

HEBREWS VERSE BY VERSE - The New and Living Way - Part eleven

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WHAT DOES IS IT MEAN TO "CONSIDER JESUS?" AND HOW CAN I KNOW WHEN I HAVE DONE THIS PROPERLY?

Hebrews 3:1-6 - "Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, [2] who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. [3] For 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.) [5] Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, [6] but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope."

The first question I have with this text is why do we need another comparison with yet another Old Testament character? Already our writer has compared Jesus with the Old Testament prophets and angels. Already we've had quotation after quotation from the Psalms and from Isaiah. You start to think, "**Enough already!**" Do we really need another comparison of Jesus with Moses?

The reason, I think, becomes obvious when we remember the first audience - the first listeners - to this letter. It's called the "**Letter to the Hebrews**" because it is directed primarily to Jewish believers who face heated opposition from Jews who felt any conversion to Jesus, the Messiah, was a blasphemous betrayal of the Judaic religion. And so these Jewish believers were in danger of being pressured to turn back from Christ to the law.

And when you think about the Old Testament Law **Moses** is the man you think of. In fact, there are places in the Bible where the Old Covenant is actually called the "**law of Moses**" - **Malachi 4:4** - "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel."

Not surprisingly, when the Jews wished to discredit and reject God's revelation in the Christ they opposed the gospel by proclaiming loyalty to **Moses**. They used **Moses** to hold Christ in contempt. This can be seen so clearly in the words of the Jewish religious leaders to the blind man healed by Jesus:

John 9:26-29 - "They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' [27] He answered them, 'I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?' [28] And they reviled him, saying, 'You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. [29] We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.'"

So Moses is set in opposition to Jesus. Moses is the **other** loyalty set up against Jesus in terms of religious devotion. And Moses is **contrary** to Jesus. This is why the writer to the Hebrews knows he **must** set the record straight about Moses and the Christ. Our writer knows this is the **line in the sand** for these Jewish listeners.

Here's what's happening in today's text. **First**, in **verse one**, there is the urgent need for meaty thinking about the **meaning** of Jesus Christ. **Second**, in **verses two, three and four**, Jesus is superior to Moses because, while Moses was **in** God's house, Jesus is the **builder** of God's house. **Third**, in **verse five**, the writer shows that if anyone truly **honors** Moses that person will recognize Moses pointed to Jesus, the Christ. And **fourth**, in **verse six**, the writer urges constant **boldness** in standing for Christ in the face of opposing religious systems.

That's where we're going today.

1) CONSIDERING JESUS - THE GREATEST NEED AND THE EASIEST POINT OF NEGLECT

Hebrews 3:1 - "Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession...."

We should all notice something strange in this verse. Jesus is called the "**apostle and high priest of our confession....**" These are Christians. These are "**brothers**" and "**sisters**". These are people who "**share in a heavenly calling.**" And these are people who "**confess**" Jesus. They pray to Him and worship Him and sing to Him and believe in Him. They tell others about Him. And the striking implication of our text is they are able to do all of this without adequately "**considering Jesus.**"

These Christians are told they urgently need to “*consider Jesus.*” Apparently they aren’t doing this adequately. What can this mean? I think we can start by acknowledging *considering* is different from *knowing*. We *know* all sorts of things. I know, right now, without even Googleing it, that the sun is 93 million miles from Earth. I know that for sure. But I never *think about it*. So *knowing* something is true and *considering* it are two different things.

But we can take this a bit farther. *Considering* is different from *noticing*. Noticing happens almost instantly. Noticing frequently happens without *trying* to notice. You just happen to see something different and it catches your eye. I noticed two little boys skateboarding in nothing but t-shirts and shorts on my way to church. Cute kids. But I never thought about them again. I *noticed* them. I didn’t *consider* them. I didn’t *make my mind do anything with what I happened to see*.

Our writer in Hebrews isn’t talking about what we *know*. And he’s not talking about what we *notice*. There is little transforming power in either of these *by itself*. *Knowing* has value, to be sure. Knowing matters because without that first step you can’t go deeper. You can’t *consider* something you’re totally ignorant about - at least not profitably.

Noticing is good too. It’s impossible to *consider* anything you haven’t noticed. Noticing is what puts a subject on your mental radar. But noticing that doesn’t lead to *considering* will lack depth and impact. Just noticing has no *staying power* in your mental life until you *consider* what you notice.

So the call is to “*consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession*” (3:1). Considering Jesus is *thinking about Jesus that is stretched out*. It’s thoughts about Jesus that are *intensified* by being *exercised*. Considering is *forcing* thought about Jesus.

Remember, our writer is urging *Christians* do this. He writes to Christians whose hearts are inclined to know no more about Jesus than they need to know to get to heaven. They try to live their whole Christian lives with nothing but that and week after week, in churches all across Canada, there are people who enjoy hearing about Jesus *at the immediate moment of hearing*. They enjoy singing songs. They enjoy sermons. They enjoy church. All of which is good and positive.

But the impact of it all is only felt *at that present moment*. But they are quickly *moved away* from what they have heard. I don’t mean they *deny* it or think it *untrue*. I mean it *leaves* their mind as quickly as it *entered*. So they *know* what’s taught. They know it inside-out. Perhaps that’s their problem. And they *notice* what was said, because they *agreed* with it. And then the power went out of that truth as life moved on to something else.

Consideration is what makes spiritual truth profitable for more than just the first moment when you hear it. That’s the issue our writer has on his mind. These Jewish believers had *started* their Christian lives because the truth of the gospel had reached their minds. The truth about Jesus *impacted* them. But now they are being pressured to return to the Old Covenant.

Here’s the important question. Is the truth heard *earlier* at their conversion enough to keep their hearts and minds *later* in their time of testing? And yes, it is - but not without *fresh consideration*. The truth they had heard at first had not suddenly become *untrue*. That wasn’t the problem.

But truth only has *staying* power - and *preserving* power - as it is *considered* at continuously deeper levels. *Unconsidered truth* is like medicine that was once potent but has long past its expiration date.

I’ve gone way too long on this first point. But let me wrap it up with this. Most people I’ve encountered who have made the trendy move from Christian to atheist are *fake* atheists. By that I mean they have never actually *demonstrated* untruth in the Christian faith they once professed. They’re just *pretending* they have done that mental work. Actually, they have simply fallen into the lazy rut of not *considering* and *applying* their early faith in deeper and disciplined ways. They’re just mentally bragging when they call themselves atheists.

2) MOSES IS IN GOD’S HOUSE. JESUS IS THE BUILDER OF GOD’S HOUSE. AND IT’S IMPORTANT TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

Hebrews 3:2-4 - “...[Jesus] was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God’s house. [3] For 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.)”

By the way, what we're doing in these difficult verses is just a refresher course in our first point. We're being stretched into "**considering Jesus**" in ways that aren't just religiously rehearsed. We're not dancing lightly here. We're pushing our thoughts - pressing them a bit beyond what comes easy - into **considering Jesus** in these verses.

Don't get lost in the phrases of these tricky verses. The point isn't as complicated as it first appears. **Moses** is an important part of God's **redemptive construction project** in this fallen world. **Jesus** is the whole project viewed in **completion**. Through Moses we get the clearest revelation of God's holy law. Through Moses Israel - and then the nations around Israel - receives a more complete understanding of the human dilemma in the Fall. We learn education isn't going to fix the problem of sin. We are morally bent and twisted.

And through Moses - and the developing history of Israel - we learn the sin problem isn't something we will overcome in time. That's why you have that thick Old Testament. Hundreds of years roll by with a record of repeated failure and rebellion. We have history marching by, century after century, teaching us mankind can't **overcome** the effects of sin the way he can get over the flu. And **Moses** is a big part of that historic process. He is a faithful servant in the unpacking of God's revelation. Moses helps **build** that house.

But Jesus isn't a part of that house. He is the **builder** of the house of redemption. He is the **fulfillment** of all that Moses and all the other prophets had pointed. This is what Jesus meant when he told religious leaders - those propagators of the righteousness of Mosaic law - that He, and not that great Temple, was the new dwelling place of God - **Matthew 12:6** - "**I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.**"

Jesus, God Incarnate, is the **maker** of the house. Moses was just a part of that house - like you and I are part of that house in Christ Jesus. And then our writer makes even more specific the difference between Moses and Jesus, the Christ.

3) **MOSES IS ONLY PROPERLY HONORED WHEN JESUS CHRIST IS EMBRACED AS LORD OF ALL**

Hebrews 3:5 - "**Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later....**"

You don't honor Moses by looking at Moses. You honor Moses by considering the greatness of Christ, to whom Moses pointed.

Have you ever tried to show an infant something really great by pointing to it only to have them stare at your finger? That's the danger our writer sees in the Jewish honoring of Moses. It's the great blindness of Judaism to this day.

Moses - like all the rest of the prophets - was just the **finger** pointing to something much greater. Our writer says Moses' role was to faithfully "**...testify to the things that were to be spoken later....**" Moses shared this faithful anticipation with the other Old Testament prophets:

1 Peter 1:10-13 - "**Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, [11] inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. [12] It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look. [13] Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."**

This is the greater glory of Christ over Moses. Moses and the prophets are the finger doing the pointing. Christ is the glorious object of our hope. I have to hurry on to our last point:

4) **THE DANGER OF NOT FAITHFULLY CONSIDERING THE GREATNESS OF JESUS, THE CHRIST**

Hebrews 3:6 - "**....but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.**"

Here our writer just introduces a warning he is going to develop in the rest of this third chapter. There is an "**if**" in this verse - "**And we are his house if....**" And we're being called back to the first point of this text - the urgent need to **continuously**

consider the great glory of Jesus, the Christ.”

The difference is now we are being told **why** we must so consider Christ - **what happens** if we **don't** so consider Christ. And as our writer cautions these Jewish believers - as they face the persecution of their fellow Jews to turn back to Mosaic law from Jesus - we get to see the important principle. **Other religious systems will appear equally valid only when Jesus isn't considered diligently.**

This is the explanation of those two strange words in **verse 6** - **“confidence”** and **“boasting.”** But the confidence and the boasting aren't **self** confidence or **arrogant** boasting. No. They are the deep rooted hope and joy that at last true glory has been found. We are no longer just looking at the separate **parts** of the house. We have the deliverance of the **Builder** Himself. Our Creator God has given Jesus the name above all names:

Acts 4:11-12 - **“This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. [12] And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

And this saving work stands all by itself.