

Hebrews Chapter 1A 2016 February 10, 2016

When Sharon and I were working in youth ministry every summer we took the youth group to the Creation Festival. During our 11 years of youth ministry we started our family and our kids always traveled with us to Creation.

- Because the crowds were so large and our blanket was so far from the stage I often picked our children up and sat them on my shoulders so that they could see the bands and the fireworks that seemed like they were a mile away.
- Sitting on my shoulders they had a better view and were able to enjoy the experience that they would have missed sitting on the blanket.

Sir Isaac Newton, the noted astronomer is quoted as saying, *“If I have seen farther than others, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.”*

- He recognized that the research and accomplishments of other scientists paved the way for His great discoveries.
- In the same way, we who believe in Jesus Christ can see with greater clarity the riches of the glory of God by standing on the shoulders of the Giants of the Faith who have gone before us.
 - The Disciples of Christ enable us to see the glory of God as we stand on their shoulders and gaze at Christ who is the image of God.

Consider what we are able to see when we stand on the shoulders of the Apostle John.

1 John 1: 1 **That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life —**

2 **the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us** 3 **that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.**

- John saw the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ as it was manifested before his very eyes on the mount of transfiguration and then again on the Island of Patmos.
- John himself was enshrouded along with Peter and James in the glory cloud that descended on that Mountain.
- Together they heard the voice of the Father declare, **"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."**

By the Holy Spirit John was able to pass on to you and to me the wonder of the eternal, omnipotent, transcendent God who put on human flesh and came to dwell among us.

- Through the work of the Holy Spirit, in and through the Word of God we are able to stand on the shoulders of Giants and peer into that glory cloud to see with our own

eyes the depths and breath and height of God's love as it is manifested in the person of Jesus Christ.

- While we really don't know the identity of the author of this book of Hebrews when we stand on his shoulders we are able to see the magnificence of the person and work of Jesus Christ with amazing clarity.

There are Three Things that I want to draw to your attention as we prepare our hearts and minds for this study, three main points that we will encounter as we work through the book of Hebrews:

1. The Splendor and Preeminence of Christ.
2. The Superiority of His Sacrifice.
3. The Stimulus for Perseverance.

1. The Splendor and Preeminence of Christ

Dr. Steven Lawson

"No one will ever live higher than their view of God and their view of Jesus Christ. Those with a lofty and transcendent view of God live on a higher plane, they breathe heaven's air."

- How is the view of God from where you stand this morning?
- Standing on the shoulders of the Author of Hebrews we are able to see with fresh eyes the glorious perfections of our blessed Savior and seeing Christ in this way significantly affects the way that we live.
- The author wastes no time in getting to the heart of the matter. He doesn't offer a flowery greeting. He doesn't even introduce himself instead, he hits the ground running and lifts us immediately into the heavenlies to see the beauty and the wonder of Jesus Christ, the "God Man."

Hebrews 1: 1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

- We will study these verses in depth next week (Lord willing) but for today let me wet your whistle with these thoughts:
- Jesus Christ is the FULL and FINAL revelation of God that is given to man. He is the apex, the peak, the summit, the climax of all divine revelation.
- Everything that God has to say to man in this present time, in these last days he has spoken through Jesus Christ.
- The eternal nature and timeless supremacy of Christ are expressed by the fact that he is the beginning and the end, the creator, sustainer and rightful inheritor of all things.

- The deity of Christ is beautifully described with the words, “**He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,**”
 - In Jesus we see not only the shining forth of God’s glorious perfections but an exact and pure representation of his divine person, (*character & nature*)
 - Paul affirms this truth concerning Jesus in his letter to the Colossians.

Colossians 1: 15 **He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.**
 16 **For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things were created through him and for him.** 17 **And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.**

Colossians 2:9 **For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,**

Because Jesus is **the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature** He is greater than Angels, He is greater than Moses, Greater than the Levitical Priests and His sacrifice is superior to all of the Old Testament sacrifices.

2. The Superiority of His Sacrifice.

John MacArthur said that the book of Hebrews might be called the “Consumer Reports” of the Bible.

- Of course he is referring to the Consumer Reports Magazine. (are you familiar ?)
- In their Laboratories Consumer Reports tests all kinds of things that you and I as consumers, might be interested in purchasing.
- Their tests help us know which dishwasher cleans the best. Which refrigerator is the most energy efficient and which car out performs all of the others.

IN a similar fashion the author of Hebrews compares the person and work of Jesus to that of the Angels, to Moses and the Levitical Priests.

- The Author compares the glorious doctrines of the New Covenant to the passing glory and planned obsolescence of the Old Covenant.
- He compares and contrasts the priesthood of Jesus to that of the Levites.
- He compares the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus to the sacrifices demanded by the Old Covenant.
- He compares the promises of the old covenant to the promises of the new.

In light of those many comparisons the word that is frequently employed by the author is the word “Better.” It’s used 10 times in this letter to describe:

- Better hope, better testament, better promise, better sacrifice, better substance, better country, better resurrection, Jesus provides a better everything!

Without doubt the apex of the Book and the most important comparison is found in Chapters 8 – 9 where the author clearly and powerfully demonstrates the superiority and the effectual nature of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Hebrews 9: 11 **But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) 12 he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.**

- The tabernacle and the sacrifices of the Old Testament were types and shadows of all that God would bring about through the sacrifice of Christ.
- The Blood of goats and bulls provided a temporary covering for sin but they were never able to remove it completely.
- BUT Jesus Christ being God's eternal son come in the flesh was able to remove sin once and for all through the sacrifice of himself on the cross.
- The cleansing that he provides is complete and eternal.

Hebrews 10:14 **For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.**

You may ask why the author so painstakingly lays out all of these comparisons.

- What is the purpose behind so many theological contrasts?
- Believe it or not all of this theology has a very practical purpose in mind and that purpose becomes more evident when we understand the audience and the timing behind the book of Hebrews.

I believe that this book was written to a Jewish audience many of whom, but not all were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ and these people were living somewhere between the year 60 and 70 AD.

- Now remember this was the time when Nero was the ruler of the Roman Empire. Of course he is famous for the burning of Rome in 64 AD after which he began a horrific persecution of Christians.
- While his persecution was not necessarily widespread it had a significant impact on the believers in major cities throughout the Empire.
- As we read through this book of Hebrews we find that the people to whom this message is addressed had endured some level of persecution and it seems that they were fearful that this suffering might become even worse.

Hebrews 10: 32 **But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, 33 sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.**

34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

- Early in their faith, when their eyes were first opened to the Kingdom of God they were ridiculed, scorned and publically afflicted.
- BUT they joyfully endured the loss of their belongings believing that God had laid up for them an eternal reward.

But it seems that their initial zeal was waning and the cost of discipleship was greater than they anticipated.

- Under Nero Jews were a protected group of people but Christians were severely persecuted. SO these Hebrew Believers were faced with a unique temptation.
 - IF they made a bold declaration of Christ as Messiah they would most certainly face persecution.
 - If they returned to their Hebrew roots, recanted their faith in Christ and returned to the Synagogue they would be safe.
- With this in mind the Author provides strong exhortations to persevere in the face of difficulty, to hold fast to the faith and not give up.
- That brings us to our last point:

THIRD POINT: The Stimulus for Perseverance.

In light of the overwhelming glory of Christ and his finished work of redemption the readers are strongly exhorted to persevere to hold on and keep believing to the very end.

- There are five exhortations sprinkled throughout the book of Hebrews and they address different people who live at different levels of maturity.

Chapter Two contains an exhortation for the spiritual drifter, the immature believer who is moved by the changing currents and tides of thought within the church.

Hebrews 2:1 **Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.**

There were others among the believers who had an intellectual understanding of Christianity but not true saving faith. They were greatly shaken by the persecution.

- Because they had no root they were quick to wither.

Hebrews 12: 25 **See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. (God speaking through Jesus Christ) For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, (Moses) much less will we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.**

26 At that time his voice shook the earth, (At the giving of the Law) but now he has promised, "Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." 27 This

phrase, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of things that are shaken — that is, things that have been made, in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

You might say that the recipients of this letter were standing at a crossroad, confounded and confused, looking down the street in both directions.

- They look to the right and there is Jesus in all of his glory, the Son of God, the Creator and sustainer of all things.
- They need to remember the glorious justification that Christ has provided through his perfect sacrifice and powerful resurrection. BUT they are perplexed by this persecution, shocked and scared by the suffering.

They look to the left and see the Temple, the rituals, the festivals, the heritage that they were born into and the community that has abandoned them and they are conflicted. Would it be better for them and for their families to return to the shadows and types that pointed to Christ instead of trusting in the reality of Christ that had been revealed to them?

- Their heart may have been bent toward Christ but their flesh is pulling in the opposite direction and their lives are at a stand still.
 - By now they should be growing in their faith but they are not. They should be teaching others but they are fearful and silent.

You may find yourself at a crossroad this morning.

- You may be newly saved and you came from a strong Roman Catholic background. Your family thinks that you have abandoned the faith. They equate Protestantism with heresy and now you are reading the writings of the reformers! You may not be welcomed at family gatherings. What do you do?
- I remember praying with one elderly woman who gave all of her attention to the faith and prosperity preachers on T.V. When she developed a chronic illness her unscriptural beliefs were shaken because God didn't heal her! The error of her theology almost caused her to abandon Christ.
- You may have experienced a terrible loss in your life, a husband or child died before their time and your loss has caused you to question the character of God. Now you are treading water in a sea of confusion wondering where is God when you are hurting.

- You may experience persecution from co-workers because you don't join in their immoral excesses. They avoid you like the plague and toss your Bible in the trash can when you leave it behind in the breakroom.

Friends, there is a growing anti-Christian sentiment on the rise in America.

- If you hold firmly to Biblical standards of morality you will be called intolerant. Even though you freely proclaim God's saving grace to all people, the fact that you call all men to repent of their immoral behavior you are considered hater.
- If you challenge the scientific theory of evolution and believe the Biblical account of a literal 6 day creation you will be considered archaic, foolish, uneducated.

If it comes down to it, is Jesus Christ worth suffering for? Are you willing to endure public ridicule and economic hardship if necessary for the sake of Christ.

These and many more difficult questions we will address as we study the book of Hebrews together.