

“Greater than the . . . Greatest?”—Hebrews 3:3-6

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Greater than the . . . Greatest?”, is Hebrews 3:3-6 → *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. (For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.) Now Moses was faithful in all God’s house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, 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.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Whom would you consider the great “giants” of the Christian faith? I suppose it depends upon the religious tradition within which you were raised or to which you have been exposed. We Lutherans may immediately think of Martin Luther as a spiritual “giant.” At the turn of the millennium A & E’s Biography ranked Luther number three amongst the most influential people of the last millennium because of his influence upon world history through the Protestant Reformation. A Roman Catholic might view the pope or various people whom their tradition canonized as “saints” to be spiritual “giants” of the

faith. The Roman Catholic Church is presently engaged in the process of “sainting” Mother Theresa. A Baptist may think of Billy Graham while a Pentecostal may think of Oral Roberts or any other number of preachers who became “larger than life” thanks to the era of mass media.

For Judaism the foremost “giant” of the faith would be Moses. In our text Jesus is compared to Moses, who was considered the greatest leader sent by Yahweh within their system of religion. In fact, Judaism considered Moses to be even greater than angels! Why?

One reason was because of his important role as God’s special leader of His people in the Exodus. Through Moses’ leadership God performed His greatest act of salvation in their history. Not only did it result in the deliverance of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt for some 400+ years but it also resulted in the establishment of their nation and their unique position in the world throughout history. Through Moses the LORD gave these people their identity as *a people holy to Yahweh* because He had chosen them by grace *to be a people for His treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.* (cf. Deuteronomy 7:6)

The Scripture also describes the unique relationship which Moses had with the LORD. In Numbers 12:6-8 Yahweh told Moses’ brother and sister: *If there is a prophet among you, I Yahweh make Myself known to him in a vision; I*

Speak with him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses. He is faithful in all My house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of Yahweh. Deuteronomy 34:10-12 says: There has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt . . . and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel. Pretty great guy in Yahweh's eyes, huh?

However, in the midst of Judaism's religious forms with its claim upon the great leader/prophet Moses, the writer to the Hebrews focuses on Jesus, not Moses! Verse 3 of our text says that *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.* The purpose for the existence of the Jewish people under Moses' leadership was to bring the Christ, the Savior of all mankind, into the world!

Moses, with his unique relationship with Yahweh is a type, pointing to Jesus Who is Yahweh in the flesh! Even Moses recognized the work of Jesus Christ as being greater than his own work when he told the people in Deuteronomy 18:15 → *The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to Him you shall listen.* These

words could have rang in the ears of those who heard the God's voice from heaven during Jesus' earthly ministry when He said: *This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.* (cf. Matthew 17:5; 3:17; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35) Thus, the focus of both Israel's and Moses' identity was Jesus, for Whom and through Whom they both existed! He is greater than anyone or anything which people may consider the greatest!

The struggle which people encounter is when the meaningful parts of their "spiritual system" becomes the focus in their lives for spiritual growth and identity instead of an expression of proper relationship. Notice how verse 5 of our text describes Moses as *faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later. God's house* refers to God's people—His Church. Moses was a *builder*, a leader and prophet amongst God's Old Testament Church as a **servant**, to testify to Christ Who is faithful over God's house as a **son**. (cf. Verse 6) Moses' "building activity" was only a glimpse of God's work in Jesus. By faith in Him *we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1)

Satan exists to take the focus off of Christ any way he can and what better place to do so than in the Church itself! The same thing can happen in the new Testament Church which happened in the Old Testament Church—becoming so focused on the ritualistic expressions and forms of their faith that

relationship with God through faith in the atoning work of Christ is minimized. Instead of *the builder of a house*—Jesus, Who is true God and *the builder of all things*—having *more honor than the house itself*, it becomes just the opposite.

Under such satanic delusions you can easily depend upon the “house” rather than the “Builder” by placing your hope and confidence in outward forms of spiritual systems, even considering various parts of those forms as of greater importance to our identity as His Church. Such mis-focus creates a relationship with outward factors such as friendships, a particular pastor, the physical structure and its appearance, styles of worship and whatever other factors are important to the expression of your faith. The delusion comes when Jesus is viewed as the most important **part of the system** rather than **the Builder of it all!!** I would love for the researchers to survey members of Christian congregations, asking them why they belong to their particular congregation, only to hear response after response which says, “Because Jesus has made me a child of God in this place!” Might not help their job security.

God Himself has brought us into His household by coming into our lives, keeping the Law perfectly in our place, defeating the power of sin, death and devil over our lives and making it possible for us to have a relationship with

Him as our loving Father **forever!** Verse 6 of our text says: *We are His house if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope. Our confidence and our hope is found only in Jesus!* Thus, if the building and traditions which make up our “religious system” were gone we would still be the Church in this place! We would still gather someplace to worship Jesus together and be strengthened by the Word and sacraments so that we continue being the Church out in the world! The Church’s identity is not found in the physical structure. Rather it is expressed according to Christ’s promise in Matthew 18:20 → *For where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I among them.*

Therefore we don’t put our hope and security for our “spiritual” lives in the outward forms. Even your baptism is not about the outward form but about God’s working through it to make you His sons, establishing His eternal relationship with you! Galatians 3:26-29 says: *In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise. We are the people of God, His building, His household, the Israel of God because of Jesus!* (cf. Galatians 6:16; Romans 9:6-8) Jesus is the object of our faith!

As we strive to remain faithful to the LORD in the relationship of grace which He has established with us, we fix our thoughts on Jesus Christ, Who is the Greatest of anything or anyone that may appear to be pretty “spiritually” great!
There’s no match for Jesus! Amen.

*So then you are . . . members of the household of God,
built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone,
in Whom the whole structure, being joined together,
grows into a holy temple in the Lord.
In Him you also are being built together
into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

(Ephesians 2:19-22)

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.