

## **WHAT DID GOD SAY ABOUT HIS SOVEREIGN PURPOSES?**

Hebrews 1:1-3

**Intro:** On the past four Sunday mornings I have been dealing with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world, beginning with His birth, as a time when God was speaking, speaking in His Son, thus making the Lord Jesus Christ Himself the message. My basic text is the text that I am using today: Hebrews 1:1-3. (Read..)

We have seen that verse 1 of this chapter is a reference to the way that God has spoken in the past, and the way that He spoke “in times past unto the fathers by the prophets” is recorded for us in the OT.

When we move from verse 1 into verses 2 and 3 we are moving from the OT into the NT where we have the record of what God has had to say “in His Son,” that is, in all that was involved in the coming of His Son into the world.

This shows us the uniqueness of the Bible. It is the Word of God. The Bible gives us what God said by the prophets of the OT, and the NT gives us what God has said “in His Son,” the message which has been recorded for us by the apostles. The books which were not written by apostles, were written under the supervision of the apostles. And all of the writers of both the OT and NT were under the direct supervision and control of the Holy Spirit Whom we can rightly refer to as the Author of all Scripture. How thankful we ought to be for our Bibles, thankful that although it was originally written in Hebrew and Greek, and a part of Daniel’s prophecy in Aramaic, yet we have it in our own language, and it has been sovereignly preserved for us even though there have been numerous attempts to destroy it altogether. And, as one of the children’s songs tells us, “It’s the only book that God has given.” So every time we read the Bible, we need to thank God that He has given us His Word, that He has preserved it for us, and that He continues to work through it.

In the second message I moved temporarily into chapter 2 of Hebrews where we have three statements of the incarnation of the Son of God. By this we mean that the Lord Jesus came to earth as a baby, born of the virgin Mary. The Son of God became a Man This is clear evidence that His mission was to men and for men. He came to meet the needs of sinful human beings, a need which was so great that none of us, nor all of us together, could not meet the need we had to be delivered from the wrath

of God.

In addition to this we learned that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth as the final and complete revelation of God. God had been revealing Himself throughout OT times, but that revelation was not complete until the Lord Jesus Christ came. His birth as a human being in no way changed His Deity. He was both God and man, the God-man.

In the third message we saw from our text in Hebrews as well as from the angel Gabriel's message to Joseph, that God was sending His Son to "save His people from their sins." And He fully completed the work of salvation. Man did not need to add anything to what Christ did when He died on the Cross. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Perfect Savior, the Complete Savior.

Last Sunday we saw what sin had done to man, making him incapable of understanding the Gospel, making him totally disinterested in the message of salvation, and unable to come to Christ. But in John 6 we learned that although no man can come to the Father on his own, yet the Father, through the ministry of the Spirit, draws us to Christ, giving us life, and enabling us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so when we talk about the real meaning of Christmas, this is what we are talking about. And the whole story is told in John 3:16. (Quote.)

Now today, for my last message in this series, I want us to consider from Hebrews 1, especially in verses 2 and 3, what God had to say through the coming of His Son into the world about the fulfillment of His purposes in this world, and actually throughout the whole universe. And to do this I want to direct your attention to three statements found in verses 2 and 3, and then I want to relate those three statements to the last part of verse 3.

The three statements are these – *and they all point directly to God Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom God was speaking when His Son came into the world.* Here they are:

- 1) "Whom [speaking of Christ] He [the Father] hath appointed Heir [Christ again] of all things." This is in verse 2.
- 2) "By Whom [Christ] also He [the Father, God] made the worlds," or a better translation for "worlds" would be *ages* – and I'll seek to explain the meaning of *ages* when we come to it. This is the last statement in verse 2.

Then going down into verse 3, about the middle of the verse we have the third statement that I want us to consider. It is this:

3) “And upholding all things by the word of His power.”

This is what we can accurately describe as THE BIG PICTURE. This is what one writer has called, THE UNFOLDING DRAMA OF REDEMPTION. It has also been called, GOD’S PLAN OF THE AGES.

Not many people, not even most of the world’s leaders, have any conception of the sovereign purposes of God. It seems that less and less people think that God has anything to do with the course of human history. They have their own ideas as to how they want things to go, and as long as they have what they want, they aren’t concerned about God, nor do they feel any responsibility toward Him. And yet we are clearly told in the Word of God that we believers have been “predesinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11). And in the third chapter of that same epistle Paul wrote of God’s “eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:11). In 2 Timothy 1:9 and 10 (one of the epistles which we will be studying in SS this Spring) Paul spoke of God

9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,  
10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

Going back into the OT we find statements like this:

10 The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.

11 The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations (Psa. 33:10-11).

And then this is what we read in Prov. 19:20-21:

20 Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.

21 There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

So contrary to what the majority of people in every generation have been inclined to think, God has a plan, and God is working out all things according to His plan. And right at the heart of His plan is His Son, as we

learn from these opening verses in the book of Hebrews.

Now let me explain further.

The first of these three statements has to do with the goal, the end of all things. “God . . . hath in these ast days spoken unto us by His Son, Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things.”

The second statement has to do with the beginning: “By Whom also He made the worlds,” or, as I have said, the word is really *ages*. So this was the beginning.

Then how do things get from the beginning to the goal? This brings us to the third statement: “upholding all things by the word of His power.”

Now let us put them together, dealing with them in the order in which they appear in these verses of Scripture. God is the One Who has ordained what is to be done, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the One for Whom and by Whom all will be accomplished.

### **I. THE GOAL: “Whom [the Son] He [the Father] hath appointed Heir of all things” (Heb. 1:2m).**

The word “appointed” is the same word which is translated “ordained” in Gal. 3:19. This was a decree established by God Himself concerning the place that the Son was to occupy when the work of redemption was carried out to the full. Salvation has been sovereignly designed by the Father for the glory of His Son.

This includes probably more than we can understand now, but certainly more than we have the time to discuss today. It has to include the fact that the Son is the only Savior. It must also be a part of the ultimate purpose of salvation, that we are predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ.

You probably will remember that the Apostle Paul said that we are “joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom. 8:17b). So the inheritance of Christ is His glorification in His humanity. And to Him will be delivered the kingdoms of this world, and He will also be the acknowledged Head over all things to the Church. Paul prayed about this in his Ephesian letter, and

these were his words. He was praying that the believers might know:

19 . . . what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:19-23).

He also will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. See 1 Tim. 6:15.

Up until now the Lord Jesus, even today, is “despised and rejected of men” (Isa. 53:3), but the day is coming when all the rich rewards and fruit of His work on the Cross will show Him to be the exalted Son of God.

But let us move on to the second point.

## **II. THE BEGINNING: “by Whom [Christ] also He [the Father] made the worlds” (Heb. 1:2b).**

The word for “worlds” is not the plural of κόσμος, but the word αἰών, or as it is here, αἰῶνας. It means “a period of time of significant character” (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p.5). So it is viewing the world as successive periods of time. It indicates the history of the account of our Lord working out the sovereign purposes of God throughout history. It by no means holds the Lord accountable for all of the sin and tragic events of history, but it indicates that God by Christ planned the course of human history from the very beginning. Nothing was left to chance. This is one reason why we can say that God knows the end from the beginning. Even the very time of the death of Christ was planned by God the Father through His Son. This is why Peter was able to tell the Jews in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost following the ascension of our Lord,

22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also

know:

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it (Acts 2:22-24).

All that pertained to the birth of Christ, that He was born of a virgin mother, in the city of Bethlehem (when it was by a decree of Caesar that Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem when Mary's baby was born), plus every other detail related to us in the Gospel, it was all planned before the foundation of the world, and all of the sequences of time with their ruling powers – all of it was planned by God the Father and God the Son before time had even begun.

But how did the plan and the goal get together? This brings us to our third statement.

### III. MISSION ACCOMPLISHED: “Upholding all things by the Word of His power (Heb. 1:3m).

The verb “upholding” is a word which means to carry or to bear something from one place to another. This is the verb which Mark used when he described what the four men did when they came “bringing” on a cot the man who was sick of the palsy. They brought him from his home to Jesus. Cf. Mark 2:3. It is the verb which Luke used when he told of how the Jews forced Simon, the Cyrenian, to carry the cross of the Lord Jesus. See Luke 23:26.

But perhaps one of the best illustrations of the word is found in the Gospel of Mark as he recorded what happened when the Lord came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, and was approached by a father. This is what happened:

14 And when he came to his disciples, he saw a great multitude about them, and the scribes questioning with them.

15 And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and running to him saluted him.

16 And he asked the scribes, What question ye with them?

17 And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, **I have brought** unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit;

18 And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he

foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away: and I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out; and they could not.

19 He answereth him, and saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? **bring him unto me.**

20 **And they brought him** unto him: and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming.

21 And he asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child.

22 And ofttimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us.

23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

24 And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

25 **When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.**

26 And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead.

27 But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.

Why do I say that this is an excellent illustration of what the writer of the book of Hebrews recorded in verse 3 of chapter 1? It is because in the expression, “the word of His power,” “the word” means *the spoken word*.

*Throughout history the Lord Jesus has been carrying the purpose of God from one period of time to another, not omitting any of them, and His control over nations and individual people and events has been the equivalent of the Lord speaking, telling people what they must do.*

**Concl:** So God ordered the time periods so that His Son would become the Heir of all things, of all of God’s redemptive plan. And then He carried that plan from one age to the next, in every nation on the face of the earth, to make sure that the goal will finally be reached where the whole universe will be forced to recognize that the Lord Jesus is the Heir. And all of this even included His own incarnation, His suffering, death,

and resurrection. God has left nothing to chance, but from age to age, even through all of the wickedness of men, His purpose is being fulfilled, and one glorious day it will all be completed. And when it is the Lord Jesus Christ will be “the Heir of all things.”

What comfort this ought to bring to all of our hearts!

(Read the article in Time Magazine for December 31 about Rudy Juliani and his struggle with the plan of God.)

I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet the words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men.

I thought how, as the day had come,  
The belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along th’ unbroken song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head:  
“There is no peace on earth,” I said,  
“For hate is strong, and mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men.”

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
“The wrong shall fail, the right prevail  
“With peace on earth, good-will to men.”