

# Hebrews 1: The Divinity of Christ

The book of Hebrews is an extremely important book. It would be unfortunate if we did not have it, even though most of its concepts could be gathered from other Old and New Testament books.

And that is what the author of Hebrews did. He gathered many scattered truths from all over the Bible—and brought them together into a single small book, the book of Hebrews. And it all leads us to a single grand truth: the priesthood of Christ.

As soon as we realize this, the book of Hebrews takes on a new importance.

This morning, we are going to begin a sermon series on this special book. As we journey through it, we will not only receive fresh inspiration, but several of the foundation truths of our people will be reaffirmed.

How thankful we can be that we do not have to scurry around, ever searching for new, revised teachings! The beliefs of our church are just as strong today as they were over a hundred years ago. That is because they are founded on the Bible!

In our study of Hebrews, we will learn this anew. A solid foundation was laid many years ago; and, brothers and sisters, we can trust it. It is sturdily built, not on the sayings of men, not on their committee actions, nor on church pronouncements or creeds. It is founded on the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy.

Hebrews is one of the few books, in the New Testament, which does not tell who wrote it. Yet it is not difficult to identify the author. We know it is the Apostle Paul. He is the only one who could have had such a masterful grasp of the history and symbols of the Old Testament Sanctuary service. Paul had the formal education, the years of preaching experience, and the divinely guided Inspiration to put together such a volume.

His authorship is also attested to by the Spirit of Prophecy. For example, in just six pages he is called the author of Hebrews seven times (*Great Controversy*, 411-418).

It is true that the arrangement of ideas in Hebrews is more carefully organized than we normally find in Paul's writings. Now, we know that most of the time, he dictated his letters to a helper. But in preparing Hebrews, he may have jotted down the key points in outline format and then expanded it as he dictated the final copy to a friend. Or perhaps he wrote the entire book himself. It is thought that there was a period of time, while in prison in Rome, when he had no helpers. During that time, Paul may have written the book and then given the manuscript to a friend

when he arrived.

When was the book of Hebrews written? It is believed that the Apostle wrote the book of Hebrews about the year A.D. 65 or a little before. This is based on the likelihood that it was written about the time he was in prison in Rome. Paul is thought to have been martyred about A.D. 67. Since the Jewish revolt, which led to the destruction of Jerusalem, began in A.D. 66, the book of Hebrews could not have been written after that time—for it contains no mention of the revolt or the destruction of the city. Surely, in a book about the true Temple and the weaknesses of the earthly services, Paul would have referred to the situation in Jerusalem if he had written the book after A.D. 65.

In the providence of God, Paul was guided to write this book to the Christian believers, so their eyes would more clearly be turned away from Jerusalem and its Temple. He wanted to direct them to the Sanctuary in heaven. The center of worship was no longer in Palestine; it was in heaven where Jesus had gone!

But modern theologians have ignored the teachings of Hebrews and have focused their attention on the earthly Jerusalem.

In doctrine, they declare that Christ completed His priesthood on the cross, when, as we shall discover, Calvary was only the beginning of His priestly ministry on our behalf.

In prophetic interpretation, modern theologians have their eyes on old Jerusalem. They are expecting great events to occur in Palestine. This is because they have not clearly recognized the great truths in the book of Hebrews.

But, a few days before His crucifixion, Christ declared, "Your house is left unto you desolate" (Luke 13:35)! And so it was. We are now to look to Christ, our great High Priest, in the Sanctuary above—where He is ministering on our behalf.

But just now, let us open our Bibles to the first chapter of Hebrews. I hope you all brought your King James Bibles with you. That is the only one we use here, for both historical and manuscript evidence shows it to be the most accurate translation in print.

In unison—together,—let us read the majestic lines of the first two verses of Hebrews:

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds."

What a dramatic, panoramic statement! It carries us back into the far distant past, and tells us that the Father—working together with the Son—made all the stars and planets and all that they contain!

So we begin the book by viewing Christ as the Creator of all things. Turn with me to two other passages which confirm this:

John 1:3— “All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made.”

Colossians 1:16— “For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him.”

In the first chapter of Hebrews, we are going to find a steady progression of glorious facts about our Lord and Saviour. —And so it will be as we go through the entire book! We will keep learning more about our precious Jesus.

Hebrews 1:3.

“Who being the brightness of His [the Father’s] glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the Word of His power; when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.”

How wonderful! Our Jesus is the “express image” of the Father!

John 14:9— “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.”

Colossians 1:15— “[Christ] who is the image of the invisible God.”

And then turn the page to Colossians 2:9:

“In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”

What sweet truths we are learning about Jesus! And notice again the words we just read in Hebrews 1:3: “Upholding all things by the Word of His power.” What greatness, what majesty, what power and authority reside in Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men!

With verse 4, Paul begins a special concept, which he will continue all the way through to chapter 13. Key words in the book of Hebrews are *better* or *greater*. Christ is better or greater than this, and Christ is better or greater than that. And everything about Christ, and everything that He does—is “better” or “greater” than that of others. In verse 4, we are told that Christ is “better than”—that is, superior to—the angels. He is, we are told, “more excellent.”

“Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”

It is important that we realize that, in the book of Hebrews, Paul was directing the attention of the early Christians away from the earthly sanctuary service and earthly priests, away from the earthly temple and the earthly temple service—to Christ as their High Priest in the Sanctuary above. All these *bettters* and

*greater*s are pointing us in one direction: up.

We glory in the greatness of Christ! And Scripture says we have a right to do so.

Luke 1:32— “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest.”

Ephesians 1:21— “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named; not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”

Yes, yes, what glory there is in the name of Jesus!

Philippians 2:9-10— “God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in earth, and things in heaven, and things under the earth.”

Isaiah 9:6— “His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.”

And now we go to verse 5 of Hebrews 1.

“For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son?”

The Apostle makes two points here: *First*, only Jesus is called “the Son.” The angels never are. *Second*, Jesus is the “begotten” one; something the angels never are.

But when does Scripture say that Jesus was begotten? Psalm 2:7 makes the prediction:

“I will declare the decree: The Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten thee.”

Yet on what day did that happen? The Bible tells us; turn with me to Acts 13:32-33.

“And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.”

So the Word of God tells us that it was on the day of the resurrection of Christ, that He was declared by His Father to be “begotten.”

In anticipation of that event, Jesus is earlier called “begotten,” as we find in John 3:16. However, it should be mentioned that some believe Jesus became “begotten” at the Incarnation. Notice the first part of Hebrews 1:6.

“And again, when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world.”

Is He there called begotten because He was begotten at the Incarnation or in anticipation of His resurrection?

But of this fact there can be no doubt: Jesus Christ is eternal: past, present, and future. There was no beginning to His existence, and there will be no end. In connection with His earthly ministry, He was begotten;—there never was a time in pre-history when He did not exist.

Throughout the remainder of this chapter, we will find the message to be Christ's majesty and eternal existence. Verse 6 again:

"And again, when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him!"

Come, view the glorious scene with me. At the birth of Christ, many angels hovered in the sky above the shepherds in the field, praising the newborn King. — But that was only a small part of the exalted praise that night. For, according to verse 6, at that same time all the angels of heaven were also singing glad hosannas to Christ!

They were praising Him for His self-sacrificing love, which so clearly revealed to them what the Godhead, which shared in that sacrifice, was like.

They were praising Him for doing all this to provide redemption to all on earth who would accept it.

They were praising Him for doing this to safeguard the entire universe and forever make it secure from another rebellion.

It is for all these reasons that we are told of the glorious happiness of the angels in Luke 2:13-14.

"Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Yes, it is true as Paul says: The angels may be glorious beings, but the Son is the great King! Hebrews 1:7-8.

"And of the angels, He [the Father] saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire;—but [in contrast] unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever! A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Thy kingdom!"

The kingdoms of men will perish, but Christ's kingdom is an eternal kingdom; it will continue forever. How thankful we can be for that! Daniel 7:13 and 14.

"One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days . . . and there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Isaiah adds to it: Isaiah 9:7.

"Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end. Upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth and even for ever."

Christ came to our world and fully took on Him our human nature, that He might minister to our needs, share our sufferings, and empower us to overcome as He overcame. The word, "messiah," means "anointed." We are told of this anointing in verse 9 of Hebrews 1.

"Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed

Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows."

Why was He anointed? to minister to our needs and show us the pathway to salvation. Luke 4:18.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor."

To those only who recognize their spiritual need can Christ share the good news of what He can do in their lives. Those who are proud, increased in riches, and pleasure seeking do not want what He has to offer.

But who are the "fellows" in Hebrews 1:9? It is those who accept Christ as their Saviour. We find the answer in Hebrews 2:11.

"For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren."

It is because Christ fully took our nature, that He could call us His "brethren." Listen not to those who tell you that Christ did not descend all the way to the bottom of the ladder! When you go home after church today, read again Philippians 2:1-15. Jesus did not partly take our human nature. He fully took it. He did not partly share our sufferings; He fully shared them. Jesus went all the way, yet without sin; so we could be raised—all the way—to clean, obedient living. Jesus came, not partway, but all the way to earth; so we could go, not partway, but all the way to heaven. And as we, by faith in Him, obey His Ten Commandment law, heaven begins right here within our hearts.

He became our brother. He formed the closest attachment to us. Hebrews 2:16-17.

"For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren."

And to think—that the One who came all the way down to minister to unworthy ones such as us,—*was the Creator of worlds!* Hebrews 1:10.

"And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands!"

Without the ever-present help of God, everything in creation would perish. But Christ is self-existent. He is God. Verses 11-12.

"They shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment. And as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed. But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail!"

In the above passage, Paul is quoting Psalm 102:25-27, almost an exact quotation. Apart from the constant, direct help of God, everything in nature would cease to exist. Turn with me to a similar passage: Isaiah 51:6.

"Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die."

It is for this reason that Christ could declare with certainty: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My

words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

The theme here is the unchangeable eternity of Christ. As we read in Hebrews 1:12, the promise is that Christ is the eternal One who cannot perish.

“But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.”

And this wide-ranging statement of His eternity: Revelation 1:8.

“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”

Or this excellent promise. Hebrews 13:8.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.”

But, let us return again to Hebrews 1:11-12. When the Apostle speaks of creatures perishing and being folded up like a garment,—he especially has in mind that great time in the future when Jesus Christ will sit in judgment on the wicked. That is why, in the very next verse, Paul wrote this. Verse 13.

“But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool?”

In ancient times, when one king conquered another, he would be seated on his throne and the foreign king would be brought in, there to bow before the conquering monarch,—and the king would rest his feet on the neck of conquered ruler, as a sign of total conquest. There are engravings of this scene on the walls of Mesopotamia and Egypt: A king seated on his throne with his feet on the neck of the other king—symbolic of total conquest. Here is another verse that also says this: 1 Corinthians 15:25.

“He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet.”

Jesus, sitting on the right hand of the Father (Mark 14:62), will conquer His enemies. The day is coming when they will wax old like a garment and perish. And that is the message of Isaiah 51:6.

“Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner.”

In Matthew 24:35, Jesus said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.” The triumphal end of sin is just ahead of us. 2 Peter 3:10.

“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

But, until that time comes, you and I must prove

faithful. We must obey the commands in Scripture and trust to the promises. We must lay hold on the hand of Christ and let Him lead us all the way to the goodly land.

As we journey along the pathway to heaven, the holy angels minister to us, ever pointing us to the Inspired Writings. Hebrews 1:14.

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”

How thankful we can be that we are not abandoned orphans in this world. God has provided us with powerful helpers! Here are two precious promises about angels:

Psalm 34:7— “The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.”

Psalm 91:11— “He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.”

That is, all the ways of God’s appointing. When we run off into side paths, we always get into trouble. Always. Only the Lord knows how to guide the feet of His little children.

But, if we will remain faithful and, through His enabling grace, obey His commandments—we will one day soon reign with Jesus! Exodus 19:5-6.

“Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”

That glorious day cannot be far off, for we live in the time of the feet and toes of the great image of Daniel 2. As we are told in Daniel 2:44.

“In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”

The Bible says, “If we suffer [with Him], we shall also reign with Him” (2 Timothy 2:12). Jesus is coming, and “will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces” (Isaiah 25:8).

“O give thanks to the Lord of lords, for His mercy endureth for ever” (Psalm 136:3).

On one occasion, it is said of the disciples, “And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only” (Matthew 17:8).

In this first chapter of Hebrews, we have lifted up our eyes, looked at Jesus, and learned about His divinity. “We beheld His glory” (John 1:14).

In our next worship sermon, we will behold His humanity and why it was necessary that He become one with us.

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