

**Text: Heb 3.1-6a**

This Sunday we are still in the same passage as last Sunday.

Now, I also should note that I do know that today is Easter Sunday. I have by times made special acknowledgement of Easter Sunday, and we've had some additions to our service today to remind us of the great victory Jesus won for us when he rose from the dead.

However, I want to mention that the reason we worship on Sunday is because of the resurrection. Every Sunday is Resurrection Day.

When this time of year comes around each year, it sort of catches me by unawares, whereas I am always prepared for Christmas. Both occasions celebrate the same thing. Christmas focuses on the Incarnation, but the Incarnation has a Resurrection point. If there were no Resurrection, the Incarnation wouldn't matter.

Today's message also has a resurrection point. Though we won't be talking about the resurrection directly, the resurrection makes all the difference in the topic we address today.

Let's read our text and we'll see if you can figure out what I mean.

Read Heb 3.1-6

What word is used the most in this passage? *House*

One could say that the concept of "house" is the unifying thread or theme in the passage.

The author is comparing Jesus and Moses, especially in relation to their house.

We noted this distinction last time:

- Moses also was faithful **in** all His house (5)
- Jesus *was faithful* as a Son **over** His house (6)

The question I want to consider today is this: Are these houses the same, or are two different houses in view?

### *Two Houses or One*

The way we answer this question applies to how we live the Resurrection life in this world.

One of my favorite commentaries on Hebrews got me started on this thought.

David Allen brings in a reference to Romans 11 to make an assertion:

Read Rom 11.16-18

He identifies the root of the tree as Israel, and then says:

“The point of this parable is that the root of Israel is never uprooted to make way for a new ‘tree,’ for the original root continues to give nourishment to the people of God. As there is one tree, so there is one house since ‘God is the builder of everything’ (Heb 3:4). Whether the antecedent of ‘house’ in v. 6 is God or Christ, the point remains the same: there is continuity between God’s people in the Old Testament and God’s people in the New Testament, an important theme developed in Heb 1:1–2.”<sup>1</sup>

This statement set my dispensationalist mind buzzing! One of the key features of dispensationalism is the distinction between Israel and the Church.

Is Hebrews talking about the same house (*i.e.*, the one people of God) or is it talking about two houses?

- Clearly Moses was faithful in and among the people of Israel
- Clearly Jesus was faithful over the people of the Church, whom he inaugurated (built) by his sacrifice on the cross
- And clearly, the term house means “people” — see v. 6, “whose house we are”

Sorting this out is the subject of our message today. I have a proposition, but it will come later.

## I. Identifying the house

A. The “house” speaks collectively about a group of people

1. Already noted, v. 6, “whose house we are”

2. Three possible interpretations of “house” in the New Testament

a. A spiritual people led by a spiritual leader [Allen: “Christendom as the spiritual community of God (1 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 2:5; 4:17)”<sup>2</sup>]

<sup>1</sup> David Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary 35 (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Publ. Group, 2010), 252.

<sup>2</sup> Allen, 242.

- b. A household or family, see Heb 11.7, Noah and his house were saved
  - c. A priestly household, compare Heb 10.21, we have a great priest over the house of God
3. The first mention (2, then 5) seems to link with Num 12.7

Num 12.7 “Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household;

Turn to Num 12 for context

## B. Observations (Num 12.6-8)

1. The context: rebellion of Miriam and Aaron
2. God says that he will speak through prophets through visions and dreams (6)
3. Not so with Moses (7)
  - a. Difference: in contrast to the prophets
  - b. Reason: he is faithful in all my household
4. God speaks to Moses face to face (8)
  - a. How dare anyone speak against him?
  - b. The position Moses occupies is unique in God’s household

What this shows is that Moses stands out above all Israel, the whole nation (a spiritual people) is under him, in or among whom he is faithful.

Thus, Heb 3.2 and 3.5 must refer to Israel when it talks about Moses being faithful in his house

## C. The house over which Christ stands faithful (see 2 Sam 7.11-13)

1. The Lord declares that he will make a house for David (11)
2. After David’s death, his descendant will come, the Lord will establish his kingdom (12)
3. This descendant will build a house for Me (for my name) (13)

The house the descendant of David will build is not

- a. Merely a physical building
- b. Nor is it the nation of Israel
- c. It is something new

4. Now consider what Hebrews says about Jesus and his house (Heb 3.6)

- a. He is over the house
- b. We are the house

What we are saying so far is this: the people of Israel and the Church are both seen as the “house of God.” We haven’t answered whether there is continuity between Israel and the church.

## II. Distinguishing the houses

A. In favor of continuity, Allen appeals to the metaphor of the olive tree in Rm 11.16-18

“The point of this parable is that the root of Israel is never uprooted to make way for a new ‘tree,’ for the original root continues to give nourishment to the people of God. As there is one tree, so there is one house since ‘God is the builder of everything’ (Heb 3:4). Whether the antecedent of ‘house’ in v. 6 is God or Christ, the point remains the same: there is continuity between God’s people in the Old Testament and God’s people in the New Testament, an important theme developed in Heb 1:1–2.”<sup>3</sup>

1. However, look closely at the reasoning of Paul in Rm 11 — the topic is the apparent failure and rejection of Israel in favor of Gentiles
2. Two metaphors in v. 16
  - a. The lump of dough
  - b. The olive tree (as we see in v. 17)
3. The image of the lump of dough
  - a. Reference to Num 15.17-21 and the offering of first-fruits

<sup>3</sup> David Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary 35 (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Publ. Group, 2010), 252.

- b. When they entered the land, they were to first offer a portion of the bread of the land as an offering to the Lord
  - c. Ever after, the “first fruits” of the harvest belonged to God
  - d. Setting apart part of the dough sanctified the rest of the food: holy food for holy people
  - e. Rm 11: If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is holy
  - f. Paul means Israel is somehow set aside as holy to the Lord by this illustration
    - 1) Not all Israel is saved, even if the “whole lump is holy”
    - 2) Some of Israel is “broken off,” not saved (see Rm 11.17)
  - g. So what is the holy first fruits? It must refer to the first believers of Israel, who sanctify those who follow
4. The image of the olive tree
- a. The root is holy, so are the branches (16)
  - b. Some branches are broken off (17) *i.e.*, not saved
  - c. Some wild olive branches grafted in (17) *i.e.*, Gentile believers
  - d. What are they grafted into? The root: the first believers
  - e. Remember Gal 3.7

Gal 3.7 Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham.

5. The root is Abraham, the Gentile believers are grafted into him, not into Israel

## B. Back to Heb 3: two houses in view

- 1. Moses was faithful in his house (2) = Israel
- 2. The builder of the house has more honor than the house (3) = Israel, probably
- 3. Every house has a builder, God builds all things (4) = Israel, probably
- 4. Moses faithful in all his house (5) = Israel

5. Christ faithful as a Son over his House (6) = the Church “whose house we are”

We conclude that there are two houses in view, two men in view, who function in relation to their houses, one man as a servant *in* his house, the other as a Son *over* his house.

**Proposition:** The distinction between the house of Israel and the house of the church makes spiritual life in the church far different from that of Israel.

### III. Living in our house

- A. The saints who lived in the old house have their hope in God based on Christ’s work building the new house

1. We will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Mt 8.11)
2. The many OT saints who followed Abraham will join us
3. The broken branches who rejected Christ have no part in the life Jesus built

The whole point of Paul’s yearning in Romans 11 was that so many of his physical brethren were broken off: they needed Christ.

This truth justifies Christian evangelism of Jews today.

- B. The saints who live by faith in the new house are under the law of Christ, not the law of Moses

1. The Old Law informs us of what God is like, what God desires, gives insight into right and wrong
  - a. God built both houses
  - b. God hasn’t changed between Testaments
  - c. God just built different houses
2. The new life in Christ motivates obedience from the heart through the power of the indwelling Spirit
  - a. There are lots of “do nots” in the NT
  - b. There is one Spirit in the believers heart saying, “Do!”

C. The new life in the new house rests on the sacrificed (and resurrected) life of our Lord Jesus

1. He is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession (1)
2. He built this house by dying and rising

### **Conclusion:**

My sermon today focuses on a very fine point of interpretation.

That focus may seem very academic and narrow, as in, "Can't he think of something better to say?"

Every word out of the mouth of God is pure, including the word "house" in our passage.

We need to know what it means.

But even more: we need to know which house we are in. There is actually a third house.

- The first house is Israel
- The second house is the church
- The last house is the chaos of the world

Only in the house of Christ, the church, can you find salvation. No other house will do.

Which house do you live in?