



# REDEMPTION

MAKING MUCH OF JESUS

**Hebrews 1:1-4**

## ***The God who Speaks***

**9/13/2020 - 9/20/2020**

### MAIN POINT

As God's Son, Jesus revealed God finally and without equal.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**What technological change or advancement in your lifetime most amazes you?**

**How long did that change or advancement remain relevant before it was updated or replaced?**

**Does that frustrate you? That no matter what piece of technology or equipment you have, it will eventually be replaced? Why or why not?**

No matter how impressive the product, a "new, improved" version is just around the corner. Though most everything in the world has a shelf life, Jesus Christ will never become outdated or replaced. He is superior—to the prophets, angels, and everything that came before Him. As God's Son, Jesus revealed God finally and without equal. He is the full revelation of God to humanity. The Book of Hebrews challenges us to recognize and share this truth with others.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 1:1-2A.

**What do these verses tell us about God?**

**Why is it important to know that our God is a God who speaks? What would be some of the implications for our lives if God was silent?**

**How and when, according to these verses, does God speak? How does His past communication compare with the present (“last days”) communication?**

God previously spoke in fragments, at “different times” and in “different ways.” This included visions, angels, events, and people. He spoke truly yet partially through the prophets. Now God has spoken “to us” truly and fully through His Son. The contrast affirms that Christ is superior to the Old Testament system because God speaks directly to us through His Son Jesus Christ, the complete, final Word of God.

**How does God speak to you? When is it easiest—and hardest—to hear His voice?**

**Why is it important for us to recognize that Jesus is the final Word of God to us?**

**If that is true, what does it mean about the way we hear the voice of God today?**

**What are some of the ways people might show they don’t believe that Jesus is the complete and final Word of God to us?**

God is personally and actively engaged in His creation. Rather than leaving us without a word from Him, He has fully revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. If we want to know God, then, we have to look to Jesus, and where we find Jesus is in the Word of God.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ HEBREWS 1:2B-4

**What phrases in Hebrews 1:2b-4 describe how God is revealed in Jesus Christ? How would you explain these verses to an unbeliever or a new Christian?**

**How does Jesus’ being the “heir” help you better understand His role in creation and redemption?**

The biblical understanding of “heir” differs from today’s understanding. In Bible times, an inheritance could be passed on before the donor’s death. The fact that Jesus and God are alive, along with the Holy Spirit, affirms the Trinity, or the three Persons of the Godhead—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God, Himself, is revealed through Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.

**What ideas do people today have about angels? Why would it be important then or now to affirm that the Son is superior to angels?**

To most Jews, angels were exalted, especially because they were involved in giving the Law to Moses at Mount Sinai (Deut. 33:2). The Jews considered the Law God’s supreme revelation. This

passage reminds us that Jesus is superior to anything or anyone we might hold highly important.

**Which part of this passage is most significant to you? Why? What does it mean personally to you?**

This passage helps us recognize the fundamental truth that as God's Son, Jesus revealed God finally and without equal. Through Jesus, we can understand God's character and the gospel message.

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What are some things that might cause Christians to question whether Jesus is in control of all things? How do the truths about Jesus expressed thus far encourage believers to endure in their devotion to Him?**

**Based on the study today, how would you explain who Jesus is to someone who doesn't know?**

**What implications does today's study have on the way you approach the Word of God? How are you going to integrate those implications into your daily life?**

## PRAYER

Thanks God as you close your group in prayer that He has not left us without a Word. Thank Him for Jesus who is superior to all things, and ask Him to awaken in your hearts the love and devotion He deserves.

## COMMENTARY

Hebrews 1:1-4

1:1. The majestic Book of Hebrews opens with an affirmation that God is the God who speaks. He communicates with His creation. He reveals, instructs, commands, and calls His people to relate to Him as God and to fulfill their wonderful, God-given purpose. The phrase long ago refers to the times of the Old Testament when God spoke to His people through prophets such as Moses (see Deut. 34:10), Samuel (see 1 Sam. 3:20), Elisha (see 2 Kings 3:11), Isaiah (see 2 Kings 20:1), and Jeremiah (see 2 Chron. 36:12). These prophets faithfully spoke God's words to

the people of Israel. Yet they also pointed to the coming of One—Jesus Christ—who would be God’s perfect Spokesman (see Deut. 18:15,18-19; Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 31:31-34).

The New Testament declares that Jesus is the Word made flesh who reveals the Father (see John 1:1,14,18). In Acts 1–2, we learn that Jesus gave His disciples authority to speak and teach the gospel message of God’s kingdom, which was powerfully set in motion in the tongues of fire and inspired speech on the Day of Pentecost (see Acts 1:8; 2:1-4). God’s Word pierces into the human heart, discerning our thoughts and motives (see Heb. 4:12). The God of the Bible speaks; false gods, or idols, do not speak—indeed, they cannot speak (see Jer. 10:5; 1 Cor. 12:2).

1:2. There are two distinct eras of God’s speaking: the former times (the times of the Old Testament) and these last days (the time from Jesus’ birth forward, including the end time). The coming of Jesus marked the dividing line between the two historical ages. The first age pointed to what would come in the second (see 1 Pet. 1:10-12). Bible students often refer to this feature as “progressive revelation.” The various means by which God spoke in the past only foreshadowed the unique and final revelation God made in His Son.

First, the writer pointed out that Christ is the appointed ... heir of all things. This phrase alludes to Psalm 2:8, where the psalmist foretold that the Messianic King from the family line of King David would be given the ends of the earth. Jesus fulfilled this Scripture! He is the King in David’s line whose inheritance includes everything that exists. As the second truth will show, this first truth doesn’t mean there was ever a time when God’s Son didn’t own everything. Rather, it emphasizes the unique, eternal relationship between the Son and the Father, a relationship that no Old Testament prophet or human king shared.

Second, the writer of Hebrews stated that Christ is the One through whom God made the universe. Jesus is the Divine Agent of both revelation and creation. In other words, Jesus is the One through whom God spoke as well as the One through whom He created. This truth also is emphasized in John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16. Jesus is the Heir of all things precisely because He was with God in the beginning as the Agent of creation.

1:3. Perhaps no other single verse in Scripture reveals more than this verse about the Person and the work of Jesus Christ. Using just 30 words (in the Greek text), the biblical writer unlocked a storehouse of theological treasure. We learn about Jesus’ unique nature, His Deity, His sustaining power over the universe, His accomplishment as the perfect Sacrifice, and His exaltation forever as Lord. All of this treasure is in one verse!

The third truth the writer of Hebrews declared about Jesus is that He is the radiance of God’s glory. This phrase means that to see Jesus Christ is to see the glory of God. Think of the sun and

the light it emits. In essence the two entities are of the same substance, yet their form and function are distinct—though unified. Similarly, to say that Jesus is the brightness of God’s glory emphasizes that the Father and the Son are distinct Persons of the Godhead. At the same time, they are coequal in their essential being (their divine nature) and are completely unified in their work. Theologically, then, this phrase reveals that Jesus is God. He is God the Son. This is who He is, has been, and will be throughout all eternity.

Fourth, the biblical writer stated that the Son is the exact expression of God’s nature and being. In ancient times, coins were formed by pressing a die, or stamp, onto a piece of metal made soft by heating. As the die was pressed like a cookie-cutter into the softened metal, it left the image of the die in the metal. Although the die and the coin are distinct, to see the coin is to see the die. Once when Philip asked Jesus to show the Father to the disciples, Jesus responded by declaring that to see Him was to see the Father (see John 14:8-9). Jesus is God just as the Father is God.

Further, the Son is the exact representation of God’s divine nature. This phrase refers to much more than what we might call a family resemblance. The Greek word behind this phrase is the basis of the theological term hypostasis [high PAHS tuh siss], meaning “nature” or “essence.” Thus while the Father and the Son are distinct Persons, they are of the same divine nature. In His being, Jesus is of the same nature as the Father.

The fifth truth the writer of Hebrews expressed about Jesus is that the Son upholds all the created order. Jesus is not only the Agent of creation but also the Controller and Sustainer of all things. Everything from subatomic particles to massive solar systems and galaxies are under His sovereign command. Unlike the mythical deity Atlas, who is pictured as holding the earth on his shoulders, Jesus is the Creator and Commander of all created things. He sustains everything by His powerful word—and He is not the least bit taxed by the effort. This is theology at its best! It is deeply assuring, which is precisely what the writer of Hebrews intended to accomplish.

Sixth, the biblical writer spoke of Jesus’ making purification for sins. This is the first mention of an upcoming major theme in Hebrews, Jesus’ atoning sacrifice for our sins. This draws our attention to Jesus’ death on the cross as the perfect Sacrifice. In Old Testament times, the Israelite high priest offered an atonement sacrifice once a year for the people’s sins (see Lev. 16:1-34). Yet no earthly high priest ever offered himself as an unblemished sacrifice for people’s sins. No earthly priest was qualified to do so. Jesus was qualified, however; and He did offer Himself! The writer of Hebrews mentioned this truth here. He explored the theme in depth in later chapters, especially chapters 9–10.

Seventh, the writer of Hebrews pointed out that after Jesus made purification for sins (the crucifixion), He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (the resurrection and

ascension). The Son is exalted to the place of sovereign authority, where He both rules and intercedes as King and High Priest. He speaks God's Word as the Prophet (see Deut. 18:15). The phrase right hand of the Majesty describes the supremacy of Christ and alludes to Psalm 110:1. Jesus the Eternal Son of God lives and rules with the power of God the Father, doing so with all authority as the One who bears God's own name.

1:4. This verse concludes the long opening sentence of Hebrews—it's one sentence in the Greek text. It is an amazing introduction to a remarkable Bible book. After listing seven essential truths about Christ, the biblical writer concluded by stating an undeniable fact: Jesus the Son, through whom God has now spoken in a full and final way, is greater than the angels. The writer went on in 1:5-14 to marshal various Old Testament Scriptures that highlight reasons the Son is superior to angels. We need to remember that the first readers of Hebrews might have been tempted to return to Judaism. They needed to understand that Jesus surpassed the nature and role of angels in the Old Testament just as He surpassed the prophets.

The writer wanted his readers (and us) to understand two further things about God the Son. First, Jesus became higher in rank than the angels. Again, we should not think this expression means Jesus came to be something in His essential being that He wasn't before He took on flesh, lived, died, was resurrected, and ascended. It means, rather, that as the God-Man (both fully God and fully human), Jesus demonstrated by His death, resurrection, and ascension that He is the exalted Lord, superior in every sense to angels. To be sure, angels are important and powerful messengers of God. Scripture shows that they do many things in service to God, primarily delivering messages for Him to people (see Gen. 19:1,12-13; 1 Kings 19:5-7; Matt. 28:2-7; Luke 2:8-14; Gal. 3:19). Yet no angel could ever be described by the seven truths Jesus exhibited.

Second, the writer of Hebrews emphasized that Christ has a far superior name than the angels. By virtue of Jesus' being God's Son and not a created being, His name is part of His inheritance. What is this more excellent name that Jesus bears? Bible scholars have offered several possibilities, even while they also acknowledge that the writer of Hebrews didn't specify the exact name in this verse. The view I propose is that the inherited name is "Yahweh," the name that God explained first to Moses at the burning bush (see Ex. 3:13-15). It's important to note that the Greek word for name is found three other times in Hebrews (see 2:12; 6:10; 13:15). In each case the reference is to the divine name of God (see also John 8:58; Phil. 2:9-10).