

## Text: Heb 3.1-6a

Last week we followed the words of our text to “consider Jesus” and thought about what the terms “Apostle and High Priest” meant for him and us.

Today our subject is

### *Jesus and Moses*

David Allen asks this question:

“Why did the author compare and contrast Jesus with Moses? A likely reason is that Moses held a distinctive place of honor in normative Judaism, Philo, and Sectarian Judaism, and this included the belief by some that Moses was superior to the angels.”<sup>1</sup>

Remember the audience of Hebrews: Christian Jews who are wavering, thinking of going back to Judaism.

Our author is laboring to show why this is a *bad idea*.

In our message today we will look at Moses, both from what the passage says and from the overall record of the Bible, as well as a few hints from Jewish tradition.

We will contrast that with Jesus, who, of course stands far above Moses, despite Moses’ personal stature.

That is to say, neither we nor the author of Hebrews looks down on Moses. On the contrary, Moses was a great man, perhaps the greatest man in history besides our Lord Jesus Christ.

Read Heb 3.1-6, we will be in and out of all these verses today

**Proposition:** You owe your loyalty to Jesus far more Moses.

## I. How Jesus is like Moses: faithfulness (1-2)

### A. Moses as an apostle and high priest

1. The terms are used of Jesus in verse 1
2. They derive from the function of Moses in his day

---

<sup>1</sup> David Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary 35 (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Publ. Group, 2010), 236.

Ex 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.”

- a. “I will send” in Gk NT is “ἀποστείλω” — verb form of apostle
- b. Moses also functioned as a priest: a mediator between God and man

“The combining of the two rôles of divine envoy and priest in one person is not common in the Old Testament; it appears only in a few outstanding characters, among whom Moses occupies a special place. That Moses was an apostle of God to his people does not call for demonstration; it is equally true that he was his people’s most effective intercessor with God. It was his brother Aaron, and not he, who was high priest of Israel as far as title and investiture were concerned; but it was Moses, and not Aaron, who was Israel’s true advocate with God. After the idolatrous festival in honor of the golden calf, in which Aaron himself was implicated, it was Moses whose prevailing plea procured pardon for his guilty people (Ex. 32:11–14, 31f.), as it did on a later occasion when the unfavorable report of the spies caused a rebellion in the camp and a resolution to return to Egypt (Num. 14:13–19).”<sup>2</sup>

3. The testimony of our text (and the rest of Scripture) is that Moses was faithful

Ex 40.16 ¶ Thus Moses did; according to all that the LORD had commanded him, so he did.

<sup>2</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Rev. ed., The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 91–92.

#### 4. The early church called Moses faithful

1 Clement 17.5-6 — Moses was called *faithful in all His house*, and through his ministration God judged Egypt with the plagues and the torments which befel them. Howbeit he also, though greatly glorified, yet spake no proud words, but said, when an oracle was given to him at the bush, *Who am I, that Thou sendest me?* <sup>6</sup>*Nay, I am feeble of speech and slow of tongue.* And again he saith, *But I am smoke from the pot.*<sup>3</sup>

#### 5. Judaism extolled Moses far above other men for his faithfulness

“the Jews had begun to elevate Moses into a position of almost supernatural grandeur which would have its effect on the imaginations of wavering and almost apostatising converts. Thus the Rabbis said that ‘the soul of Moses was equivalent to the souls of all Israel’ (because by the cabbalistic process called *Gematria* the numerical value of the letters of ‘Moses our Rabbi’ in Hebrew = 613, which is also the value of the letters of ‘Lord God of Israel’). They said that ‘the face of Moses was like the sun’; that he alone ‘saw through a clear glass,’ not as other prophets ‘through a dim glass’ (comp. St Paul’s ‘through a mirror in a riddle,’ 1 Cor. 13:12), and that whereas there are but fifty gates of understanding in the world, ‘all but one were opened to Moses.’”<sup>4</sup>

- It is doubtful the recipients of Hebrews would go this far, but they highly esteemed Moses (as should we).

#### B. Jesus was faithful ... as Moses was

1. The comparison here is favorable
2. The well-known failures of Moses ignored in this comparison

<sup>3</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers (APF)*, ed. J. R. Harmer, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1898), 65, BibleWorks, v.8.

<sup>4</sup> F. W. Farrar, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, With Notes and Introduction.*, Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1893), 58.

3. The highlight is the similarities: faithful as Moses was
  - a. Moses appointed to an office, which he fulfilled
  - b. Jesus appointed to an office, which he fulfilled
    - 1) He completed the mission on which he was sent: faithful apostleship
    - 2) He accomplished the intercession between God and man, his purpose (Heb 2.5-18), his priesthood

### C. Sidebar on appointment

1. The word “appointed” is literally, “to do, to make”
2. Arius, the early heretic, seized on this to say, “See, Jesus was made, not eternal”
3. Westcott points out that in that sense, it is the office that was made; Jesus was appointed to an office God made for him

1 Sa 12.6 ¶ Then Samuel said to the people, “It is the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt.

Mk 3.14 And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He *could* send them out to preach,

The point, here is this: Jesus is faithful, just as Moses was, and worthy of our consideration *at least as much as* Moses

## II. How Jesus exceeds Moses: worth of their faithfulness (3-4)

- A. Has been counted worthy of glory
  1. The idea is that his faithfulness earned glory, and...
  2. The worthiness of that glory continues on
  3. The glory is *more than* that of Moses
- B. Moses is worthy of glory for his faithfulness
  1. Yet he is only part of the house, Jesus is the builder of the house
    - a. This is the implication of the quoted axiom (v. 3b)

- b. Moses himself, though great in administration, was himself only able to access God in and through the old covenant
2. Moses mediated the old covenant from God's voice to Israel's ears
3. Jesus created the new covenant by initiating the covenant in his blood

The axiom is an illustration: When you have a great building constructed, we remember the builder.

- Francis Rattenbury for Victoria
- Christopher Wren for London

### C. The ultimate implication of the builder analogy (4)

1. Every house has a builder
2. Ultimately God is the builder of everything (giving ability, power, opportunity to men he appoints)
3. And Jesus is the Son of God, which brings the whole thing around to him, by implication

“The general principle, that the framer is superior to the thing framed, admits of application in the case of the Law. Even here we must not rest on the system; for every system, and this highest of all, has its framer; and finally every system is carried up to God as its Author, and ‘Jesus’ our ‘Apostle and High-priest’ is the Son of God. Nothing is said here expressly of the unique relation in which Christ, as the Son, stands to God. That is assumed, as having been already laid down in the opening of the Epistle.”<sup>5</sup>

Both Jesus and Moses are faithful, but Jesus is worthy of more honour

---

<sup>5</sup> Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3rd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1903), 78.

### III. How Jesus is distinct from Moses: stature (5-6)

A. Here we find the most important distinctions, first of status, or stature

1. Moses is a servant (the word implies voluntary service, not forced service)
2. Jesus is a Son

B. Second distinction, service

1. Moses was faithful *in* his house
2. Jesus was faithful *over* his house

“Moses was faithful as a servant in the administration of God’s house: Christ was faithful as a Son as sovereign over God’s house (1:2).”<sup>6</sup>

C. Third distinction: the point of Moses service

1. Moses was faithful in all his service in his house
  - a. He laboured to deliver Israel from Egypt
  - b. He laboured to get Israel to Sinai (enduring harsh criticism)
  - c. He met with God on Mt. Sinai, receiving the Law
  - d. He led the people of God through the wilderness for 40 yrs, enduring more criticism and rebellion
  - e. He spent his last weeks preaching the law again to the people of God (book of Deuteronomy, plug for Wednesday nights)
2. Moses’ service pointed beyond Israel

for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later

- a. What things? The new covenant things
- b. What man? The new covenant man, the man greater than Moses

---

<sup>6</sup> Westcott, 79.

Moses in his faithfulness pointed to the one who would come after him, the faithful Jesus, Apostle and High Priest of our confession.

## Conclusion:

**Proposition:** You owe your loyalty to Jesus far more Moses.

Now, a few things for us to think about.

- How many of you think that with the unpopularity of Christianity in our world, maybe I should just slip on over to Moses and Judaism to take the heat off?

I would guess not many of you think that way.

But what does have your loyalty in your daily life? What do you love? What drives you?

We are working through a topic in our Sunday afternoon services that touches on this: What should Christians do about media? (Today we are taking a break for Communion)

You need to think about this question. The world wants you to stand aside from Christ. He's not worth it, the world thinks.

Ask anyone you meet, do you think it is worth your time to take your Sundays and go to church?

What does the world say? What does the Bible say?

What do you say?