



Their scriptures told a story that was a sort of “cliff hanger.” God was going to do something really great. That expectation was summarized in a single word, “Messiah.” Many different scriptures pointed to a Messiah. Starting with Genesis 3:15, God gave a promise to Adam and Eve. God’s words were directed to the serpent who tempted them:

God clearly promised that a descendant of Eve would defeat the serpent who had just tempted Adam and Eve to sin. This was the first of many promises that a Messiah would come and deliver God's people. These promises gave the Jewish people great hope that God could and would do great things.

The writer of Hebrews explained how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. The fulfillment was connected to individual spoken prophecies and to the entire fabric of God's revelation. His words are intended to encourage believers, not to persuade unbelievers. For the believer, what he says is breathtaking, and overwhelming. God's very big plan for humanity had moved forward to the next step in God's plan because of Jesus.

In this lesson we will begin our study of the book of Hebrews with the first four verses from the book:

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, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 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, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. Hebrews 1:1-4 ESV

Who is heir of all things?

Raising children caused me to be cautious about making promises, because my children always held me to my words. As a result, I learned to be cautious about making promises. The only promise I usually made was to do my best.

God is different than humans. He doesn't have to be cautious about making promises because He will always keep them.

In the second chapter of the book of Psalms God made a promise to make someone the heir of everything on earth.

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. Psalm 2:8 ESV

The writer of Hebrews picks up on this promise as he begins his letter to Jewish believers. Jesus is the person God promised to make heir of all the nations living on the planet. See how the author of Hebrews explains the fulfillment this Old Testament promise:

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, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. Hebrews 1:1-2 ESV

Jesus was "appointed heir of all things." God had spoken through his prophets before Jesus came. When Jesus came, however, prophets were no longer needed because Jesus was the one God the Father had used when "he created the world."

The relationship between God the Father and God the Son is difficult to grasp even for those who accept the concept of the Trinity. We ask, "How can God, who is one God, be both the Father and the Son?" The writer of the letter to the Hebrews doesn't offer us much help with this. He simply states it as a fact. He says that Jesus is the Creator, and that God the Father spoke to believers through the "Son." We know that this "Son" is Jesus Christ.

I don't claim to have the best answers to questions about the Trinity, meaning that God is one God in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I can point out that Jesus commanded that those who believe in Him should be baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Paul explains that through faith in Jesus Christ believers can cry out to God as "Abba Father" (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6). There many places in the Gospel of John where Jesus refers to God as His father (John 2:16; 5:17; 5:43; 6:32; 6:40; 8:19; 8:38; 8:54; 10:18; 10:25; 10:29; 10:37; 14:2; 14:7; 14:20-23; 15:1, 8, 10, 15, 23, 24; 20:17). Yet, all those verse claim that it is true, but they don't explain how to understand it.

There is a bond of love between the Father and the Son that helps us to understand why God can be a God of love (1 John 4:8). Jesus refers to the bond of love that existed between Himself, God the Son, and God the Father, before the world was created:

²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. John 17:24 (ESV)

John says that "God is love" (1 John 4:8) because God has always been defined by His love. The Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father. I can't help thinking that God wanted to share His love with more people, so He created us.

This still is not a full explanation of the Trinity, but I have found it helpful to explain how God can be a God of love. Because there is a Father, Son and Spirit, three persons who are one God, then, God can be a God of love. He has always been a God of love, even before He created people like us whom He could love.

Getting back to the letter to the Hebrews, in the past believers heard God's word through the prophets. Now, God had come in human flesh and people heard the words of God came directly from Jesus, who is God. God skipped the middle-man when Jesus spoke.

Who sits at God's right hand?

The writer of Hebrews considers another promise that God had given to His people about the deliverer who would come. He would sit at the right hand of the Father.

The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at **my right hand**, until I make your enemies your footstool." Psalm 110:1 ESV

The position of being at the right hand of "the Lord" signifies authority. This deliverer would have great authority. Notice how the writer of Hebrews develops this idea as a description of Jesus Christ.

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, Hebrews 1:3 ESV

The writer of Hebrews wants us to know that there is no higher authority in the universe other than Jesus, except God the Father.

Hebrews tells us still more about Jesus. He is at the right hand of God the Father because He is "the radiance of the glory of God". Jesus radiates, or shines, with the reputation and power belonging to God. That is because He is God.

Not only that. Jesus is "the exact imprint of his nature." God's essence is shared by Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Again, that is because Jesus is God.

There's more. Jesus "upholds the universe by the word of his power." When God said, "Let there be light, and there was light," Jesus spoke those words. Not only did He create the universe, He continues to give the universe the power to exist. Without Jesus the universe would never have been created. But it is also true that without Jesus, the universe would cease to exist.

And, there's still more to say about Jesus' greatness. "After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Jesus lowered Himself, and became a human being. He was born as a baby. He grew to adulthood, and died on the cross as a sacrifice. He purified believers from their sins. Then, after accomplishing the way of salvation, He sat down at the right hand of God the Father. The phrase "the Majesty on high" refers to God the Father.

Is there anyone greater than Jesus? Only God the Father, but they are not in competition for supremacy. They are united so closely that they are one God. In many ways they are indistinguishable from one another because they are one God. But in other ways they are two persons, the Father and the Son. This is a mystery that cannot be fully explained but it can be known.

Hebrews helps understand who Jesus really is. He existed before the creation of the world, and He was the world's Creator. He came to earth and saved those who believed in Him from an eternity in Hell. Often when we speak of Jesus and what He has done, we get distracted by what He has done for us, and how wonderful it is for us when we believe in Him. Hebrews keeps us focused on Jesus Himself.

The focus is not on how wonderful this is for those of us who believe in Him, or how good they are for believing in Him. The focus is on how wonderful Jesus is in Himself.

The challenge for everyone who believes in Jesus is to understand that He is Lord. He is our Master. He does not serve us, we are supposed to serve Him. We did not choose Him first, He first chose us (John 15:16).

The book of Hebrews is refreshing. Its message frees us from focusing on ourselves, to being focused on Jesus Christ. He is greater than anything else we can know. When we worry we need to remember that our problems are insignificant to His greatness.

He gave Himself for us so that we might be with Him for all eternity. This is a greater blessing than having all the wealth of the world, although we might still think having all the wealth of the world might not be such a bad thing. The truth is that Jesus has so much more to offer than all the wealth of the world. There is so much that wealth cannot buy. There is nothing that Jesus cannot provide. He is greater.

Who is the biggest and the best?

No king is greater than Jesus. No angel is greater than Him. His “name” is greater than theirs.

having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. Hebrews 1:4 ESV

We might wonder what this “name” is that Jesus has inherited. We can find an answer in another promise that God gave first to King David. Once again that promise is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 2 Samuel 7:13 ESV

Jesus was born into the line of David. The promise given to David was that He would have an heir who would rule forever. His royal line would not die out.

God promised to build David a house for God’s name. David wanted to build a temple for God, but God told David that instead God would build a house for David, meaning a royal line.

This royal line would go on and on forever. Just how that would be possible God didn’t explain. It wasn’t until Jesus came and died and rose again, that it became clear that He was the king born into David’s line who would reign forever. He was the fulfillment of that royal line. He would be part of that “house” where the name of God would be established, because Jesus was God Himself.

This eternal reign and eternal life would be transferred to all of His subjects. Those who believe in Jesus and Him as their King will live forever.

Jesus fulfilled the promise God gave to King David but in a way that David could have never fully understood. Only after many years did the meaning of God's promise to David become clearly understood, when Jesus fulfilled God's promise.

The writer of Hebrews wants believers to know that every promise of God recorded in the Old Testament was fulfilled in Jesus. He is the most important, most powerful, and most wonderful revelation of God and God’s plan. There can be no greater event in history than the coming of Jesus Christ.

Believers recognize that not only did the Old Testament point to Jesus, but all of creation also points to Jesus, the Creator (Romans 1:20). When believers look at the world He created, they see that everything in creation points to Him.

When believers look back at different experiences in their lives, even from before the time they believed in Jesus, they see that everything in their lives has been pointing to Jesus.

Even when a people believe in Jesus, they will often see everything in their life as being centered on themselves. They often struggle to make sure that people treat them with respect and honor. They want their children and their families to receive honor and respect, and they will fight for it. The challenge for believers is to see that they first show honor and respect for Jesus. Only after believers build their “house on the rock” that is Jesus Christ, can they build their life solidly on Him (Matthew 7:24).

This is a challenge every believer must face, and the book of Hebrews help believers to meet this challenge because it tells us how great Jesus really is. He is greater than all but the Father.

Next week we will continue to study the book of Hebrews, looking at Hebrews 1:5-14.

The Nature Of The Son (Hebrews 1:1–4)

L E X A C T H I N G S K N
V H J L O N G L O R Y H N
D A Y S W L A S T I M E S
S N Y O A B W N A H A I R
P D U J Y E O A P A J R I
O V N R S C R T P V E A G
K H I G H O D U O I S D H
E B V G I M P R I N T I T
C R E A T E D E N G Y A M
P U R I F I C A T I O N A
O M S P R O P H E T S C K
W A E U P H O L D S I E I
E N M F A T H E R S N R N
R Y L J S P O K E N S F G

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, whom he **appointed** the **heir** of all **things**, through whom **also** he **created** the world. 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**, **having become** as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.
([ESV](#))

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