

GOD'S FINAL WORD

Hebrews 1:1-4

Intro: Today I am beginning a series of messages based upon the book of Hebrews, chapters 1 and 2. We are in that season of the year which has been set aside in the past to remember the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am afraid that to most people it has deteriorated into just a Holiday Season in which little or no thought is given to the coming of our Lord into the world. In fact, there are many people who would like to do away with the word “Christmas” altogether because it carries the Name of Christ. We all recognize that this time of the year has been so commercialized that many merchants are of the opinion that they will not make it through the rest of the year if their sales are not big in December. So the big emphasis for them is getting money, not remembering the birth of Christ.

But when we turn to the Bible, it is very clear that from the mention of *the seed of the woman* in Genesis 3, on to “Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son” in Isaiah 7:14, and then on to the angel’s announcement to the virgin Mary that “thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His Name JESUS,” words found in the text we will consider together tonight – but across the entire content of the Old Testament there was that certain expectation that God was sending none other than His only begotten Son to become a Man that He might save His people from their sins. The first four books of the New Testament give us the record of the miraculous birth of Christ, followed by the record of His perfect life and ministry of teaching and the working of miracles. Then beginning even in the Gospels, going on into the book of Acts, and then into the New Testament epistles, or letter, we have a record of the teaching of the Apostles as they explained to the people of God in their day just what the birth and work, the death and resurrection, of that Son of God and Son of man, should mean to us.

And so it is obvious that what the Old and New Testaments tell us about Christ is the key to understanding both of those sections of the Word of God. There are no events in past history up to the present day that can even begin to compare in importance with the birth and life of Jesus Christ, His death and bodily resurrection, followed by His ascension back to God the Father in heaven. And anyone who ignores the message of the Bible, and what it has to say about Jesus Christ, does so to his or her own eternal loss. Your relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, and my relation-

ship to Him, are the most important matters for you and for me to be concerned about. He came into this world of sin to offer Himself as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins, and to bring all who trust in Him into a perfect relationship with God. No one else can do that for us, and that is why the message about Christ is the most important message any person will ever hear. Most of you have heard it, and you are trusting in Christ for your salvation. I would hope that before we leave today, everybody in this room would be trusting in Him.

Now I want to tell you what I plan to do today, and for the three remaining Sundays of this month.

Today I want to take you to the first four verses of this book of Hebrews where we are going to get better acquainted with God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. There we are going to see what a glorious Person He is.

Then for the next three Sundays we will be in chapter 2, examining the three statements found in that chapter to tell us that the Son of God became a Man, and why. Look at them with me for just a moment so you will see what we will be doing.

Next Sunday, the Lord willing, I plan to go into the meaning of verse 9. I will be referring to some of the verses that lead up to that verse, and four of the verses that follow. (Read verse 9). That will be on the 17th.

Then on the following Sunday, which will be the day before Christmas, we will go to verses 14 through 16 where we have another statement of His incarnation, and why. (Read verses 14-16.)

And then on the last Sunday of this month, and of the year 2000, we will look together at verses 17 and 18 where we have the third statement as to why the Lord Jesus became a Man. (Read verses 17 and 18.)

Now I want to make sure that we all understand what we mean when we talk about the incarnation of Christ. We mean that the Son of God Who in heaven had no body like you and I have, was born as a baby in Bethlehem, and so He had a human body just like we do. So when we speak of His incarnation, we mean that although He was God the Son, yet He became a Man and yet He continued to be the Son of God. There never has been a birth like His, nor has there ever been a person like He became. You and I are just human beings. But Jesus Christ was God

Who became a Man, so we say that He became incarnate to come into this world, God the Son appeared as Man, He looked like we do, but He was also the Son of God. And it is this that made the Lord Jesus unique, different from all of the rest of us.

Now let us look at Hebrews 1, verses 1-4. (Read.)

The name of this book, Hebrews, means that it was written for Jewish people who had become Christians. And it seems most likely when we consider the content of this book, that it was written to Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. There was a lot of trouble for Jewish Christians in Jerusalem because other Jews who had not trusted in Christ looked upon the Jews who had become Christians as traitors to the Jewish nation. Many of the early Christians died as martyrs because of their faith in Christ.

We can't say for sure who wrote it. I am inclined to think that the Apostle Paul wrote it. Luther thought Apollos wrote it. Some think that Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, may have written it. The truth is that we don't know who wrote it, but we can be sure that whoever wrote it, wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

It begins in a very unique way, and it tells us right away that:

I. GOD HAS SPOKEN (Heb. 1:1).

This in itself is a marvelous fact. Although man did not ask for it, God has spoken. And as we look back over the past, we realize that He did not say everything that He wanted to say all at one time, but it was at different times and in different ways. Sometimes He spoke audibly. Sometimes in visions. But always in what He told some of His servants to write. So at different times and in different ways God spoke to the fathers of Israel through divinely called and appointed prophets.

We have in this a statement of the unique character of the OT. It is the Word of God. If we want to know what God has said, we turn first of all to the OT. As the Word of God it is without error and it exists with divine authority. What God has had to say covers hundreds of years. He didn't say it all at once.

But what in particular, if anything, was the writer referring to as he mentioned that God has spoken?

Well, we have lots of different things. God spoke to His people about sin. He warned them of judgment upon sin. In the very earliest part of human history, God spoke about salvation from sin. A lot of the OT is history where we learn about the failures as well as the successes of the people of God. Much of the OT has to do with words which were prophetic at the time it was written. *But, in the light of what we are told about the Son of God in verses 2 and 3, I am inclined to think that what the writer was saying here in verse 1 was that **God at different times and in different ways has spoken about Himself!*** As I have said before many times, the Bible is not only a revelation from God, a book which He has given us, *but it is a revelation of God!* The Bible tells us about God Himself, Who He is, what His character is, how what He has done shows us more of His character.

Even in the OT we learn that there are Three Persons in the Godhead, and that They are identical in their Deity. They all have perfect knowledge and wisdom, all are omnipresent, all are omnipotent, all are eternal. So this means that as we begin reading in Genesis, and continue on to Malachi, our main concern in every book should be to learn what that book teaches us about God Himself. And we learn about Him from what He says, from the way He deals with His people, from His prophecies concerning the future, and on and on. And if the Bible were ten times as large as it is, or a hundred times, it still would not exhaust all that could be told us about God! But we have in the sixty-six books of the OT and NT all that God wants us to know now, and none of us will ever exhaust what we have in the Word of God.

But now as we move from verse 1 to verse 2 we learn how God came to a conclusion of what He had to say. I have called it,

II. GOD'S FINAL WORD (Heb. 1:2a).

Although the birth and life of Christ are not mentioned here in so many words, this is clearly the meaning of the first part of verse 2. When the Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem from a mother who was still a virgin, *God was continuing to speak about Himself just like He had been speaking from the beginning of time. But when Jesus Christ came as a Man, and we see what kind of a Person the Lord Jesus was, and we listen to His teaching, and we see the amazing works which He did, we are seeing the most perfect revelation of God that there could possibly be. The OT prophets could speak about God, telling forth His truth, but in*

Jesus Christ we have One Who is God! He told Philip when He was with His disciples in the Upper Room, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

So, as I have told you before, if God the Father had become incarnate, He could not have been more like Himself than the Lord Jesus was like Him. So all that God had been saying about Himself all through the OT was finally brought to a conclusion when He sent His Son. The Father and the Son are different Persons, but they are identical in their nature, in their Deity! But remember that the term “Son” speaks of having the nature of God. The Jews recognized what the Lord meant when He claimed to be the Son of God, and so they took up stones to stone Him because they considered it blasphemy for a man to claim Deity. And it would have been blasphemy if you or I had made such a claim, but it was not blasphemy for the Lord to say that He was the Son of God *because that is exactly Who He was!*

III. THE LORD’S QUALIFICATIONS TO BE THE FINAL REVELATION OF GOD (Heb. 1:2b-3).

A. His two appointments from the Father (Heb. 1:2b).

1. “Whom He hath appointed Heir of all things.”

2. “By Whom also He made the worlds.”

To be the Heir of all things speaks of the consummation of all of the purposes of God; “by Whom [Christ] also He [God] made the worlds.” This was the beginning.

We have been learning on Tuesdays in our study of Colossians that the Apostle Paul said concerning Christ, “All things were made by Him, and for Him” (Col. 1:16).

It shows how depraved our generation is, and how far we have wandered from the truth when we can talk about the origin of the world, and the final outcome of all things, without even the slightest reference to God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. God made all things through Him, and He is going to be the Heir of it all!

But look with me for a moment at the “worlds” at the end of verse 2.

This is the Greek word αἰῶνας, and actually means *ages*. It looks at the history of the world from the standpoint of *periods of time*. We know that the Lord created the heavens and the earth, but the Holy Spirit added here in Hebrews that the Lord Jesus is the One Who is moving the world through successive periods of time, which ultimately will arrive at the goal established by God for all creation from before the beginning of time. It is similar to Paul's words in Col. 1:17:

And He is before (above) all things, and by Him all things consist (are held together).

Such statements as these could only have to do with Deity.

But even more important as to the qualifications that the Lord has to be God's final and complete revelation of the Father, we see in what Hebrews 1:3 tells us about:

B. The character of our Lord (Heb. 1:3a).

1. "Who being the brightness of His glory."

2. "And the express image of His Person."

Recently we have been studying the glory of Christ, and we have learned that "glory" with Christ meant Deity. Here we learn that His glory is *the brightness of God's glory*. "Brightness" means *effulgence, the radiation of the complete glory of God*. Or, as Bishop Westcott has said in his commentary, it "is not [an] isolated ray, but the whole bright image which brings before us the source of light" (p. 11).

You and I might reflect a very weak ray of the glory of God as we grow in Him, but in Christ we have the full manifestation of God's glory, the glory which Peter and James and John saw on the Mount of Transfiguration which the Lord appeared briefly in the full blaze of His glory.

But what does it mean that Christ is "the express image of His [God's] Person"? This means that all of the distinguishing characteristics that you would find in God, are to be seen in Christ exactly as they are in God.

Now these words are extremely important as Paul, or whoever wrote Hebrews, approached what he was going to say about the work of Christ on our behalf. Christ's incarnation is only implied in the words in verse 2 that God has "spoken to us by His Son." He spoke in the coming of His

Son. But the description which we have at the beginning of verse 3 indicates that our Lord was perfectly qualified to be our Savior. No person with less than a complete likeness to God, could qualify. God has no sin. Christ is exactly like God, therefore, He has no sin. And having no sin He alone is qualified to take our place, to bear our penalty, which He did, and which we will come to in just a moment. But first we have a statement as to:

C. The ability of our Lord: “Upholding all things by the word of His power” (Heb. 1:3m).

I believe there is a twofold meaning to this expression. We have been thinking about how the Lord carries creation along to the purpose which God had when He created it, making our Lord the Heir of it all. But as we go on to learn what the Lord has done for our salvation, we see here a statement which is synonymous with Paul’s statement in Phil. 1:6, that the Lord having begun a good work in us, the work of salvation, is perfectly qualified to finish completely the work that He has started. “The word of His power” is *His spoken word*. It was by that Word that creation came into being, and it is by that same powerful, spoken word, that our salvation will be fulfilled. Perhaps the writer had in mind here what he wrote later in Heb. 7:25:

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

“Intercession” indicates a spoken word.

This statement about our Lord is one of the strongest, if not the strongest, statement of our Lord’s Deity that is to be found anywhere in the Bible. And it is all preparatory to the powerful message of the priesthood of Christ which is given to us in this book of Hebrews.

Finally we come to:

IV. THE LORD’S REVELATION OF THE FATHER’S LOVE FOR SINNERS (Heb. 1:3b-4).

This statement comes as something as a surprise, and yet it follows closely upon what has been said about Christ. Having been assured of His equal Deity with the Father, we read that He “by Himself purged our sins.” This eternally living One became a Man without ceasing in any

way to be God, and offering Himself voluntarily on the Cross *He made purification for our sins*. And He alone among all men was the only One Who was qualified to perform such a work. He did it completely with nothing to be added by us. And having completed the work, His acceptance by the Father is seen by the fact that He “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

Concl: Could anyone possibly deny after such a presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ that He was infinitely qualified to put away our sins? And this led to a point which, the Lord willing, we will take up next week, proof that our Lord Who obviously was greater than any man, is also greater than the angels of heaven. Christ did not die for angels, nor could any angel have died for us. Therefore, let the angels worship Him, and let us worship Him, and Him alone.