

SHC Hebrews 002 -- 1:1-3 -- God Has Spoken to Us in His Son

2/14/2021

Introduction

Review and Extend What is Helpful to Know Before We Begin

Review 001

- Why Consider the Book of Hebrews
- Author - Anonymous, therefore: "the writer to the Hebrews", or "the Hebrews writer"
- Date - Before 70AD
- Audience - Primary Jewish believers in Jesus as God's Messiah, perhaps secondarily to Gentile believers
- Purpose -- To encourage believers as they endured their hard circumstances

New -- Kit's Point D. Overview pp. 8-9 top

- **Circumstance** -- Jews who did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah God had promised, regarded Jesus as a false messiah and the Jews who believed in Him were seen as being led astray from the truth of God. They saw Jesus and those who followed Him as threatening them and the way they had done life for centuries - a threat that needed to be stopped. They plotted to kill Jesus enlisting the help of Roman authorities. They plotted to kill Paul. They were similarly opposing the Hebrews to whom this letter was written.
- **Goal** -- to remind them of who Jesus is and what God had done in Him especially as that impacted "who they were as followers of Jesus" (Culver, p. 8)
- **Approach in the Letter** (means to reach the above stated goal) -- show "Jesus' supremacy over all things..." (Culver, p.9). The writer would first show the Supremacy of Jesus' Person (1:1 - 4:13) (Who He is), and then the supremacy of His ministration (see Culver, p.9, top) (What He did/does). The letter not only instructs, the writer also flushes out implications and issues and gives pastoral exhortations like the first one at the beginning of chapter 2, "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away *from it*."

The section of the letter we will be looking at for the next several weeks therefore will lay out for us, "The Supremacy of Christ's Person"

Reading of the Text

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 He also 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 so much better than the angels, to the extent that He has inherited a more excellent name than they.

A Few Notes to Help Us Get at the Meaning and Point

- **God spoke** -- God spoke! Our God communicates to His people. He did it long ago to His people called Israel and we can read about it in what we call our Old Testaments. He has spoken again in these last days.
 - Implication: It being God who spoke, we should read the record of what He said! And BTW, He still speaks through the ministry of His indwelling Spirit, not adding new truth He has not yet revealed, but bringing us to a better understanding of the truth already revealed in Christ. While a topic to be fully explored another day, do take note today that God's Holy Spirit is called the Helper (John 14-16) and one of the most helpful ways He helps us is to help us understand what God has already spoken to us as we encounter that in our Bibles. That God spoke, means that we should listen! Are you listening?
- **"These last days"** -- This not only indicates the time the author of Hebrews lived in (as perhaps the word "now"), but the particular time that God had told the people of Israel would come when He Himself would come and set things right. "These last days" indicates the time of which God had previously spoken and in which He would bring to pass His goals which included restoring all that was not right, establishing a kingdom in which He was king, becoming finally and fully God to His people...
 - Implication: All who have lived since the time of Jesus have lived (broadly speaking) in the same time period, and we can call this time period, "these last days." We live in the last days, i.e., the days when what God had promised He would do to set all things right (that we read about in our Old Testaments) He has now done substantially in Jesus Christ *His* Son.

Main Point

Bold words express the main point: The **God** who spoke long ago to Israel in many ways through the prophet (which we read about in our Old Testaments), **has now** (in these last days) **spoken to us in** the highest and final and best way of **His Son** (who when we read about in our New Testaments in the person of Jesus), and about whom we should know the following several things as we begin to read this letter:

What This Passage Says About Jesus

I am going to state several things about Jesus this passage brings up. But it is important that in all these things we recognize that Jesus -- the man born in Bethlehem to Mary and adopted by Joseph and raised in Nazareth... -- was the incarnation in time and space of the eternal Son of God. God the Son has always existed with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit -- This is the Trinity (the triune nature of the One eternal God) indicated in the Scriptures. God saw fit to inflesh (=incarnate) Himself in the person of Jesus some 2000 years ago. So when I make the following observations about "Jesus" do not think that I am putting the human person of Jesus, back before He was born into this world as if Jesus existed then. Jesus of Nazareth did not, but God the Son did. Still, God the Son

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was pleased "in these last days" to take on human form (Philippians 2) and come to us in the person of Jesus. John's Gospel begins by speaking about "the Word" -- "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Who or what was/is this "Word"? It is the eternally existing person of God the Son. God brought Him into the world as an act of love and condescension **to us** so that He [Jesus] might manifest and explain God to us and so that through Him, we would come to know and be reconciled and restored to the triune God.

1. **Jesus is a Son to God** -- "God... has spoken to us in *His Son*..." -- A son is the highest and best representation of the father, especially to the ancient Jewish mind -- See The Parable of the Landowner / Vine-growers (Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12 and parallel in Luke). Also remember God considered Israel (the people of God) His son (Exodus 4:22-23...) who would together serve as a kingdom of priests -- representing God to the world and the world to God.

And for us, may we see that Jesus, being the Son of God, is not some second lieutenant to God the Father (who was busy so He sent a representative), but He is One with the Father (John 17:11, 21, 22) -- God has infleshed Himself in His speaking, His word, to us in the person of Jesus... We read of Him in our Bibles, but He came and lived in flesh and blood most fully explaining God to mankind, more fully than God had spoken to and through Israel's prophets.

A son most fully represents his father. God the Son incarnate in Jesus most fully represents God the Father. A son's representation of His father is superior to a non-son messenger. Jesus' is superior to the prophets through whom God spoke.

So what? We must weigh what Jesus said as heavier than all other voices. What Jesus said and indeed Jesus Himself is the highest expression of all that God has said when He spoke through the prophets (and as we read of those words in our Old Testaments).

2. "God... has spoken to us in *His Son*..." and God's Son (who came to be incarnate in **Jesus** of Nazareth) **is God's Heir** -- "whom He [God] appointed heir of all things" -- In the ancient world familiar to the Jews, all that a father had would pass to the father's heir.

God is God of everything. There is nothing that exists that does not rightfully belong to God. We think of our houses, our cars, our bank accounts... but the Jewish mind (shaped by the instruction of God should have /) would have seen all things as ultimately belonging to God and His heir. Things have come into our possession, but they have come as gifts, temporary entrustments, from God which should be used for His purposes... Our names might be on a few deeds and bank accounts and miscellaneous titles, but **Jesus is God's heir**.

Jesus is distinguished from all of God people. He is God's Son, and He is His heir. The writer is lifting Him up to the highest place in the minds of his readers. The Jewish opponents who were coming against the early Jewish Christians were

seeking to diminish Jesus. The writer is holding Him before his readers as superior in every way. In a word, **Jesus is the heir of all** that exists in creation. (See top para on Kit's p. 13). **Jesus is God's Son and heir!**

3. **Jesus** (as the incarnation of the Word, the eternally existing Son) **is the One through whom God Made the World** – "God... has spoken to us in *His* Son... through whom He also made the world."

The Jews knew that, "In the beginning **God** created..." all that is (Genesis 1:1). The writer to the Hebrews felt it necessary to state clearly for the believers in Jesus he was writing to (the believers under pressure not to regard Jesus as highly as they did) that Jesus is the one through whom God made the world. This is a high place indeed!

He was not Himself a created being separate from God. Rather, Jesus was the incarnation of the pre-existing Word and Son of God. We need to see Him as this as well. He is more than many think He is. He is not our ticket to eternal life; He is the creator of all life and the highest expression of life itself. In a word, **Jesus is the source of all** that exists in creation. (See top para on Kit's p. 13).

4. **Jesus Is the Radiance of God's Glory** – "And He is the radiance of His glory." If we could peel away that which obscures our vision of Jesus (our hurry, our natural mindedness with its confidence in what we know thinking that that is reality, our arrogance in thinking that what we know is all there is to know, our distraction because of the cares of this world...) and see Him for who He is, His appearance would dazzle us. Remember the Mt. of Transfiguration: "His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light." Matthew 17:2.

If we could see Jesus in all His glory perhaps it might blind us, as His appearing did to Paul (Acts 9:1-9). When we look carefully at Jesus we see God. John 14:9b -> "... The one who has seen Me has seen the Father..."

The Jews who would have first read this letter before us were familiar with "God's glory"¹.

God had gloriously manifested His presence when He delivered their fathers out of bondage in Egypt appearing to them as a pillar of fire at night and a pillar of cloud during the day to manifest to them His presence (NIV Study Bible Note: (13:21 *pillar of cloud . . . pillar of fire*. The visible symbol of God's presence among his people (see 14:24; see also note on 3:2), from which he often spoke to them (Nu 12:5-6; Dt 31:15-16; Ps 99:6-7).

¹ Kit Notes P. 12: "This language would not have been lost on **the original Hebrew readers**; they **understood** that, throughout Israel's history, **God had been present among His people in His Shekinah – His glory-presence** that led them into His sanctuary land (Exodus 13:17-22, 15:17-18, 33:7-10), and then dwelt among them mysteriously between the wings of the cherubim in the Most Holy Place, first in the tabernacle (Exodus 40:33-38), and then in the temple (1 Kings 8:1-11). **God's glory-presence departed just prior to the destruction of the first temple (Ezekiel 10)**, but with the **promise that He would return to His sanctuary**. And when He did, **He would remain forever, bringing with Him forgiveness, liberation, healing, and the renewal of the covenant** (cf. Haggai 2:1-9; Zechariah 1-2; Malachi 3:1)."

The glory of the Lord had appeared to them in a cloud when God provided Manna and Quail to sustain them as He brought them out of Egypt into the land He had promised them ([Ex 16:10](#)).

The glory of the Lord had again appeared to them when He descended on Mt. Sinai to speak with Moses in Exodus 24 giving him the law and the design for the tabernacle which would be their place of meeting with God – “**15** Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. **16** The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. **17** And to the eyes of the sons of Israel, the appearance of the glory of the Lord was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. **18** Then Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.”

Then in Exodus 40 after that tabernacle was constructed we read “**34** Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. **35** And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. **36** Throughout their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the sons of Israel would set out; **37** but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day when it was taken up. **38** For throughout their journeys, the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and there was fire in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel.”

That same glory descended on the Temple, God’s permanent place of meeting with Israel in Jerusalem. See 2 Chronicles 6 and [especially 7...](#)

Sadly, that same glory of God departed from the first temple according to Ezekiel 10 in a vision God gave to the prophet (in one of the “various ways” God spoke to the prophets).

Gladly, that same glory of God “would return to His [God’s] sanctuary. And when He did, He would remain forever, bringing with Him forgiveness, liberation, healing and the renewal of the covenant” (Culver, p. 12) [that the people of God had broken by their faithless disobedience (see Jeremiah 31:31-34). Pastor Kit cites at this time: [Haggai 2:1-9](#); [Zechariah 1-2](#); [Malachi 3:1](#)].

Further, other prophets were told by God that His glory would one day return to His temple, but not in the form of the Shekinah glory cloud as in the past, but in superior and better sense, in God’s incarnation in the Messiah, the one He anointed and appointed to return and set all things right. See Pastor Kit page 12 bottom paragraph. There he sends us to [Isaiah 9:1-7](#); [59:1-60:3](#); [Malachai 3:1](#); [Matthew 4:12-17](#); [Luke 1:57-2:32](#).

The point being that the words, “glory of the Lord” evoked familiar significant memories of God manifesting Himself to accomplish His purposes with His people in their nation’s history. **Now the glory of God was being manifested in the person of Jesus, the Son of God.**

Jesus was and is the radiance of God’s glory! All the goodness of God is seen in Jesus. He is the manifestation of God Himself who promised to return and fill His temple with

His glory. Jesus is the Messiah and the incarnation of God Himself come to restore people to Himself, and through them set all things right.

Kit: *"the Son is the perfect and complete embodiment of the living God as "the refulgence of His glory and the very imprint of His being."* (Culver, p.12)

5. **Jesus Himself discloses God to us because He is God incarnate** – Jesus is "...the exact representation of His nature" – KJV: "express image of his person". Jesus is more than a representative of God, like the OT prophets were, He is "the exact representation of [God's] nature." Thayer on nature/person: **"the substantial quality, nature, of any person or thing..."**

When the first disciples saw and heard and when we consider Jesus, we are considering God as He has chosen to reveal/disclose/speak of Himself to us at this time ("these last days"). For the Jew who expected God Himself to return in His real presence and glory and restore creation in conjunction with the Messiah (as their scriptures indicated), the writer's words would have conveyed that Jesus is indeed The Messiah God promised in all the Scriptures -- He is the "exact representation of [God's] nature/person" come to restore and renew as promised. [John 1:14-18](#). **Jesus' superiority is evident yet again and Jesus goes beyond bringing a message from God, Jesus discloses God because He is God in the flesh, God incarnate, come to accomplish His purposes and fulfill His promises.**²

There is a progress to be noted here -- a progress in how the unchanging God has chosen to work and disclose Himself in redemptive history (God's dealings with His creation to advance His purposes of restoration unto the achievement of His ultimate intentions). The progress is from partial to full, a progress towards superiority and ultimacy. God had previously manifested Himself in glory clouds (Shekinah), now (in these last days) He manifested Himself in His Son. He became present, making His glory known,... in the person of Jesus -- God Himself incarnate in Jesus born to Mary and raised in Nazareth.

The Hebrews to whom this letter was written needed to know this because they were undergoing pressure not to so highly regard Jesus. We need to know this because many in our day, those behind the cultural pressures that would have us regard Jesus as something less, even a fake, a false Messiah, someone some people (simple people and fools) regard as God but who really was just a man deluded or deceiving.

This letter before us declares Jesus to be more not less than what most think Him to be. He is the exact representation of God Himself.

6. **Jesus Sustains and Moves All Things Toward Their God-Appointed Destiny** -- "upholds all things by the word of His power." As we come to know Jesus as He is disclosed in this

² Kit: The Jews understood that this return [of God] and renewal would come in connection with the Messiah. Their Scriptures addressed this in shadowy terms, but it was clear that **somehow Messiah's work would see Yahweh's glory restored to His sanctuary. In this way, Israel associated the Messiah with the "radiance of God's glory,"** but **the Hebrews writer** went further, insisting that **Jesus the Messiah is Himself the full embodiment of that glory (John 1:14-18), because He is "the express image of God's being."** The prophets' reassurance that Yahweh would return to Zion and His glory would again fill His sanctuary **wasn't the promise of the Shekinah's return, but of the incarnation** (cf. Isaiah 9:1-7, 59:1-60:3; Malachi 3:1; Matthew 4:12-17; Luke 1:57-2:32). (Culver, p.12, following on the heal's of previous footnote).

passage, we see that we do not only look back to the historical person, rather Jesus is the one who even now acts, He “upholds all things by the word of His power.” What does this mean? Is Jesus like Atlas in Greek mythology who holds the earth on his shoulders?



That does not do it. He is not just holding it, speaking to His strength, though He has no shortage of that. Pastor Kit puts his finger on the thought of **sustaining** (see Culver notes p. 13) and **moving forwards towards** the realization of God’s ultimate goal. **Jesus is the one in whom and through whom God is sustaining creation and moving it towards its ultimate destiny.** What is God’s goal for His creation? It is that it would be restored to Him and related to Him as He intended; and He intended all things to be related to Him having been set right themselves proper relation to (for us, in union with) His Son.³

7. **Jesus has made purification of sins reconciling us to God** – Please remember with me that sin in the Bible does not just refer to things you do that are wrong in someone’s book. Sin is ultimately separation from God, existing in estrangement from Him, living in a way that, when set alongside God’s intention for us, we more rightly should call our life death.

Sin separates us from God. So when we talk about Jesus making purification for sins we are not talking about Him cleaning us up well enough so that can come to the dinner table and not offend God. We are talking about Jesus rescuing us from our estrangement and delivering us into a good and right and God-intended relationship with God Himself. “...He had made purification of sins...” The writer does not choose at this time to discuss how or where, so I should not elaborate at this time either, besides mentioning the atonement accomplished on the cross upon which He died. He did discuss what Jesus did

- What: purification (blamelessness before God);
- When: before He was exalted to heaven by resurrection and ascension and seated on the throne (next phrase);
- Who: Jesus

Jesus has made purification of sins reconciling us to God. Try that one. Who can do that? Jesus can.

Finally,

³ Kit sends us to [Col 1:17; 1 Cor 15:20-28](#)
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8. **“He [Jesus] sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”** -- “the Majesty on high” refers to God. Psalm 148:13, “They are to praise the name of the Lord [Yahweh], For His name alone is exalted; His majesty is above earth and heaven.” Our Bibles make clear that Jesus died on the cross at Calvary, that he was buried, that three days later He rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples and many others ([1 Cor 15:1-8](#)), that he ascended into heaven⁴, and took His seat at the right hand of God ([Col 3:1](#)) on the throne of the kingdom of God where He also makes intercession for us ([Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25](#)).

The Jews to whom this letter was written would have noted that Jesus is therefore King and Priest, the ultimate and final king and priest. May we note the same. Jesus is Lord, meaning not just our master who we should obey, but The King God promised, The High Priest who brings us to God and God to us.

There is a sense of “seated” in this phrase that may well include the idea of “rest.” But Jesus’ “rest” is active and ongoing. He is now the active King of the KOG and He is actively advancing the kingdom purposes which include our best according to Him. He is the ultimate and final reigning king and interceding (praying) priest.

The Implications of this for You and Me Today

To those under pressure to abandon their faith in Jesus, the writer to the Hebrews, here in an introductory and summary form (which He will flesh out in the verses to follow), sets Jesus before his readers as He is so that they might continue to enjoy all that God has intended for them in Christ and the New Thing (New Creation Kingdom of God) He has begun “in these last days.”

Our stressors in 21st century America are different. But the pressure is the same: abandon, or do not look to, Jesus as God’s Son and the one in and through whom God intended to set all things right; don’t consider Jesus; don’t waste your time in church; don’t bother reading the Bible to know Him more fully; don’t believe in something and someone you can not see...

Is not the opposite the truth of the matter. When we pause enough to consider God and His Son, Jesus the Messiah, the Christ, do we not find what I first found when my father said as we looked out over the beautiful creation we could see from our front porch, that perhaps there is a God behind this creation.

And when we consider that He has come to us in the person of Jesus to give us a new life in the new creation Kingdom of God - the life He always intended for us to ultimately have - do we not find ourselves open to that possibility?

And as we carefully consider the veracity of Jesus and reflect on His life and death and resurrection and enthronement and the sending of His Spirit to all who believe, do we not come to know and remember the goodness of God and feel ourselves drawn to Him and praise welling up in us for Him? I believe we do, we can if we seek Him genuinely.

⁴ Acts 1:9 -- And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were watching, and a cloud took Him up, out of their sight.

Be reminded this morning of these rather sterilely listed propositions concerning Jesus

- 1. Jesus is God's Son**
- 2. Jesus is God's Heir**
- 3. Jesus is the One through whom God Made the World**
- 4. Jesus Is the Radiance of God's Glory** -- when we look at Him we see God⁵
- 5. Jesus Himself discloses God**, because He is God incarnate
- 6. Jesus Sustains and Moves All Things Toward Their God-Appointed Destiny**
- 7. Jesus has made purification of sins**, reconciling us to God
- 8. [Jesus] sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high**, where He is now seated reigning and serving

And then in your devotional times this week read and reread Hebrews 1:1-3, roll these things over in your mind, meditate on them... and allow the Holy Spirit to help you come to know Jesus in greater fullness.

Don't sweat that you don't understand every phrase, the rest of the book will unfold what we have considered in these 3 verses.

May this passage intrigue us and cause us to look for the answers to the questions it may raise: What does it mean that Jesus is God's Son, and Heir, Creator, Radiance of God's Glory...; and what are the implications of that for the world and for me? Let me whet your appetite, if Jesus is God's Son, we too are sons of God in our union with Him; if Jesus is Heir, we are co-heirs of God in Christ...

I am taken to prayer in these thoughts.

Lord help us to know Jesus as He is and especially in the weeks ahead, may we know Him as He is revealed in this ancient letter. And may You -- the unchanging God who has come to us in this superior new way of this superior man Christ Jesus -- (may You) encourage each of us such that we persevere in our faith in Jesus, even though some would call us to abandon Him. May we come to see that there is none better. He is your final goal. May we come to know Him and understand ourselves and our world in relation to Him. Please answer (in Your good time) the questions these verses raise in our minds and bring us into the fullness of the life You have begun in Christ.

We also pray for our country

America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!⁶

May we be responsible citizens of our country in such a way that we bear witness to our more important citizenry in the Kingdom of God of which Jesus is Lord.

⁵ John 14:7,9

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/America_the_Beautiful#Lyrics

Benediction

20 Now may
the God of peace,
who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep
through the blood of the eternal covenant, *that is*, Jesus our Lord,
21 equip you in every good thing to do His will,
working in us that which is pleasing in His sight,
through Jesus Christ,
to whom *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.