

Hebrews - A Letter Addressed to Modern-Day Christians

Part 6

Our Relationship to Jesus Christ our High Priest

Last time we studied the garments of the Old Testament High Priest and the symbolic meaning they had for ourselves in our Christian life and as background for us to more fully understand the work that Jesus the Christ is doing now as our High Priest at the very Throne of God.

We now continue to follow the theme of Jesus as our High Priest, the reality in Heaven, which was depicted in shadow form by the Levitical High Priest on Earth.

Hebrews 3:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.”*

“Therefore” as a result of what has just been revealed to us about Jesus and how He qualifies above all others to be the perfect, merciful and faithful High Priest.

All of us should *“fix your thoughts on Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest”*.

“Apostle” – one sent forth [John 13:16 The word “sent” in the Greek word “*apostolos*” meaning set apart and set out]. Jesus was sent forth from God to accomplish the task of redemption, and now as “High Priest”, He returned to God to represent the redeemed.

John 10:36 [NIV] *“what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’?”*

John 20:21 [NIV] *“Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’”*

The same Greek word “*apostolos*”.

Whenever you come across the word “*apostle*” always think of “*one who is sent*”.

If the person is not sent, he is **not** an apostle.

Also an apostle is one who has the total authority of the one who sent him, as his spokesman; they could equally be described as ambassadors.

Apostle is a job description and only lasts as long as that person is fulfilling the job, Jesus Christ **not** now an apostle.

“High Priest” Jesus our High Priest is a recurring theme in Hebrews and we will gradually build up understanding of the present office of Jesus.

In Latin, the word for priest is “*pontifex*” which means a bridge builder between man and God. A priest must be able to speak to God for men and speak to men of God.

Jesus fits this role perfectly as no other being ever could, can, or will ever.

We have in this verse the first occurrence of another “key” word “**confession**” [NIV] “*profession*” [KJ]. Greek word “*homologeō*” to speak the same thing, that is to make our words agree with the Word of God.

Also to declare openly by way of speaking out freely; such confession being the effect of deep conviction of facts.

Matthew 10:32 [KJ] “*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.*”

This passage conveys the thought that confessing is total allegiance to Christ as our Master and Lord and of Christ’s acknowledgement of us as His faithful worshipper, servant and loyal follower, that is each identified with the other in thoughts, language and deeds.

Note: Christ as our High Priest is linked with our confession.

No confession, no High Priest!!

Our confession invokes the Ministry of Jesus as our High Priest.

Hebrews 4:14 [NIV] “*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.*”

“*Therefore*”, our natural reaction to the fact we have a High Priest in Jesus the Christ, should be to “*hold firmly to the faith we profess*”.

Hebrews 10:21-24 [NIV] “*and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. **Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds.***”

Thus being an example for others to follow.

A progression of events ending with our confession.

Hebrews 3:1 [NIV] “*Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.*”

Focusing on Jesus is the key to Holiness.

This is very practical, the more our thoughts are focused on Christ’s Word, Christ’s Works for us and Christ’s present office, the less we will focus on this societies ways and works, that are far from “*Holy*”.

Philippians 3:14 [NIV] “*I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me **heavenwards** in Christ Jesus.*”

Forward and Heavenward – we will find that this is the whole thrust of the letter to Hebrews.

Hebrews 3:2 [NIV] “*He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God’s house.*”

Here we have the first occurrence of the key word “**faith**” or “**faithful**”.

Always remember when we see this word in scripture it’s primary use is trustworthy, faithful to what is said, or reliable.

Only means what we believe in the light of how we live.

Faith is character that results from our creed.

Hebrews 3:2 [NIV] *“He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God’s house.”*

Let us again remember the conviction with which the writer of Hebrews starts.

The basis of his whole thought is that the full and supreme Revelation of God comes through Jesus Christ, and that **only** through Jesus Christ can mankind have real access to God.

The writer of Hebrews began by proving Jesus is superior to prophets.

He then went on to prove Jesus is superior to the angels, and now he proceeds to prove that Jesus is superior to Moses.

This might at first sight seem that this is an anticlimax, but it is **not** so for a Jew.

In the thoughts of a Jew, Moses holds a place which is utterly unique.

Moses spoke with God face to face, as with a friend.

Moses was the direct recipient of the Ten Commandments, the very Law of God and the greatest thing in the world to a Jew is the Law.

The Jew looks on Moses and the Law as the same thing – not to be separated.

In the second century a respected Jewish Rabbi, Jose Ben Chalafta, when commenting on **Numbers 12:6-8** where God calls Moses faithful in all his house considered this made **Moses** greater than ministering angels.

Therefore the writer of Hebrews takes the logical step for a Jew to now after angels prove Jesus to be superior to Moses.

Within such proof we can include all the other prophets that appeared before Jesus and have appeared since Jesus and those whom we find in the world today.

Some such prophets have today a very large number of people following **their teaching** over and above that of Christ.

Many religions in this world show the same attitude towards their “*prophet*” as the Jews do towards Moses; therefore what we can learn from this part of Hebrews is very relevant today.

Hebrews 3:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.”*

“*Fix your thoughts*” the word used here [“*katanoēō*”] – to perceive with the senses, observe fully, discover the lesson that God is seeking to teach you through Jesus as Apostle and High Priest.

If we are ever to learn Christian truth, a lacklustre, disinterested, detached glance is never going to be enough.

There must be a concentrated prolonged gaze of all the mind in a determined effort to see scripture’s meaning for us personally.

This is an invitation to share in a Heavenly calling, is a personal invitation from God with our name on it, not to be ignored or even taken lightly. Hence the need to concentrate our total mind power on Jesus.

Hebrews 3:2-6 [NIV] *“He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God’s house. Jesus has been found worthy of greater honour than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house, testifying to what would be said in the future. But Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.”*

The word house in Greek [“*oikos*”] has a double meaning, as it sometimes has today, house in the sense of a building where people dwell but also in the sense of a family such as the “*House of Hanover*” means a family.

In comparison between Jesus and Moses both were faithful towards their “*house*”.

This was based on the testimony concerning Moses as found in **Numbers 12:7**.

But Jesus was [as we have already seen] Creator of the whole universe including all of mankind of which Moses was only one [“*house*”] family.

Moses did **not** create the house [the whole universe is looked on as God’s House, Earth and all its inhabitants a mere footstool of God, **Isaiah 66:1-2**].

Moses was only a faithful steward of one part of the total family [“*house*”] of God.

Moses did **not** create the Law. He only mediated the Law.

Moses did **not** speak of himself; all he ever said was only a pointer to the greater things that Jesus the Christ would some day say.

How do modern day “*prophets*” compare even with Moses, let alone Jesus Christ!!

Moses in short was the servant; but Jesus was the Son.

Moses knew a little about God, Jesus **was** God.

Herein lies the greatness of Jesus and the secret of His unique superiority.

Jesus is the final and complete revelation of God to man. We don’t need additional modern day revelations to know the true Creator God.

Hebrews 3:6 [NIV] *“But Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.”*

The writer of Hebrews uses the same picture to refer to the church as God’s House [family].

For in a very special sense God built the church by bringing it into existence.

This is a picture often used in the New Testament writings [**1 Peter 4:17; 1 Timothy 3:15**].

1 Peter 2:5-7 [NIV] *“you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,”*

Each member of the Church is likened to a stone in that Church. If one stone is weak the whole building is endangered.

The Church only stands firm when each living stone in it is rooted and grounded in the faith of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:20 [NIV] *“built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.”*

Christ the chief cornerstone.

Isaiah 28:16 [NIV] *“So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed.”*

Christ is the fulfilment of the prophecy referred to in **Hebrews 3:6**, etc.

Hebrews 3:6 [NIV] *“But Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our **courage** and the **hope** of which we boast.”*

We have another two key words in this verse.

“Confidence” [KJ] or **“Courage”** [NIV] The Greek word *“parresia”* two root words meaning *“to pour forth the whole”* or *“to pour forth whatsoever”*.

That is freedom of speech.

If we really understand the Good News that Christ brought from God, we will not be restrained from allowing it to burst out from us in testimony by example and words.

Why is it that so often we find it difficult to have confidence to express our hope in action or in words?

I feel that is because Satan knows **if we don’t** express the hope we have in us by way of testimony, we are very likely to forfeit our right to the inheritance we have stored up with Jesus Christ as part of Christ’s *“Holy Brethren”*, so Satan makes it difficult for us to express the hope we have!!

“Hope” Greek *“elpis”* positive confident expectation, happy anticipation of good, and as in this context **only effective if expressed in the way we live**, and hold on to firmly until the end.

Hebrews 3:6 [Inter-Lineal Translation] *“If indeed the boldness and the boasting of the hope **unto [the] end firm we should hold”**”.*

James 5:7-11 [NIV] *“Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near. Don’t grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door! Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.”*

Enduring patiently to the end, **with God it is the end that is decisive**, the weaknesses and failures of past can be dealt with by the Blood of Christ.

What interests God is the growth and end product which He can harvest as a result of what He has sown and nurtured.

This basic principle is expressed time and again in both Old and New Testaments.

Next time we will begin by studying the second passage of very serious warning found in **Hebrews 3:7-11** – a direct quotation from **Psalms 95:7-11**.