SESSION OBJECTIVE: HEBREWS 3:1-6

To understand why Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses.

Read the Text:

"Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, 2 who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. 3 For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. 4 (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) 5 Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, 6 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." (Hebrews 3:1-6, ESV)

Study the Text:

Moses, Remember Him?

Those who spent the last few years in the Life Bible Study groups are familiar with Moses (read: *very* familiar). And all that studying is going to pay off today. In chapter 3, we are presented with another "therefore." If you remember, Session 3 (Heb. 2:1-4) noted that "therefore" is used to draw the reader back to what was just discussed, in that case, to what chapter 1 established. Now, Hebrews 3:1-6 is going to continue to build on that "if/then" proposition ("if" everything that chapter 1 said is true, "then" we "must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it") by adding a glimpse of one of the most important aspects of the author's purpose: *hope*.

But first, the author must continue to give his readers the right perspective of Jesus, one that is aligned with what John the Baptist said of Him: "He (Jesus) must increase, but I (John the Baptist) must decrease. He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all" (John 3:30-31). Below is a breakdown of the passage with special attention given to key words and ideas.

YOU WHO SHARE IN A HEAVENLY CALLING

Most of the epistles (or "letters") of the New Testament contain a formal opening that outlines the recipient. The opening helps explain how the reader would have understood the letter. However, Hebrews jumps right into the action with Christ's supremacy, which makes the beginning of Hebrews feel a little bit like drinking from a fire hydrant. In chapter 3, a glimpse of the letter's recipient is found: "holy brothers (and sisters), you who share in a heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1). The author of Hebrews is never satisfied with just one topic to be communicated to his reader (i.e., Jesus is greater than Moses), he uses the language of family (ἀδελφοὶ: "brothers and sisters") as well as partnership (μέτοχοι: "you who share" or "partakers"). Both draw the reader's attention to the heavenly calling, which brings people together into a community.

APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST OF OUR CONFESSION

Deuteronomy 34:10 states: "And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." Interestingly, while Moses was a "priest" (Ps. 99:6), he was not known as an apostle (see Matthew 10:1-4 for a bit of context on apostles), and his brother Aaron was the high priest (Hebrews 5 gives further discussion on the significance of the "high priest"). Therefore, even before directly stating that Jesus is worthy of greater glory than Moses, the author of Hebrews foreshadows it. Now, Jesus being "the apostle and high priest of our confession" brings to mind the question: "What is our confession?" Simply, our confession is the Sunday school answer: "Jesus." But 1 Corinthians 15 has one of the clearest versions of that confession: "That Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that He was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time" (1 Cor. 15:3-6a). However, given the context of chapter 2 and the "therefore" at the beginning of chapter 3, it may also be understood that our confession is to Jesus, our merciful and faithful high priest (Heb. 2:17), and we are confessing our sin, since He has made propitiation for the sins of the people (Heb. 2:17), and He is able to help those who are being tempted (Heb. 2:18). We confess our sins and we are forgiven (1 Jn. 1:9). We confess Jesus is Lord and we will be saved (Rom. 10:9). And whether forgiven or saved we are drawn together as a community because of these confessions.

MOSES ALSO WAS FAITHFUL IN ALL GOD'S HOUSE

So why bring up Moses? Moses is found to be faithful in most of Exodus, and Moses is of very high regard to the author's audience. There are many examples of his faithfulness in the midst of the faithlessness of the people of Israel. One of the best examples is in Exodus 32, when Moses has been on Mount Sinai for 40 days, receiving the Ten Commandments from God. The people rebelled against God by making a golden calf to worship. God tells Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you" (Ex. 32:9). And how did Moses show himself faithful? "The next day, Moses said to the people, 'You have sinned a great sin. And now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30). He returned to the mountain and lay prostrate for another 40 days, praying for the people of God. He was found faithful in God's house, praying for God's people.

SERVANT OR SON

Verse 5 continues: "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." Instinctively, a son is superior to those with the title of servant. But even what he testified as a faithful servant (the law) was only pointing to that which the Lord "has spoken to us by His Son" (Heb. 1:2). Sigurd Grindheim notes, "The contrast is further

emphasized by the two prepositions. Whereas Moses is in (en) the house, himself belonging to it, Jesus is Son over (epi) his house."[1]

If the point the author of Hebrews was conveying was only that Jesus was greater than Moses or that we are sons because of faith, he would have continued similarly to Paul in Galatians 3:24-26, "So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith." But his point is not our status as sons (although that is true), but that because Jesus is greater than Moses and as the Son, Jesus is over the house, the author is communicating that Jesus has the right to say "we are His house" (a community). Now, similar to other places, the author emphasizes again that we have a part to play to stay in that community, namely, "we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope."

What About Now?

In the Old Testament, the people of God are continually told to remember. In Deuteronomy 4, we are told: "Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children" (Deut. 4:9). In Joshua, the stones were set up after Israel crossed the sea on dry land so that the people and their children would remember what the Lord had done (Josh 4:22). These are pictures of a community being compelled to remember God's faithfulness. Those who hold fast to their confidence and boast in the hope we have through Jesus are part of a community, too. And just as Jesus is superior to Moses as a Son is superior to a servant, our confidence and boasting in Jesus brings a hope in something greater than a promised land. Hope is an underlying message throughout the book of Hebrews. For now, it is sufficient to define our hope as simply who Jesus is, for as the author has noted over the last few chapters, He is worthy, but the hope will further develop as we continue to include not only who He is, but what He has done and what it ultimately means for us, His house.

Study Questions

Day One

1. Read Hebrews 3:1. What titles does the author give to Jesus?

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2. What is the significance of each? (Hint: Matthew 10:1-4, Hebrews 5)

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Day Two

1. Read Hebrews 3:2-3. How does Jesus compare to Moses?

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[1] Sigurd Grindheim, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2023), 213.

2. What does this reveal about their respective roles in God's plan?

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Day Three

1. Read Hebrews 3:5. What is Moses' role in God's house? What is Jesus' role?

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2. What does it mean that Moses testified "to the things that were to be spoken later?"

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Day Four

1. Read Hebrews 3:6. Who does the author say are "his house?"

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2. What does it say we must indeed do to be his house?

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Discuss the Text!

Session 6 Discussion: We are His House

In chapter 3, verses 1-6, we see that we are God's house. We are a community built on the hope we have in Jesus and his completed work on the cross. Talk as a group about what it means to be God's House.

1. Icebreaker: Do you feel like you are a part of "His house?"
2. What drew you to be a part of "His house?" What do you think pulls people away from "His house?"
3. Do you see your heavenly calling as drawing people to that community?
4. Do you consider yourself faithful in "His house?"
5. How do you help others hold fast to their confidence and their boasting inside that community?
6. Kid Talk (For Home): Gather your family in a circle and talk about how your home feels special because everyone is together - that's what God's house is like. Explain that God's house isn't a building, it's all the people who love Jesus and help each other. Ask: "How can we help our family and friends feel like they belong in God's family?"

Takeaways:

1. Jesus, as a Son over God's house, has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses.
2. We are His house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.