

Jesus: The More Excellent One

The Excellence of Jesus

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This morning we're going to introduce a little bit of a parenthesis in our exposition of the Sermon on the Mount and do something that has been on my heart for quite a while to do. Nearly three years ago we surveyed the five books of Moses, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, in our Tuesday evening study and I realize that many of you were there and many others were not, but that was the beginning of the revelation of God, what he gave through Moses, and without trying to rehearse all that we said in that series of messages, in the book of Leviticus, God established a sacrificial system by which his people could approach him and what we said at the time was that there is a great problem that the human race has, which means that each one of us has. There is a God and he is holy and then there is you and there is me and we are not holy. We are sinful. We are guilty and God's holy presence cannot admit guilt into it, so the question is how can anyone ever approach a holy God? This is the most important question that anyone could ever ask. How could it be that you could approach a holy God when you are a sinner?

You cannot enter his presence directly. You should not be under the delusion that most people live under that everything will be fine in the end for you, and that if there is a God, that somehow he will accept you just because he should; just because you are you, and after all, you're a pretty important part of the universe. Scripture shatters that delusion and tells us that by nature men are separated from this holy God and that there is no way to approach him in your own righteousness because your own righteousness has been shattered and forfeited and therefore there is nothing but guilt, and what does God do with guilty sinners in the end? He condemns them and he sends them to hell for being an eternal violator of his eternal law.

Well, the beauty of the book of Leviticus is that it taught us, it showed us, it showed the people of Israel, it showed them a way forward. It showed them how they could approach God. And copies of that single message are available on the table out in the lobby. I invite you to pick one up and take it home with you because it does sort of undergird everything that we are saying here. Leviticus teaches us this: it teaches us that God requires an atoning sacrifice for sinners before he would receive them and their worship. And in Leviticus in the days of Moses, those sacrifices were animal sacrifices offered through a human priest and that God had established that as the means by which in that dispensation his people could approach him. Not on their own, not without a sacrifice,

not without blood having been shed in order to cover the worshiper, as it were, as he approached God. So the people offered an animal through a priest and the blood of the animal was taught to be a substitute for their own blood that God would otherwise have required from them. So just in the most basic of terms, we see some of the most fundamental issues of life. We see the great vast holiness of God and this infinite gulf between you and him created by your own sin, by your nature and by your choice to sin. So the question is how can that ever be bridged? How can we ever get beyond that?

Well, as you study the books of Moses, as you study the book of Leviticus and as you study the revelation that followed that, you see this basic point: God was using that system, that Levitical system of sacrifice and priests to teach his people a most important lesson. There must be an unblemished sacrifice acceptable to God that must be offered on behalf of the sinner in order to atone for their sin, in order for their sin barrier to be removed so that they can be received by a holy God. This was critical. This was foundational. This went on for 1,500 years in the Jewish nation as they practiced this system that God had given to them, all designed to impress upon their collective consciousness the need for an unblemished sacrifice to atone for sin, sacrifices offered repeatedly again and again and again.

Now, there may have been a certain carnal appeal to that system as men in priestly vestments conducted the visible rituals to them, but as Scripture teaches us, the mere fact that these sacrifices had to be offered again and again showed that there was something missing, that there was not a finality to them, that there was somehow something inadequate in it. Scripture teaches us, as you would go along, and it should have been evident to anyone who would think about it with any moment of clarity, that ultimately the blood of an animal could never fully put away the sin of men.

Now with that little brief overview, assuming an awful lot of teaching that we've done in the past, flash forward to today. You look around us, we don't have an altar, we don't have a stable of animals in back that we are about to sacrifice. The people of God today do not offer animals. That system has been done away with. Go back into the Jewish mindset for a moment, the sacrifices were visible; you could watch the sacrificial ritual being played out, you could see it with your eyes. We don't have that today, do we? We rely on a sacrifice that we have not seen. We rely on a sacrifice that is not present in front of us in order to approach God. We come to God now, we come to a holy God through the sacrifice of the final Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We need to understand that deeply and profoundly and so did the early church. The earliest believers who had inherited this animal sacrificial system from their forefathers, the earliest believers in the church were Jewish and in that transitional period, they had a mindset that had been cultivated by the Old Testament system but now they had stepped in and were in the first generation of those coming to understand Christ and what they needed to understand, as Scripture records in places like Acts 15 and the book of Galatians and other places, they needed to understand something really fundamental about true salvation, about the person and the work of Christ: it's that Christ came in order for them to break with that system. It's not that Christ was added onto that system

and that you would continue both parallel side-by-side, as if animal sacrifices would continue to be offered after Christ had been offered. No, what you see in Christ when you understand the true and living God as he has revealed himself in Christ, is that Christ came and fulfilled that system and did away with it because he accomplished everything that it had been pointing forward to. And once you have Christ, beloved, you must understand this, especially in these days when there is a fascination with Messianic congregations that want to carry on Old Testament rituals and still somehow proclaim the name of Christ, the purpose of Christ's coming was to do away with that entire system forever and you must understand that.

Now, we have a book in the Bible that was written to help us understand all of those things with clarity and it's the book of Hebrews, and I invite you to turn to Hebrews 10 as we continue this mode of introduction. Hebrews 10 and you might title this message if you're taking notes, you might title this message "Jesus: The More Excellent One." Jesus, the more excellent one. Now, you know from reading the Bible, from reading the book of Acts, reading the accounts of the martyrdom of Stephen and the difficulties that the early church faced at the hand of the Jews, you understand that there was persecution associated with the early believers; that there was opposition that met them, that met the Apostle Paul as he went and proclaimed Christ and how the Jews would work up riotous responses in order to disrupt the preaching of the Gospel. Well, put yourself in the sandals, as it were, of an early Jew in the early church and there is all of this conflict coming into your life and around you simply for the sake of the name of Christ, and the system from which you came from, that you grew up with, is now attacking you for your early naming of the name of Christ. Well, you know, in the early days of that, there you are in your Jewish sandals having somehow named the name of Christ and you see all of this conflict and its human nature that when conflict comes, you want to get out of it and you look for the easy way out.

Side note here, let me tell you that that is a very bad way to approach spiritual life and that is no way for a Christian to live whatsoever, to think that the immediate thing that God would have for you when conflict or difficulty comes into your life, that the first goal of God in that is for you to get out and live in ease. Why would we ever think such things, beloved? Why would we think that that was the path to following Christ? Why would anything like that ever cross our minds? Didn't obedience to God lead Christ into conflict in his earthly life as the Pharisees and the Sadducees and everyone opposed him? Why would we think that ease was the path of the Christian life when Christ purchased us in the path that led him to Gethsemane when he cried out, "O my God, if possible let this cup pass from me." And he wept and he sweat drops of blood because of the intensity of the spiritual conflict that was at stake, and then he goes to the cross and he suffers for us. How could it be that we would think that our salvation which was purchased at the price of blood on the cross was designed to give us a life of ease without conflict in the way that we live? You see, that's not biblical thinking, that's just simply selfishness and we need to think a whole world differently about those things.

Well, the early Jews needed help thinking that way as well and I have you in Hebrews 10, which is good because that's where I want to go now. We're still in introduction here.

Hebrews 10:32, the writer of Hebrews is writing to Jews and recognizing the conflict that they feel in the midst of their suffering and they are at a crossroads in their mind. They're saying, "Do we proceed and follow Christ despite all of this conflict? Or we could go back to Judaism and all this conflict would go away?" And the writer of Hebrews is writing to call them, to warn them, to help them, to strengthen them, and he says in verse 32, "remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated." He said, "Remember your past. There was conflict in the past as you had been enlightened by the teaching about Christ and there was conflict and suffering that went along. Some of you just experienced it personally, some of you had those that were close to you that went through it and you shared in their suffering."

Verse 34 he says, "For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one." But now it has come back. Now apparently it's even more severe and now they are really facing the cost. "Will we go forward with Christ or will we turn back and, as it were, press the button that releases the pressure valve on this and all of it can go away and we can be restored to external peace?" And they are weighing, they are battling what are they going to do with this and the writer of Hebrews 10 chapters in, almost to the end of chapter 10 says in verse 35, "Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised." He says, "You had this prior confidence in Christ that now has been shaken." He says, "Don't throw it away. The answer isn't to abandon Christ. The answer isn't to go back to the old ways of Judaism. The answer is to go forward with Christ; to go forward and if it brings you suffering, to accept that suffering for his name's sake." The writer of Hebrews says this after nearly ten full chapters of showing to them the preeminent excellence of Christ. This call to be faithful to Christ is premised on the argument that he had made in the prior nine chapters and that's what we want to see, we want to see in the most general and sweeping of ways what the writer of Hebrews has said that would justify his claim and his call upon their lives to persevere through suffering rather than abandoning Christ in order to avoid it.

When you see the superior excellence of Jesus Christ, you're not tempted to leave him behind. When you see the superior excellence of Jesus Christ, it girds you and you know that your faith is not in vain. But we need to make these things very very clear and what the book of Hebrews does is this, keeping in mind and now tying together what I said about the books of Moses, what the book of Hebrews does is this: it makes a cumulative argument, in other words, piece by piece by piece and joins different strands of argument together to make one great overarching claim, and based on that overarching claim of the superiority of Christ, calls its readers to continue in faith in Christ and to persevere despite the hardship that that might bring. It teaches the superiority of Christ to everything about the Old Testament system so that we would understand that our faith in Christ is not in vain.

So systematically, section by section, it teaches the superiority of Christ to angels, the superiority of Christ to Moses, to Old Testament priests, to animal sacrifices, and systematically goes through and shows how surpassingly great Christ is over all of those things, going to this point, that given how great Christ is, you honor him by putting your faith and your trust in him and persevering in whatever that brings to you. What will strengthen your Christian life, what will give you the courage to stand out, to accept isolation and rejection from those closest to you, to accept hardship, to accept loss of material things for his sake, is to see the greatness of who he is and that's what we want to see as we're going to walk far too quickly through the book of Hebrews today, next week and at some subsequent third time.

So let's go back to the start of Hebrews now, Hebrews 1. We are going to see that Jesus is the more excellent one and in a very systematic way that greatly appeals to a logical mind, you find the writer of Hebrews showing the excellence of Christ far above and infinitely over anything else that had come before him. So it starts with this, this is our first point for this morning, first of all, we said that Jesus is the more excellent one and we can say this, 1: he is more excellent than the prophets. He is more excellent than the Old Testament prophets.

Now, let me warn you or not warn you, I guess you could take it as a warning, but just advise you that we are going to go through these things all too quickly. I hope that in the future God will allow us to go verse by verse through Hebrews but that's down the road. Today we want to see the major points of it and you can understand from different places that you've been, the value of a broad grander view. Isn't it true that when you go to the mountains, you like to get up to a point, those of you that have been to mountains, you get up to a point and you see the panorama, you see the panorama of mountains extending for miles and the collective grandeur of that has a unique beauty all its own. There is a view and a vision of breadth and depth that transcends what happens when you're climbing the rocks when your face is just inches from the face of the mountain. You have a whole different perspective. Well, what we're trying to do here with this very brief series is to give you the broad panorama, that you would embrace the panorama of the overall message of Hebrews and we'll consider it in detail, hopefully, Lord willing, at some time in the future. So we are going to go rather quickly here.

First of all, what about the superior excellence of Jesus? You can say definitively that Jesus is more excellent than the prophets that went before him. Look at the first three verses of Hebrews 1 where the writer says, "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways," a brief overview look back at Old Testament revelation. He says in verse 2, "in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Now, he opens up by making a passing general reference to the Old Testament prophets and what great men they were. You read about Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel, you read about Daniel, you read about Hosea, Joel and Amos and all of the other minor prophets, you read what they wrote and you are

impressed by the ability and the integrity and the faithfulness of these men. Great men of God but you put them next to our Lord Jesus Christ and you realize that there is no comparison to be made. Hebrews is a study of contrasts and it contrasts Christ with anything that might be offered against him or in addition to him alongside of him, better stated; anything that might be offered alongside of him, it puts them side-by-side and says, "Make the comparison and come to your conclusion." These prophets were mouthpieces of God, that's awesome. Do you know what? Jesus Christ is God. There is no comparison.

Look at what he says in verse 2, he spoke in the prophets in the past, now he has spoken in his Son, and who is the Son? He is the heir of all things. He's the one through whom God made the world. No prophet was remotely like that. Verse 3, Christ is the radiance of the glory of God and perfectly represents his nature. No prophet was like that. The prophets were sinful men of human flesh just like you and me. And Christ upholds all things in the universe by the word of his power. No prophet does that. No prophet ever did, no prophet ever could. Christ made purification of sins at the cross. No prophet ever did that. Christ has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High in the throne room of heaven. No prophet ever did that. Christ is superior, more excellent than all of the prophets and so he opens with this great salvo that helps us see that as much as we might appreciate the ministry of the prophets, that the fulfillment of everything that they spoke of is found in Christ and he surpasses the prophets in every conceivable way.

Let me state it this way for those Jews that would reject Christ as the Messiah: they have made their own prophets absolutely meaningless. If the prophets pointed to Christ, the culmination, Jesus said in Luke 24 that, "Everything that was written about the Scriptures was pointing to Me." Well, if you take Christ out of it, everything crumbles to nothingness. So Christ by virtue of being Incarnate deity is far greater than the prophets therefore we heed him. Not that his ministry was in contrast to the prophets or contradicted it, but it was a fulfillment of it. You follow – watch this – the prophets were pointing with their fingers ahead and when you follow the finger, you follow the line of direction and say, "Oh, there is Christ in all his glory." And the prophet then withdraws his hand, as it were, and says, "That's the whole point. You see the culmination and the fulfillment of that of which I spoke." Think about the transfiguration in the Gospels. Peter said, "Lord, let's build a temple for you and the other two, for Moses and Elijah." God covers them up with a cloud and says, "This is my beloved Son, listen to him." The cloud is withdrawn and they see Christ alone. So the point of the prophets was to point to Christ and as we see Christ, we realize his greater excellence in that way.

Now, as you move on in the argument of Hebrews, the writer makes the point that Christ is more excellent than angels. That's point 2 if you're following along: Christ is more excellent than angels. Look at verse 4 with me. What are angels? They are created spiritual beings, mighty, magnificent, super-mundane powers, so great that even in the New Testament the Apostle John was tempted to fall down and worship, so great was the angel in front of him and what the angel said was, "Don't do that. Worship Christ alone." Well, the book of Hebrews makes this point and shows how Christ is more excellent than angels.

Look at verse 4 as it goes, "having become," speaking about Christ, Christ has become "as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they." There were strains of Jewish thought that were preoccupied with angels and how great angels were. And whenever you hear anybody talking that way, especially in charismatic circles today, and they want to magnify angels and, "Oh, I saw an angel," you can understand and know for certain that they are missing the point completely. Why would you focus on an angel when Christ is here?

This is the argument of the writer of Hebrews and he goes on to say, he goes on and he proves his point by quoting from the Old Testament in verse 5 he says, "For," in order to support my statement that Christ is more excellent than angels, he says, "to which of the angels did He ever say, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'? And again, 'I will be a Father to Him and He shall be a Son to Me'?" God the Father looks at Christ and says, "This is My beloved Son." He never said that to an angel. He never would. Why? Because angels are of an infinitely lower order than the Son is.

And he proves the point further in verse 6, he says, "And when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says, 'Let all the angels of God worship Him.'" You can see the superiority of Christ to angels because God tells the angels to worship his Son. He is superior to them and that's why they are commanded to worship the more excellent one, Jesus. And therefore the point of this is that you should not be drawn to a preoccupation with angels or those spiritual beings in a spiritual realm. As fascinating as fiction books might make them seem to be, they were never intended to be the preoccupation and the object of faith of the people of God. It was always about Christ, Christ and him alone, and that's why even the angels are called upon to worship the Son. And in the greatness of the Son, you leave in your mind the preoccupation with angels behind; this all being drawn to make the point that Jesus is the more excellent one than anyone else could ever or possibly be.

So beloved, you have in Christ one who is above the prophets, you have in Christ one who is above the angels. Now look at verse 13. He makes this point in comparison with the angels in a negative way. He says, "to which of the angels has He ever said, 'Sit at My right hand, until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet'?" He said that to Christ. He said that to his Son. He never said that to an angel and therefore isn't it obvious that the object of our faith should be the Lord Jesus Christ, not a lesser being?

Verse 14 he says, "Are they not all ministering spirits," speaking of angels, "sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?" He tells us in passing what angels are and what they do but it's in the context of the great superiority of Christ to them. So we look past angels, we don't preoccupy ourselves with angels because something infinitely greater of much greater value than them is present before our mind and that greater one is the most lovely and the most excellent and the high and glorious one, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, having made that point, he applies the significance of it to his readers and applies it in a way that each and every one of you in this room needs to pay close attention to as he does. You have before you in Scripture, you have presented to you the highest one, the firstborn of the universe, meaning he has the highest rank of them all and what do you do with that? You should be asking yourself, "What do I do with that?" The writer of Hebrews applied it to his readers and said this, chapter 2, verse 1, "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it." Here's his argument, here's his point, here's the flow of his thought: he says this excellent Christ is better than prophets and he's better than angels and this is the one that has been proclaimed to you, therefore, you should pay attention to Christ.

And he supports that point in verse 2, he says, "For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable," his point being, you can see this in Acts 7 and in Galatians 3, that somehow the angels were involved in the giving of the law through Moses and he says in verse 2, "and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty," watch this, stay with me here, this is all so very very important or we wouldn't be talking about it. His point and his argument is this: Christ is greater than angels but, you know, the angels were involved somehow in the giving of the law of Moses, and in that law delivered by angels, every act of disobedience, every sin, every transgression, was subject to severe punishment from God. This is the law given by angels and there were penalties attached for disobedience to the law given and delivered by angels.

Watch his inescapable point as he goes to verse 3, "how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" He says, "If God punished men for transgressing the law given by angels, what do you think is going to happen when you neglect, reject and are indifferent to something much greater than that which angels could ever give? Angels on a lesser order gave a law that produced penalties and disobedience and judgment. What's going to happen to you when you reject Christ who is greater than angels?" It's an argument from the lesser to the greater. If penalties and judgments were associated with the lesser thing, what do you think is going to happen to those who reject the greater thing? Only greater punishment. Only greater culpability. Only greater accountability. That's why he goes on and speaks, he'll return to this theme later on in the book.

So we could say it this way: the law of Moses was holy, disobedience was punished, Jesus is greater than angels, my friend, what do you think is going to happen to you if you neglect Christ? If you turn away from him? If you walk away? What is going to happen to you if those who had the law as delivered by angels were punished, what's going to happen to you when the greater one is there and you walk away and you neglect him, you spurn him, you reject him, you mock him, you have no interest in him? Your guilt is infinitely greater and therefore the point of that is, the point of it is that therefore, my friends, my brothers and sisters, visitors, those of you who are with us for the first time, the whole point of it is this: is that it behooves you to pay heed to New Testament revelation which points you to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you or I were found guilty of neglecting it, rejecting it in light of the great revelation given to us then, beloved, the only thing we can say is that our blood is on our own head and it is no fault

of God, it is no fault of Christ. It's your own accountability that brings about the destruction of your own soul.

This is important. This matters. Let's put it this way: do you think that the God who decreed this eternal plan of salvation, do you think Christ who left his glories in heaven above in order to come down and pay the price for sinners at the cross of Calvary at great personal cost, at great suffering as he absorbed the wrath of God on behalf of everyone who would ever believe in him, do you think that God would be indifferent to those who hear of those most holy majestic things and say, "I'm not interested"? You're not interested in the greatest act of the universe of all time? You're not interested in the great eternal plan of God? You're not interested in his great Son? You would scorn and insult the King of kings? Well, there are consequences to that, beloved. That means that for your own good, for your own sake, you must pay much closer attention to what has been said in Scripture. Those of you that are straddling the line, those of you that know that you're not in Christ, those young people that are in this room who come week after week and you're part of a Christian family and the truth of the matter is that deep in your heart you really couldn't care less, oh, I do not want to be in your shoes if that's you. There's no excuse. You must pay much closer attention.

Now, the writer of Hebrews goes on and he continues his argument in chapter 2, again showing the superiority of Christ to angels. Look at verse 14 and as he's making his argument about the superiority of Christ, the greater excellence of Christ to angels, he articulates the purpose for which Christ came and took on human flesh. Verse 14, he says, "Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself," speaking of Christ, "likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives." Watch this, "For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham." The purpose of the Incarnation was for Christ to redeem men from the slavery of the devil, from the slavery of their sin, to relieve them from the wrath of God upon their sin. Christ came to help men. He came to help humanity, not angels.

So it's obvious that there is a lesser order to angels than there is to Christ and because Christ has done that, he is in a perfect position to help people just like you. Verse 17 he says, "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Verse 18, "For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted." This is a passage of immense mercy.

I've spoken candidly, I've spoken very directly about your indifference in your sin in response to Christ and in response to the Gospel. Here in this passage, my friends, what you see, the passage that I just read, is an act of incomprehensible mercy, an offer of unspeakably great grace, that Christ came for sinners just like you and in the conviction that you might feel after decades of indifference toward him, to realize that Christ came and offers a free and full forgiveness of your sins through faith in him; that he is able to

come to your aid; he is able to deliver you from judgment; he is able to deliver you from the power of sin; he is able to deliver you from the enslavement of Satan over your soul. And make no doubt about it, Scripture teaches that those who do not know Christ are under the domination of the devil, in his power, and the teaching of Scripture is that our Lord Jesus Christ has the power and the willingness to deliver you from all of that; to forgive all of your sins; to break the power of Satan over your soul; to break the chains of sin that have kept you in darkness. And he is perfectly willing to do so and he invites you to come, by simple faith in him, hearing his promise and saying, "Lord Jesus, I want to be delivered," and he says, "I will gladly do that on your behalf," but you have to come. You have to come. He is a willing Savior and he invites you to come and he says, "Come to me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." In the command to those of you that are in sin, you young people who have grown up under the umbrella of a Christian home and just stubbornly refuse to even give heed to it, you don't know how much we pray for you, that God would somehow open your eyes and shake you awake out of your lethargy, of your spiritual laziness and indolence, and come to Christ. And here, once again, Christ calls you and says, "Come to me and I will give you rest." These things matter. These things are true. These things have consequences.

I tend to highlight the young people, I know there are mature adults who need to hear the same thing. You think God doesn't see your indolent lazy indifference to spiritual things? You think he doesn't see that? Is that just a momentary lapse or is that the mark of your whole spiritual existence that would testify that you never truly have been born again yourself? And I ask you in accord with the Scripture that we read from Galatians 4, those of you who may be getting offended at the moment, have I become your enemy by telling you the truth? Why do we say these things? We say these things to honor the Gospel that has come to us, we say these things for the good of your own soul. Wake up. Wake up and pay closer attention and let your life show forth the fruit that the Spirit of God is truly at work in you.

Christ is greater than the prophets. He is greater than angels. Thirdly, we can say this: he is more excellent than Moses. He is more excellent than Moses. Look at chapter 3. Because he is more excellent, you should give attention to him. Because he is greater than the prophets and the angels, therefore you should give attention to him. Look at chapter 3 as he renews his point about paying attention as he says, "Therefore," chapter 3, verse 1, "Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession." Turn your mind to Jesus. Turn your heart. Turn your will. Turn your obedience to him and give it to him. Verse 2 he says, "He was faithful to Him who appointed Him," he was faithful to the work that the Father had given him to do, "as Moses also was in all His house." He introduces Moses to our consideration.

Now, remembering the Jewish nature of the writers that he was writing to, let me just remind you of something really important so that you follow the flow of his argument and see the force of it with all that it is intended to have. Scripture shows us and teaches us that the Jews boasted of their association with Moses. They delighted in being a part of the people that Moses led out of Egypt. In John 9:27, they said, "We are disciples of

Moses." And so their thought, their conception was that to be affiliated with Moses was the pinnacle. That was the great thing and the writer of Hebrews is about to dismantle that faulty thought that Moses was the apex and that there was nothing further to be had or to be said.

Now, Moses was a faithful servant, though not without sin. Watch the argument, beloved, Moses did lead the people out of Egypt. Moses was the human person who delivered the law of God to the people. Moses does have his name attached to the first five books of our English Bibles to this day. What a great man. He stood face-to-face, toe-to-toe, nose-to-nose with Pharaoh and didn't back down. But Jesus, Jesus is more excellent than Moses.

Look at verses 3 through 6 of Hebrews 3. Speaking of Christ it says, "He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house." Verse 4, "every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. Now Moses," verse 5, "was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later." Moses was faithful, yes, and we are grateful for that, but he was just a servant in the house. Verse 6, "Christ was faithful as a Son over His house." A servant is of no comparison to the Son. Christ is the Son, Moses was a servant. Christ was the architect, Moses was a mere house by comparison. Christ was the genius of the whole plan of salvation, Moses by comparison was a water boy. Oh, he was a good water boy but by comparison to Christ, that's all he was.

So we look to Christ and we honor him greatly, infinitely, far above, infinitely beyond Moses. Moses was a man of like human flesh to us. Moses was sinful and needed a Savior himself. Remember, Moses sinned and therefore wasn't able to enter into the Promised Land. Faithful overall, but still weak and fallen and sinful. Not Christ. Not weak. Not fallen. Not sinful. God over all. Impeccable. Did not sin. Was not able to sin. Incarnate God, uncreated, the second person of the blessed Trinity. That's who Jesus is. Moses has no part in any of that so by very essence you look to Christ, not to Moses. And if you belong to Christ, then the writer of Hebrews is saying you can't go back to the Levitical system. You leave it behind because Christ fulfilled it all. He satisfied all of its demands and having satisfied it, now he is the object of faith. He is the one whom you trust. Christ is the one to whom you look, not to the shadows that Moses established.

Look at Hebrews 3:12 and in light of all of that, he speaks to them with such kindness but with such directness. He says, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." He addresses them directly and based on his pattern, I address each one of you directly here today: take care that there not be in any one of you an evil unbelieving heart that turns away from Christ after his excellence has been presented to you. What do you think will happen to you if you do that? What's going to happen to you if you walk away from Christ? What's going to happen to you if you dismiss this word from Scripture? It can't possibly be anything good and it is only evil indwelling sin in

your own stubborn will that would cause you to do so. There is nothing in God that would influence you to reject Christ. That rejection and that unbelief all comes from inside you. And what's going to happen to you if you give in and you follow the evil dictates of your own sinful heart rather than coming to this most excellent Christ? He's greater than Moses, he's greater than angels, he's greater than the prophets, what's going to happen to you? How do you think God will judge you if you look at that and spit on it and walk away unchanged, unbelieving, preferring sin in this world to Christ? What's going to happen to you? I shudder at the thought. I shudder at the thought.

Jesus Christ is greater than Moses. The writer of Hebrews makes reference to the fact that Jesus is greater and the rest that Jesus offers, the rest that Jesus gives is greater than the rest that was given by another Old Testament figure, Joshua, who we will not make a separate point of this in the outline of the message, but look at verse 8, chapter 4, verse 8, "if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His." Think about it: Joshua led the people into the Promised Land and what was on the other side after they had crossed the Jordan? A lot of years of difficult warfare. What's going to happen to us when we cross into our rest in heaven? Perfect peace. Glorification. The fulfillment of everything. Joshua was a great man of the Old Testament. We have spoken about leadership illustrating principles from his life but Jesus is greater than Joshua and the rest that he gives is an eternal heavenly rest, unlike the earthly, temporal, broken rest that Joshua led the people into.

Do you see the superior surpassing excellence of Christ? Have you come to him? Do you see the significance of which we speak? Because Christ is more excellent, because Christ as we'll see next week is a greater high priest who offered a greater sacrifice, verse 14 of chapter 4, speaking to these who were trembling as they stood at the fork in the road in verse 14 he says to them, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." The writer of Hebrews has become very pastoral at this point. He set forth the great contrast and made clear the consequences of rejecting what he says but he's not speaking with just a stick in his hand, not a rod to beat and discipline with, rather he has upheld the excellence of Christ in order to give his readers, and by extension us today, to give us every possible motivation that we would need to come trustingly to Christ and to continue to follow him; to make Christ the object of our hope, Christ the object of our faith, and to cling to him and to hold to him even if that faith, that identification with Christ, brings hardship and persecution to us.

He says in Christ we have a high priest who has passed through the heavens. He has gone to the very throne room of God where he represents those who believe in him. He sees past through it all. And what is he like at the right hand of God? Merciful. Sympathetic. Understanding. Knowing the difficulty. Knowing by personal experience the difficulty

that life on this earth can bring. Knowing by personal experience the opposition that his name brings in the hearts of the unbelieving. Knowing the conflict of this world though he did not sin in it. Knowing the crowning act of suffering as he went to Calvary for his people. That's who Jesus is, that's what Jesus is like. That's who our great Lord as we look into heaven, as it were, that's what he's like at the right hand of God. Sympathetic, understanding and merciful with the call being to you, those of you who are in Christ, those of you who are struggling, those of you who are wondering if it's worth all of the effort to follow Christ in this life, and the writer of Hebrews comes with the resounding answer that says, "Yes! Yes! Yes, he is worthy! Yes, he is faithful! Yes, he understands! Yes, he is able to help!"

That's who Christ is. That's what he's like and because he is like that, the call goes to you as a believer. Look at it again in verse 16. Though perhaps you were tempted to turn away, though perhaps you have staggered under the load, though perhaps things are all confusion around you today, this great light pierces the fog of your thinking, the fog of your divided heart, pierces the fog of your circumstances and calls on you and whistles to you, as it were, and says to you, "Let us draw near with confidence, with boldness, with a sense of belonging to the throne of grace, to go to Christ and know that in response to our faith he gladly, freely, abundantly dispenses mercy and grace for you in your time of need." That's who Jesus is. That's who our Christ is.

Christian, I know some of you are greatly beleaguered. Christ says come and find grace in your time of need. Those of you who should be deeply convicted, clearly understanding that you are outside of Christ, that you have not to this moment had any love for him in your heart whatsoever, Christ says, "I see that and I offer myself to you once more." Come to Christ and find grace and mercy for you in your deep hour of great spiritual need.

Scripture says you must be born again to enter the kingdom of heaven. Have you been born again? Have you come to faith in Christ? Don't you see after this morning that Christ is preeminently worthy of the worship of every man and woman, boy and girl, who has ever lived, who lives now and who ever will live? His lofty preeminence demands worship. He graciously calls you to worship, to trust him, to come to him by faith and enter into the kingdom of God to have all of your sins forgiven. And rather than being under the deceitful murderous taskmaster of Satan that you would be under the good benevolent rule of the most holy Christ who will gladly represent you and bring you to his Father in heaven and is not ashamed to call those who believe in him brethren. That's who Jesus is.

Friend, I ask you, he's really excellent, isn't he? No prophet can do any of that for you. No one ever did, they were never intended to, they never could. No angel can bring you to God. No foolish charismatic vision can bring you to God. Why would God keep giving visions when he has already spoken in Christ? He said all there is to say. Anything said after Christ would be lesser and God doesn't descend from the perfect to the imperfect. He is greater than Moses. Don't try to find your justification with God through obedience to the law. You can't. Even if you could do it perfectly from this moment forward, which

you couldn't, you have broken his law so many ways in the past. You are a shattered pane of glass. All that is left is to sweep up the pieces and throw them away. You need to be born again. You need Christ to save you. You cannot save yourself. You must come by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved. And because he is greater than the prophets, because he is greater than angels, because he is greater than Moses, because he came to save sinners just like you, you can know with certainty that your faith in Christ is not misplaced. You can know with utter confidence that he will receive you and forgive you forever and bring you into his family. God will call you his child. God will keep you and bring you into heaven. In the weakness of my words, in the weakness of my flesh, I have brought you to Christ but I cannot push you in. You must receive him, you must put your faith in him to be saved. And Christian brother and sister in Christ here in this room with me today, don't you ever think about going back on him. Don't you ever leave Christ. Trust him. Follow him and know that as you do, it's Christ himself that is keeping you in the faith.

Let's bow together in prayer.

I'm going to take a moment of silence to give you all an opportunity to conduct your necessary business with Christ. My unsaved, unbelieving friend, isn't it time to repent and put your faith in Christ? My brother and sister in Christ, as you stagger under the load, won't you express now your trust and confidence in the grace and mercy of Christ to keep you and ask him to help you? Draw near to the throne of grace rather than shuddering under the blankets of your own fear about what you're facing right now.

Our dear Lord, we shake our heads in wonder at the majesty of who you are. God Incarnate, the friend of sinners, the great high priest who has passed through the heavens, having accomplished all the work that the Father gave you to do, having accomplished salvation for your people and now graciously extending yourself to us with mercy and grace in our hour of need. Father, how great is the need here as we speak with you this moment? Mere human flesh speaking of eternal matters that are beyond our power and adequacy to address. Here we stand speaking, Father, with no power in our own hands over the human heart, speaking to souls who will soon enough be before you in judgment, and some so foolishly indifferent, O God, that they dismiss your word so casually, so carelessly, impervious to the pleading of those who would bring the Gospel to them. We are weak, God, but you are strong and you are mighty to save and so we ask according to your power, according to the finished work of Christ, to the great infinite saving and sanctifying power of your Holy Spirit, to do a work in the heart of each one; that you would strengthen the brethren that are with us today; that you would exercise saving regenerating power upon the hearts who have walked into this room dead in sin. Open their eyes and turn their hearts so that they would willingly come by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, confessing sin, abandoning any sense of self-righteousness, nothing in their hands they bring, but God, simply to the cross of Christ they cling. May that be true of many here today. Take these things that have been said from your wordy, sanctify them to each heart and accomplish your perfect will. We thank you that when all is said and done, our lives and destinies are in your hand. May you bless what has been said

*according to your most holy and perfect will. In Jesus' most excellent name we pray.
Amen.*

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