

EXPOSITION OF HEBREWS

Message #2

Hebrews 1:1-4

Many years ago when I was in school, Calvin Seminary brought in a Reformed theologian whom I greatly respected because I had read much of his work. I was invited to attend and did. Before he spoke, there were various dignitaries who were making small talk about this and that; and as I was listening to this, the thought that kept going through my mind was “shut up and sit down because I didn’t come to this to hear you ramble.” I just wanted these guys to get out of the way so we could actually learn something from the one who actually knew something. As far as I was concerned, they were wasting his time and wasting my time. I can’t help but think about this when you come to the opening of Hebrews. Ray Stedman said Hebrews begins “like a rocket shot to the moon” (*Hebrews*, p. 19).

This book of Hebrews opens with God. It is almost as if the writer says, “Everyone, get out of the way.” There is no introductory small talk, no mention of a sender, or an addressee, or any words of greeting; it opens with God and **specifically it opens with God speaking.** **Hebrews 1:1-4 is one long sentence comprised of several subordinate clauses with the main one being “God has spoken.”** It is no wonder the author did not name himself in this Epistle; he is getting completely out of the way. God is speaking and He is speaking about His Son and He wants His people to hear Him.

Think about this for a moment, “God has spoken.” The living, true, sovereign God speaks to man. False gods do not speak but the living God does speak.

As Hebrews begins, God immediately wants us to realize the superiority of the revelation of Jesus Christ over every other form of Divine revelation which has ever existed in history.

GOD THE FATHER SAYS THAT HE SPOKE IN A VARIETY OF WAYS AND TIMES IN THE PAST, BUT HE SPEAKS ONLY ONE WAY IN THE PRESENT, THROUGH HIS HIGHLY EXALTED SON, JESUS CHRIST.

This book of Hebrews is no warm devotional that is designed to give people a crash course on discipleship or evangelism. This is a book of deep theology. Someone said those who neglect theology will live a shallow Christian life that will never affect other lives. **What God says here is, deep theology about My Son is what makes people strong in their faith.**

These opening verses demand that we interpret the Bible dispensationally. God speaks in different ways at different times, depending on what His program demands. He spoke one way in the Old Testament and another way in the New Testament.

There are **two main opening thoughts** the writer communicates to God’s people:

OPENING THOUGHT #1 – How God spoke to His people in past times. **1:1**

Someone said there are two questions men need to ask God: 1) Does God speak to man?
2) What does God say to man?

In past times, God spoke to His people in three ways:

(Way #1) - God spoke to His people by means of His prophets .

By bringing up the prophets, God is pointing us to realize that His Word in past times prophetically spoke of and pointed to His Son coming into this world.

The reference to “long ago” is one that refers to God speaking back in O.T. times. Now it needs to be pointed out that God spoke to specific people, “the fathers,” and He did so in a specific way “in the prophets.” God spoke to prophets, and prophets both spoke and wrote down what He said. The prophets were great men of God, but they were not God.

God spoke to His people through His prophetic Word through His prophets.

(Way #2) - God spoke to His people by means of many portions .

The Greek adverb “many portions” (πολυμερος) means that God spoke in many parts, divisions or categories (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 371). God spoke at multifaceted times in multifaceted ways. He spoke in one way to Adam, another way to Abraham, another way to Moses. There was a development of truth over time, which clearly lends itself to a dispensational approach to the Bible.

He spoke through miracles, through a still small voice, through dreams and visions. He spoke through the angel of the LORD and through cosmic disasters that He caused.

(Way #3) - God spoke to His people by means of many ways .

God also spoke in multifaceted ways. The Greek adverb “many ways” (πολυτροπως) means that God spoke in many different manners or ways (*Ibid.*, p. 372).

In O.T. times, everything we learned about God came through a variety of diverse ways in a variety of diverse times. It was a fragmented system of revelation. We learned about God’s hatred of sin and wickedness through a flood and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Then later we learned about potential forgiveness through a blood sacrifice. God’s people learned about His care of them when He parted a Red Sea or made walls of a city fall down. In O.T. times we saw that there were various types and pictures of things to educate us about God. Revelation about God was progressive.

The key point of these two adverbs is that in O.T. times, God spoke in many diverse ways.

OPENING THOUGHT #2 – How God has spoken to His people in present time. **1:2-4**

God does not speak in diverse ways or diverse times anymore. He spoke to this world by His Son, Jesus Christ, and His Son is the final and complete Word of God. In all reality, the apostles are just those who unravel the doctrine and truth pertaining to Jesus Christ. They expand our knowledge and give us great insight into who Christ was and what He accomplished.

It is interesting that in Hebrews God does not speak through the Son's words but through the Son's description. God speaks in Hebrews by describing who His Son is and what His Son did.

In Greek, the noun "Son" is anarthrous (without article) which means the character and quality of everything God says is found in His Son. This absence of the article fixes our attention on the nature of Jesus Christ, in that He is God. The last physical word that this world has ever received from God or will ever receive is Jesus Christ. **Jesus Christ is not only a better and superior revelation from God, He is the final revelation from God.**

Everything you want to know about God is fully and finally seen in Jesus Christ and in truth and doctrine connected to Him. In Christ you see God's righteousness and by what happened to Christ you see His hatred of sin. In Christ you see the Messiah, the Savior, the great High Priest, and the King of Kings. Everything about God is revealed in Jesus Christ.

In the present time, which is the time God classifies as the "last days," God spoke just one way - through His Son. There are at least nine facts God brings out about His Son:

(Fact #1) - Jesus Christ is the inheritor of all things. **1:2a**

When Jesus Christ was here He was recognized as God's heir and people wanted to kill Him and take His inheritance (Matthew 21:38; Mark 12:7; Luke 20:14).

Normally a son inherits all things when the father dies. This Son inherited all things because He died. Jesus Christ is the appointed heir of all things. A critical point in Hebrews is that Jesus Christ is prepared to share some of His inheritance with His family (Romans 8:17), if we do not throw it away (Hebrews 10:35).

(Fact #2) - Jesus Christ is the creator of all things. **1:2b**

Many passages of Scripture affirm this fact that the Son was the Father's agent in all creation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). God the Son stood side by side with God the Father before anything existed in time. He created all things in space and in time.

It is God who made the world and He made the world with His Son. The design, the plan, the actual creation of the universe came into existence because of God and because of God's Son. Educational imbeciles fight over whether creationism should be taught in schools, and I warn them all - you will face Jesus Christ who did create the universe, and you will be shown to be as stupid as you really are. The design and order of this universe all speak of God.

When David Livingstone was traipsing around Africa, he said he saw the glory of God everywhere he looked, from the animals to the land to the water to the trees.

If you take ten pennies and number them one to ten and put them in your pocket your chances of reaching into your pocket and pulling out the one marked one are one in ten. If you put the penny back into your pocket and mix them up again, your chances of drawing out pennies numbered one and two are one in one hundred. If you were to repeat the process your chances of drawing pennies numbered one, two and three in order would be one in one thousand. If you kept repeating the process your chance of pulling out one through ten in order are one in ten billion.

To think that this magnificent creation with all of its “cosmic elegance” just happened by chance, when there is such precision and order, is absolutely absurd. It is no wonder God calls people fools who reject Him. All creation speaks of a magnificent, genius God and it speaks of His Son.

Every human being needs to stand in awe of Jesus Christ as the Great Creator. What actually have we created? We brought nothing into this world and we will take nothing out of it.

(Fact #3) - Jesus Christ is the radiator of the glory of God. **1:3a**

This is a very rare Greek word only used here. This word “radiant” means that Jesus Christ reveals the intense brightness and splendor of God. He does not just reflect the glory of God, He radiates it. He is not a light reflector, He is the source. As O’Brien said, Jesus Christ is the “twin source of the light of God’s glory” (*The Letter to the Hebrews*, p. 54). The full glory of God is seen in Jesus Christ. There is not one tarnish or blemish in Him to the Glory of God.

(Fact #4) - Jesus Christ is the exact representer of the nature of God. **1:3b**

Jesus Christ is the exact representation, the exact stamped image of the Divine Being, God. The Divine image of God has been stamped on Jesus Christ. This word right here is one of the strongest words to defend against false religious groups who lessen who Jesus Christ is. Groups like Jehovah’s Witness and Mormons and Muslims.

The Greek word “exact representation” (*χαρακτηρ*) refers to an exact image or stamp or impression of something. It was used for placing an identity mark or stamp on a coin or seal. (Smith, p. 479). What this verse proves is that Jesus Christ is the exact identity representation of God. He is the exact stamp of God’s nature and character. Jesus Christ is not a representation like God; He is the same substance as God and is God!

(Fact #5) - Jesus Christ is the upholder of all things. **1:3c**

This statement combats a Deistic view of creation which says God created things and then just lets it run by itself. Jesus Christ has an active hands-on management control of all of His creation. He actively sustains everything by the power of His word. Even as scientists have explored the universe, they come face-to-face with the reality that something is literally holding all things together. That something is someone and it is Jesus Christ.

Paul said exactly the same thing in Colossians 1:15-20. God the Son is the ultimate manager of everything and He carries out His responsibilities with the power of His word. When Christ was physically here on earth He gave us some glimpses of this reality. The storms and the wind and the rain obeyed His every command. He commanded a fish to swallow some money and then take it to His disciples so His disciples could pay their taxes. He spoke to sicknesses and diseases and fevers and demons and everything obeyed Him. He even spoke to the dead and the dead obeyed Him.

(Fact #6) - Jesus Christ is the purifier from all sin. **1:3d**

To be right with God, one must see sin as putrid and filthy defilement and one must come to realize that only Jesus Christ can purify us from our sin. The word purify (καθαρίζω) speaks of purifying and cleansing something that is filthy and defiled (Smith, pp. 222-223). God the Son did something no one else could do, something only He could do.

Why did this majestic Son of God, who is the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe, come to this world and die on a cross and shed His blood? To make us pure, to make us clean, so we could have a relationship with the Holy God.

The verb “made” is middle voice which means Jesus Christ is the only one in and of Himself who can purify you from your sins. He was the only member of the Godhead who could carry out this assignment. His own purpose for coming to this world was so He could purify us from our sins.

If you dare think you can save yourself by your works, you are greatly deceived. Why do you think the Creator came to this earth to die on the cross? In order to purify you from “all sins.”

(Fact #7) - Jesus Christ is the right-hand Majestic Ruler over all things. **1:3e**

The One who descended from heaven to this disgraceful and shameful world has now ascended and is back at the right hand of God and is highly exalted with a name above every name. Arthur Pink says this fact means three things: 1) High honor; 2) Settled continuance; 3) Complete rest. He has unparalleled honor. As Hershel Hobbs said, He is our King (*Studies in Hebrews*, p. 16).

The reference to Jesus Christ being seated at the right hand of God comes from Psalm 110:1. Sitting at the right hand of God the Father is the ultimate level of power and honor that one could have. **What this shows is that God’s majesty is not compromised in any way by having Jesus Christ sitting on His throne.**

If we carefully look at Psalm 110, we must conclude that this means that Jesus Christ is Ruler, Judge, Lord and King and He is presently biding His time until He will smash and destroy all God-mocking powers.

(Fact #8) - Jesus Christ is far better than the angels. **1:4a**

In much of this book of Hebrews, God will show what His Son accomplished in His humanity. The reason He mentions the angels here is because He wants us to realize that this One with humanity is much higher ranked than any heavenly angel. Angels were Divine agents God used in the O.T., but One greater than any angel came to this earth.

Angels are the highest of God's creation and heaven is their home. They excel in their strength and are God's glorious ministers. They are holy and they are powerful. But as glorious and as powerful as angels are, they do not compare to Jesus Christ, for He is God.

Actually, the remainder of the chapter will show just how far better He really is over the angels. No angel sits at the right hand of God. Jesus Christ has obtained an eminence and preeminence above any angel, no matter what their rank or status.

(Fact #9) - Jesus Christ in an inheritor of a greater name than any angel. **1:4b**

Paul said that God has highly exalted Jesus Christ and has given Him a name above every name (Philippians 2:9). The angels sang "Glory to God in the highest" the day He was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:13-14).

If one worships any angel, including Satan, one simply worships an angel and that is the wrong person to worship. There is One far better and far superior to any angel and it is Jesus Christ.

When you are in the midst of trials and troubles, you cannot do any better thing than to cultivate your relationship with Jesus Christ.

What this opening says to God's people is this, when you place your faith in Jesus Christ and have a relationship with Him, you have a relationship with Almighty God.

Any who want to share in an eternal inheritance must begin by coming to terms with Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the only God/Savior who can link us to heaven, and reward us in heaven.