

September 9, 2018 - Hebrews 1:1-3 - "God's final Word is Jesus"

Introduction

People often are not themselves when they come face to face with celebrities whether they are actors, actresses, politicians or sports celebrities. True story, a while back a woman entered a Haagen-Dazs Ice Cream Parlor in a Kansas City Plaza for an ice-cream cone. While she was ordering a customer entered the store. She placed her order, turned and found herself staring face to face with Actor Paul Newman. He was in town filming a movie. She was completely at awe and she fumble to finished paying. Quickly she walked out of the store with her heart pounding. Gaining her composure she realized she didn't have her ice cream cone; so she turned to go back. At the door she met Paul Newman who was coming out. He turned and said to her, "Ma Are you looking for your ice-cream cone?" Unable to utter a word she nodded yes.

---"You put it in your purse along with your change."

When was the last time you or I were physically affected by the reality that almighty God speaks directly to us? Remember Moses trembled when God spoke to him. Before the battle of Jericho, Joshua saw the "commander of the Lord's army" (the Lord Himself) standing opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. Joshua fell on his face and worshiped. In other words, he recognized God's greatness. Isaiah was commission by a heavenly calling of God presence and he was awe stoked with sin. He cried out," *Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

In Acts 7:3 Peter, when he realized who Jesus was, "fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, `Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!'" Paul fell to the ground when Christ met him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:4) John lost all physical strength when God spoke to him (Rev. 1:17).

I. God speaks to us in many ways.

1. The writer of Hebrews tells us: God, who at sundry times- this is one compound word in Greek *polymerōs* meaning many times in many portions and in divers that is various or different manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. In times past, God spoke in dreams and visions. He used nature; miraculous signs; a still, small voice; fire; trumpets; fleece; the casting of lots; and angels. He spoke in the middle of the night, during worship services, at mealtimes, during funerals, while people were walking along the road, through sermons, in the middle of a storm.

Scripture also says that God does speak powerfully to us through creation. God spoke to Moses through a cloud and the Ark of the Covenant (Ex 19:9 & 25:22). He spoke to Elijah in a still small voice (1 Kgs. 19:12). He spoke to Ezekiel through visions and to Daniel through dreams. These many different methods reveal God's strong, loving desire to communicate with us. The problem has never been that God doesn't speak to us. The problem is we don't listen very well. So God desire to send his Son to speak to us directly and the writer of Hebrews makes it very clear that Jesus Christ is the medium through whom God created everything that exists.

Therefore, He is the rightful heir of all things and Jesus is God's final Word to us because He is the Recipient of all things.

II. God's final Word is Jesus (1:2a).

1. The writer of Hebrews makes it clear God has given us the final Word, and it is not through a lawgiver or prophet. He writes: [*God*] *hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son* (1:2a). The phrase in *these last days* refers to the time in which we are living. Jesus is God's final Word to us.

2. The book of Hebrews is a wonderful message from God. It is encouragement to the dear saints for today. Hebrews is different from other New Testament books; it begins like an essay, continues as a sermon and ends like a letter. Before we get into that let's discuss the Who, when and why of this epistle.

1. Unknown Author

The first known writing identifying Paul as author of Hebrews is Papyrus 46 (or P46) written about A.D. 200 and found in Egypt. However, church leaders a century later still didn't know who wrote Hebrews. Clement of Alexandria surmised that Paul wrote Hebrews in Hebrew and that Luke translated it into Greek. (Of course no one has ever found a Hebrews in *Hebrew*, so Clement stands by himself with that idea.) Origen was less sure, confessing that "who really wrote the letter is known to God alone." Elsewhere in Africa, at Carthage, Tertullian nominated Barnabas as the author of Hebrews. Most Christians in the Roman West said they didn't know. Centuries later, in the Reformation, Luther leaned toward Apollos while Calvin favored Luke or a second-century believer named Clement of Rome.

2. Unknown Recipients

1. If the identity of Hebrews' first readers were Jews we have no absolute statement to verified this. The deduction comes from a study of the book itself that seem to emphasis throughout the book all the ways Jesus and his priesthood and sacrifice are better and stronger and more enduring than their Old Testament counterparts.

3. Unknown Date

1. The date of Hebrews is equally unknown. When the author discusses Jewish priests, sanctuary and sacrifices, he clearly is speaking about people, places and things described in the Old Testament, not the politicized priesthood and Temple of the first century after Christ. We cannot even say for sure whether Hebrews originated before or after the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in A.D. 70. Advocates for both views claim internal support from the book of Hebrews itself.

We can state with reasonable confidence that Hebrews was written no earlier than the mid-first century since its first readers were second generation believers (Hebrews 2:3-4; Hebrews 13:7).

It was certainly written before A.D. 96, when Clement of Rome quoted from it in his letter to the church at Corinth now called First Clement. Many ascribe 60 AD as the time of it writing.

4. Unknown circumstances

1. Through the centuries, most Christians have assumed that Hebrews was written for Jewish believers who were tempted to abandon Jesus for the religion in which they were raised. There are two main reasons for this assumption. First is the name "Hebrews" itself. Again, there is the constant emphasis throughout the book on all the ways Jesus and his priesthood and sacrifice are better and stronger and more enduring than their Old Testament counterparts. Isn't that adequate evidence for the long held and widespread conclusion that Hebrews was written to Jews who were in danger of forsaking Jesus for Moses? I think so but not all agree.

2. Some scholars think that it is not. In fact, the name "Hebrews" is undocumented before about 200 A.D. As a descriptive term, "Hebrews" appears almost exclusively in the Old Testament, where it regularly identifies the people we know as Jews.

It should not surprise us that the Book of Hebrews frequently quotes, regularly refers to, and always assumes the presence of what we call the Old Testament. After all, those earlier Scriptures were the early church's Bible. (For the most part, the early church read the Septuagint, a common Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures made between 275-200 B.C.

Nearly all the Old Testament quotations in Hebrews match the Septuagint. The truth is that the original audience really does not matter. Whether the first readers were messianic Jews, Gentile Christians or house churches containing both Jews and Gentiles they were in need of teaching and encouragement. The writer was concerned that his readers would drift away from Christ and return to Judaism. Becoming a Christian was not easy then just as it is not in our day. This is one purpose behind the study of this book at this time.

Jesus is God's final Word to us because...

III. He is the Recipient of all things (1:2b-c).

1. God appointed Jesus heir of all things (1:2b). The reason He is heir of all things is found in **Colossians 1:16**; let's look at this important passage. In John 1:18 we note the result of God speaking to us through His Son.

Spiritual victory comes to those who humble themselves and seek God's will.

2. It was through Jesus that God made the worlds (1:2c). The word translated worlds is not KOSMOS, which is the common Greek word for "world." The word translated worlds here (AIONAS, i-ohn'-as) is a Greek word from which we get our word "eon" An eon is an extremely long, indefinite period of time that can refer to billions of years and the universe.

This means Jesus not only created material things but also time, so His creation continues indefinitely. Things are still happening in God's time and in His order. That's why we are not here by accident. God told Jeremiah He knew him before He formed him in his mother's womb (Jer. 1:5a). What does God also tell him in Jeremiah 1:5b, which is also true of you and me?

You and I are not "cosmic accidents." The miracle of birth and the organization of cells and organs have grown by His design. Some people want us to believe we are "cosmic accidents." I don't have that much faith. Do you? It takes a lot less faith to believe in God than to believe we are "cosmic accidents."

IV. He is the Radiance of God (1:3).

1. Jesus is the brightness of God's glory (1:3a). He is not just a reflection of God. Is the light of the moon the same as the light of the sun? No! The moon reflects the light of the sun, whereas the sun radiates light because it is the source. Jesus doesn't reflect God; He is the **radiance** of God's glory because He is God in flesh and blood. Jesus make this clear in John 14:9...

2. Jesus is also the express image of God (1:3b). The word translated image (car-ak-tare') is the word from which we get our English word "character." Jesus is the exact representation of the holiness, love, grace, and mercy of God. Jesus doesn't reveal God's physical appearance; He reveals God's character. Someone said, Jesus is the signature of God in human flesh.

3. Jesus is upholding all things by the word of his power (1:3c). The word upholding is present tense, denoting continuous action. Our universe is not in chaos because Jesus' sustaining power keeps everything on course and in order. Why doesn't our Planet ever get too close to the sun? Why don't the planets collide? Colossians 1:17 answer these questions.

Jesus Christ is not only the Creator of the universe; He also sustains and maintains what He has created. Jesus is the Recipient of all things, the Radiance of God, and ...

Conclusion:

V. He is the Redeemer of all people (1:3d).

Jesus is God's final Word to us because He is the Recipient of all things, the Radiance of God, and the Redeemer of all people. God speaks to us in many ways, but God's final Word is Jesus.