

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews

Christ, Superior to Moses

Hebrews 3:1-19

- I. THE STATEMENT OF CHRIST'S SUPERIORITY (Hebrews 3:1-6)
 - A. In Faithfulness (Hebrews 3:1-2)
 1. The faithfulness of Christ (Hebrews 3:1-2a)
 - a. The recipients of the comparison (Hebrews 3:1)
 - (1) Holy brethren
 - a) The term *brethren* or *brother* if by itself could suggest a physical kinship.
 - b) However, the inclusion of the descriptive word *holy* identifies that the nature of this kinship is spiritual.
 - c) In other words, these are believing Jews.
 - (2) Partakers of the heavenly calling
 - a) This phrase, in and of itself, does not suggest that the believers were saved.
 - b) In fact, we shall see that the idea of partaking is a common thread in the book of Hebrews and must be considered in light of its surrounding context. Consider Hebrews 2:14 for the scriptural definition of *partake*.
 - i) Partakers of the heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1)
 - ii) Partakers of Christ (Hebrews 3:14)
 - iii) Partakers of the Holy Ghost (Hebrews 6:4)
 - iv) Partakers of chastisement (Hebrews 12:8)
 - v) Partakers of His holiness (Hebrews 12:10)
 - b. The persons of the comparison (Hebrews 3:1-2)
 - (1) Christ (Hebrews 3:1)
 - a) His unique identification
 - i) The Apostle of our profession
 - (a) This is the only time in scripture that Christ is specifically identified as "the Apostle."
 - (b) In order to fully comprehend why this position might be assigned to Christ, the office of apostleship must be understood.
 - (i) The word *apostle* (found only in the New Testament) occurs in one form or another eighty-three times from Matthew through Revelation.
 - (ii) The word *apostle* means sent one, and it refers to those sent out by Jesus Christ for the special work to which He called them. This



special calling is easily recognizable in the context of the word's first usage (Matthew 10:1-4, see esp. 5, 6, 7, 16).

- (iii) Luke 6:12-13 tells us that Jesus prayed all night and then called unto him his disciples and “of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.” These men were already disciples, but were now named apostles. While there were other disciples never called to be apostles, these twelve were given a special office as representatives of the Master.
- (c) This position is attributed to Christ because He was One sent from the Father to procure man's salvation. It emphasizes His responsibility to the Father's mission.
- ii) The High Priest of our profession
 - (a) This is much more familiar to God's people and emphasizes Christ's priestly duties.
 - (b) As it pertains to Christ, this specific title “high priest” is restricted to the book of Hebrews where it is found eleven times (Hebrews 2:17; Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 4:14, 15; Hebrews 5:5, 10; Hebrews 6:20; Hebrews 7:26; Hebrews 8:1; Hebrews 9:11; Hebrews 10:21).
 - (c) Though priestly duties emphasize a dual responsibility (God to man and man to God) it would seem contextually as though the emphasis is upon Christ's responsibility from man to God.
 - (d) With that being said, consider the implications
 - (i) The Apostle of our profession—emphasizing Christ's responsibility and faithfulness to God in His mission
 - (ii) The High Priest of our profession—emphasizing Christ's responsibility and faithfulness to mankind in His mission
- b) His common identification
 - i) Christ—His deity or His responsibility before the Father
 - (a) Messiah = Christ (John 1:41)
 - (b) Christ = Anointed (Acts 4:26 with Psalm 2:2)
 - ii) Jesus—His humanity (Matthew 1:21) or His responsibility before mankind
 - iii) Note: Though this order “Christ Jesus” is common (found fifty-eight times), it fails in comparison to the more common “Jesus Christ (found 198 times). It seems likely that God ordered the title of His Son to match the order of the previous title or position.

- (2) Moses (Hebrews 3:2); Note: In order for Gentiles to grasp the loftiness of this comparison they must first understand the Jewish appreciation for Moses.
 - a) Moses was mentioned by name thirty-eight times in the gospels and was viewed in many ways as the representation of God's voice or word (Matthew 8:4; Matthew 19:7; Matthew 22:24; John 9:28).
 - b) Moses was viewed as the mediator between God and men, but there was to be only one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).
 - c. The nature of the comparison (Hebrews 3:2)
 - (1) Christ Jesus was faithful
 - (2) To Him [the Father] that appointed Him [the Son]
2. The faithfulness of Moses (Hebrews 3:2b, 5)
- a. The similarity—"as also Moses was faithful"
 - b. The subject—"faithful in all his [God's] house" (see Numbers 12:7)
 - (1) The word *house* is used in various manners both throughout scripture and in the immediate context of our passage.
 - (2) Here, the word *house* seems to suggest responsibility, ministry, dispensation, or authority (see Genesis 41:40).
 - c. Note: One of the themes of Hebrews is that Christ is *better*. He is better than the angels, better than Moses, better than Joshua and better than Aaron. However, the strengths of Christ are not compared with their weaknesses. Rather, He is shown to be better in the areas of their greatest strength.
 - (1) The angels are known for their relationship to God as ministers, their ability to speak God's word as His messengers and for their strength in executing His will. Christ is better in all facets. He has a better relationship to God as Son (Hebrews 1:5, 8). He is the source of God's word (Hebrews 1:2). And, He is more powerful than the angels (Hebrews 1:2, 10; Hebrews 2:10).
 - (2) Moses' strength was his faithfulness and in his relationship to God (Numbers 12:1-9). Yet, Jesus is greater in faithfulness (Hebrews 3:2-3) and has a better relationship to the Father (Hebrews 3:6) than Moses did as a servant (Hebrews 3:5).
 - (3) Joshua's strength was found in the fact that he conquered the promised land and gave the people of God rest from the times of wandering in the wilderness and fighting the enemies of God. But the rest of Joshua was flawed and true rest can only be found through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:8-10).
 - (4) Aaron's strength was that only he could approach God to seek forgiveness for man's sins and make sacrifice for these sins (Hebrews 5:1-4). Yet, his sacrifices had to be made over and over again and he had to come back to God each year (Hebrews 10:1-4). Only Jesus could bring the ultimate sacrifice that could remove our sins forever (Hebrews 10:10-14).

B. In Glory (Hebrews 3:3-6)

1. Christ's superiority stated (Hebrews 3:3a)
 - a. This man [Christ Jesus]
 - b. Was counted worthy of more glory than Moses
 - (1) The glory of Moses and His dispensation
 - a) Though the ministration of death, it was glorious and the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance (2 Corinthians 3:7).
 - b) Though the ministration of condemnation, it is glory (2 Corinthians 3:9).
 - c) It lacked glory only by reason of the glory that excelleth (2 Corinthians 3:10).
 - d) Its glory was to end (2 Corinthians 3:11).
 - (2) The glory of Christ's message
 - a) As the ministration of the spirit, it is rather glorious (2 Corinthians 3:8).
 - b) As the ministration of righteousness, it exceeds in glory (2 Corinthians 3:9).
 - c) Because it remaineth, it is "much more...glorious" (2 Corinthians 3:11).
2. Christ's superiority explained (Hebrews 3:3b-6)
 - a. Christ was the builder of the house (Hebrews 3:3b-4).
 - (1) Christ's ministry was more glorious than that of Moses, "inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house" (Hebrews 3:3b).
 - (2) Every house is builded by some man, but He that built all things is God (Hebrews 3:4). In other words, Moses' ministry was part of God's overall plan, but Christ was the planner and facilitator. Keep in mind that God often desires to take man from the known to the unknown. He uses earthly and physical truths to teach heavenly and spiritual truths (see John 3:12).
 - b. Christ is over His own house (Hebrews 3:5-6)
 - (1) Moses' faithfulness (Hebrews 3:5)
 - a) The completeness of his faithfulness
 - i) He was verily faithful
 - ii) In all his house
 - b) The calling of his faithfulness—"as a servant"
 - c) The cause of his faithfulness
 - i) A testimony of those things
 - ii) Which were to be spoken AFTER
 - iii) Note: Moses' entire life and ministry was for the purpose of foreshadowing that which was to be "after." He was to testify of Christ and His words both in character (Deuteronomy 18:15) and in word (John 5:39; Hebrews 10:1). When Moses failed in these matters, his ministry ceased (Numbers 20:6-13).

- (2) Christ's faithfulness (Hebrews 3:6)
 - a) The completeness of His faithfulness
 - i) At first glance it would appear that nothing is mentioned here about Christ's faithfulness.
 - ii) However, the nature of the sentence (Hebrews 3:5-6) suggests that Christ was also "verily...faithful". This would match the teaching of Hebrews 3:2.
 - b) The calling of His faithfulness
 - i) Not as a servant—Moses (Hebrews 3:5)
 - ii) "But...as a son over his own house"

C. Special Notes on Christ's House (Hebrews 3:6)

- 1. Their identity
 - a. Whose house are we—believers
 - b. Other passages promoting this truth
 - (1) We are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16).
 - (2) We are builded together for a habitation of God (Ephesians 2:19-22).
 - (3) We, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5).
- 2. The complexity presented
 - a. The assumption presented
 - (1) The New Testament should be divided as such
 - a) The gospels—Doctrines for the Jews
 - b) The book of Acts—Transition from Jews to church
 - c) Pauline epistles—Doctrines for the church
 - d) Hebrews through Revelation—Doctrines for the tribulation saints
 - (2) That being said, beginning with Hebrews the doctrine of salvation shifts to conditional salvation and is based upon faith and works.
 - (3) In fact, the only difficult verses as it pertains to salvation found in the New Testament are within this section of scripture.
 - b. The presumption presented
 - (1) Hebrews 3:6 teaches that in the tribulation men cease to be Christ's house if they not hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.
 - (2) Hebrews 3:14 teaches that in the tribulation men cease to be partakers of Christ if they do not hold the beginning of their confidence stedfast unto the end.
 - c. The reality presented
 - (1) The problem exists outside of the Jewish epistles and Revelation.
 - a) It is found in John's gospel (John 8:31).
 - b) It is found within Paul's epistles (1 Corinthians 15:1-2; Colossians 1:21-23).

- (2) The problem exists due to ignorance of “if...then” statements.
 - a) If...
 - i) Refers to actions to be found in the **future**
 - ii) Serves as a verification or proof of a stated truth
 - b) Then...
 - i) Makes a statement about something **presently** true
 - ii) Does not rely upon the *if*
 - iii) Note: It is important to realize that the *then* can be understood in a way similar to the way we have rules of the understood *you* in the English language.
- (3) The problem exemplified
 - a) John 8:31
 - i) The present truth—“then are ye my disciples”
 - ii) The future proof—“If ye continue in my word”
 - b) 1 Corinthians 15:2
 - i) The present truth—“ye are saved”
 - ii) The future proof—“if ye keep in memory what I have preached unto you”
 - c) Colossians 1:21, 23
 - i) The present truth—“yet now hath he reconciled”
 - ii) The future proof—“If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled”
 - d) Hebrews 3:6
 - i) The present truth—“whose house are we”
 - ii) The future proof—“if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end”
 - e) Hebrews 3:14
 - i) The present truth—“we are...partakers of Christ”
 - ii) The future proof—“if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end”
 - f) This truth is no clearer than in another if...then statement found in Hebrews (Hebrews 12:8). It is obvious in this passage that the *then* presents a present truth and the *if* presents a future proof.
3. The conclusion
 - a. These verses state that we are presently something as future tokens prove it to be so. Since future actions cannot be the cause of present conditions, they only prove the apparent present condition to be true.
 - b. As such, they do **not** teach works salvation or the possibility of losing salvation.
 - c. They teach that someone can claim to be saved and can go through the outward motions of believing without truly being born again.
 - d. They teach that those who turn totally from God after professing to know Him indicate by their actions that they were never truly saved.
 - e. They teach that one of the proofs of a man’s salvation is his faithfulness in serving God (1 John 2:3-4; see also Titus 1:16).