

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 13 June 2021. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced, and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Christ Is Superior to Moses

Hebrews 3:1-6

One of the most influential men in history was Moses. Monotheistic religions of the West regard Moses as a prophet. The New Agers look at him as some kind of “ascended master.” The God-hating humanists deny his existence. However, Moses cannot be ignored. His impact on history is massive.

Yet, who is the *real* Moses? What is his true portrait? According to the Bible, Moses was a faithful servant of the LORD, whom God used to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt. However, to many Jewish people, he is much more than that. He is, practically, their “saviour.” Why? *Because Moses gave them the Law*; and to them, the Law is their salvation. Many people in Paul’s Jewish audience were just like that. They had made a *profession* of Christianity; yet, when they began to be persecuted for their association with Jesus of Nazareth, they were willing to turn back to the Judaic religion. By turning back to an empty shell of Judaism, they were, in effect, choosing to trust in Moses, instead of in Christ.

Why were these people willing to exchange Jesus for Moses? Because in their minds, **Jesus had never really been superior to Moses**. They still considered their adherence to the “Law of Moses” to be their way of salvation. They had “tried Jesus out”: but they had never really believed on Him. Even in the early days of the Jerusalem church, the Apostles had to confront a faction of the church body who still thought that salvation is through keeping the Law of Moses!

Read Acts 15:1-11.

Were these people saved? According to the teaching of the New Testament, no! They had been accepted into church membership; but they were trusting in Moses, instead of in Christ. It is frightening to think how many people, to this day, are “trying Jesus out,” yet are not truly trusting Him for their salvation. To such people, the book of **Hebrews** is just as relevant as it was 2,000 years ago. To those who are hesitating at the threshold of salvation, Christ is still sounding the warning: **“If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.”** To all *true* Christians, the book of **Hebrews** is a strong reminder that Jesus Christ is not merely our Saviour from death and hell: He is the *reason we live*! The title of my message this morning is *Christ Is Superior to Moses*.

Read Hebrews 3:1-6.

From this passage, we see, first of all, that...

I. Moses is like Christ (vv. 1-2).

Throughout the book of **Hebrews**, Paul often addressed the *falsely professing* Christians, who were on the verge of turning away from Christ. However, at this point, Paul is addressing the *true* Christians. He isn’t addressing merely his Jewish brethren in general: rather, he is

addressing his Jewish *brothers in the Lord*. Only saved people can be called “***holy brethren.***” “Holy” means “set apart”: and these people were truly “set apart” from the world, because they were saved. We also know that Paul is addressing genuine Christians because he calls them “***partakers of the heavenly calling.***”

By the way, these words “***holy brethren***” speak volumes about why God saved us. This is how God expects us to live our lives now that we are saved. As Christians, we are “***holy***” (or “set apart”), because we now belong to God; and our lives should show it. We are not of this world, and we should not *yearn* to go back to the ways of the world. If there be worldly lusts, habits, or attitudes in us, we should turn from them as soon as we become aware of them.

We also have a “***heavenly calling.***” This “***heavenly calling***” is *not* the “call to the ministry.” Paul isn’t talking to pastors, evangelists, and teachers. He’s talking to *every Christian*. Every Christian has a “***heavenly calling.***” As Christians, we have been called to salvation--which means that we are called to live a holy life in Christ. The ultimate goal of our calling will be realised on the resurrection day, when we will be *completely* conformed to Christ’s image. We will be completely sinless and undefiled in body, soul, and spirit, the way that God intended us to be. That’s why He saved us in the first place!

Read Romans 8:29-30.

Christian, your “calling” is no casual thing. You aren’t a member of a “country club”: you are a member of God’s royal household. Jesus Christ is your reason for living! In every word, thought, and action, you should be motivated by the thought, “*Am I representing the Lord to those around me? Am I serving Him, or am I serving myself?*” Moses was such a man. He had a close walk with God, and an undying devotion to Him. In fact, Moses was so faithful to God, that Paul gives him the honour of comparing him to Christ!

There are several ways in which Moses was like Christ. First, Moses is like Christ in that **he was an apostle.** (Read Hebrews 3:1-2 again.) When we think of the word “apostle,” we usually think of the 12 Apostles. However, the word “apostle” simply means “sent one.” An “apostle” is someone who is a representative of God to man—someone who speaks God’s words to men. Just as **Christ** was the ultimate “sent One” (the One who was sent down from Heaven to pay the price for our sins), so **Moses** was a “sent one.” Moses was sent by God to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt, and to deliver God’s words to them.

The Jews of Jesus’ day revered Moses. They recognised him as one of God’s great “apostles.” Yet, most of them failed to recognise the most important “Apostle” of all. They failed to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, who was sent down from Heaven. In **John 9**, the Jews angrily told the blind man who had just been healed by Jesus, “***Thou art his (Jesus’) disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.***” God’s ultimate “Apostle” was right there in their midst; yet, they refused to see Him for who He was. Tragically, they forfeited their offer of salvation. Sadly, many of the people to whom Paul was writing were about to forfeit salvation, as well, because they were now turning away from the Christ whom they had *almost* embraced.

Now, let’s look again at **verse 1.** (Read Hebrews 3:1.) Not only was Moses like Christ in that he was an Apostle: he was also like Christ in that **he was a “high priest,”** of sorts. Now, Moses was not technically the high priest of Israel: his brother *Aaron* was the high priest.

However, Paul definitely seems to be comparing Moses to Christ on this point. Christ is our High Priest; and in a certain sense, Moses was a “high priest.” What does Paul mean by this?

Well, think of it this way. An **apostle** is a representative of *God to man*, right? Moses was definitely that. However, a “**high priest**” is just the opposite. A high priest is a representative of *man to God*. If there were ever a *sinful* man who was a representative of man to God, Moses was that man! Even though Moses was not the official “high priest” of Israel, the reality is that he pleaded to God on behalf of the nation of Israel in a way that few other sinful men have ever done! Through Moses’ earnest pleadings for Israel, the people were spared God’s wrath on more than one occasion!

Read Exodus 32:7-14, 30-32.

Are you starting to see why Moses is like Christ? Just as Christ is our true “High Priest,” or Representative, so Moses was, in a sense, a “high priest” representing Israel. He earnestly pleaded to God on behalf of his people--and prevailed! By the way, Christian, do *you* have this kind of love for others? The children of Israel were constantly rebelling against God, and murmuring against Moses; yet, Moses was incredibly patient with them. Despite all their ill treatment of him, he did not resent them. In fact, he loved them so much, that he was able to make these kinds of heartfelt prayers for them. Moses’ love for Israel was very much like Christ’s love for all of us! Though Moses himself was a sinner, he was able to love his people in this incredibly Christ-like way. Why? Because he was controlled by the Spirit of God, not by the spirit of bitterness. Christian, do you wrestle with God in prayer on behalf of others--even those who are not very lovable? *Do you pray much for others at all?* If not, take Moses for an example, and allow your heart to be broken for that which breaks God’s heart!

Now, there is one more way that Moses is like Christ. Moses is like Christ in that **he was faithful in all his house.** (Read verse 2 again.) Few people in history who have been used of God in such a special way as Moses was. However, it wasn’t the *size of Moses’ task* that made him so special. **What made Moses so special, and so uniquely beloved of God, was his faithfulness.** He didn’t serve God half-heartedly. He went to the people on God’s behalf, and to God on the people’s behalf, with such a selfless attitude, that it was almost beyond human! In fact, it *was* beyond human. He was an exceedingly meek and humble man; and because of his humble heart, he was able to be a faithful servant in God’s House.

Read Numbers 12:5-8.

Moses was one of the few men in Scripture who had the honour of being compared to Christ. He wasn’t compared to Christ in a *small* way, either: he was compared to Christ in a very *big* way. Unlike other prophets, Moses was able to speak with God *face-to-face*! He was a great man of God. However, we must never forget that, even though Moses was such a great man of God, he is still far inferior to the Son of God! This brings us to our second point.

II. Christ is superior to Moses (vv. 3-6).

Christ is superior to the prophets; He is superior to the angels; and He is superior to Moses. Moses, unique though he was, was just a man. In contrast, Jesus is the God-Man. In these next few verses, Paul is laying out for us why Moses is superior to Moses.

First, Christ is superior to Moses because **Christ, unlike Moses, is the *Builder of the house.*** (Read verses 3-4 again.) In these verses, Paul uses the analogy of a “house” to show that Christ is superior to Moses. The “house” that Paul is talking about is the “house” of Israel, over which Moses was the appointed leader.

Now, since God compares Israel to a “house,” then Moses must be a primary “builder” of the house, right alongside Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, right? Actually, no! Paul says in **verse 3** that *Christ* is worthy of “**more glory**” than Moses, because He is the *Builder* of the house. Christ’s glory exceeds Moses’ glory in the same way that an architect’s glory exceeds the glory of the house that he built. Moses may be an important *structural part* of the house of Israel (such as one of the central pillars); but Christ is the *Builder* of the house. He is the *God* of Israel. He is the one who designed and built the house of Israel; and He will finish the work that He started. Furthermore, Christ is the one who built “**all things.**” He is the Creator. He is the one who laid the foundations of the earth, and who stretched out the heavens like a curtain. In short, He is God! As Paul put it, “**He that built all things is God.**” Clearly, Paul is stating that Jesus is God! As Isaiah was speaking to God, He said, “**We are the clay, and thou our potter; and we are all the works of thy hand.**” Just as a potter forms the clay into a vessel, so Christ is the Potter who formed Israel (and “**all things**”) with His hand.

Think of the most beautiful house that you have ever seen. When you look at that house, do you think, “My, but that house did an incredible job building itself! Look how beautifully those bricks and stones arranged themselves”? No! You would say, “My, how wise the person who designed and built that house must be!” Likewise, when you look at the preservation of the house of Israel through its long millennia of persecution and hardships, and when you look ahead to the glorious future that God has promised them, are you compelled to admire *Israel*? Or, are you compelled to admire the *God* of Israel, who has established them, protected them, and preserved them for His glory? Obviously, you are compelled to admire the God of Israel. Well, guess what? That great God, the Builder of the house of Israel, is Jesus Christ. *He* is the one who should be honoured.

So it should be in our lives, as well. We should live to honour and exalt Christ, not ourselves. Yet, sadly, we live in a day when many Christians have come to think diametrically the opposite. Almost unconsciously, Christians have picked up on worldly ideas such as the need for “positive self-esteem.” Somehow, many Christians today have come to believe that the reason for their problems is that they don’t “love themselves” enough.

Folks, a person cannot even be *saved* until he comes to the point where he *stops* loving himself, and instead sees himself as an unworthy, hell-deserving sinner! Our whole problem is that we love ourselves! That’s what separated Adam and Eve from God in the first place. They decided to love *themselves* instead of God.

The “behavioural experts” say, “You don’t love yourself enough.” However, God says, “You must *stop* loving yourself, and love Me.” John the Baptist said of Christ, “**He must increase, but I must decrease.**” When **Isaiah** saw the vision of the glory of God on His throne, he did *not* “feel good about himself,” as so many church-going folk seek to do today. Modern Christians seek for “an amazing encounter with God” as they are “ushered into God’s presence” through the use of emotional, sensual, repetitive music. However, that wasn’t

Isaiah's experience. He didn't have a "warm, fuzzy feeling" when he saw the LORD of hosts in His glory. Instead, he cried out, "***Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!***" Far from wanting you to have a "good self image," God wants you to acknowledge that you are but dust and ashes: that you are sinful and undone: that you are nothing, and that He is everything. It is only when you come to this point that God is able to use you. It was *after* Isaiah cried out "***Woe is me! For I am undone,***" that God said, "***Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.***" It was only after Isaiah acknowledged his sin, and the sin of his people, and received cleansing from his sin, that God was able to commission Isaiah for service. It was then, and only then, that the Triune God said to Isaiah, "***Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?***" Isaiah then humbly said, "*Hinneniy, sh'lacheniy*" ("***Here am I; send me***").

If you have never trusted Christ as your Saviour, I plead with you to humble yourself before Him, acknowledge that you are a guilty sinner, and place your trust in Him alone to save you. Should you be saved already, I urge you to *continue* to abase yourself before Christ, and to lift up Him instead. Just as a pillar in a house cannot boast itself against the builder, neither can we boast of our doings. Any goodness that comes forth from our lives is *Christ's* doing.

Read Hebrews 11:24-26.

Moses knew that he was not the builder of the house of Israel. He knew that the Builder of Israel was God. His esteem was in the reproach of Christ. Of course, Moses never saw Christ in the flesh. However, he embraced the promise that the Messiah was coming one day: and his "esteem" was in Him. Does *your* esteem lie in the One who built all things? Are you glad to suffer for Jesus' name? Paul said, "***That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.***"

We've seen that Christ is superior to Moses because He is the *Builder* of the house of Israel, whereas Moses is merely part of the *infrastructure* of the house. However, Paul isn't done with his analogies. Christ is also superior to Moses because **He is the Son who rules over God's house**. Moses was merely a *servant* within the house; but Christ is the Son who faithfully rules over the house. (**Read Hebrew 3:5-6 again.**)

In **verses 3 and 4**, Paul used the *analogy* of a "house" (in the sense of "a physical dwelling place") to describe the family of Israel. Now, in **verse 6**, he uses the word "***house***" to refer to an actual "family," or "household." However, he speaks of *two* households; and he draws a clear distinction between the two. Moses was a *servant* within *his* house (the house of Israel); however, Christ is the Son over "***his own house.***" What house is that? He's talking about *Christ's spiritual* family. Christ's "***own house***" is not made up of people of one particular ethnicity, such as the Jews. It is composed of every soul, since the time of Adam, who has repented and placed his trust in Christ for salvation. Paul is talking about the "household of faith," or the "family of God."

Read Ephesians 2:19 and 3:14-15.

Clearly, there are two families being spoken of in **Hebrew 3:5-6**. First, there is the household of Israel, which is made up of all the descendants of Abraham. Moses had an important

position in that house. He was a faithful servant in that household. The ordinances, rituals, and plans for the Tabernacle were not things that Moses made up. *God* gave those ordinances to Moses. The design for God's House came from *the Son* who rules over the house. To be sure, Moses was an important servant in the house of Israel—perhaps the most important position of all, outside the patriarchs. However, Christ is the *Head* of the House of Israel.

It's the same way in the *spiritual* household that we read about in **verse 6**. Moses isn't the head of that house, either: *Christ* is! In the Household of Faith, Christ is the Son and Heir. As a saved man, Moses is merely a *member* of that household; but Christ is the *Son* over that house. Christ is the Heir of the Father. He is the One who rules over the house.

With this in mind, please notice what Paul says next. He says, "***Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.***" Why does Paul put that conditional word "if" on this statement? Is he saying that if you've already been accepted into the Household of Faith, you might still end up being disowned and expelled from it "if" you aren't faithful enough to God? No. He's saying that "***if***" a person who *professes* to be a Christian should *turn away* from Christ, and *turn away* from the Door of salvation, then he never truly belonged to the household of Christ in the first place. There *will* be enduring evidence of Christ's presence in the life of a true believer. There *will* be enduring faith and confidence in Christ, and enduring rejoicing in the hope of salvation.

John Harper is a perfect example of a man who held fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end. John Harper was a Scottish Baptist pastor who lived in the late 1800's and early 1900's. He grew up in a Christian family, and was saved at the age of 13; but at the age of 18, the Holy Spirit began to work in his life in a powerful way. It was said that every street corner was his pulpit. Everywhere he went, whether on a street corner or in one-on-one conversation, he preached the Gospel to the common people with power and conviction. Drunkards, gamblers, prostitutes, and prize-fighters were reclaimed from Satan's kingdom. He was known, on many occasions, to spend all night in his church building praying for every one of the hundreds of members of his church. He burned himself out for God, and spent himself for others so tirelessly, that in 1905 he fell ill, and was incapacitated for six months. From that point onward, his health was never the same; and his once-resonating voice was gone. Also, his wife passed away in 1906, shortly after their daughter Nana's birth. However, John Harper continued on for the Lord with as much zeal and power as he had before.

In 1912, at the Seaman's Centre Mission in Glasgow, John Harper stood up and announced to the men at the meeting that his schedule had changed, and that instead of sailing on the *Lusitania* to America, he would be sailing on the *Titanic*. (Pastor D. L. Moody had scheduled him to preach at Moody Church in Chicago, for the second time.) A brother named Robert English stood up in the meeting, and told Harper that he had been praying for him; and in his prayers, he had a very strong, ominous impression that he would meet disaster if he sailed on the *Titanic*. English offered to pay for his ticket if he would take another ship. A number of other people said the same thing, and begged Harper to change his schedule. However, Harper was just as determined to go to Chicago as the Apostle Paul was determined to go up to Jerusalem. He knew that danger was coming; but he was determined to do God's will.

Well, you know the rest. On 15 April 1912, the "unsinkable" *Titanic*, which the "experts" claimed that even God could not sink, sank into the depths of the Atlantic Ocean after striking

an iceberg. On that night, many men showed how haughty, vain, selfish, and cowardly they really were. A crew member named John Phillips told a radio operator on the ship *Californian* to “shut up” after he had radioed him for the sixth time to warn him that icebergs were in the path of the *Titanic*. Will Murdoch, the *Titanic*’s first officer, shot himself rather than face drowning. Colonel John Jacob Astor, the richest man in the world, tried to sneak into a lifeboat with his wife, and had to be physically stopped from doing so. Daniel Buckley tried to get onto a boat disguised as a woman. First-class passengers on one of the lifeboats refused to pick up people who were drowning, even though there was room for many more people. Yet, what was John Harper doing during this madness? First of all, he made sure that his six-year-old girl, Nana, got onto a boat. (Nana later grew up to marry a Baptist pastor, and to be a fervent witness for Christ.) While other men were trying to save their own lives, Harper was barking out orders to let the women and children into the boats. However, he was doing much more than that. Earlier that evening, he had been seen trying to witness to a young man on deck; and that is what he continued to do, right to the end. After the ship had sunk, and he was clinging to a board in the icy water, he continued to cry out to anyone who could hear, “Are you saved?” He addressed this question to a man who was clinging to a board nearby him; and the man answered, “No.” Harper shouted to him, “***Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.***” The man was not able to reply, because the current pulled him away; but he later drifted back within earshot of Harper. Harper again asked him, “Are you saved?” The man said, “No”; and Harper again said, “***Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.***” With that, Harper slipped into his icy grave, and went to be with Christ. He didn’t survive until the *Carpathia* arrived. However, the man who heard Harper’s last witness did survive; and later, in Ontario, Canada, he testified that he had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He was Harper’s last convert. To the end, Harper held fast his confidence in Christ.¹

I would ask *you* the same question that Harper asked: “Are you saved? Are you *really* saved?” If you know Christ as Saviour, I am not trying to scare you. I am not saying that if you stumble and fail the Lord, or have times of doubt and fear, then you might not be saved after all. If you have truly repented of your sin and trusted in Christ, then you are “***kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.***” What I *am* trying to do is to plead with those who have never truly become new creatures in Christ. It *is* possible to be considered a Christian by everyone around you, and even to become a church member, without truly being saved. That is why Paul urged the people in the church of Corinth, “***Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.***” Paul knew that it was possible that at least some of the members of the church of Corinth were not truly born again. So it was as Paul wrote this letter to the Hebrews. Paul was warning those who had never truly entered the Door of salvation that their willingness to turn away from Christ was evidence that they never truly belonged to Him. One who is truly saved will not utterly forsake Christ. Christ is the Son over the house; thus, to reject Him is to forfeit entry into God’s family. One who *has* entered the household of Christ may grievously sin, and deny Christ in his actions; but God will chastise him until he repents. He will deal with him as a father deals with his erring child.

Read Hebrews 12:3-12.

Conclusion: The message of **Hebrews 3:1-6** is just as relevant to us as it was to the Jews in Paul’s day. First of all, if you are trusting in your good works to save you, then you are not in the household of faith. You are rejecting the Son: and He is the only One who can save you. Don’t ignore his call! Humble

¹ All historical information about John Harper and the *Titanic* is taken from Moody Adams, *The Titanic’s Last Hero*, pp. 11-38.

yourself before God, and receive Him. You may be rejected by others; but you will gain the priceless gift of everlasting life! **If you are saved, you need this message, too.** Your life is not your own: it belongs to the Master Builder, Jesus Christ. Are you being a faithful servant in His house, just as Moses was?