

The Supremacy of Christ – part 1

Today and next Sunday we will be taking a look at Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1-4. I'm going to cover verses 1-2 today and verses 3-4 next Sunday.

My prayer is that these messages would not only be an encouragement to you spiritually, but that it would also be of some aid in an apologetic sense, in helping you to be able to give a defense for the hope that is in you when you are asked.

With that said, let's pray.

We read in John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Before anything ever existed, before God uttered the first creative word from His mouth, the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, existed from all eternity. This is the essence of truth. I say that it is the *essence* of truth because it doesn't depend on anyone to believe this in order to still be. It would still be reality, it would still be true, God would still be God even if no one ever believed in Him. He is supreme. He is before all things. He is completely and utterly sovereign. Life does not revolve around us, and God does not somehow fit into our existence. We are on this side looking and observing God and His story as it unfolds, and somehow, graciously, we get to be a part of that!

This being so, every act that God has ever done in creation, indeed, even creation itself, was a gracious act. God needed nothing, for He is sufficient in Himself. One of the most gracious things God could ever do to creatures He has made is to communicate with them. This is to say, God doesn't owe us anything. He certainly is not bound somehow to do anything gracious to His creatures.

I mean, what would it be like if God simply created us and then just left us, as some think, to fend for ourselves, not having any dealings with His creatures. How would we fare? How would we know there is a God at all? How could we know if we have a Savior to save us, or even that we need saving? Would we be able to feed ourselves, or even live for one second if God were somehow aloof, not involved at all in His creation?

Well fortunately, we don't ever have to find out how things would go if that was the case because...and this is an extraordinarily wonderful truth...God has revealed Himself to His creatures. From the very beginning in the garden, God is seen communicating and fellowshiping with man. He even created man in His own image in order that man could be in communion with Him. From the beginning, from those days in the garden, there was never any doubt about God's existence. Such thoughts would have been absolutely foolish to Adam. Why of course God exists...I speak to Him continually. He's the reason I am even here!

Think about this for one moment. Compare the garden with today. In the garden Adam knew God perfectly. God communicated with Adam and Adam communicated back. There was perfect fellowship. No thoughts as to whether or not there was a God. Such thoughts did not even exist. But today, not only do we have many who call themselves "agnostics" or "atheists," who in

reality are simply those who suppress the truth that they know in unrighteousness, but millions more, even, sadly, some who call themselves Christians, are living their lives as if God didn't exist at all. As if He has never communicated or revealed Himself to mankind at all.

So what has changed? Nothing has changed on God's end. He is still just as supreme, just as sovereign, and just as true as He always was. He still doesn't need anyone to believe in Him to exist, as if His existence depended on the perception and finite understanding of His creatures.

Do you see how petty, how foolish such thoughts are? And today we think we can put God on trial and we think we have to prove that He exists using enough evidence to support our beliefs. As if all the evidence in the world would make a difference to someone who has his heart set against God. How foolish.

But God understands. He knew where we would be in our sin which has separated us from Him and has veiled our spiritual eyes from seeing Him. He knew! That's why He left creation no room for doubt that He is there.

In a general sense, God has revealed Himself to all people of all ages, everywhere, without exception.

Nature

Romans 1:18-20 - ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Psalms 19:1-4 - The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

² Day to day pours out speech,
and night to night reveals knowledge.

³ There is no speech, nor are there words,
whose voice is not heard.

⁴ Their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

Conscience

Romans 2:14-16 - ¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

So then all people have a sense of what is right and wrong because God has made them to do so. They know it's wrong to kill someone. They know it's wrong to steal. And if you have any doubt, just reach over and steal your neighbor's wallet and see what he says!

Providence

Matthew 5:45 - For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

So that is a general sense that God has revealed Himself. And really it is unmistakable. It's not like God is hiding from people. He has revealed Himself for all to see. The evidence is irrefutable. So what's the problem? Why do people still have trouble seeing this?

Well, the answer to that question doesn't lie with God, but with man. It's because of sin.

But again, God understands. So He didn't stop with general revelation.

When Jamie and I were engaged, I remember sitting with her on a park bench one day. In those moments I told her all about myself. The good, the bad, and the ugly. And it was in that time and times just like it that Jamie began to know me. To really know me. But in order for that to happen, I had to open my mouth and speak. To communicate with her what was in here.

As if revealing Himself in nature, our conscience, and providence wasn't gracious enough, God revealed Himself in a special way. God...spoke!

We turn now to our main text that I will be talking with you about both this Sunday and next, and we're going to look at and marvel at just how amazingly God spoke to us.

Hebrews 1:1-4 - *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, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.*

We see in our text two phases of God speaking to us:

1. Prophets - Old Testament
2. Son

The author of the book of Hebrews is writing somewhere probably around 60-70 A.D. That date is debated, but the point is, Hebrews is being written in the first century A.D. From the author's perspective, the Old Testament was "long ago."

I. First Phase

1. From the very beginning of the book of Hebrews, we encounter what is perhaps the single most important statement that could be made in our time. God spoke! In this age of relativism where as many as 70% of Americans believe that there are no absolutes, whether in matters of truth or morality, we see that God spoke. What we are dealing with today here in America is a loss of truth. And with the loss of truth is a loss of hope. Where in years past we had truth that we knew we could stand on, today many people say that we can't really know anything at all. But God is not silent. He is not an aloof deity. Again, this is an absolutely wonderful truth! What grace God has shown! This in itself should blow us away! God spoke to us! The uniform testimony of the Bible about itself is that it is God's very Word!
2. God spoke to us by the prophets. – God's typical way of speaking is to select people to reveal His Word to and then send them to speak to others.
2 Peter 1:21 - ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
 - This is what we refer to as the Bible's *inspiration*, that God himself has communicated to us using human authors as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
 - The point is not that these books contain the inspired insights of men; quite the opposite is the case. It is God's Word as from His very mouth, given through the Holy Spirit's work in the lives of human servants. This is what Paul also emphasized in 2 Timothy 3:16, where he says, "All Scripture is breathed out by God."
 - It's true that God used the unique experiences and characteristics of each human author in the process, but in all of this it was still God who spoke. We need to understand that He was sovereignly directing the process completely.
 - Many times the author of Hebrews will cite Scripture. Whenever he does he doesn't credit the human author, but God. For instance, in Hebrews 2:12 he cites Psalm 22:22 and says that it is Jesus Christ speaking in the Old Testament. In Hebrews 3:7-11 the author cites Psalm 95, but he doesn't say, "as David said." He says, rather, "as the Holy Spirit says." And notice, by the way, that it says, "as the Holy Spirit *says*." Not, "said." Which means that God is still speaking these Words to us today.
 - Because God spoke these words, this also means that the Bible carries divine *authority*. We see today many who set aside the Bible's teachings when they are in conflict with current cultural standards. Some also say that the Bible is not relevant today, that somehow we are smarter now, we have technology, we know a lot more now than we used to, and therefore the Bible doesn't apply to us anymore. Let me tell you that this is a grave mistake. For if God is still God, and He never changes, then the Bible still carries, and will always carry, the same relevant, authoritative standard for

our lives that it always has. And it is a standard that we are to shape our lives by, not the other way around.

- So if you are ever asked why we should trust the Bible, if you are ever asked why we can trust these words that were written, after all, by human authors, if anyone asks you why the Bible can be trusted, your answer should be this: The Bible can most definitely be trusted because God, who is all-powerful, was in control of the whole process from start to finish and made sure that His very words have been accurately recorded and preserved.
3. We also see in the text that God spoke to the prophets At many times and in many ways – which tells me that God wants us to get it! He didn't just speak one time through one prophet and then say, "That's it, if you don't get that, tough!" No! His grace is tremendous! He spoke to us in His mighty works of mercy and judgment, and made known through His servants the prophets the meaning and purpose of these works; He spoke through a burning bush and through thunder to Moses, in a still, small voice to Elijah, through priests and prophets, wise men like Solomon, through poetry and song through David and Asaph, and through gracious warnings, admonishments, and foretelling the future through the prophets. He really wants us to get it!

II. Second and Final Phase – one thing you have to know about Hebrews is that it is continually contrasting the glory of the Old Covenant with the supremacy of the New. It continually says, the Old was great...but the New is even greater! And here is the core of why this is so:

God has spoken supremely through His Son –

We read here that God has not merely spoken, but that His final and definitive revelation of Himself is in and through His Son, Jesus Christ. Phase 2 is greater because Christ is greater! God spoke liberally in phase 1 – how much MORE did He speak in phase 2!!! In the Old Covenant we got an echo...in the New, the Voice Himself appeared on the scene.

Notice, it doesn't say God spoke through apostles. That is true. But it says God spoke through His Son! Go back to 2 Peter:

2 Peter 1:16-18 - ¹⁶For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," ¹⁸we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.

You see, the apostles were eyewitnesses of the majesty and glory of the Word of God being lived out and proclaimed through the person of Jesus Christ.

I don't want us to miss what this is saying about Jesus Christ. It is saying that He is supreme in that He is fully God. When God spoke through Christ it was His supreme and ultimate Word because of who Christ is! Look what the rest of Hebrews 1 verse 2 says:

1. The Son was appointed heir of all things – If he is heir of all things – that is, all things belong to Him – then He has the power to make good on His Word.

- When He says in Romans 8:39 that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus – He can say that because He owns everything!
- When he says that one day this whole earth will be made new and sin and death and disease and pain will be no more – He can say that because He owns it!
- And when He says that one day every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord – He can say that because He owns it all!
- Our end is secure in Him because He is Lord over all!

2. Through whom also He created the world

- Jesus has all authority and all power first because He created it all! He owns it because He created it!
- This helps us to understand that term “heir” correctly. He wasn't just a man, as some presume, that God chose and decided to use and then make him heir.

In **Hebrews 1:10-12** God the Father is speaking concerning His Son, Jesus Christ - “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands;

¹¹ they will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment,

¹² like a robe you will roll them up,
like a garment they will be changed.

But you are the same,
and your years will have no end.”

- This is also why WE are accountable to Him and why our knee MUST bow to Him.
- But He is heir of all things not just because He made all things, but He was appointed heir of all things because of the redemption which He wrought.

Hebrews 10:12-13 - But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet.

He is heir of all things by virtue of conquering them at the cross!

- Because He is Creator, all things are rightfully His.

- Because of Adam’s sin, Adam forfeited his dominion to Satan.
- But because of Jesus’ redemption as the Last Adam, all things have been given to Him by God and one day as God wraps all things up, Jesus will lay all things at the Father’s feet. (1 Corinthians 15:28)

These two descriptions of Christ—that He was appointed heir of all things and through whom God created the world—are a part of a seven-fold affirmation which describe the attributes and achievements of Christ as God’s supreme Word to the world. This is what we will cover next Sunday as I bring part 2 of this message.

God’s Word through His Son is definitive and final. - I looked up that word “definitive” in the dictionary just to make sure that it was the right word to use here and it most definitely is. It means “most reliable or complete,” “serving to define or specify definitely,” having its fixed or final form,” fully developed,” “complete.”

There will be no third phase – “In these last days” – This is God’s final and decisive Word. Because Christ is supreme, His Word is final.

You see, while the first phase of God speaking is said to come “at many times and in many ways,” the author’s point is not just that God wants us to get it. He is showing that the Old Testament revelation is fragmentary and incomplete. Each of the books are true divine revelation, but they are fragmentary and incomplete. The Old Testament is unfulfilled.

F.F. Bruce in his commentary on Hebrews states:

“Divine revelation is thus seen to be progressive—but the progression is not from the less true to the more true, from less worthy to the more worthy, or from less mature to the more mature. How could it be so when it is one and the same God who is revealed throughout? ... The progression is one from promise to fulfillment, as made abundantly clear in the course of this epistle.”

We read elsewhere in Hebrews that the men and women of faith in the Old Testament days did not in their lifetime experience the fulfillment of the divine promise in which they had trusted. As it says in Hebrews 11:39-40: “And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.”

The Old Testament expectantly longed for the answer that came in Jesus Christ. By contrast, when God spoke in and through Christ, His revelation is complete. This is because God Himself has stepped into history in the Person of Jesus Christ, the second person of the trinity.

John 1:18 – “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.”

Whenever your friendly neighborhood Mormon comes by and knocks on your door and says to you, “We have the final Testament of Jesus Christ in the book of Mormon,” don’t believe it. What they are saying, in essence is, Jesus Christ was not enough. There’s more that needed to be said.

When the writer to the Hebrews says, “In these last days, God has spoken to us by His Son,” he is saying there is no other or greater Word. Jesus Christ is the supreme Word to the World. His Word is final. Because He is Creator and because He has conquered through the cross and resurrection, He owns it all, and therefore His Word can be trusted.

Conclusion

Jesus stood before Pilate during His trial, and Pilate asked Jesus if He was really a king. Jesus replied that His kingdom was not of this world. Pilate replied, “So you are a king?” Jesus said, “For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate then asked Jesus the most enigmatic question of all: “What is truth?” And Pilate was standing there looking right into the eyes of Truth himself.

Jesus elsewhere said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Today I want to issue an invitation. I want to give an invitation for those who have never trusted in this supreme Word. Those who have not yet tasted the grace and love of God in Christ Jesus. Jesus went to the cross to bear the sins of all who will turn from their sin and trust Him.

To all of you who are seeking a way through this life, Jesus says He is the way. To all of you who are seeking truth, to really know what is true in this world of relativism, Jesus says He is the truth. To all who are seeking to have life and that more abundantly than any life this world could ever offer, Jesus is the life.

It's our sin that keeps us from seeing the truth. It's our sin that keeps us from eternal life. But you can have eternal life today, but only in Jesus Christ. Would you turn from your sin and trust Him today? Would you give your life to Him? My friends if you sense a burden on your heart right now, if God is speaking to your heart and showing you your need for a Savior, don't wait. Give your life to Jesus right now as we sing.