

Consider Jesus
Hebrews 3:1–11
October 22, 2023

For months now we've been expressing our excitement about the pairing of the Gospel of Matthew with the book of Hebrews. We've repeatedly noted how studying these two books at the same time can show us the unity of Scripture. For example, when we were discussing angels in Hebrews 1, in Matthew an angel of the Lord was visiting Mary. And then on the Sunday when we were discussing Christ bringing many to glory in Hebrews 2, Matthew 2 recalled the Exodus. As we walk through these two books, correlating themes will appear over and over again.

But it's not *just* the unity of the Scriptures that makes these two books pair so well, it's the differing genres of the books themselves. While both Matthew and Hebrews are oriented toward a similar audience—believers with a Jewish background—and both center on the same Subject, their approach is quite different.

Is there an advantage to that? Yes, if those differing genres end up complementing one another. Though this is something of a simplification, narratives like the Gospels often give us scenes. And letters give further clarification and/or explanation. Though there's overlap between those categories,¹ it's fairly easy to see how those two approaches would round out our understanding of any subject.

So, for example, today's passage will instruct us to, v. 1, **consider Jesus**. Both genres help us do this. For example, Hebrews describes Him with terms and titles the Gospels never use. Yet, as we look to the Gospels we see *why* He might be described in that way. Further, Hebrews continues the central argument of the letter, that is, the supremacy of Christ over all things, including the revelation of God. Yet in the Gospels it's evident that He's *not* to be thought of as the pinnacle of a theological argument, *merely* someone to compare to another and make a conclusion. If we're going to consider Him, we don't consider Him merely as a list of superior attributes, we consider Him as a Person. And, as has been clear from the first few verses of this letter, He's a Person in whom God speaks.

1. Consider Him, Brothers and Sisters (vv. 1–2a)

Verse 1: **Therefore, holy brethren.** Though the author's beginning a new section in Hebrews, "therefore" draws on everything he's written thus far.² What he's written thus far explains why they—or we—might be called **holy brethren**.

We're going to talk about Moses in a moment, so maybe it's worth being reminded of the first time God called Israel holy.³ Immediately after the Exodus, Moses gathered the people and told them what God told him to say, **If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation** (Ex. 19:6). God pursued and delivered a people; and *then* He told them who they were. Hebrews 2 outlines something similar, describing God delivering a people, bringing many sons to glory by the suffering of His Son (Heb. 2:10). Then, in Hebrews 3, He tells them who they are.

However—not to get ahead of ourselves—while similarities do exist there is a significant difference between the holiness of Exodus 19 and what Hebrews describes. In Exodus 19 God calls

¹ The Sermon on the Mount will have quite a bit of explanation/instruction.

² Dana Harris, *Hebrews*, EGGNT, 67–68.

³ Jo Bailey Wells, *God's Holy People*, 33.

Israel to be a holy nation. For the good of the world, He separates a people from the world. That's the aim of Exodus 19. We know how that turned out.

On the other hand, Hebrews describes a people that have been *made* holy by the work of Another. Jesus lived the holy life Israel should've lived. And He did so, in part, so that His life might be given to a people. Hebrews 2:11: **For He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source.** The next verse reads: **That is why He is not ashamed to call them brothers** (2:11).

That's a *bit* of the background to chapter 3's "therefore." What God has done for His people through His Son—what Hebrews 2 recalls—leads us to verse 1's declaration: **Therefore, holy brethren.** God once again pursued and delivered a people; and then He tells them who they are.

And He has more to say: **Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling.** Earlier I mentioned some overlap when considering biblical genres. In John 6, we have an instance where a Gospel gives us *both* scene and explanation. The scene none of us have trouble recalling from John 6 is the feeding of the five thousand. But, *after* that miracle, Jesus gives something of an explanation that relates to being partakers of a heavenly calling. First, He says, **For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me** (John 6:38).

We should note *where* He says He came from. Jesus tells the Pharisees that He came from heaven to do the will of Him that sent Him. Don't miss that language for "sent." We'll come back to that. But, first, what was the will of Him that sent Him from heaven? **For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life** (6:40). He came from heaven so that He might bring sons and daughters to glory (Heb. 2:10). He came so that there might be **partakers of a heavenly calling.**⁴

So, chapter 3 begins with, "This is who you are": holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling. After that, the author instructs them on what they're to do. If we're looking for something novel, we won't find it here. But if we're looking for an something that steadies, read 3:1: **Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus.** They were commanded, *we've* been commanded, to fix our thoughts on Him.⁵

Maybe you say, "Isn't that what y'all said last week, and maybe the week before?" I remember a few years back sitting under some guys here as they preached through Galatians. And week after week I kept thinking, "I just heard last week that I couldn't be justified by my works. You'd think I'd need to hear something *new* this week. But here I am hearing it and, somehow, I need to hear it again."

However, we're not only repeating ourselves because we *need* the same message, we're continuing to emphasize this because the text continues to say it. In Hebrews 2:8: **At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we do see Him.** Hebrews directs our spiritual eyes to Him. A few verses prior, in the first warning passage we were instructed to **pay much closer attention to what we have heard.** Our spiritual ears were being directed to what God's said in His Son. Why? Why do we need to *keep* coming back? So that we don't **drift away from it** (2:1). The current is unyielding. Drift happens. And it's clear from the repeated admonitions of this letter that our need to have what is central brought back into focus is something that must be said more than once. So, **holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus.**

⁴ And, then, I mention this because it connects with what we'll consider in the weeks ahead, He gives more explanation concerning the bread He'd just multiplied: **I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever** (6:49–51).

⁵ NIV.

But that doesn't mean that this *same* message doesn't have facet after facet of beauty to discover. The author uses a title for Jesus that's applied to Him nowhere else in all the Scriptures.⁶ Verse 1 continues: **consider Jesus, the Apostle.** As you might or might not know, the word "Apostle" means sent one.⁷ Though the New Testament doesn't use this title for Him elsewhere, we just noted that Jesus said as much about Himself: **For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me** (John 6:38).

Holy brothers and sisters, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, sent for you. The verse continues, **holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession.** As Chris pointed out last week, the One sent for you became a merciful High Priest to make propitiation for the sins of the people (2:17). We consider Him sent for us, but not without considering *why* He was. He came to give us access to God by conquering death on our behalf (2:14).

We confess Him as a merciful High Priest, but also a faithful one (2:17) And that's how verse 2 of chapter 3 describes Him: **He was faithful to Him who appointed Him.** What God sent Him to do, He did. Nothing was left undone. In John 17 He prayed to the Father, **I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do** (John 17:4).

So, as those God calls holy brothers and sisters, we consider Jesus—the One sent for us, the One sent to both offer and be an atoning sacrifice, the One faithful in all things. Consider Him. Note secondly,

2. Consider Him Better (vv. 2b–6a)

Verse 2 continues: **He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house.** To make his comparison, we'll see that the author doesn't have to demean Moses any more than he had to demean the angels in chapter 1. Instead, he begins by saying that Moses, like Jesus, was faithful. Both men were appointed by God to give revelation. And both were faithful to do so.⁸

Verse 2 locates this faithfulness to **in all His house.** I don't know if you've ever struggled to follow the logic of this next section, but it's important to figure out *first* whose "house" he's referring to. The NASB capitalizes **His house** to make it clear that the house in mind is the Lord's. That interpretation is confirmed because this verse—and its echo in verse 5—both allude to Numbers 12. In that context, "house" is clear. When Miriam and Aaron were speaking against Moses, the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud and said, **If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to them in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles** (Numb. 12:6-7). Moses was faithful to serve in the Lord's house. Regarding his role there, it seems as if in Numbers 12 the Lord elevates Moses *above* the other prophets. Elsewhere that seems to be confirmed. At his death in Deuteronomy 34, we read, **and there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses** (Deut. 34:10).

The author of Hebrews hasn't demeaned Moses in the least bit. And yet, of the One we're to consider, he writes in verse 3: **For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house.**

Not only do we need to know whose "house," the author refers to, it's also important that we consider what the author means by "house." Does he mean the actual "brick and mortar"

⁶ Harris, 64.

⁷ George Guthrie, *Hebrews*, NIVAC, 126.

⁸ Peter O'Brien, *God Has Spoken In His Son*, NSBT, 65.

structure? Or, by house, is he referring to the Tent of Meeting or the Temple?⁹ Or can house also mean “household,” referring to the people of God?¹⁰ The problem with saying it’s only *one* of those is that there’s significant overlap between all three. Passages like 2 Samuel 7 use house to refer to both. David wants to build a house for the Lord. In the same passage the Lord promises that David’s “house”—meaning his household—will endure forever (2 Sam. 7:16). In Israel, the household of God gathered at the house of God.

To put my cards on the table, for a number of reasons I tend to think it’s referring primarily to the household of God. The use of “brethren” in verse 1 is household language. Further, this is the way it’s clearly used in verse 6. But, regardless of that conclusion, the comparison remains true: **the builder of the house has more honor than the house.**

That’s a general statement the author uses to set up verse 4. The ESV puts this verse in parentheses, as if it’s parenthetical, but it actually helps advance the argument. The word “for” hints at that. Verse 4: **For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.** What’s the logic of these verses? If the builder of the house has more honor than the house, what degree of honor does the person have that built *all* the houses—and—also built all the builders? Verse 3 already said it. Christ has been **counted worthy of more glory than Moses.** We don’t have to denigrate Moses to see its not all that close.

Verse 5 returns to the comparison. Verse 5: **Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant.** Now look at verse 6: **But Christ was faithful as a Son over His house.** To what degree is Christ better? Note the descriptors: Moses is a servant; Christ is a Son. Also note the prepositions: Moses was faithful *in* the house. Christ was faithful as a Son *over* His house. In other words, Moses belonged to the household as a member. Christ reigns over the household as Ruler.

Again, without denigrating Moses we can see the comparison is not close. In fact, Moses’s life itself pointed toward Someone better to come. Note the end of verse 5: **Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later.** Hear that which was spoken later by Philip in John 1: **We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth** (John 1:45). Or hear the One to whom Moses pointed in the Gospel of John: **For if you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me** (John 5:46). Or what He said in the Gospel of Luke: **These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled** (Luke 24:44). Moses was faithful in God’s house. But as He did so, He pointed to Another.

Verse 6 concludes this house language by saying that **Christ was faithful as a Son over His house—whose house we are.** In this verse it’s quite clear that “house” refers to household—the people of God. Again, verse 1 called the readers holy brethren—holy brothers and sisters. They were sons and daughters that had been brought to glory. Christ Himself was not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. The builder of all things built a household of faith.

The author isn’t finished telling them who they are based on what Christ has done. Belonging to that house, they were to consider Him. And they were to consider Him better than what they were being tempted to go back to. Note third,

3. Consider Him Now (vv. 6b-11)

There’s something of a condition after the phrase—**whose house we are.** It goes on, **if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.** Don Carson says that if we

⁹ Harris, 70.

¹⁰ Peter O’Brien,

have a proper theology of conversion to begin with, this almost sounds like a definition of what saving faith looks like.¹¹ Whether we read the parable of the soils in Matthew 13 or consider the epistle of James or even read 1 Corinthians 15 rightly it's clear that saving faith perseveres. The evidence that we are indeed part of God's household is that we endure.

This verse sets up the next Old Testament text the author will consider. It's Psalm 95. I'll briefly introduce it today, but for the rest of chapter 3 and all of chapter 4 the author will warn these Jewish Christians from it.

The emphasis on God speaking has been constant throughout Hebrews. That continues in verse 7: **Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says.** Chapter 2 admonished the hearers to pay much closer attention to what they'd heard (2:1). This one warns likewise, v. 7, **Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.**

The "therefore" of verse 7 means this citation is not entirely disconnected from chapters 3's exposition thus far. As holy brethren, members of God's house, partakers of a heavenly calling, they were to consider Jesus. Verse 7 gives something of an urgency to it. If they hear Him **today**.

We'll see this in more detail in the weeks ahead, but if they've heard His voice, they were not to be like those of the wilderness generation. They'd provoked the Lord (v. 7). Even though they saw His works for forty years, they tested Him (v. 9). And, because of that, He was angry with them, so much so that He swore they would not enter His rest (v. 10–11). Like the warning in chapter 2, the warning of Psalm 95 we'll consider in the weeks ahead is a loving warning, intended to spur these men and women on to perseverance.

Conclusion

They were to consider Christ. And they were to consider Him now.

The Gospels can come alongside and help us do so. On Friday I had the opportunity to speak to some 11 and 12-year-old young men. For a host of reasons, some of them obvious, I chose to teach from Luke 2 on 12-year-old Jesus. The narrative about Joseph and Mary losing Him is interesting, as are the details about teachers being amazed at Jesus.

But the bookends of that passage are often missed. On the front end of that story, Luke summarizes in one verse 12 years of Jesus' life by saying, **the favor of God was upon him** (Lk. 2:40). Because that verse is a summary statement about Jesus growing up, it means that God's favor was on Him *all* 12 of those years. God's favor was on 5-day-old Jesus, on 5-year-old Jesus, and He was pleased with 12-year-old Jesus in the temple. That's the statement that introduces the scene. But, like a bookend, that scene ends with verse 52: **And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.** What's that mean? That means that God's favor was not *only* on 12-year-old Jesus, but also on 15-year-old Jesus and 22-year-old Jesus. In fact, there was never a year—never a moment—that God the Father's favor and pleasure didn't rest upon His Son. Why? Hebrews 3: **He was faithful to Him who appointed Him.** And the glory of the gospel is this: all that is in your account. Not the wreck you were at this age or that age. If you're in Christ, God sees Him, as if you did it.

When we say, "consider Jesus," we mean consider Him in these ways, the One faithful in all things. We're to consider what He's accomplished for us, His life making us holy, permitting us entry into God's house as brothers and sisters, and somehow calling us partakers of a heavenly calling. We're to consider Him, what He's done on our behalf. We're to consider Him better, as the essence of God's revelation. And we're to consider Him now.

¹¹ Don Carson, "How the Book of Hebrews Makes Use of Old Testament Passages," here: <https://www.uu.edu/audio/detail.cfm?ID=395>