

BUILDERS ARE BETTER THAN BUILDINGS

Hebrews 3:1-6

When Israel looks back to its past and remembers people who made their country great, nobody is more significant to their past than Moses.

According to Michael Shapiro, *The Jewish 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Jews of All Time* (1994). **Jesus ranks second. Moses topped the list.**

Judaism focuses on Moses & revelation God gave Him. Prophets and angels are important.

They're God's spokespersons, through whom He reveals Himself. Revelation through Moses is basis of everything Judaism clings to. People considering return to Judaism must consider Moses. Hebrews acknowledges that; then affirms:

Someone GREATER THAN MOSES has come!

Jesus' revelation of Father is better than Moses' 3:1-6

Builds on previous observations about Jesus. Begins with "*therefore.*"

"Whenever you see 'therefore,' find out what it's *"there for!"*

Already demonstrated Christ identified with His people.

Jesus is better revelation of Father because He's God & man. 1:1-2:18

Jesus is able to help us in midst of our struggle & temptation. **2:18**

He knows what we're going through—He's been there.

When we're tested & cry out for help, he comes running to help us.

[2:18 leads into 3:1, which introduces the...]

Logical conclusion of Jesus' superiority to angels 3:1

Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle & high priest of our confession,

**Letter's written to brothers—he considers them true believers
—to people who share in the heavenly calling.**

He looks at these results of what God has done in our life as fact.
 When God's people are under gun, when suffering for our faith,
we may not feel like holy brethren, nor sharers in heavenly calling.
 They're feeling pretty low about selves, & about lot in life right now!
 Have you ever felt like that? *What do WE do when WE feel that way?*

Solution: FOCUS ON JESUS!

When God's people are swept away by current of storm raging around us, he advises: *"Fix your thoughts on Jesus"*

Jesus suffered while He was being tested.

Jesus knows how to help people who are facing testing.

Therefore, when WE face hard times, **FOCUS ON JESUS!**

He's ready to come running to our aid when we cry out for help.
 Therefore focus on Him—*"think carefully, thoroughly, about Him"*.

Jesus is the Father's official emissary.

Jesus is "the Apostle" – "the One sent out"

2 characteristics of emissary:

1. Emissary carries the authority of the king.

Jesus was sent by God, with the authority of God

2. Emissary speaks for the king.

Jesus came with voice of God. He's God's spokesman.

[Not only does Jesus represent God to us...]

Jesus is our representative before God.

Jesus is our "High Priest" – "the mediator."

As Apostle, Jesus is God's representative to us.

As High Priest, Jesus is our representative to God.

Therefore, we should focus our attention on Him!

Jesus is better Mediator than "great one" in mind of Israel.

Moses was *sent out* as God's emissary.

Moses was *mediator* for God's people—represent them to God.

Moses was a *great* emissary. Moses was a *great* mediator.

He's esteemed by Jewish people—but **Jesus is better yet.**

Fixing our attention on Jesus, doesn't *just* mean to think about *Him*, in some abstract sense.

Most translations begin verse 2: "He was faithful."

That's an acceptable translation. It tells the truth about Him.

But it misses one important aspect of what the passage says.

Literally, it says, "Consider Jesus... *being faithful.*"

Focus on Jesus, *when HE was faithful in trials.*

When we're in the pit & feel like throwing in the towel:

"Fix your attention on Jesus when HE was being tested."

Look at what He went through.

Look at His faithfulness under fire . . . and imitate Him!

Consider how Jesus, like Moses, was faithful to the One who sent Him.

Then YOU hang in there & be faithful!—even under fire!

Comparison of 2 faithful representatives 3:2-6 3:2-4

²[Jesus] was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. ³For 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.)"

Though **BOTH WERE FAITHFUL,—**

Moses demonstrates faithfulness as part of the house,

Jesus demonstrates faithfulness as builder of house.

Lays foundation for basing letter Numbers (3:1-6 <= Num. 12:7)

Num 12:6-8 "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. ⁷**Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my**

house. ⁸*With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, & not in riddles, & he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?"*

The context points to Moses' greatness as a mediator.

He was the only one who spoke to God "face-to-face."

Therefore, they had better not speak against him.

To a Jewish person it was impossible to conceive of anyone standing closer to God than Moses. But **Jesus is better yet!**

He has more than a face-to-face encounter with God

He stands closer to God, because **He's the Son! He's God.**

They'd better not speak against Him!

Both were faithful.

Doesn't say Jesus is *more faithful* than Moses, though case could be made, since Moses failed God on occasion. *Jesus never did!*

Hebrews affirms that Moses was faithful; but Christ is greater.

Moses was faithful, in spite of high cost of commitment;

Moses was faithful, as servant, to do what God sent him to do.

Jesus was faithful, in spite of high personal cost of commitment;

Jesus was faithful, as God's Son, to do what God sent HIM to do.

But Jesus is worthy of greater glory!

Note **their similarities**:

* **Both were appointed by God**;

* **Both were faithful**;

* **Both are related to God's house**.

Our thought concerning God's house, would be God's house as church building, or, in Moses' case, the Tabernacle.

However, in this passage it's clear that *WE* are God's house.

He is looking at the people of God as His house.

Moses was *not* the builder, he's part of the house.

He's great leader, but He's still just one of *God's people*.

Jesus made the building. He's the *Creator*.

JESUS is the Builder; He's Head over the house!

*** Jesus deserves greater glory.**

[vss. 3-4: Inserts, without comment, an underlying assumption:]

Jesus is better than Moses because . . .

1st he tells us **the builder is Jesus. 3:3** *"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"*

Then tells us **the Builder is GOD. 3:4** [Which is it?!!]
"Every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God."

Logical conclusion: Jesus is God!

Moses was faithful servant

Jesus is faithful Son 3:5-6a *"Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son"*

"Servant" is not normal term used, i.e., "slave." Views Moses as:

—one who serves voluntarily/willingly

—one who holds honorable position, worthy of respect.

Nevertheless, he IS a *servant* to the One Who built the house!

Moses was in the house; he was on the inside!

Jesus is over the house.

Moses testified concerning the future;

Jesus is fulfillment of those things. Jesus IS the future!

Law Moses gave was temporary & anticipatory.

Jesus came to fulfill what the law pointed to.

Christ is clearly greater! =>

=> WARNING CONCERNING JESUS 3:7-4:13

Based on Num. 12:7-8; concerning Moses,

“How could you dare to speak against Him?!”

[He points out] Moses is God’s faithful servant in time of rebellion.

The people spoke against Him. God responds in judgment.

OT warns it’s dangerous to oppose or ignore God’s servant.

If that’s true about *the servant*, more serious to ignore *His Son*!

Jesus is greater than Moses;

we had better pay attention to what He says.

Transition to warning passage: **6b** “*We are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence & our boasting in our hope.*

We are His house,

if we hang on and don’t throw in the towel.

It looks like he says: “If you don’t hang in there, you’ll lose it!”

Some understand verse to say you can lose your salvation.

That’s not what he says!

Neither does he say we *become* His house *by* hanging on, even *if* we hang on

This is a demonstration that we are (pres.) His house.

Moses was faithful as a servant *within* God’s house.

Jesus was faithful as Son over God’s house.

Now it’s OUR turn! Will WE be faithful?

The proof that we are part of the house is hanging in there.

No one does that who isn’t really part of the house!

To hang on is evidence of our salvation;

not the basis of our salvation.

BEST TEST OF REALITY OF OUR FAITH IS ENDURANCE.

To discover if person is part of God's family, don't look at an emotional response, quick decision, or walk down the aisle. Simply mouthing words isn't enough!

True faith, trust in Christ, stands the test of time.

ENDURANCE is best test of REALITY of our faith.

CONSTANCY proves *REALITY*!

Take a look at a person's life as a whole.

If they don't throw in the towel when faced with adversity, there's a reason for their constancy. They're part of the family.

If they turn away, that may be evidence that they never really belonged. **1 Jn 2:19** *"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us"*

Hebrews maintains the tension:

To give assurance to those who are members of God's family.

To warn people "along for ride" to be *sure* they have real thing.

He assumes that the profession of these Christian Jews is real.

He calls them "holy."

He calls them "brethren."

He calls them "sharers in the heavenly calling."

He realizes that in O.T., as in N.T., many were "along for the ride."

They're "groupies;" part of club, but not genuinely trusting Christ

That's risk for people today also! —Just going along for the ride.

He warns those hanging to fringes to examine themselves to discover whether they're personally trusting Him.

If we have real thing, we'll cling to Him when the going gets rough —we'll hang on, when the current rages around us.

IMPLICATIONS FOR US:

Which are we? Is our faith real? Will our faith endure test of time?

Or do we just hang around, because of friends or family?

–because mom & dad, wife or girl friend want us to?

If we're just hanging around crowd, our "faith" won't stand the test!

If it is, it will stand test of time! **Constancy proves reality!**

Those who receive God's blessing hang on to their confidence,
we're sure we'll receive what we've been promised!

The difference between people who are part of the house, and
people outside the house, is that when the storm rages around
God's people, we can **FOCUS ON JESUS!**

We may still be struck by the flu, by failure, or by financial collapse!
We're human!

When we're part of the house, the roof can leak, walls can
collapse, carpet can wear out!

But we expect builder to come to rescue; when we cry out to Him.

**No matter how severe the pressure we're under,
FOCUS ON JESUS!**

Whatever the source of the problem, the solution is the same:
FOCUS ON JESUS!

He's been there. He knows what it's like.

He's able to hang in there, under more pressure than we'll ever face

If we FOCUS ON JESUS, He'll give US the ability to hang in there!

Heb comes back to that conclusion in final exhortation: **12:1-3**

"Since we're surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also
lay aside every weight, & sin which clings so closely, & let us run with
endurance the race set before us, ²looking to Jesus, the founder &
perfector of our faith, who for joy set before him endured the cross,
despising the shame, & is seated at the right hand of the throne of
God. ³Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against
himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Think back to last “gray slush” day you experienced?

What did it feel like at the time?

What did God teach you through it?

How did Jesus come to your side when you cried for help?

What does that tell us about today’s problem, or next 1 we may face?

If Christ is able to deal with our sin, He’s able to deal with the storm.

If we can trust Him with *our soul*, we can trust Him with *our life*.

The key is to take our eyes off the storm, “*turn your eyes upon Jesus*,

Maybe it’s not a storm like these Hebrew Christians faced.

Maybe we’re not being persecuted for our walk with God.

Maybe we haven’t lost our job because of our stand for Him.

Maybe we’re not faced with an empty cupboard.

Maybe we aren’t risking arrest and death if we don’t deny Him.

But we may be saying, “I wish my problem was that clear cut!

At least then I could blame God for the mess I’m in!”

I made this mess myself! There’s no easy way out of this mess!

I have good news! ***It doesn’t matter who made the mess.***

God says trust me with it! Give it to me! I can handle it!

Life is filled with warning signs.

It would be foolish to ignore the warning signs along the road of life.

Slippery when Wet! Watch for Rocks on Road!

High Voltage! Danger! Construction Zone

Most of us are careful about warning signs of heart problems.

It’s dangerous to ignore the symptoms of heart trouble!

Medical experts warn us to learn the symptoms of heart trouble, and act quickly at 1st sign of a bad heart.

Hebrews issued similar warning 2000 yrs ago

–warns us of danger, not of hardening of arteries, but hard **heart**.

Watch for signs of a hard heart; a sinful, unbelieving heart.

At first sign of heart trouble, we better take drastic action to prevent permanent damage. ***Beware of a Hard Heart!***

He's writing to generation of Jewish believers under pressure because they've identified with *Jesus*.

In physical realm, stress & anxiety are major contributors to a bad heart; that's true in the spiritual realm also.

Stress & anxiety can force us to trust God, & experience His rest, or cause blood pressure to rise, hard heart, with anger & bitterness.

Jesus' revelation is superior to Moses',
because He is greater than Moses. 3:1-6

3:7-4:13 Since Jesus' revelation is superior, it is even more important that we hear & obey His message.

Warning based on Israel's experience 3:7-19

In light of superiority of Son to Moses, don't fall into trap Israel did.

BASIS OF OLD TESTAMENT WARNING 3:7-11

1-6 reminds us of Aaron & Miriam's error in rebelling against Moses.
He was just God's faithful servant—just part of His house.

Yet failure to trust God & obey His messenger results in judgment.
How much riskier would it be to reject the Son?

Now he relates warning to disobedience in Kadesh-Barnea.

If Jesus is so great, trust & obedience should be given to Him.

**Ps 95 makes same point about Yahweh: If He's so great
He deserves worship, but He also deserves total
allegiance & submission.**

The writer uses the Psalm to build his case.

Ps. 95 — A PSALM OF PRAISE

EXHORTATION TO WORSHIP YAHWEH

The praise is familiar **95:1-6** *Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us*

make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! ²Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! ³For the Lord is a great God, & a great King above all gods. ⁴In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. ⁵The sea is his, for he made it, & his hands formed the dry land. ⁶Oh come, let us worship & bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

Psalmist acknowledges that God, as Creator, is worthy of worship. He fears people might not respond appropriately & repeat rebellion of fathers in wilderness. They could suffer similar loss of privilege. He warns them of risks of heart disease.

Prevention involves *not* becoming discontented and *not* rebelling.

Exhortation not to harden our heart—to trust Him and to walk in His ways **95:7-11** *“He is our God, & we are the people of his pasture, & the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, ⁹when your fathers put me to the test & put me to the proof, though they had seen my work. ¹⁰For 40 yrs I loathed that generation & said, “They are a people who go astray in their heart, & they have not known xmy ways.” ¹¹Therefore I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my rest.”*

Ps. 95 based on **TWO O.T. INCIDENTS.**

First incident: Ex. 17:1-7 No water

Rather than trust God to provide, they grumbled & tested God.

Rather than hear God’s spokesman, they quarreled with Him.

Two names remind them of heart attack they had there:

“*Massah*” = “testing” & “*Meribah*” = “quarreling”

Ps calls on God’s people to praise Him, rather than harden their heart, test God, & quarrel with His messenger. **Ps. 95:7b-9**

They had seen all God did for them, yet still didn't trust Him.

1st heart attack warned them they had heart trouble.

Drastic action needed to avoid consequences of bad heart.

2nd incident: Num. 13-14 At Kadesh-Barnea

They sent 12 spies to check out the land. Their response:

God was right! It's great place to live! God chose perfect spot!

In fact, it's so great inhabitants became healthy & strong.

They were *GIANTS!!!*

God just made one mistake. They couldn't take the land.

They lost perspective.

They focused on enemy; enlarged enemy & shrunk their God.

So, they had another heart attack.

Num. 14:1-11,

Again they hardened their heart & disobeyed.

The Lord describes their heart condition **Heb 3:10**: *"They always go astray in their heart; they have not known my ways."*

RESULT: that generation would never receive blessing God promised—they would never enter rest—Num 14:**20-23, 28-35**; => **Heb. 3:11** *"As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'"*

Generation failed to trust God & rebelled died in wilderness.

Israel learned hard way about cost of obedience & risk of hard heart.

If Israel failed to believe & lost privilege God promised, it's even more important that *we* trust & obey Him.

We have superior revelation;

consequences of disobedience are greater.

APPLICATION OF WARNING TO US 3:12-19

3:12-14 Compares elements at Kadesh to their situation (and ours!)

3 applications to our life—when pressure rises:

1. Don't let unbelieving heart turn *you* away from the living God

3:12 *"Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbeliev-*

ing heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.”

Unbelief produced disobedience (Cp. Deut. 1:2-3, 26, 32)

Unbelieving heart turned them away from the living God.

That’s what unbelief does—it turns us away from God

Unbelief always produces disobedience!

Remember how Satan got to Eve?

“God doesn’t care about you! He knows that you’ll become like Him and He wants to keep you from it!”

How does He get to us? *“God wants to take away your fun!”*

If Satan convinces us not to trust God, He can control our behavior.

Don’t let heart trouble, unbelieving heart, turn you from God!

2. Encourage one another daily 3:13 *“Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”*

Murmuring produced discouragement.

They failed to encourage each other; they discouraged each other! Author makes us responsible to watch for one another & encourage those weak in faith, who may not be trusting God in suffering.

Mutual encouragement is best prevention against hard heart.

Sin’s deceit produces it.

Encouragement prevents it.

When Satan’s lies pressure us to throw in towel, encouragement of others standing together is the best prevention for heart disease.

As we stand together, we’re able to endure in midst of pressure & resist storms that would sweep us away.

As we encourage one another, we’re able to face persecution or peril.

Encouragement keeps us going.

If we murmur & grumble, we discourage & drag one another down.

3. Get firm grip on your confidence 3:14 *“We have come to share*

in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

He repeats: **Endurance is the evidence of salvation.**

He assumes they *are* sharers with Christ.

Lit., “*we’ve become partners with THE Christ.*” They joined hands with the promised one. They are united with Messiah!

The evidence of their position is endurance—“*IF you take a firm hold on the confidence you had in the beginning.*”

He doesn’t say they *become* partners by hanging in there.

We *are* His partners.

We demonstrate it by clinging to Him when going is rough.

Keep firm grip on assurance we received when we trusted Him.

When heat’s up doesn’t mean it’s time to let go. We need tighter grip under pressure than when everything’s great & we feel no stress.

Who are the people who experience God’s judgment?

The people of Israel probably would have responded as we would: “NOT ME! I’ll never have a hard heart attack!

But look at what warning tells us about them. **They were . . .**

1. People who had seen God’s power 15-16 “*As it’s said, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”*

¹⁶*For who were those who heard & yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?”*

ALL those who watched God work in delivering them from Egypt.

2. People who sinned against Him 17 “*With whom was he provoked for 40 yrs? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?”*

These same witnesses to God’s power sinned against Him

3. People who disobeyed Him 18 “*To whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient?*

They were the same ones who disobeyed Him

4. People who couldn't enter—because of unbelief 19 “So we see *that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.*”

Last 2 vss show: what got people was the deadly duo: *unbelief & disobedience*. They go together—2 symptoms of heart trouble!

These people were eye witnesses to greatest demonstrations of God's power the world has ever seen.

Yet they had heart trouble!

They didn't trust Him. They refused to obey—hardened their hearts. The fact that people have experienced a clear demonstration of God's power is no guarantee they won't turn from Him!

They didn't trust Him!—In spite of evidence they had seen.

Basic ? : What's spiritual condition of people judged in wilderness

Were they believers? Were they unbelievers? Were they mixed?

They were all part of people of God.

They'd all been delivered out of Egypt

They didn't *all* personally trust Yahweh

Some went along with social pressure

Some went with rest of their family.

They're all saved out of Egypt, but some are just part of crowd.

Those who accompanied the true believers without personally trusting God later rebelled against Him.

There's parallel here to the church.

Some true believers.

Some children or spouses of true believers.

Some come along for social reasons

“Decide which you are!!!” Make your personal commitment to God.

If those walking among God's people rebel against Him, they lose their blessing because of unbelief & subject selves to God's judgment

Is this warning to unbelievers or believers? To both!!

Unbelievers convince some believers to join rebellious response.

Vs. 14 refers to those *assumed* to be true believers.

They've *already* become partners with Christ. They won't lose that.

But the demonstration of genuine faith is to trust Him in adversity.
Israel missed God's blessing, because they failed to trust Him.

Notice the downward spiral:

People who have seen God's power begin to doubt

Doubting God produces complaining

Complaining produces hard heart

Hard-heartedness produces rebellion

Rebellion produces loss of privilege & judgment. What a tragedy!

Hardening of heart is terminal! It killed that generation.

It will get us too, if we allow hardening of the heart to set in!

Be careful! We're at risk.

Many of us have seen God work in the past.

We've been present when God did some great things for His people.
Rather than motivating us to take Him for granted, it should make us
cautious—alert—against Satan's schemes.

Satan spares no energy in attempt to increase stress, to get us to
complain, discourage us, get us to harden our heart & throw in towel.

God's work in the past should motivate us to trust Him in the future.

When we can't see light at end of tunnel, we should trust Him in dark!

God wants us to trust Him to handle the stress,
whether we can see where He's leading or not.

Warnings about mortality rate from heart disease stir people to give up
smoking, adopt low-fat diet, exercise, & other preventive measures.

This warning about the mortality rate from hardening of the heart ought
to stir us to take appropriate preventive measures also.

What steps can we take? Writer prescribes 3:

1. Don't let unbelief creep into our life. 3:12

Trust Him daily, whatever stress we may face.

Don't allow space, even for tiny, nagging doubts.

Determine that when we don't know what's going on, we'll trust Him.

2. Encourage one another. 3:13

Help each other out. When we see someone carrying a heavy load, come along side to encourage them to hang in there.

3. Hang on to our hope. 3:14

Don't throw in the towel, however dark things may appear.

Have you got a stress test coming up this week?

How did you do on your last one? What will it take this time?

Don't make room for doubt! Call a friend! Hang on to your hope!

Unbelief led God's people not to obey Him.

Unbelief & disobedience kept them out of the land.

Unbelief & disobedience keep *us* from experiencing God's blessing

He desires that WE learn to trust Him in the dark, & obey Him.

When we trust & obey Him, we enjoy benefits He wants to pour out in our lives, even in midst of the storm.

When faced with the enemy, we need to trust and obey Him.