



## First Baptist Church Selmer

JESUS IS BETTER • JESUS, THE PERFECT SON • HEBREWS 3:1-14 • 5/21/2023

### MAIN POINT

Jesus is beyond comparison to those who have come before, who are today, and who are to come.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Who has had the most spiritual impact on your life to date?**

**What makes someone worthy of such a great honor as to be named as a role model of faithfulness?**

Ruby Nell Shelton is a name that many of you have never heard of nor know much about. My grandmother was very much to herself for much of my life. She raised a family, gardened, canned, cooked, shopped for groceries one day a week, and attended a local church faithfully.

In most regards, she would be very much like many of your mothers, grandmothers, or perhaps great-grandmothers. But there was something that was quite unique about her and one that still made quite an impression on me many years ago. The kitchen table was always outlined (except for meal times) with grocery store coupons, fresh vegetables from the garden, and my favorite, a glass jar filled with homemade biscuits that were always available for a quick snack.

But each of those things was just surrounding the main course on the table. It was her favorite thing, her Bible. I particularly remember the Bible on the table littered with devotionals, personal study notes, and her upcoming Sunday school lesson that she would teach on Sunday.

The Bible was such a mainstay in her home that you would literally have to move her Bible and notes in order to sit at the table to enjoy a meal. After the meal was over, guess what was coming back out? You got it, her Bible.

We all have people in our lives that were great spiritual influencers in our own Christian walks. The prophet Moses was one of these to the nation of Israel. Second to Abraham, Moses would have had a tremendous amount of honor among Jews. As the writer of Hebrews communicates chapter 3 to a Jewish Christian audience, most would stand in reverence to the mention of Moses. But the author didn't spend much time speaking of Moses alone, because there was someone that needed to be mentioned far more than Moses. His name was Jesus!!

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 3:1-6

*1 "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." (ESV)*

**What do you find most intriguing about the phrase, "*consider Jesus*"?**

**Why is Jesus greater than the prophet Moses?**

The phrase "*consider Jesus*" literally means to consider carefully, to understand fully. The author of Hebrews was asking the readers to take a full look at Jesus. Don't just take someone else's opinion, or even two or three. Jesus is worth full consideration for all people.

Moses was a prophet that occasionally served as a priest, but it was his brother Aaron, that was tasked with the job of High Priest. Moses was a wonderful man and an unbelievable example of faithfulness, but Moses was not Jesus. Moses was a servant, Jesus is the Son.

**What does it mean that "*we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.*"**

As we looked at last week. Jesus came to die for mankind. Those who would receive Jesus would be included in the church. Colossians 1:18 says, "*And He is the head of the body, the*

church... *that is all things He may have the preeminence.*" What a truth that you and I can be a part of the plan of redemption that Jesus has set forth through his death and resurrection.

## | HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 3:7-12

7 "Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, 'Today, if you hear his voice, 8 do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, 9 where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. 10 Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways. 11 As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.' 12 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.'" (ESV)

**What is the connection between departing and unbelieving? What are the potential consequences of either?**

**Since we are to keep watch over our hearts, how do you do this in your own life? How might we keep one another accountable in a Bible study group or even in a church?**

The writer of Hebrews continued to express concern that these Jews would return to their former religion. In doing so, they would depart "*from the living God.*" Rejecting Christ will lead to divine judgment. "*An evil, unbelieving heart*" (unbelief) was the root of the problem, seen in their failure to take God's command and promises seriously. The heart was considered the center of the physical, mental, and spiritual life of humans.

**How does this warning apply to Christians today?**

**What are some examples of "seeds of doubt" the Devil throws at believers in times of hardship? What helps a believer keep growing in faith and able to resist those temptations?**

**Do you think there are any observable signs or indicators that a person is developing a rebellious heart? If so, what are they?**

As believers, we need to stay focused on God and God alone. If we trust in religious writings, religious leaders, and other non-eternal items for our salvation, we will find ourselves deceived.

**If our church were to receive this warning in a letter, how do you think it would respond? How would you respond personally?**

## | HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ HEBREWS 3:13-14

*13 "But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end."* (ESV)

**How does this passage emphasize the importance of ongoing, constant encouragement within the Christian community?**

The word "*daily*" (v. 13) implies frequent contact. The reference "*today*" (v. 13) communicates urgency and shows that believers are to stay in regular contact with each other. When believers live in isolation, they become more susceptible to "sin's deception" and temptation. Christians grow better through fellowship with each other.

**How can our understanding of a relationship with Christ serve as a source of encouragement to remain faithful for the long run?**

Christ can help us remain faithful. The word "*companion*" (v. 14) also is translated as "partaker." It describes a partner or someone who shares something. With Christ as a companion, all of His resources are available to strengthen us and help us endure.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What does daily encouragement in the faith look like?**

**Can you think of at least one way you can encourage someone in the faith this week?**

**Whom do you know who needs a call, a visit, an email, and your prayers?**

**Is there anything you need to share with our group about your life so they can be more active in encouraging you to endure in the faith?**

## PRAYER

God, give us the perseverance to remain faithful. Help us see the urgency of obedience and our responsibility for helping one another. Show us someone this week to reach out to and encourage in their walk.

# COMMENTARY

## | HEBREWS 3

**3:1.** The author of Hebrews used two designations of New Testament Christians. First, they are called “holy brothers.” This reminded them that God had set them apart to live in separation from sin. Second, he called them sharers in the heavenly calling. God had given them the task of helping to complete his spiritual purposes. They carried out their jobs on earth, but they lived as citizens of a heavenly kingdom.

The command to fix your thoughts on Jesus called them to reflect firmly on the true significance of Jesus in God’s plan. They would then understand clearly that he was an apostle and high priest. Apostle presented Jesus as God’s representative to human beings. High priest presented him as our representative before God. Jesus was God’s perfect revelation to us. He also represented the perfect picture of our response to God.

**3:2.** A faithful representative does his job. Both Jesus and Moses were faithful (Num. 12:7; Heb. 2:17). For Moses, God’s house was the people of Israel. Moses fully carried out all God’s appointed duties with the chosen people. Jesus affirmed his own obedience in the task of representing God to human beings (John 17:4).

**3:3.** The first two verses show a similarity between Jesus and Moses. This verse presents a contrast between them: God had chosen to give greater honor to Jesus than to Moses. Why?

Because the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. The house described the people of God, either the church for the New Testament or the people of Israel for the Old Testament. Christ was the builder of the house. Moses had an important role in God’s plan, but he was only a part of the house. Moses was a person through whom God spoke, but Christ was the founder and heir of the household.

Jews and Christians alike recognize the greatness of Moses the lawgiver. How much more should they honor Jesus!

**3:4.** This verse backs up the claim of verse 3. Verse 3 describes Jesus as the builder of a house. Verse 4 introduces God as the builder of everything. Both the Father and the Son were involved in building the house. The Father clearly established his own house, but he worked through the Son to get the job done.

Hebrews deals with people who gave excessive respect to Moses for his role in giving the Law. No matter how important Moses was, God was still the lawgiver. God was the builder of everything in that he had established a new spiritual community with Christ as the head. (This affirmation does not deny the importance of those who worked with him in building.) The word everything may also refer to God's material creation as well as to the church.

**3:5.** Here we find another argument to show the superior position of Christ over Moses: a son and a servant.

Moses was a servant. The word (therapon) for servant does not appear elsewhere in the New Testament. It pictures a person who willingly did the service expected of him. The term shows a certain tenderness in the service rendered without focusing on the low position of the servant.

Moses' field of service was in all God's house. He worked among God's people, Israel. His task was to testify of what was to follow. He pointed toward things which Christ would declare more clearly. Through Christ, God would give a clearer revelation than Moses had given.

Some Jewish Christians saw Jesus as a second Moses. The next verse proves that Jesus was greater than a second Moses.

**3:6.** Two features make Jesus superior to Moses. First, he was a Son, a position certainly worthy of more glory than that of a servant. Sonship carried a larger responsibility. Second, Jesus stood over God's house. Moses was in all God's house, but Jesus stood in authority over it. One who stood over something was superior to one who stood in it.

**3:7.** Verses 7–11 quotes Psalm 95:7b–11 to compare the experience of Israel with that of the church. These believers faced a serious danger, and they needed to avoid repeating Israel's failures and experiencing Israel's fate.

Psalm 95 begins with praise (vv. 1–7a) and concludes with a warning (vv. 7b–11), based on the story recorded in Exodus 17:1–7. The judgment mentioned occurred in Numbers 14:20–38. The writer of Hebrews followed the psalmist in urging his readers not to imitate the folly of the generation of Jews who died in the wilderness under God's judgment.

Two words in verse 7 catch our attention. First, though a human author penned the words, the writer of Hebrews knew that the Holy Spirit was speaking. He recognized these words as a strong warning based on divine authority. Second, he used the psalmist's reference to Today to apply the words to his readers. He went back into the Old Testament history, but his mind was on his readers. He wanted them to hear the present voice of God in the ancient message.

**3:8–9.** Hardening the heart takes place whenever someone rejects God's call or instructions. Hardening is an action which we develop in ourselves by our own choice to disobey God. A constant response of resistance leads to a habit of disobedience and to a judicial sentence from God. The wilderness generation hardened their own hearts, and it was possible that the readers of Hebrews might do the same thing.

The reference to forty years would have special significance if forty years had passed since the ministry of Jesus. Many scholars believe that the author penned Hebrews just before a.d. 70. God could have been warning the Christian readers that just as he had dealt with Israel for a probationary period of forty years, so now they, too, had arrived at the end of the same period of probation. They had a special reason to avoid the deceitfulness of sin (3:13).

**3:10–11.** Does God really become angry? We can answer "yes" to that question, but God's anger does not resemble human anger. God's anger always has a just cause, and it does not show a peevish nature in God but a consistent opposition to sin.

We often use human analogies to understand God. Whenever we attribute a human emotion such as anger to God, we produce many questions in understanding what happened. However, unless we express God in such human terms, we will find it hard to understand him. God does become angry, but he tempers his anger with justice and love.

Two actions of the Jews in the wilderness contributed to divine anger. First, the Jews habitually strayed from God. Second, they did not know God's ways. One sin reinforced the other.

This persistent practice of sin led God to deliver his verdict with an oath. The reference to an oath seems to reflect Numbers 14:21, where God supported his word with an oath. God used this oath when the spies returned to bring an unfavorable report of the prospects for entering the Promised Land. The people of Israel rebelled against trusting God and accused Moses of bringing them to the wilderness to die. God swore that such rebels would never experience his rest.

**3:12–13.** Paul used the term brothers to describe the Galatians in much the same way as the writer of Hebrews used it here. Paul addressed the Galatians as professing Christians despite the fact that some of them were holding on to doctrine which did not grasp the principles of grace (Gal. 3:15; 4:12; 5:13). His use of the term did not guarantee that all the readers were true believers. He warned them against turning away from the gospel they had professed.

Similarly, by using the term brothers the author of Hebrews did not guarantee that any or all of his readers were true believers. Each of them had to show his or her conversion by refusing to

deny the faith they had professed. The writer issued such strong warnings because he observed that his readers were carelessly considering deserting Christ. If they actually turned from him, they would show that they were never Christians. The writer of Hebrews did not want them to be deceived by their own actions.

The main problem of these people was unbelief. They failed to take seriously God's commands and promises. This unbelief could lead to apostasy. The God of Israel, the God of the Old Testament, the Father of Jesus Christ was a living God. Christians living in the pagan world found themselves thrown with people who worshiped idols, not the true God. He is alive. He stays in constant communication with his people through Scripture and the Holy Spirit.

Most scholars feel that the readers of Hebrews were considering turning from Christianity to Judaism. Those who practice the Jewish religion may worship the one true God, but they do not respond to Christ. All of God's fullness lives in Christ (Col. 1:19). For someone to turn from the full truth of God in Christ back to Judaism was open compromise. To turn from Christianity involved rejecting Christ. To reject Christ involved rejecting God. Even though Judaism has elements of spiritual truth, it was not God's final revelation. Only those who respond to God in Jesus have reached the final understanding of God's revelation. For the readers of Hebrews to turn back to Judaism after having professed Christ was a sin against the truth. It was outright rebellion. Such rebellion would show that they had never made a true commitment to Christ!

**3:14.** Merely beginning the Christian life is not sufficient to assure its completion. We must continue in our commitment to share in Christ. The readers of Hebrews had started off with great confidence and hope. They must hold this hope firmly to the end, until Jesus returns or until their death. To do anything less would demonstrate that they had never experienced salvation.

The concluding warning that we must hold firmly demanded vigorous effort. Commitment to Christ does not allow for halfheartedness. The term confidence (hupostasis) described the assurance a property owner had because he had the deeds to the land. Spiritually, this term carried an appeal for living faith. A property owner with the deeds had a claim to ownership. As believers in Christ, we have the title deed to heaven and its blessing. Believers with a steadfast faith demonstrate that they belong to Christ. These believers were encouraged to hold with firmness to their commitment.[1]

[1] Thomas D. Lea, Hebrews, James, vol. 10, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 44–51.