

CHRIST: SUPERIOR TO MOSES

Hebrews 3:1-19

Compiled By Dr. Gary M. Gulan, ©1983 (Rev. 92,01,09)

So far in our outline, we have examined the first “superior” theme was “Christ is Superior to the Prophets: Being a Better Revelator, (Heb. 1:1-3). The second “superior” theme was “Christ is Superior to the Angels: Having a Better Name, (Heb. 1:4-2:18). The next “superior” or “better” section is “Christ is Superior to Moses: Having a Better House,’ (Heb. 3:1-19).

The word “Therefore” (Heb. 3:1)

The word “therefore” (Gr. “hothen,” Heb. 3:1) states that “what is going to be said” is based on the information just discussed.

The question is, (1.) does the “therefore” (3:1) refer to the information up to the previous “therefore” (2:17, held by Westcott; Ellingworth); (2.) does the “therefore” (3:1) refer to everything stated previously (1:1-2:18, held by Gromacki; Pink).

My personal opinion is that the “therefore” (3:1) refers to the material previously mention on the subject of the “High Priesthood” now addressed. The author will now start to develop material on the “High Priesthood” in the rest of the book. Since “Christ” is the divine-human agent dealing with the “things that pertain to God,” who is the other human agent that these Jews being addressed in the book of Hebrews would look to as being worth following.

“Because Christ has taken our nature to Himself and knows our needs and is able to satisfy them.” (Westcott, p. 73) “*Therefore*” (Heb. 3:1) these Christians needed to “consider” who Christ is and how He will help the reader who was experiencing persecution.

The word “Consider” (Heb. 3:1)

The word “consider” (Gr. “katanoesate,” Heb. 3:1) means “to bring your mind to bear upon,” meaning “observe so you see the significance.” (Dods, p. 271) The word “consider” is a simple command requiring the individual “...to put one’s mind down on an object or person. It involves reflective study, attentive examination, and careful thought.” (Gromacki, p. 56)

Remember these readers were discouraged and were thinking of going back to Judaism. They were being exhorted to “reflect and examine” Christ the Apostle and High Priest.

Who is addressed?

These readers were “saved” individuals described by four terms:

1. “Holy,” (Gr. “hagio,” Heb. 3:1) meaning “set apart ones” usually translated “saints,” (Gromacki, p. 54)
2. “Brethren,” (Gr. “adelphus,” Heb. 3:1) (Gromacki, p. 54)
3. “Partakers of the heavenly calling,” (Gr. “metochoi,” Heb. 3:1) meaning “to have with, a term which involved full participation.” (Gromacki, p. 55) Often used as the word “companions.” (Guthrie, p. 126)
4. “Profession” (Gr. “homologeoo,” Heb. 3:1)(Gromacki, p. 55) “...Literally meaning “to say the same thing” generally used of ‘confession’ and ‘profession.’” (English, p. 90)

These readers were saved individuals and this is an important fact to remember when encountering the warning passages.

The author uses a comparison and an exhortation to get the reader to “consider” Christ rather than leaving Him.

1. MOSES (Heb. 3:2-6)

Why Moses? He was the founder of the Old economy. (Ellingworth, p. 194) Moses is very important to the Jewish and Christian mindset as seen by the fact that Moses is mentioned 79xs in the NT and Abraham is mentioned 72xs in the NT. (Ellingworth, p. 194)

We are going to see that Moses was a (1.) “sent one” and (2.) performed “priestly duties.” Christ has been introduced as the (1.) “apostle” or “sent one” and (2.) a “ruling priest.” “This comparison is an essential part of the argument; for through the superiority of Christ to Moses might have seemed to be necessarily implied in the superiority of Christ to angels, yet the position of Moses in regard to the actual Jewish system made it necessary....” (Westcott, p. 72) It is said that God had magnified Moses as a god, (Ex. 7:1).

A. Who was Moses in the Jewish mindset?

Moses was divinely chosen for a special service, (Ex. 2:1-10)(Hughes, p. 89)

Moses became the deliverer of God’s people, (Ex. 7-12)(Hughes, p. 89)

Moses was the greatest prophet of Israel, (Num. 12:6-8)(Hughes, p. 90)

Moses was the giver of the Law, (Ex. 19-20) (Hughes, p. 90)

Moses was Israel’s great historian and writer of God’s revelation (Gen. – Deut) (Hughes, p. 90)

Moses was the most humble man on earth, (Num. 12:3) (Hughes, p. 90)

Moses was the one who interceded on behalf of God’s people, much like a high priest, (Ex. 32:11,31; Num. 14:13)(Hughes, p.90)

Moses was a Levite who performed priestly functions, (Ex. 24:4-8)(Hughes, p. 91)

Moses was a “sent one” meaning an apostle, (Ex. 33:8)(Hughes, p. 91)

B. Moses was identified with a “house” (Heb. 3:2,5)(This house is Israel – Num. 12:7)

The word “house” (Gk. “oiko,” “oikou,” “oikos,”) comes from a root word meaning “a house or dwelling,” but here means “a household, inhabitants, family, or a people.” (MacArthur, MNTC, p. 80)

C. Moses had a testimony

Moses was “faithful” (Heb. 3:2,5)

Moses had glory, (Heb. 3:3)

Moses did not “build” Israel, (Heb. 3:4)(Israel was God’s people and He built the house, (Num. 12:7)

Moses was a servant in the house, (Heb. 3:5)(Ex. 14:31; Deut. 18:15,18,19)

2. CHRIST (Heb. 3:2-6)

This shows Christ’s “faithfulness” as a High Priest (Heb. 2:17).(Ellingworth, p. 193)

A. Who is Christ in comparison to Moses?

- Christ the “Apostle” (Gr. “ton apostolon”)(Heb. 3:1)(only used here in NT) meaning “sent one.”

The term refers to His title of “Son of God. (Kelly, p. 50)

“Our Lord was a Sent One; He was sent by the Father (John 17:3,18)....” (English, p. 89)

- Christ the “High Priest” (Gr. “archiereia”)(Heb. 3:1) literally means “the Priest who rules.” (Gromacki, p. 56)

The term refers to His title “Son of Man.” (Kelly, p. 50)

“The high priestly function: ‘to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself’ (English, p. 89)

B. Christ has a “house” (Heb. 3:6) (This house is the church)

Christ was faithful, (Heb. 3:2)

Christ was appointed “over” this house, (Heb. 3:2)

Christ is worthy of more glory and honor than Moses, because Christ was not a part of the house, (Heb. 3:3)

Christ was “Son” over the house, Moses was a servant in the house, (Heb. 3:6)

C. Christ is better than Moses

Christ was appointed by God the Father (Heb. 3:2)

Christ counted worthy of more glory than Moses (Heb. 3:3)

Christ is the one who did the building (Heb. 3:3-4)

3. THE WARNING: THE EXAMPLE, (Heb. 3:7-19)

This shows Christ is a “merciful” High Priest (Hebrews 2:17).(Ellingworth, p. 193)

This section has a twofold purpose: (1.) it applies the information from Moses’ house to Christ’s house as a warning, (Heb. 3:1-6); and (2.) it sets up the discussion for “rest” in the next major outline point, “Christ Being Superior to Joshua: Having a Better Rest,” (Heb. 4:1-13).

A. How did Israel respond to Moses? (Heb. 3:7-11)

Israel:

(1.) “didn’t listen to His voice,” (Heb. 3:7);

(2.) they “hardened their hearts,” (Heb. 3:8);

(3.) they “tested the Lord,” (Heb. 3:9); and,

(4.) went “astray in the heart,” (Heb. 3:10)

B. How should the church respond to Christ? (Heb. 3:12-19)

Jews who have accepted Christ should not leave Christ and go back to Judaism because they would be acting like Israel under Moses. They need to:

(1.) “hold fast” (Gr. “ean kataschiomen,” Heb. 3:6) a third class condition second aorist active subjunctive (Robertson, p. 355) This construction means “we may or may not hold fast...” The word “hold fast” has the meaning of “holding back or holding down” with the idea of holding one’s course toward or bearing down for.” (Vincent, p. 415) By not translating this properly, it gives the impression the Arminian theological view that we could lose our salvation or that that our salvation is based on our holding on to it, is true when in fact it is not. “This does not mean, as many have misinterpreted that we are saved if we hang on until the end. We can neither save ourselves nor keep ourselves saved.”(MacArthur, p. 83)

(2.) “beware” (Gr. “blepete,” Heb. 3:12) which is a present active imperative (a command);

(3.) “exhort each other” (Gr. “parakaleite,” Heb. 3:13); which is a present active imperative (a command) and

(4.) “hold the beginning,” (Gr. “kataschiomen,” Heb. 3:14) a third class condition second aorist active subjunctive (Robertson, p. 355).

This section about “entering rest” is a hinged section leading into chapter four.

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