
The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

Christ's Superiority Over Moses (Part 1)

Hebrews 3:1-6

1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession; 2 He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. 3 For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. 4 For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. 5 Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; 6 but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house — whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

Back in college I had a professor of Theology, Dr. Emert, who so faithfully taught the Word of God as well as how to teach the word of God. On Tuesday evenings, Dr. Emert had the Pastoral Studies majors over to his home to discuss “practical theology.” I remember one night being at one of these sessions and the question was asked of Dr. Emert, “How long does it take you to prepare a sermon?” Now then, here was the practical question of questions. A bunch of young preachers about to be told what time frames they should expect in devotion to preparing a Sunday sermon. It seemed like the perfect “practical theology” question. But Dr. Emert, in a style I came to both expect and appreciate, did not give us an answer we were expecting. Without hesitation and with all honesty in his eyes, Dr. Emert told us that it took him about 30 years to prepare one of his messages. You see, Dr. Emert was about 55 years old, having become a preacher when he was in his mid-20’s. He told us that an effective message was not developed out of the hours one spends in a week, but rather out of the full life experience of the preacher as he walks with God. In other words, when I was called to pastor my first church at age 26, my messages were to be drawn from my life experiences as I walked with God. At that time I had been a Christian for about 9 years. So, for those of you that wonder why my messages are somewhat lengthy, please know that I prepare my messages from some 21 years walking with God. I know, some of you are concerned about 10 years from now, but don’t worry, we might well still be in the book of Hebrews.

But, what Dr. Emert communicated to these young preachers has application to every believer in Christ. An effective Christian life is not developed simply out of how many hours one spends in Bible reading, prayer and church attendance, but rather out of the full life experiences of the believer as he walks with God. I have always appreciated this, and I often reflect upon this and other teachings and thoughts Dr. Emert imparted to me.

I would assume that most of you here have had spiritual mentors – those persons who have greatly influenced and impacted you spiritually. I would hope that each of you might be able to recall some individual who has been a catalyst or spark to move you on into a deeper and more meaningful relationship with Christ. I know that I have been blessed with a number of men, like Dr. Emert, who have so inspired me. Some of these men I still have regular communication with, to discuss life, issues, problems and concerns. But there is something else I have learned about mentors in the faith. As wonderful as these men are – they are yet just men, fallen men, saved by the same Savior, covered by the same Blood, serving the same Lord as I do. And the reason why this is important is because we do sometimes have a tendency to place such individual’s on pillars, thinking that they can do no wrong. We have a fascination with legends and larger than life individuals. We can consider them as being so

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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close to God that it makes our relationship with the Lord look like a general acquaintance. Sometimes as we get older and hopefully wiser, we see these spiritual giants in our lives men, as those who do make mistakes, as those who do have struggles and as those who do need others to minister to them as much as they have minister to us. But sometimes it is hard to see such individuals in this light and we must be reminded that the Person who is to have the greatest influence upon our lives, He who is to truly be the One we look to for direction and guidance, is simply the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, do not think that it cannot happen, this lifting up of earthly mentors to a place where we might consider first their thoughts and ways before we consider Christ's. Just the other day, someone asked me not yet attending our church, "Who are your mentors?" Without hesitation I made reference to two men in particular who have had a profound influence upon my Christian life. And while I do not mean to suggest here that I did anything inherently wrong or evil by doing so, for God has given us people to inspire our faith, it yet grieved me later that my first thought and response to the answer was not, "Jesus Christ is my greatest Mentor, the One who has most influenced and motivated me on to a more complete walk with my God.

As we come now to the third chapter of the book of Hebrews, we see the author make yet another comparison, or better said, another contrast. The contrast presented to us in Hebrews 3:1-6 is between Christ and Moses. Having already and definitively shown how Christ is superior to the angels, our author now turns our thoughts to how Christ is superior to Moses.

Again, we may find it a temptation to say, "I already know that Christ is superior to Moses, so what benefit does this study have for me?" To such a thought I have two responses. First, remember that in studying the book of Hebrews, if we are to rightly know its truth, we must first see it through the eyes of its first readers, readers who had an incredible, absolutely monumental regard for Moses. As we will come to see more clearly in a moment, to most Jews, Moses not simply the greatest of all men, but also all beings, next to God Himself. In fact, according to some early traditions, it was believed by many Jews that Moses was not only superior in rank, privilege and position to that of any other man, but that he was also superior to the angels themselves. The concern for the author of Hebrews then was that these first readers may have acquiesced to the idea of Jesus being superior to the angels, but they were not yet willing to see Jesus as superior to Moses.

The second reason why we believers need to consider the teaching of Hebrews 3:1-6 well is that while we may or may not put Moses on such a spiritual pedestal as did the Jews, we can be guilty of placing others, particularly those spiritual giants in our lives, before the Lord Jesus, running first to such people for their help, their thoughts and their direction before taking such things to Jesus first in prayer and searching out His will for us in His Word.

So, this morning I hope to lay a foundation for you, showing to you why Moses was held in such high regard and then follow that with the first of three key points in verses 1-6 that reveal Christ's superiority to Moses. It will take us a couple of weeks to do this, so let me first present you with the outline we will follow of Hebrews 3:1-6:

1. Christ is Superior to Moses by Station (3:1)
2. Christ is Superior to Moses by Stewardship (3:2-4)
3. Christ is Superior to Moses by Sonship (3:5-6)

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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This is our outline of the passage before us and now we will consider the first key point, namely that Christ is superior to Moses by station. And what I mean by station is position or rank. But in order to more aptly see Christ's superiority over Moses, we must first be reminded of the reasons why Moses was and is such an eminent and powerful figure in the mind of these Jews. I submit to you thinking then six facts that reveal the eminence of Moses:

1. Moses received a great call of God.

Moses was divinely chosen and preserved by God for his task. Most people have heard and have come to love the story of Moses. As recorded in the book of Exodus and continuing on through the book of Deuteronomy, we see someone upon whom the hand of Providence was actively at work. We see God's hand of providence preserving him as a babe floating in the River Nile; and we see the same hand of providence having dug his grave at the finish of his life. From the call of God at the burning bush, to the command of God given on Mount Sinai, to the consequences of God for his disobedience, Moses was truly set apart by God for the task God prepared for him. For it is the LORD God who said to Moses in Exodus 3:10:

Therefore, come now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, so that you may bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt.

Make note of this verse well, for God said, "I will send you..." This will bear with significance in a moment.

2. Moses was the great deliverer of Israel.

To read through the accounts of Exodus 7-14, to see how God, through this man named Moses, displayed such wonders and miracles as the plagues and the dividing of the Red Sea so as to provide the way of escape for Israel but the destruction of Egypt is nothing short of stupendous. Although Israel's history was but in its infancy, no prophet or teacher or judge to come would so mightily and continually display the power of God. No wonder that because of the things Moses saw God do through him, he would sing:

Exodus 15:2-3, 11

2 The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; This is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will extol Him. 3 The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is His name. 11 Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?

3. Moses was the great prophet of Israel.

In the book of Numbers we read of a most incredible facet of the life of Moses. Look with me at Numbers 12:6-8. Here we read as the LORD is speaking:

6 Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. 7 Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; 8 With him I speak mouth to mouth, even openly [face to face], and not in dark sayings, and he beholds the form of the LORD.

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

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In my thinking and understanding, not since Adam has any one man ever had such intimacy with God. For we are to know that the relationship between God and Moses and the manner in which God communicated with Moses was greater than any other prophet of God.

4. Moses was the great Law-giver of Israel.

It is truly an amazing consideration of Scripture, that the Law of God, the commandments, the statutes, the ordinances, and the rules of life given to Israel by God came to bear the name of Moses. In passage after passage in the Scriptures, the Law of God was also known as what? The Law of Moses (Joshua 8:31-32; 1 Kings 2:3; Ezra 3:2; Luke 24:44; Hebrews 10:28). That is impressive and reveals a greatness that belonged to Moses. John in John 1:17 would say it this way, think about this; *“The Law was given by Moses...”* The Law was given by God through Moses, but in the mind of the Jews, Moses was bestowed the honor of having his name associated with the Law of God.

5. Moses was the great historian of Israel.

In a word, the very foundation for not only Israel, but for all of humanity is founded in the first five books of the Bible, common referred to as the books of Moses. Contained herein are the reasons why humanity is as it is and why humanity needs the Savior, Jesus Christ.

6. Moses was the humblest man on earth.

With all this greatness associated with Moses as a man. It is important to note that Scripture testifies such greatness did not ultimately go to Moses' head. Numbers 12:3 declares:

Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.

Now, you want to talk about a larger than life image. For some 1500 years the persona and perception of Moses had grown. Every Jewish child grew up in the light of the majesty and might of the person of Moses. There is a sense in which some of these Jewish readers might have considered Moses as “The great Apostle and High Priest of God. For although Moses did not officially hold the office of high priest, there is no doubt that he was truly Israel's advocate and mediator. But now there comes a new figure in Israel's history. Another called of God; another who has been said to be the deliverer of Israel; another who was a great prophet; another who came not simply with the Law of God, but with the Word of God; another who would not simply restate history, but would make history; and another who would actual be more humble than Moses. How could the 40 some odd years since the death and resurrection of Christ compete with the 1500 years of learning about Moses?

For the author of Hebrews, the length of time is not the determining factor, but the true greatness of the individual will reveal that Christ is superior to Moses. And in Hebrews 3:1, we see specifically that Christ is superior to Moses by station, that is, by His rank or position over Moses. From verse one then, I would like to consider three thoughts that lead us to seeing Christ as superior to Moses. Let us see first -

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1. The believer's standing.

"Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling..."

In order to place Moses in proper perspective, we see the author of Hebrews first state the believer's standing before God. Remember that we noted how in Jewish thinking, Moses had received one of the great calls of God and how he had been set apart for God's service. Yet here, our text opens up with showing how believers in Christ have also received a great call.

Notice that believers are called "*holy brethren*." This is a phrase used only here in the book of Hebrews and the point is that just as Moses had been set apart, we who have received and follow Christ has also been set apart by God for the tasks He has for us. Believers are also noted here as being "***partakers of a heavenly calling***". You might remember that in Hebrews 2:14, it is said of Jesus that He "partook of the same" that is of humanity's flesh and blood. The word for partakers here in Hebrews 3:1 is related to the word found in 2:14 and speaks of taking on something that one did not possess before. Jesus was not human prior to His birth. And we who are in Christ did not possess a heavenly calling until the Lord first took hold of us and made us His sons and daughters. Moses received an earthly calling to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt and into the promised land, but believers have a heavenly calling, having been led out of bondage to sin and looking forward to our citizenship in heaven. This is the standing of the true believer in Christ and he looks forward to the promise of Christ to return and deliver us safely into the promised land of heaven.

2. The believer's study

"...consider Jesus..."

Our second point leads us to the command of this passage. This is the emphasis, the key call to action. These "holy brethren" are to "consider Jesus". Notice what the author of Hebrews is doing. It may seem subtle to us, but it is likely that the Jewish readers caught this. Our text does not say, "consider the Son of God" or "Consider Christ, the Messiah of Israel." Rather, we see the human name of Christ used again. Consider . . . Jesus. Consider the man Jesus in light of who He is and what He had done and contrast that with the man Moses.

Now the word "consider" means "to observe fully or completely." It has the idea of attentively considering everything, every aspect of a subject. It is not enough to have some shallow and superficial thoughts or understandings of Jesus. Rather, Jesus is to consume our thinking. We must fix our eyes and our minds upon Jesus. For as great as Moses might have been, our subject of study is now Jesus as the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, of that which we say we believe.

What does it mean, however, to truly consider Jesus in this light? Let me present to you four aspects of what it means to consider Jesus.

First, to rightly consider Jesus you must have **desire**. You must desire to "observe fully or completely" the person of Jesus. The greatest of the people of God always have such a desire. David, the great psalm writer, put it this way in Psalm 27:4;

One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD And to meditate in His temple.

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

Is this your longing, your passion, your desire? The apostle Paul said it this way in Philippians 3:10;

...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death...

Pray for such a desire! Long for such a desire! And do not be content with any less a desire than to be able to consider Jesus.

Second, to rightly consider Jesus we must have **devotion**. By devotion I mean a concerted effort to spend time learning of Jesus. To consider Jesus requires great concentration. The study of Jesus my dear friends is nothing short of the study of the Almighty God. To think that such a study should always be simple and easy is to forget that we who are limited are seeking to know the unlimited, the finite the infinite. Do not wane in your devotion, but concentrate upon the Lord Jesus through His Word.

Third, to rightly consider Jesus, we must have **discipline**. Just as an athlete in training spends day after day in seemingly monotonous repetition, practicing the same moves and performing the same exercises, so too is the Christian to be so disciplined in the means by which a knowledge of the Holy is obtain. Through daily Bible reading and prayer; through faithful and active fellowship with the people of God; and through the constant efforts to make one's faith known in the world is, as 1 Timothy 4:7 states; ***“discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”***

Fourth, to rightly consider Jesus, we must have **determination**. The key consideration here is that to consider Jesus takes time, time and more time. Do not let the fast food mentality of our culture ever make you think that knowledge of the Holy comes at a cost of just minutes a week. You must be determined to pursue a lifestyle of considering Jesus. Such is the familiar, but I fear often neglected words of Jesus in Luke 9:23;

If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

I cannot put any more succinctly that this: To enjoy Jesus you must be determined to remain with Him until you have learned to so enjoy Him. You must remain with Jesus until your life is one joyous experience after another. To consider Jesus is to long for every waking moment of every day to be joy upon joy upon joy as you are with Him. So consider Him – so dwell upon Him – so fix all your attention on Him.

If you are determined to live for Jesus, you will determine to take up your cross daily. And as you do, I submit to you that you will more deeply, more meaningfully and more completely “consider” Jesus. This is the believer's study.

3. Christ's Station

“the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.”

Finally then, we consider what the author of Hebrews tells us about Christ's station – that is His rank or position. There is a real sense in which the author wants his readers to see how Moses does not match Jesus two such expressions of this station.

First, Jesus called here “the Apostle”. Now the word apostle literally means, “one sent out”. You might remember that a part of the call of Moses in Exodus 3:10 included the Lord

The Book of Hebrews – The Superiority of Christ

...God has spoken to us in His Son...(Hebrews 1:2)

saying, “I will send you...” In this sense Moses was an apostle, one sent out to the people of Israel as well as to Pharaoh. But Jesus here is not an apostle, He is “the” Apostle, sent not just to an earthly king to exact deliverance or to a relatively small nation in which to lead, but to a spiritual tyrant, the devil, to destroy his works and set His people free. And further, Jesus was not sent just to Israel, but to the world, to call all types of men, tribes and nations to repentance and to faith in His name. In the writings of the apostle John alone, Jesus describes Himself as being sent by the Father;

John 17:21

that they may all be one; even as You, Father , are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

Second, Jesus is called the “High Priest of our confession”. Unlike Moses, who although was a mediator between God and the people, Moses himself was a man who made mistakes and sinned and needed a Savior. But Jesus, being both perfectly God and perfectly man could be a High Priest unlike any Israel had ever experienced. As a man, Jesus is perfectly able to communicate our needs and concerns to God with perfect sympathy. As God, Jesus is perfectly able to communicate the heart and will of God to man. This is something that Moses did not and could not claim. Thus, we see Christ as being superior to Moses by the two-fold station of being “the Apostle and High Priest of our confession” of what we believe.

May we never come to disregard those whom God has placed in our lives to challenge and encourage us on in the faith. But may we also never place any person, be it a teacher, a preacher, a friend, a parent or a spouse, before Jesus. For unlike all others, only Jesus is the one sent from God, sent to fulfill a mission on our behalf, a mission which He perfectly fulfilled. And unlike all others, only Jesus is the mediator between God and men, praying for us at the right hand of God. May we come to experience Jesus truly and fully as being superior over all other persons and all other things in our lives. May our prayer be for a greater desire, a greater devotion, a greater discipline and a greater determination to “consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.”

Soli Deo Gloria

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