

Greater than Moses - the Son builds the father's house

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[0 : 00] Our reading this morning is from Hebrews chapter 3, verses 1 through 6. Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house.

For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honour than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.

Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later. But Christ is faithful over God's house as a son, and we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

The word of the Lord. Well, good morning, everyone. For those who don't know me, my name's David, and I'm a sort of part-timer here.

Well, I am. Sort of. Yeah. I'm actually not sure how to introduce myself these days. All right.

[1 : 24] Into God's word. It's really common, I think, for people in tough circumstances. That is, when life's confusing, when life's hard, sometimes when life's out of control, really far removed from what we'd consider normal.

It's common for people in those sort of circumstances to look back to familiar people and things. Things that, in their mind, were lodged in there, but actually come to the surface in tough times and remind them or become the indicators that, well, life was secure.

Life was normal. Everything was well in the world back then. And so they sort of come to the surface. It's a little bit like, in computer terms, returning to default settings.

Things that, as I say, buried in our hearts and minds, oftentimes we don't even know they exist until tough circumstances trigger the reset.

For example, a child, a lump of a child, struck down by illness or some other trauma might actually go back to sucking their thumb or cuddling a soft toy that they haven't done for years because it's an indication that, you know, life is okay.

[2 : 51] We saw during the COVID pandemic some of the random things adults did. Toilet paper, for goodness sake. Somehow or other, for so many people, that became the indicator that life was going to be okay.

It was random, but it was worth fighting over, apparently. But even other things, like some people would go and do religious things that hadn't done since childhood, maybe offer a prayer or actually go and sit in a church building somewhere.

Again, where does that come from? The other big thing during the COVID pandemic was just that demand to be able to see family members, visit them freely.

And that from people who often would have been careless about those same family members. Prior to COVID. It's that sort of thing, I think, that helps us understand what's going on behind the scenes here in this letter to the Hebrews.

It seems like many Christians to whom the letter to the Hebrews was addressed were doing the same sort of thing. When they first encountered Jesus, they identified really strongly with him.

[4 : 12] They were totally thankful for what he had done for them. They were excited for the fresh start they had in him based on grace alone.

And with total conviction, they turned away from their old Jewish religion and Jewish religious practices, which was all about priests and sacrifices and celebrating special religious days and

special religious holidays.

They had gladly turned away from that saying something far, far better in Jesus. But it seems like when commitment to Jesus got really tough, and as their daily lives felt more and more out of control, they found themselves excluded from their family.

They found themselves excluded from the local synagogue and oftentimes from the local community even. And then on top of that, they were starting to experience in very real terms persecution from the Roman Empire, the Roman authorities.

And there's all these things built up on them and unsettled them. It seems like they were tempted to default back to the old, familiar, comforting Jewish religious practices.

[5 : 37] It feels normal again. And as they did that, then they also had to convince themselves that the Jewish religion, which after all had served their ancestors well for centuries, and after all there was a lot of overlap with Christianity, they had to convince themselves that there wasn't really that much difference.

It was a difference of emphasis, perhaps. And on top of that, they would have the added bonus of renewed acceptance with family in the synagogue, their local community.

And they would be tolerated once again. They'd be free from persecution because the Roman Empire tolerated the Jewish religion at that stage. So all of that means the main challenge of the letter to the Hebrews is this.

Don't allow yourself to drift away from Jesus because serving him in a hostile world is really hard. It's too hard.

And repeatedly, we've seen it several times already, and we're only in chapter 3. Repeatedly, the writer is saying, think deeply and carefully about Jesus.

[7 : 03] Pay attention to what he says. Consider him. Reflect upon him. Meditate on who Jesus is and what he has done. Think about what drew you to Jesus in the first place.

Put serious time into, and this isn't superannuation ad, comparing the two. What the old Jewish religious practices offer you and what Jesus offers you.

Both offered a pathway to salvation and heaven. But when you look at it, the writer's saying, you'll see that the pathways, the differences, are neither minor nor cosmetic, but they're fundamental.

So consider Jesus. Fill your mind with who he is. Fill your mind with what he has done uniquely to make you acceptable before God and qualify you for a place in heaven.

And if you do that, the writer's saying, if you do that constantly, then you'll find you've got a whole new perspective in any time of suffering.

[8 : 19] In any short term of suffering. Because, and this is the first main point I want to make, moving us into the chapter today. Because it's only as we understand who Jesus is, that we understand who we are in him.

So this is really, the first point is just all verse 1, and then the second point is verse 2 through to 6. You look at verse 1, it's introduced by a connecting word, therefore.

That tells us that the writer is now summing up the argument in chapter 1 and 2.

And we've seen so far in the three sermons we've had so far that every encouragement by the writer here for people to persevere with Jesus, every encouragement is focused on who Jesus is.

And then the direct consequences for believers, those who are united to him. Because Jesus is this, then we're that as we're united to him.

[9 : 32] Now here in verse 1, Jesus is described in an unusual term called the apostle of our confession. It's the only place where Jesus in the Bible is described as an apostle. And the word itself isn't too fancy.

It's just one who's been commissioned, called and commissioned, or set apart for a unique task. In this case, we've seen in chapter 1 and 2, that Jesus was called and commissioned, set apart, come into the world for the unique task for which he was uniquely equipped or credentialed, that of effecting or implementing God's salvation plan in history.

And so, like the prophets before him, Jesus comes into our world speaking God's word to God's people.

Similarity. But, when you consider Jesus, you realize that he quickly redefines the category of prophet.

Being God, we're told in chapter 1, Jesus spoke with a unique clarity. Who else knows God's mind better than God himself? And he spoke, Jesus spoke with a unique authority.

[10 : 53] And we saw in chapter 2, since he came in, since he is God, come into the world in true human form like us, he also models or demonstrates how image bearers should live.

He demonstrates the good life of obedience and worship, which God's image bearers were designed to live. And so, when you consider Jesus, yes, he's like the Old Testament prophets, but then you realize he's in a category by himself.

He speaks with clarity and he speaks with authority, but even more important, his life was totally consistent with what he said. Unlike any other prophet before him.

Jesus is also described in verse 1 as the high priest of our confession. Now, remember I said last week the priest has two main responsibilities. On the one hand, he has to offer appropriate sacrifices to deal with God's anger because his creatures had rebelled against him.

And also then to deal with the guilt that comes as a natural consequence of that rebellion, the guilt of sin. So the priest had to offer sacrifices to deal with that.

[12 : 23] But he also had another important responsibility, as we talked about last week. He had to pray for God's people. And he had to pray for God's people because he, above all else, as a priest, would know, because he's in constant rubbing of it, people's natural inclination to continue rebelling against God, even when they're experiencing God's grace and forgiveness through sacrifice and restoration.

The priest was meant to see how broken God's people were, and not just blandly offer a sacrifice, but actually pray for them. Priests were notorious for not doing either very well.

Things haven't changed over the generations, have they? But again, you see, Jesus refines or redefines the category of priest because he perfectly fulfills both responsibilities.

And he achieves, we're told in chapter 1, he achieves what not even the angels, with all their involvement over the generations in implementing God's plan in the world, Jesus achieves what they couldn't have done ever and didn't do ever.

And so we got last week that Jesus is our trailblazer, our champion. And he cuts a nice, neat pathway through God's wrath, through the penalty of our sin and the guilt that comes with it, through our broken humanity, praying for us in our weaknesses and struggles.

[14 : 09] And he leads us down that pathway, as it says last week, that beautiful little phrase, taking many sons and daughters to glory, which is heaven, a place of blessing.

Amen. For every relationship with God. So that's the summary.

And the consequences out of that, verse 1, are just incredible. We have been reunited to God's forever family.

That's where we were created to be, image bearers, Genesis 1 and 2. Pushed away by God because of rebellion.

Now in Jesus, reunited. We're holy brothers and sisters of Jesus and of one another. Reunited to God's forever family and to every other believer.

[15 : 13] Reformatted. Holiness. We're reformatted for a life of obedience, as we were originally created to be but couldn't be. Now we can be in Jesus.

Restored to the enjoyment of all God's blessings and privileges, which Jesus enjoys. fellow heirs. And not only that, but redirected to our heavenly calling.

In other words, our orientation to life is so completely different now. Our motivation for living is so completely different now. We look ahead to that moment of glory.

And that is what gives us the perspective and the confidence and the courage and the hope to live well now. No matter the cost.

Here, we're part of the world that said in chapter 1 that will be rolled up eventually. In other words, it's just temporary. Looks very permanent, but it's just temporary. But in Jesus, we're part of that world that will be forever.

[16 : 24] Forever. Hang in with what is lasting and hang in with the one who's leading you home to glory.

So, the point's so clear. Jesus has done for you.

He said to these guys that come out of the Jewish religious practices, he said, Jesus has actually done for you that which the Jewish religious system could never have done for you.

And he's done all that at such huge cost to himself and you get it as a free gift of God's grace and mercy. So, no wonder, he says, for goodness sake, if only you would consider Jesus, that is, if only you would just stop and think carefully about Jesus, think deeply about who he is, think expansively

about what he has done for you, just savor the privileges and the benefits that have come to you through Jesus.

Then he's saying, I think you will realize just how insulting and offensive it would be to Jesus and to God to say, well, actually, sorry, Jesus, I'm just going to put you back on the shelf.

[17 : 54] I'm not ignoring you completely, but I'm going to just play you down because it's going to make my life a bit easier. And isn't that what we do when the push comes to shove?

That's the decision we make. If I identify with Jesus here, my life in the next two minutes might just be a bit tough. So many of us struggle with assurance, struggle with just knowing, are we safe in Jesus?

Are we in Jesus? Are we totally safe? Well, I would say to you, and I don't want this just to be a sort of platitude or a cheap shot, but I think it's something we miss.

I'd say to you, genuinely spend time filling your mind with who Jesus is. Filling your mind with what Jesus has done for you. Filling your mind with who you are in Jesus from Jesus' own words.

Fill your mind with that because we struggle with assurance so often because we allow our mind to be filled with our own imperfections.

[19 : 15] with our own failures. Sometimes our mind is not filled with anything other than the last argument we had with our wife or our husband or our children or whatever.

Consider Jesus. That's not going to be a be-all and end-all. It'll sure help. I went to the, for those who are following the script, I'm off script at the minute, went to the dentist this week and it just occurred to me that there on the ceiling randomly is a TV screen.

I think, why on earth would you have a TV screen on the ceiling in the dentist surgery? And of course, when I ask, like a fool, I had to ask, he said, well, it's to distract people who are fearful. Now, I wanted to say, listen, you're going to have to find a different channel because it wasn't distracting me, it was annoying me. But anyway, some people might have been distracted, but that's the purpose.

So, if you're filling your mind with that, you're not thinking about what the dentist is doing to you. Second point, as we understand who Moses is, we understand more of why we need Jesus and that's verses 2-6.

[20 : 37] So, we're moving into new territory now. So, there is a connection because the faithfulness of Jesus in his mission connects into the next phase of the writer's argument.

So, verse 1 is actually both a summary and also a segue into his next line of argument. So, he's now going to compare Jesus and Moses. Now, who was Moses?

Well, Moses was the most significant figure in Jewish history. he was really considered to be the architect of the Jewish nation under God, that is.

He rescued God's people from Israel in the event we call Exodus. Go back and have a look at Exodus chapter 3. It actually uses the word rescue and redemption there.

God's people were in a terrible predicament and they cried out to God for rescue and God responded and sent a rescuer, a redeemer. And that was Moses in the event we call the Exodus.

[21 : 41] And Exodus was leading God's people out of Egypt to Mount Sinai, God's place. And at Mount Sinai, God reaffirmed his relationship to his people.

Here you are gathered and the word in Exodus is oikos, which is a house. Here you are churched. Ecclesia, sorry, not oikos. Ecclesia, churched.

You're gathered in front of me. You're my household. You're my community, my family. All those words sort of overlap. And you're governed by my law, which I'm about to deliver to you through Moses.

Moses led God's people through the 40-year period of punishment for the rebellion, rebellion against God's grace and mercy and the rejection of God even after experiencing his grace and mercy.

Moses supervised the construction of the tabernacle, which was the place to deal with sin and meet with God. He led the vast nation of Israel to the very edge of the promised land.

[22 : 53] Moses was a huge, huge character in Jewish history and in the Old Testament. And I think the writer again is anticipating the response of his readers.

It might go something like this and this is my spin on it. So, you know, dismiss it if you think it's just weird. I can sort of imagine the writer thinking, okay, these guys are going to agree wholeheartedly that Jesus was a great rescuer, that Jesus was a great achiever of God's salvation plan, that he

was a great trailblazer leading people back to God and God's place of forever blessing, that he was a personal champion who identified with and sacrificed himself for the good of God's people at great cost to himself.

Yes, we can see all that and that's lovely. We appreciate all that about Jesus, but wouldn't it be true to say that all that same stuff was said about Moses?

And if following the model of obedience and worship demonstrated by Moses was the designated pathway to life and relationship with God for generations, then surely it'll be good enough for us. Surely it'll be an acceptable pathway to heaven for us too. perhaps they were saying even more than that. You know, now that we were in this position, we're starting to realize how much we miss some of the practical aspects of our old Jewish religion.

[24 : 46] Things that were visible, things that were tangible, things that were familiar, things that were grounded in history, things that made us feel comfortable, things that made us feel safe, things that gave us a really nice rhythm in life, within which we could say, yes, everything is well in our world.

In contrast to what we're now experiencing with this perhaps over identification with Jesus. Jesus. And so the writer launches into a comparison of Jesus and Moses, and he concedes that Jesus and Moses are alike at key points.

Each was a specially appointed rescuer or savior figure. Each spoke God's word clearly and authoritatively to God's needy people.

And each were described here, each were told here, was faithful in carrying out their mission. They cared for God's people.

They did what they were asked to do by the Lord. They were serving God's house, God's household, God's nation, God's family, God's community.

[26 : 10] I think any of those words can just be plugged in here. And as I said before, check out Exodus 2 for that language. But also Numbers 12, that's a phenomenal thing that was pointed out at our small group.

I hadn't picked that verse up before. Numbers chapter 12 verses 1 to 9. There's an incredibly extravagant description of Moses by the Lord himself in the context when Aaron and Miriam got sick of Moses and were trying to sort of find a way to shove him to the side and get around him.

And the Lord appeared to them and said, this is my servant Moses. And it was extravagant terms he described Moses. But, equally true, Moses and Jesus contrast at key points.

In fact, it's not their similarities but their differences which ultimately form final evaluation of the two. Jesus is in a category by himself in terms of status before God. His part in God's salvation plan is unique.

[27 : 35] His achievements as a savior figure are unique and complete. And we're told here for that reason, at those key points, he is just so totally different from Moses.

And for that reason, he deserves far, far greater glory and honor than Moses does. So, God's community. And here's the point of contrast.

Moses was never able to be more than a servant to God's community. He was a good servant, but he was never more than a servant. Jesus established God's community.

Jesus owned God's community. Jesus defined God's community. Moses was used by God to establish a clear pattern of God's rescue or God's redemption or God's salvation.

But in the end, Moses was not able to achieve anything lasting. He was not actually able to deliver God's people from the very basis of the rebellion.

[28 : 54] That is, their bad hearts, their bad track record against God. He could speak God's word to them and he did so faithfully, but he couldn't make that word penetrate to their hearts and change their attitudes and their minds.

Which, of course, is exactly what Jesus does. Moses was unable to lead God's people consistently. He was a brilliant leader. but he wasn't perfect. He was prone to anger and prejudice. He just got sick and tired of the whinging about God's people.

He would have given up on them at times. But not so Jesus. Even more important, Moses was not a priest.

His brother Aaron was a priest. priest. So, ultimately, Moses wasn't actually able. He wasn't qualified. He didn't have the opportunity to deal with the sins of God's people.

[30 : 05] He didn't have the qualification to deal with the sins of God's people. He could point out their sins. He himself, of course, not only was another priest, but he needed a priest for his own sins.

Jesus. The point of comparison, contrast, Moses set up there as a way, the template for God's savior figure, for God's plan of redemption, but he couldn't actually deliver it.

So, as we saw that template in Moses, we thought, ah, we've got to wait for someone better. And Moses himself knew that he was waiting for someone better.

Moses could only point to God's real savior, real deliverer, the real crusher from Genesis chapter three, the salvation trailblazer, the champion.

Moses loved God, and Moses longed for the deliverance of his people from rebellion to the good life of God's blessing. Of course he did.

[31 : 25] But Jesus loved God and then delivered that which Moses could only long for. Moses was significant to the people of Israel and the history of Israel.

No, sorry, Moses was significant to the people of Israel and the history of Israel because his life and ministry shaped or became the model for or the type of God's rescue plan, not because he achieved it.

And Jesus affirms that understanding in his own ministry. If you read the Gospels, particularly in Matthew 5, 6, 7, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus casts his own ministry in terms of being a new and better Moses, with a new and better exodus or a new and better rescue of God's people to a new and better promised land.

therefore, the argument is to put Moses and Jesus on the same page in terms of glory, in terms of confidence you would invest in each for salvation, in terms of praise offered them, to do that is to display a shocking lack of understanding.

And ultimately, as I said before, to insult the achievements of Jesus. To drift away, or to deliberately abandon the way of Jesus for the way of Moses, is silly, according to the writer, because it goes from the superior to the inferior.

[33 : 24] It goes from reality to incomplete. It goes from reality delivered and tangible to the prototype drawings.

And verse six delivers the logical conclusion of all this argument. Delivers it as a warning. we are his household, his house, his family, his community, his died-for resurrection community, the church.

We are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and are boasting in our hope. Very simply as this, turn your back on Jesus, and you've really turned your back on salvation.

since Jesus is greater than Moses, then his call to hear God's word and follow him to life and blessing is more important.

And therefore failure to do so will have more severe consequences, even than what God's people experienced under Moses. we demonstrate the reality of our heavenly calling in verse 1.

[34 : 53] We demonstrate that we're the new salvation community of Jesus. We demonstrate that we've been part of this knock-down rebuild project, which Jesus came into our world to do.

We demonstrate all of that very simply by being faithful to Jesus. Jesus was faithful to his purpose. The challenge to you and me is, will we be faithful to Jesus? I don't know what default settings are in your central processing unit, but they will be there.

They will be there. They'll come out at random times. will