

Study 4: Jesus Better than Moses

Throughout the book of Hebrews, Jesus is compared to a range of aspects that the Hebrew Christians would be familiar with under the Law of Moses.

In this study, we see Jesus compared to *Moses*.

Why does the writer use the word “therefore” at the beginning of chapter 2?

How is that Jesus is referred to here as the Apostle?

Jesus is noted again as the High Priest. How would the Jews have regarded this?

How is Jesus likened to Moses?

How is Jesus said to be not just “up there with Moses”, but greater than him?

What is the condition precedent for gaining the inheritance?

Why does the writer quote here from Psalm 95?

What should they do about this?

What stopped the fathers in the wilderness from entering into their rest?

What are the implications for us?

Because of all this, what should we do?

Homework:

Read the notes, and reflect on what has been said about Jesus and Moses.

Read Chapters 4:12 – 7:28 in preparation for next week.

- Who was Melchizadek?
- Why was he so great?
- What are the implications of Jesus Priesthood “after Melchizadek”?

Study Notes for: Study 4: Jesus Better than Moses

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In this study, we see Jesus compared to *Moses*.

Why does the writer use the word “therefore” at the beginning of chapter 2?

As in the previous chapter, whenever we see the word “therefore”, we should ask “wherefore?”

The writer has built an argument. Based on his argument so far, he now wants to move towards building on it and moving towards a conclusion.

His argument so far is:

- God has spoken to us through Jesus
- In Jesus we see the exact representation, perfection and completeness of God
- He is greater than the Angels
- The Old Testament prophets foresaw that He was greater than the Angels
- He took on obedience when He became a man
- In faithfulness as a man, He is able to be a merciful intercessor for us

This being the case (“therefore”) we should Consider Him....

How is that Jesus is referred to here as the Apostle?

Jesus was never an apostle in the sense in which we use the word “one of the twelve”.

The word “*apostle*” means, “*one sent forth*”. In the case of the twelve, it was the ones sent forth by Jesus. In the case here of Jesus, He is the one who was sent forth from God. There are other men in the NT who are called apostles, who were not of the twelve: Barnabas (Acts 14:14); Silas (1 Thess 2:6)

Jesus is noted again as the High Priest. How would the Jews have regarded this?

Having shown Jesus as greater than the Angels over the first two chapters, he is now moving towards Jesus as being greater than Moses. But before he gets there, he throws in the bit about the High Priest – really as an introduction to where he wants to go.

The writer is yet to deal with the idea of Jesus’ Priesthood, and this will become a major subject later in his letter. He has already mentioned the idea in 1:17, and builds a bit more on it here.

To the Jews who regarded the Jewish religion as God’s ultimate revelation, the High Priest was the highest perpetual position – The one who actually went into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies – The one who made intercession for the people. To say that someone was “equal to the High Priest” would be almost paramount to claiming deity. Such a position would normally be rejected out of hand. In any case, Jesus could not be a Priest because He came from the wrong tribe! – But yet, if Jesus is so great, that He is greater than the Angels – then perhaps there is something that should be investigated regarding His position as High Priest.

How is Jesus likened to Moses?

Moses' greatness is accepted, and the writer does nothing to belittle it. Yet he now introduces Jesus as being greater than he is.

Moses is described as being faithful in all his house (God's house = God's affairs). It could be argued that there were times that Moses was not as faithful as he should have been, but the Jews hold him in the greatest esteem.

Jesus faithfulness is put right up there beside that of Moses. "He was faithful to he who appointed him... - just like Moses".

How is Jesus said to be not just "up there with Moses", but greater than him?

Moses is described as no more than a part of "the house", but Jesus is described as the "architect of the house" (or builder of the house).

Whilst the house may well be magnificent, it took a great mind, and great skill to build it. The honour really goes to the great mind and the skilful builder, rather than in the house.

But God (and Jesus) did not just build the Lord's house – and His people through Moses – but He built ***EVERYTHING!***

Moses' role was more like that of a servant in the house. As a faithful servant, the appearance of the house, the running of the house, the maintenance of the house, and the presentation of the house could be attributed to him. But alas, he was just a servant. He has no proper ownership, and no consideration of inheritance.

But Jesus is described as a Son. He is the one who will inherit everything (as God's ***ONLY*** Son, ***ALL*** the inheritance will be his).

Moses could ***NEVER*** claim this!

Now, ***WE*** are the household of God, and ***WE*** are the ones who are God's inheritance.

What is the condition precedent for gaining the inheritance?

The condition is our faithfulness. "***if*** we hold fast... (***if***) we rejoice in hope to the end".

God's promises are sure, but they ***are conditional upon our obedience***. The writer will illustrate Faith and Works in that great chapter on faith – chapter 11.

Why does the writer quote here from Psalm 95?

Ps 95 speaks about the rest for God's people. God was frustrated with the Israelites, since they continually rebelled against Him. As a result, their promise of rest was taken away from them.

The Psalmist reminds the Jewish people that they too should not turn against God, and harden their hearts, or else they too may lose their promised place of rest.

The Hebrew writer then mirrors this thought, that the Jewish Christians need to beware of falling into the same pattern, that they should have an evil heart, that they should fall into unbelief, that they should depart from the living God.

What should they do about this?

Exhort one another daily. Encourage one another. Have daily fellowship with one another. The idea of daily fellowship gives the idea of *habitual* fellowship. This was the pattern of the early Jerusalem church. We **NEED** to have fellowship with one another, so that we can *strengthen* each other, and can support one another in the daily struggles and trials that we face.

The writer promotes a sense of *urgency* in doing this: **TODAY!** The time is short. You have today. You might not have tomorrow. “Do it now!”

We must not forget that the writer is not writing to Jews, to try to convert them to Christianity. He is writing to Jews who had already become Christians. He has asserted the exalted position that Jesus has compared to the pillars of the Jewish religion, and is giving his readers a strong admonition to “hang in there”.

What stopped the fathers in the wilderness from entering into their rest?

It was their unbelief that was demonstrated by their disobedience to God. It was not just a small few of those who came out of Egypt, but (nearly) all of them. God was patient, but they continued to push Him. Finally, He took away their promise of rest – but only to those who stood against Him.

What are the implications for us?

There still remains a rest for the people of God (4:1, 9), and we will receive it if we remain faithful.

Many have thought that the rest is the Sabbath day, and that the implications are that we should keep the Sabbath. The Sabbath was “a rest”, but was not “the rest”.

In the Old Testament examples that the writer has considered, the rest was when the children of Israel entered into the Promised Land. What God took away because of their unbelief was not the Sabbath rest day, but the “permanent” rest in the land flowing with milk and honey at the end of their journey.

The rest that the writer has in mind at the end of our journey, is the *permanent* rest that we will have with God in heaven. The Old Testament examples are clear examples for us, that we should not give up on God like they did, or else we will fall into the same “punishment” that they received in not receiving their reward, but falling by the wayside.

Because of all this, what should we do?

“Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience.” (NKJV)

One final thought:

Moses was not able to deliver the children of Israel into the Promised Land. God took him up to Mt Nebo where he saw over the land, but he himself was prevented from entering in.

But, through Jesus, He is the one who delivers us, and again demonstrates His superiority to Moses in accomplishing what Moses was not able to do.