

International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
October 9, 2016

Lesson Text: Hebrews 3:1-6; Matthew 7:24-29
Lesson Title: The Builder of the House

Introduction

The central focus in the Letter to the Hebrews is the superiority of Christ. In presenting Christ's superiority, the author does not downplay the role of others God had used in His sovereign plan. The prophets and angels already mentioned in the opening chapters had significant roles, but none of them can or could replace the superiority of Christ.

In Hebrews 3, the author turns his attention to the superiority of Christ over Moses. Among the Hebrew people, Moses had a special place of honor. The nation of Israel had Abraham as their spiritual father, but they became a great nation under the leadership of Moses.

Declaring Christ's superiority to Moses was not designed to downplay Moses' importance. The author compares Moses to Christ because the Hebrew Christians, to whom he is writing, were either drifting back to Judaism or they were considering going back to the law, the synagogue, and the religion in which Moses was supreme. So, the author must show Christ is supreme to Moses, the great lawgiver himself. He must present the truth to the Hebrew Christians that there is no going back into the old way of life.

The author shows Christ's superiority to Moses through the illustration of a "house." God used Moses in building the house of Israel. But Christ built and oversees the house of Israel in which Moses served, making Christ superior as the Builder of the House.

Jesus the Master Builder (Hebrews 3:1-6)

Verse 1

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;"

"Wherefore" means what the author is about to say is based on the conclusions he has reached in the previous passages. The author addressed his readers as "holy brethren." The phrase "holy brethren" appears only here in the New Testament. It refers to "individuals born again as brothers and sisters in Christ, the set-apart ones." The author sees these Jewish believers as those

who have been separated from the mass of humanity by the new birth (John 3:3).

“Partakers of the heavenly calling” speaks of their participation with the call of God to salvation. In other words, they are not “holy brethren” because of anything they have done. God has called them to salvation through “the heavenly calling.” It was God who took the initiative in their salvation. He brought them out of darkness into the light of salvation. The author stresses this so they will not take their salvation lightly.

“Consider” literally means “to put the mind on something, observe carefully and attentively, fix the eyes upon.” The author wants his readers to fix their eyes and mind on “Christ” as “Apostle” and “High Priest.” Christ is called an “Apostle” because God the Father sent Him to give salvation to all who would believe. As an “Apostle,” Christ represents God to man. Christ is called a “High Priest” because He is the believer’s advocate in heaven representing man to God before His throne.

Verse 2

“Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.”

“Who” is a reference to Christ. The first “him” is a reference to God who “appointed” Christ. Christ was “faithful” to God who “appointed him” to be an Apostle and High Priest. Christ was trustworthy, dependable, reliable. Christ was “true to his own nature” in relation to God and man.

The words “Moses was faithful in all his house” is taken from Numbers 12:7 in reference to Moses’ faithfulness in overseeing the building of the tabernacle. In that context, God’s “house” would be the tabernacle itself. Calling Moses “faithful” means he, like Christ, was dependable and carried out the ministry God gave him.

Moses was also “appointed” to deliver the Israelites from Egypt, give them the Law, and lead them to the Promised Land. But Christ was more “faithful” because unlike Moses, He never sinned or failed in any way. Again, the Hebrew author is not comparing Moses to Christ to demean Moses. He is making the comparison to show Christ’s superiority and encourage the young Jewish believers not to return to Judaism.

Verse 3

“For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.”

“This man” is a reference to Christ who “was counted worthy of more glory than Moses.” Commenting on this verse, Doctor John Philipps writes, “Moses certainly derived glory in God's house, and God did not hesitate to give it to him. The fact that Moses is mentioned by name upward of seven hundred times in the Bible and that his name appears in every section of the Bible is proof of that. He was truly one of the cornerstones in God's plans for this world, but it would be ludicrous to magnify a stone, however ornate, important, and key it might be, above the building's designer. Moses was not without his majesty, but he was still a servant and inferior to Christ.” (*John Phillips Commentary Series, The - The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Hebrews: An Expository Commentary.*)

The thought behind the words “inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house” references the fact that the one who builds a house is entitled to more honor than the house or those who serve in the house. The author’s point is Moses was a part of the Old Testament system of worship, a servant in the house; while Christ, was the founder and builder of both the Old and New Testament worship.

Verse 4

“For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.”

Every house is built or made ready by someone. In this particular “house,” Christ and God are called the builder of the “house.” Since all things were created by God through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:2), verse 3 and 4 of our text confirm Christ’s deity. If the young Jewish Christians are contemplating a return to Judaism, they would be worshipping a “house,” or system rather than the Creator of the “house,” Jesus Christ. The author wants them to worship the One who is God, Jesus Christ.

Moses never claimed to be the builder of “all things.” “God” alone has created and “built all things.” Only “God” can make that claim.

Verse 5-6

“And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.”

“Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after” means Moses was not only faithful in his ministry regarding Israel, the Law, the covenants, and the tabernacle, but he was also a faithful witness of the coming Christ (Deuteronomy 18:15; John 5:46; Hebrews 11:24-27). In other words, Moses’ “faithful” ministry pointed to

Christ who would transcend his own ministry. According to the author of Hebrews, the One who would transcend Moses' ministry is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Under Moses, "house" referred to the "house" of Israel. But in this age, "house" is a reference to Christ's position over the church: "Christ as a son over his own house; whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" stresses the fact that believers are the "house" of God. In the Old Testament God manifested His presence in the tabernacle. Today, when a sinner receives salvation, God takes up permanent residence in the believer through the person of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:22; 1 Peter 2:5).

"If we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" stresses the importance of perseverance as God's children. Notice the author's stress here of the importance of continuing to "hope firm unto the end." The author has already stated he believed these young Jewish believers were truly saved (Hebrews 3:1). So his words here are not designed to create doubt or unsettle them in their profession of faith. He wants to make sure they are not resting their hope on a past experience or religious tradition which has no present relation to the living Christ.

Question: The question is not "Have you trusted Christ?" The question is "Are you trusting Christ?"

True believers will continue "rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" in Christ's redemptive work. On the other hand, if someone professes faith in Christ but returns to Judaism or their old way of life, that person reveals he or she may not be a true believer in Jesus Christ.

The Hebrew author's message to the young Jewish believers is, "We are the house Christ's rules. We are His household. We are His brothers and sisters. We are His people." Therefore, we must "hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

The author of Hebrews does not personally know the heart of everyone he is writing to. However, he does know a true Christian believes in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and trusts in Him alone for eternal life. He also knows a true Christian continues in faith and trust to the very end.

Jesus the Master Teacher (Matthew 7:24-29)

Matthew 7:24-27 presents a summary of the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. It is a general conclusion to our Lord's entire message. Although the Sermon on the Mount is Kingdom Gospel, we need to hear Jesus' words as they apply to us today. The Master Teacher tells us how to build a house that will stand the tests of life.

Verse 24-25

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.”

“Therefore” points our attention back to everything Jesus has taught in the Sermon on the Mount. “Whosoever” includes everyone listening then and now. Anyone who “heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them” refers to His words and His words only. In order to build on the right foundation, one must listen, understand, and obey what Christ is teaching (Luke 11:28; John 14:24; 15:14). Many people admire Christ’s teaching as socially and economically beneficial, but have no saving relationship with Christ. What Jesus is teaching in the Sermon on the Mount are “sayings of mine.” He is stressing the relation these words have to Himself.

The individual who hears and obeys the Word of God is likened “unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.” Just as Moses was building the house of Israel in the Old Testament, each of us are building for eternity. This does not mean we work or build in order to be saved, but we are building a life on the foundation of salvation given to us by Christ. He is calling His disciples to build their lives upon the foundation of His person and His words. The authority of who He is, and the authority of His teaching is the only sure foundation.

Those who are “wise” or cautious, build their “house upon a rock.” This “rock” is Christ Jesus. This “rock,” or type of the Rock is mentioned in the Old Testament many times (Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:8; Psalm 28:1; 31:2-3; 62:2). The Apostle Peter and Paul declare this “rock” was Christ Jesus (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 10:4). Paul also said, “*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Everyone’s “house” or life will be tested. Jesus said, “*And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*” The “rain, floods, and winds” represent divine intervention in life. Only the “house” built on the “rock” of hearing and obeying God’s Word will be able to stand in that day.

Verse 26-27

“And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.”

In contrast to the “wise man” who built his house upon the rock, Jesus describes “a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand.” “Foolish” is the Greek word *moros* {mo-ros} which means “dull, stupid, heedless.” This man did not hear “these sayings of mind.” He closed his ears and heart to God’s Word and built on a foundation of “sand.” “Sand” will not stand the “rain, floods, and wind.”

Jesus is not simply asking if people hear His teaching. He is asking if they are building their lives on His teaching. It is nearly impossible to see the foundation of a person. All we can see is what happens when the rain, floods, and wind come. Jesus is telling us when the storms come, when the pressures of life hit us, our foundation will be revealed. The Lord Jesus is not saying we are saved by works. He is not saying we are saved by listening. He is saying all who truly hear the gospel, and who truly profess faith in Him, will always express that faith in their obedience, in their works, and in their lives.

Each of us are building a house. The question is what is the foundation we are building on? Is our house a house built for the here and now? Is our house a house for the then and there? Are we living in light of eternity, or just for the moment? What is important in our lives? What is the priority of our lives?

Verse 28-29

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

When Jesus finished His Sermon on the Mount, “the people were astonished at his doctrine.” Meaning they were flabbergasted (yes, it is a word) by what they heard. They had never heard anything like the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus taught with “authority, and not as the scribes.” The “scribes” quoted others to establish their authority; Jesus was His own authority (Matthew 28:18).

There are many today who teach like the “scribes.” They quote this person and that person and sound so convincing. They go back to the sands of religious tradition and there they build their house. When the rains and floods come their foundation will crumble. Only the words of Christ, spoken in His “authority” will provide a solid foundation.

Conclusion

The author of Hebrews wrote to some young Jewish believers who were at a crossroads in life. They had been saved by grace but were tempted to return to the old religious traditions of Judaism. For these young believers, a return to

Judaism was in essence building on sinking sand. His call to “consider Christ Jesus” was crucial in their perseverance and remaining firm unto the end.

Like the young Jewish believers in Hebrews, each of us are building a house, a life, a future. There are only two foundations on which to build. One is “wise” and the other is “foolish.” One is the “Rock,” the Lord Jesus Christ and the other is “sinking sand” of our own desires and lusts.

Who has the authority to say which way of building is “wise” and which is “foolish?” The answer is “Jesus.” He alone has the “authority” to answer all of life’s questions. If you have come to Christ will you press on or will you go back to the old traditions when times get rough? Will you accept the authority of Jesus and His teachings, or will you build on sinking sand? If Jesus is truly the Son of God and if He is greater than the prophets, angels, and Moses, then He must be heard and obeyed (John 6:68).

Amen.