

# “Christ Alone: Our Great Hope”

## *Hebrews 1-2*

The Protestant Reformation, led by Martin Luther, resulted in the freeing up of the Word of God from the church of Rome into the hands of all people. The Roman church held that it alone had authority over the people because they believed (wrongly) the Pope was the successor to the apostles. Since they held the church was the final authority then the Word of God had a secondary role. The people didn't need the Word and the priesthood were the only interpreters of the Word. Unfortunately that led to wrong teaching that salvation was acquired through buying indulgences or doing sacraments. The belief was that every time you did a sacrament you earned a little more grace that hopefully would result in getting you to heaven.

But Martin Luther saw what the Word of God actually said and was aware of his own sin and need to repent. By seeking to study and teach the word of God he understood that God's Word alone was authoritative to communicate the truth about salvation. That salvation begins with God who through grace alone (because we don't deserve saving) He initiates a relationship with us that we respond through faith alone, believing that Christ alone is the One who can save us because He alone died for our sins and rose again. Now our purpose in life is to live for the Glory of God alone.

But the one pillar of the Reformation that ties them all together is salvation by faith through Christ alone. Jesus ties everything together. He is central to God's plan. So we're going to look at the book of Hebrews this morning because the book of Hebrews is dedicated to showing us that Jesus Christ is superior to all other prophets, angels and mediators and that the work that He accomplished on the cross is the only means by which we can be saved.

Salvation is not just about 'making a decision' for Jesus. The book of Hebrews was written to 1<sup>st</sup> century Jews who claimed to believe Jesus was the Messiah but were not living for Christ out of fear of persecution by the Romans. The writer of Hebrews reminds the people that to know Jesus is to follow and obey Jesus. And he warns them that if there's no following Jesus then that shows there's no evidence of faith in Jesus. So let's look at the first 2 chapters and see what he had to say about Jesus Christ.

He begins his letter very uniquely by contrasting Jesus with the Old Testament prophets and patriarchs. We read,

*In the past God spoke to our fathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. <sup>3</sup> The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. <sup>4</sup> So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs*

So the author of Hebrews elevates Jesus above all other messengers through whom God has chosen to reveal Himself to us. So even though the prophets and angels told us some things about God only Jesus Christ alone . . .

**Reveals the Fullness of God**  
**(1:1-3; 2:1-4)**

It has always been God's desire to reveal Himself to us. That's why He spoke to the Abrahams, Isaacs, Jacobs, Davids, Elijahs, Elishas, Isaiahs, Ezekiels, Jeremiahs, Daniels and so many others. God in His grace initiates a relationship with us by setting apart individuals who will be faithful in communicating His message to the people in their day. He did it through many prophets and in many different ways. Through Daniel He gave visions, through Ezekiel He used drama, through Elijah and Elisha He used miracles, through Hosea he used the marriage to his wife, an adulterous woman. All, however, with the same purpose; to reveal Himself. But the picture they got of God, while expanding as time went on, was still incomplete until God sent His Son Jesus Christ.

The "last days" refers to the time since Jesus came. Peter used this term twice to refer to the times since Jesus rose and ascended into heaven. Acts 2:17 at Pentecost and 1 Pet. 1:20 referring to Jesus' earthly coming. It's very clear that God Himself divides time and history at the coming of His Son. There's before Christ and there's after the death of Christ. Is it no wonder that's how people used to date time – BC and AD? And now they redefined it into BCE (before the common era and CE Common era. Why? I found this answer in Wikipedia:

The simplest reason for using BCE/CE as opposed to AD/BC is to avoid reference to Christianity and, in particular, to avoid naming Christ as Lord (BC/AD: Before Christ/In the year of our Lord). [Wikipedia, Anno Domini article:](#)

So people can change dating history any old way they want but it doesn't change the fact that Jesus Christ is Lord. And the doomsday clock in God's kitchen has been ticking slowly down to the end since Jesus Christ left. Now we are awaiting His return. But why Him? What makes Jesus unique?

Unlike the prophets only Jesus can show us who God fully is. God has spoken (past, completed tense) by His Son. Implication being we know through Jesus all we need to know about God to have a relationship with Him. Jesus is the radiance of His glory. Jesus is the rays of the sun as God is the sun. He reflects God perfectly. He is the exact representation of His being (or nature). In the ancient world a king would have a signet ring that he used for all official correspondence. He would seal a letter by pouring hot wax over it that held strings around it, and then pushed his seal into the wax. It was the exact representation of his ring. So when people heard and saw Jesus, they heard and saw what God was like. In John 1:18 we read,

*<sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.*

The night before He died Jesus told the 11 that He was going away to His Father to build additions on the Father's house for His followers and that He would come back for them. Thomas asked Jesus 'Lord, we don't know the way you're going?'

*John 14:6* Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup> If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

<sup>8</sup> Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." <sup>9</sup> Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? <sup>10</sup> Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. <sup>11</sup> Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves.

In 2:1-4 the author of Hebrews issues his first warning to those who were reverting back to Judaism and abandoning Jesus. He writes,

*We must pay more [the most] careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. <sup>2</sup> For if [since] the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, <sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we ignore such [so great] a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. <sup>4</sup> God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and [by] gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*

So the author affirms Jesus' message as consistent with the prophets before Him but also the apostles after Him. No one changed the message. The prophets spoke about Jesus' coming, the apostles spoke about when He came. All were in agreement. Jesus alone is the final and full revelation of God and the Word of God alone consistently speaks to the authority of the Word through Jesus. Salvation is through faith in Jesus. If we 'drift away' from that there is no other way to God other than through Jesus.

As the Son of God and the only One who can fully reveal God the Father, Jesus alone is . . .

## **Is the Heir and Ruler of the World** **(1:2-3; 2:1-4)**

Back in Heb. 1:2 we read

*<sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. And He is , sustaining all things by his powerful word.*

Notice the order. First he establishes Jesus' authority when He says Jesus is the appointed heir of all things before he says Jesus created the universe. Jesus pre-exists the universe. Jesus has always co-existed with the Father and the Spirit. They are eternal. God had already appointed Jesus heir and ruler of the universe before it even came into being. And now He continually sustains it by His Word – the same Word by which he created it. Sustain does not mean just keeping it in place like Atlas holding the world. Sustaining means working at keeping it going. The world keeps moving around the sun, as do the other planets, as do all the stars and galaxies. The NIV chooses correctly the word "Universe" because it's not just our world that Jesus created, its everything that revolves around our world. And it includes time itself. The Greek word for "universe" is what we get in English for 'eons'. Eons speaks of time. Jesus created time. He's managing time as He manages the world. He's a busy Saviour!!

Listen to Paul's description of Jesus' power and authority and universe sustaining skills in Col. 1:13-20,

*<sup>3</sup> For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

*<sup>15</sup> The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup> For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers 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. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. <sup>19</sup> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup> and*

*through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

Firstborn doesn't mean Jesus was created. "Firstborn refers to position, prominence. The firstborn inherits what the Father leaves for him but it also means He's responsible to look after the family. Jesus is God's appointed heir who manages all the Father's affairs and looks after all the Fathers' family. We'll see more of this last part later on.

When Luther and the Reformers understood Scripture they scraped off layers of works theology that the church had put over scripture. The Roman church said yes believe in Jesus but also do good works and follow the sacraments and buy some indulgences and pray to Mary and the saints too. Jesus got painted over but when we read the Scriptures we see the original, the truth that Jesus alone reveals the fullness of who God is and is the rightful heir and ruler of the world, who we look forward to seeing return soon & Jesus alone . . .

### **Is Our Mediator with God** **(1:3; 2:9-14)**

One of the other amazing things the author of Hebrews claimed about Jesus was that

*<sup>3</sup> . . . After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

The Creator of the universe became part of this world, took on flesh, lived a sinless human life and provided purification for sins. The author deliberately uses this Old Testament sacrificial language because some of his Jewish readers were going back to the temple to offer sacrifices again to 'purify their sins'! But only Jesus offers purification for our sins. Look at Hebrews 2:9-14 and Hebrews 9:12-14.

*<sup>9</sup> But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.<sup>10</sup> 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 suffering. <sup>11</sup> Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. <sup>12</sup> He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing your praises." <sup>13</sup> And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." <sup>14</sup> 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— <sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

Jesus had to become one of us because human sin needed a sinless human sacrifice. Jesus' death broke the power of death held by Satan until someone (Jesus alone) could conquer death. Death no longer keeps us afraid. We go to be in the presence of God when we die.

In ch. 9 the author explains why animal sacrifice was insufficient.

*<sup>9:12</sup> He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. <sup>13</sup> The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. <sup>14</sup> How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead*

to death, so that we may serve the living God!

The bulls and goats cleaned you on the outside but on the inside – our consciences. Jesus sat down because the job was finished. The apostle Paul echoes Jesus sole Mediatorship with God in 1 Tim. 2:5-6 when he wrote

*<sup>5</sup> For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. <sup>7</sup> And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.*

The saints can't help you get to God. Mary can't help you get into heaven. Your own good works are insufficient to earn you grace marks. Faith alone through God's grace alone In Jesus Christ alone according to the Word alone makes us right before God.

All this helps us have a relationship with God but what about now? How does Jesus help us now?

### **Is Our Intercessor for Present Help** **(2:16-18)**

We read in 2:16-18,

*<sup>16</sup> For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. <sup>17</sup> For this reason he had to be made like his brothers 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. <sup>18</sup> Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

There are 2 things Jesus does for us now that only He can do alone. First is provide ongoing atonement for our present sins. He doesn't have to die again but He does continue to forgive our sins when we confess them. But He also helps us before we sin. Since he was fully human Jesus knew what it was like to be human. While He never sinner He experienced temptations to sin. So when we are facing temptations we can pray to Jesus for help. Jesus can comfort us and give us wisdom in His Word through His Spirit's reminding us of what His Word says.

In Heb. 4:14-16 we read,

*<sup>14</sup> Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

And also in Heb. 7:25 we read

*<sup>25</sup> Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.*

Jesus intercedes with God for us and we're not even aware of it. Isn't it great when someone comes up to and says 'I've been praying for you' and you weren't even aware they were? How often aren't you and I praying for each other and we're not aware of it but we're comforted by it and it

encourages us to stay faithful.

So Jesus alone reveals God His Father in his fullness. He is the heir of the world and will one day return to rule as King. In the meantime he's the only mediator between God and man and we must (if we haven't already) accept Him as Lord and Saviour. And He is even praying to God for us now as well as is available whenever we need Him. So how should we respond to that?

If we haven't accepted Christ as our Saviour yet, we must. No one else can forgive your sins. There is no other name under heaven by which you can be saved. You can't earn enough grace bucks to earn your way to God. You must place your faith in Jesus alone for salvation.

But if we do know Christ already then our response should be, tell someone! Once saved it is our responsibility to tell others. Listen to Paul in 2 Cor. 5:17-21

*<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

So in the past God spoke in various times and in many ways through the prophets but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son and now it is our turn, as it was originally the apostles to confirm that message and affirm God's Word as the only authority to learn about God and Jesus and salvation. The Spirit has distributed gifts to us by His will so that we can share this message and continue spreading the good news of great joy. So let's go and "*declare the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness and into his marvellous light*" (1 Pet. 2:9).

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