

Hebrews

Chapters 1-2: Jesus is Better

- The letter to the Hebrews was written to a Jewish audience that had converted to Christianity.
- So this one is different than most of Paul's letters that Paul wrote, which were normally written to non-Jews, teaching them more about God, and redirecting them from pagan lifestyles
 - Because, this audience already had extreme reverence for God. They had grown up their entire lives, reading the Torah, practicing God's laws, offering sacrifices, memorizing scripture, etc. etc.
 - But now that they had come to Jesus, they weren't reliant on the old traditions and customs of the Jewish religion anymore
- However, the Jewish leaders and many of their family members put so much pressure on

these new believers to continue to observe the Jewish sacrifices and return to their old customs

- And if they didn't, they were ostracized from their local community
- Also, this letter is being around 70 AD, probably just before it, and this was during the reign of Emperor Nero, who may have been the most ruthless Roman ruler when it came to persecuting Christians.
- Historians report that it really started in 64 AD whenever Nero had his people start a large fire in one of their regions to clear out land for a building project...and whenever he got public backlash, he blamed it on the Christians and their hatred of people
- So he used Christians as a scapegoat and began using their executions as sport and entertainment for the Roman public.
 - We'll talk more about that when we get to chapter 10, but of course many of these new believers were afraid for their lives and the

Sunday, January 7, 2024

lives of their families, so many were thinking about leaving the faith

- So these are the two main things warring against the church, the temptation to return to Judaism and the temptation to leave the faith in fear
- And the writer of Hebrews, who we're not really sure who the writer is, but the writer wants to get two main points across in this letter. And that is:
 - **JESUS IS BETTER THAN THE OLD WAYS** and **JESUS IS WORTH THE TROUBLE**
- These are going to be some reoccurring themes that we see throughout the book, (for however long it takes us to study it)
- And even though these things are written to those in the first century, experiencing things that we are not experiencing, the truths of this book are still so relevant for us today.
 - Because I don't know about you, but I have found it very easy or even desirable at times,

over the years, to slip back into some of the old ways of my life before Christ.

- I don't know about you, but living this Christian life by faith can become very wearisome, heavy, difficult, and confusing... but the question is, is Jesus worth it?
- I believe with all that I am along with the writer of Hebrews, that yes, yes He is!
- He begins this letter, not with any introductions (which is the leading factor to those not believing that the apostle Paul wrote this, because it's so much different in style), the writer just gets right to it right off the bat.
- ***“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 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. 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, having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs.” -Hebrews 1:1-4 (ESV)

- PRAY
- How many times do we hear in our every day lives, “Well, Consider the source?”
 - I know for me in my studies, I always have to check the author of what I am reading to make sure that it is coming from a trustworthy source
 - In our day and age, we have a vast overload of information out there, and we have to make sure the place that we are getting the information is credible.
 - Also, we all have those friends or family members out there that we know to take whatever story they share with a grain of salt.
- We have the exaggerators, where we can assume that whatever story they’re telling is probably embellished a little bit
- We have the dramatics, where we can assume that they are probably just starting a bit of gossip and we probably need confirmation from the horses mouth to take anything they tell us seriously.
- Or we have the under-sharers, who tend not to speak in much detail so we probably know there’s more to the story whenever they tell us something.
- Whether its news cycles, family drama, or whatever it is, we need to consider the source
- Well the writer of Hebrews tells us that the message that we have received comes from the most credible source of all time.
- What has been spoken to us has not come from just another human resource, even with how credible the Prophets were with the Holy

Spirit working through them...this message has now come to us from The Lord Himself.

- Jesus is Lord. Like the angel told the shepherds at His birth He is not just a Lord, He is THE Lord. Literally He is The Master, He is The Decider of all things.
- And in this passage we see three different aspect of His Lordship. First:
 - **JESUS IS LORD ETERNALLY**
 - Now, the message is not coming through mere mortals
 - But rather now, the Message became a Man
 - ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” -John 1:1,14 (ESV)***

- And “The Word” actually comes from the Greek word: LOGOS.
- John, borrowed this Word from Greek Philosophers
- You see, the Greeks believed that the world had a rational and moral order to it, and the meaning of life was found in contemplating and discerning this “order of nature” that they called the Logos
 - The **Logos** was thought to be **the meaning and purpose of life**
- And John, as the French Philosopher Luc Ferry once stated, changed the course of human thought by introducing the idea that the meaning of life was not found in a principle, philosophy, ideology, or any abstract idea of rational thought.
- But rather, the meaning of life was found in a Person. Someone who existed before creation, made everything, and chose to walk the earth.

- Make no mistake, Jesus' existence didn't begin in Mary's womb.
 - Our passage in Hebrews says that He is the heir of all things and that the world was created through Him.
- The writer says, ***“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.” -Hebrews 1:3a (ESV)***
 - He is not just a God, He is not just a form of God, He is not just a part of God, HE IS GOD!
 - All of the Radiance of who God is, the exact imprint of God's nature is embodied in the Person of Jesus
 - Colossians says that He is the fulness of God in Bodily form
 - This is what makes Him better than the prophets: They were mortal, flawed, human beings. He is Eternal, Perfect, God.
- This is what makes Him better than the angels. They are heavenly beings, who do not die, but were a part of creation. So they are immortal, but they are not Eternal, because they had a beginning.
- But Eternal God has no beginning, and He has no end.
- In John chapter 17, at the beginning of Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, He states, ***“And now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.” -John 17:5 (ESV)***
 - The Father and Son existed together in Glory, along with the Holy Spirit, long before the world even existed.
- And the Son didn't just play a part in creation, but had a central role. Colossians 1 says, ***“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. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

-Colossians 1:16-17 (ESV)

- And here is my favorite declaration, in all of scripture, of the Eternal Nature of Jesus.
- In John chapter 8, He is teaching in the temple, and He was telling them about Himself. He tells them that He is not from this world, that He is from above.
- He told them that He would die in their sins, He told them that if they abided in Him they would know the truth and the truth would set them free!
- He told them that anyone who kept His word wouldn't taste true death.
- And as He was teaching, verse 30 says that many believed in Him!
- Many believed, but not all. Some were accusing Him of being a Samaritan and being demon possessed.

- They say, “What do you think you're greater than our Father Abraham, and all of the Prophets? They died, and now you're saying that those who believe in you won't taste death? Who do you think you are?”
- And in John 8:58, “Jesus said to them, ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I Am.”- John 8:58 (ESV)***
 - I AM, using the same terminology that God did when He revealed Himself to Moses and said, “I AM WHO I AM”, and “If anyone asks you who sent you, say I AM sent you.”
 - It is the most traditional and reverent Name for God, and Jesus bestows that Name upon Himself, authoritatively declaring His Eternal Deity
 - He doesn't say, “I was,” He says, “I Am,” literally means “exist”...its eternal present tense language because there was never moment in which He didn't exist and there will never be a moment where He ceases to exist.

- And of course, this infuriated those Jews who did not believe and verse 59 says, **“So they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.”**

-John 8:59 (ESV)

- He hid Himself: Did He become invisible? Did He change His appearance to confuse them? Did the disciples cover Him and help Him escape? Did He say, “Whoa, what’s that??” And then run the other way? I don’t know!
 - All I know is that there is nothing that they could do to end Him.
- And I know this to be true, because whenever the Jews thought they had ended Him, whenever satan thought that he had ended Him on the cross, He rose up out of that grave, and in doing so, our passage says: **“After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the Name He has inherited is**

more excellent than theirs.” -Hebrews 1:3b-4 (ESV)

- So not only is Jesus Lord Eternally, but:
 - **JESUS IS LORD POSITIONALLY**
 - The writer says that He sat down at the right hand of the Father
 - That is the position of all power, authority, and completed work.
 - Jesus could sit down in Heaven because He said “It is finished” on the cross.
- And the right hand was also significant because throughout Jewish history, the right hand was a symbol of blessing
 - Whenever a father would bless his son, he would place his right hand on his head to administer the blessing
 - Also, throughout history in most cultures, the seat on the right side of the throne of the king was reserved for those who had

supreme authority, had the highest honor, and the most favor with the King.

- The writer wanted to get this message across, because angelic messages that we have read about some receiving such as Joshua, Gideon, Elijah, Daniel, Mary and Joseph and others had experienced were seen as supreme messages, even more so than prophetic messages

- However, the writer wants them to know that the Message that Jesus brought throughout His life and ministry is to be held in much higher esteem because He is superior to the angels.
- He goes on to say throughout the rest of the chapter, things such as, “To which of the angels has God ever said, ‘You are my son,’
- “What angel was there ever that God told other angels to worship?”
- “What angel did He ever offer to sit at His right hand?”

- He says, No, “They are not God, who is enthroned forever like Jesus.”

- He says in verse 14, **“Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?” -Hebrews 1:14 (ESV)**

- Then we read in chapter 2, **“For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere, “What is man, that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? You made him for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned him with glory and honor, putting everything in subjection under his feet.” Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see Him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the**

suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.”

-Hebrews 2:5-9 (ESV)

- It seems a bit strange that the writer says that this Eternal and Positional Lord, was made for a little while lower than the angels.
 - With all of this emphasis on Jesus being so much more supreme than all other beings, including angels, why would the writer add in this detail?
 - In doing so, he quotes psalm chapter 8, when David is speaking about God’s love and care for mankind, and how at creation, man was made a little lower than the angels while they were on this earth, but were still given dominion over the rest of creation.
 - However, mankind’s role here was interrupted whenever we fell into sin.
- So the writer says, although we do not see mankind’s dominion over the rest of creation as God originally intended right now:

- WE DO SEE JESUS- Who fulfilled what mankind could not!
 - And He did so, by lowering Himself to the position of man. Almighty, superior God, allowed Himself to be lower than the angels for a short time so He could do what we couldn’t do and pay the price that we couldn’t pay
 - And because of that, He is all the more so worthy of being crowned with all Glory and Honor.
- The apostle Paul also talked about this Humility that Jesus showed in the book of Philippians when he wrote: ***“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of***

death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the Name that is above every name, so that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2: 5-11 (ESV)

- Now this passage is vastly misunderstood in some circles, and it is a very dangerous theology that I think bears some clarification.
 - Some take this passage to mean that Jesus laid aside His deity, while He was on the planet, and in doing so gave us an example of what humanity could look like if we lived in perfect relationship with God.
 - And they teach that if we just stay close enough to the Father like Jesus did, then we can do all of the things that Jesus did.
 - Now, while I believe there are some aspects to that that have merit. Such as,

when it comes to walking in the authority of children of God. But, this theology has a very big inherit flaw.

- If Jesus were to set His deity aside, that would mean that all you and I had to do was be good enough and we could have brought salvation to the world.
- That means that anyone could have died for the sins of humanity as long as they stayed close enough to God.
- But that is not the case, only God Himself, could do that.
 - And Jesus in no way ever said anything that would allude to Him not being fully God throughout His entire life and ministry on this earth.
 - If Jesus had laid His deity aside, the cross would have meant nothing.
 - As one commentator wrote, “Only a man could die and only the God-Man could die for the sins of the world.”

- Also, that theology just minimizes the great humility that Jesus showed. Because as He was fully God inherently and positionally, He still humbled Himself to serve those beneath Him.
- Jesus said, ***“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” -Mark 10:45 (ESV)***
- Also, Paul says that Jesus humbled Himself, not by giving some up, but by doing something.
 - He said, He emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant.
 - And Paul says, “Yes, we should follow this example.”
- *And I saw a great example of someone following Jesus’ example in a practical way this past Monday:*
 - *Many of you know that we have a great relationship with iChurch here in town, just down the road*
 - *They let me use an office there a few days a week, and have space for our worship team to rehearse when they need to*
 - *And Pastor Carlos Rodriguez there, I haven’t known him that long, but he is already one of the Pastors that I admire most on this planet*
- *And this past Monday, on New Years day, no one else was really working that day but I knew that we had a lot of stuff goin on this week and I needed to get a jump start on my studies so I went into the office*
 - *And while I was there, surprisingly Pastor Carlos came in as well*
 - *He’s a very busy man, with a large church, and a lot of responsibilities so I don’t see him much while I’m over there during the week, and also their whole staff is off on Mondays so I was very curious as to why he was there*

- And then I saw him and his wife, and a few others pulling custodial stuff out of the closet
 - So I went into the sanctuary to say hey, and I had a Christmas gift that I wanted to give him
 - And as we were talking, I found out that he and his family have a tradition that every New Years day, they go in and clean the sanctuary for the church.
- And that was such a powerful thing for a younger man in ministry like me to see
 - Because no matter how large his church had gotten, no matter what all he has going on, no matter if it was an off day, he was going to make sure that every year, his year is started off by setting the tone of serving the people of his church
- Now, in doing so, he did not lay being Pastor aside. He may have taken the form of a custodian in that moment, but it did not change who he was and the position that he had in that church
- In fact, because of his position, it made the humility that he showed that much more powerful for me to see
- In the same way, on a much greater scale, Jesus, in spite of His position as Lord, showed the most powerful humility of all by taking the form a servant, b being born in the likeness of men, and dying a criminals death, all for the benefit of us!
- And the benefit of you personally.
- Because Jesus is Lord Eternally, He is Lord Positionally, and:
- **JESUS IS LORD PERSONALLY**
- Yes, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the One with the Name above all names, the Divine Designer, wants to connect with you on a personal level.
- This is what would have been almost impossible for this Jewish audience to wrap their heads around.

- Because for so many years, if people would just touch or look inside the Ark of the Covenant, the Holiness of God would kill them
 - Only once a year, the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies to make a sacrifice in the presence of God.
 - There was such a vast gap between the Holiness of God and the sinfulness of man, the thought of getting close and personal with Him was absurd.
 - BUT THAT VEIL HAS BEEN TORN!
- The Writer of Hebrews says, that the Holiness of God is now bestowed upon us through the death and resurrection of Jesus. And now, that gap has been bridged, and the relationship we are offered with God is as personal as family.
- He says it this way: ***“In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for Whom and through Whom everything exists, should make the Pioneer***

of their salvation perfect through what He suffered. Both the One Who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.” -Hebrews 2:10-11 (NIV)

- So whenever we accept Jesus, as John says, all of us who receive Him and believe on His Name, we are given the right to become children of God.
 - Romans calls us Co-heirs with Christ.
 - But this was never possible before the resurrection of Jesus.
- It's interesting that throughout Jesus' life and ministry, He referred to His disciples in various ways, such as little children, at one point He refers to them as friends, but never did He refer to them as siblings....
- That is until after the resurrection:
- In Matthew 28, He says to both Mary's:

- ***Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell My brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.”***

-Matthew 28:10 (ESV)

- In John 20, Jesus says to Mary Magdalene:

- ***Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.’” -John 20:17 (ESV)***

- This is why the writer of Hebrews refers to Jesus as the Pioneer, or the Author, or the Captain of our Salvation:

- Because He went before us and opened the way for us to become Children of God

- However, I don't know about you. But I can have a difficult time, seeing Jesus as my brother.

- Seeing myself as a child of God, seeing God as Father that's one thing, that makes more sense to me.

- But seeing Jesus, the Captain of my Salvation, the Eternal and Positional Lord as my brother, that just doesn't seem reverent enough, it seems almost too personal.

- So I had to struggle with this, this week. Does Jesus really want an as personal relationship with me as I have with my brother? Do I want an as personal relationship with Him as I do with my brother?

- Most of you know my older brother Matt, he's not here with us today...

- But it meant the absolute world to me, whenever he was adamant, that wherever Rach and I were going to plant a church, He, Miriam, and the kids were coming with us

- I hadn't lived in the same town as an immediate family member since before I was in college!

Sunday, January 7, 2024

- And I'll tell you, right now, there are few things in this life that I enjoy more, than just hanging out with my brother.
 - Just being at each other's houses to watch a game
 - Just sitting around talking sports or life
 - Daddy-Day-Caring all of the kids together
 - Going to play a horribly-terrific round of golf together
- But just spending time with someone who gets you, knows you, and understands you in a way that no one else on the planet really does because you share the same flesh and blood, and the same life experiences
- The Bible tells us, that's exactly who Jesus is to us, so it challenged me, am I only spending time, or even acknowledging Jesus whenever it's time to get all spiritual with church or personal devotional times...
- Or am I inviting Him also into the mundane, the every day?
 - Do I see Jesus as Someone Who wants to just hang out and watch a game with me?
 - Do I see Jesus as Someone I can talk to just about anything?
 - Do I see Jesus as Someone I can just play a round of golf with?
 - (Almost told Rachel I needed to go play a round of golf with Jesus)
- But in all seriousness, I want to do that! I want to just be going about every day life and acknowledge that Jesus is there hanging out with me
 - I think this is a take on praying without ceasing.
 - Constantly acknowledging His presence and care in everything that I do
- Some may not fully be picking up what I'm laying down because you never had a brother, or maybe haven't had a healthy relationship with an older sibling, maybe you were an only child, or worse had all sisters (IM KIDDING)

Sunday, January 7, 2024

- We've talked about God not being the reflection of an earthly father, but the Perfection of an earthly father.
- And the same is true about Jesus, He is not the reflection of an earthly brother, but the Perfection of an earthly brother.
 - He's the brother that's constantly calling and checking in
 - He's the brother that's never led you astray
 - He's the brother that always cares
 - He's the brother who is never embarrassed by you.
 - He's the brother that's always there, but will never force Himself into your life and your personal problems until you ask.
 - He's the brother that calls you out when you need it, in the most loving way possible
 - He's the brother that helps you learn from His experiences, so life doesn't have to be harder than it already is.
- My brother did that for me, even in the times I didn't listen, he still tried to give me wisdom from his life experiences
 - I remember not having to fear Middle School because I had seen him go through it
 - I didn't have to fear high school, I was excited because I had seen him go through it
 - I didn't have to fear college because I had seen my brother live out that season, and I was pumped about doing it myself
 - It was the same as adulthood, marriage, parenting, to this day if I want advice on parenting from one person on the planet, it's my big brother
- However, in a similar, but monumentally more significant way, our Big Brother Jesus, went before us so we wouldn't have to fear:
- In verse 14, the writer says, ***"Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might break the power of him who***

holds the power of death—that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels He helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason He had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.”

-Hebrews 2:14-18 (NIV)

- Jesus lived this life and walked this earth so that we would not have to live in fear of it
- Jesus went through death, defeated it, stripped the devil’s power of it, so that we wouldn’t have to be afraid of it
- He went through temptation and hardship, so He could better understand, relate, and help lead us through it.

- God, in His goodness and Mercy allowed a part of Himself, a Person of the Trinity, to be made like us.
 - So that we could have— *The Father: God above us, The Son: God with us, and through the Holy Spirit, God in us.*
- He wanted to cover and be a part of every aspect of our life and eternity because He loves us that much, He cares that much, and the Eternal and Positional Lord of the universe, desire a Personal relationship with us that much.
- Challenge for the Unbeliever:
- Challenge for the Believer:
 - How many of us have been ignoring our Big Brother?
 - Maybe we haven’t been returning His calls.
 - Maybe we haven’t been listening to His wise advice.
 - Maybe we’ve been refusing His help.

Sunday, January 7, 2024

- Maybe we've just been neglecting the personal relationship.
 - Maybe we know, that no matter how long we ignore Him, He's still going to be our Brother, nothing is going to change that, and we just take Him for granted and only reach out when we need something.
- Well I think it's time we start appreciating our Big Brother Jesus, and intentionally spend more time with Him. Inviting Him into our everyday lives, and just enjoy spending time with Him. He deserves that.