

Alert - God Has Spoken!

Let us begin our first study in the book of Hebrews with some background information: the date, author, audience, and what the message is. I'd like to start first of all with the date of the book. Hebrews 2:3-4 gives us some hints that will help us determine when this book was written. Hebrews 2:3 says,

... how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. Hebrews 2:3-4

Notice what it says at the very end of verse 3. It says, "Through the Lord it was confirmed to us by those who heard." We're told that they had heard from some people who had heard from Jesus and they in turn communicated it to them. Verse 4 tells us that God testified as to their message with signs and wonders and various miracles and by the gifts of the Spirit. What we are told in these two verses is that whoever the book of Hebrews was written to had apparently listened to the apostles. That helps us get an idea as to when the book of Hebrews was written.

It was written at least during the time of the apostles. In Hebrews chapters 5, 7, 9 and 10, we see references to the temple, the priests, and the sacrifices. Those are all clues. More than likely the temple, the priest and the sacrifices still existed and were continuing. If we read Hebrews 10:32-34, we find that the readers to whom the book is

addressed had gone through a period of persecution. They had gone through a period of suffering.

We will go back and think about what was going on in that era. At that time, there was a man called Nero. He was the Caesar of Rome and he persecuted Christians in the period of A.D. 65-70 approximately. We also remember that the Jewish temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. If we put this information together with the fact that there was a temple, sacrifices, and priests and that these folks had listened to the apostles, and had undergone persecution, all the data leads us to believe that the book of Hebrews was written somewhere between A.D. 65 and A.D. 70.

It's also important to note that in Hebrews 12:23 we are told Timothy had just been released from prison. This did not occur during the early persecution of the church. This persecution occurred much later. Once again this supports the conclusion that the book of Hebrews was written somewhere between A.D. 65 and A.D. 70. Watch it, these Christians had been going and were going through some difficult times. They needed to learn to lean on Jesus.

Now the other question we want to answer is who wrote the book of Hebrews? 2 Peter 1:20-21 tells us that, "Men were moved by the Holy Spirit." The prophets of old were moved by the Spirit. They wrote because the Spirit moved them to write what God wanted them to write. That passage of Scripture tells us that there are always two authors of Scripture. There is a



human author and the Holy Spirit.

There has been a great debate down through the ages about who was the human author of the Book of Hebrews. There are those who say Paul wrote the Book of Hebrews. There are those who say that Barnabas wrote the Book of Hebrews or Luke or Apollos. And there are other people who have other ideas about the author of the book of Hebrews.

I think the early church father Origen said it best. He said,

But who wrote the epistle, in truth, God knows.¹

That is, we simply do not know who wrote the book of Hebrews. But there is one person who does know. God is the one who knows who wrote the Book of Hebrews. I like that response because truly it doesn't matter who the human author is. The reason I trust the Bible is not because of the human author but because of the Holy Spirit. I know that God wrote the book. That is why I trust the book of Hebrews and God does not lie.

The only person that we know for sure wrote the Book of Hebrews is the Holy Spirit, and I would like to just leave it there and not worry about who the human author is.

The book of Hebrews is filled with all kinds of references to Jewish issues, Jewish terms and Jewish concepts. It talks about priests, the temple, sacrifices, Moses, Aaron, the ancient patriarchs and many different Jewish issues. What it reveals to us is that the book of Hebrews was primarily written to Jews. It was written to Jews who believed and to some who did not believe. Those who believed, as we are going to find out, were struggling in their Christian life. We are going to discover that some of them were apparently starting to have doubts about who Jesus was and is.

It was written also to unbelievers who had not yet put their faith in Jesus. They had heard about Jesus. They knew about Jesus. They had been talking about Jesus. But they hadn't

come all the way to Christ. They were still wondering about Christ. They were thinking about not going all the way. They were struggling. So, it was written to Jews who were believers and to nonbelievers who were struggling in different ways. The message of Hebrews is elegant, rich and precious.

Hebrews is powerful, especially in its dark passages. As we are going to find, there are a series of dark passages. There are passages that are just glowing with hope. There are passages that are beautiful and gorgeous, and then there are passages that are dark that call us to action. The book cycles between the positive and the negative and as we are going to see, the message is absolutely powerful.

THE THEME. In the opening of the book, Jesus is superior to angels and then He is superior to Moses. He is superior to Aaron. He is superior to all of the priests. The resounding theme, the main theme, the main purpose of Hebrews is to communicate to us that Jesus is our merciful and faithful high priest. This is the only book in the Bible where you are going to get a glimpse of Jesus that you will not find in any other book in the New Testament. This is a great book and its study is going to be a great learning experience for each of us.

Along the way we will be answering some questions. What is a high priest? What is significant about the fact that Jesus is our merciful and faithful high priest? We are going to get a chance to ask some questions. Am I saved once and forever? Can I lose my salvation? Am I spiritually mature? Does the Mosaic Law still apply today? Over the years I have found there are Christians who wonder about that. Or, what is faith? Is there a temple in heaven? There will be some interesting nuggets and jewels in the book. It is going to be a fabulous study and I'm looking forward to it and I hope that you are as well.

HE SPOKE LONG AGO. We are going to begin our study with Hebrews chapter 1, and we will start with verse 1. Therefore, I invite you to turn there if you would. Hebrews 1:1 says,

1. Eusebius, Church History, 6.25.11-14.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways . . . Hebrews 1:1

The message of verse 1 is simple. It takes us back to the ancient fathers, to the patriarchs. It takes us back to the ancient prophets. It takes us back thousands of years. We are told that God spoke through the prophets, in many portions, and then He spoke in many ways.

The Greek word for “many portions” has the idea of different segments or different times. Therefore, it has the idea that God spoke at different points in time along the way. Think about the first time that God spoke. It was in Genesis. He spoke to Adam. Later, He spoke to Eve and He spoke to others.

When we get to the book of Exodus we find that God speaks to Moses from a burning bush. At the end of Deuteronomy 34:10 we are told that Moses was a prophet. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were all written by Moses. So, that tells us God spoke through Moses, the first prophet. Hebrews is telling us God spoke to and through prophets.

God also spoke through some other men. He spoke through Samuel, Nathan, Gad and Jehu. He spoke through Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Jonah, Micah and the rest of the prophets of the Old Testament. God spoke through many different prophets. We are told that, “He spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets in many portions.” He started with Moses and continued speaking for thousands of years through the prophets. They didn’t speak all at one time or all at once.

Think about it for a moment. When Genesis was written, all posterity could know how God created the world, the universe and everything. It would be revealed to us how the fall of mankind occurred. We could discover God’s attitude towards sin. We discover what was included in the curse of sin. Today we can find out about the flood. Imagine what would happen if God had never recorded the flood in the

pages of Scripture. We wouldn’t know about the details of the flood. God wanted us to know about these credible facts.

As a result, we also know that God chose Israel. There are many things that we know from Scripture. But He didn’t tell us everything in one book. The first book of the Bible is the book of Genesis. Then He wrote Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and then He gave us Joshua and Judges. And He gave us all the other books of the Bible. He has revealed to us what we needed to know, little by little. We call it progressive revelation.

God revealed to us things that He wanted us to know progressively, and not all at once. He did it little by little or portion by portion. As a result, we can discover that God is a unity. We are able to discover that God loves us. We are able to discover that God planned to send a Savior who would be not only a Savior from our sins, but He would also be a King.

Then we are told that He did it in many ways. He communicated things verbally to some of the prophets. To some God communicated through dreams and visions. You could think of Daniel. God wrote on a stone tablet to give the Ten Commandments. We are told He wrote that with His “fingers,” as if God had fingers. We know God doesn’t have human fingers because God is spirit. He communicated to us in written form using human authors to write. We call that communication the Old Testament Scriptures and the New Testament Scriptures. The first prophets wrote about 1,450 B.C. and continued all the way down to 400 B.C.

Then silence occurred and God didn’t speak for over 400 years. It was a hint that something great was about to happen, something fabulous was going to happen. Verse 2 tells us,

. . . in these last days God has spoken to us in His son. Hebrews 1:2

Something truly fabulous did happen. After 400 years of silence, all of a sudden His Son arrived. God’s Son was not

just a prophet. Although Jesus is a prophet, the emphasis was on the fact that the Son of God arrived.

God has given us hints that Christ was going to come. God had already revealed who the Christ was. In Genesis 3:15 we were told that a seed would come and defeat Satan. In Genesis 49:10 we were told that Shiloh would come and rule. He would be a king. He would reign. In Psalm 2 we were told that a king would come. In Isaiah 53 we were told that our Suffering Savior would arrive. In Isaiah 7:14 we were told that a child would be born of a virgin. Isaiah 9:6 tells us that the child would be the eternal God and a King. In Daniel 7:13-14 we were told that there would be a Messiah and He was referred to as the Son of Man.

God had already given us clues that He was coming and He came. He arrived and He arrived in “these last days.” Can you just imagine what it was like for the writer of Hebrews to write this? God’s Son had arrived. Great, great time of life! The Son had arrived. Do you know what the Holy Spirit did in verses 2-3? Verses 2-3 give us the credentials of God’s Son. He gives us His resume, if you please. He tells us why the Son of God is important. He gives us seven things that we need to know about the Son.

The first one is that He is heir of all things. Verse 2 says.

In these last days He has spoken to us in His Son whom He appointed heir of all things. Through whom also He made the world. Hebrews 1:2

We are told here that God the Father appointed Jesus as heir of all things. Psalm 2:6-9 tells us that Jesus would be the Messiah and would be the King. He would be the ruler, and if you are king, you own it all. If you are king, you own everything and there is nothing that you don’t have. In Romans 8:16-17 we are told that we are joint heirs with Christ. If we are heirs with Christ, then we are joint heirs. That implies Jesus is an heir of something. So Scripture is consistent. What we’re told here is that He was appointed heir of all things and you know what that means. He is heir

of all things.

Next, through Him God made the world. So, Jesus is heir of all things and He made the world. That’s the second part of the resume. The Greek word translated here as “world” is *aion* and means “ages.” It doesn’t necessarily mean world or earth or universe. The primary idea is that He created the ages. That’s the best understanding of this statement. Watch this, Jesus didn’t create just the earth. He did not create just the stars. Jesus created the space. He created time. He created energy. He created all of it. He created everything.

He created the countless stars and every time Hubble is upgraded, we discover some new surprises. Every time it is upgraded, we discover more stars and more galaxies. The universe just goes on and on, infinitely, because we have an infinite God who created an infinite universe.

God created the planets and the black holes. He created the electrons. He created the protons. He created the quirks, the dark matter and the anti-matter. We are just beginning to understand what dark matter is all about. We have no real understanding, but we know it exists. God created everything. He created the things you see and the things you do not see. He created the things in heaven and the things on earth. He created it all. There isn’t anything that Jesus, the Son of God did not create. Wow, what credentials! what a resume.

So when the Son speaks, we need to listen to Him because there is no one like Him. Colossians 1:16 tells us that He created everything. God the father and Jesus Christ both together created everything. They did it all together. Genesis 1:1 tells us the Holy Spirit was present at the creation as well. God had created everything. Verse 3 tells us that the Son is the radiance of His glory.

And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high . . . Hebrews 1:3

Somebody might think from verse 2 that the verse describes God. Indeed verse 3 makes it clear that the Son is God because the first thing we are told is that He is the “radiance of His glory.” The Greek word in your Bible that is translated as “He is” is a present participle. The verb has the idea of timeless existence. He is the great *I Am*. He is the eternal being. He is the radiance of God’s glory and the Greek word for radiance has the idea of brightness or shining.

RADIANCE OF HIS GLORY. Think about brightness. I can turn on a light in my house, but it could be rather dim. This word has the idea of brightness. Think about the moon for a minute. If you go out at night and you look up at the moon you see some light. That is a reflection. It is the sun’s light reflecting off the moon and back to us. The sun’s rays bounce off the moon, enter my eye, and I can see the light off the moon. That is a reflection of a light from the sun.

Jesus is not like the moon. Jesus is not a reflection of God’s glory. No, Jesus is God. He is the light. He is the Shekinah glory. Jesus is not a reflection. He is the “out raying” - that’s the idea of the word. He is the “out raying” of God’s glory. I can’t help but think about the transfiguration of Christ in Matthew 17. When Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, we are told that He shown like the sun’s brightness. He is the radiance of God’s glory. That is exactly who Jesus is. He is God.

EXACT REPRESENTATION. The next credential for Jesus is that He is the exact representation of God’s nature. The phrase “exact representation” comes from the Greek word that is pronounced as “character.” The Greek word has the idea of an impression on a coin. Jesus is the *exact* likeness of God the Father. Some of the great creeds of the Christian faith state that Jesus is of the same substance as the Father or has the same nature. You know who Jesus is? Jesus is just like the Father in every way : His fundamental nature, His fundamental properties, His fundamental character and His fundamental attributes. Jesus is just like the Father. He is an exact representation of God the Father, and the Holy Spirit. They’re identical. They are exact.

BY THE WORD OF HIS POWER. Now notice the next credential of Jesus. We are told that He upholds all things by the word of His power. That is a great statement. Not only did Jesus create the world, not only did He create everything in this world but He also upholds everything. He maintains everything! I can’t help but think about the fact that the earth spins around the sun on an axis of 23.3 degrees. Did you know that Jesus maintains that?

We discovered these little things called atoms. First, we thought there were only protons and electrons in the atom. As scientists continued to investigate, they found that there were all kinds of things in that little atom. Now we are not sure why that atom even holds together. It should fly apart. We have discovered that we don’t know very much. We’ve discovered that there’s some great mysteries in science. Jesus not only created all these things, but He holds it all together and He maintains it. That is power. Guess who Jesus is? He is God.

Only God can do these things, but notice what verse 3 says. It says, “by the word of His power.” It does not say magic. There was no need for any help. Christ did not need a computer. Christ did not need help from a contractor. All He needed to do was to speak a word. He just spoke a word. He can do whatever He wants to do. From my point of view, those are tremendous credentials. This is amazing. Talk about credentials. Talk about a resume.

Then we are told that when He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Let’s take the first part of the statement. It says, “He made purification of sins.” The Greek word that is translated as “made” is in the aorist tense and has the idea of completed action at some point in time. That is, He did it. He completed it. He made purification of sins. He provided a way for us to have our sins forgiven. He has made it possible for repentant and believing sinners to be forgiven their sins. Those who believe in Christ will be forgiven their sins and go to heaven.

MADE PURIFICATION FOR SINS. He made purification for sins when He died on the cross. He did it once and completed it. When Jesus was on the cross, He did not just die. He said, "It is finished!" He did it. He completed His task. He made purification of sins. Then we are told that He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. I was talking to some folks and they told me they struggled with the concept that Jesus is God. If He is God, how could He sit down on the right hand of God the Father? Now, stop to think with me for a moment.

SAT AT THE RIGHT HAND. The Scripture figuratively states that God has hands. Scripture figuratively speaks as if God has feet. Sometimes Scripture figuratively speaks as if God has different body parts. Also on occasion, Scripture figuratively speaks as if God is a lion, a lamb, an eagle, fire, a hen, a chicken, a water fountain, a shadow or a temple.

Now, I have a question for you. Does that mean that God is all of these things? Is He a chicken, temple, fire, shadow, or some-kind-of-fountain? Is that what God is like? No, these are anthropomorphic expressions to communicate to us some truth about God in terms that we can understand.

In short, God is not like us. God says in the Psalms, "You thought I was just like you" and God says that is not true. 1 John 4:24 tells us that God is a spirit. Do you know what we need to do with the statement that Christ sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high? First, understand that God doesn't have a right hand. God doesn't have a left hand. Second, this is a statement by which to communicate truth. So the question is what is truth? The answer is that when a high priest entered the Holy Place he entered to offer a sacrifice. He couldn't sit down. He had to walk in, offer the sacrifice and then leave. If he did not do everything perfectly he'd die and someone would have to drag him out. He couldn't go in and just sit down.

Do you know what Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, did after He offered Himself as our sacrifice? After he died on the cross, He said it is fin-

ished. If you don't mind, He went to the "Holy of Holies." He went to heaven and He sat down. His work was finished because He was the perfect and final sacrifice. It is done! It is completed. This is an incredible statement about Jesus. Jesus is a priest. He is a high priest. These have been seven unbelievable truths about who Jesus is.

MESSAGE OF HEBREWS. What is the message of Hebrews? The message is very simple. God spoke to us in ages past through the prophets. Then God stopped speaking to them. I suspect the Jews were wondering when God was going to speak again because it had been 400 years and they were marking time. They were waiting. Then we are told that in these last days His Son has spoken. The Son finally spoke and the Son was and is God (Hebrews 1:5-9).

Look at the credentials of the person who is speaking. This is not someone to ignore. We should not ignore this person. We should not ignore this one who is speaking because He is God. He was and is speaking to us and God the Father is speaking through Him. Jesus is the life and the truth. What He speaks is the truth and we had better listen.

I was thinking about this passage and pouring over it. Then I was struck by the fact that the Son, a term we may not think about too often, is a wonderful name. His name is the Son of God. His name is wonderful, Jesus my Lord.

May I ask you today, "Is He your Lord?" I pray that He is, because He has spoken to us in these latter days and we need to listen. Audrey Meier wrote "He is the mighty King, Master of everything. His name is Wonderful, Jesus my Lord. He's the great Shepherd, the Rock of all Ages, Almighty God is He. Bow down before Him, love and adore Him, His name is Wonderful, Jesus My Lord."