

## HEBREWS/LEVITICUS

Hebrews 1:1-4

March 5, 2023

### Hebrews 1:1-4

**Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. <sup>1</sup>**

**“This is the Word of God” – “Thanks be to God.”**

As we begin this new series today, we open the New Testament to the letter to Hebrews. This letter is unlike any other in the New Testament and as evidenced by the introductory verses, it seems less a letter, or epistle, as it does a work of literary prose. Yet, by the time we get to the close of the book, there are clear evidences of what is called it’s epistolary, or simply its intent as a letter, function.

Our journey through the book of Hebrews is going to be a bit different than other series we have had through specific books as we look expositionally at the scripture to best understand and apply. While we will be in Hebrews primarily, there will be Sundays where we bookmark the New Testament letter while opening the Old Testament book of Leviticus.

One of my seminary professors years ago made a statement in a class that has stuck with me since. He said that to best study the book of

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Heb 1:1–4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Hebrews, we must also study the book of Leviticus. The old is not erased in the new but is fulfilled as Christ fulfilled the law. Thus, our series is through God's Word as revealed in the book of Hebrews, with a foundation from his Word through the book of Leviticus, as expressed in the graphic for this series.

I love how this letter begins. It does seem like a great literary work.

**Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>**

You can almost hear the deep baritone voice of a narrator giving this as exposition at the beginning of an epic film.

Yet, this is no fiction. This is not the next sequel in a J.R.R. Tolkien story. This is the word of God. Thanks be to God.

The question that remains unanswered, and will remain so, is "Who is the author of the book?" Debates for thousands of years regarding authorship have theologians choosing Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, Priscilla, and Clement of Rome as possibilities have occurred and continue to. Suffice to say...so that we do not find ourselves lost in the weeds debating details that will ultimately end up with God saying to us "You really spent all the time debating who wrote the letter rather than by following the instructions in the letter and delighting in me?" we affirm what we know to be a certainty – the Holy Spirit is the author of this letter, just as he is of every book within our Bible.

While there remains debate on the human author the Holy Spirit used to put pen to paper, the agreed upon overarching theme of the book is the supremacy of Christ and the beauty of the gospel as the evidence of God's goodness, greatness, and love.

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<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Heb 1:1). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

The original recipients were Jewish Christians who had converted to Christ as Lord without actually ever seeing Jesus in person. Their faith is evidence in that faith is described as believing without seeing and their surrender to Christ was no minor thing...especially in their culture.

The eloquence of the letter reveals the beauty of God, the loving Father, the redemption through the Son, and the sustainment of abundance and human flourishing through the Spirit.

The trinitarian revelation is no small thing.

Being Jewish Christians, or Hebrew believers, the value of the Old Testament law is evident. Christ as the fulfillment of the law is not to be minimized and for those modern-day Christians or even denominations that ignore the guidance and teaching of the Old Testament, believing that it now is irrelevant, may this journey through Hebrews with Leviticus reveal a righteousness and fulness of the godhead Trinity in a way that is fulfilling and helpful for us all.

Thus, in the world of evangelical Christianity so prominent in our culture today that views sermons, teachings, and worship gatherings as places to gather details on next steps for a good life and insight into how to change one's behavior for better, the pause and reflection that God gives us in the beginning of this book is not only deeply doctrinal and theological, but amazingly comforting and loving.

On Sunday evening, May 21, 1882 in the pulpit at the Metropolitan Tabernacle at Elephant and Castle in London, Pastor Charles Spurgeon opened his Bible and began to preach from this very passage. He announced, "I have nothing to do tonight but to preach Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> He then began to unveil the truth of the glorious Son through the Word

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<sup>3</sup> Hughes, R. Kent. *Hebrews: An Anchor for the Soul* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 23.

of God to those who would have ears to hear. What joy we have this morning to once more open God's Word to not just hear stories being read and thoughts being shared, but to be able to immerse ourselves in the inerrant, immutable, love-saturated, life-giving, amazing grace and mercy of God through his very clear word to us.

C.S. Lewis is known for his intellect, his insight into philosophy, his conversion to Christianity and his writing of many books, most notably the Chronicles of Narnia series. In the world of Narnia, different characters represent others. The lion Aslan, king of the kingdom is an allegorical emblem of Christ for the fictional world. The young girl Lucy in the novel *Prince Caspian*, is on her own spiritual quest. She sees Aslan whom she has known throughout the stories. He is the Christ-figure, shining white and huge in the moonlight. She is overjoyed at seeing him and rushes toward him, burying her face in his thick mane.<sup>4</sup>

“Aslan, Aslan. Dear Aslan,” sobbed Lucy. “At last.”  
The great beast rolled over on his side so that Lucy fell, half sitting and half lying between his front paws. He bent forward and just touched her nose with his tongue. His warm breath came all round her. She gazed up into the large wise face.

“Welcome child,” he said.

“Aslan,” said Lucy, “you're bigger.”

“That is because you are older, little one,” answered he.

“Not because you are?”

“I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger.”<sup>5</sup>

As R. Kent Hughes has stated, “Expanding souls encounter and expanding Christ!”<sup>6</sup>

May it be so today.

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<sup>4</sup> Hughes, 15.

<sup>5</sup> Lewis, C.S. *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 380.

<sup>6</sup> Hughes, 15.

## **GOD HAS SPOKEN**

The first verse gives the historical, Old Testament prelude to the great work done in the person of Christ throughout the New Testament.

Long ago	-	In these last days
God spoke to the fathers	-	He has spoken to us
In many ways by the prophets	-	By his Son

Don't rush through this for these recipients knew the long ago. They just longed for the here and now and were struggling to stay faithful.

Church, this is not foreign to us. Many have heard the stories of old, have read the faith accounts of Moses, David, Abraham, Nehemiah, Isaiah, and others. Even so, the accounts of Peter, James, John, Paul and the New Testament faithful as well. Yet, there is this human reality that often creeps into our lives.

God...we know what we have heard you have done, but what about now? Now? What about now? Are you still the God of life? Are the truths of the ancient word relevant in our postmodern, interconnected, gender dysphoric, politically volatile, consumer centered world?

In these last days...God has spoken.

The question is "Are we listening?"

## **GOD THE SON**

Have you ever heard the term chiasm? In literature, a chiasm (Ky-A-Zem) is a "reversal of grammatical structures in successive phrases or clauses – but no repetition of words." That's an academic definition and ultimately, most of you don't care.

Yet, when reading, this type of structure begins to connect points in our understanding of the teaching in ways that often are hard to define but resonate with us.

In ancient literature and in the biblical narrative, you will see this used at times. That’s what the author of Hebrews is doing in this first four, essential verses.

The symmetry of the points made early become like a skeleton that the remainder of the teachings hold to. Just as a human skeleton is the firmly strong structure to which muscles, tendons, nerves, and blood vessels are attached, so too is this section of Hebrews. So, even without knowing it consciously, the chiasmus of literature provides handles for us to hold to as we journey through the epic story of God’s great love, plan, and fulfillment through Christ.

Thus, as we look at the connective tissue that binds this together, look at these four, key phrases:

He has spoken to us by his Son (v.2)	He is the exact imprint of his nature (v. 3)
He appointed (Jesus) the heir of all things (v. 2)	He upholds the universe by the word of his power (v. 3)
Through whom he created the world (v. 2)	After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (v. 3)
He (Jesus) is the radiance of the glory of God (v.2)	Having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs (v. 4)

This may not connect with you today at a deep level but hold on as we go through this book and look back to the book of Leviticus. The point of this chiasm is found in the first part and the last – Jesus is the Lord who speaks truth and he is superior to the angels because he is Son. He

is the heir and ruler of the universe. Jesus IS creator.<sup>7</sup> He shares God's nature because he is more than man. He is God.

## GOD STILL SPEAKS

The God who spoke in the past still speaks. How? Through his Word. The canon of scripture we have is his recorded inerrant word. Yet, his son, Jesus Christ is the Logos, the ultimate Word.

As John wrote in his gospel account:

### **John 1:1**

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.<sup>8</sup>**

In the beginning...before the beginning (Gen 1:1) was the Word (Jesus.) Jesus was and is and always will be. He is the definitive word. He is the final word.

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

Jesus is the evidence and culmination and the final revelation of all that the fathers and prophets spoke of throughout the Old Testament. God spoke. He still speaks. Jesus rules as Messiah, King of kings, Lord of lords, and is the suffering servant who willingly came, lived, served, and sacrificed so that you and I and many others may know the life of abundance and flourishing promised by God from time beginning. He lived, died, fulfilled the task and sat down. He is the Son and more excellent than even the angels. He is the one and only Son of God, God the Son and he brings glory to the Father through being the way, truth, and life. And that brings such joy for you and me today. For without the Son, we have no way, cannot know truth, and will not have life.

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<sup>7</sup> Schriener, Thomas R. *Hebrews: Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 52.

<sup>8</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 1:1). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Do you know him today?

How long have you known him?

She gazed up into the large wise face.

“Welcome child,” he said.

“Aslan,” said Lucy, “you’re bigger.”

“That is because you are older, little one,” answered he.

“Not because you are?”

“I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger.”<sup>9</sup>

Thus the Christ who is real reveals that as we grow, we will find him bigger. May this be true for you.

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<sup>9</sup> Lewis, C.S. *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 380.