

## Prayer

Praise the Lord for the way that He reveals Himself to His people! Praise the Lord for the great wonder and power of His resurrection! Praise the Lord for the love He has shown to all people everywhere! Praise the Lord for the forgiveness He has shown towards us all! Praise the Lord for the eternal future that He opens up before us! Thanks be to God, for the glories of the Gospel! AMEN

## Prayer Suggestions

*(Offering alternatives that can broaden your experience of prayer)*

### Prayer ideas

*Pray about your health. Offer to the Lord all those aspects of your health that give you cause for concern, whether small or large, long or short term. Ask Him for healing.*

### On-going prayers

- **Pray for those who do not know the Gospel.** *Pray for those in your own country who do not know the Gospel because they have not grown up in a house or social environment where Christian faith is made known.*
- *Pray for people whose lives are made difficult through poor pay and working conditions.*
- *Praise God for the amazing events that took place after the Resurrection, and thank God for what they mean to you*

## Meditation

The glory of God is incredible,  
It is impressive, and beyond our understanding;  
For we see it in His total command of all things.

The glory of God is revealed,  
It is made known through the empty tomb at Easter,  
The good news of eternal life for all who believe!

The glory of God is essential,  
It is established in the moral nature of our world;  
And enshrined in Jesus' victory of good over evil.

The glory of God is prophetic,  
It is certain that the purposes of God will prevail;  
And the destiny of our world lies in truth and love.

The glory of God is a mystery,  
It is a wonder that can never be defined or grasped;  
Yet He allows us to see just enough to be sure ...

That the glory of God is Himself, and much more!

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## Bible passage - Hebrews 3:1-6

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, holy friends who share in the heavenly calling, take notice of the apostle and high priest of our confession, Jesus. <sup>2</sup> He was faithful to the one who appointed Him, as was Moses from all of God's household, <sup>3</sup> but He is worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the founder of a household has more respect than the house itself. <sup>4</sup> (For every house is built by someone, but the founder of all things is God.) <sup>5</sup> Now from out of all God's household, Moses was faithful as a servant, testifying to what would be said in the future. <sup>6</sup> Christ, however, was faithful as a

Son placed over God's house; and we are His house if we firmly grasp the assurance and the confidence of our hope.

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## Bible Study

### Review

What a wonderful and expressive passage! The first two chapters of Hebrews contain a powerful description of Jesus Christ, who as the Son of God, came to earth at God's behest to identify with humanity and ultimately to bring salvation. Now, the author calls on his readers to give Jesus the honour of affording Him a greater glory even than Moses. Moses was of course the founding figure of Jewish religious practice and its first High Priest, but Jesus has become the founder of God's House (3:6) and the '*High Priest of our confession*' (3:1).

Many of those who first read the letter had spent a lifetime in Judaism, doing what they believe to be right before God according to the teaching of Moses. Their religious practices were based on the Old Testament but had been extensively developed over centuries. Consequently, Hebrews pays great respect to Moses, singling him out as a faithful servant (3:2,3) who did what God required of him. It nevertheless tells us that however impressive Moses was he was only ever a member of God's household like every other man or woman in the lineage of Abraham. By contrast, Jesus was the 'Son of God' (3:6) who therefore had greater authority in God's house, and for this reason should be given greater honour, above that of Moses.

One interesting feature of this passage is the way that the writer describes God's people, the Church. At the beginning of this passage, they are called '*holy friends who share in the heavenly calling*' (3:1). This is wonderfully descriptive of the bond that holds all Christians together, but it is not immediately obvious from this passage what the '*heavenly calling*' is. The best way to explore this is to look back at the previous chapter, which speaks of Jesus' work to release people from the slavery of sin and set them free as children of God (2:15f.). The '*heavenly calling*' of all Christians is therefore to find God in Jesus Christ.

The central section of the passage (3:2-5) goes on to say more about Christ and His place within God's church. The writer was aware of the huge and abiding influence of Moses on Judaism, and used this known fact to draw a comparison. He said that however much the Jews honoured Moses, more honour should be given to Jesus within His church. He argues that because Jesus is the 'Son of God' (3:6), and therefore the '*founder of all things*' (3:4) together with God the Father, He is therefore far greater than Moses. It was vital that this argument was won, for many early Christian Jews (Hebrews) were so steeped in the laws of Moses they found it hard to think that Jesus' life and death was a bigger and more extensive revelation of God.

Then at the end, we return to the idea of God's people as unified in Christ; '*we are His house if we firmly grasp the assurance and the confidence of our hope*' (3:6). This verse confidently asserts that Christian faith is based upon the hope of salvation in Christ (as previously), and appeals to us to take hold of this confidently. Surely, Christian faith must be something that is publicly observable; it is not to be hidden, it is to be enthusiastically portrayed through everything done by God's people, the Church.

The letter delivers a clear message to early Christian Jews. Christian faith was not a matter of incorporating Jesus into Judaism according to Moses, because Jesus comprehensively replaced Moses. For this reason, the laws of Jesus replace the laws of Moses; they do not merely add to them or reinterpret them. It is important for us to realise today that this argument had to be won in the early days of the church, lest Christianity become a religion of sacrificial legalism. Today, we do not slaughter animals or believe that such deeds will appease God's wrath, as the laws of the Old Testament teach. We believe that Jesus fulfils these laws in Himself; so, for example, the Old Testament laws of worship do not tell us how to worship God, they explain and help us understand the life and witness of Jesus.

Our passage today also reveals the unashamed and joyous nature of Christian faith. The writer of Hebrews had no time for private and emotionless faith. His was a faith of open confession (where the word 'confess' means 'to agree with'), in which Jesus Christ was publicly proclaimed. We may not be worried today about the church being overcome by zealous followers of Moses, but the passage can encourage us to confess our faith with open and public confidence. Our salvation is shared with all who have faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

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## Discipleship

### **Questions** (for use in groups)

1. What does this passage tell you about the place of Moses in Judaism and the place of Jesus Christ within the Church?
2. How is Christ's Church built today, especially in an age when many Christians rebel against the church as they perceive it?
3. In what sense can it be shown that Christ is the 'head of the house' within your church?

### **Personal comments by author**

*One of the most significant parts of this passage for me is the last verse which speaks about assurance and confidence. I meet so many Christians who express uncertainty about their faith, perhaps after family tragedy or personal problem, I have become concerned as to whether some have ever known real certainty of faith or confidence in Christ. I know that it is possible for any of us to lose confidence for a short time, but it is sure not right for the church to be a place of uncertainty! Let us argue every issue to find the truth, but share a common faith in Christ who has done all things necessary for our salvation!*

### **Ideas for exploring discipleship**

- **Something to think about** : *What does the phrase, 'the assurance and the confidence of our hope' mean to you? Are you truly confident in your salvation, or are there doubts in your mind about your ultimate destiny in God?*
- **Something for you to do**: *Three times in the course of your day, say a prayer that expresses your faith and pray it boldly. See if this helps you take hold of your faith with greater confidence.*

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## Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, You have done a good work in me; may I not fail to stand firm in my faith and hold on to the truths You have taught me. Help me to face my own problems rather than ignore them, and I ask You to liberate me from their power. Lift my heart to praise Your name, Lord Jesus, both now and forever more:  
AMEN

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