

Jesus is Better Than Moses

PSALM 105:26; HEBREWS 3:1-6; REVELATION 15:3; *Heidelberg Catechism 31 & 32*

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Congregation of Christ: If you were a Jew, who would you consider the greatest Jew who ever lived? Is it Abraham, Moses, or David? Abraham is considered the father of the nation Israel, and David is considered the most faithful king, “a man after God's own heart. But Moses is considered by Jews as the greatest of all Jews. Why?

All Jews would point out many reasons. Moses was chosen by God for a specific mission: to lead Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. So he was the preeminent deliverer of the nation of Israel. He was also Israel's greatest prophet because God communicated directly to him. God spoke to all the other prophets through dreams and visions, but he spoke to Moses “face to face” (Num 12:6-8). Since Jews regard the Law of the Lord as the greatest of all laws in the whole world, and it was given to Moses, he is considered as the greatest lawgiver. This is why the Law is often called the Law of Moses. And he is the greatest historian of the Jews, writing about the origins of the world and of Israel in the first five books of the Old Testament.

All of these things were in the mind of the writer of the Book of Hebrews. Because his audience were Jewish converts who were being persecuted, they were in danger of falling back into Old Testament worship with its temple, priests and sacrifices. How would he turn them back to Jesus Christ, who has done away with these things? In Chapters 1-2, he explains to these Jews that Jesus, not the prophets, has revealed God and his Word to them. That Jesus is even better than the angels.

So next, he tells them that Jesus is better than Moses. Better than Moses! Some Jewish rabbis even consider Moses better than angels. Who in the whole world can be better than the greatest man who ever walked on earth?

Our text today is the Preacher's attempt to persuade Jewish Christians that Jesus is better than Moses. So we will meditate on three things: first, **“Apostle and High Priest of Our Confession”**; second, **“Worthy of More Glory and Honor”**; and third, **“Consider Jesus.”**

“Apostle and High Priest of Our Confession”

The Preacher, as the writer of Hebrews is often called, begins our text with the word, *“therefore.”* This is a transition from the previous verse, Hebrews 2:17-18, in which he says that Jesus is the *“merciful and faithful high priest”* who has offered himself as a sacrifice for their sins. Since he suffered in being a high priest, he can help and sympathize with us when we also suffer.

He calls his audience *“holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling.”* They are holy because they have been purified of their sins (1:3), and Jesus had made them holy (2:11).

He calls his audience his brothers, just as Jesus calls all believers his brothers (2:12). God was the one who called them out of their sins into “eternal glory in Christ” (1 Pet 5:10).

Since Jesus was called and ordained by God to his most holy mission, the Preacher then exhorts the Hebrews to “*consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession.*” He refers to Jesus with two terms. The first is that he is “the apostle,” a term used of Jesus only once in the whole New Testament. Do you think Jesus is really one of the apostles, so there are now thirteen apostles? No, because the word apostle means “one who is sent.” The 12 apostles were called and sent by Jesus, but Jesus himself was chosen and sent by God into the world. So he is the greatest and preeminent apostle. In John's Gospel, Jesus himself uses this word to describe himself and his work 11 times. In John 5:36, he says, “*the works that the Father has given me to accomplish... bear witness about me that the Father has **sent** me.*”

The second term is that he is the “high priest. Though Aaron served as the high priest of Israel in the wilderness, Moses was the de facto high priest. He mediated between God and the people: he spoke to God for the people, and God spoke to the people through him. And he also performed priestly ceremonies, such as sprinkling the people with blood (Exo 24:4-8).

In saying that Jesus is “the apostle,” the Preacher implies that Jesus is greater than Moses. Moses was sent by God to deliver his people Israel from slavery in Egypt, and lead them to an earthly Promised Land. But Jesus was chosen and sent by his Father to deliver God's people from all nations to their Promised Land, which is heaven itself. In saying that Jesus is “the high priest,” Jesus is also greater than Moses. Moses mediated between God and Israel, and offered animal sacrifices repeatedly for sin. And many other high priests followed him. But Jesus is now the “*one Mediator between God and man,*” offering his own body and blood, once for all, for all the sins of all who would believe in him. And those who would believe in him will not only be Jews, but also Gentiles from all nations.

Therefore, Moses had limited authority as an “apostle” and “high priest” of God. And this authority ended when he died. But Jesus is greater because he holds both offices in all their fullness and authority. And since he rose from the grave never to die again, he holds these offices for eternity.

“Worthy of More Glory and Honor”

In his offices as “apostle” and “high priest,” the Preacher says Jesus “*was faithful to him who appointed him,*” his Father in heaven. But Moses “*also was faithful in all God's house.*” Why then does the writer say that “*Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses*”? If he could justify why Jesus is worthy of more glory than Moses, then the Hebrews should follow Jesus all the more than Moses. So he gives two reasons why.

The first is because Jesus is “*the builder of a house,*” and as the builder, he has more glory and honor than the house itself. The “house” then represents Moses. In the Bible, God's people, whether in the Old or New Testaments, are called a “house” (1 Tim 3:15).

Since Moses represented Israel, he is figuratively God's house. God, through the coming Messiah, built Israel through Moses. The writer even says in Hebrews 11:26-27 that Moses "considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward." So "by faith he left Egypt," and in doing so, became the leader of God's house Israel.

But Jesus himself is the builder of the house. In Zechariah 6:12, the "Branch," who is the Messiah, *"shall build the temple of the LORD."* Jesus, who is also called the Cornerstone, the most important stone in a building in the ancient world, is building the church, *"a spiritual house,"* made up of *"living stones."* The living stones are believers like you (1 Peter 2:5-6). But the writer says that *"the builder of all things is God."* Isn't he calling Jesus "God" himself? Paul says this in Colossians 1:16, *"For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible... all things were created through him and for him."*

The architect gets more glory and honor than the magnificent building he designed. Michelangelo gets more glory than Mona Lisa. Steve Jobs gets more glory and honor than the iPhone; the whole world know him. In like manner, therefore, as the builder of God's house, Jesus is greater than Moses, who was the house itself.

The Preacher gives the second reason why Jesus has more glory and honor than Moses in verses 5-6, *"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."* We confess that Jesus the Christ is the eternal only-begotten Son of God the Father. The Father sent him for one purpose: to deliver his people from their sins, and make them holy, and finally, glorify them when he returns from heaven. Jesus accomplished all God's purposes for his people by being perfectly obedient and faithful to all of God's commandments. He fulfilled the whole law in his life, death and resurrection.

Moses was Israel's greatest man because he delivered them from slavery in Egypt and led them to the gates of Canaan the Promised Land. But because he was also a sinner like us, he was unable to take them into Canaan. Joshua, Moses' successor, finally led Israel in conquering and settling the land. But over and over again in its history, the people rebelled against God in its unbelief. So their full redemption was incomplete (Deu 34).

But God revealed to Moses that another prophet will come from Israel to lead the people of God, *"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"* (Deu 18:15). Stephen, the first Christian martyr, gave his life in preaching that this prophet revealed by God to Moses is none other than the man Jesus Christ. This is why the Preacher says that Moses will *"testify to the things that were to be spoken later"*

Moses was faithful as a "servant" in God's house. The word used by the writer for "servant" is not the common word for servant or slave. This word is used only in verse 5 in the whole New Testament. Moses was a servant who willingly offered his services to God,

looking after the interests of God his master. So he was a one-of-a-kind servant in God's house, and possessed a higher glory and honor than a common servant.

But the Preacher says that Jesus was faithful in God's house, not as a servant, even a special servant like Moses, but as a Son. He was equal to the Father in his Person and authority. As the incarnate God, Jesus is the Savior, Lord and King of the church, his Father's house. He himself declared to the Jews that he is better than Moses as a prophet and high priest, *"For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"* (John 5:46) To the Jews, it was an impossible pill to swallow, and so they crucified him who was far superior to Moses.

"Consider Jesus"

Finally, brothers and sisters in Jesus, the Preacher has an exhortation. In verse 1, he says, "Consider Jesus." How do you "consider" Jesus? Do you just have fleeting thought of him, and then go on with your life? Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines the verb "to consider" as "to think about carefully: as to think of especially with regard to taking some action; or to take into account; to regard or treat in an attentive or kindly way; to gaze on steadily or reflectively. The Greek word used for "consider" means the same thing: "to notice, observe carefully; to look at in a reflective manner; to think about carefully."

Jesus uses this same word in telling us, *"notice the log that is in your own eye"* (Luke 6:41); *"consider the ravens... God feeds them"* (Luke 12:24); *"consider the lilies, how they grow"* (Luke 12:27). We are to consider Jesus carefully, attentively and steadily, not merely considering him for a moment. The NIV has an interpretative translation, *"Fix your thoughts on Jesus."*

And when we consider Jesus carefully, attentively and steadily, we will *"hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope"* (verse 6). Holding fast to Jesus, your confidence and your hope, is the real test of faith. The Preacher exhorted the Hebrews, and he exhorts you today to persevere in the faith, through all the trials, sufferings and persecutions in this world. So the Holy Spirit asks you today: Are you persevering in the faith? Do you hold on to your first love when you first received Jesus as your Savior and Lord? Even when the thorns of life and the pleasures of this world entice you to walk away from the Christian faith that you love so dearly at first?

Only then, and only then, when you are persevering in the faith, that you will surely be confident in saying, "I am God's house." Consider Jesus, your great apostle and high priest, greater than Moses, greater than any man in this world. He has delivered you from all your sins and is making you holy daily as you persevere to the end, when Jesus will glorify you. There in heaven's glory, you will be singing the song of Moses and the song of Jesus the Lamb, *"Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!"*