

October 9

Lesson 6

# BUILDER

## OF THE HOUSE

DEVOTIONAL READING:: Hebrews 10:19-25

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Hebrews 3:1-6; Matthew 7:19-29

### HEBREWS 3:1-6

<sup>1</sup> Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. <sup>2</sup> He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. <sup>3</sup> Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. <sup>4</sup> For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. <sup>5</sup> "Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house," bearing witness to what would be spoken by God in the future. <sup>6</sup> But Christ is faithful as the Son over God's house. And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory.

### MATTHEW 7:24-29

<sup>24</sup> "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. <sup>25</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. <sup>27</sup> The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

<sup>28</sup> When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, <sup>29</sup> because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.



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### KEY VERSE

*Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.—Hebrews 3:3*

### LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. List some implications of the fact that Jesus is the greatest and final authority because of his identity as God's divine Son.
2. Compare and contrast the significance of the word *house* in the Matthew and Hebrews segments of the lesson text.
3. Identify the part of Christ's spiritual house(hold) that is most in need of repair and commit to helping to correct the problem.

## LESSON OUTLINE

### Introduction

A. The Presence of Greatness

B. Lesson Background

### I. Faithful Builder ([Hebrews 3:1-6](#))

A. Like Moses ([vv. 1, 2](#))

B. Greater than Moses ([vv. 3-6](#))

*Side-by-Side Comparisons*

### II. Faithful Teacher ([Matthew 7:24-29](#))

A. Wise Plan ([vv. 24, 25](#))

B. Foolish Plan ([vv. 26, 27](#))

C. Ultimate Authority ([vv. 28, 29](#))

*Cite the Highest Source*

### Conclusion

A. The Greatness of Jesus

B. Prayer

C. Thought to Remember

## Introduction

### A. The Presence of Greatness

Some people are fortunate to observe exceptional talent before it is widely recognized. They see a young athlete perform, hear a budding musician play, or listen to an emerging leader deliver a speech. The discerning recognize that they are experiencing something remarkable. When the talented individual later rises to prominence, the early witnesses are able to say, "I knew I was in the presence of greatness even way back when."

In some ways, Jesus appeared as an unexceptional person ([Isaiah 53:2b](#)). Yet in ways that some perceived at the time, he was unlike any other. In his resurrection from the dead, God confirmed that Jesus was indeed like no other! No mere prophet or wise man, he was God's divine Son, the one who fulfilled all of God's great promises.

In our lesson today, we will consider two texts that emphasize this. The first will show us how Jesus compared and contrasted with God's leaders who came before, thereby demonstrating him to be fundamentally greater than all others. The second will remind us how Jesus demonstrated greatness by the authority with which he taught, even before his resurrection.

### B. Lesson Background

Our first segment of our lesson text is from the book of Hebrews. The background is therefore the same as that of last week's lesson, and that information need not be repeated here.

Our second text is from the end of Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount as [Matthew 5:1-7:29](#) records it. The lowly son of a carpenter from the lowly town of Nazareth was in the first of his three years of earthly ministry. He was on his first general tour of Galilee ([4:23-11:30](#)) as he taught what it means to be subjects of God's kingdom. He spoke with an authority that could only belong to God. To listen to Jesus and obey meant blessing; to ignore him meant ruin.

Hebrews explains how Jesus, the divine, authoritative Son of God, fulfilled God's promises. Matthew shows how Jesus' one-of-a-kind greatness was revealed in what he said and did. Together they declare that to follow Jesus is to be in the presence of greatness.

## I. Faithful Builder

([HEBREWS 3:1-6](#))

In [Hebrews 1:10-2:18](#), which comprises the 23 verses between last week's lesson and today's first segment, the author uses six Old Testament

passages to establish facts regarding the nature and work of Jesus. The opening “therefore” of today’s text indicates that conclusions and implications in this regard are in store.

### A. Like Moses (vv. 1, 2)

#### **1. Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.**

The readers are addressed as *brothers and sisters* not because they necessarily share the same Jewish heritage but because together they belong to God and so are *holy*. Together they *share in the heavenly calling*—a calling that is the solemn, authoritative invitation that comes from the most authoritative source of all: God himself.

The holy brothers and sisters have this identity because they together *acknowledge* something as being true. That, of course, is the good news of Jesus. It is time for the readers to think carefully yet again about the one who is the center of that message, the very one who has brought them God’s calling.

#### *What Do You Think?*

What are some ways to live out our own calling from God, which comes from faith in Jesus?

#### *Talking Points for Your Discussion*

In general ways, as modeled in the first century by Jesus himself

In specific ways that are especially appropriate to culture of the twenty-first century

Jesus—God’s promised, chosen king—is the *apostle* of what the readers profess. We know of this designation as it is used for leaders of the first-century church, especially the 12 disciples plus Paul. The word *apostle* indicates one who carries an authoritative message from an authoritative figure. Applied to Jesus, it describes him as God’s most authoritative messenger ([Hebrews 1:1-4](#), last week’s lesson). His message is God’s climactic message, the fulfillment of every message that God has delivered in the past.

Jesus is also *high priest*, a designation used often in this letter ([Hebrews 2:17](#); [4:14](#); [5:5](#), [10](#); [6:20](#); [7:26](#); [8:1](#); [9:11](#)). Israel’s high priest offered the once yearly sacrifice in the tabernacle or temple on the Day of Atonement. Carrying blood of a sacrificial animal into the Most Holy Place, he sprinkled it on the “cover,” or mercy seat, which is the top of the ark of the covenant. This act was payment for the sins of all Israel ([Leviticus 16](#); [Hebrews 9:7](#)). What God promised in that office and rite, Jesus fulfilled by his death, resurrection, and ascension to the most holy place of Heaven. Jesus both proclaimed the fulfillment of God’s promise as apostle and accomplished it as high priest.

#### **2. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God’s house.**

Before developing further the idea of Jesus’ greatness, the author focuses on Jesus’ faithfulness. Moses was a preliminary example of that trait. Privileged to speak with God directly ([Numbers 12:8](#)), Moses was declared by God to be his faithful servant ([12:7](#)). Moses demonstrated his faithfulness when he was challenged in his leadership role. In meekness, he did not speak for himself; he let God vindicate him instead ([12:3](#)).

## HOW TO SAY IT

Colossians Kuh-*losh*-unz.

Deuteronomy Due-*ter-ahn*-uh-me.

Ephesians Ee-*fee*-zhunz.

Ezekiel Ee-*zeek*-ee-ul or Ee-*zeek*-yul.

Galilee Gal-uh-lee.

Hebrews Hee-*brews*.

Isaiah Eye-*zay*-uh.

Levitical Leh-*vit*-ih-kul.

Leviticus Leh-*vit*-ih-kus.

Mosaic Mo-*zay*-ik.

Nazareth Naz-uh-reth.

Jesus’ faithfulness is of a similar kind. Submitting to the will of God the Father, he allowed himself to be arrested, beaten, and crucified. He suffered as his people suffered ([Hebrews 2:10](#), [14](#)). He did not defend himself but let God speak for him by raising him from the dead.

As the original readers consider Jesus, they are to remember afresh that his faithfulness should be reflected in their own faithfulness. Like Moses, Jesus has shown what faithfulness to God is. In so doing, Jesus has issued the heavenly calling that urges his followers to the same

faithfulness.

*What Do You Think?*

What aspects of Jesus' faithfulness most challenge you personally to be faithful? Explain.

*Talking Points for Your Discussion*

- Regarding temptation
- In dealing with the flaws of others
- In service
- Other

## B. Greater than Moses (vv. 3-6)

### 3. Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself.

The writer could compare Jesus with Moses to show that while both were faithful, Jesus was more faithful. But instead he moves to a different comparison: as *the builder of a house*, Jesus is logically greater *than the house itself*.

Two aspects of Bible-era culture will help us understand the significance of this. The first concerns the term *house*. As used here, this word refers not to a structure but to people who reside together (family members, servants, etc.). We use the term *household* for this concept, and [Acts 16:15](#) translates the same Greek word used here that way. Jesus is the one who builds the spiritual household of faith (see [Ephesians 2:19-22](#)).

The second aspect is the role of the son in such a household. As the father's heir, the firstborn son has a status in the household greater than that of his siblings (compare [Deuteronomy 21:15-17](#)). Jesus has the position of firstborn Son ([Hebrews 1:6](#), last week's lesson; compare [Colossians 1:15](#)). Faithful in lowly submission to the Father's will, obedient in waiting for the Father's vindication, Jesus as firstborn held and holds for all eternity the highest status possible. He lived as God's servant; he exists as God's authoritative Son.

### 4. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.

The existence of a house in any sense—whether that of a physical structure or of relationships (as in “household”)—presupposes a builder, whether human or divine. God is the greatest builder, as he is the Creator of all that exists. Whatever authority and honor there are in the world, God is supremely worthy of them as the ultimate builder and sustainer.

### 5. “Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house,” bearing witness to what would be spoken by God in the future.

The writer cites God's pronouncement in [Numbers 12:7](#) to establish the faithfulness of Moses. Deuteronomy moves to its conclusion with the statement that “no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face” ([Deuteronomy 34:10](#)). For the people of Israel, including the original Jewish-Christian readers of Hebrews, Moses-the-prophet is a defining figure of their history.

But God had spoken to Moses of a prophet to come after him, a prophet who would be like him ([Deuteronomy 18:15, 18](#); compare [Acts 3:22, 23](#); [7:37](#)). In relation to that promised figure, Moses' life served as a witness—an indicator or sample of what was yet to come in God's plan. Moses was great among God's servants, but he was a servant who served the greater one to come after him.

### 6. But Christ is faithful as the Son over God's house. And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory.

Despite the greatness that may be attributed to Moses, Jesus stands alone as the Servant-Son. *Christ*, as *the Son*, participated with the Father in the very creation of the world ([Hebrews 1:2](#)). Christ claims rule over the household of God's people by means of the redemption purchased at the cross. He is the one promised by God, like the servant Moses but greater in all respects.

That conclusion leads the writer back to where he started in this passage. We who follow Christ, who have received his message at God's authoritative invitation ([Hebrews 3:1](#)), now belong to his household. As his unworthy servants, we are graciously blessed as God's children. We belong to this household only by what Christ has done. Our remaining in the household is God's gift to us, but it is conditioned on our bold allegiance to Christ and what God promises through him (compare [Colossians 1:23](#); [Hebrews 3:14](#)). How foolish it would be to neglect or reject God's greatest!

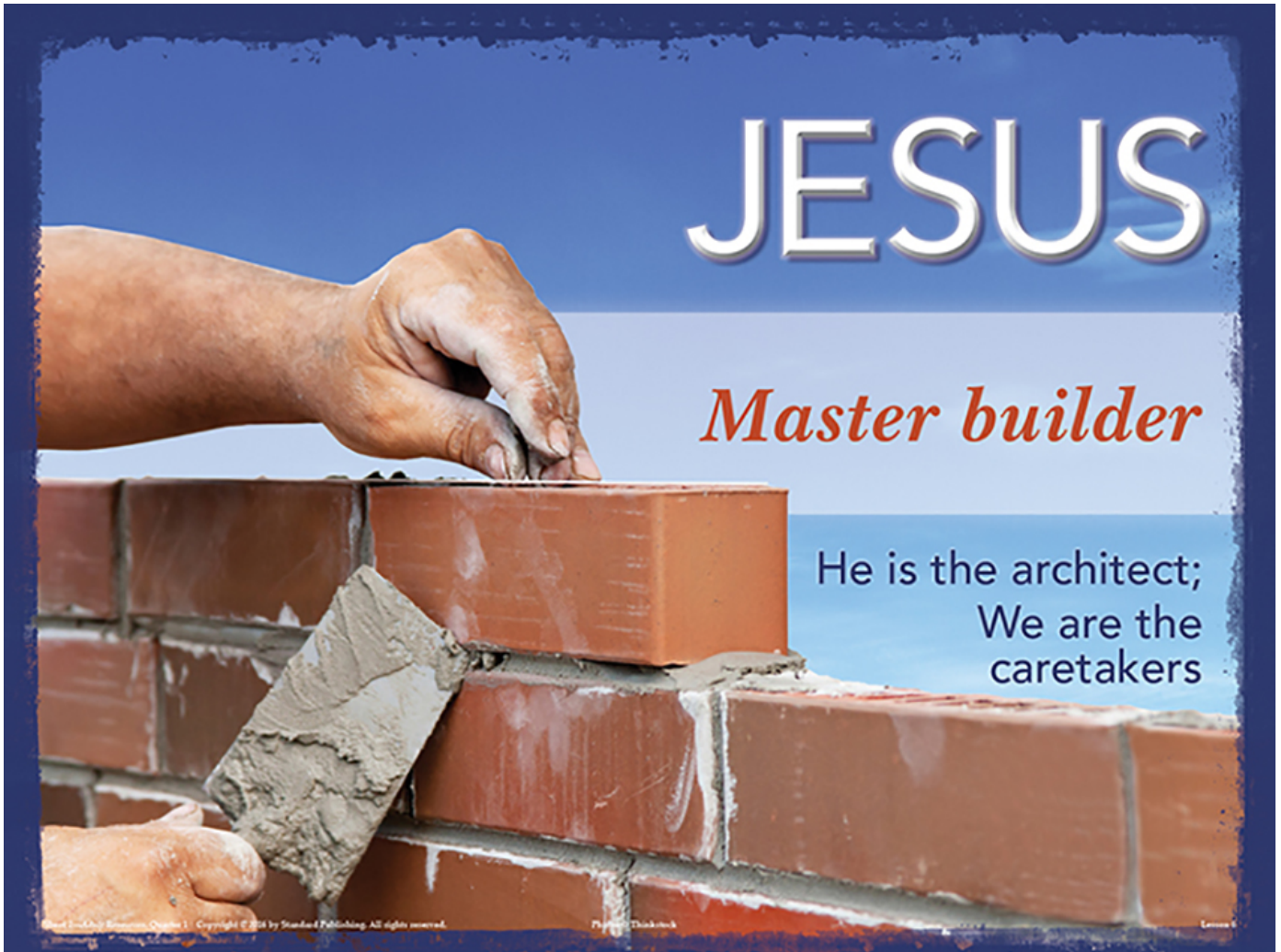
## SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISONS

Side-by-side comparisons have been an effective marketing tool since ... well as long as there has been marketing. Today, many Internet sites offer tools that invite visitors to see various features of products in a simple side-by-side tabular format. I have used these tools for evaluating cell phone plans, selecting area rugs, etc. Between the photographs, product details, and pricing and shipping information, comparison tools make choosing the best option easier, if not outright obvious.

The book of Hebrews in general and today's passage in particular address issues the Jewish Christians of the first-century church were facing. These issues centered on how to view Jesus in light of established practices and doctrines of the Jewish people—practices and doctrines that had come from God himself.

The methodology of Hebrews in this regard is that of comparing and contrasting the person and work of Jesus with those of angels, Moses, the Levitical priesthood, etc. The result demonstrates that the new covenant is built on a better sacrifice, a single one that is eternal as contrasted with the many that were temporary; is delivered through a better priest, one who is eternal and sinless as contrasted with the many that were mortal and committed sin; and offers a fuller revelation, of God through his Son in contrast with the old piecemeal communications via prophets.

The logic is airtight, and the conclusion is inescapable. In the end, the reader is left with only two choices: either (1) make the decision that pleases God and results in eternity with him, or (2) make a different, shortsighted decision to please those around us. This choice confronts us yet today.—V. E.



**Visual for Lesson 6.** Start a discussion by pointing to this visual as you ask, “What are some of our duties as caretakers of God’s household of faith?”

## II. Faithful Teacher

(MATTHEW 7:24-29)

Hebrews speaks of Jesus’ preeminence as divine Son; Matthew demonstrates it with examples of Jesus’ authoritative teaching. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks on sacred topics as he makes assertions without appeal to anyone’s authority but his own. Jesus ends the sermon by illustrating repeatedly that those who listen to him and do what he says will experience God’s blessing, while those who do not do so will experience God’s judgment. The parable that begins the next part of our lesson is Jesus’ final statement of those alternatives in the sermon. (Luke 6:47-49 is parallel.)

### A. Wise Plan (vv. 24, 25)

**24. “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.**

The opening *therefore everyone* links what Jesus is about to say with what he has just said in [Matthew 7:21-23](#). Those verses set forth a radical choice to make, and so will the verses that follow.

Jesus’ story begins by inviting the mental image of a certain *wise man* who chooses a *rock* as the location for his building project. Such a place is a relatively difficult one on which to establish the foundation of a *house*, but one that offers security from seasonal flooding. In connecting the wisdom of such a plan with hearing Jesus’ *words* and putting *them into practice*, Jesus echoes [Psalm 111:10](#): “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (Compare [Proverbs 1:7](#); [9:10](#); [15:33](#).)

**25. “The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.**

The land of Israel has many seasonal rivers that flow from hills and mountains. Between rains, the riverbeds can be completely dry. But when rains fall in the higher elevations of Palestine, water rushes down those riverbeds in torrents. Thus Jesus’ illustration draws on what is familiar to the people of his time and place.

A house built on a secure foundation can endure a crisis of floods and accompanying *winds*. The storm in this story suggests not merely the hardships of life but the final judgment of God (compare [Isaiah 28:16, 17](#)). In the previous story, Jesus spoke of those who would stand and speak to him “on that day,” the Day of Judgment ([Matthew 7:22](#)). The wise, Jesus now implies, will be secure on the Day of Judgment because they have heard and done what he teaches. Jesus, the divine Son, is the one who will judge.

#### *What Do You Think?*

What will you do to continue to build the house of your life on the rock of Christ?

#### *Talking Points for Your Discussion*

- Regarding values assessment
- Regarding the identification of rivals
- Regarding Bible study
- Regarding the choosing of mentors
- Other

### B. Foolish Plan (vv. 26, 27)

**26. “But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.**

Jesus now draws the contrast between the wise man and the fool. A sandy area is an easier place to build a house, since such a surface yields easily to the shovel. But everyone in Jesus’ audience knows that no *house built on sand* will last long. A person who builds on sand is an obvious fool.

Jesus’ words again echo the Psalms, which twice say, “The fool says in his heart, “There is no God”” ([Psalms 14:1](#); [53:1](#)). This is the position of the person who hears Jesus’ *words* but *does not put them into practice*. No one who is listening to Jesus can miss the implication: Jesus is asserting himself to be God.

**27. “The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”**

The same situation confronts the foolish man as confronts the wise: *rain*, flooding *streams*, and *winds* threaten the house. Lacking a secure foundation, the house of the fool collapses (compare [Ezekiel 13:10-13](#)). Jesus emphasizes the magnitude of the loss: *it fell with a great crash*. To have lived life and not heeded the word of one’s Creator means the greatest loss that can be.

#### *What Do You Think?*

How can we better help others realize the recklessness of living without regard to Christ’s authority?

#### *Talking Points for Your Discussion*

- In our attitudes toward those who so live
- In our actions toward those who so live
- In our speech toward those who so live

## C. Ultimate Authority (vv. 28, 29)

### **<sup>28</sup>. When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching,**

Matthew occasionally notes people's *amazed* reactions to Jesus' words and actions (compare [Matthew 9:33](#); [13:54](#); [22:33](#)). *His teaching*, which here refers both to what he teaches and how he teaches it, surprises and astonishes them. We can infer that they are unsure whether to heed or reject it.

### **<sup>29</sup>. because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.**

In some respects, Jesus teaches ideas that are common among Jewish religious teachers of his time. For instance, his saying about treating others as we would like to be treated ([Matthew 7:12](#)) is very similar to the sayings of other rabbis. What makes Jesus different, astonishingly so, is the *authority* of his teaching. The *teachers of the law*, the ones who are experts in Israel's Scriptures, often cite the authority of earlier teachers for their views. Jesus, on the other hand, asserts everything on his own authority. He does so by beginning his correction of common views with "But I tell you" (examples: [Matthew 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44](#)).

Much of what Jesus teaches is about himself in claiming to fulfill the Mosaic law ([Matthew 5:17](#)), to stand in the place of final judgment ([7:21-23](#)), etc. He now boldly asserts that final judgment depends entirely on hearing and doing his teaching. This is a claim to authority like no other!

#### *What Do You Think?*

What did Jesus do or teach that demonstrates most vividly to you his supreme authority?

#### *Talking Points for Your Discussion*

Acts and words of power or authority

Acts and words of weakness or service

## ***CITE THE HIGHEST SOURCE***

While in journalism school, we students were constantly challenged to evaluate when our writing was objective (referring to established facts) and when it had slipped into editorializing (containing some slant or opinion). We were trained to make statements only when they could be attributed to a credible source, such as a recognized expert in the subject area being addressed.

We would justify our sources by noting their accomplishments in their field. On a topic of great importance or great controversy, it was best to cite the highest authority possible on the topic at hand in order to establish credibility for the information in the article.

The common folk of the first century recognized something different about Jesus' teaching. Unlike their own teachers, who would refer to the interpretive opinions of other teachers for support, Jesus simply spoke the truth. In modern journalism, a writer does have license to state facts and conclusions without referring to other sources under one condition: if he or she is a subject-matter expert. Jesus was just such a one—the ultimate one. His expertise resulted in condemnation of self-serving and hypocritical teaching (examples: [Matthew 23](#); [Mark 7:1-13](#)), recognition of false choices intended to ensnare (examples: [Luke 20:20-26](#); [John 8:2-11](#)), etc.

Jesus did not need to justify his interpretations or teachings by referring to a higher source because he was the highest source. He still is.—V. E.

## **Conclusion**

### **A. The Greatness of Jesus**

Was Jesus' claim to divine authority a true claim? After all, he *was* arrested, convicted, and crucified on a Roman cross! Some who were there said the crucifixion itself proved that Jesus was disfavored by God ([Matthew 27:43](#); [Luke 23:35-39](#)); others reached a different conclusion ([Matthew 27:54](#); [Luke 23:40-43](#)).

God settled the question when he raised Jesus from the dead. The Gospel of Matthew, the letter to the Hebrews, and the rest of the New Testament show us that many moved from astonishment to faith as a result.

Will we accept the authority of Jesus, or will we not? This has remained the most vital of decisions for nearly 2,000 years. If Jesus is indeed the fulfillment of God's plans and purposes, if he is indeed the exalted Creator and self-sacrificing Redeemer, then he must be heard and obeyed. All of life, now and forever, depends on doing so.

### **B. Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we stand amazed in the presence of your Son. May our lives reflect that amazement as we glorify him by faithfully hearing and doing. We pray for this in his name. Amen.

### C. Thought to Remember

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” ([Psalm 111:10](#)).

## INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

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### Into the Lesson

Distribute four strips of paper on which you have written the following statements: 1. Frank Lloyd Wright was recognized in 1991 by the American Institute of Architects as “the greatest American architect of all time.” 2. His hundreds of completed structures, in addition to many homes, included churches, offices, skyscrapers, hotels, and museums. 3. He also designed many interior elements of his buildings, including furniture and stained glass. 4. Only 300 of the buildings still survive. As the statements are read in order, display pictures you have found of Wright’s constructions. Ask for comments from those who have seen any Frank Lloyd Wright buildings. Then say, “Today we are going to look at an even more famous builder, whose house is eternal and will never be destroyed, since it’s built on solid rock.”

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the “Jesus Is Greater Than ...” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download. Have your students work in pairs to complete the matching activity. As they give their answers, also ask for a brief explanation of why Jesus is superior to each item. Then say, “Today, we’ll be looking at why Jesus is a superior builder because of the house he built.”

### Into the Word

Hold up a photo of your house along with a picture of your family as you give the following explanation. “I want to show you two pictures of a house. The first is a place of residence, and the second is of the house of \_\_\_\_\_ [insert your last name]. The Greek word for *house* is used with both meanings several times in today’s texts. In some verses it refers to a building, but in others it refers to God’s house, meaning his people—as in *household*.”

Divide your class in half, and ask one half to find the two verses in [Hebrews 3:1-6](#) that use *house* to refer to a structure, and the other half to find the three verses that use *house* to mean God’s people. After receiving the answers of [verses 3 and 4](#) (building) and [verses 2, 5, and 6](#) (people), ask them to do the same for [Matthew 7:24-27](#). They should conclude that all uses in Matthew refer to a building. Then say, “Hebrews presents the image of Jesus as a builder who is superior to Moses because he is the Son who is over God’s house. The Matthew text has Jesus giving a valuable lesson on the importance of building our houses—and our lives—on a firm foundation.”

Have students break into two groups to discuss either the Hebrews or the Matthew text. Distribute a sheet of paper with the appropriate exercise for each group. *Hebrews Group:* 1. List all the reasons why Jesus is worthy of great honor. 2. As part of Jesus’ house, what can we do to show him the honor he deserves? *Matthew Group:* 1. List all the ways a person could benefit from putting Jesus’ teaching here into practice. 2. What was it about Jesus’ teaching that so amazed the people? Allow time for both groups to share.

### Into Life

Ask, “Have any of you been involved in repairs to your living space lately? If so, did you do it yourself or hire someone to do it? What led to that decision?” After brief discussion, stress “As hard as it is to do building repairs, making repairs to God’s household, our church family, can be even more difficult. What ministry areas of our church family need to be repaired or built up?” Have students discuss this question in their small groups. Encourage them not only to identify the problem but also come up with ways that they can be part of the solution. Ask for volunteers to share what they have discussed, being careful to keep it from becoming a personal attack on anyone.

*Option.* Distribute copies of the “Master Builder, Master Teacher” activity from the reproducible page. Have students discuss these scenarios within their small groups.