

HEBREWS

Message 3

Date:

Words: 6032 to

Reading:

INTRO: Let me begin this message with the first question I asked in the last message regarding Hebrews 1:1-4: What is the one major thing God did after He created man, according to our passage? He spoke. He gave words to man. He spoke in the past, and so in verse 1 we have a reference to the OT. Then He spoke to us in these last days through Jesus Christ. From the assignment of the last message, tell me the one major thing Jesus Christ accomplished on earth before He sat down in heaven? He purged us from our sins! In order for Jesus to purge us from our sins, God first had to speak in the past. The OT must come before the New. Without God speaking in the past, Christ could not have purged us from our sins. The history of the past was necessary for the sacrifice of Christ to be meaningful.

Look at our passage once more. By the way, how about memorizing it? We begin in Hebrews 1:1:

1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

The main sentence could be read like this: God has spoken to us in these last days by His Son. At the time Hebrews was written not all the books of the NT were written. At least, these books had not yet been written: the Gospel of John, 1-3 John, Jude and Revelation. Most of the other books had either just been written or were written shortly after Hebrews was written. The NT was not a completed section of the Bible as we have it today until about 400 years after Christ.

I would expect that the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, would have been in circulation. What we learn is that the Hebrews did not have the NT as we have it. What they had was the OT. And so, the writer to the Hebrews says that God spoke in various parts in various ways to the fathers in times past by the prophets. The readers were familiar with that because they were familiar with the entire OT.

Our subject now deals with the words that God has spoken in these last days to us by His Son. It was the life, death, burial and resurrection of Christ that was the core of the belief of the early Christians. And when you read the book of Acts, you find that the resurrection of Christ was one of the key issues for the early Church, and it still is for us today. But it is important to realize that the Hebrews to whom this book is written did not have the NT.

A. The Claim of Superiority

2. God's revelation in the present (2b-4)

Well, we are looking at Christ's superiority to angels. But we don't see anything about angels until the very last part of this majestic sentence. We have seen that God spoke in the past, and now we are ready to look at the fact that He has spoken in these last days to His people through the Son.

In the section on God's revelation in the past, the writer gives one main thing that God did after He created the universe and that was that He spoke. In an earlier message I said that these first 4 verses could be divided into two sections. Section one is that God spoke in the past to the fathers through the prophets. Section two is that He spoke in these last days to us by His Son Jesus Christ. And all of what we have after the word "Son" in verse two is a description of God's Son; who He is and what He did.

I do not know if there is any NT passage that so exalts the Lord Jesus Christ, with the possible exception of Philippians 2:1-11. Look at verses 2-4 and how the writer describes this One through whom God has spoken in these last days:

2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

3 who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

We begin then in verse 1 and we note first when He spoke through His Son.

1) When He spoke

Our verse now tells us when God spoke to us through His Son. It was "in these last days." He does not say that He spoke in time present to us. He says God spoke to us "in these last days."

The phrase, "in these last days" has now been 2,000 years long. How could it say "in these last days if this time is so long?" Well, first, these last days, up to this point, have been 2,000 years shorter than the first days.

Second, God spoke in various parts of history past in various ways. And then one day He stopped speaking. Those were the first days. And then, after some 400 years of no speaking, He began to speak to us once more "in these last days." He has never given any more divine revelation after the writing of the NT books. He will not give any more revelation. We have the last chapter.

Now we could spend a long time on the point that we are in the last of the last days. I do not spend the time into prophecy studies as some do and I encourage you to listen to those who hold the view that the catching up of the Church will happen before the tribulation who

are on the cutting edge of what is happening. Listen carefully and with discernment, but keep up with at least some of what is happening. Let me mention a site I just recently heard about called, harvestprophecyhq.com. Things are happening so fast today that one cannot keep up with it all. From the events we see all around us, we have every reason to expect Christ at any time.

2) To whom He spoke

When the writer spoke of the time of the OT he said that God spoke to the fathers. Now he says that in these last days He spoke to us through His Son. Now remember that at the time Hebrews was written, they did not have the NT as we have it. In a matter of approximately 60 years after Christ left, all 27 books of the NT were written. These books were later put together to become what we have as the NT.

After Jesus left, the Holy Spirit inspired four Gospel accounts of the life of Christ. And these are written to mankind after the OT was complete. Twenty-four other books were written before 100 AD and became part of the NT. There will never come another time when He says, "He spoke in the OT to those who lived before Christ. He spoke in the NT to the Church. But He now speaks to us this third time by..." There will be no third time. The divine revelation of God is complete. We have the last chapter.

Listen now to how this divine revelation closes in the last chapter of the Bible as we have it:

16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

18 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book;

19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

God has spoken to us in these last days by His Son!

3) Through whom He spoke

So we have seen that God spoke to us, and He spoke to us in these last days, and we note last then, through whom God spoke in these last days. It was His Son. Now all the rest of this majestic sentence is tied to this word "Son." In these words we have several descriptions of God the Son, and we have His one major accomplishment, after which He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. When He sat down in glory, He had accomplished once and forever, the redemption of mankind.

It is the one major error of all cults, to fail to recognize that the Son of God is divine. How could one fail to note that, when Scripture says Mary was found with Child of the Holy Spirit and when it was said by the angel that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, and when it was said He would be called, "God with us"? Let me also mention that this failure is a fatal failure.

a) What God did with the Son

Now let us note first what God did with regard to the Son in verse 2. God has appointed the Son, Jesus Christ, the One through whom He spoke in these last days, heir of all things. He is heir to everything by Son-ship. God has no other Son, in the sense that He was born of God as Jesus Christ was. Turn to Matthew 21. In this chapter we are just shortly before Jesus will be crucified and Jesus is speaking to the Jews at the temple. The chief priests and elders of the people confronted Jesus. They asked by what authority He could just walk in and tell them what to do in the temple? Who gave Him such authority?

Jesus had just walked into the area around the temple and He had acted like He owned the place. Verses 12-13 say this:

12 *Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.*

13 *And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"*

So, they said, "By whose authority do you dare do this in our temple?" And He gave them several parables, showing them what would happen.

We begin with the second parable in verse 33:

33 *"Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country.*

34 *"Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit.*

35 *"And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another.*

36 *"Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them.*

He is talking here about the prophets of the OT. Verse 37:

37 *"Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.'*

38 *"But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.'*

39 *"So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.*

This parable is prophetic of what would happen just a few days later. They cast Jesus out of the vineyard and killed Him.

40 *"Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?"*

41 *They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."*

But Jesus said, "What do you think the owner of the vineyard will do when he comes?" And they said, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably and lease out the vineyard to other vinedressers." They had just diagnosed their own case and given their own judgement.

The time Jesus spoke these words was around 30 AD. Forty years later Titus came and you talk about miserably destroying those wicked men. Jews lay in heaps in the narrow streets of Jerusalem so you could hardly pass through them.

Now between those two dates, 30 AD, when Jesus gave this parable, and 70 AD, when the temple was destroyed, the Hebrews to whom this letter was written had become Christians. And now, as they went on in life, one trouble after another has come. The future does not look any better and where is this Messiah who said He was coming again?

But Jesus, heir of all things has now gone to His throne. And no matter what dark days come on earth, He is still heir and He is still coming. Today we think, "Well, it can't go on like this too much longer." Let me give you some words from Hebrews, listen to them:

11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

12 Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees,

13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed (Heb. 12:11-13).

That is a word for us today. It is true that Jesus is coming. But this world has been through many times when you might have said, "It can't go on much longer." But it has and it does. But as long as He has not come, we must never give up hope. To believe that He could come soon is an important part of Christianity but we must

never get discouraged if He does not come when we think He should.

Well, Jesus Christ is heir. But listen to this: He is heir of all things! All things! He is returning. He will put down the antichrist and the false prophet. He will destroy all unbelievers and He will set up His kingdom. He will rule for 1,000 years. Christians will rule with Him. There is no doubt about this. And it is also true that Jesus might come even this very day!

When the Church has been caught up and the 7-year tribulation is past, when those 1,000 years are over, this Heir of all things will sit on the throne of David for all eternity in the New Jerusalem. And this kingdom will never end. At that time, all things will have been put under His feet and He will reign over all things forever!

So we have seen the exaltation of the Son by God in that He has appointed Him heir of all things. Now we note second in verse 2 that it says of the Son: "He is the One through whom God made the worlds."

Now this is a strange statement. Let me ask you, is there more than one world? It says here He made the worlds, plural. The word translated "worlds" is not actually "worlds", but "ages." But that is puzzling to me as well. Are the ages something that was made?

The original word for ages is *aiwnas*. It is the plural of the word *age*. This word "age" is often translated as *ever* or *forever*. Literally it is into the age, or into the ages.

Now the use of this word in the plural and translated "worlds" occurs only here and in Hebrews 11:3. John Gill, who is a Hebrew scholar says this:

"...this is said in agreement with the notions of the Jews, and their way of speaking, who make mention of three worlds, which they call, the upper world (the habitation of God), the middle world (the air), and the lower world {o} (the earth); and sometimes they call them the world of angels (where they dwell), the world of orbs (where the sun, moon, and stars are), and the world below {p} (on which we live); and it is frequent in their writings, and prayer books {q}, to call God רבוּן כּל העוֹלָמוֹת, 'Lord of all worlds'..."

Since this book is written to Jewish people, this comment seems the most logical explanation to me. That is, God made the entire universe through Jesus Christ. John 1 says, "without Him nothing was made that was made." He made it all.

We view Jesus Christ as the mediator between God and man, with relation to sin, and He is. But He is also the mediator between God and the creation of the universe. It is sometimes said that God spoke the universe into existence. In Genesis 1 God says a number of times, "Let there be...and there was." So, we take from that that God spoke things into existence.

But when He said, "Let there be..." the implied "You" is missing because it is an imperative verb. And the "You" refers to Jesus Christ as John 1:1-3 and numerous other passages indicate. Jesus Christ created the universe, or we might say God created the universe through Jesus Christ.

Now think of who Jesus Christ is! He is the One who has inherited ALL things! Pastor Daryl gave us many names for Jesus this Christmas. Many of those names describe who Jesus Christ is. In this passage He is the mediator through whom God created the

universe. You see, the angel said to Joseph the Baby Jesus should be called "God with us!"

b) What the Son did - He sat down

- The description of the One who sat down

Well, we move on in the verse. God has spoken to us by His Son in these last days. This Son He has appointed heir of all things. Jesus Christ, is the heir of all things, everything! Not everything has yet been put under His feet, but that time is coming. And then He is the One through whom God created the universe. The creation of the universe in six days is a staggering truth. It is beyond us. It is too wonderful for us.

Now I have called this sentence majestic. I spent long hours seeking to outline this sentence. The "who" of verse 3 attaches to the "Son" of verse two. And everything in verses 3-4 now attaches to this word "who." And the main thought of verses 3-4 is that Jesus Christ sat down. We'll get to that later because we are following the wording order, not the grammatical order.

And before we get into that the writer seeks to describe to us the One who sat down. So we have now first a description of who He is. And the first thing that we are told He is, is that He is the brightness of God's glory! How can we put that into words?

The text literally says that He is the brightness of *the* glory. I cannot see how it can refer to any glory but God's glory! So translators say He is the brightness of "His", glory. You will note that the pronoun "His" is in italics. Now, surely we must stop here and ask, what does it mean

that Jesus Christ is the brightness of God's glory?

Well, the very first thing we have to know is what glory is. Most of you have gone through our Catechism notes. You will have found that the very first question deals with a very important matter. "What is the most important thing we should seek after in this life?" And in my view the answer to that question is that we should live to the glory of God.

And just what is the glory of God? I have gone through this so often most of you know the answer. Let me say in short, without explaining further that the glory of God is when we know who or what He is. When someone learns some good character trait that is in you, that is glory for you. When we learn something of who God is, that is His glory.

When someone learns something of our undesirable traits, that is shame. We all have those. But God has no undesirable characteristics. There is nothing bad in God. But our problem is we do not know Him, or we do not know Him well.

Let me just give one illustration of glory. You have to be into hockey to fully appreciate this illustration but you will get the picture even if you are not into hockey. I will use this illustration for two purposes. In 1972 Canada and Russia played the first series against each other. Canada went into the series very confident. Canada wanted to show the world they were a better at hockey team than the Russians. They had the world's best players, and they knew it. But there were a few things they did not know about the Russian team. Well, they would play 4 games in Canada and four in Russia. Can someone tell me how many

games Canada won in Canada? One game. One game was a tie. Canada was in shock.

Well, they then went to Russia for the last 4 games and Canada lost the first game. That means they now have to win the last three games in a row. Canada won the next three games and if you are into hockey, you may have watched those games more than once. But the last two games were tied until almost the end of the game, and then Canada scored. All across Canada and Russia hockey fans were spell bound.

And oh, the glory for Canada when their country watched or heard them win the series. There comes in such a time a moment of glory, and in this case, it went to Canada. Now there have been many incredible moments of glory in this world in various things. But in hockey, it was the Canadian hockey team that was the glory of Canada. The tremendous feelings of glory reverberated through Canada, and still does from time to time.

Now it is almost sacrilegious to compare Jesus Christ being the glory of God to hockey. But it helps us in a small way to understand it. But notice now that Jesus Christ is the brightness of God's glory. I do not know that I can put this to words, or if I even have it right. But here is how I see the brightness of God's glory. The brightness is that once you see His glory, it lives on and on with you.

Let me try to explain that from the hockey series I mentioned. After four games in Canada and only winning one, Canada then went to Russia and here they lost the first game. That means they have to win the next three games in a row to win the series. Can anyone tell me who scored the game winning goal in the next game? It was Canada's Paul Henderson.

The next game it is tied 3-3 and who can tell me who scored in the last minutes of the game to win for Canada? It was Paul Henderson. We are now at game eight. Canada has to win. There is little time left in the game and it is tied at 5. Who can tell me who scored the game winning goal for Canada? The same man scored the winning goal in the last three games. Think of the glory he experienced. For years people have talked to him about this goal.

I listened to him in an interview and he said that many people had talked to him about that goal. But when they talked about the goal they didn't say what a great goal it was. They said, "Hey, I can tell you exactly where I was when you scored that goal!" And this is many years later. Here is the brightness of the glory. It shines on and on! How many of you know about this game and you were not even born when these games were played? That is how I see the brightness of the glory!

I must simply say I cannot describe for you what it means that Jesus Christ is the brightness of God's glory! Every time we learn something of the character of God, we get to see some of His glory. His glory is a display of His character. You could list all His attributes here. He is all knowing; all powerful; everywhere present; without beginning and without end; 100% good; completely righteous; completely holy and on and on. This is God.

Consider the illustration Pastor Daryl used of the free will of man and how God is omniscient. He mentioned a checkers player who could think 64 moves ahead. It is mind boggling, and it is so small compared to God. And Jesus Christ is the brightness of that glory!

When Jesus Christ came to earth in the likeness of man He was a complete picture of who God is. If God came in human form, He would live here on earth just like Jesus lived. And man would kill Him!

Now let me make another point from all this. If someone from Africa who knew nothing about hockey had watched the Canadian Russian series, he might have said, "What fools Canadians are. They go crazy over a little black puck being knocked around!" That is how the glory of God is for the lost. They don't get it.

Jesus Christ is the brightness of the glory of God the Father in human flesh and how many recognize it and can appreciate it? You will remember that just before Jesus was crucified, He told the disciples He was leaving. Turn to John 14. He said He was going to prepare a place for them, and He would come back and receive them to Himself. And He said, "You know where I am going, and you know the way to get there."

And Thomas said, "Lord, we don't know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" And Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by Me." Look at verses 7-11 now:

7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."

8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."

9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

10 "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words

that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.

11 *"Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.*

Jesus said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." Philip had seen Him often, and he did not recognize or appreciate what he saw.

There is a kind of picture generated by computers called a stereogram or autostereogram. When you stare at this picture, which is on a flat page, all of a sudden a three d picture emerges that is different from what you see at first. How many of you have seen such a picture.

Scholars tell me, and I am not capable of verifying this, but that if you study the Gospel of Matthew, the picture of a King emerges. In Mark, a servant appears. In Luke, the picture of the Son of man is seen. In John the picture of the Son of God appears.

I propose that when you study all four Gospels, and the life of Christ, a picture of God appears. Jesus said to Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me?"

I know what it is like to be a "Philip." What is the problem with being a Philip? Seeing we don't see, and hearing we don't hear. Philip had lived with Christ and had not gotten the real picture yet. That is the problem of man. Look at creation and you must say, "There is a God." Look at Jesus Christ and you must say, "There is God!" He is the brightness of His glory! Oh, for eyes to see!

I read somewhere a saying of the Jews that said this, "If God lived on earth man would break His windows." They were right. When Jesus came, they broke the windows. Ponder this: If Jesus Christ came to our town and put on farmer's clothing, and preached on our streets, would we break His windows?

Jesus Christ was the radiant splendor, the effulgence, the brightness, the reflection of God Almighty! Jesus Christ was the brightness of God's glory! We have four Gospels. Read them long enough and you will see God!

Now why is it the Jews did not recognize Jesus? Why is it that the majority of mankind does not recognize Him today? It is because we have eyes, but we cannot see; we have ears but cannot hear. Sin is our problem.

You see, we have a world book and we have a Word book. And in the world book we have creation. If one has his eyes opened he will see the glory of God. Listen to Isaiah 6:

1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

2 Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

3 And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!"

4 And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

5 So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone!
Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I
dwell in the midst of a people of unclean
lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The
LORD of hosts."

Here is what one of the angels said, "The whole earth is full of His glory!" But man does not fall down before God and get converted. Why not? He cannot see! My wife and I watch David Attenborough's nature videos sometimes. And he sees and show amazing things. And what does he see? Evolution! How blind is he? Totally! We see those same pictures and say, "Oh, what a God is the One who created all that!"

Now I ask you, how do we know when you have truly gotten to see God? We will know when you have seen how unclean we are! When Isaiah saw a little bit of God, the first thing that happened to him is that he saw himself a defiled and a very unclean man. How do you know when you have seen God in Christ? When you find yourself utterly defiled! That is our problem. We don't see God right and therefore cannot see ourselves right.

Jesus Christ was the brightness of God's glory. The Apostle Philip said to Jesus, "Show us the Father and that would be enough for us." For some years he had walked with Jesus and seen His miracles and still he said, "Show us the Father." Jesus said, "Have you been this long with Me and you say, 'Show us the Father?' My goodness, Philip, but you are a blind man! He who has seen Me has seen the Father!" You see, Jesus Christ was the brightness of the glory of God.

Here is one thing I have learned about many people. They say they want the truth. But when the truth steps on their toes, they lose interest. Sir Winston Churchill said

that occasionally some people stumble over the truth. They then pick themselves up, dust themselves off, and walk on as if nothing had happened.

What happens when someone displays the life of Jesus in his or her life? Well, people break their windows, so to speak. Jesus Christ was the brightness of the glory of God and they nailed Him to a cross. He would not fare any better in our world.

Do you see who this writer is saying Jesus Christ is? He is the heir of all things. He is the One through whom God created everything that exists. He is the brightness of God's glory. But we are not done and will look at this further in the next message.

CONCL: Well, we close for this time. This letter is written to discouraged Christians. They are considering going back. And the writer will try to encourage them. He will try to show them what they would be leaving if they went back to Judaism. And in this first section he will show them that their hope must not be in angels. Their only hope is Jesus Christ. And in this first sentence he eases them into this subject. He does not mention angels until the last part of the sentence.

So what he does is he shows them how God spoke to them in the past, and they will agree with all that. But then he shows them that God has spoken to us in these last days through His Son. And then he tells us who this Son is and what He has done. He will show them how far beyond angels Jesus Christ is. And what we have seen this far in our sentence could never be said of angels, but the writer does not say so. He just explains who Jesus Christ is.

Oh that we might all get a fresh glimpse of Jesus Christ from time to time. Oh the brightness of the glory He displays of God! God has spoken! He spoke in time past, and we have the OT. But He spoke again in these last days, and there we got the NT.

Read the last chapter of the OT and the last words. Then read the last book of the NT, and especially the last 3 chapters, and

you will find a very satisfying last chapter to the whole
revelation of God!