

And This Will We Do, If God Permits
An Expository Journey through the Epistle to the Hebrews
Chapter 3: The Preeminence of Jesus Christ
Hebrews 1:1-4
28: The Preeminence of Jesus Christ: Part 13

WAOY Thursday 02/05/09

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We are continuing our verse-by-verse journey through the **Epistle of Hebrews**, and today I want to continue to look at what the writer of **Hebrews** taught about the Preeminence of Jesus Christ. So let's open our Bibles and read **Hebrews 1:1-4** again together:

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,
2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.
3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
4 having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

Now on the last broadcast, we were looking at the seven "excellencies" that the writer of **Hebrews** shows us in the second half of verse two and all of verse three, so let's read those verses again together.

2 ... whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.
3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Now in these two verses, we can see that the writer of Hebrews is going to great lengths to describe just who Jesus is. And in his very detailed description, the writer lists seven attributes about Jesus that are true only of Jesus and are not true about anyone or anything else except Jesus in all the universe. Those seven attributes are:

1. His Heirship
2. His Creatorship
3. His Brightness
4. His Being
5. His Administration
6. His Sacrifice
7. His Exaltation

And we have to understand that from the very moment that this inspired, infallible Book was written (sometime around AD 68), nobody could ever describe Jesus again without including these seven attributes in their comprehension of Jesus. In other words, a correct Doctrine about Jesus *must* include these seven attributes, and any person or any group which seeks to describe Jesus and leave off these seven attributes about Jesus is giving a false or at best, *incomplete* understanding of just who Jesus is. So I hope you can begin to see why this stuff matters.

Now on the last broadcast, we were looking at the third attribute that the writer of **Hebrews** talked about, and on today's broadcast I want to begin to look at the fourth attribute of the Preeminence of Jesus Christ by looking at the next part of verse three, where the writer says that Jesus is

... the exact representation of His nature (NASB)

... the express image of his person... (KJV)

So here the writer tells us that Jesus Christ is the “**express image**” or “**exact representation**” of God's own Person. Now just what does that mean?

We must understand, dear friends, that the **Epistle to the Hebrews** is unique from all the other Epistles in the New Testament precisely because the subject of this Epistle is that Jesus is superior to everyone

who was listed in the Old Testament - especially angels - and that the New Covenant is vastly superior over the First or the Old Covenant. In the words of the noted Bible scholar, A.W. Pink, the Epistle to the Hebrews reveals to us “the super-abounding excellency of the New Covenant.”ⁱ Pink tells us that the writer of **Hebrews** reveals Christ to us in ever-escalating glories, just like Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John, in the Mount of Transfiguration. Pink says that as we go through the **Epistle to the Hebrews**, we will see Christ clearer than we have ever seen Him before, and our appreciation of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done will grow in our hearts and minds, and our comprehension of God’s great Love toward us will rise to the heavens. Nowhere is that more true than right here in **Hebrews 1:3**.

Throughout the thirteen chapters of this Epistle - one by one - all of the symbols, the types, and the partial revelations that the Old Testament contains are held up next to the Glory of an exalted and sinless Christ, and we see each one of the Old Testament signs melt in His Presence; we see each one pale by comparison; and we see each one reduced in importance in the light of the Glory of God that shines through Jesus Christ.

As we go through this Epistle, the Holy Ghost will take up the angels, and Moses, and Joshua, and the Levitical priesthood, and the Old Testament men of Faith, and will stand them next to the Brightness and the Majesty and the Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we will see just how magnificent Jesus really is.

To be sure, all the Old Testament characters had a great glory that was far superior to that of sinful man. Absolutely. The glory of Moses’ face as it shone after he had been in the Mountain with God eighty days and eighty nights was so great that the children of Israel could not stand to look upon him. But nevertheless, the writer of **Hebrews** tell us boldly that one glimpse of the Brightness of Jesus Christ will make Moses’ glory look like midnight.

Now over the last several broadcasts, we have been studying the seven “excellencies” or the seven *attributes* of Jesus Christ that can be found in the first four verses of Hebrews 1. In verses one through four, we can see that Jesus manifests seven different marvelous *excellencies* in and of Himself. And what the writer teaches here about Jesus should help us form a Biblical understanding of just who Jesus is. And this is so important, dear friends, because, for example, if people really could

see all that the writer of **Hebrews** tells us here in just these first four verses, nobody would be a Jehovah's Witness; nobody would be a Mormon; nobody would be a Gnostic; nobody would be deceived by the Messianic cults that have sprung up everywhere; and nobody would be confused about angels.

If people just simply believed what the writer of Hebrews clearly teaches here, nobody would believe any of those self-appointed and unaccountable prophets and apostles and seers, who go all over the country telling people that they have received special revelation from God; and people would not be standing in lines all throughout America today hoping and praying that somebody else would tell them what God's Will for their life is.

But by simply understanding these first four verses of **Hebrews 1**, people would know that although God absolutely used to speak to Man through prophets under the inferior Old Covenant, today - under the superior New Covenant - God speaks to Man solely through His Son in the pages of inspired Scripture, which is the product of the Spirit of Jesus. So these people would get out of those lines and they would be in the Bible themselves and then they would know God's Will and God's Word and God's Voice.

You see, by correctly understanding what the writer teaches here about who Jesus is, not only is our *theology* corrected, but our *behavior* will be modified as well. You see, beloved, it is impossible for anyone to live long term contrary to what he believes. So as our beliefs conform to Scripture, our lives will reflect the Glory of God.

Now one of the biggest fallacies in the modern Church today is the fact that in order to appease the sentiments of lukewarm, backslidden or unsaved people, the ministry of the average Church produces sermons and teachings which copy the world. One of the most amazing things I have ever heard was written by a pastor of a huge "mega church" in his very popular bestseller, when he said that in order to get people to come to your church, the leadership needs to find out what the "unchurched" wants and give them that.

Now I don't know about you, but I have no idea who the "unchurched" are supposed to be. That label is about as descriptive as "people of faith". I have no idea who the unchurched are. But if this pastor is referring to unsaved people; lost people; unregenerate people,

then I know exactly what the Bible says that the leadership of every church in the world is supposed to give them: clear and precise preaching and teaching about the Law, along with clear and unapologetic teaching about their own inherent sinfulness... mixed along with the preaching of the Cross, and calling them to repentance.

Now it shouldn't surprise you that this is not what this pastor said we are to give these lost people. He recommends various kinds of sandwiches in the food court of the church next to the expresso bar, along with opportunities for these hell-bound sinners to join various small groups that specialize in things like quilting, baking, pottery, motorcycle riding, weight loss, and yoga. You see, dear friends, if you give the lost world what they want, they will *never* want Jesus. They will never want the Bible; they will never want verse-by-verse, line-upon-line, and precept-upon-precept studies of the Bible. They will *never* want fervent and effectual prayer meetings where people can cry out to God and where they can grab the horns of the altar and "weep between the porch and the altar". They will never want to confess their sins; they will never want to repent; they will never want to sing of the majesty of God.

That's because they are lost. And lost people don't want to do those kinds of things any more than bank robbers want to go to the police station because the police station has a nice buffet in the cafeteria.

And if the Church abandons the preaching of the Gospel in order to get the "unchurched" to come, all we will have as a result of this effort is a bunch of tares sitting in an "unchurch"... which is exactly what is happening. We have to get to a place sooner or later, dear friends, where we realize that the reason that so many people in the church have not changed and have no desire to serve Jesus is because they are not saved. And to simply fill a building with a bunch of these people is *not* church growth.

Real church growth is when a black heart is washed in red blood and it becomes whiter than snow. Church growth is when people run to the altar to repent of their wicked ways, when people begin to love the things that God loves, when people no longer love money, when covetousness is rejected, and when the Love for God outweighs the love for ourselves, and when we no longer love this present world. Church growth is when people consider it an honor to suffer for Christ's sake,

and when people fear the least sin more than they fear the greatest injury. Church growth is when the hunger for God outweighs hunger for pleasure and when obedience is more important than life itself.

The pressure on the pastors today to let the church be like the world is enormous, and I simply refuse to go that way. God doesn't want His Church to look like or to act like or to smell like the filthy, unsaved world. That is because the church is different from every other place on the face of the earth. The church has been called out and set aside and dedicated to the Presence and the Majesty and the Glory of Jesus Christ. The Greek word that Jesus used to say "church" is the word *ekkleesia*, which means

*An assembly of called out and chosen people who leave their own homes and gather together in a public place for the express purpose of worshipping God.*ⁱⁱ

That is what Jesus meant when He used the word "church". And if that is not the meaning that comes into your mind when you use the word "church", you are using the word incorrectly. And we must love the church and reform the church and bring the church back to the Scriptures, so that the church can once again be that shining city set on a hill, and so that in the church, Jesus Christ can once again have the Preeminence.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **Hebrews**. May God help us all.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. *Soli Deo Gloria*. For the Glory of God alone.

ⁱ AW Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2004) page 29

ⁱⁱ *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1980)