

# HEBREWS 1 - THE KEY TO UNLOCKING WHO JESUS REALLY IS

Isaiah Wilson / General Adult

---

## I. INTRODUCTION

### Hebrews 1:1–14 ESV

<sup>1</sup> Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. <sup>5</sup> For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”? <sup>6</sup> And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.” <sup>7</sup> Of the angels he says, “He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire.” <sup>8</sup> But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. <sup>9</sup> You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.” <sup>10</sup> And, “You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; <sup>11</sup> they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, <sup>12</sup> like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end.” <sup>13</sup> And to which of the angels has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”? <sup>14</sup> Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

### A. PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

The book of Hebrews was written to show us who Jesus really is. Its main goal is to prove that Jesus is supreme and sufficient. The unknown author builds a careful case that Jesus is better than anything that came before him.

Properly understanding Hebrews will transform how you read the Old Testament.

Throughout history, people have asked, "Who is Jesus?" Hebrews gives us the most complete answer. It doesn't just tell us facts about Jesus. It shows us why he matters and how he fulfills God's entire plan.

The writer's purpose wasn't just academic. He wrote to strengthen believers who were facing pressure to abandon their faith. By showing them the greatness of Jesus, he gave them reasons to hold on when things got tough.

## B. AUDIENCE

Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians who knew the Old Testament well. They understood temple worship, the priesthood, and sacrifices. But now they faced persecution for following Jesus.

The Roman Empire was becoming increasingly hostile to Christians. Emperor Nero had begun his persecution around AD 64. Jewish believers faced rejection from their families and communities. Following Jesus had real costs.

Some were thinking about going back to Judaism. The temple still stood in Jerusalem. The sacrifices continued daily. Judaism had legal protection in the Roman Empire. Christianity didn't.

The writer tells us these believers had "endured a hard struggle with sufferings" and had "been publicly exposed to reproach and affliction" (10:32-33). Some had even lost their property (10:34).

Imagine being torn between the faith of your ancestors and your new faith in Jesus. Imagine facing rejection from family and threats from authorities. These believers needed strong reasons to stay faithful.

## C. THEME

The central theme of Hebrews can be summed up in three words: "Jesus is better."

Better than angels. Better than Moses. Better than Aaron. Better than the old covenant. Better than animal sacrifices.

In Greek, the word "better" (*kreittōn*) appears 13 times in Hebrews but only 6 times in the rest of the New Testament. The writer hammers this point home repeatedly.

Jesus isn't just slightly better. He's infinitely better. He doesn't just improve the old system. He fulfills and replaces it.

This matters because we all tend to settle for less than Jesus. We look for spiritual shortcuts or add human traditions to what Jesus has done. Hebrews calls us back to the sufficiency of Christ alone.

## D. STRUCTURE

Hebrews alternates between deep theological teaching and practical exhortation. The pattern looks like:

Teaching → Warning → Teaching → Warning

This rhythm shows us that doctrine and practice go together. What we believe shapes how we live. Theology isn't just for scholars. It's for everyone who wants to live faithfully.

The book begins with seven chapters focused on who Jesus is. Then it shifts to what Jesus has done. Finally, it explores how we should respond to him.

The Greek of Hebrews is polished and sophisticated. The writer uses long, carefully crafted sentences. He draws from at least 35 different Old Testament passages. He assumes his readers know these texts well.

Unlike Paul's letters, Hebrews doesn't name its author. Many scholars have suggested Paul, Barnabas, Apollos, Luke, and even Priscilla. But honestly, we don't know who wrote it. What matters more is the message itself.

## E. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Hebrews was likely written between AD 60-70, before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. This was a pivotal time for Jewish Christians.

The first generation of Christian leaders was passing away. The apostles who had seen Jesus in person were dying. New believers had to rely on the testimony of others.

Christianity was separating from Judaism. Initially, Christians had worshipped in the temple and synagogues. But growing hostility was forcing them to form distinct communities.

Roman persecution was increasing. Nero had blamed Christians for the great fire of Rome in AD 64. Following Jesus could now mean imprisonment or death.

The Jewish revolt against Rome began in AD 66. This created further pressure on Jewish Christians, who were caught between their Jewish heritage and their Christian faith.

Just as the writer predicted, the old covenant system was "becoming obsolete and growing old" and would soon "vanish away" (8:13). In AD 70, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, ending the sacrificial system.

In this context, the message of Hebrews was crucial. It showed believers that in losing the temple, they lost nothing of real value. They had something far better in Jesus.

## F. THE OPENING KEY (1:1-4)

The first four verses of Hebrews contain the DNA of the entire book. These verses introduce us to the central claim: God has spoken his final, definitive word in his Son.

In the Old Testament, God revealed himself "at many times and in many ways" (1:1). The Hebrew Bible contains law, history, poetry, wisdom, and prophecy. Each offered a different glimpse of God. But these were like puzzle pieces, not the complete picture.

Now, in Jesus, we get the whole completed puzzle. Jesus is God's final, authoritative, and complete message to humanity.

These opening verses present seven magnificent truths about Jesus:

1. He is God's final word
2. He is the heir of all things
3. He is the creator of the universe
4. He is the perfect reflection of God's glory
5. He sustains all things by his powerful word
6. He provides purification from sin
7. He sits at God's right hand

This is Jesus as we need to see him. Not just a good teacher or moral example, but the divine Son who reveals God perfectly.

# II. THE PATTERN, PERSON, PERFECTION FRAMEWORK

## A. PATTERN

The Bible is full of patterns. They're like road signs pointing ahead to something greater.

Think about the Old Testament sacrificial system. Every morning and evening, priests sacrificed lambs on the altar. Year after year, the high priest entered the Most Holy Place with blood. These weren't random rituals. They were patterns preparing God's people for Christ.

The tabernacle itself was a pattern. God told Moses, "See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain" ([Hebrews 8:5](#)). The earthly sanctuary was a copy of heavenly realities.

The priesthood was a pattern too. Priests stood between God and people. They offered sacrifices. They interceded for the nation. This role pointed forward to a perfect priest who would come.

Even Israel's history contained patterns. They were slaves in Egypt, then God rescued them. They wandered in the wilderness, then entered the Promised Land. These experiences foreshadowed our spiritual journey.

These patterns weren't the final reality. They were teaching tools. [Hebrews 10:1](#) says, "The law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities."

God used these patterns to create a spiritual vocabulary. He was teaching his people concepts they would need to understand Jesus when he came:

- Sacrifice taught them about substitution
- The temple taught them about God's presence
- The priesthood taught them about mediation
- The covenant taught them about relationship

Without these patterns, Jesus would have seemed random and disconnected from what came before. With them, he makes perfect sense as the fulfillment of God's plan.

## B. PERSON

Jesus isn't just another pattern. He's the person all those patterns pointed to. He's the reality behind every shadow.

This is crucial. Christianity isn't primarily about rituals or rules or religious systems. It's about a person. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" ([John 14:6](#)). Not "I'll show you the way" but "I am the way."

Look at how Hebrews describes Jesus:

- He's the "great high priest" (4:14)
- He's the "guarantor of a better covenant" (7:22)
- He's the "mediator of a new covenant" (9:15)
- He's "the founder and perfecter of our faith" (12:2)

Jesus fulfills every Old Testament type and shadow:

- He's the true Passover Lamb ([1 Corinthians 5:7](#))
- He's the true Tabernacle ([John 1:14](#))
- He's the true Bread from Heaven ([John 6:32-33](#))
- He's the true High Priest ([Hebrews 4:14](#))

With Jesus, abstract concepts become concrete and personal. God's love isn't just an idea. It's demonstrated in a person who lived and died for us. God's truth isn't just a set of propositions. It's embodied in a person who said, "I am the truth."

Religion focuses on what we must do for God. Christianity focuses on what God has done for us in the person of Jesus.

## C. PERFECTION

Jesus brings everything to its perfect completion. What the patterns hinted at, he fulfills completely.

The word "perfect" appears 14 times in Hebrews. It comes from the Greek word "teleios," which means complete, mature, or having reached its end goal. Jesus doesn't improve the old system, He brings it to perfection.

Look at what becomes perfect through Jesus:

- Perfect salvation: "He became the source of eternal salvation" (5:9)
- Perfect access to God: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (10:22)
- Perfect cleansing: "The blood of Christ... purify our conscience" (9:14)
- Perfect worshipers: "By a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified" (10:14)

The old system could never achieve this perfection. [Hebrews 7:19](#) says, "The law made nothing perfect." It was never designed to. Its purpose was to point to the one who would bring perfection.

God taught his people through patterns. He revealed himself fully in the person of Jesus. Now he perfects us through relationship with him.

#### D. THE FRAMEWORK APPLIED

Through Jesus, we can now experience what the patterns only hinted at:

- Perfect forgiveness instead of repeated sacrifices
- Perfect access to God instead of restricted entry
- Perfect guidance through the Spirit instead of external law
- Perfect hope of resurrection instead of shadowy promises

This framework will help us navigate the book of Hebrews. When we read about sacrifices, priests, covenants, and promises, we'll see how they all lead to Jesus. He's not just the main character in the story. He's the point of the story.

The journey from pattern to person to perfection wasn't just for them, it's for us! Each of us is invited to move:

- From knowing about Jesus to knowing Jesus
- From religious rituals to personal relationship
- From partial understanding to complete trust

This is the heart of Hebrews: Jesus is better because he brings us to God himself.

### III. THE MASTER KEY ([HEBREWS 1:1-4](#))

The first four verses of Hebrews work like a master key that unlocks the entire book. These verses pack an incredible amount of truth into just a few sentences.

Let's look at the text:

#### **Hebrews 1:1–4** **ESV**

<sup>1</sup> Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets,  
<sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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, <sup>4</sup> having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

## A. GOD'S FINAL WORD (V.1-2A)

The writer begins by contrasting how God spoke in the past with how he speaks now.

"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."

This shows us the shift from pattern to person. In the Old Testament, God revealed himself through various patterns - dreams, visions, burning bushes, smoke, fire, and the words of prophets. These revelations were:

- Partial - Each prophet received a piece of the truth
- Progressive - The revelation unfolded over time
- Preparatory - They pointed to something greater

But now God speaks through a person - his Son. This revelation is:

- Complete - Jesus reveals God fully
- Final - No further revelation is needed
- Personal - God reveals himself in a person we can know

Notice the contrast between "many times and many ways" and the singular "by his Son." The multiple patterns have given way to one perfect person.

In the Old Testament, God spoke through many people about his Son. Now God speaks through his Son about everything. Jesus isn't just another prophet in a long line. He's the fulfillment of all prophecy.

This is why Jesus could say to the religious leaders, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me" ([John 5:39](#)). The patterns of Scripture all point to the person of Jesus.

## B. DIVINE CREDENTIALS (V.2B-3A)

The writer doesn't stop with Jesus as God's spokesman. He gives us four statements about Jesus that establish his divine credentials:



"...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..."

### *HEIR OF ALL THINGS*

Jesus is "the heir of all things." Everything in creation belongs to him. This clearly echoes [Psalm 2:8](#), where God says to his Son: "Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession."

This isn't just about ownership. It's about fulfillment. Everything finds its purpose in Jesus. Paul puts it this way: "All things were created through him and for him" ([Colossians 1:16](#)).

The patterns of the Old Testament were like road signs pointing to a destination. Jesus is the destination. He inherits everything the patterns pointed toward.

### *CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE*

Jesus is the one "through whom also he created the world." The word for "world" here is literally "ages" in Greek. It refers to both space and time - the entire created order.

This takes us back to [Genesis 1:1](#): "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Jesus wasn't just present at creation. He was the active agent of creation.

Think about this: The baby born in Bethlehem created the stars. The man who thirsted on the cross created the oceans. The one who died on the cross designed the human body.

### *RADIANCE OF GOD'S GLORY*

Jesus is "the radiance of the glory of God." The glory of God (in Hebrew, *kavod*) was a central concept in Jewish thought. It referred to God's visible presence, like the cloud that led Israel through the wilderness or the fire that filled the temple.

Jesus doesn't just reflect God's glory like a mirror. He radiates it from within himself. He's the source, not just the reflection.

When Moses asked to see God's glory, he could only see God's back ([Exodus 33:18-23](#)). But in Jesus, we see God's glory face to face. [John 1:14](#) says, "We have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father."

### *EXACT IMPRINT OF GOD'S NATURE*

Jesus is "the exact imprint of his nature." The Greek word for "exact imprint" (charaktēr) referred to the impression made by a seal in wax or the image on a coin. It's a perfect representation.

This is far more than saying Jesus is like God. He is God. As Jesus told Philip, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" ([John 14:9](#)).

The patterns of the Old Testament gave glimpses of God's nature. The Law showed his holiness. The sacrifices showed his justice. The covenant showed his faithfulness. But in Jesus, we see God's nature perfectly displayed.

### C. DIVINE ACTIONS (V.3B-4)

The passage continues with three powerful statements about what Jesus does:

"...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."

#### *SUSTAINS ALL THINGS*

Jesus "upholds the universe by the word of his power." The word "upholds" doesn't just mean he holds things up. It means he carries all things toward their appointed goal.

Jesus isn't a distant creator who set the universe in motion and stepped back. He's intimately involved in sustaining every atom, every heartbeat, every moment.

The same word that spoke creation into existence continues to sustain it. [Colossians 1:17](#) says, "In him all things hold together."

#### *PROVIDES PURIFICATION FOR SINS*

Jesus "made purification for sins." Here we begin to see his work as the perfect high priest, which becomes a major theme later in Hebrews.

The language of purification comes from the Levitical sacrificial system. But while those sacrifices needed constant repetition, Jesus accomplished purification "once for all" ([Hebrews 10:10](#)).

This moves us from pattern to perfection. The Old Testament sacrifices could never actually remove sin. They were shadows pointing to the perfect sacrifice Jesus would offer.

#### *SITS AT GOD'S RIGHT HAND*

After completing his work, Jesus "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." This quotes [Psalm 110:1](#), the most frequently quoted Old Testament passage in the New Testament.

Two details are significant:

1. He sat down - The Old Testament priests never sat down in the sanctuary because their work was never finished. Jesus sat down because his work was complete.
2. At the right hand - This is the place of highest honor and authority.

This again shows the movement from pattern to perfection. The earthly priests stood and worked continually. Jesus, the perfect priest, finished his work and sat down.

#### D. SIGNIFICANCE FOR TODAY

The opening of Hebrews gives us a vision of Jesus that transforms how we see everything else. When we grasp who Jesus really is, our problems don't disappear, but they do fall into proper perspective.

This is why the writer calls us to "fix our eyes on Jesus" (12:2). Not just as an example to follow, but as the divine Son who reveals God perfectly, sustains all things powerfully, cleanses us completely, and rules eternally.

## IV. THE "BETTER THAN" THEME

The word "better" runs through Hebrews like a golden thread. In Greek, it's "kreittōn," meaning superior or more excellent. This one word captures the heart of the book's message: Jesus isn't just good; he's better than everything that came before him.

#### A. BETTER THAN ANGELS (1:4-2:18)

Angels held a special place in Jewish thinking. They were powerful beings who:

- Delivered the Law to Moses ([Acts 7:53](#))
- Brought messages from God ([Daniel 9:21-22](#))
- Protected God's people ([Psalm 91:11](#))
- Served in God's heavenly court ([Isaiah 6:1-3](#))

Some Jewish traditions had elevated angels so much that they became almost like mediators between God and humans. The Dead Sea Scrolls show that certain Jewish groups believed angels would fight alongside them in the final battle against evil.

But the writer of Hebrews wants to be clear: as impressive as angels are, Jesus is far better.

He builds his case using seven Old Testament quotations, asking, "To which of the angels did God ever say...?" Then he quotes passages that apply only to the Son:

- "You are my Son, today I have begotten you" ([Psalm 2:7](#))
- "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son" ([2 Samuel 7:14](#))

Angels worship Jesus (1:6). Angels are servants (1:7), but Jesus is addressed as God himself (1:8-9). Angels are created beings, but Jesus is the unchanging Creator (1:10-12). No angel was ever invited to sit at God's right hand (1:13).

This comparison helps us see the movement from pattern to person. Angels were part of the pattern, delivering God's messages and serving his purposes. Jesus is the person to whom those messages pointed and the one whom angels serve.

## B. BETTER THAN MOSES (3:1-4:13)

Moses was the greatest figure in Jewish history. He:

- Led Israel out of Egypt
- Received the Law on Mount Sinai
- Spoke with God "face to face" ([Deuteronomy 34:10](#))
- Mediated the covenant between God and Israel

No human was more revered in Judaism than Moses. Even today, traditional Jews call him "Moses our Teacher."

The writer acknowledges Moses's greatness but shows Jesus is worthy of greater honor:

"Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession, who was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in all God's house. For Jesus has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses—as much more glory as the builder of a house has more honor than the house itself" (3:1-3).

The comparison uses a play on words with "house," which can mean both a physical building and a household or family. Moses was a faithful servant within God's house ([Numbers 12:7](#)), but Jesus is the Son over God's house. Even more, Jesus is the builder of the house.

This comparison reflects the pattern-person-perfection framework:

- Moses represented the pattern: he delivered the Law that prepared for Christ
- Jesus is the person: he embodies everything Moses pointed toward
- Jesus brings perfection: he leads us to a rest Moses couldn't provide

### C. BETTER THAN AARON'S PRIESTHOOD (4:14-7:28)

The priesthood was central to Israel's relationship with God. Only priests could enter God's presence in the tabernacle. Only priests could offer sacrifices for sin.

Aaron, Moses's brother, was the first high priest. His descendants formed the priestly line. The high priest entered the Most Holy Place once a year on the Day of Atonement to make sacrifice for the nation's sins.

But this priesthood had limitations:

- Priests died and needed replacement
- Priests had to offer sacrifices for their own sins
- Priests could only enter God's presence under strict conditions
- The sacrifices they offered needed constant repetition

Hebrews introduces Jesus as "a great high priest who has passed through the heavens" (4:14). This priesthood isn't based on physical descent but on God's direct appointment.

Jesus qualifies as our high priest because:

1. He can sympathize with our weaknesses (4:15)
2. He was tempted in every way but remained sinless (4:15)
3. He learned obedience through suffering (5:8)
4. He was directly appointed by God (5:5-6)

His priesthood follows the order of Melchizedek, not Aaron.

Again, we see the pattern-person-perfection progression:

- The Aaronic priesthood was the pattern, pointing to a better priesthood
- Jesus is the person who fulfills the role perfectly
- His priesthood brings perfection, making us "perfect forever" (10:14)

This section culminates in 7:25: "Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."

The word "uttermost" means "completely" or "forever." Jesus doesn't provide partial or temporary salvation. His salvation is complete and eternal.

#### D. MEDIATOR OF A BETTER COVENANT (8:1-13)

God established a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai ([Exodus 19-24](#)). This covenant included:

- God's commandments
- Detailed laws for worship and daily life
- Promises of blessing for obedience
- Warnings of consequences for disobedience

But Israel broke this covenant repeatedly. The prophets looked forward to a new covenant that would transform hearts, not just regulate behavior.

Hebrews quotes [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#) at length:

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah... I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people..." (8:8-12)

This new covenant differs from the old in several ways:

1. Internal, not external ("I will put my laws into their minds")
2. Relational, not just legal ("I will be their God")
3. Universal in knowledge ("they shall all know me")
4. Based on complete forgiveness ("I will remember their sins no more")

Jesus mediates this better covenant based on better promises. The old covenant was the pattern. Jesus brings the perfect covenant that transforms us from within.

#### E. OFFERS A BETTER SACRIFICE (9:1-10:18)

The author describes the tabernacle and its furnishings in detail, focusing on the Most Holy Place, which the high priest entered only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

This elaborate ritual had built-in limitations:

- It needed annual repetition
- It provided only external cleansing
- It reminded people of sin without removing it completely

Jesus offers a superior sacrifice:

- He entered not a man-made sanctuary but heaven itself
- He offered not animal blood but his own blood
- He entered not repeatedly but "once for all" (9:12)

The results of his sacrifice are better:

- It cleanses our conscience, not just our bodies (9:14)
- It redeems us from transgressions under the first covenant (9:15)
- It removes sin, not just covers it (9:26)
- It happens once, not repeatedly (9:28)
- It makes us holy, not just ceremonially clean (10:10)
- It perfects us forever, not temporarily (10:14)

The pattern of animal sacrifices pointed to the person of Jesus, who brings perfect cleansing through his sacrifice.

This section culminates in the declaration that "where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin" (10:18).

The sacrificial system has fulfilled its purpose. Christ has accomplished what all those animal sacrifices could only symbolize. No further sacrifice for sin is needed.

## V. BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: THE RESPONSE OF FAITH

As we've seen, Hebrews presents Jesus as better than everything that came before. Now let's consider how we should respond.

### THE WARNINGS WE MUST HEED

Hebrews contains five serious warnings:

1. Don't drift away through neglect (2:1-4)
2. Don't harden your heart through unbelief (3:7-4:13)
3. Don't remain spiritually immature (5:11-6:12)
4. Don't deliberately keep sinning (10:26-39)
5. Don't refuse God when he speaks (12:25-29)

These warnings show us that knowing Jesus is better isn't enough. We must respond with genuine faith that changes how we live.

## THE FAITH WE NEED

Chapter 11, often called the "Hall of Faith," shows us what real faith looks like. Faith isn't just believing facts about Jesus. It's trusting him enough to act on that belief.

Faith means:

- Believing what we can't see (11:1)
- Obeying even when it's difficult (11:8)
- Choosing God's promises over present comfort (11:24-26)
- Persevering through hardship (11:35-38)

These Old Testament believers trusted God before Jesus came. How much more should we trust now that God has revealed himself fully in his Son?

## THE RACE WE RUN

[Hebrews 12:1-2](#) gives us a perfect picture of the Christian life:

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

This verse brings together everything we've learned:

- We have examples to encourage us (the cloud of witnesses)
- We need to remove whatever holds us back (weights and sin)



- We must persist when things get hard (endurance)
- We keep our eyes fixed on Jesus (the founder and perfecter)

## PRACTICAL STEPS FORWARD

As we close, let me suggest five practical responses to what we've learned:

1. **Embrace the sufficiency of Christ** Stop trying to add to what Jesus has done. His work is complete. Rest in it.
2. **Draw near to God with confidence** You don't need special rituals or human mediators. Through Jesus, you can approach God directly.
3. **Hold fast to your confession** When pressure comes to compromise or give up, remember who Jesus is and what he's done.
4. **Encourage one another daily** Faith isn't meant to be lived alone. We need each other, especially when times are tough.
5. **Fix your eyes on Jesus** Don't focus on the patterns. Focus on the person. Jesus is the key that unlocks everything else.

## CONCLUSION: FROM SHADOW TO SUBSTANCE

The book of Hebrews takes us on a journey from shadow to substance, from pattern to person, from promise to perfection.

Think of it this way: When you're expecting someone important, their shadow might appear on the wall before they enter the room. The shadow tells you someone is coming, but it's not the person. When the person arrives, you no longer focus on the shadow.

The Old Testament gave us shadows of Christ. Now Christ himself has arrived. We don't ignore the shadows—they help us recognize him. But we don't focus on them either. We focus on him.

Jesus is so much better than we think. He's better than angels, better than Moses, better than Aaron, better than the old covenant, better than animal sacrifices. He's better than anything this world offers.

And the good news is this: This Jesus—this perfect, divine, exalted Son—loves you. He became human for you. He died for you. He intercedes for you. He's coming back for you.

The question Hebrews leaves us with is simple: Will you trust him? Will you trust him when following him costs you? Will you trust him when you can't see the way forward? Will you trust him with your whole life?

Because Jesus isn't just better than what came before. He's better than anything else you could ever choose.