

# ***The Book of Hebrews***

## ***Part 2: The Person and Work of Christ (Heb. 1:1-3)***

### **Introduction**

We are *“those who crossed over.”* Through the mysterious writer to the Hebrews, God speaks to us today as those who have crossed into new life with Christ, calling us to stand firm and to continue staying connected with others who embrace this truth.

With this comes one of the most powerful paragraphs ever penned. It is believed by some that the first few lines of this letter contain the words of an ancient hymn that was written by the early church in order to establish the absolute essentials of our faith. It is those who build their lives with a trusting heart upon the truths in these words who find themselves standing on the most solid Rock imaginable.

**1 God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, 2 in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. 3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.  
(Hebrews 1:1-3)**

We will break this portion down into five parts:

- *God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son,*
- *whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.*
- *And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature,*
- *and upholds all things by the word of His power.*
- *When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*

Each part is a world of exploration unto itself. As such, further prayer and study is highly encouraged... Yet, the hope is that the simplicity of these words penetrates our hearts and leaves us standing more confident in the reality of Christ.

## 1. The Revelation of Sonship

*God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son,*

As highlighted in our first session, the writer of Hebrews is helping the recipients of this letter navigate a very difficult transition. The religion of their ancestors, going all back to Abraham, was experiencing the most intense shaking of its 2000+ year history—a shaking that would reach a climax in the next few years with the incoming destruction of Jerusalem.

The shift into the truth of Christ was hard for people to embrace. It felt like they were betraying their family, culture, and even God himself. They wrestled with what seemed like many contradictions to long-held beliefs about God and scripture.

The writer acknowledges that God has indeed spoken through Abraham, Moses, and the Hebrew people in their 2000+ years of prophetic history. He has been with them all along. Yet, in these last days, the surprise of the ages has come...

***Special Note:  
The “Last Days”***

Typically, we understand the phrase “last days” as referring to the entire period of history from the 1<sup>st</sup> coming of Christ to his full appearing on earth. Contextually, it is important to note that this phrase was also in reference to the “last days” of the Hebraic-Temple system. The entire nation of Israel was experiencing a kind of “last days” during the writings that would later be called the New Testament.

In Jesus’s prophetic warnings about Jerusalem’s destruction, he gave a hope that we have already begun to see unfold in modern times over the last 75+ years: *“And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” – Luke 21:24*

The “*times of the Gentiles*” is the period in which we are currently. Though Israel is a nation once more, key parts of Jerusalem (including the original location the temple) is still under “Gentile” occupation. As a result, the “fulfillment” Jesus mentioned is still to come. This is something to greatly look forward to as it will culminate in what Paul describes as *the fullness of the Gentiles* coming into the Kingdom (Romans 11:25). Therefore, the “last days” does apply to the Hebrew era that finally ended in 70 AD; however, it also speaks to us today, for we are now in the “last days” of the Gentile era.

Affirming that God was at work through Hebrew history, the writer explains that previous divine communications (most of which are found in what we now call “the Old Testament”) were only “portions” of truth. This is a word that can be translated as “fragments.” We can think of this statement describing God’s previous communications as puzzle pieces that had not yet come together.

An entire nation and culture had been built around these fragments of incomplete puzzle pieces. The people thought they understood the purposes and ways of God, but their perspective was deeply incomplete. Now, a new era was upon them. The full picture of God’s Word had come together in the person of Jesus.

*“...in these last days has spoken to us in His Son.”*

As God and Man, Jesus reveals the full truth about God and his image-bearing children.

In the original language in which this letter was written, the phrase “*in His Son*” does not have a possessive noun. In other words, the writer originally penned the following: ***He has spoken to us in Son.***

So, one way to read this letter in its original language is as follows:

*God has now spoken to us in Sonship.*

*Or...*

*God has now spoken to us in the language of sonship.*

With the coming of God’s Son, we learn that everything released through angels and prophets was building toward a greater revelation about God’s true identity and ours. This is what everything was leading toward.

Though the word “identity” is only a few hundred years old, its root meaning in terms of the nature of something (i.e. a person) goes back to Genesis 1 and our original blessing as the image-bearers of the Creator.

This letter was written to call people to leave behind their incomplete spirituality with archaic and broken understandings of God and self. It calls us to return (“repent”) to the truth.

And this truth carried massive implications. One example of why the message of Christ was a difficult transition for both the Jews and the pagans around them was how it upended their understanding of sacrifice and divinity.

In the era of the law, there was still a pagan idea that God was a distant, wrathful deity who needed to be appeased through blood sacrifices. The coming of Christ revealed this was *not*

reality. It turns out God had injected himself into our broken and violent systems, but only to eventually end those systems from the inside out by offering himself. He would be the final sacrifice to end all sacrifice.

The cross would reveal that God is not a wrathful judge needing to be appeased with blood rituals. He is a Father who would literally give his right arm and more to save his kids. In the depths of his heart was tender humility and gentle love. His “wrath” was simply a passionate hatred for anything stole his children’s innocence.

The writer is telling the Hebrews that everything they held dear in their rules, rituals, and history were only signposts pointing to something else. That “something else” has arrived. In this one sentence, he is setting up the entire purpose of the book so that they might let go of what is comfortable and even “holy” in their minds, and to embrace the most amazing revelation to ever hit humanity.

That revelation is that we are the sons and daughters of a good and glorious God. This is what Jesus came to reveal and redeem.

## 2. The Heir of All

*...whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.*

The next two verses of Hebrews go on to establish the glory of who Jesus is. Since we are made in his image, it’s imperative we know this Source of our identity and existence.

Colossians 1, particularly verses 15 – 17, carries many of the same truths being expressed in Hebrews 1:1-3. Look at how this same revelation is given with some different wording:

**16 For by Him all things were created . . . all things have been created through Him and for Him.**  
**(Colossians 1:16)**

This verse is saying the same thing as Hebrews 1:2, but in reverse. The world was made “*through*” Jesus, and it was made “*for*” Jesus—which is another way of saying he is the “*appointed heir of all things.*”

Not only is Jesus the source of creation, but he is the reason everything was made. This connects with one of the titles given to him in the book of Revelation—the *Alpha and Omega*. Jesus is the source “blueprint” for humanity’s existence. Again, he is the One who reveals our true nature. But he is also our destiny. He reveals where we’re headed! He is the hope of a glorified human race walking in holy joy, love, and peace.

As the heir of all things, Jesus is also the rightful Owner of the entire universe. Every star in the universe, with every planet and moon scattered throughout, is under Jesus's domain. This obviously includes the earth and ALL who dwell therein.

**1 The earth is the Lord's, and ALL it contains,  
The world, and those who dwell in it.  
(Psalm 24:1)**

According to Psalm 2:8, the nations of the world are part of the Messiah's inheritance. Russia belongs to Jesus. North America belongs to Jesus. China, Iran, Japan, South Africa. All nations, all tribes and tongues, belong to him.

Another scripture that unpacks the promise of Jesus being the "heir of all things" is found in the letter to the Philippians:

**"So that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."  
(Philippians 2:10-11)**

Many think this means one day all people will be forced to confess Jesus's lordship. But a forced "bowing down" does not align with the nature of the One who is Love. Love does not control. This is the very reason behind the existence of evil, since God allows for free will.

This Scripture seems to suggest that one day everyone will use their own free will to bow before the Lord—to the true and ultimate glory of God the Father. This is a great mystery that opens up controversial theological territory. It is not meant to minimize the graphic warnings given to those who choose paths outside of Christ; however, one way or another, all creation is headed toward the full worship and praise of Jesus!

- See the following Scriptures for further study: 2 Samuel 14:14; Psalm 22:27-29; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Revelation 5:13.

A final note for this portion: As we saw in the last section, the revelation of sonship is also for us. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, we are the created sons of God. Because of this, we are co-heirs with him (Romans 8:16-17). There are no words to describe the wonder and awe of this mystery!

**21 So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, 23 and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.  
(1 Corinthians 3:21-23)**

### 3. The Full Expression of God

*“And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature...”*

From this wild declaration of Christ as the heir of all creation, the author goes on to explain more of who he really is.

Jesus is the perfect and eternal image of God. For all eternity, without beginning or end, Jesus has carried the full DNA or inward expression of God. He is the God the Son, infinitely proceeding from God the Father.

Here is the same text from some other translations:

**He is the sole expression of the glory of God [the Light-being, the out-raying or radiance of the divine], and He is the perfect imprint and very image of [God's] nature...**  
*(Amplified Classic Edition)*

**The Son is the dazzling radiance of God’s splendor, the exact expression of God’s true nature—his mirror image!**  
*(The Passion Translation)*

The Father and the Son are compared to the sun and its light. Obviously, the sun and its light go hand in hand. They are one in the same. But deep down, within its outward light, the sun has an invisible force of gravity at its core which begets the light.

Through the power of gravity, something called nuclear fusion takes place at the core of the sun. This causes light energy to explode and travel millions of miles out of the core to give an outward expression (image) of the sun’s invisible power.

In the same way, Jesus gives the visible expression to the powerful reality of God.

One way to understand this is that there has always been a burning love deep inside of God. However, this was not fully visible until Christ came and laid down his life for us. The cross manifested an eternal force of love that was previously veiled.

Once again, Colossians 1 parallels these truths:

**15 He is the image of the invisible God...**  
**(Colossians 1:15)**

Part of the reason this revelation is introduced at the beginning of the letter (besides the fact that it is a cornerstone of our faith) is that the writer is going to be addressing the people’s incomplete understanding of God. That idea of a wrathful, sacrifice-hungry deity comes to an end with the Son of God.

To clarify—“Yahweh” in the Old Testament is truly God; however, the people were only seeing him in fragments as he communicated bits and pieces of his reality. Yahweh was working in the midst of our broken systems, humbling himself to come low into the dust of our deception in order to lead us out of it.

In a very tangible way, God was already bearing the sins of man in the Old Covenant by taking our fallen systems of animal sacrifice upon himself. But this was not to affirm our broken religions, but to ultimately destroy them from the inside out with the coming of the Messiah and his final sacrifice.

Through this sacrifice, Jesus truly “shed light” on thousands of years of shadowy truths. He exposed the full reality of God which was not visible through the law.

And this was not just through his sacrifice—although that was the climax of everything. This light was also shed through his life in his acts of mercy, healing, and kindness. Through both the life and death of the Messiah, we find what was really at the core of God’s being. He is the Light that reveals the unquenchable gravity of Love. *In other terms, God is Love and Christ expresses this.*

John 1, another powerful passage of Scripture, unpacks many of the same things found in Hebrews 1 (and Colossian 1). In that chapter, John expands on this revelation when he writes the following:

**17 For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.  
18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.  
(John 1:17-18)**

We cannot imagine how scandalous and offensive these words were in the first century. John is saying *no one* has seen God at any time! This would include Moses himself, even with his “face-to-face” encounters mentioned in Exodus 33. Communication was happening, but he was not truly seeing God. (Note: This was evidenced by Moses being shown the “back” of God’s glory later in that same chapter.)

Such words would incite deep anger and persecution toward believers in Jesus. But John was not saying the prophets didn’t have real interactions with God. He was just saying his true face had not yet been seen.

The only begotten God who is in the bosom—or hot core—of the Father has brought forth the truth of God’s grace! In Christ, grace and truth were realized.

So, here is the Gospel in a simple word:

*Jesus Christ is the Son of God!*

In other words, Jesus reveals the fullness of his Father. And furthermore, he reveals the fullness of our image-bearing identity.

We are called to accept that we are new “Hebrews.” We are those who have **CROSSED OVER** from religion to sonship. We have passed from an old and fearful understanding of God, to the abiding trust of a child who lives in an intimate relationship with his beloved Father.

#### 4. The Word of Power

*“...and upholds all things by the word of His power.”*

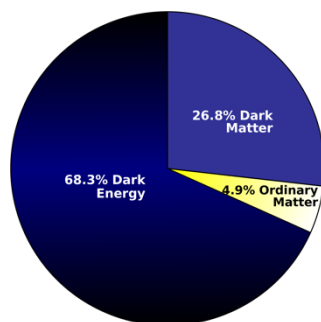
After declaring that Jesus is the full expression of God, the author states that he is the One upholding the entire creation by the word of His power—or “by his powerful word.” Once again, Colossians 1:15-17 parallels the truths being expressed here:

#### 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:17)

Hebrews says all things are upheld by *the Word*. Colossians says that *in Him* all things are held together. According to John 1, Jesus is the Word. So, these verses are all saying the same thing. Jesus fills all things and holds it all together.

The word for “uphold” can also mean “carry something forward.” There is an implication here that he is not only holding the universe together, but that he is moving it forward and expanding it. One of the most incredible scientific discoveries of the last century is the stunning reality that our universe is constantly growing and expanding—and that this is happening faster than the speed of light. Not only that, but this expansion is speeding up! Galaxies are growing further and further apart all the time.

To the scientific community, there is clear evidence that something is mysteriously holding the universe together and something causing it to expand at the same time. Since they have no idea what these things are, they describe them using the term “dark.” They call it “dark energy” and “dark matter.”



*“Dark matter works like an attractive force — a kind of cosmic cement that holds our universe together. This is because dark matter does interact with gravity, but it doesn’t reflect, absorb, or emit light. Meanwhile, dark energy is a repulsive force — a sort of anti-gravity — that drives the universe’s ever-accelerating expansion.” – Eric Betz (astronomy.com)*



It turns out that everything we can see and observe (from galaxies to ants) makes up less than 5% of the entire universe. All of it is held within these unknown forces.

There is also growing evidence that a type of vibrational energy literally plays at the fabric of creation like musical notes. This is the basis of something physicists refer to as “string theory.” If true, this ties in remarkably with the reality that Jesus is the **Word** that both sustains and moves things along. He is a spoken force of God that plays the strings of creation.

Science aside, this verse shows us that Jesus is much more than a teacher or prophet. He is the Creator and Sustainer of everything around us. Though it is beyond our ability to fathom, this includes things happening at the farthest reaches of space where the universe continues to stretch and grow at unfathomable speeds.

## 5. Purification & Innocence

*“When he made purification of sin and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...”*

After declaring all these glorious realities of who Jesus is, we learn what he accomplished in coming to earth as a man.

The two most powerful things a person can accept into their heart and mind is *who Jesus is* and *what he has done*. The **Person** and **Work** of Christ is the key that unlocks every part of our inheritance and releases within us the fullness of joy. Our greatest purpose on earth is to grow in the intimate heart-knowledge of Christ’s personhood and what he has done for us at the cross.

At the cross, Jesus came to deal with the great hindrance to our identity as image-bearers. He came to face all our sin and suffering. According to other Scriptures, every human being has sinned and fallen short of their true identity as those made in God’s glorious image.

To come back to sonship, our sins needed to be dealt with. There needed to be forgiveness and restoration. This is what Jesus accomplished.

When Jesus said the words *“it is finished”* (John 19:30), he was referring to this reality of the *“purification of sin.”* Humanity’s sin was purified. In other words, we were forgiven and cleansed.

This is where we need to recall that Jesus is the One who fills and sustains all things. As the One holding all of us together, Jesus is uniquely qualified to represent *all of us*. His death applies to all humanity. When he died, our sin died with him. From God’s perspective, sin has been washed away.

- **Note:** *The word for “made purification” is the same term used to “create” or “author” something. Jesus is the one who authored our cleansing from sin. As we’ll see later in Hebrews, he is the author and finisher of our salvation.*

After he resurrected, Jesus ascended to the right of God, forever settling our innocence before the Father. Since he continues to represent us before God, all of us are raised into innocence through him.

Jesus is the truth about humanity. Learning to trust in this is what FAITH is all about. Faith is how we access the amazing reality.

This passage also shows us that our innocence is based upon the highest seat of authority in the universe. The One who rules and reigns over creation—indeed, who holds everything together—has declared that we are forgiven and pure. We are redeemed back to our true identity as God’s children.

In Christ, we have ***crossed over*** from sin to innocence. Though we may struggle with darkness because we’re still learning to renew our mind to the truth of the gospel, all of us are called to rest in this reality. This will become the main thrust of the letter, and thus this sentence is the turning point into the rest of the book.

It is essential we remember this reality of our purification from sin. The apostle Peter used this same term when he called people to always remember this truth:

**9 For he who lacks these qualities (*love, godliness, perseverance, etc.*) is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.  
(2 Peter 1:9)**

Spiritual blindness is losing sight of the fact that you have been made pure and innocent. The highest authority of creation declares that your sinful nature was a lie and that it is now forgiven and washed away through his death and resurrection.

## **The Crescendo of All Things**

In this small but powerful paragraph we have discovered the bedrock of reality. Subjects that mankind seeks to understand and teach—such as science, history, literature, and theology—all find their crescendo in the opening words to this letter to the Hebrew people.

With this, the writer has brought forth a simple message. He is essentially communicating the mission of Jesus:

Jesus came to reveal the Father and to redeem his lost brothers and sisters. This is the Gospel. This is what we are called to stand upon. This is what we will dive into as we continue to explore this timeless letter.

### **Follow-up Encounter:**

*Prepare to take communion.*

*You can gratefully verbalize back to God one of the truths found in Hebrews 1:1-3.*

*For example: "Lord Jesus, thank you that you hold and sustain all things. Absolutely everything is held together by your Word. You are my Creator and you hold my life. I worship you and I praise your name."*

*Ask God to unfold more of that particular truth. Ask him to show you more of its mysteries. Quiet your mind and listen/watch for what comes to your heart. Trust that he wants to speak to you and that will show you "great and mighty things you do not yet know."*

*After some time, take the bread and the cup. Share with others what you are sensing God may be speaking to you.*