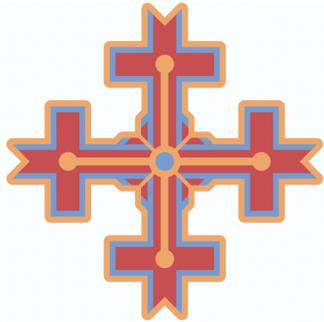


HEBREWS

STUDY 2

3:1-4:13



The discussion about Jesus' superiority over all things moves from angels to the heavenly courts and the power of the High Priest to the central OT image of Moses and his role of leading the people out of Egypt.

MOSES AND JESUS

Jesus and Moses are compared and contrasted. Moses is seen as a paragon of faith for both Jew and Christian, and an established political and spiritual figure in both OT and NT.

According to the OT, Moses survived a dangerous birth in Egypt, rescued from the bulrushes, brought up as Pharaoh's adopted son. He saw what was happening to the Hebrew people and fled – and then called by God to set the people free. Moses' story is one of liberation and the 40-year journey across Sinai, the giving of the Ten Commandments and preparation for the people to enter the promised land.

Hebrews sees Moses as a predecessor and forerunner of Jesus. When Jesus gives the Sermon on the Mount, he is reinterpreting the law of God for a new time.

When Jesus meets Elijah and Moses at the Transfiguration, God establishes Jesus' priority over these leaders as the unique Son.

Paul in Corinthians (1 Cor. 10) pictures the Christian life as a new exodus.

Revelation 15:3-8 proclaims that at the end time the angels will sing the song of Moses, the servant of God.

Thus, Hebrews 3:2 states that Jesus was faithful to God, just as Moses was faithful in setting the people free.

The same idea is seen in John 5:46, and refers to the importance of Moses and his message in Luke 16:31.

APOSTLE OF OUR CONFESSION

Although there are similarities, Hebrews affirms that Jesus is superior to Moses – because Jesus is the ***apostle and high priest of our confession***.

The term ***apostle*** means that Jesus was faithful to his appointment by God – literally “*one who is sent*” by the king. It is as if Jesus is seen as God's diplomat.

Jesus is superior to the prophets and Moses because he is more than an emissary – he is God's Son.

Apostle – term used to describe the first Christians who proclaimed the good news of Jesus – limited to those who had received their commission directly from Jesus after his resurrection. This is the only place Jesus is given the title ‘apostle’, so may indicate too that he is greater than the church's first apostles, whose power came from him.

The ‘***confession***’ of which he is an apostle, is more than just a message – but akin to a certified statement of the truth God wishes to transmit. Confession here does not mean asking for forgiveness but confessing belief. Confess in Gk. means “to say the same thing” or “to declare publicly.” Eg. Phil. 2:11 – every tongue should confess

In Hebrews a statement of belief brings hope (3:6), confidence (4:14) and assurance of Jesus' faithfulness (10:23).

HOUSE OF GOD (3:1-6)

Note the use of the metaphor of a house in the OT - eg. Numbers 12:6-7.

In Hebrews the term 'house' has several meanings:

- Symbol of the house of God is where people meet with God.
- The people of God who are faithful, God's family living and acting together under one spiritual roof. (Josh 24:15 me and my household)
- In the NT the concept is connected with the ministry of Jesus. He often teaches and heals in a house – a place of safety, intimacy and revelation (Mk 1:29; 2:15).
- Jesus cleanses the Temple courtyard because it is no longer treated as the 'house of God'.
- The early church worshipped in homes.
- Later 'house' was used as a code/cipher for the Christian movement (Heb. 3:6).

As God is the designer and builder of the house of faith, then it makes sense that the builder's Son is better than one who serves in it as a servant (eg. Moses).

EXODUS AND THE CONCEPT OF REST (3:7-4:11)

An illustration of the Exodus is given quoting from Psalm 95.

The author focuses on the 'hardness of heart' of the people, the time of testing, and the fact they could not enter God's rest until after Moses' death.

Rest, in this passage, includes the concept of God's rest after 6 days of creation and the development of the 7th day as an observance of worship and cessation from work.

It is also about understanding what occurred during the 40 days of wandering. It was because they disobeyed God, that their hearts were hardened and they turned away from God to other gods. This resulted in them not attaining the fullness God intended for them.

Hebrews thus sees sin as an attitude of rebellion against God's love and a defiant rejection of the Ten Commandments. This leads to spiritual unrest and eventually death.

In this sense, even Moses did not provide adequate leadership (3:16) to the house of God, and by his own example prevented them from realising the truth – and, because he had disobeyed God himself, he was not allowed to enter the land of Canaan.

Heb. 3:1-4:11 references the Exodus in order to show the covenant between God and the people and states that it cannot be fully realised without Jesus.

The point of the sermon is shown in Heb. 3:13 where the listeners are encouraged not to repeat the mistakes which the Israelites made in the wilderness – but to encourage and exhort one another. Unbelief can keep us from God (3:19). A similar idea is expressed in 1 Cor. 10:9-12.

The concept '**today**' (Heb. 3:13; 4:7) taken from Psalm 95, points to the necessity of an immediate decision – turning to God is not something to put off.

PENETRATING POWER OF THE WORD (4:12-13)

The final paragraph reconnects with 1:3 – God's powerful word.

This is a passage (Heb.4:12) which is often used in prayers of illumination. It refers to the ability of God's message to expose all pretences. The imagery is quite graphic, especially as the people would experience the military force of Rome on a daily basis. For early Christians the sword also served as a symbol of a prophet's warning (Isa. 49:2) or the judgment of God (Rev. 1:16). This passage imagines the precision of God in cutting out that which may damage the spiritual life. God is not fooled by appearances and knows the procedures that restore health.

