**Hebrews 3:1–6 (ESV)**

1 Therefore, **holy brothers,** **A God’s People**

you who share in a heavenly calling,

consider **Jesus**, B Jesus Christ . . . faithful

the apostle and

high priest

of our confession,

2 **who was faithful**

to him who appointed him,

just as **Moses** also was faithful C Moses . . . faithful

in all God’s house.

3 *For* Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than **Moses**— D Jesus > Moses

as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself. E Builder > House

4 *For* every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. D God = Jesus > Moses

5 Now

**Moses** was faithful C Moses . . . faithful

in all God’s house [Num 12:7]

as a servant,

to testify

to the things that were to be spoken later, [cf. Heb 1:2]

6 but **Christ is faithful B Jesus Christ . . . faithful**

over God’s house

as a son.

And **we are his house**, **A God’s People**

if indeed we hold fast

our confidence and

our boasting

in our hope.

7 Therefore . . .

12 Take care, brothers . . .

4:1 Therefore . . .

**Context**

**Literary.** This comes after the introduction of the Son. He who is greater than prophets (1:1–4) and greater than angels (1:5–14) is now presented as greater than Moses (3:1–6). This comes before the author issues a call to faith/fulness (3:7–19). The faithfulness of Moses and Jesus sets up the discussion about faithfulness of the believers.

**Historical.** The audience would have respected Moses highly. He is the great Prophet. In some ways, his words were greater than angels. Thus, this section is not redundant or assumed; it makes an important contribution to the argument. Also, a main concern for the book is the faithfulness of the audience. Yet, this faithfulness is not self-generated; it is a response to the faithfulness of God and his great high priest. Thus, we do find a polemic at work to spur on faith, hope, and love.

**Canonical.** The background of this passage is both Numbers 12:7 and 1 Samuel 2:35. Jesus is greater than Moses and fulfills the promise of a new priest. Without an understanding of “house,” “Moses,” “priesthood” it will be difficult to understand.

**Structure**

1:1–4 The dignity of the Son [brief] Son > Prophets

1:5–14 The Son’s superiority to the angels [longer] Son > Angels

2:1–4 The validity of the word of salvation spoken the Son Listen to the Son

2:5–18 The accomplishment of Jesus [longer] Son for the sons

3:1–6 His superiority to Moses [brief][[1]](#footnote-1) Son > The Prophet

3:1–6 Christ’s Faithfulness A God’s Holy People (v. 1a)

3:6–4:13 Will you be faithful? (3:6–4:13) B Jesus FAITHFUL Apostle + High Priest (vv. 1b–2)

4:14 A basis for faithfulness (4:14)[[2]](#footnote-2) C Moses a Faithful Servant (v. 2b)

 D Jesus > Moses (vv. 3–4)

 C’ Moses a Faithful Servant (v. 5)

B’ Christ the FAITHFUL Son (v. 6)

 A’ God’s People = House (v. 6b)

**Aim**

The aim is to show how Jesus is greater than Moes: Moses was faithful in God’s house as a servant; Jesus is faithful over God’s house as a Son. Therefore, Jesus deserves more glory, honor, and obedience.

**Gospel Connections**

**Texts.** Numbers 12:7; 1 Samuel 2:35; Hebrews 1:2;

 **Types.** Priesthood; Apostle = Prophet, God’s house; Moses; God’s Servant; Sonship

**Themes.** Faith/Faithfulness; Glory; God’s Sovereignty;

**Theology.** Christology, Ecclesiology

**Personal Application**

1. Christ is a greater high priest, so consider him and trust in him
2. God’s people are those who hold fast to the Lord

**Verses 1–2: Jesus is Like Moses**

**What do we learn about the brothers?**

* “Holy” = saints (6:10; 13:24) – the rest of the references are to the Holy Spirit (2:4; 3:7; 6:4; 9:8; 10:15), Holy Places (8:2; 9:1, 3, 8, 12, 24, 25; 10:19; 13:11)
* What might the spatial reference to holiness indicate when he calls us saints? We are a people who have access to the holy places.
* And what grants us access? The Holy Spirit.
* This explains the other facet: We are “his house.”
* Holy brothers are the priests who have place in God’s house – cf. Psalm 133–134.
* **So what does this brotherhood tell us about Jesus? About ourselves? Our faithfulness?**

**What do we learn about Jesus?**

* Apostle = delegate, envoy, “Sent One” (Mark 3:13–14; cf. Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:1…)
* High Priest = Aaron; highest office in Israel

**Why are they brought together?**

* They summarize Hebrews 1–2 and they summarize the ministry of Moses
* Moses is more than a priest; he is also a priest-maker
* Moses is a priest and prophet

**What do we learn about Jesus and Moses?**

* Jesus was faithful like Moses was faithful. The comparison between Jesus and Moses turns on the fact that Jesus was faithful to him who appointed him. The emphasis seems to stress the point that Jesus, like Moses, was in faithful in God’s house.
* Later, v. 6 will say Jesus is over God’s house as a son. But there was a time he was in the house and faithful. In fact, his appointment over the house comes from his faithfulness in the house.

**What is the confession he speaks?**

* It is the public witness of the Christian community
* Next two instances – “hold fast to our confession” (4:14; 10:23)
* It is is plural “our confession”
* And it may have something to do with baptism – 1 Timothy 6:12

The ὁμολογία of Hb. is a firmly outlined, liturgically set tradition by which the community must abide. We are to think of an ecclesiastical confession of faith or baptismal confession to which the hearers are already committed—the formula of divine sonship (4:14; 6:6; 10:29) is frequently enough attested as the content of the baptismal confession—or possibly of a liturgy of praise which is connected with the various predicates of Christ (3:1; 4:14f.)[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Verses 3–4: Jesus is Greater Than Moses**

**What is the “house”? (vv. 3–4)**

* House = household = The assembly of God’s people
* Vessel of glory (v. 3) = also the place where God’s glory will dwell
* The builder has yet more glory than the house, just as the One who dwelt in the house exceeded the builders – the builders served the owner / dweller of the house
* There are servants in the house; a son rules over the house; God is sovereign over all houses
* Might v. 4 be a covenantal reference: Moses built the first house; Jesus the second; God is responsible for both.

**What does built mean?**

* The word built means “prepared”
* A way is prepared (Matt 11:10; Mark 1:2; Luke 1:17; 7:27)
* Tent was prepared (9:2; cf. 9:6)
* Ark was constructed (11:7)
* So the idea of house and building is more elastic that brick and mortar construction

**What is the central contrast of this section?**

1. More glory = Jesus > Moses
2. More honor = Builder > House
3. More God = All houses are from God
	1. There’s a house associated with first covenant and Moses is the high priest of that house
	2. There’s a house associated with the second covenant and Jesus is the high priest of that house

**Verses 5–6: Jesus is a Greater High Priest**

**What is similar / different between vv. 1–2 and vv. 5–6?**

* The comparison is still between Moses and Jesus
* Now, the comparison is one of contrast = Jesus is greater

**What are the differences?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Moses was faithful  | Jesus is faithful |
| In God’s House | Over God’s House |
| As a Servant | As a Son |

**Why is sonship better than priesthood?**

1. Son is faithful by nature, not by legal requirement
2. Priests were servants in God’s house
3. Sons were over God’s house
4. Sons are greater priests

**Do you know of any places where sonship and servanthood relate to priesthood?**

**1 Samuel 2:35 –** What does that verse say?

1 Chronicles 17:13–14 – How does that add to the context?

Targum to 1 Chronicles 17:14, the version read in the synagogue reads: “I will make him *faithful* among my people, and in my house.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

**What is Hebrews 3 teaching?**

Jesus is a greater son who is both the king over God’s house and the priest that replaces the old priesthood.

But how can someone not from Aaron’s household be priest?

**What does Numbers 12 teach us?**

1. The debate is the same – who has the right to speak
2. God defends Moses from Aaron and Miriam
3. He proves that Moses is greater than Aaron, so too Jesus is greater than Aaron
4. Hebrews 3 takes Numbers 12 and says Moses wrote to testify of later things
1. William Lane, *Hebrews,* 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid., 56 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Michel, O. (1964–). ὁμολογέω, ἐξομολογέω, ἀνθομολογέομαι, ὁμολογία, ὁμολογουμένως. TDNT, Vol. 5, p. 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. William Lane, *Hebrews,* 60. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)