

Hebrews

Hebrews 3:1-6 - “We are his house”

Part 11 was about “fixing our thoughts on Jesus our high priest whom we confess,” by showing what the high priest did on the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16, and why. “What” the high priest did was go through a prescribed list of rituals that “made atonement” for the sins of Israel, that also cleansed the Israelites from all their sin, including the embarrassing and downright dirty sins the Israelites either didn’t know about - or didn’t want anyone else to know about. “Why” the high priest then went through these rituals was to free up the Israelites from all guilt and shame so they could step out in confidence that God was still willing to work with and through them in setting up his Kingdom on Earth.

And the author of Hebrews brings all this to mind in **Hebrews 3:1** to remind the Christians in his care that this is what **Jesus** became a high priest for too. Jesus also came to “make atonement for the sins of the people,” **Hebrews 2:17**, which in turn freed them up as Christians to step out boldly in total confidence that God was more than willing to keep working with them and through them in his universal plan to restore things back to the way they should be, as originally intended in the Garden of Eden.

But what’s all this in **Hebrews 3:1** about Jesus also being called “the **APOSTLE** whom we confess” too? Well, it was to fix their thoughts on **why Jesus had been sent**, because that’s what being “an apostle” meant in Greek. It’s “apostolon,” which translates into English as “one who is sent off.” It was first applied in Scripture to the 12 disciples of Jesus “whom he named apostles” in **Luke 6:13**. They were also called “apostles” right after they’d returned from being sent off by Jesus (on a kingdom-announcing trip) to “gather round Jesus and report to him all they had done and taught” in **Mark 6:30**. Other words we could use for apostle, therefore, would be “envoy,” “messenger,” or “emissary” from the Latin “missio,” from which we picked up the word “missionary” in English. It certainly gets the idea across that there are people whom God sends, and with a specific purpose in mind.

And we see why the word “apostle” is so important when referring it to Jesus, because when the Jews asked him in **John 6:28**, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus replied in **verse 29**, “The work of God is this: **to believe in the one he has sent**,” referring, of course, to himself.

And in **John 17** at the end of his ministry, when he too is reporting in to his Father all that he'd done and taught, he summarizes it by saying in **verse 8**: "they believed that you sent me." "They" in this case is specifically referring to "the ones you (Father) have given me" in **verse 9**, meaning his disciples, so we see here just how important it was to Jesus that **his disciples** believed he'd been sent by the Father. He also prayed that "the world may believe that you have sent me" in **verse 21**, and in **verse 23** that all those who "believe in me" (verse 20) will be "brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me." So that's three times in Jesus' report to his Father summarizing his work, that everyone, from his own disciples to other believers in him through the ages, and finally the whole world, comes to believe that the Father had sent him.

And I've often wondered what he meant by that. Well, here was a grand opportunity to find out, because we're at that point in Hebrews when Christians who've been drifting off track are being brought back on track by fixing their thoughts on Jesus being an "apostle," and therefore getting it clear in their minds again that the Father had sent Jesus for a purpose. And it was vitally important that they believe that purpose and understand what it was.

But the context in which it's put in **Hebrews 3** seems a bit odd, because the author of Hebrews jumps in with the example of Moses. He writes in **verse 2**, that Jesus "was faithful to the one who appointed him just as Moses was faithful in all God's house." So why the comparison with Moses? Well, for a start, God sent Moses for a specific purpose too. It's in **Exodus 3:10** when God tells Moses, "So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

That's the first point, that God sent Moses, so Moses was like an apostle too. But sent him to do what, exactly? The verse says he was sent to "bring my people out of Egypt." And according to **Hebrews 3:2**, "Moses was faithful" to that "heavenly calling" (verse 1). What God from heaven had called and sent Moses to do, therefore, Moses fulfilled to a tee. So when God sends someone it's because he has a purpose that the person he sends will do. Which is good to know because the same point applied to Jesus. God sent him and he too "was faithful to the one who appointed him" (verse 2). Whatever purpose God had in mind in sending Jesus, then, was also fulfilled to a tee.

So what was that purpose? For Moses it was being "faithful in all God's house," **verse 2**, or, as other translations bring out, "he was faithful when entrusted with God's entire household." To God those Israelites were his family - his entire family, in fact - so this was his very own family he was rescuing.

The Israelites were like the wife and kids stuck inside a burning house, and the husband sending in the firefighters to save his family. It was that personal to God too, because the Israelites were his family, his entire household. They were “my people” in Exodus 3:10, just as we call our families and those in our home country “my people.” So when God sent Moses it was on a personal mission, a heavenly calling from God himself, to rescue “MY people, my household, my family.” And to make sure it happened God chose a man who’d do that job faithfully.

And his chosen man did the job he was sent to do all right, **Hebrews 3:5**, because “Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house,” and in so doing (verse 5 still) he was also “testifying to what would be said in the future” about Jesus, that Jesus would also be faithful “to the one who appointed him.” Moses said it himself in **Deuteronomy 18:15**, that “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him,” which **Acts 3:22** also quotes and brings right up to date as referring to Jesus.

So what we’ve got so far in Jesus being called an “apostle” is this picture of God sending Moses on a highly personal mission to rescue his family - God’s very own household - out of the corrupting, evil influences of Egypt. And this is the reason we fix our thoughts on Jesus, because God sent him to us Christians - his entire household today - for the same reason. God deeply cares about us, and his proof of it is sending his very own Son to be our rescuer from all the corrupting, evil junk in our culture too.

And what makes this so personal to God in sending Jesus is that “Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house,” **Hebrews 3:5**, but, **verse 6**, “Christ is faithful as a SON over God’s house.” Moses was like the head butler, a “servant,” but we get the family head, the actual SON of the one who got this whole household of God started in the first place. And being the Son, Jesus is as dedicated to the family home and household as his Father, which you see all over Britain today in huge family mansions and estates being kept alive by sons and family heirs giving up their entire lives to preserving the family home. And there is nothing more important in their lives than that.

And there has been nothing more important to Jesus too, as we see in **John 17:4** when Jesus says to his Father, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do” - the work of “revealing you to those whom you gave me out of the world,” **verse 6**. In other words, God sent his Son to reveal that he, God, was in actual fact a Father, and therefore the head of an actual family household, which he was kick starting through Jesus’ disciples.

That's why he'd sent his Son and not a servant like Moses, because it was sons that the Father was now creating. He was setting up his very own household full of his children on this planet, just like he'd originally intended through Adam and Eve. Call it the "kingdom of God" or the "household of God," it's the same thing. They both describe God setting up his family estate on this earth just like he'd originally intended in the Garden of Eden, to create his home on this earth and a whole household of children equipped in his likeness to carry his glory and wisdom to all creation. And Jesus had been sent to get that started all over again, this time through the disciples that the Father had given him.

So when Jesus said in **John 17:8** that it was so vitally important that his disciples believe the Father had sent him, it was because of what the Father had sent him to his disciples for. The disciples had become the first members of God's household, the first of the Father's brood of children that would make up his household and family estate (or kingdom) on earth again, and it was Jesus' job to help his disciples grasp that - that God had again done with Jesus' disciples what he'd begun in Genesis, which was set up his home on this earth and make humans his children and members of his household.

Adam was even called "God's son" in Luke 3:38. He was the first in line, the first son and heir of God's household, therefore, whose life, like Jesus' life, would be totally dedicated to setting up and preserving his Father's estate. But Adam and Eve had decided to ignore God's purpose and set up their own estate, based on the lie the serpent told about God. And what a clever lie it was too, because it gave a totally wrong picture of God. It destroyed all belief in God being their loving Father, which in turn destroyed their loyalty to his purpose. No longer did they see themselves as God's children or God's household and preservers and developers of God's estate.

And what a pity that was, because even on a human, physical level without God's Spirit, there are men and their wives today who've given their all to growing and preserving the family mansion and its huge acreage, and done a superb job of it. They've improved and upgraded the family estate in each generation of children to the point that some estates are functioning beautifully, making money off tourists and selling fruits, vegetables and meat from their own farmed land - and they've pioneered self-sufficiency in electrical power generation and water use too.

Well, as Christians, we know God has sent such a Son to us, whose deepest desire is to grow and preserve his Father's family estate too, and to pioneer all sorts of things on this Earth through his disciples.

That's because God sent his Son to give Jesus' disciples the right picture of himself as the Father. What the serpent destroyed for Adam and Eve in giving them a wrong picture of God was totally corrected by Jesus. It was what God sent him to do, to get what began and failed in the Garden of Eden on the right footing and foundation again.

And it was all based on this picture of God as "Father." When Jesus prays in **John 17:6**, "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world." The word "you" in that verse in Greek is actually "your name." So Jesus came to reveal that the great God they were in contact with was, in fact, called "Father." That was his name.

This was staggering information for those who believed that God was a single "One God Being" called YHWH. The Israelites had used other names for God, like Elohim and Adonai, but YHWH had been the name most used by the Jews since returning from their exile in Babylon up to the time Jesus arrived on the scene. Jesus then arrives and rather than referring to God as YHWH he refers to God as his Father, but even more startling was his statement that he and this Father God "are one" (John 10:30), and that he was "in the Father," and his Father was in him (John 14:11).

So God was now Father AND Son, which made sense, though, because how could God be called a Father unless he had a Son, or a child? You only become a father when you have children, right? But what a revelation, that in God being called Father it meant God was both Father and Son. In other words, Jesus was sent to reveal God as being a family, a household, even in the meaning of God's name too.

This was a completely new revelation, that God was in fact the name of a household. It was a family name, as we see again in **John 17:11** when Jesus prays, "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name." So Jesus reveals yet again that God goes by the name Father, and how important that is to his disciples, knowing that they are literally God's children. It's meant to have a powerful impact on them.

But then there's a dash in that verse next, when Jesus immediately adds, almost as an afterthought "- (dash) the name you gave me - (dash)," and then he finishes off the sentence with, "so that they may be one as we are one."

Jesus seems to be saying that the Father's name is also the name the Father gave him, but how could Jesus be called "Father" too? It doesn't make any sense. And where does Scripture say the Father gave his name to Jesus?

In Scripture the name the Father gave Jesus was “Son,” as we saw at Jesus’ baptism when God said, “This is my beloved Son...” The power of the Father’s name, therefore, is also in the name “Son” that he gave to Jesus, because it shows that God is both Father AND Son. And there’s power in knowing that, because it makes God a family that we as disciples of Jesus become members of too, which in fact is what God created humans for in the first place.

Jesus then says exactly that in the last part of **John 17:11** when he says the power of knowing God as both Father and Son is “so that they (Jesus’ disciples) may be one as we are one.” In other words, knowing God is a family has real power in the life of a disciple of Jesus, because Jesus is saying we can be one with him and his Father and just as much members of their family as they are. We’re members of their household too, as if we’re in Buckingham Palace as actual relatives of the Queen, and not tourists or employees.

But notice also in **verse 11** that the context of all this is protection. Jesus is praying to his Father to “protect” his disciples through the power of his name. Well, with God now being understood by his name “Father,” of course he’ll protect his children. But for Jesus this is powerful knowledge he’s specifically praying his disciples will grasp, because the Father now being their Father too means they are utterly safe in his care.

But Jesus goes one step even further than that, because knowing God as both Father AND Son means the disciples have the protection of the Son as well, which is exactly what Jesus says next in **verse 12**, when he says, “While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me” - with the exception of Judas (**verse 12** still), but he was predicted to do what he did, not because Jesus failed to protect him.

And how did Jesus keep his other eleven disciples safe? By the name “Son” the Father had given him. “Son” meant Jesus had the same power in his name that the Father’s name carried, so now the disciples had double protection. Which clearly they would need “to keep them safe,” as we see in **Luke 22:31-32**, when Jesus tells Peter that “Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail.”

Satan knew Peter had a weakness, that Peter could talk a good fight but when the chips were down Peter lacked the faith to follow through. Peter says to Jesus in **verse 33**, for instance, that “I’m ready to go with you to prison and to death,” but Jesus knows Peter all too well, and tells him in **verse 34**, “before the rooster crows you will deny three times that you know me.” It would be a tough lesson that Peter would never forget.

But it got the lesson across, that disciples especially are on Satan's hit list at all times, and we can easily think we can defend ourselves against him, but we need all the protection the power of both Father and Son can give us.

Which ties in very nicely with where we're at in **Hebrews 3:6**, that "Christ is faithful as a son over God's house." And there's great power in knowing that. Jesus being Son and protector of God's household means he'll never let us down. He'll keep his church alive no matter what Satan tries to do to it. So those who understand this is why God sent Jesus, who then look to him to keep them safe, will be kept safe, because, as **verse 6** says, "we are his house."

As Jesus' disciples we belong to his house. We are his people, his household, the ones his Father has given him the power to protect too. And Jesus is fiercely protective of his Father's household and his own brothers, as we saw back in **Hebrews 2:14** when Jesus died to destroy the deathly power of the devil. That's what it took to protect us, so that's what Jesus did. We can have absolute confidence, therefore, that he will care for us.

But I notice there's an "IF" in **Hebrews 3:6** as well, that "we are his house IF we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast." We can rightfully "boast" that we are totally safe in Jesus' care, but there will be times when our courage and hope will be put to the test.

I think of those Christians being severely persecuted in several countries today, who've been shot, bombed and hacked to death. So, where was Jesus, and why didn't he protect them? Well, he did warn us that we'd be persecuted and hated, and people will "falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me" (Matthew 5:11). But he also said in **John 14:1**, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me," because, **verse 2**, "In my Father's house are many rooms, and I'm going there to prepare a room for you," and "I will come back and take you to be with me," **verse 3**, "so you can be with me where I am." We have a faithful elder brother who takes deep pleasure in reminding us that as members of God's household we are guaranteed an honoured position in his Father's house that he prepared for us himself.

The Christians in Hebrews, however, were losing their hope in that, because many of them were being heavily persecuted by their fellow Jews for focusing on Jesus rather than Moses, when surely it was clear with the temple still standing in Jerusalem that the old dispensation of Moses was still in place. But, the author of Hebrews replies in **Hebrews 3:3**, "Jesus has been found worthy of greater honour than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honour than the house itself."

But why was Jesus worthy of more honour than Moses? The answer is in **verse 4**, “For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.” So what is GOD building? And specifically, what is he building **through his Son** that he didn’t build through Moses?

Well, that’s what we’re learning here in Hebrews, that first of all Jesus is the head of the great household of God, God’s great family of children that his Father appointed him to faithfully take care of, to fulfill what God has a household of children for.

Which brings us to the second reason that Jesus is worthy of more honour than Moses. It’s because of what Jesus is ALSO head of: he’s not just the head of God’s household, or the God family home that he’s faithfully taking care of it, he’s also head of what God has his household of children for, which, as we learnt in **Hebrews 2:7-8** is one day to “crown them with glory and honour and put everything under their feet.”

In other words, Jesus is the head of a great dynasty of kings and queens who one day will be ruling over the entire planet. They will be the leaders in the kingdom of God. So they’re not just the family of God they’re the ROYAL family of God too.

So the phrase “we are his house” in **Hebrews 3:6** has two meanings. We are the house of God meaning we are God’s household, his great brood of children he loves, whom he’s given charge of to his Son to faithfully take care of. We are also the house of God like the Queen’s family is the “house of Windsor,” meaning a dynasty in training to rule.

We have both forms of that “house” beautifully portrayed for us in Buckingham Palace, which first of all, is a household, the home of the Royal Family. But it’s also the House of Windsor, where the future leaders of the Commonwealth are being trained. It’s both a royal household and a royal house in training, and it’s both these things that God is building through his Son.

By comparison Moses’ job was similar to that of Jesus, in that he too had been appointed by God to faithfully take care of God’s children, the children of Israel - and he’d been trained personally in a king’s palace. And from him would come a whole dynasty of royalty through the centuries, including King David, to whom God promised the everlasting dynasty of Jesus. But Moses was just a servant in that process, the one through whom God started the building of his royal household and royal dynasty, but Jesus was the one God appointed to complete it.

But who would Jesus be completing God's royal family and dynasty through? Through, of all people, his disciples, the church, which is what the author of Hebrews wanted the people in his care and his congregations to understand. They needed to grasp and remember they were "brothers sharing in the heavenly calling," **Hebrews 3:1**, that heavenly calling being to fix their thoughts on what God was building through his Son through them.

But looking back through church history this has proved to be an extremely difficult thing for Jesus' disciples, the church, to grasp, because instead of focusing on the two things GOD meant by "we are his house," we've focused on the word "house" meaning physical buildings like cathedrals, and every city and village having church buildings with steeples and towers reaching higher than all the other buildings.

But why did we do that when Paul said in **Acts 17:24**, "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and he **does not live in temples built by man.**" But how many well-meaning Christians have totally ignored that and built the biggest churches in town on the highest hill or most prominent place, and there they stand as ageing, antiquated, stone-cold, money-draining monuments to our folly as Christians. And we now face the humiliation of churches having to close their doors due to lack of people being able to support them, or we depend on gawking tourists who are there simply to gaze at the buildings, not to seek what God created his church for.

It may be well-meaning for Christians to want to build a "house for God," (or to God) to reflect his glory, reminiscent of King David's desire to build a house for God too. But Jesus made it clear in **Matthew 12:6** and **John 4:21-24** that the era of temple buildings was over because he was now the temple of God, and so was his church (**1 Corinthians 3:16**). And in the new heavens and new earth there isn't any temple either, "because the Lord Almighty and the Lamb ARE the temple." Solomon's temple, meanwhile, only lasted 400 years, and Herod's temple only 46 years, and it was still unfinished when it was totally destroyed right down to its foundations in 70 A.D.

We've spent billions on building and preserving our human edifices, focusing people on the buildings not on the builder (exactly what **Hebrews 3:3** says), and we pat ourselves on the back for how glorious these buildings are, when right from the beginning God made it clear he came to dwell with us and in us as his means of spreading his glory throughout creation, not in buildings made by us. He built US to be his house. It was never his idea to build temples or any other building to dwell in. He had the tabernacle set up in the desert, yes, but it was just a tent, and a temporary one at that, not a building.

God has already built his house and we are it, **Hebrews 3:6**. The implications of that are enormous, then, because it means we are his royal family and royal dynasty in training. But that's why we're called children of God and disciples, to get the point across that we're members of God's royal family household destined and being trained to become the royal dynasty of God ruling this world in the future.

It's understandable if Christians shy away from that, because who are we to rule anything? But that's why we fix our thoughts on Jesus and why God sent him, because Jesus will care for us and get us trained. It's what God appointed him to do, and Jesus will faithfully do it if we, for our part, "hold on to our courage and hope of which we boast," **verse 6**.

So, I ask myself, do I boast of my courage and hope? Well, I jolly well can and ought to, because of these verses in Hebrews 3. As a disciple of Jesus, which I assume I am, I share the same heavenly calling all the other disciples of Jesus have received through the ages. The Son of God and head of the Father's household and head of the Royal Family of Planet Earth in the future too - has by royal decree chosen me. I can't for the life of me understand why he did that with the likes of me, but I discover here in Hebrews that he's as proud as punch to call me his brother (Hebrews 2:11). And by "brother" he means of "the same family" (verse 11), meaning I'm as much a member of the Father's royal household as Jesus himself is.

Approaching our Father now, therefore, is like having the guards of Buckingham Palace step aside to let us through the doors to the Palace so we can walk right in to a hearty family welcome from the Father and Son. I can even imagine what it's like having the Father and Son set up their family home and palace WITH ME, as Jesus said in **John 14:23**, that to anyone who loves Jesus by obeying his teaching, "we (Father and Son) will come to him and make our home with him."

There's a lovely part in the TV series "Victoria," where Queen Victoria's lady-in-waiting has been confined to a lunatic asylum by her jealous husband, but the Queen by royal command has her released, because, she said, "I want you by my side." Imagine having the Queen saying that to us too. But the king of the entire planet IS saying that to us and he wants us imagining it too, to give us courage and hope so real we cannot stop ourselves boasting to people that no matter what their personal troubles or the world's troubles are, everything is going to be all right. And why do we believe that so strongly? Because we've understood why God sent his Son. It's to convince the whole world that he loves them as much as he loves his Son, **John 17:23**.

But where is the proof that the Father loves all us humans as much as he loves his Son?

It can be seen in Jesus' disciples now, who know what it's like to be loved by the Father and Son, know we are being cared for, know we're being protected from the devil, know God loves making us his children and actually making his home with us, know he's getting us ready for our future, and know that both Father and Son want us by their side forever, and what confidence and peace that gives us, and what courage and hope we are just full of. We are bubbling and boasting to bursting point that despite all that we see going on down here, one day, thanks to God sending Jesus as an apostle and Jesus "being faithful to the one who appointed him" (Hebrews 3:2), we'll all be "with Jesus where he is, and (we'll all) see his glory," **John 17:24**, in God's house and home together forever.