



Jesus: The Glory of God

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Hebrews 1:1-3

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1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² 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. ³ 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,

(Pastor prays)

Has there ever been another book like the book of Hebrews? We don't know who wrote it! We don't know who it was written to. We are not sure of the occasion or even the date it was penned. What we do know is that it strips away the mud and muck of this hard world and puts before our eyes the excellencies of the crucified, resurrected Jesus.

It could have been Luke with all its details or Apollos with all its rhetoric or Barnabas with all its clear encouragement or even Paul with such deep theology. Whoever it was, we ultimately have to join Origen who in the 3rd Century said, "only God knows."

Whoever it was knew the Old Testament. There are 35 direct quotations. Whenever it was, it had to be before AD 70 because the temple was still in use. To whomever it was written, they must have been Jewish Christians, because they knew the Old Testament and the early manuscript had the title, "to the Hebrews." It's significant that the first subject in the book is God, not

us. If you read the whole book in one sitting, it's striking how the author keeps putting God in front of the reader: 68 times in this little book, once every 23 or so words, is "God." No other New Testament book is saturated with so much God.

The book of Hebrews settles up-front the most important issue of the day: the person, the work and the supremacy of Christ Jesus. And the first three verses in this little book are some of the most remarkable in the entire Bible. Because there was pressure. Maybe from the Roman government and the madman Nero or maybe from a family that didn't understand Christianity. Maybe it was from tradition that's hard to break out of or maybe from a society like the one we live in that is constantly calling for compromise. That's the pressure we are facing: to compromise our Christian views on gender, marriage, sexuality, parenting, education and even worship.

That's why in the coming year this little book is going to be so important for us as we live convicted under the constant pressure of a world that hates our God. I hope you will draw strength, be encouraged, and stand with joyful conviction because of what's inside this little book. I want you to...

Keep Your Eyes on God and Trust His Ways

There are two things the author wants us to know in these three verses. The first one is...

God speaks

Our God is not silent or aloof or unconcerned or directionless. Look how the author says it in verse one: *1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,* Before he takes us forward he has us look back and be reminded that our God is the God who communicates with His people. We call this "revelation." God has spoken in creation. He has spoken in Providence. He has spoken in conscience. But the author moves quickly to specific revelation, that God has spoken, through the prophets. There is a written record of God revealing Himself. We go back to the Old

Testament and read the marvelous stories of God speaking through dreams and visions, angels and a burning bush, and a floating axe head, and Balaam's donkey. God even spoke to the witch of Endor. But he presses us even further to say it's the written record, the prophets, that God used to speak to his people. It was Moses with the burning bush. Elijah heard a still small voice. Isaiah had a vision in the temple. Hosea was spoken to through an unfaithful wife. Amos was spoken to through a basket of summer fruit and Gideon through a fleece. It's written down. The author goes to great lengths to tell us of the veracity and the authority of the Old Testament, all of which points to the next clause in the long sentence.

Let's Go back and read: *1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,* *2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son,* In Jesus, the new messianic age has appeared, and his point is continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament held together as God speaking to His people and driving us to Jesus so that you keep your eyes on God and trust His ways. And His ways are given to us in the Bible.

The Old Testament prepares the way for the new. The promises in the Old Testament are fulfilled in the new. The author begins this little book with one statement of fact, God has spoken. We need to get this right and help clear up nonsense talk about God *telling* you something. That is direct revelation as in "Jesus Calling." I heard a preacher say the other day you need to position yourself to hear from God. I don't have a clue what he meant by that. Was it through a portal, or do I need to be in some downward dog or something?

Let me tell you how to position yourself to hear from God: put your forearm on either side of this book and read. Because God has spoken through the prophets to the fathers and, in the last day, He has spoken to us by His son Jesus. He has spoken into our lives and given direction during depression, marriages, moving, purpose, hope and forgiveness. He has spoken through the Gospel. Keep your eyes on God and trust His ways because God speaks.

God saves

Let's read all three verses: *1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 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. 3 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,*

In the first two verses there is no salutation or introduction. The author takes us immediately to Christ to say here, here is where you need to run, to Christ. To press the point, he rattles off seven glorious facts about our Lord Jesus, seven being the number of perfection. Just to reiterate how God saves perfectly in Jesus. Let's look at what we see here and try to apply it. Let's look at the first fact.

His dignity

He is appointed the heir of all things; Jesus Christ has a supreme place in the mighty universe. He is divine royalty, and in Colossians Paul says, all things are created for Him. In Romans 11: 36 it says, *36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.* In Revelation 5 it says that Jesus has been given the title deed to the universe. And the point he is making is "don't fall back. Don't compromise. Don't let up." This Jesus deserves your unbridled joyful allegiance. He is the heir, and because of the cross we are joint heirs. In Romans 8:17 it says to "stand fast." Let's look at the second fact.

He gives us security

Through whom also He created the world. That's how we are introduced to Jesus in John's gospel. In John 1:2-3 it says, *2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* And Paul says in Colossians 1:16, *16 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. This gives you great confidence and security knowing that you won't face anything that is outside of Christ's control and used for His glory and for our growth.

He outshines everything

He is the radiance of the glory of God. Effulgence. He is holiness and love and forgiveness and goodness on full display. Mark 9:3 says, ³ *and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.* And Acts 9 describes Saul on the road to Damascus and God's glory is personified and given to us. The *shekina* glory that made Moses' face glow is the glory that saves our soul. This is Immanuel which means "God with us" and by His spirit is *in* us. And a life lived to God's glory is a life lived in submission to Christ.

He is God

He is the exact imprint of His nature. This is God come to us, this is the gospel. Colossians 2:9 says, ⁹ *For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,* And in John 14 we hear Jesus tell Phillip, if you've seen me, you have seen the father. What God essentially is, is seen in Christ. When the church fathers were putting this into words in the Nicene Creed, they call God the God of God and the Light of Light. It's all very God of very God. Here is the power of the Gospel to save because you aren't imitating a leader or following a guru. You are brought from being dead in sin to alive in Christ by the one who is the exact imprint of God's nature. He saves because...

He is taking us somewhere

He upholds the universe by the word of His power. Uphold. This is not like an old man Atlas with the world on his shoulders. The image is one of direction and purpose and forethought and a plan, and it's done by his enabling word. That your life is going somewhere and has direction and momentum and purpose and power and all of that is found in Christ.

He is our only hope

He made purification, after making purification for sins. Here is the central phrase in the central verse of the whole Bible. Throughout Hebrews the author is making sure we see that Jesus has accomplished a many-sided salvation. He has redeemed us. He has annulled sin. There is propitiation for sin. He brought about the remission of sin and He bore our sin. He puts it away so that God remembers sin no more. This book is pulsating with the reminder that Christ is our only hope. Whatever had to be done about sin, He has done it.

Our holy God, who is wrathful and hates sin and is determined to judge it. He has placed that judgment on His son Jesus once and for all at the cross. And as a sign of victory, God raised Him from the dead. And the way that becomes yours, He gives you the grace to believe. And you believe! Why do you believe? Because...

Jesus Christ is Lord

After He made purification for sin, He sat down at the right hand of majesty on high. it is the finished work of Christ. The priest stood in the temple because His task was never completed. Jesus sat down at the right hand of majesty. He is Lord. He sat down at the right hand of majesty and has all authority. He is Lord. He sat down because redemption is accomplished. He is Lord. He sat down at the right hand of majesty. He is Lord. Keep your eyes on God and trust His ways. God speaks, God saves, God is found in Christ. Give your life to Christ. Commit to grow. Deal with a sin and have someone pray with you.

(Pastor prays)