the promised land.

For the mind of the Hebrew, Abraham and Moses 2 of the major Father figures of their belief, and their identity toward God. Understanding the promises given to Abraham to be physical in nature and not spiritual meant that the Israelite's, being offspring of Abraham himself, were the chosen of God, the children of God. But here this author begins to lay down an argument that Christ, the one who died is greater than Moses. Now it is believed that this letter is written to a group, or maybe groups of Hebrews who were already followers of Christ who were going through some persecution, and it would seem that some snuck in with the intention of leading them away from the beliefs that their faith were first founded in, much like Paul's letter to the Galatians. So while this passage would have been blasphemy to the mind of the Hebrews at large, to this group, or groups it was a call to stand strong and not be persuaded away from the faith that they were established in, it was not only instruction but encouragement to remain faithful.

So let us start this morning by reading the first 6 verses of Chapter 3 (Read 1-6)
So as we see it starts out with the word, Therefore, which as we have seen many times, over and over again in scripture writing shows that this is built upon what came previously. What is being said here is not an isolated case, and it is not meant to be an isolated case but rather is just one part of the whole argument. As I had just said earlier, it is like part 2, the continuation, and it just keeps building. It isn't hard to understand Jesus being superior to Angels, but to Moses, one of the Hebrew Fathers and champions in the faith? But this "therefore" we see here in verse 1 is the author basically saying, well if these things which I have already said are true, well then these things must also be true. What it is, really, is the continuation of logical thought, In chapter 2 the author has argued and established the fact that Christ, being the Son of God not only came in the flesh to suffer and die to redeem God's children, but in doing so has become Superior of all things, the king over his kingdom to which everything else is subject to.

Also of note here in verse 1, is how this author addresses those who he is writing to, He calls them Holy brethren. which clearly shows that these Hebrews are those who follow Christ, and who understand that their identity before God is through Christ, not through their heritage, or traditions but through the blood of Christ. For the author here sees them as brethren in the faith, not as Hebrews, but as fellow Christians for our identity in Christ supersedes all other identities. I want to take a few moments this morning and sort of just talk about this idea of Identity because it is a rather hot topic in our society today. The current reigning idea, is that we control our own identity, that we can be whatever we want to be.

But The reality is, there are many different traits, or personalities that make up our identity or who we are, but all of that is of little matter in God's grand scheme, the only identity that matters is if you're sins are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ.

For instance, these Hebrews, they have an identity as, well being Hebrews, but it is not the defining factor here is it? The Author calls them holy brethren, He recognizes them as those who identify with Christ. As Paul said, the family of God is made up of all peoples no matter race, or social status, if you are in Christ, then you are all bound together in your identity through him. This idea of mashing social identity politics or constructs into the church that we see going on today is really nothing more than a humanistic practice of futility. IT is a loss of focus, it is no longer keeping the main thing the main thing, and as I was saying over the last few weeks, if anything becomes takes the focus away from Christ, and becomes your focus, your purpose, or reason then you are already starting out on the wrong foot. There should not be special churches planted, in an attempt to draw in a certain demographic, or identity of people. We hear it all the time don't we in books, or even in discussions and business meetings in churches all across the country, it sounds like this. "What can we do to draw more people in." or "What can we do to bring in a younger crowd" in other words, how can we change ourselves to cater to a certain demographic, a certain identity of people so we can draw them in. It is the whole concept of being seeker sensitive, to make your service tailor made to cater to a certain group of people. The church, and the local body no longer are seen as a group of brethren, as one body each member having their strengths and weakness, but rather the idea of bringing in more is the focus even at the cost of who you have.

Now that may sound cynical, but I have been around pastors' and churches long enough to have heard many of these conversations. That is why churches usually split, it isn't normally of issues of doctrine, but rather the proverbial color of the carpet. An example of this, would be a church comprised mostly of middle age and up members proposing to bring in modern worship music to make themselves more appealing to a younger generation, even if there are many who attend who will find it offensive. Diana and I had a small experience like this when we first were married. We were in a Sunday school class for our age group, which expanded from like 15 – early 20's. Once we got married, which we were 18 and 19, we were told that we needed to start attending the "adult" Sunday school classes, which was mind you the classes which was made up of those in our parents age group. The idea, was that now that we were married we should be in with the others who were also married just in case a few of the other teens and early 20's who had stopped attending might come back. The result was that our Sunday school class was dissolved because big surprise, those who were not attending already...never came back and attended. An unnecessary change was made, which did nothing but alienate us, pushed us out in failed idea of wanting to cater to, or draw back a certain group of people. And the reality, is that they lost people because of this decision. When you begin to play the game of identity politics in the church, when you try to cater to certain groups of people you will not win, you will only end up offending everyone which will have the opposite of the intended outcome.

That is why we should not really be concerned of such things, this author calls these Hebrews holy brethren because he sees them as his brothers and sisters in Christ no matter what their other distinctions or identities maybe, when talking of the church, our identity in Christ, really is only one that matters. Just as Christ is superior to the Angels, and as we will see as we work through these verses this morning that Christ is superior to Moses, our identity in him is superior to any other identity. In the church the only thing that should matter is if you are like what the Author of Hebrews says here in verse 1, partakers of the heavenly calling, having been made holy, set apart, by the calling of God to being adopted children. Preference to age, race, or social standing should have no place in a gathering of God's children, for we are all one, through him.

So as we see here in verse 1, the author implores his readers to look upon Christ, when setting forth this comparison between him and Moses, he starts here by saying, "Consider the Apostle, and High priest of our confession, Jesus Christ."

I don't believe that there is anywhere else in scripture that directly uses the term Apostle when applied to Christ. But while that maybe so, there are quite a few that make reference to his actions being that of an Apostle. For instance, the term Apostle basically means, one who has been sent and throughout the gospel accounts we can see that Jesus often refers to himself as being Sent from God. So in the basic sense of the word, he is the first apostle, and the source of all other apostleship. This is clear from the terms used when Jesus commissions the others that are famously known as the apostles, John 20:21 he says, "as the Father has sent me, I also send you." This usage and reference of Jesus as an apostle I don't think is being used in any formal title here, but rather is to relay the truth that he was sent from the father for the purpose of securing our salvation. And the same could be said as well being that he has also gone before us in the resurrection, just as he said, "If I go, I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself so where I am, you maybe also."

But as we know, this isn't all that Jesus is, he was not just some mere apostle, or teacher sent from God, but he was also made a high priest, who both offered, and was the sacrifice for our sins. Verse 2 says, "Jesus Christ who was faithful to God who appointed him, as Moses also was faithful in all his house." brings forth a few important distinctions. 1, God appointed Jesus to be the high priest of many brethren as was mentioned in chapter 2. But not only that, it points to his faithfulness in fulfilling his appointed role. Philip Hughes put it in his commentary "The imagery is that of a steward appointed to a position of responsibility in a house hold, thus Christ's faithfulness is defined as to being faithful to him who appointed him, namely God." Jesus' whole concern was to fulfill the will of the one who sent him, to complete the work that he had been sent to do. This is at the heart of the motive of both Christ's coming, and his acting on our behalf. The reality of this truth is that it should incite in us an assurance in our faith, for knowing that Jesus was fully faithful to God means that he is entirely worthy of our trust. His faithfulness has been proven upon the cross, fulfilling all that he father had sent him to accomplish. Will he not also be faithful to fulfill in you all that the father seeks to accomplish?

There is also in this verse a comparison between the faithfulness of Jesus, and the faithfulness of Moses. This verse alludes to the book of Numbers, which we read this morning, Which said, Hear now my words, if there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make myself known to him in a vision, I speak to him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses, he is faithful in all my house, I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings, and he sees the form of the Lord." Moses met God's requirement, and fulfilled God's appointed task as a faithful steward of his house, that is the house of Israel, and he was commended by God for it. But if we look at verse 3 we see it begins to lay out why Jesus is greater than Moses even, for it says. "For this one has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses inasmuch as he who built the house has more honor than the house." So while Moses and Jesus were both faithful in what God has appointed for them to do, it is in Jesus which we find is the builder of the house, it is he who established his kingdom and is not just a Stewart of Israel, or of the family of God but he is the high priest, and King of the nation of Israel. Which to clarify is not the physical earthly kingdom of Israel, but the spiritual kingdom of God's chosen people throughout all of creation.

Verse 4 continues this thought saying, "For every house is built by someone, but he who built all things is God." This could be understood to be further pointing to the fact that all things are subject to God. For every house built was built by someone, whether physical or spiritual there are many builders who build houses. There are many ministers, and witness's of the gospel of God, but it is God who built it all, it is God who created the builders, who first set them to their task.

While there may be many builders, they are only builders in the secondary sense, that is that they can only build upon and use which the substance or material that was first provided by God. As Calvin said, “All things of which God is said to be the builder here have a reference which is limited to the structure of the church. But it is preferable to understand our author to be affirming the universal truth of the supremacy of God as the architect, and builder of the totality of things, both the whole created order of the physical world and the world of his new creation, the church. The comparison between Jesus and Moses continues in the following verse as well, verse 5 into the first part of verse 6, “And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward. But Christ as a Son over his own house.” A comparison set up between the two, that namely Moses as a servant was faithful in God's house, where Christ as a son was faithful over God's house.

So unlike other faithful servants that we see throughout scripture such as Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Job, Christ is the culmination of all servant hood, being the Son is more than a servant, but also and heir. His faithfulness in God's house is as of that of a servant, yet his authority in the house of God is that of a Son. Just as the Author had attributed Christ to being both an apostle, and a high priest, he is also both a servant, and a Son. To put it another way, Christ displays himself in two ways, a servant in his appointed task to be our mediation, our atonement, and has our sovereign Lord by his eternal Son ship of the Father and his coronation as the king and ruler over the house of God at his crucifixion.

And yet another comparison between Moses and Jesus was in their appointed mission, Just as Moses was a prophet speaking the words given to him by God to the children of Israel and leading them out of bondage to Egypt and into the promised land, So to Christ had come and fulfilled the prototype of Moses, by speaking the words of God to the spiritual Israel and being the one who has broken the bond of the captivity of sin, and has prepared and lead the way into the spiritual promised land, that is heaven. For those of you who like this stuff, Moses was the type, and Jesus the anti-type, Moses was the example pointing to the later fulfillment which is found in Jesus. Much in the same way that we can see the nation of Israel, and the Spiritual Nation of Israel, one being a type, or an example of the later larger fulfillment. And we can see this in the last verse that we are looking at today, for throughout this passage the author had made references to the house of God, early on in verse 1 he said all those who are partakers of the heavenly calling consider Christ to be the apostle and high priest of our calling. And here we see the last part of verse 6, says whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing in the hope firm to the end.

This is not the house of Israel, in the physical sense, this is no the physical offspring of Abraham, but it is a house made up of all those who are partakers of the heavenly calling, of the gospel, of what this author had laid out at the end of chapter 2. verse 9 “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that HE by the grace of God might taste death for everyone,” the everyone here being those who are his holy brethren, those set apart, those who are partakers of the sovereign heavenly calling. Verse 10. For it is fitting for him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, the chief builder, the creator of all, to bring many sons to glory, to be made the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering.”

If we are the house built by God, if we are the workmanship of his hands the one who has created all, and who all things exist then we will persevere to the end. While there seems to be a clause, or a requirement set forth here saying, IF we hold fast, the truth is that if we are a house built by God we will hold fast. So it isn't so much a reward for the action of holding fast, but the reality that in times of testing, or in the face of adversity we will hold fast and that is a testimony of the validity of Christ in us. So if that is true, then what is the outcome if we are not the house built by God? We will fail right? We will fall into the temptations, we will be lead astray to following weird and perverse doctrines. For if our faith is not a faith built by God for God, but is rather something that we decide upon with our own mind, and seek to gain merit through our own actions we are nothing more then a counterfeit house. It's like going into a show home, nothing in there is actually functional but it looks nice, so is it the same way with anyone whose faith is not grounded and built upon, and by the chief builder, the king and sovereign lord Jesus Christ.

And as this author puts it here, it is the end that proves out our faith. IF we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope, firm to the end then we are houses built by God. He is imploring his readers to not be deceived by who ever it is that is trying to lead them astray, into worshipping angels, or any other heavenly being, to not be deceived and put Christ secondary and worship or put their faith in anything other then him. IF you are Christs, hold fast, be strong, and rest in the assurance that you are not just a foreign visitor in the house of God, but adopted children and joint heirs with the Son to whom God the father has given all things. Joint heirs with the one who all things are subject to, in who was faithful to his father fulfilling his appointed purpose to bring salvation to you that we may be identified as Children of God. Be confident in this faith, have hope in the one who saves, and give glory to the God who shows mercy.