

The Supremacy of Jesus: Hebrews – Week 1

INTRO

The origin of Hebrews is full of question marks. Scholars aren't sure exactly when it was written, but since Clement quoted it, we know concretely that it was written before A.D. 95 when he wrote his first epistle. Because its use of O.T. sacrificial customs and never alluding to the pivotal destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, it's widely accepted by scholars to have been written before then. Unlike Paul's letters, the author neither identifies himself/herself nor is clear who they are writing to (The closing verses indicate that it was to a specific church community).

Several authors have been proposed. Augustine and many others believed **Paul** wrote it because of the emphasis of Jewish worship. Martin Luther argued for **Apollos** with some neat proofs. There's even a clever argument for **Priscilla** (wife of Aquilla) proposed by scholar Adolf von Harnack (historian/theologian, but not a great person to follow theologically). **Barnabas** (because of his Levitical background), **Luke** (because of its polished Greek), and **Silas** (because of how Pauline it sounds) have all been proposed, but like Origen's said, it's probably best to accept that "only God knows who wrote Hebrews."

Book Theme: Jesus is our **supreme** salvation to God, and our **only** salvation to God.

It defends His supremacy, explains His work of redemption, encourages God's people to persevere in faith in Jesus, and warns (6x) of the dangers of abandoning the only One who is our salvation.

The first five chapters are focused on showing Jesus' superiority as Deliverer of God's word. (E.g. Letter by mail **vs.** Facetime; Cheerleader megaphone **vs.** PA system at rock concert) Jesus is the best of the best, and our author proves it.

Illustration: How would you prove your favorite quarterback was the best, most talented, most significant quarterback?

You would compare him to the greatest quarterbacks both past and present. You'd note his statistics, records he'd broken, victories he'd won, and accounts of his teammates affirming his leadership skills.

The author will spend the first five chapters comparing Jesus to other go-betweens of God's words. These mediators were the most significant links between God and man in human history. But Jesus isn't just the best in a category of greats. He is now the only link/mediator/ambassador, and all others were merely **shadows** of Him (**Heb.10:1**). Now, the substance which cast those shadows has been revealed. The supreme and final Messenger of God's word is Jesus, God's Son.

Here is the message the Holy Spirit, through an unknown author, intends to get across. **Because of WHO Jesus is and because of His position**, His words alone are the only way to be saved.

HOOK

Illustration: A man has to take over a small airplane after the pilot passes out. He's saved by trusting an expert on the radio who guides him to safety. This was a man he could not see, only hear by way of the radio. "My job is to get you home safe. But if you want to get home safe, you've gotta promise me you'll obey my voice. You can't see me, but I can see you. If you don't obey my voice, you'll die." "I don't want you to look at what's going on outside. I don't want you to pay attention to the storm, just my voice. If you start watching the storm, you will die, but I will take you through it." "Stay with me." "Thanks for listening. I watch em' crash and burn all the time because they won't follow my voice. They don't understand that I'm the one who can see them even when they don't see me. They pay attention to everything else and they kill themselves."

- **Because of WHO Jesus is and because of His position, we MUST listen to Him.** His words are the word of GOD, and only by His word will we be saved.

BOOK – **Read: 1:1-4: Hebrews 1:1-2a** – Jesus is superior to all previous forms of God's revelation. **1:2b-3a** – Seven reasons he is superior.

LOOK

We all have a problem, a limitation, a police boot on the tire of our existence. We are natural humans stuck in the box of the physical realm, and all religions are attempts at escaping that box to connect with the supernatural realm. God, Himself, is supernatural, transcendent, which means we – who are stuck in the box – can only know Him IF He reveals Himself to us, speaks to us.

Hebrews 1:1 - *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,*

- "Prophets" includes all Old Testament people which God spoke through to give the words of scripture. And all O.T. scripture was to prepare for the coming of the Christ.
 - **A prophet's job is to speak to people for God** (not to be a fortune teller).
A priest's job is to speak to God for people.
- Three characteristics of God's former communications: **1)** They are from the distant past, **2)** are piecemeal, **3)** and take diverse forms.

- **E.g.** It was like a 500-piece puzzle, and God had chosen many pieces from different portions to give them. It showed partial glimpses of the big picture but was missing critical portions.
- These disclaimers of the O.T. are NOT saying it's invalid, but incomplete. It's readers knew it was incomplete and waited faithfully for its fulfillment (**Jer.33:14-16, Mt.5:17**).
 - **Note:** The author doesn't believe they should be dismissed or thrown out but still vitally important (**4:12**)
- God's self-revelation and His will no longer had to be deciphered from 1,500 years of prophetic speeches/writings, but was spoken plainly and came with undeniable evidence (**2:4**). Jesus delivered God's word clearly, in its entirety, and within the author's life (**2:3**). In fact, God's word was seen face to face, touched by human hands, and heard by human ears.

Hebrews 1:2 - *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.*

- **"last days"** – Is a reference to prophecies about the coming Messiah/Christ. They would speak of "coming days" when the prophecies would be fulfilled (ex. **Jer.33:14-16**). We are living in the era when the foreshadowings are complete. **Ex.** Jesus' message filled out every missing space in the puzzle, and it was a picture of God, Himself (**John 4:25**).
- When God became man, He entered our box. He had all the attributes of truly natural man without abdicating all the attributes of truly supernatural divinity. He was fully God and fully man.
- Therefore, if we have confidence in sinful men, the prophets, relaying God's word to us, how much more should trust in the word of God's Son. God's self-revelation and His will is clear and complete in Jesus.
 - There are seven reasons we can trust God's Son as being the first, finest, and final Word of God.

Seven Reasons Jesus is God's First, Finest, and Final Word

1. He is the Heir of all things.

Jesus emptied Himself, stepped down from glory in heaven, and became a servant. He was born in a stable, raised by unimportant parents, lived in obscurity for 30 years, had no formal schooling, and lived homeless during His ministry. He died abandoned by his friends and shamed as a criminal. Even His clothes were

taken. Then, he was buried in a stranger's tomb. He was impoverished in every way, but will receive everything.

As the Son of God, He receives all God possess. **Col.1:15-16** says Jesus is the "firstborn" of all Creation. This isn't saying He had a beginning, but it's a **title** showing all Creation belongs to the Father's Heir. In **v.16** it says, "all things were created through Him and FOR Him." All that exists exists **for** Jesus.

Further, the kingdom of heaven, God's people, are the Father's gift to the Son. **2 Cor., Eph., and Rev.** call us the bride of Christ, and Jesus is the Bridegroom waiting to receive us.

Why is Jesus, God's Son, the first, finest, and final Word? He is the heir of all things.

2. He is the Creator of the world.

John 1:3 - *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made* (Echoed by **Col.1**)

Ex. Engineers can build computers. Scientists can formulate medicines. And parents can reproduce children. But creating something from nothing, and having the power and wisdom to do so, is an ability which belongs ONLY to GOD.

"**world**" - "**aion**" (aye-own) = ages, eternity, worlds, universe.

Jesus created matter, space, energy, and time. HE began the timeline, opened up space like a canvas, painted matter and light across it, and set the forces which govern it into place.

Illustration: You can fit 1.2 million earths inside of the sun. The sun is 93 million miles away. Betelgeuse (brightest star in Orion) is 880 quadrillion miles (880 followed by 15 zeros) from us and is bigger than the size of our orbit around the sun. Light travels at 671 million miles per hour. But, traveling at the speed of light, it would take 640 years to reach Betelgeuse.

But despite all this bigness, the smallest variation of many aspects in our existence would kill us. Just a bit closer/farther to the sun = burn up/freeze, or our atmosphere having slightly less density = bombarded by meteors.

Why is Jesus the first, finest, and final Word? He's the Creator of the ages.

Since He began all things and all things culminate when He receives them at the end of the natural timeline, He is the beginning and the end of all things, the Alpha and the Omega. (Is.44:6, 48:12, Rev.1:8,17-18, 21:6-7, 22:13)

Hebrews 1:3a – *He (Jesus) 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.*

Seven Reasons Jesus is God's First, Finest, and Final Word

3. He is the Radiance of the glory of God.

Ex. How do we see? A luminous source projects radiance which bounces off an object. Any light that isn't absorbed by the surface of the object is reflected to our eyes. The only reason we see is because of light.

In **Mal. 4**, Jesus is called the "*Sun of Righteousness*." We can't see God. No one ever has, and no one ever will while in the box of the natural realm. Like the light of the sun by which we can see the sun, Jesus is the radiance of God's glory. **He is how we see God.** **Is.9**, a Messianic prophecy, is quoted by Matthew about Jesus (**Mt.4**): "*the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.*"

John 1:1-5, 9, 14 – John calls Jesus the, "*light of men*" which "*shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*"

9 *The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*

14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father...*

Apart from the Radiance of God there is only darkness. Darkness is equated through the N.T. as unbelief or being hard to the message of the gospel. In **John 9**, Jesus, after healing the blind man who came to belief, equates seeing with salvation and blindness with rejection of Himself. **Jn.9:39** - *Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."* **He's the watershed dividing sheep from goats.**

Why is Jesus the first, finest, and final Word? He's the Radiance of the Glory of God.

4. He is the exact Imprint of His nature.

Col. 1:15 - *He is the image of the invisible God...* Jesus wasn't a man with godly powers, He was God manifest. The word for "imprint" is the term used for the impression of a stamp or signet ring on a wax seal. The shape left behind is the exact shape of the stamp, a precise representation.

The One who was transcendent has become visible. The One who was indescribable has become touchable. The One who is incomprehensible made the way for us to know Him.

Philip said, "Jesus show us the Father." And Jesus responded, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father (**Jn.14**)."
John 1:18 - *No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.*

Why is Jesus the first, finest, and final Word? He's the exact Imprint of His nature.

5. He is the Sustainer of all things.

Jesus, not only created all things and will inherit all things, but is actively holding them together. The word "*upholds*" means "to support" and "to maintain." It's used in the present tense = it's happening right now as a continuous action.

His same infinite power which create the universe currently is sustaining the universe and ruling it according to His good will. "The universe is a cosmos instead of a chaos (MacArthur)."

We depend on the constancy and predictability laws. The force which holds us to the ground and the earth in orbit, the force which holds atoms together into molecules, the forces which govern motion and energy are powers we take for granted. These are Christ's steady activity throughout His universe. We experience His hand upholding us every day. But like a fish doesn't feel that it's wet, we who are submerged in the omnipresence of God often miss His glaringly obvious faithfulness. **Rom.1:20** - *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.*

Why is Jesus the first, finest, and final Word? He's the Upholder of all things.

Hebrews 1:3b - *After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

Seven Reasons Jesus is God's First, Finest, and Final Word

6. He purifies us from sin.

Notice that His work of purification is put into the past tense. It's already happened. In John, as Jesus was dying on the cross, His last words were, "It is finished." **Who has the right to declare such a final word on God's act of redemption?** Jesus completed God's work which began in the garden of Eden. At the severing of man and woman from their Creator/Lover, God spoke of One who would redeem Eve's descendants from sin and the devil. That rescue mission took place across ages and generations until it was finally fulfilled in the death of Jesus on the cross. This is why **Heb.12** calls Him the "*Author and Finisher of our faith.*"

There was nothing we could do to reach God from inside our box. And there was nothing we could do to be free of the chain of sin's curse. (**Anselm**) "You have not yet considered the greatness of the weight of sin."

Even our own wills were slaves to sin so that we couldn't even desire to be righteous (**Rom.6**). Under sin's dictatorship of our minds and hearts, we love being our own masters and crave satisfying our sinful desires. We were hopeless and enemies of God.

BUT Jesus, being perfect in holiness and infinite in value, offered Himself in our place. He was recognized by God as righteous but took on our verdict of being guilty. He changes our hearts to see Him and love Him and gives us His verdict of being righteous (**Ez.36**). We receive His blessing, and He received our punishment.

1 John 1:7 – *...the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.* In this way, He purified us of our sin and redeemed us to the Father.

"He sat down" – There were no chairs in the O.T. tabernacle. The priests were on their feet every moment of their daily ministry offering sacrifices for the people of Israel. It was an exhausting job of slaying, separating, and burning up the sacrifices for people's sin.

BUT, Jesus was the once and for all-time sacrifice. His work was perfect, all-sufficient, & complete. Therefore, with great satisfaction, He takes His rightful seat.

Why is Jesus the first, finest, and final Word? He's purified us of our sin.

7. He is exalted!

But He's not just sitting on a random bench in heaven. His rightful place is at the right-hand of the Majesty on high. To be on the right hand of the King was to be on His side of power.

This is His position of **honor** and before Him, “everyone tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil.2)”

This is His position of **authority**. 1 Pet.3:22 - Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

This is His position to **intercede** for us. Rom.8:34 - Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

This is His position to **judge**. 2 Cor.5:10 - we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Why is Jesus the first, finest, and final Word? He is exalted to the highest authority.

TOOK

Illustration: Twice I’ve walked with a student through legal issues. Both times, I sat with the families in the courtroom waiting to hear the judges verdict. Would they spend the next years in juvenile detention, be sent to adult prison, or put on probation? Both times (Destin and here), the family’s prayer was that their son would be tried under a specific judge. “Pray he gets judge ____.” Why? That was the judge that was known for giving mercy.

(**Thomas Watson** paraphrase) Those who refuse to believe and chose their sin reject Jesus as their Master and Savior. They will stand in front of a Judge who they have made their enemy. **How much hope can they have in the critical moment of judgement?**

Those who’ve dedicated their lives to Him, accepted His work as being for them, and made Him their master will stand before a Judge who is their Savior. Our Judge loves us and has been interceding for us all our lives. Further, He died to determine our verdict. **How much hope can we have?!**

The reality is Jesus is supreme over all things and ALL things will be brought under His sovereign authority. The question of which relationship you’ll have with the Judge is based on whether or not you relinquish your authority to Him now. **To the unbeliever:** Have you put your faith in Jesus’ purification for you and made Him supreme in your life?

To the believer: In your ongoing sanctification, what areas in your life have you now giving Him supreme authority?

What voices have you been listening to?

- Have you been listening to the voice of prideful self-sufficiency?
 - “I can do enough to earn salvation.”
- Have you been listening to the voice of rebellion?
 - “Live for pleasure. It’s your life. Live your best life now.”
- Have you been listening to the voice of busy-ness?
 - “You can get around to religion later. For now, focus on you.”
- Have you been listening to the voice of willful ignorance.
 - “If I can’t see God, He’s not there. This is all there is.”

How do we stay anchored to the voice of truth? The voice which will bring us home?

We turn to the pages where God’s Son is predicted, revealed, preached, explained, and expected. We study the life, teachings, work, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

RECAP

- Jesus is the first, finest, & final Word of God’s self-revelation and will.
- He is the:
 - Heir of all things
 - Creator of the ages
 - Radiance of the glory of God
 - Exact imprint of God’s nature
 - Sustainer of all things
 - Purifier of sin
 - And holds the highest position of authority in the universe and above.
- We must ask ourselves the most important question of all, “What will my relationship be with the Judge when I stand before Him in eternity?”
- For believers, “What of my life haven’t I made Him supreme over yet?”

Challenge 1: Begin reading the book of Hebrews.

Challenge 2: Select an area in your life which hasn’t been surrendered to Jesus yet, and take the first step.

eGroup Questions /// The Supremacy of Jesus – Hebrews, Wk. 1

Pray:

Key Verse: Hebrews 1:1-2 - *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son...*

Questions:

1. Can you remember a time when having a bad connection on the phone/internet caused you problems? (*Leaders, be careful to limit responses. Time will get away from you here.*)
2. Why is it significant that God became flesh?
3. In what way can we follow His voice? (*Be careful not to wander into subjective "I hear God telling me x." Challenge them on what is subjective vs. objective.*)
4. What does it mean that Jesus will judge?
5. What did Pastor Dominick mean by having some place in our lives that Jesus wasn't supreme over?
6. What's an area in your life you haven't surrendered?
7. Why haven't you surrendered it yet?
8. What would be your first step?
9. How can your friends here help you?

Two things:

- Tell your students if any of them would like to make Jesus supreme over their lives and make Him their Lord, to talk to you afterwards if they don't want to do it right now.
- Can you memorize the seven reasons Jesus is superior to all? Quote them to the snack shop volunteer and be rewarded with a free, black Elevate bracelet.

Ask for prayer requests: Pray

Fill out student contact sheet if there are any new people.