

VII. Mightier Than Moses

December 12/13/14, 2017

Hebrews 3:1-6

Aim: To consider Jesus as our Apostle and High Priest, the greater Prophet promised by Moses, and to hold fast to our confidence and hope in Him.

Schreiner: The main point of the paragraph isn't the share calling of believers and Jesus. The central theme in verses 1-6 is Jesus' role as apostle and high priest. The readers are on the verge of forgetting Jesus' role as the one sent by God to cleanse them of their sins. Jesus was faithful in His ministry just as Moses was faithful in his (v. 2). Still, Jesus deserves greater honor than Moses, for Moses is a member of the house (the people of God), but Jesus is the builder of the house (v. 3). Jesus' building of the house points to His deity since God shapes and directs all things (v. 4). Moses should be honored as a faithful servant, but it is a serious mistake to see Him as the terminus of revelation for he pointed forward to a greater word (v. 5). Moses was a faithful servant, but Jesus is the faithful Son (v. 6), and believers are part of His house if they endure in faith to the end.

Phillips: The Book of Hebrews was written to exhort Christians under fire to stand firm in their faith in Jesus Christ. The opening passage of chapter 3 exemplifies that thrust, both beginning and ending with an exhortation to endurance. It begins by encouraging us to fix our thoughts on Christ and concludes by exhorting us to hold on to our courage and hope.

A. Jesus Is Superior to Moses in His Offices (Hebrews 3:1)

1. Moses

MacArthur: To appreciate how, why, and to what extent Jesus is better than Moses we need to see how important Moses was even before this. We need to ask why it is necessary to prove that Jesus is better than Moses. Moses was esteemed by the Jews far above any other Jew who ever lived. God had miraculously protected him as a baby and personally provided for his burial. Between those two points in his life are miracle after miracle after miracle. He was the man to whom God spoke face to face. He had seen the very glory of God and, in fact, even had this glory reflected in his own face for a brief while (Ex. 34:29). He was the one who led Israel out of Egypt. As Paul stresses in Romans 2, Jews had great confidence in the law. The Old Testament commandments and rituals were their supreme priorities, and to them Moses and the law were synonymous (cp. Lk. 2:22; Acts 13:39; and others). Moses not only brought the Ten Commandments but he also wrote the entire Pentateuch, which lays out the Levitical and other laws that governed everything the Jews did. Moses gave the plans for the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant.

Hughes: Moses was revered as the greatest of all Hebrews, and indeed the greatest man of history by his people. We must understand this first if we are to get anything of the Holy Spirit's message to us in Hebrews 3. First we must understand that Moses was divinely *chosen* for his epic task. Second, Moses became the incomparable *deliverer* of his people through an unparalleled display of power. Third, he served as Israel's greatest *prophet*. God communicated to other prophets indirectly through various means, but he communicated directly to Moses, as God Himself explained in Numbers 12:6-8. Fourth, Moses was the *lawgiver*. To the Jew, the Law was the greatest thing in all the world. Moses was the conduit for the Ten Commandments,

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the Levitical laws, the sacrificial cultus, and the tabernacle. Everything in their religion recalled his name, for it all came from ‘the Law of Moses.’ Fifth, he was Israel’s great *historian*. Under divine inspiration he authored the Pentateuch. Sixth, he was ‘very *meek*, more than all people who were on the face of the earth’ (Num. 12:3). Remarkable! He was the greatest, but it had not gone to his head. These six qualities, among others, can be summed up under one grand heading: *Moses—The Great Apostle and High Priest of the Old Testament*. Moses functions as the greatest *apostle* and *priest* of his people, and for this he was revered (cp. Ex. 33:8). When Moses died, the Lord Himself buried him in an anonymous grave (Dt. 34:5-6)—perhaps because some would have worshiped his bones. The book of Deuteronomy closes with Moses’ sublime epitaph (Dt. 34:10-12).

MacArthur: Some Jews believed that Moses was greater than angels. God spoke to the prophets in visions, but to Moses He spoke face to face. He spoke to him in a burning bush. He spoke to him out of heaven. He spoke to him on Sinai and wrote the commandments with a finger of fire. He was, above all others, God’s man. Yet, in this passage of Hebrews the Holy Spirit calls on Jewish readers, especially, to look at Jesus. Moses was indeed great; but Jesus is far greater. Jesus is shown to be superior to Moses in office, in work, and in person.

Hughes: To Jews, Moses was simply the greatest. According to one early tradition, Moses was superior to angels, having higher rank and privilege than the ministering angels. Now, seeing something of the vast regard the Jews gave to Moses, we can understand why here in Hebrews 3 the writer deems it necessary to establish the superiority of Christ over Moses. Some of his fellow-Christians/fellow-Jews, who had readily accepted Jesus’ superiority to angels, perhaps do not view Christ as superior to Moses, because of their traditional overestimation of Moses and their inadequate understanding of Christ. As a result, they are in danger of drifting back into Judaism when persecution intensifies.

2. Holy Brothers (3:1a)

¹*Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling...*

Schreiner: The ‘therefore’ (*Οθεν, Othen*) links this section with the previous one. Since Jesus has conquered death and sin, fulfilling the destiny for human beings by ruling the world as God’s vice-regent, those who belong to Him are His ‘holy brothers.’ Here the author picks up on the previous paragraph, which emphasized that those who are sanctified and who are the offspring of Abraham are Jesus’ brothers and sisters. Indeed, they are His ‘holy’ brothers and sisters since they have been cleansed of their sin through Jesus’ propitiatory sacrifice. Furthermore, as brothers and sisters they share a heavenly calling. Their destiny is not confined to present earthly realities, for believers are promised a future reward (10:35). The heavenly calling of believers focuses on the future, for believers ‘seek the city that is to come’ (13:14).

Bruce: The terms in which they are addressed—‘brothers in the family of God, who share a heavenly calling’ (NEB)—are calculated to remind them of the dignity with which God has invested them, a dignity which it would be insulting to God for them to treat lightly. Two common New Testament designations of Christians are joined together in the phrase ‘holy brothers’ (*αδελφοι αγιοι, adelphoi hagioi*), while the insistence on the heavenly character of their calling marks them out as citizens of a realm not circumscribed by the conditions of earthly life. They are set apart by God for Himself, made members of His family, and called to share in His eternal rest.

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MacArthur: ‘Holy brethren’ refers to fellow Christians, to those who are true brothers. This particular passage is written to Christians, holy Jewish brothers in Christ. These were spiritual brothers, sanctified, set apart, and made holy in Christ (cp. 2:11). This section is written to ‘partakers of a heavenly calling,’ who desired a heavenly country (11:16), and who had come to the heavenly Jerusalem (12:22). All of these blessings show the superiority of Christianity to Judaism. Judaism was an earthly calling with an earthly inheritance. Christianity is a spiritual and heavenly calling with a spiritual and heavenly inheritance. It is, therefore, far superior.

Phillips: He calls his readers ‘holy brothers’ and those ‘who share in a heavenly calling,’ and identifies them as both the recipients of Christ’s work and those who are thus obliged to live for Him.

3. Consider Jesus (3:1b)

...*consider Jesus*...

MacArthur: The word ‘therefore’ always refers back to something previous. ‘On the basis of what I’ve just said,’ the writer is saying, ‘consider Jesus.’ The term ‘consider’ (*katanoēō*) implies attention and continuous observation. The idea is, ‘Put your mind on Jesus and let it remain there, that you may understand who He is and what He wills.’

Hughes: The command is framed in congenial terms that reference their solidarity of experience and orientation of soul—their brotherhood, holiness, and mutual sharing. But it is unrelenting as to what it commands—namely, a focus on the man Jesus and His functions as ‘apostle’ and ‘high priest.’

Hughes: Understanding this, we are prepared for the full force of the command, because ‘consider’ expresses ‘attention and continuous observation and regard.’ It means to apply one’s mind diligently—to fix one’s attention in such a way that the significance of the thing is learned. Here in Hebrews the word means: Think on the incarnate Son Jesus and what His being *the sent one* and *intercessor* means: keep on applying your mind to it unceasingly and apply it to your life.

Hughes: How does one ‘consider’ in this way? It begins with *desire* (cp. Ps. 27:4; Phil. 3:8-10). Along with desire, fixing the mind calls for *concentration*. Concentration, of course, requires *discipline* like that of an athlete. Lastly, fixing our thoughts on Jesus requires *time*, for true reflection cannot happen with a glance. No one can see the beauty of the country as he hurries through it on the interstate. It is only when we sit still and gaze that the landscape fills our souls. What wisdom the writer was pouring on the persecuted church! He knew that its people’s survival lay in turning their eyes away from their trials and fixing them upon Christ their *apostle* who accomplished His mission and their *high priest* who prays for them. This is what all of us need above everything else. Lack of this is why so many Christians are sick and useless and are falling by the way. They need to cultivate the desire, concentration, discipline, and time to fix their eyes upon Jesus.

4. Apostle and High Priest (3:1c)

...*the apostle and high priest of our confession*...

Schreiner: The main point of the paragraph emerges with the summons to consider Jesus as the apostle and high priest of our confession.

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Hughes: Significantly, Jesus is referred to by the terms *apostle* and *high priest* only in the Book of Hebrews: ‘apostle’ this once and ‘high priest’ twelve times. The words used together here are freighted with immense significance. The title introduces Jesus’ superiority to Moses, the apostle and priest of the old economy.

Bruce: When Jesus is designated as ‘the apostle and high priest of our confession,’ he is marked out as being both God’s representative among human beings and their representative in the presence of God. The Old Testament writings tell the story of God’s self-revelation to human beings and their response to that revelation; in both respects these writings find their fulfillment in Jesus. For He is not only, as has been emphasized already, the one in whom God has revealed Himself finally and completely, but also the perfect embodiment of humanity’s obedient response to God.

Bruce: The combining of the two roles of divine envoy and priest in one person is not common in the Old Testament; it appears in only 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 (cp. Ex. 32:11-14, 31ff.; Num. 14:13-19).

Phillips: This exhortation receives further support starting with the description of Jesus in verse 1 as ‘the apostle and high priest of our confession.’ An apostle is one who is sent to represent God before men, and to speak and act on His behalf; a high priest represents men before God and offers a sacrifice for their sins. Moses was the only Old Testament figure to fulfill both of these functions, and as such he pointed forward to Jesus, whom we proclaim as *the* apostle and high priest of our confession.

MacArthur: Jesus is to be considered as ‘the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.’ The fact that He is both of these is the first way in which He is superior to Moses. Though he was never called such in Scripture, Moses could be considered an Old Testament apostle in the basic sense of the word. *Apostolos* means ‘sent one’ and was a title often used for official ambassadors. In this sense Moses was God’s apostle, His sent-one to bring His people the law and the covenant. But Jesus was both Apostle and High Priest. Though Moses could be considered a type of apostle, he was not a priest at all, much less high priest. [DSB Note: see Bruce above]. Jesus is superior to Moses in office because He has two offices, whereas Moses had only one. [DSB Note: Actually, Jesus held three offices: Prophet (apostle), Priest, and King].

a) *Apostle*

Schreiner: Jesus is the emissary sent by God to fulfill God’s covenant promises. He is the one sent by God to accomplish salvation, to enable humanity to have access to God. The sending of Jesus echoes the thought that He served as the pioneer (2:12). The Lord set Moses to deliver His people from Egypt (Ex. 3:10); Jesus, as God’s final and definitive messenger (cp. 1:1-2) is the great deliverer of the Lord’s people.

Hughes: Jesus was and is ‘the apostle,’ ‘the sent one,’ par excellence. Jesus repeatedly describes Himself (over ten times in John’s writings alone) as being sent by the Father into the world. Jesus is the first apostle, the great apostle, the source of all apostleship. His apostleship is prior to all apostleship and is the foundation of all that would follow. His apostleship meant ‘mission accomplished.’

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MacArthur: In the office of apostle, Jesus is superior to Moses—first of all because He brought a better covenant, and second, because He was Himself the sacrifice that made the better covenant effective. Jesus is the supreme Apostle, the supreme Sent-One from God.

b) High Priest

Hughes: And of course, Jesus is also the ‘high priest’ par excellence. Because He was perfectly human and perfectly divine, He knows both man and God. Thus He is able to speak to men for God and to intercede to God for men. He is the one person through whom man comes to God and God to man.

Schreiner: He also undertakes a commission as high priest, as the one who took on human nature and offered Himself as a sacrifice for the cleansing of sins. When the author says that Jesus is the apostle and high priest of the believer’s ‘confession’ (*ομολογιας, homologias*), the word ‘confession’ denotes the true embraced by the readers (4:14; 10:23). The teaching accepted by the readers focuses on Jesus as God’s high priest, as the one sent by God. The confession is not an abstract list of doctrines. It focuses on Jesus Himself and His work on the cross for the readers’ salvation. If the readers limited themselves to the revelation mediated through Moses, they would be guilty of forgetting Jesus and would repudiate His sacrificial work on their behalf, and as a result they would be turning against the one whom God sent as high priest.

MacArthur: Jesus is also our great High Priest. He is the supreme Priest, the supreme Mediator, between God and man. He not only is the Sent-One from God with all God’s power, speaking with God’s voice, but He is the One who brings man and God together. Thus He brings God to man and man to God.

B. Jesus Is Superior to Moses In His Work (Hebrews 3:2-4)

Hughes: Having challenged his friends to fix their eyes on Jesus, the ultimate apostle and high priest, the writer now explicitly addresses Jesus’ superiority over Moses by showing that while both Moses and Jesus were faithful in their God-given callings, Jesus’ was greater because His work was greater.

MacArthur: Here is a brief comparison of the work of Jesus with that of Moses. Almost everything of importance connected with God is, in the Jew’s mind, connected with Moses. This subject, therefore, is dealt with very carefully by the Holy Spirit in this passage. His wisdom is marvelous. Before showing Jesus’ superiority to Moses, He points up the resemblance of the two. Before talking about their differences, He talks about their similarities

1. Faithful (3:2)

a) Jesus Was Faithful (3:2a)

...²who was faithful to him who appointed him...

Schreiner: In the subsequent verses the author explains why the readers should consider Jesus as their apostle and high priest. The reason provided here is that Jesus was faithful to the one who appointed Him as an apostle and high priest, just as Moses was faithful. Perhaps we have allusions here to both 1 Sam. 2:35 and 1 Chr. 17:14. In 1 Sam. 2:35 the Lord promises to raise up a faithful priest, and in the LXX of 1 Chr. 17:14 He promises to raise up a faithful king. This text, of course, emphasizes Jesus’ role as a faithful priest. Jesus carried out the commission entrusted to Him by God as an apostle and high priest.

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Bruce: In both respects Jesus has proved Himself faithful—a faithful high priest (cp. 2:17) and a faithful envoy. The faithfulness of an envoy consists in his loyal discharging of the commission with which he has been entrusted; and such faithfulness was manifested preeminently in the Sent One of God, who glorified His Father on earth by finishing the work which He had given Him to do (cp. Jn. 17:4).

Phillips: Chapter 1 established Jesus' superiority over the angels, and now in chapter 3 we are told of His supremacy over Moses. Jesus is a figure who can be compared with Moses, the greatest prophet of the Old Testament and Judaism's greatest priestly figure. Both Jesus and Moses share the greatest accolade that could be given, namely, that they were faithful.

MacArthur: Jesus always did the Father's will. He was faithful. *Faithful* is such a wonderful word. The chief qualification for an apostle, as with a disciple, is faithfulness. Jesus came to earth and He accomplished the work without question and without hesitation. Christ was also 'faithful' in His 'house,' the church. We are the new household and Jesus is the One who cares for us. Just as believers under the old Testament are called the house of Moses, believers under the New Testament are called the house of Christ. And as Moses was faithful to an earthly household, Jesus is faithful to the heavenly household.

b) Moses Was Faithful (3:2b)

...just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house.

MacArthur: 'House' is from the Greek *oikos*, meaning 'household,' and refers to people, not a building or dwelling. Old Testament believers—Israelites in particular, but also proselytes—were God's household. Moses was a trustworthy steward in that household. A steward does not own the house, he simply manages it for the owner. God owned the house of Israel; Moses was simply its manager for a while. He was in charge of dispensing to the people of Israel the truths, commandments, requirements, and promises God had committed to his trust. In this he proved trustworthy.

Schreiner: The readers were attracted to Moses and to the revelation entrusted to him and were in danger of exalting Moses over Jesus. Hebrews does not denigrate Moses, nor does it deny that God Himself revealed to him (cp. 1:11). Indeed, Moses was faithful in God's house as well. 'House' in this context refers to the people of God. As a member of God's people Moses was faithful. In that sense he anticipates the greater ministry of Jesus.

Bruce: When Moses' unique position as the spokesman of God was challenged even by members of his own family, his faithfulness was vindicated by God. Other spokesmen of God might receive communications from Him by vision or dream, but Moses enjoyed more direct revelation than they (Num. 12:7ff.). The 'house' of Num. 12:7 in which Moses served so faithfully is not the tent of meeting but the people of Israel, the family of God.

MacArthur: 'Moses was faithful.' The Old Testament confirms that testimony. 'My servant Moses...is faithful in all My household; with him I speak mouth to mouth' (Num. 12:7-8). Just as Moses was faithful to the One who appointed him, so was Jesus—only much more so.

2. Glorious (3:3)

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.*

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Schreiner: Moses and Jesus are not on the same level. They were both faithful in their callings, but Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses. Why is this so? The author uses an illustration from everyday life. When a house is built, honor goes to the one who built the house. No one thinks the house deserves more honor than the one who built it. [DSB Note: e.g., Garnier Opera House in Paris]. The application of the illustration is evident given verse 2. Jesus as ‘the builder’ (*ο κατασκευασας, ο kataskeusas*) of the house warrants more honor than Moses as a member of the house.

Bruce: Yet, great as Moses was, his status was inferior to Christ’s. The implication for the recipients of this epistle is plain: the old economy, inaugurated by Moses, is inferior to the new order introduced by Christ.

Hughes: It was commonly held in ancient thought that an architect is greater than what he builds. So the central point here is that Jesus is superior to Moses because Jesus is the builder, and Moses is part of the house/household.

Phillips: Not only is Jesus compared favorably with Moses, but He is even superior. This is what verse 3 tells us. The point here is obvious, that these Hebrew Christians should not fall back from the new covenant in Christ to the old covenant of Judaism. Jesus is superior to the greatest old covenant hero, through whom the old covenant was given, and therefore His new covenant is also superior.

Schreiner: Both Jesus and Moses were faithful, but Jesus was faithful as the one who built the house, as the one who established the people of God. Moses, on the other hand, was faithful as a member of the people of God. The argument is complex here and operates on a number of levels. On the one hand Jesus as a human being and as the high priest is faithful to God. On the other hand, as the divine Son He is the builder of the house—the Creator of all! The weaving together of these two themes is stitched into the letter from its outset (1:2). We are not surprised, then, to find both the humanity and deity of Jesus proclaimed here. At the same time the house here seems to refer both to the people of God (3:2, 5-6) and to the creation of the universe (3:3-4). A verse that looked rather simple on first glance holds a number of hidden treasures.

3. Builder (3:4)

⁴(*For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.*)

Schreiner: The author pauses to make a comment about building. Every building that exists has been prepared and built by someone. For every effect there is a cause. Ultimately, however, everything that exists has been built by God Himself. He is sovereign over all that is and is the ultimate cause for everything in the universe. Hence, God receives the glory for all that exists and for all that has been created. The author doesn’t say specifically here that Christ is the Builder of the house; rather, he constructs an analogy between Christ and God. God as the Creator of the universe deserves glory and honor, so too Christ as the Builder of the house is honored above Moses. Hence, he implies, when we put this verse together with the previous one, Jesus is the divine Builder of the house.

Hughes: This comparison between the builder and the house in no way minimizes Moses. His faithfulness is not in question. In fact, God highly honored him. Jesus built the spiritual house of God—Moses was a leader in the house. They are simply in different categories that are beyond comparison because Jesus’ calling is so superior. In fact, the Father has made everything in the universe through His Son, Jesus (1:2).

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Bruce: Moses was a household servant exalted by virtue of his outstanding faithfulness to the post of chief administrator of God's household; but Christ, the Son of God, through whom the universe was made and to whom it has been given by His Father as His heritage, is founder and inheritor of the household. In this regard the Son is one with the Father: God the Father, the Maker of all things, is inevitably the founder of His own household, and it was through His Son that He brought into being all things in general and His own household in particular.

MacArthur: Moses was faithful, but he was part of a house. Jesus made the house. That is the difference, the great difference. Jesus created Israel. Moses was only a member of the household which Jesus built. Jesus created Israel; Jesus created the church. Since God built, or created, all things, Jesus obviously is God. The Builder is greater than any of His tools. Moses was part of the house of Israel and an instrument of God used in building it. To hold on to the forms of Judaism or to its greatest leader is to hold on only to the symbol of reality or to an instrument of reality. To hold on to Jesus is to hold on to reality itself.

C. Jesus Is Superior to Moses in His Position (3:5-6)

1. Servant of the House (3:5)

a) *Servant (3:5a)*

⁵*Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant...*

Schreiner: The OT background here is illuminating. Hebrews alludes to Num. 12:7 where the Lord commends Moses as His faithful servant: 'Not so with my servant Moses; he is faithful in all My household.' The words 'servant' (*θεραπων, therapōn*), 'faithful' (*πιστος, pistos*), and 'house' (*οικος, oikos*) from Numbers 12:7 are repeated in Hebrews 3:5. A comparison of the LXX of Num. 12:7 and the text of Heb. 3:5 demonstrates that the author draws upon Num. 12&, even if there is not an introductory formula. The context of Numbers 12 is also important. Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses because he married a Cushite woman. They were apparently jealous of Moses, claiming that God did not speak through Moses alone. The Lord appeared to them, indicating that He spoke to prophets in visions and dreams, but Moses was distinctive as the faithful servant of God. God spoke to him 'directly' (literally, 'mouth-to-mouth'), 'not in riddles' (Num. 12:8). It is imperative to see that when the author speaks of Moses as God's 'servant,' he is using an exalted title. The context of Numbers 12 shows Moses' superiority and greatness in comparison to others. Moses stands out as the greatest prophet and perhaps the greatest leader in the OT.

Hughes: The other great proof of Jesus' superiority involves looking at His person as compared to Moses. Moses was a 'servant,' but Jesus was a 'son.' The word used to describe Moses' servanthood is rare, being used only here in the New Testament. It denotes an honored servant who is far above a slave but is still a servant, somewhat like a squire to a great person. It embodies very well Moses' honored Old Testament title 'servant' of the Lord (Ex. 14:31; Num. 11:11; 12:7; Dt. 3:24; Jos. 1:2). As a servant, Moses' faithfulness was proverbial. In Exodus 35-40 there are twenty-two references to Moses' faithfulness to God.

MacArthur: Here is the climax. In this passage we see that Moses is by person 'a servant,' while Jesus is by person a 'Son.' There is a great difference between a servant and a son. The Greek word used in 3:5 for 'servant' is *therapōn*, and is a term of dignity and freedom, not of servility. It is only used this once in the New Testament, and suggests that, even as the highest-ranking

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servant, Moses was still a servant. He was a faithful, obedient, ministering, caring servant—a good steward of God. In Exodus 35 to 40 there are twenty-two references to Moses' faithfulness to God. Exodus 40 alone refers eight times to Moses' obedience in everything God commanded of him. But he was not a son.

Bruce: Moses' relation to God's household, then, was that of a servant; Christ's relation to it is that of the Son and heir. Moses administered the household as one who was himself part of the household; Christ rules over the household as the Son whom His Father, the owner of the household, has appointed to exercise this rule. The Son's authority is greater than the servant's: Moses was not the *author* of the old economy as Christ is the author of the new. Yet God issued a solemn warning to any who might venture 'to speak against my servant Moses' (Num. 12:8); more solemn still is the implicit warning against denying or ignoring the claims of Christ and the gospel.

Phillips: This passage is noteworthy in giving us a New Testament perspective on Moses' ministry, and thus on the Old Testament as a whole. Moses was a faithful servant in the house. But Christ is the Son and heir who builds the house for God. This means that Moses' ministry was not in conflict with Christ's, but Moses was a servant whose labor was part of Christ's ultimate work.

b) Witness (3:5b)

...to testify to the things that were to be spoken later...

Schreiner: Hebrews does not argue for the superiority of the new covenant by denigrating Moses as the mediator of the old covenant. On the contrary, he is praised as God's servant. Despite Moses' greatness, we look forward to something better. Moses was God's servant as a witness 'to the things that were to be spoken later.' God spoke, as Heb. 1:1 attests, in a variety of ways and modes under the old covenant, but His final and definitive revelation has arrived in His Son (1:2). This text likely alludes to Dt. 18:15, 18-19 as well, for Moses himself predicted that God would raise up a future prophet to whom the people must listen, and thus Moses himself anticipated a future and better word from God. Moses is not the terminus and goal of revelation but a pointer along the way to something better.

Hughes: A marvelous characteristic of his faithful servanthood was his 'testify[ing] to the things that were to be spoken later.' Specifically, this refers to the gospel that Jesus proclaimed as God's Son (cp. 1:1-2). Moses' Law, the Levitical system of sacrifice, the ceremonies, the priesthood, the tabernacle were all testimony 'to the things that were to be spoken later' in Christ (cp. 10:1). Jesus Himself told the Jews: 'If you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me' (Jn. 5:46). After Jesus' resurrection, while walking on the road to Emmaus, Luke tells us, Jesus conversed with two disciples: 'And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself' (Lk. 24:27).

Phillips: Verse 5 tells us this was especially true of Moses' work as a prophet: he testified 'to the things that were to be spoken later,' that is, in the time of Jesus Christ (cp. Jn. 5:45-46). Moses' work and message spoke of things to come. Moses was a servant whose work furthered the house-building project of God's Son and heir. Indeed, everything in the Mosaic administration points forward to Jesus Christ. The tabernacle spoke of God dwelling with man, which is what Christ did. The year of jubilee, in which slaves were released and land was returned to its original owners, spoke of the great day of deliverance that was to come in to Christ. Jesus is

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called Immanuel, which is ‘God with us.’ The sacrifices of lambs and bulls and goats spoke of His great atoning work on the cross.

Phillips: Moses presented Israel with pictures or types of the Messiah to come, shadows that were cast backward into the Old Testament by the light of Christ and were fulfilled in His long-awaited coming. So what Jesus said is true: Moses testified about Him. It was of Jesus that Moses spoke, for instance, in Deuteronomy 18:15: ‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen.’ This being the case, if Moses could write to the Jewish Christians, he would tell them the very thing emphasized by the writer of Hebrews: that they should hold fast to Christ in faith. In fact, Moses did write such a letter; he wrote the first five books in the Old Testament, and their ultimate purpose was to point to Jesus Christ as the Savior of His people, the apostle and high priest of our confession.

Bruce: The claims of Christ and the gospel are foreshadowed in the ministry which was committed to Moses: Moses’ ministry was designed as ‘by way of testimony to the things which are about to be spoken of’—or, in the language used later in this epistle, it was designed as ‘a shadow of the good things to come’ (10:1), the good things which now have indeed come in Christ. In some sections of Jewish Christianity Christ’s role was envisaged as primarily that of a second Moses; here He is presented as being much more than that.

MacArthur: Moses’ faithfulness had an important and special reason: to be a ‘testimony of those things which were to be spoken of later.’ Judaism did not understand then, and does not understand now, that Moses was faithful primarily as a testimony to things which were yet to come in Christ. Judaism without Christ, the Old Testament without the New Testament, is incomplete. It is the shadow without the substance (cp. 10:1). It was the shadow of the perfect substance that was to come; and if you reject the substance, the shadow is worthless. On the other hand, if a person truly accepted the shadow, he would also accept the substance when it became known. ‘For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me’ (Jn. 5:46).

2. Master of the House (3:6a)

...⁶but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son.

Schreiner: Moses was God’s faithful servant, but He looked forward to when God would speak a better and final word through His Son. Jesus is not just a faithful servant in the house. He is the faithful Son ‘over God’s house.’ He is the sovereign ruler over the people of God, the Davidic Messiah who reigns at God’s hand, the Creator and Preserver of the universe (1:2-3). As a human being He always did the will of His Father, faithfully obeying and submitting to Him. The readers should not turn back to Moses the faithful servant, for Moses himself spoke of a coming day. Moses himself looked forward to the arrival of the faithful Son, and the readers should remain loyal to the Son. In this sense Moses functions as a type of the one to come, Jesus.

Hughes: Moses displayed supreme human faithfulness as a servant, ‘to testify to the things that were to be spoken later.’ But he was not a son. ‘But Christ,’ says our text, ‘is faithful over God’s house as a son.’ He faithfully fulfilled every Old Testament prophecy. He faithfully and joyfully became incarnate, perfectly becoming a human in body, mind, and emotions. He faithfully submitted his ‘omnis’—His power, His presence, and His knowledge—to the will of

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the Father. He faithfully underwent temptation and suffered terribly, never giving in. He faithfully went to Gethsemane. He faithfully yielded His hands to the nails. He faithfully became sin for us, as wave after wave of the world's sin was poured over His sinless soul. And, of course, He faithfully died for us. Such was the ministry of our faithful *apostolos*, *the sent one*.

Hughes: But now as our resurrected *high priest* He faithfully intercedes for us with a tender mercy sensitized by His apostolic faithfulness. Moses was, indeed, a faithful apostle and high priest. But Jesus is infinitely supreme! He is the great 'apostle and high priest of our confession.' And He is eternally faithful over God's house.

3. People of the House (3:6bc)

a) God's House (3:6b)

And we are his house...

MacArthur: The church building we worship in is not the Lord's house. We are the Lord's house. His house is not a building but believers (cp. Eph. 2:22; 1 Tim. 3:15).

Bruce: If the household of God in which Moses served Him so loyally was the people of Israel, what is the household of God today, over which the Son of God bears rule? That household comprises all believers.

Phillips: What are we to understand by 'God's house'? Some commentators take this to be the tabernacle or tent of meeting in which Moses served so faithfully, while others point to Israel as a whole as God's household in which Moses served. Both are true. Verse 6 especially emphasizes the latter, saying, 'And we are His house.'

Phillips: The house Jesus is building and in which Moses served is the people of God. This tells us there is a basic continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church. There are differences, since the old covenant looked forward to Christ with national Israel, and the new covenant looks back on Christ with the transnational church. But despite the differences based on their redemptive-historical setting, Israel and the church are one. This passage exposes the error of dispensationalism, which sees Israel and the church as fundamentally different peoples in God's economy. The house in which Moses served is the house over which Jesus is Lord. The New Testament represents the fulfilling of what was promised and hoped for in the Old. For instance, the fulfillment of the tabernacle and temple typology is the church, which is God's house, built not by men or by means of purely human labor, but built by Christ and the power of His gospel (see also Eph. 2:19-22 and 1 Pe. 2:9-10). To change metaphors, old covenant Israel is the bud of which the new covenant is the flower.

Phillips: If this is what Christians are—God's house—then we should ask, For what reason does one build a house? We might say that one builds a house for His glory. That certainly is in view here, and a majestic estate certainly does show the riches and the skill and the artistry of the one who can afford to build it. But the main reason one builds a house is to live in it. What a marvelous truth this is, that God has redeemed us that we might be His own dwelling place (see also Rev. 21:3). This emphasizes that God indwells His people (cp. 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Pe. 2:5). The church is the holy temple where the holy God dwells in spirit, is worshiped and served.

Phillips: People today tend not to take the church very seriously. We are rugged individualists and think we can go it alone. But the corporate community of saints is the household of God. If this does not transform our view of the church, then nothing will. We see that the church is not a

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human institution but a divine building which God erects and in which God Himself dwells. To be part of the church is to have historical roots in the people of God and spiritual connectedness to others now, in past ages, and in generations to come. The Old Testament reveals a geography of salvation—if you wanted to know God, you could not look just anywhere. God is everywhere, yet He specially disclosed Himself in a particular place, among His people Israel, and especially at Jerusalem in His temple. Today, if you want to learn about God, you should go to a church where His Word is taught. Though God is everywhere, it is still in His house where He especially reveals Himself to those who come in faith.

Phillips: This is one reason why Christians need to be members of a faithful church. Christian growth and discipleship take place in the church, in God's household, and not as a solo endeavor. This also says much about evangelism. If you want to bring others to God, you should bring them to the church, where God speaks through His Word with authority and power. Christian worship takes place most especially in the church, for when His people gather, God promises to meet with them (see Mt. 18:20). Thus the writer of Hebrews later exhorts his readers not to neglect meeting together (10:25), for the gathering of God's people is God's own dwelling. There is therefore no greater privilege than membership in the church. There is no greater calling than the Christian's calling to offer his gifts and talents, time, and money to the work of the church.

b) Our Hope (3:6c)

...if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

Bruce: The conditional sentences of this epistle are worthy of special attention. Nowhere in the New Testament more than here do we find such repeated insistence on the fact that continuance in the Christian life is the test of reality. The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints has as its corollary the salutary teaching that the saints are the people who persevere to the end. The author fears that his readers may fall away (like the seed sown on the rocky soil – Mk. 4:5ff.); hence his constant emphasis on the necessity of their maintaining fearless confession and joyful hope.

Bruce: Christians live by faith and not by sight; but while their hope is in things unseen, it is something to exult in, not to be ashamed of. The waning of the first expectant enthusiasm of these 'Hebrews,' the apparent postponement of their hope, and various kinds of pressure brought to bear upon them, all combined to threaten the steadfastness of their faith. Hence our author, in deep concern, urges upon them that they have everything to gain by standing fast, and everything to lose by slipping back. He reinforces his warning by appealing to a familiar Old Testament precedent in the following verses.

Schreiner: The last part of the verse communicates the importance of faithful endurance. The readers are members of God's house; they are truly members of the people of God if they endure to the end. The author urges them to hold fast and to hold on with a word that he uses two other places to designate the need to 'hold on' (*κατεχω*, *katechō* in 3:14; 10:23). They are to hold onto their 'boldness' (*παρρησια*, *parrēsia*), which in light of other texts in Hebrews (4:16; 10:19, 35) focuses on their free access to God through Jesus' high priestly work. The words 'confidence of our hope' (*το καυχῆμα τῆς ἐλπίδος*, *to kauchēma tes elpidos*) should be understood as 'the hope we take pride in.' Hope refers here to the content [of hope] rather than the act of hoping. Believers must not abandon their confidence and their hope, for they belong to the Son who reigns over all.

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Schreiner: How should we interpret the words ‘we are’ in the conditional sentence? If the readers endure to the end, they are God’s house. The author is not attempting to affirm that if the endure *they already belong* to God’s house, but he is not denying such an affirmation either. Nor is he saying that if they endure to the end *they will be* His house. The purpose here is not to speak to or resolve such temporal questions. The author isn’t contemplating whether the readers were already Christians; his point is pastoral: the readers must persevere to belong to God’s house. The conditional here should be interpreted in the same way as the other conditionals in Hebrews: if the readers persevere to the end, they belong to God’s household.

Hughes: As we have seen, we must continually ‘consider’ Him—always—perpetually. In addition to this, as Jesus’ faithful example would suggest, we must faithfully *persevere*. We will find this condition again and again in Hebrews: continuance in the Christian life—holding on—is the test of real faith. ‘The doctrine of the final perseverance of the saints has as its corollary the salutary teaching that the saints are the people who persevere to the end.’ The writer fears that some in the storm-tossed church will not persevere. The Holy Spirit thus asks us, are we persevering? Or in the jostling tides of life are we drifting away? Is Christ as dear as the first day we met Him—even more dear? Are we holding on to our ‘confidence’? Are we ‘boasting in our hope’? That is, are we proud of the gospel? Focus on—hold on—to Christ, your great, superior apostle and high priest.

MacArthur: How can we know that we are really God’s house? By holding ‘fast our confidence and the boast of our hope until the end.’ This does not mean, as many have misinterpreted, that we are saved if we hang on until the end. We can neither save ourselves nor keep ourselves saved. The meaning is simply that continuance is the proof of reality. We can tell if we are really the house of God because we stay there. The one who falls away never belonged in the first place (cp. 1 Jn. 2:19). Apparently there were many Jews who had fallen away, and it is because of them that the writer of Hebrew gives these words, which both warn and encourage. Some were convinced of the gospel and were on the edge of commitment, but kept falling away. Some, no doubt, had even made an outward profession of faith. But in both cases they fell away from the church, proving they were never a part of it. The true saints persevered, and their perseverance was evidence of their salvation (cp. Jn. 8:31; 6:39). Jesus has never lost anyone and will never lose anyone from His household.

Phillips: Christians sometimes are unnerved by this type of conditional statement, often because they have experience with a legalistic theology that denies the believer’s security in Christ. But since these conditional statements are in the Bible, they are appropriate, and even necessary. The point of this statement is to encourage faith in the face of trouble. The writer is saying, ‘Since you are the house God is building, this demands that you stand firm in your faith.’ There is no conflict between the teaching that all true believers are safe in the hands of God and the teaching that emphasizes that Christians must persevere in faith. All true Christians will continue in the faith until they are gathered to God. But it is also true that true Christian faith is proved only by steadfastness under trial. We are saved by faith alone, but the test of our faith comes through our willingness to persevere under difficulty and persecution. Those who do not persevere, like Paul’s one-time companion Demas (2 Tim. 4:10), and those who betray Jesus to this world, like Judas Iscariot, reveal by their actions that they never truly possessed saving faith and never truly were saved. If you are a Christian, God will call you to show courage before the world, holding fast to your hope in Jesus Christ. But where does courage come from? The Bible’s answer is

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that it comes from God, from our knowledge of Him and His salvation, and from the Holy Spirit He sends to His children as they trust in Him.

D. **Jesus Is Superior to Moses Summary**

Schreiner: Believers in Jesus Christ must hold onto their faith until the end. It would be lamentable to revert to the revelation given through Moses, for Moses was a faithful servant of the Lord, but Jesus is God's faithful Son. He is the apostle and high priest of our confession. Moses himself looked forward to a further word from God, to the fulfillment of what was proclaimed, and Jesus constitutes that fulfillment. The boldness to enter God's presence through Jesus' high priestly work would be surrendered if believers abandoned Jesus.

For next time: Read Hebrews 3:7-19.