

# Hebrews

## The Superiority of Christ (Part 1)

### Hebrews 1:1-2

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### Hebrews 1:1-2

#### INTRODUCTION:

It is clear that the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD had not yet occurred when the book of Hebrews was written. The destruction of the temple would have been mentioned if it had already occurred, for it would have strengthened the letter's argument about Christ's sacrifice spelling the end of the temple sacrificial system. The public persecution mentioned in 10:32-34 gives us insight for dating the book.

#### **Hebrews 10:32-34 (NASB95)**

<sup>32</sup> But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, <sup>33</sup> partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. <sup>34</sup> For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

We know that the Roman emperors Nero and Domitian persecuted Christians. Most likely Hebrews was written during the persecution under Nero between 64- 68 A.D., perhaps just before the destruction of the temple.

Jesus was crucified around 32 A.D. Hebrews was written approximately 35 years later around 67 A.D. If we were to equate the writing of the book to our current year of 2022, that would place Jesus' death and resurrection to occur in 1987. In 1987 June and I had all four of our parents. We had 8 aunts and uncles and one great uncle still living. Now, in 2022 we only have my mom and one aunt still living. So today we are in the second and third generation since 1987. So many of these Christians had not experienced the miracles and teachings from Jesus. It was all second hand knowledge. Prior to their conversion the Old Testament had been their entire Bible. They had gone through a major shift from Old Testament law to New Testament grace. This would have been a very bold move on their part.

I am sure that many of the Christians who received this letter had grandparents, uncles, and aunts, and parents that had not converted to Christianity. They were all going through persecution. I can hear their unconverted relatives accusing their Christian relatives for the persecution that they both were experiencing because their relatives had believed in Jesus, who the unconverted thought was a blasphemer claiming to be God, and God was showing His wrath against them all for falling away from the sacrifices, not circumcising, and not living according to their Jewish law.

Some of them probably knew one or more of the guards at the tomb who were still claiming that Jesus had not resurrected from the grave, but had been stolen and hidden by the disciples.

### **Matthew 28:11-15 (NASB95)**

<sup>11</sup> Now while they were on their way, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all that had happened. <sup>12</sup> And when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, <sup>13</sup> and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.'" <sup>14</sup> And if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble." <sup>15</sup> And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, *and is to this day.*

Where did they get this idea? When Jesus was cleansing the temple, the Jews asked Him by what authority was He doing it? Here is how Jesus answered them.

### **John 2:18-22 (NASB95)**

<sup>18</sup> The Jews then said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." <sup>20</sup> The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" <sup>21</sup> But He was speaking of the temple of His body. <sup>22</sup> So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.

The unconverted Jews kept reminding the Christians that Jesus had said that the temple would be destroyed and that it would be rebuilt in three days. From their perspective, that had not happened! Over 35 years later the temple was still standing.

### **Mark 14:55-59 (NASB95)**

<sup>55</sup> Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. <sup>56</sup> For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. <sup>57</sup> Some stood up and *began* to give false testimony against Him, saying, <sup>58</sup> "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'" <sup>59</sup> Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent.

Many Christians during this time period **thought** that Jesus had said that He was returning soon during many of their lifetimes. Many of them had passed away and they were getting concerned because He had not returned and I am sure that they were being ridiculed for it. I can hear the unconverted Jews saying "Jesus was an imposter. He is not coming again!"

Many of them had lost their houses and were being persecuted by Nero. Some were thinking this was surely the wrath of God falling down on them for their disobedience. Some were beginning to wonder if believing in Jesus was worth all of the trouble that they were going through and may have considered going back to the temple and practicing their Jewish laws once again.

The author certainly knew his audience very well and understood the doubt that they were going through. Some were walking away and abandoning their faith altogether. This explains the structure and the purpose of this letter. The author had two main goals in

his writing. One was to elevate Jesus as superior to anyone or anything else and that He was the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament and that He brought in the new covenant which was also proclaimed in the Old Testament. Showing that Jesus is worthy to receive all of their trust and devotion. The second goal was to challenge the readers to remain faithful to Jesus despite persecution.

He used the Old Testament, that they knew very well to show how it foreshadowed the Messiah that was to come.

He spoke about how Abraham's family became the nation of Israel. And how Moses led the people out of Egyptian slavery to mount Sinai where they received the Torah and made a covenant with God. And about the tabernacle that was built where the priest offered sacrifices for sins. And how they wandered through the wilderness on their way to the promised land.

The author expects the readers to know all the details about all of these stories. So he identified the bridge between the Old and New Testament by looking at the foreshadowing from the Old Testament and identifying the fulfillment in the New Testament through Jesus.

Hebrews 1 is about the supremacy of Christ Jesus. It paints a wonderful picture of how He is superior to the angels because of His redemptive work on the cross. Jesus is the exact representation of the Father and was sent to communicate to us the true nature of God. By understanding who Jesus is and what He said, we can know the fullness of God's nature and character. Within the first four verses the author lists seven arguments that Jesus Christ and everything connected with Him is superior to all that had come before and all that will come after Him. We will look at a few of them this morning.

## All Stand and Read Scripture

### **Hebrews 1:1-2 (NASB95)**

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, <sup>2</sup> 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.

## Prayer

### **BODY:**

#### **I. Jesus Helps us to Understand God's Nature.**

### **Hebrews 1:1-2a (NASB95)**

1 **God**, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, <sup>2</sup> **in these last days has spoken to us in His Son**,

One of the main stumbling points for both Christians and non-believers is reconciling the differences between their view of God in the Old Testament and their idea of who Jesus is in the New. These views can appear to contradict each other unless we understand this important truth: **the Old Testament only gave partial revelation of God's nature, but Jesus gives us the clear and perfect image.**

**The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed. The New Testament is the Old Testament Revealed.**

**Jesus is the expression of God's love toward us. God has always tried to communicate with us.** He sent messengers, prophets and kings to show us his intentions. Each one gave a portion of the truth. But we could not fully understand God's character by the limited revelation they conveyed, **so God sent Jesus to communicate His full nature to us.**

It is easy to **misinterpret God by solely looking at the Old Testament** without the filter of Jesus. For instance, The Old Testament shows us God's wrath and justice, but **Jesus shows us God's mercy.** The Old Testament shows us God's holiness, but **Jesus shows us God's grace.** The Old Testament shows us God's righteousness, but **Jesus is the one who provided that righteousness for us.** God has always been merciful, abounding in grace and faithful to save. But Jesus is the one who demonstrated these characteristics to us in a complete and full way.

### **John 1:17-18 (NASB95)**

<sup>17</sup> For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained *Him*.

Jesus, the very same person who created the universe, who holds it together by his word, who sustains life on this planet, and **was sent to reveal God's love to us.**

### **Colossians 1:15 (NASB95)**

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

Everything Jesus is, shows us the Father in a complete way so we can know and understand him.

### **1 John 4:8 (NASB95)**

<sup>8</sup> The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Love is not an attribute of God; it is the **essence** of God. John went on to explain,

### **1 John 4:9-10 (NASB95)**

<sup>9</sup> By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.

What an amazing truth that Jesus was sent to show us God's complete nature. This is one of the reasons Jesus came to earth as a man. This is an important truth to understand, **Jesus came in the flesh so He could interact with us in a way that we could see, hear and understand.** The result is putting our trust in Him.

## **II. Jesus is the Heir of All Things.**

### **Hebrews 1:1-2 (NASB95)**

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, <sup>2</sup> 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.

### **ILLUSTRATION:**

There was a documentary a few years back about the deepest parts of the sea. Scientists were studying the life that existed at incredible depths. Most of the creatures that inhabited the deepest points of the ocean still surfaced occasionally to eat plankton and various particles that were produced from the natural flow of life on this planet.

However as they explored these incredible depths, they soon discovered life forms living far beyond the reach of our sun. Until this time, science operated under the assumption that all life on this planet was sustained by the sun and photosynthesis. Needless to say this discovery baffled the deep sea scientists.

Finding these creatures disproved the theory that life is supported by our sun. **Rather life is sustained by the Son (S-O-N)**. It is amazing how a living creature can live so deep under the water without being crushed to death. It requires a very strong and thick metal to withstand the tremendous pressures that exist down there.

Genesis tell us that in the beginning God created. Through progressive revelation of the Old and New Testaments we now know that Jesus, Who is part of the Godhead, is the one who actually created the Universe and Who holds it in place by His powerful word. **It emphasized how important Jesus, the Son of God, really was!** He came to this world and walked among us and He was the creator of all things!

### **Colossians 1:15-17 (NASB95)**

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

By these life forms found in the deep sea, science has opened a door for others to understand what believers have long understood: **Jesus created the universe. Jesus holds it together. And Jesus sustains life on this planet.**

The apostle John told us,

### **John 1:3-4 (NASB95)**

<sup>3</sup> All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. <sup>4</sup> In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

**Understanding who Jesus is, is the beginning of life.** Not just physically but spiritually and eternally. Jesus himself told us,

### **John 10:10 (NASB95)**

<sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have *it* abundantly.

## **III. The Word, Jesus Became Flesh.**

## Hebrews 1:1-2 (NASB95)

1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, <sup>2</sup> **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.

How did Jesus qualify to be "The Word of God?"

## John 1:1-2 (NASB95)

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.

Jesus came to communicate **God's message of love toward us**. To do this, he entered into humanity.

## John 1:14 (NASB95)

<sup>14</sup> **And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us**, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Jesus came to the world he created with a **simple but glorious message**, that **God loves us and has provided the way for reconciliation through the Son**. Jesus came to proclaim the good news that God was not holding mankind's sins against them and **He would provide the way to the Father**. The messengers that God previously sent forecasted these events and longed to see them transpire.

## Luke 10:24 (NASB95)

<sup>24</sup> for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see *them*, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear *them*."

**What they longed to see was Jesus, the expression of God's love!**

## CONCLUSION:

Even in the deep sea, the creatures that live there **draw life from the Son**. They testify to this incredible message of **God's love in the person of Jesus Christ**. He is the author of all things and willingly offers eternal life to all who call upon his name.

## 2 Corinthians 5:17-19 (NASB95)

<sup>17</sup> Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. <sup>18</sup> Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup> namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

This is what the early Christians at the time of this writing was needing to hear once again. We are **forgiven, accepted and loved!** The persecution that they were going through was difficult, but worth it in the end, if they would just remain faithful. Jesus has communicated perfectly God's true nature and character. By knowing Jesus, we know the Father.

**He is Lord.**