

- ***READ Hebrews 1:1-3*** Beginning last Sunday, our Daily Bible Reading is working its way through the letter that was written to the Hebrews. This New Testament letter is considered by many to be right on par with Paul's letter to the Romans in regard to the theological depth and importance that is found within its teachings. But there are many who would also compare this work to Romans from the standpoint that it can be difficult to gain a firm grasp on the teachings it contains.
- Some of that difficulty comes from the fact that we don't know who wrote this letter. There is no specified author stated within this text and that hinders us from considering this letter from the standpoint of knowing the writing style writers such as Paul, Peter, John, etc. There is no end to the number of men being speculated as the author. Luke, Clement of Rome, Barnabas, Apollos, Timothy, Philip, Peter, Silas, Jude, and others are all theorized as being the writer to the Hebrews. The only information we have regarding the author is found in **2:3** where the text seems to indicate that this author was someone who was familiar with the disciples of Jesus. He had heard of the great deeds of Jesus being confirmed by those who heard and saw Jesus themselves. While we don't know the author for certain, we can have confidence in the Apostolic influence that was upon him.
- We also are not fully aware of the exact recipients of this letter. We are not told specifically of their background or location, but some have said that these recipients were a house church that had broken away from the main church within a particular city. Others have said that this was written to Christians who had at one point been Jewish priests who were considering a return to Judaism of some sort because they were not wanting to endure persecution. Then others theorize that these recipients were actually Gentile Christians who had a high level of reverence for the Old Testament Scriptures. Whoever they were, these had to have a deep understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures because of the vast density of OT quotations within this letter.
- We simply don't know the identity of the recipients, but we can assume that these brethren were dealing with persecution based upon what is written in **10:32-34** concerning what they had endured and an encouragement to not give up since they had made it so far already. If we place this letter sometime in the mid-60s then this is the fierce persecution present under the emperor Nero.
- These admonitions for endurance are built upon the very foundation of the letter. In the verses that we read together just a few moments ago, the author goes right into the foundation of his argument concerning the superiority of Jesus. Whereas many of the other New Testament letters start out with some words of greeting, this letter jumps right into the subject matter which is why this letter is seen much more as a sermon than personal letter. That subject matter centers around Jesus and how God has established Him as being superior to all that has existed, does exist, and will exist. What is even more remarkable is the fact that God uses Jesus Himself as the mouthpiece by which He will make these things known.
- This is significant because God had for all of time up until this point used mere men as prophets to declare His will to the world, but *"In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son."* This statement is a dramatic shift in the way that God reveals His will to man based upon the medium of communication. Before God used mere men to reveal His will to man, but now He is using someone who comes with credentials that cannot be rivaled. **Hebrews 1:2,3** answers the question as to why Jesus is the ultimate mouthpiece for God, and then we will look at what exactly God has spoken to mankind through Jesus here in this letter to the Hebrews. I hope that these considerations will aid us all in our reading through this letter during the month of September.

I. Why is Jesus the ultimate mouthpiece for God?

A. He is the Heir of all things.

1. The creation itself stands as a testimony to the glories of God, and **Psalm 2:7,8** reminds us that

the Messiah, that Jesus would be exalted by the Father as the ruler of all things. *"I will declare the Lord's decree. He said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance and the ends of the earth your possession.'"*

2. This statement by the Hebrew writer establishes Jesus as the King of kings, the Christ. All things that exist have been given to Him as an inheritance for Himself and His people whom He rules over.

B. He is the Creator of all things.

1. What is more impressive is the fact that He also stands as the Creator of everything He is to inherit. **Colossians 1:16** not only supports this claim of the Hebrew writer, but it also supports the previous claim of Jesus as the Heir of all creation. *"For everything was created by him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created through him and for him."*
2. Many other verses could be given in support of Jesus being Creator of the world, but it is enough to simply state that Jesus being Creator of the World surely allows Him the ability to establish superiority over all that has been created.

C. He is the Radiance of God's glory.

1. John wrote concerning Jesus, *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."*
2. When men looked upon Jesus, they should have been witness towards the divine perfections that are also present in the Father. Every characteristic of Jesus radiates the perfections of God.

D. He is the Exact Expression of God.

1. The radiance of God's glory was able to be seen in Jesus because He is stated as being the *"exact expression"* of God's nature. This is to say that Jesus is possessing of the very same essence of God. One writer states that Jesus is the very rays of the sun or the wax impression of the signet ring. He is what God is.
2. With this being the case, it is no stretch to recognize that Jesus is deserving of every form of devotion and worship that might be offered to God by men. Though others might exalt themselves to god-like status, Jesus is the only one who has the right to actually be honored as King by divine decree.

E. He is the Word of God.

1. While other prophets simply relayed a message from God to the men of the world, Jesus is the actual message Himself. He is the one from whom the message of God's will originates.
2. Instead of just proclaiming the message of God through words, John reminds us that the Word Himself became flesh and dwelt among us. He not only spoke but also offered up a life full of obedient actions to God to show the magnitude behinds God's words of His love for mankind.

F. He is the purification for sins.

1. It was only through the sacrifice of Jesus that true forgiveness and purification of sins is made possible. We'll expound upon this in just a few minutes.
2. This purification wasn't done without sacrifice, but we know that Jesus was willing to give His life in order for such a thing to take place.

G. He is at the Right Hand of the Father.

1. Jesus is not simply an Heir that is waiting to receive His inheritance, but He is right now reigning in heaven at a position of absolute power at the right hand side of God. **(Acts 2:33)**
2. He sits at the right hand of God to signify His completed work upon the earth in establishing a new covenant through which mankind can be saved. The great and magnificent plan of God that was to bring about the reconciliation of mankind to Himself has been perfectly set in motion by Jesus Christ. By every conceivable right, Jesus is to be recognized as superior above all else.

But what does this mean? So what that Jesus is able to bring these credentials to the table? These things matter because they establish a foundation for why the recipients of this letter ought to give strong second thoughts to leaving Jesus for Judaism. Over the next ten chapters, the Hebrew writer is going to lay out a logical argument for the superiority of Jesus against every that the Jew might see as being either superior to man or of the utmost importance in the theology of Judaism. It is through Jesus, His character, His credentials, and His life that He is able to tell the world of His own superiority to all things. Through Jesus, God makes these declarations of His Son known.

II. What has God spoken to mankind through Jesus?

A. He is greater than angels. (1,2)

1. Jewish tradition holds to the belief that it was the heavenly beings of angels who delivered the Law to Moses while he was on Mount Sinai. To the Jews, there was not a greater messenger than angels in all of existence because they had delivered the most important revelation of God to men up to that point in time.
2. If they were to respect these beings for the great message of the Law that they delivered from God to Moses, then how much more should they respect Jesus for the Gospel message that He had delivered from God to the world. Not only that, but how much more should they respect the greater message that was presented through the greater messenger? The Hebrew writer sums it all up well when he writes in **Hebrews 1:6**, *"Let all God's angels worship Him."* For this to have been written would've been a major indication to these Hebrews that there was truly something special about Jesus.

B. He is greater than Moses. (3,4)

1. Moses is such a pivotal figure within the story of the Bible and particularly the people of Israel. He had taken God's people out of the hands of captivity and had led them right up to the point of the promised land. He had delivered the Law and had established Tabernacle worship. He was a key figure within the history of God's people, and yet the Hebrew writer is going to show in chapters 3,4 that Jesus is even superior to this great man of God.
2. Speaking of Moses and Jesus, the Hebrew writers states, *"Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was in all God's household. For Jesus is considered worthy of more glory than Moses, just as the builder has more honor than the house. Now every house is built by someone, but the one who built everything is God. Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's household, as a testimony to what would be said in the future. But Christ was faithful as a Son over his household. And we are that household if we hold on to our confidence and the hope in which we boast."* (3:1-6)
3. What is meant by this? I take it to mean that Jesus was able to finish the work that Moses had started in bringing the people to the point of the promised land. Moses had progressed the story along, but he had not brought it to fruition as Jesus had done. Additionally, if the people of Israel were punished for rejecting Moses, how much more of a punishment would the recipients receive if they rejected the words and message of Jesus? *"Therefore, since the promise to enter his rest remains, let us beware[a] that none of you be found to have fallen short For we also have received the good news just as they did. But the message they heard did not benefit them, since they were not united with those who heard it in faith."* (4:1,2)

C. He is the greater Priest. (5-7)

1. The line of priest that had been present through the family of Aaron had served a tremendous role in being those who represented the people before God. They were the ones who mediated between God and Israel by offering atoning sacrifices for the people. However, these priests were not flawless men. Even Aaron's own sons were guilty of rebellion.

2. Therefore, there was a need for someone better. Someone who would be able to serve as the ultimate high priest that would stand as the mediator between God and His people. One might think that this person would eventually come through Aaron's line, but that person instead came through the Tribe of Judah and not Levi.
3. This would normally make Jesus an illegitimate priest, but instead He served as a priest of the priestly order of Melchizedek. This prophecy can be found in **Psalm 110:4**, *"The Lord has sworn an oath and will not take it back: 'You are a priest forever according to the pattern of Melchizedek.'*" This priesthood came long before the Law and allowed for Jesus to serve as this ultimate Priest-King between God and His people. Unlike Aaron's people, Jesus was flawless and always available when His people come before Him begging for mediation between themselves and the Father in heaven. If these Hebrew brethren rejected Jesus as high priest then they would have no one better to look for to mediate between them and God.

"For this is the kind of high priest we need: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He doesn't need to offer sacrifices every day, as high priests do—first for their own sins, then for those of the people. He did this once for all time when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak, but the promise of the oath, which came after the law, appoints a Son, who has been perfected forever." (7:26-28)

D. He is the greater Sacrifice. (8-10)

1. Lastly, the Hebrew writer argues for Jesus being a far superior sacrifice which is a part of a far superior covenant with God. Though the animal sacrifices under the law were necessary for the cleansing of the sins of the people before God, they had to be offered day after day and year after year. *"Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the reality itself of those things, it can never perfect the worshipers by the same sacrifices they continually offer year after year. Otherwise, wouldn't they have stopped being offered, since the worshipers, purified once and for all, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? But in the sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year after year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." (10:1-4)*
2. The writer shows that the sacrifice of Jesus was the fulfillment of these sacrifices and it brought about a covenant that was superior in every way to what had been established through Moses. Through Jesus's one sacrifice the sins of the world could be forgiven and fellowship with God could be established. *"For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified. The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. For after he says: This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, the Lord says, I will put my laws on their hearts and write them on their minds, and I will never again remember their sins and their lawless acts. Now where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer an offering for sin." (10:14-18)*

The rest of the letter to the Hebrews is a plea for these brethren to forsake their former ways of living in order to fully embrace Jesus as their Messenger, their Leader, their High Priest, and their Sacrifice. Through their continued faithfulness to God, these brethren could endure their afflictions and remain as the saved people of God.

While we might not have a fall back faith such as Judaism, there are still many temptations that could lead us away from remaining faithful to God. It is my hope that our considerations this evening have reminded us that there is nothing better in this world than to serve a Savior who can hold up the claims and credentials that Jesus can. No one is God's messenger like Jesus. No one leads us like Jesus. No one serves as our High Priest and Mediator like Jesus. No one has given themselves as a sacrifice for us like Jesus has. He is worthy of our love and devotion, and may we remember these things spoken to us by God through Jesus as we go into this week striving to serve Him well in all that we do.